

# THE WEAVING OF MANTRA

Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse

*Ryuichi Abé*



Columbia University Press  
NEW YORK

Columbia University Press expresses its gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Ryōji Satō,  
Mr. and Mrs. Kikuo Tanaka, Mr. and Mrs. Masao Ōshima, and  
Mr. and Mrs. Katsutoshi Tanaka for their generous gift,  
which made possible the publication of this volume.



Columbia University Press  
Publishers Since 1893  
New York Chichester, West Sussex  
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Abé, Ryūichi, 1954—

The weaving of mantra : Kūkai and the construction of esoteric  
Buddhist discourse / Ryūichi Abé

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-231-11286-6 (cloth)—ISBN 0-231-11287-4 (pbk.)

1. Kūkai, 774-835. 2. Shingon (Sect)—Doctrines. I. Title.

BQ8999.K857A34 1999

294.3'92—dc21

98-36381

♾

Casebound editions of Columbia University Press books are  
printed on permanent and durable acid-free paper.

Printed in the United States of America

c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

p 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*For my father, Ryūbun Abé,  
who taught me the pleasure of learning*

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## Acknowledgments

I remember one day when I was looking in dismay at numerous handwritten notes I had accumulated through my research on Kūkai. Unlike my first book project—a study of Ryōkan and his poems—for which the manuscript preparation went rather smoothly, my notes on Kūkai refused to come together. Like amoeba cells they kept proliferating, all the while changing their shapes. When I finally managed to assemble them into a manuscript, the earliest draft of this book, my joy was short-lived. It had grown far too long and complicated for publication. From that stage onward, however, I fortunately received countless encouragements from my friends and colleagues. It was they who made it possible for me to continue my work, to reshape the structure of drafts and to refine their detail.

I cannot thank enough Haruo Shirane, who heavily invested his time in reading my work and urged me with incisiveness to develop my ideas further. Without his warm support I could not have gathered the strength to complete this project. I am also deeply grateful to Robert Thurman, who liberally made himself available for consultation, lent his understanding to my rather unorthodox approach to the study of Buddhism, and inspired me to think differently. Paul Anderer, Peter Awn, Tomi Suzuki, Wayne Proudfoot, and David Wang are among other colleagues of mine at Columbia whose support has been essential for my intellectual growth. I also thank Barbara Ruch for sharing with me her knowledge of women's experience in Japanese Buddhist history.

I would like to express my genuine gratitude to Peter Haskel, who patiently listened to my explanation of formative, often fragmentary ideas, followed the development of my manuscript from its inception to completion, and at each stage helped me in improving my presentation.

I am indebted to William LaFleur and Jacqueline Stone, who carefully read my earlier draft and provided me with extremely constructive criticism. Professor LaFleur's scholarship has been an important inspiration for my

effort to integrate methods of literary criticism into the reading of Buddhist texts. I also benefited greatly from the insight of Professor Stone, whose expertise in the Tendai School and its esoteric tradition was instrumental for me to problematize the conventional manner in which Kūkai, Saichō, and the Buddhism of the early Heian period have been treated.

I am equally thankful to Carl Bielefeldt, Bernard Faure, Allan Grapard, Paul Groner, John McRae, Robert Sharf, and George Tanabe, who read my early draft and presented me with invaluable suggestions, without which I could not have condensed my manuscript to a publishable size. The pioneering works these scholars have produced in the study of Buddhism in East Asia have been the guiding force for my attempt at presenting a radical reappraisal of Kūkai's place in Japanese history. I am also honored that the following scholars, whose works have been constant sources of inspiration to me, read my manuscript in part or in its entirety and gave me encouraging comments: William Bodiford, Karen Brock, James Dobbins, Robert Gimillo, Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, Livia Kohn, John Nelson, Fabio Rambelli, Ian Reader, Brian Ruppert, Stephen Teiser, and Stanley Weinstein.

Among my associates in Japan, I am particularly indebted to Imai Masaharu at Tsukuba University and Sueki Fumihiko at Tokyo University. I am thankful to my former teachers at Taishō University, Endō Yūjun, Fukuda Ryōsei, and Yoshida Kōseki, who enabled me to acquire knowledge of traditional doctrinal studies within the Shingon School. I also owe much to historical research carried out by Hashimoto Hatsuko, Kamikawa Michio, Matsuo Kenji, Nagamura Makoto, Oishio Chihiro, Satō Hiroo, Takagi Shingen, Taira Masayuki, Ushiyama Yoshiyuki and Yoshida Kazuhiko.

I am forever indebted to Yoshito Hakeda, who trained me rigorously in reading Esoteric Buddhist scriptural texts. I will remain grateful to Philip Yampolsky, who taught me all essential skills necessary for carrying out research in primary Buddhist texts. I will also remember the taintless heart of Pema Losang Chogyen, whose love of learning helped me in developing better understanding of Esoteric Buddhist rituals. I deplore their untimely departure and deeply miss their kindness.

I found it fortunate that while I was engaging in this project I was surrounded by many talented graduate students who showed interest in my work and provided me with new perspectives. They include Gina Cogan, Anne Commons, David Gray, Laura Harrington, Marina Illich, Jayne Kim, Kenneth Lee, Joseph Loizzo, David Lurie, Tomoko Sugahara, Thomas Yarnell, Christian Wedemeyer—and Lori Meeks, an unusually gifted religion major graduating Columbia College.

I could not have begun this project without Maruta Yoshio, Satō Ryōji, Tanaka Kikuo, Ōshima Masao, and Tanaka Katsutoshi, who generously

patronized my research in its early phase. Alexander Brown, Kenneth Harlin, Any Heinrich, Yasuko Makino, Rongxiang Zhang, and other librarians and staff members at Columbia's Starr East Asian Library heartily gave their assistance to my research here.

This volume has been greatly enhanced by the encouragement I received from Jennifer Crewe, my editor at Columbia University Press, and Anne McCoy, managing editor. I also appreciate the meticulous editorial support provided by Suzanne Schafer and her staff. I am equally indebted to John Storm, who carefully read my proof.

Finally, I am enormously thankful to Sachiko, for graciously giving her tender care to all in my family through these trying years of my career. I'm grateful to my wife Kanui, for always being my best friend, and to Taiga and Karuna, our growing pains and joys, who made me renew my gratitude to my parents.

## Chronology of Kūkai's Interaction with the Nara Clergy

YEAR	DATE	EVENTS
810	?	Donated to an anonymous priest at Tōdaiji his imported copies of the <i>Avataṃsaka Sūtra</i> and its related commentaries and ritual manuals ( <i>Kōya zappitsushū</i> , KZ 3:589).
813	1/3	Composed for the priest Eichū of Bonshakuji a letter to the court requesting Eichū's resignation from the post of <i>shōsōzu</i> at the Sōgō ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:522).
	2/23	Composed for the abbot Nyohō of Tōshōdaiji a letter to the court expressing his gratitude for the imperial patronage given to his temple ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:448).
	12/?	Upon the request of the priest Shūen of Kōfukuji, composed the <i>Konshōkyō himitsu kada</i> (KZ 1:825), a series of verses each of which summarizes a chapter of the <i>Golden Light Sūtra</i> .
814	winter	As <i>bettō</i> of the Otokunudera monastery at Nagaoka, north of Nara, sent a letter to a certain <i>sōzu</i> in the Sōgō requesting support for the restoration of the monastery's buildings ( <i>Kōya zappitsushū</i> , KZ 3:590).
	7/26	Composed a letter to the court requesting imperial pardon for a crime committed by the Hossō priest Chūkei of Gangōji ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:444).

The dating in this chronological table indicates dates and months according to the Japanese calendar. For example, “813 1/3” does not mean January 3 of the year 813, but the third day of the first month of Kōnin 4, which corresponds approximately to the year 813 in the Western calendar.

815	4/1	Composed the <i>Kan'enshō</i> , a letter to lay and clerical leaders of several provinces soliciting their cooperation in copying and circulating Esoteric Buddhist scriptures ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:526).
	4/5	Sent the <i>Kan'enshō</i> to the Hossō priest Tokuitsu in the province of Mutsu ( <i>Kōya zappitsushū</i> , KZ 3:565).
816	7/?	At Takaosanji, gave abhiṣeka to the master Gonsō and other priests of the Daianji monastery ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:542).
817	8/2	Upon the request of a certain Kegon master at Tōdaiji, composed the <i>Jissō hannya haramitakyō tōshaku</i> (KZ 1:747), a commentary on the <i>Prajñā-pāramitā-naya</i> (Jpn. <i>Jissō hannyakyō</i> ), a chapter in the <i>Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra</i> .
820	?	In Nara (Tōdaiji?), copied the eighty-fascicle edition of the <i>Avataṃsaka Sūtra</i> and performed a rite of dedication to the sūtra ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:485).
822	2/11	At Tōdaiji, erected the Abhiṣeka Hall ( <i>Tōdaiji zokuyōroku</i> , ZZG 11:287a–b).
	?	Also in Nara (Tōdaiji?), gave abhiṣeka to the cloistered Emperor Heizei ( <i>Heizei tennō kanjōmon</i> , KZ 2:150).
823	10/10	At Tōji, designated the reading of the vinaya of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, whose authenticity was recognized by the Nara clergy, as a prerequisite for the study of Esoteric Buddhism ( <i>Sangakuroku</i> , KZ 1:120–121)
824	3/2	At Tōdaiji, hosted a rite of dedication to the three jewels ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:485).
	3/26	Was assigned to the post of <i>shōsōzu</i> in the Sōgō ( <i>Sōgō bunin</i> , DBZ 65:9a).
	?	Gave abhiṣeka to the Kegon master Dōyū ( <i>Kōbō daishi deshifū</i> , KDZ 10:96b).
825	7/19	At the imperial court, composed and delivered the opening address at a special rite dedicated to the <i>Virtuous King Sūtra</i> hosted by Emperor Junna ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:514).
826	3/10	At Saiji, composed and delivered the opening address at a commemorative service for the former Emperor Kanmu ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:464).

827	5/?	Was assigned to the post of <i>daisōzu</i> in the Sōgō ( <i>Sōgō bunin</i> , DBZ 65:9b).
	9/?	At Tachibanadera, Asuka, together with leading members of the Sōgō and representatives of the Hossō, Sanron, and Shingon Schools, performed a service for the deceased Prince Iyo ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:466).
828	8/13	At Kyoto (Saiji?), to commemorate the former Sōgō member Gonsō, who had passed away a year earlier, gave a lecture on and performed a service dedicated to the <i>Brahmājāla Sūtra</i> ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:508, 539).
	?	Gave an abhiṣeka to the master Dōshō of the Sanron School ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:485).
829	7/18	At Nishidera, Nara, gave a lecture on the <i>Lotus Sūtra</i> ( <i>Hokekyō kaidai</i> , KZ 1:792).
	9/11	Composed for the Hossō priest Chūkei a poem celebrating the eightieth birthday of his master Gomyō ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:545).
	9/23	Hosted a reception to celebrate the eightieth birthday of the Hossō master Gomyō of Gangōji, who was the incumbent <i>sōjō</i> , the highest officer of the Sōgō ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:543).
	11/5	Was appointed to the <i>bettō</i> at Daianji, a major center of Sanron studies. ( <i>Tōji chōja bunin</i> , GR 4:622b; <i>Kōbō daishi gyōkeki</i> , KDZ 2:116a–b).
824–834		In response to the court's request to the leaders of the Six Schools (Ritsu, Kusha, Sanron, Hossō, Tendai, and Shingon) to present treatises explicating their teachings, produced the <i>Himitsu mandara jūjū shinron</i> ( <i>Kōbō daishi gogyōjō shūki</i> , KDZ 1:168a–b).
831	6/14	Requested that the court exempt him from duty as <i>daisōzu</i> in the Sōgō. Request denied ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:520–521).
834	2/11	At Tōshōdaiji, attended a sūtra copying service hosted by abbot Nyohō. Composed the opening address for Nyohō ( <i>Seireishū</i> , KZ 3:497).
	2/?	At the Abhiṣeka Hall, Tōdaiji, gave a lecture on the <i>Lotus Sūtra</i> ( <i>Hokekyōshaku</i> , KZ 1:781). On the same occasion, Dōshō delivered a lecture on the <i>Hannya</i>

*shingyō hiken*, Kūkai's treatise on the *Heart Sūtra* (*Tōdaiji engi*, KDS:763).

12/19

Requested that the court construct the Mantra Chapel in the inner palace where esoteric rituals might be performed concurrently with the Misaie, the lectures by eminent Nara priests on the *Golden Light Sūtra* held annually at the court during the second week of the first month (*Seireishū*, KZ 3:518).

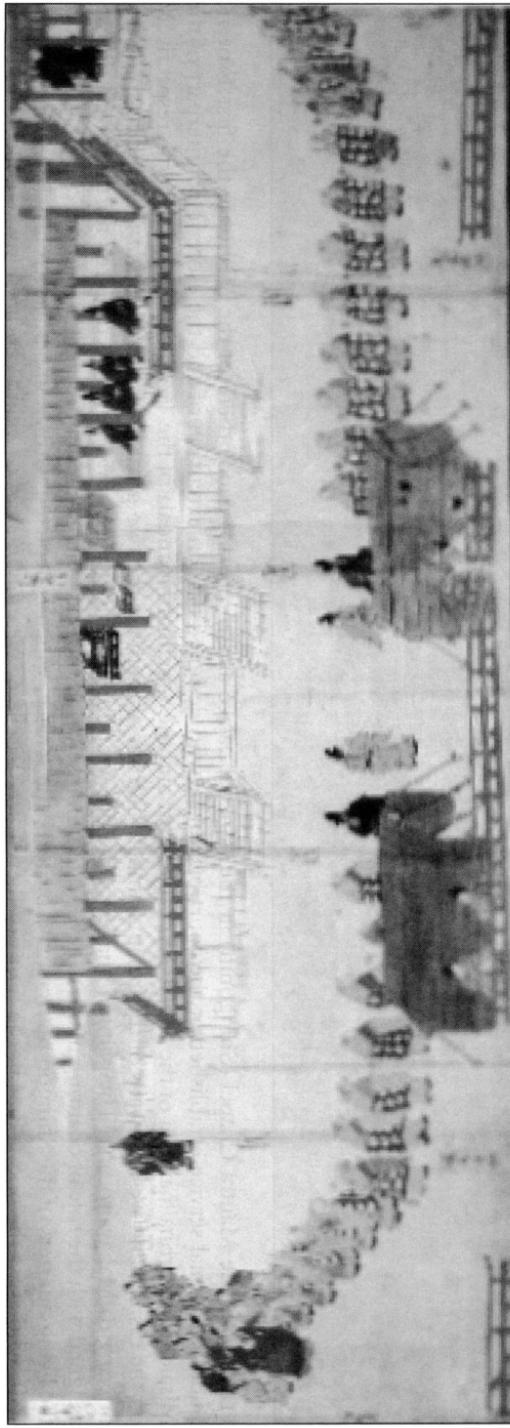


PLATE 1. The opening scene of the Misai, the seven-day lectures and recitations of the *Golden Light Sūtra*, part of the New Year festivities at the imperial palace and the most extravagant and prestigious annual Buddhist service. Led by court officials at the Ministry of Aristocracy (Jibushō) and the Agency of Buddhist and Foreign Affairs (Genbaryō) and accompanied by assistant priests and pages, eminent priests of the Office of Priestly Affairs (Sōgō) are forming their processions reaching the front of the Daigokuden Hall. Enshrined inside the hall are the images of the Buddha Vairocana and the Bodhisattva Manjusri (only the bases of their altars are shown). Ministers at the Grand Ministry (Daijōkan) have seated themselves and wait for the entry of the priests, who will soon begin their recitations and lectures in the hall. Fascicle 7, *Nenjōyōji emaki*. Twelfth century. Private collection. Courtesy of Chūōkōronsha. Discussed in the first and second sections of chapter 1 and the fifth section of chapter 8.

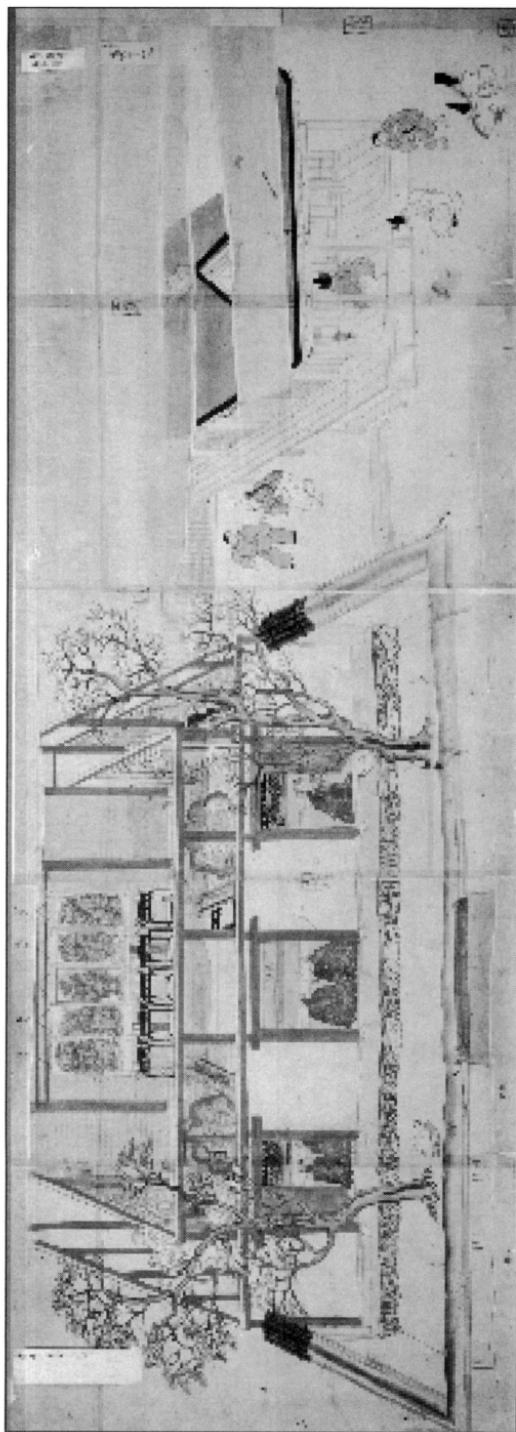


PLATE 2. The Mantra Chapel (Shingonin) in the imperial palace and the performance there of the Mishuhō, the first Esoteric Buddhist annual service established at the court by Kukai, who designed it as an extension of and the esoteric counterpart of the Misaic. The garbha mandala of the *Mahavairocana Sūtra* and the vajradhatu mandala of the *Vajrāśekhara Sūtra* hang, respectively, on the eastern and western walls of the inner chamber. In front of them are the two great ritual altars (*daidan*) for performing the offering to Mahavairocana. The painted images of the five wrathful divinities (*godai myōō*) are placed on the northern wall. Priests assigned with the role of chanting mantras have seated themselves in the outer chamber. On the right side of the chapel is Chōjōbabō, the living quarters of the Shingon masters who perform the service, which is depicted with an imperial secretary (*kurōndo*) and his staff, who assist the priests during the terms of the service. Fascile 6, *Nenjūgōji emaki*, twelfth century. Private collection. Photo courtesy of Chūōkōronsha. Discussed the first and second sections of chapter 1 and the fifth section of chapter 8.

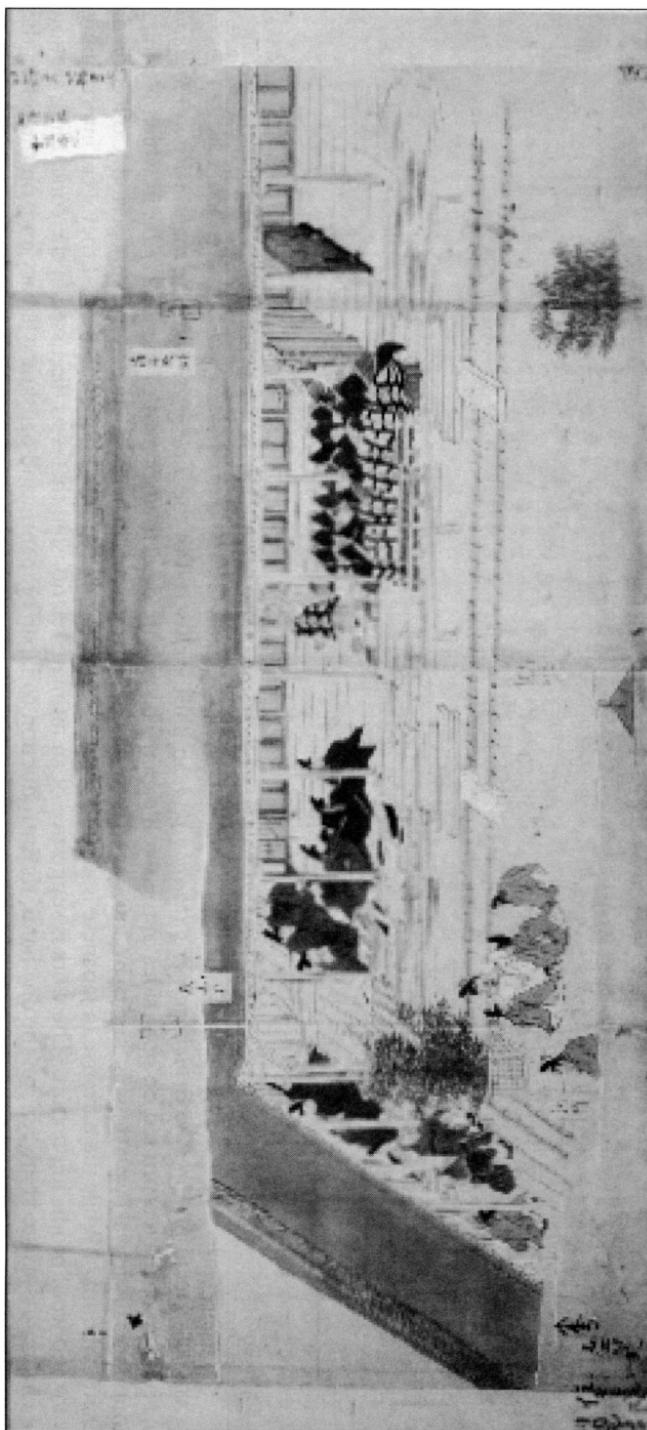


PLATE 3. *Uchirōgi* at the Seireiden Hall, the doctrinal debate at the emperor's private quarters, held at the conclusion of the Misai and the Mishuhō. The abbot of Toji is leading the opening ritual in which he sprinkles consecrated water first on the emperor (hidden behind the slide doors), and then on the priests of exoteric disciplines who have held the Misai and those of esoteric disciplines who have performed the Mishuhō, and imperial princes and dignitaries at court, who all seem to be shinking with the biting chill. Fascicle 6, *Nenjūyōji emaki*, twelfth century. Private collection. Photo courtesy of Chūōkōronsha. Discussed in the first section of chapter 6, the fifth section of chapter 8, and the fifth section of chapter 9.



PLATE 4. Detail of *Hakubyo isemogatari shitaе bonjikyo*, an illustrated scroll of the *Tale of Ise* with the mantra *Kōmyō shinjōn* in Siddham characters printed on both sides of the scroll paper. The picture depicts chapter 65 of the *Tale of Ise*, in which Narihira announces his arrival by playing his flute to his lover, who is confined by her parents in her residence. Kamakura period. Collection of Dairokyū bunko. While the narrative in Japanese is written vertically, the mantra is printed horizontally, as if they were interwining warp and woof producing texture. The work is suggestive of an intimate relationship that—as discussed in the concluding section of chapter 9—existed between, on the one hand, the introduction to Japan of mantra and Sanskrit syllabary and, on the other, the rise of the native scripts and new genres of literature based upon the kana syllabary.

# Introduction

Esoteric Buddhism, or *mikkyō* in Japanese, consists of complex systems of icons, meditative rituals, and ritual languages, all of which aim at enabling practitioners to immediately grasp abstract Buddhist doctrines through actual ritual experiences. Identifying itself as Vajrayāna (lightning-fast vehicle for enlightenment), it distinguishes itself from other Buddhist schools in the traditions of Mahāyāna (greater vehicle) and Hīnayāna (lesser vehicle)—the schools that rely primarily on ordinary language, rather than ritual systems, for understanding Buddhist doctrines—by classifying those traditions as exoteric.

Contrary to the forbidding image associated with the term *esoteric*—which may explain why this important subject has largely been neglected in modern academic literature—*Mikkyō* (literally, secret teaching) enjoyed a wide diffusion throughout all walks of medieval Japanese society. At imperial coronations, for example, it was necessary for the emperor to participate in Esoteric Buddhist rituals that gave authority to the new ruler by imparting to him the attributes of a cakravartin (Jpn. *tenrin shōō*), the legendary universal monarch described in Buddhist scriptures. Because the emperor was also the supreme priest in the worship of *kami*—indigenous Japanese Shintō gods—the notably Esoteric Buddhist characterization of rulership was key to the rise of the Shintō-Buddhist amalgamation,<sup>1</sup> in which *kami* were understood as local manifestations of the Buddhist divinities described in the *mandala*, the Esoteric Buddhist art form portraying the realm of enlightenment inhabited by numerous Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In large part, the Buddhism that was disseminated to every stratum of medieval society<sup>2</sup>—not only by priests and nuns but by traveling mountain ascetics, holy men, storytellers, and entertainers—was neither a recondite philosophy nor a sectarian dogma, but rather a distinctly Japanese system of beliefs to which Esotericism was integral.

In this belief system, it was assumed that Esoteric Buddhist rituals were capable of influencing the interaction between the six great elements of the universe (*rokudai* i.e., earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness), which determined the course of events in both nature and the human realm. At times of national crisis, such as foreign invasions or civil strife, the court and shogunate employed as an alternative to military action or diplomacy esoteric rituals designed to destroy their enemies. When an epidemic broke out, the court summoned specialists in esoteric rituals, who took counsel with imperial physicians and diviners to determine its cause and who prescribed methods for containing it. Various other esoteric rituals, employed for controlling droughts, pests, typhoons, earthquakes, and other natural disasters, became indispensable to medieval society for maintaining and increasing economic production.

Esoteric Buddhism also made a seminal contribution to the development of medieval Japanese art and literature. For example, one of the most influential theories on *waka*, poetry in Japanese, understood waka as a manifestation in Japanese language of mantra and dhāraṇī, Esoteric Buddhist incantations. According to this theory, just as Buddhist divinities in India revealed their secrets of enlightenment in (and as) mantra in their language, Japanese gods manifested their secrets in waka. Written in Sanskrit, mantras were understood as symbols of the six elements and their movements, reflecting within their letters all sorts of events in the entire span of the universe. Waka was treated as an analog of mantra, a ritual language in Japanese, and composing it was regarded by both Buddhists and Shintoists as an act as sacred as the ritual manipulation of mantra. In the late medieval period, a tradition developed in which the art of waka was transmitted from one generation of court poets to the next by a ritual replicating *abhiṣeka* (Jpn. *kanjō*), or Esoteric Buddhist ordination. Not surprisingly, many of the most eminent waka poets were Esoteric Buddhist priests—among them Henjō (816–890), Saigyō (1118–1190), Jien (1155–1225), Ton'a (1298–1372), and Sōgi (1422–1502).

These examples suggest that Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, and its ritual system in particular, functioned as a practical technology that had a direct bearing on medieval politics and economy as well as literary production. It served as a pivotal matrix for the integration of medieval society's diverse fields of science, art, and knowledge in general; an integration that, in turn, gave rise to the religious, political, and cultural discourse characteristic of the medieval Japanese intellectual constellation.

The Priest Kūkai (779–835), who was responsible for the introduction to and initial dissemination of Esoteric Buddhism in early ninth century Japan, was indisputably the single most popular Buddhist saint in medieval society. No

other Buddhist figure has been more intensely legendized. Countless anecdotes about Kūkai—or Kōbō Daishi (“Great Master Who Spread the Dharma”) as he is referred to in medieval literature—portray him as a miracle-working mendicant who trod every corner of the islands of Japan, healing the sick, punishing the wicked, and rewarding the righteous. One of the numerous legendary claims for Kūkai is that he discovered and made public the hidden identity between the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, the ancestral deity of the imperial house enshrined at the grand Shintō complex of Ise, and the Buddha Mahāvairocana, the central divinity of the Mikkyō mandala.<sup>3</sup> Kūkai was also said to have invented kana, the Japanese phonetic orthography, and the Iroha, the kana syllabary. In the Iroha table, the kana letters are arranged in such a manner as to form a waka that plainly expresses the Buddhist principle of emptiness.

These two legends, respectively, point at the two cultural passages through which Buddhism grew into the dominant ideology of medieval Japan. First, Buddhism legitimized the authority of the emperor and the imperial lineage around which formed the order of medieval society. Second, Buddhism justified writing in Japanese, a medium considered more effective in describing and sustaining the medieval social order than the learned yet foreign classical Chinese language and its ideographic letters, which had been relied upon in earlier periods. A case in point is the aforementioned “waka-mantra” theory, which was the counterpart in the realm of writing of the belief in Shintō gods, the progenitors of the emperor’s pedigree, as avatars of Buddhist divinities. That is, just as the emperor ultimately descended from Buddhist divinities, Japanese language also “descended” from Buddhist ritual language. The legendary invention by Kūkai—who was said to have discovered the emperor’s Buddhist ancestry—of the kana syllabary as a Buddhist poem appears to be the critical link for unveiling/inventing this hidden parallel.

In short, the Kūkai of medieval Japan was a major cultural icon illustrative of the deep cultural assimilation in which Buddhism constituted, almost transparently, the nucleus of Japanese society. That assimilation would have been impossible without Esoteric Buddhist ritual for communicating with and manipulating Buddhist and Shintō deities and the ritual language of mantra, whose phoneticism (in contrast to the hieroglyphism of Chinese characters) encouraged the development of the native syllabary. In this sense, some of the legends about Kūkai, as mentioned earlier, seem to convey certain metaphorical force (what Gianbattista Vico has described as “poetic logic”) in that they point to the relevance of Kūkai’s introduction of Esoteric Buddhism to the development of medieval Japanese society.

Curiously, modern scholarship on Kūkai—carried out principally by Japanese Buddhologists whose approach on the whole has been sectarian—has

neglected the importance of Kūkai in Japanese cultural history. Rejecting outright traditional characterizations of Kūkai as myths and fabrications, the conventional studies portrayed Kūkai's introduction of Esoteric Buddhism in the form of his foundation of the Shingon School (*Shingonshū*). Arguably, these scholars regard the Shingon School as an exclusive sectarian institution that, together with Saichō's (767–823) Tendai School, constituted the Buddhism of the Heian period (794–1192), the age of the aristocracy whose life centered on the imperial court in Heiankyō (Kyoto). The immediate implication of their argument is that, with the arrival of the Kamakura period (1192–1333), the age of warriors and their shogunate in the city of Kamakura in the east, the Shingon Sect declined together with the aristocracy, which patronized it, and was replaced by what historians have referred to as Kamakura New Buddhism, new sectarian schools consisting of Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren. As a result, their picture of Kūkai fails to explain either the continued growth of Esoteric Buddhist institutions throughout the medieval period, the far-reaching integration of Esoteric Buddhism beyond the walls of the Shingon monasteries into medieval cultural life, or the reason for the rise of a massive legendary literature centering on Kūkai.

This study presents a picture of Kūkai that is radically different from the conventional one just sketched. I argue that at the heart of Kūkai's effort to disseminate Esoteric Buddhism in Japan was not the establishment of a sect but the creation of a new type of religious discourse grounded in his analysis of the ritual language of mantra. Kūkai lived in an age that was the final maturing phase of the ancient regime, which had solidified its power by promoting Confucianism as the ruling ideology for Japanese emperor and through the strict enforcement of *ritsuryō*, the body of law adapted from the T'ang administrative (Jpn. *ritsu*; Ch. *lì*) and penal (Jpn. *ryō*; Ch. *líng*) codes. The core of the *ritsuryō* regime consisted of literati-officials of the imperial court, who were trained in the Confucian educational curriculum at the Daigaku, or State College. These officials treated the Buddhist clergy as if it were a government bureaucracy subordinate to their own, in accordance with a division of the *ritsuryō* termed the *Sōniryō*, or Rules for Priests and Nuns.

The *Sōniryō* guaranteed the clerics the state's patronage by providing them with stipends and legal privileges similar to those given to court officials. In exchange, the state demanded that the clerics engage in even their principal activities—ordination, ritual services, proselytization, etc.—only if they were authorized by the state. In other words, through its Confucian rationale, the *ritsuryō* deemed the clerics—who severed family ties for their religious pursuit—to be loyal subjects whose goal was to serve the ruler faithfully as

if he were their benevolent father. In this manner, the *ritsuryō* state expected all aspects of the clerics' life—religious training, scriptural studies, and, in particular, services performed for the state—to be acts of devotion to the ruling class through which the clerics generated merit for the nation. Cultural historians refer to this period, extending from the mid-eighth to the mid-ninth century, as the “age of *statecraftism*” (*Keikoku jidai*), the age of Confucian pragmatism during which the *raison d'être* of all intellectual activity, even the writing of literature, was the contribution it made to the management of the state. In short, the promotion by the state of Confucian ideology—which legitimized the emperor's rule, shaped the education of literati-officials at court, conditioned their interpretation of the *ritsuryō*, and controlled the intelligentsia and its production of discourse in general—kept Buddhism on the defensive.

I shall argue that the Esoteric Buddhist discourse invented by Kūkai provided the early Heian intelligentsia (consisting primarily of the clergy and court officials) with an alternative to hegemonic Confucian discourse, a set of “Buddhist” theories explaining the meaning of religious, cultural, and political activities and of the relationship between these activities and authority—e.g., in what way ritual can become effective; in what manner the efficaciousness of a ritual can be explained; what text is and is about; and how rulership should be legitimized by means of ritual performance and textual production. Kūkai accomplished this by advancing a general theory of language, which derived in turn from his analysis of the two principal forms of the Buddhist ritual language of incantation: *dhāraṇī* and *mantra*. The former occurs prominently in both exoteric and esoteric scriptures, and numerous *dhāraṇīs* were known to and popularly chanted in the Buddhist community of the Nara and early Heian periods. On the other hand, the latter is unique to esoteric scriptures. Although a small number of texts containing mantras had arrived in Japan before Kūkai's day, they escaped the attention of the clergy; and it was Kūkai who first made the word *mantra* known in Japanese, especially through its Japanese translation *shingon* (literally, “words of truth”), the term he chose to refer generically to his new form of Buddhism.

The word *dhāraṇī*, which derives from the Sanskrit verb root *dhr*, meaning to hold, keep, maintain, can roughly be translated as “that by which to sustain something.” It is generally understood as a mnemonic device, containing within its short passages all the meaning of a section or chapter of a *sūtra*, or a particular teaching discussed therein. *Dhāraṇī* is also believed to be endowed with mystical power that protects those who chant it against malign influences such as demons, evil rulers, thieves, and diseases. As for *mantra*, there has been perennial, seemingly endless debate as to what the term means and how

it can be defined.<sup>4</sup> Many experts believe that it consists of two parts—the old Vedic root *man*, to think; and the action-oriented (*kṛt*) suffix *-tra*, indicating instrumentality. Thus it is possible to understand mantra as a linguistic device for deepening one's thought, and, more specifically, an instrument for enlightenment. However, it is also true that there are numerous mantras whose chanting is purported specifically to realize mundane effects, such as causing rain to fall, attaining health and long life, and eliminating political rivals.

It is often said that of the two forms of incantations, mantra tends to be shorter and more strongly contextualized in ritual procedures—that is, its chanting is associated with particular breathing, visualizing, and other meditative exercises. Yet from the point of view of linguistic structure alone, the distinction between dhāraṇī and mantra is not always clear. For example, both dhāraṇīs and mantras frequently contain a large number of unintelligible phonic fragments (which are often chanted in rhythmic refrain), such as *p̄hat*, *mām*, *trat*, *hām*, and *brim*, which have encouraged many to hold a view that mantras and dhāraṇīs are devoid of meaning: mumbo-jumbo.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, Kūkai distinguished mantra from dhāraṇī in their semantic and semiotic functions, i.e., in terms of the different manners through which they produced meaning or became meaningful. He defined mantra as a special class of dhāraṇī, capable of demonstrating that every syllable used in dhāraṇī was in fact a manifestation of the working of the Buddhist truth of emptiness. For example, Kūkai interpreted the syllables of the root mantra of the Buddha Mahāvairocana, *A Vi Ra Hūm Kham*, as representing the five essential forces of emptiness, respectively: stability (earth), permeation (water), purity (fire), growth (wind), and spacing (space). That is, even before syllables are put together to form a word, they are already the sources of countless meanings capable of illustrating the truth as it is explained in the writings of Buddhist scriptures. In other words, mantras show that dhāraṇīs are not devoid of meaning but, on the contrary, saturated with it. It is through their semantic superabundance that Kūkai attempted to explain why dhāraṇīs were impregnated with the power to condense the meaning of scriptures, to protect chanters, or to bring about supernatural effects.

Furthermore, since there is no difference between the syllables used in mantras and those in scriptures or even nonreligious texts, as long as they are written in the same language, Kūkai asserted by extension that if one possessed a secret knowledge of mantra, any word in any language could manifest its power as mantra. In other words, language in general is an exemplary realm where the Buddhist ultimate truth of emptiness manifests its working. Kūkai also suggested that in order to illustrate this inseparability between emptiness and language, a phonetic writing system, as in Sanskrit or Japanese, is more effective

than a hieroglyphic system, as in Chinese, the language that dominated the intellectual production of his day. For him, therefore, it was the responsibility of the clergy to preserve and develop the science of language and, by their taming of the secret power inherent in language, to take command in constructing and maintaining social and political order. Their role in society could not merely be a passive subordination and service to the Confucian literati. Kūkai's new discourse can thus be understood as a divergence from that of the *ritsuryō* authorities, a counterdiscourse that paved the way for the rise of Buddhism as the nation's prevailing ideology. In order for him to trigger these changes, the ideas centering around the ritual language of mantra were essential.

It was, of course, by means of his own writings that Kūkai advanced his mantra-based language theory and worked to weave Buddhism deep into the texture of Japanese intellectual discourse. This study offers a new reading of Kūkai's texts, which demonstrates that they represented a critical innovation in the technology of writing, textual interpretation, and ritual language. Kūkai's writings and the new type of discourse they spawned were among the developments that marked the transition in Japanese history from the ancient order to the medieval world. As if to provide a fertile ground for the growth of the numerous legends that would surround him, Kūkai's own life seems to anticipate this momentous shift toward the cultural dominance exercised by Buddhism: in his youth Kūkai left the Confucian State College where he had been trained as an elite candidate for *ritsuryō* government service; later in his life he emerged as one of the most powerful leaders of the Buddhist community.

I hope my analysis will show that Kūkai's works, which sectarian scholars have treated as the crystallization of timeless doctrines, in fact reflect various historical conditions that surrounded him. I also hope that my rereading of Kūkai will suggest that many issues that have until now been discussed within the confines of Japanese Buddhology—e.g., whether instantaneous enlightenment is possible or how an esoteric interpretation of a *sūtra* can be made compatible with an exoteric one—have both direct and indirect bearing on topics essential for understanding medieval Japanese history, such as the development of new imperial mythologies, the growth of Shintō and Buddhist institutions as feudal powers, and the rise of the native Japanese poetic and aesthetic theories.

My discussion in this volume is divided into nine chapters, which I have organized in three parts. In chapter 1, I establish the factual foundation for a new reading of Kūkai's texts by laying out my basic paradigm: first by locating Kūkai's life in the historical context of the *ritsuryō* state and its policy toward

the Saṅgha, the community of Buddhist clerics, and second by identifying in that historical context major events in Kūkai’s life that shaped his formation of Esoteric Buddhist discourse. Previous studies on Kūkai have postulated that Kūkai’s swift success in propagating Esoteric Buddhism was due to the phenomenal growth of the nascent Shingon Set. They have also presumed that Kūkai’s Shingon Buddhism was aimed at reforming the established yet debased Buddhism of his day, at forming a new sect destined to supersede the antiquated monastic institutions in the former capital, Nara. It was for this reason, they suggest, that Kūkai enjoyed the personal patronage of the early Heian emperors and their courts in the new capital of Kyoto, and of the emperor’s ministers, who were working to contain the Nara clergy and bring an end to their interference in court politics.

There is no evidence, however, that Kūkai ever promoted Esoteric Buddhism as either a sect or a reform. That he established a reform sect is a modern myth. On the contrary, I argue that Kūkai’s success was made possible only by the alliance he built with the Nara Buddhist establishment, which initially viewed his new form of Buddhism as heretical but eventually came to accept and support it. That is, many of the achievements with which modern sectarian studies credit Kūkai, in truth, were due to his collaboration with the Nara clergy. I also suggest that underlying that alliance was a common interest in loosening the tight grip the state maintained on the Saṅgha. These observations make it possible to identify the main objectives that Kūkai pursued throughout his writings: to demonstrate an affinity between his new Buddhism and the Buddhism represented by the great Nara monasteries; and to eviscerate the ritsuryō state by stripping it of its Confucian ideological underpinning, thereby creating a cooperative or even symbiotic relationship between the state and the Saṅgha.

In part I—Origin, Traces, Nonorigin—I begin my reading of Kūkai’s texts by probing the early phase of Kūkai’s writing career, in which he struggled to create a discourse distinct from the norm for writing set by the ritsuryō state for the early Heian intelligentsia. The discussion in chapter 2 revolves around the analysis of Kūkai’s first major piece of writing, *Demonstrating the Goals of the Three Teachings* (*Sangō shiki*), which he composed at age twenty-four, at the turning point when he abandoned the elite education at the Confucian State College and became an *ubasoku*, a privately ordained novice mendicant, whose practice was banned by the ritsuryō. In that discussion I strive to illustrate that, both in its content elevating Buddhism as a philosophy far superior to Confucianism and in its unorthodox format of fiction aimed at ridiculing the rigidity of the Confucian classics, *Demonstrating the Goals* was Kūkai’s first attempt to challenge the ritsuryō regime and its control over the production

of discourse. I also suggest, however, that it represented a failed attempt to resolve the personal crisis Kūkai himself was experiencing at the time as a result of his disillusionment with not only the political elite but also the state of the Buddhist clergy.

Chapter 3 examines Kūkai's journey to China, which extended from 804 to 806, as a critical moment during which Kūkai extricated himself from many of the restraints imposed on intellectual activities by the Japanese *ritsuryō* state and discovered an utterly new way of studying, practicing, and writing about Buddhism—the path through which he was introduced to Esoteric Buddhism. There I read Kūkai's account of his training in Esoteric Buddhism with his Chinese teacher Hui-kuo (746–805) side by side with scriptural texts he studied with the teacher. These readings illustrate the procedure followed in the *abhiṣeka*, the Esoteric Buddhist ordination ritual, which represented the completion of Kūkai's training in Esoteric Buddhism. I suggest that the integration of ritual practice and textual studies achieved in the Esoteric Buddhist system studied by Kūkai in China, and hitherto impossible for Japanese Buddhist practitioners under the *ritsuryō* regime, not only enabled him to unblock the impasse in his own religious pursuit but also provided him with the key to develop a new religious discourse that was to effect a change in the relationship between the early Heian state and the *Saṅgha*.

In chapter 4 I offer a general survey of late Nara and early Heian Buddhist culture in order to assess the impact on the Japanese intellectual community of Kūkai's return, when he presented to the court the *Catalog of Imported Items* (*Shōrai mokuroku*), the official report of his study in China, consisting of a lengthy list of the scriptural texts, scrolls of religious paintings, ritual instruments, and other items he brought back to Japan. Even during the Nara period, Esoteric Buddhist scriptures, incantations, and sculptures were carried back to Japan by elite Nara scholar-priests who studied in China. Is it fair, under the circumstances, to single out Kūkai as the progenitor of the Esoteric Buddhist tradition in Japan? I suggest that, despite the broad diffusion of certain elements of Esoteric Buddhism, Buddhist practitioners of the time lacked the *perspective* necessary to enable them to see these esoteric elements as being different from their exoteric counterparts. On the other hand, in his *Catalog*, Kūkai introduced for the first time in Japanese history Esoteric Buddhism as a concept, an independent category. Thus the weight of the influence of Kūkai's importation of Esoteric Buddhism can be located in Kūkai's invention of what I refer to as the taxonomic knowledge distinguishing between the Exoteric Teaching (*kengyō*) and Esoteric Teaching (*mikkyō*)—rather than in Kūkai's importation of new scriptures, rituals, and icons. I also suggest that the control exercised by the *ritsuryō* state over the *Saṅgha* in Nara

and early Heian Japan worked against the growth of such a knowledge within Japanese Buddhist scholarship.

Part II—Cartography—is a study of Kūkai’s interaction with the Nara Buddhist intelligentsia, which was seminal to Kūkai’s development of a distinctively Esoteric Buddhist discourse. The discussion in part II corresponds to major events in the second half of Kūkai’s life, such as the abhiṣeka he granted in 816 to the priest Gonsō (758–827) of the Daianji monastery, one of the most prominent Nara scholar-priests; his establishment in 822 of the Abhiṣeka Hall, the first permanent structure in Japan for performing esoteric ordinations, at Tōdaiji, the central monastic complex of the Nara Buddhist community; and his induction in 824 into the government’s Sōgō, or Office of Priestly Affairs, the elite institution responsible for implementing the ritusuryō for the clergy, to which until then only elders of the Nara monasteries had been appointed.

Kūkai declared that his Esoteric Buddhism was the direct manifestation of the teaching of the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana and that the meditative practices prescribed in Esoteric Buddhist scriptures enabled one to attain enlightenment instantaneously. For the doctrinal schools of Nara, which Kūkai saw as representing Exoteric Buddhism and inferior to Esoteric Buddhism, it was axiomatic that all Buddhist scriptures were preached by the historical Buddha Śākyamuni and that, according to his teaching, it would require at least three eons of countless transmigratory lives of training before anyone could reach enlightenment. Kūkai’s new system, which initially appeared aberrant to the Nara Buddhist establishment, could have been rejected in its entirety as heresy.

Some of Kūkai’s texts are known to have been written in response to questions posed by Nara scholar-priests. I contend that, in fact, most of Kūkai’s major works, particularly those essential to his construction of the category of the esoteric, were addressed principally to the Nara clergy. They are evidence of Kūkai’s successful struggle to legitimize his new Buddhism, which eventually led to his alliance with the Nara Buddhist leadership. These writings demonstrate Kūkai’s unique approach, which I describe as the “complementarity of the esoteric and exoteric.” It was this approach of complementarity that won not only recognition but adoption by the Nara Buddhist community of Esoteric Buddhism.

In chapter 5, I first take up Kūkai’s own usage of the term *shingon*, the Japanese translation of mantra, the principal term Kūkai chose to refer to his Esoteric Buddhism, and show how it provided the conceptual foundation for the esoteric-exoteric complementarity. I then analyze his works *Distinguishing the Two Disciplines of the Exoteric and Esoteric* (*Benkenmitsu Nikyōron*) and *Record of Dharma Transmission of the Secret Mandala School* (*Himitsu*

*mandarakyō fuhōden*), the first works in which Kūkai explored the concept of complementarity. In chapter 6, I discuss Kūkai's commentaries on scriptures whose recitation constituted the heart of those services the Nara clergy conducted for the state—in particular, *Homage to the Secret of the Golden Light Sūtra* (*Konshōōkyō himitsu kada*) and *Interpretation of the Reality of the Prajñā-paramitā* (*Jissō hannyakyō tōshaku*).

In these works Kūkai seems to suggest that although the Nara Schools were highly developed intellectual enterprises, their range was limited to the academic study of scriptural texts. That is, the exoteric schools of the Nara institutions failed to develop theories capable of explaining the meaning as well as the efficacy of their own religious services—namely, rituals built around the recitation of scriptures—whose success was essential if the Nara clergy were to maintain its cooperative relationship with the state. Esoteric Buddhism, Kūkai suggested, was capable of bridging the epistemic gap between textual study and ritual practice that was impairing the Nara Buddhist system. That was true because, even if the Nara clerics were unaware of it, mantra, dhāraṇī, and many other distinctly Esoteric Buddhist elements were already parts of scriptures they had been reciting at their public services. It is on that power of mediation—perhaps on that power alone—that Kūkai's claim for the superiority of Esoteric Buddhism over the Nara exoteric schools seems to rest. In other words, Kūkai presented his claims of superiority in a manner that was acceptable to the Nara clergy because he maintained that Esotericism already inhered in Nara Buddhism and yet was beyond the grasp of their doctrinal enterprise.

The Esoteric Buddhist discourse that Kūkai was developing can thus be understood as mediating between on the one hand the canonical literature of Nara Buddhism and on the other the hitherto unknown textual and ritual traditions of Esoteric Buddhism imported by Kūkai.<sup>6</sup> That is, Kūkai's writings were intended to regulate the pace at which his new Esoteric Buddhist system was being integrated within the then orthodox Nara Buddhist system, so as to generate a stable structure for a new type of Japanese Buddhist discourse consisting of both the esoteric and exoteric systems. This regulating function of Kūkai's texts made it possible to introduce Esoteric Buddhism without threatening the Nara Buddhist establishment, thereby averting the possibility either that Nara would reject Kūkai as representing a form of heresy or that Kūkai would have to entirely deny the authority of Nara Buddhism as inferior to his esoteric system. This point seems of particular historical significance, because another attempt—by Saichō—to introduce a new Buddhist school into early Heian society resulted in the hostile secession of Saichō's Tendai School from the institutional structure of the Nara Buddhist establishment.

Yet another implication of the discussion in part II is that the concepts of the esoteric and exoteric did not spring to life of their own accord. They had to be constructed if they were to become legitimate categories in Japanese intellectual discourse. In Kūkai's construction (which, though not the only one, set the standard for subsequent constructions in the history of the Shingon and Tendai Schools), the distinction between the two categories is far more fluid than has been assumed by existing modern studies. The esoteric and exoteric are relative to each other at best. That is because, as noted earlier, what ultimately determines whether something is esoteric or exoteric for Kūkai is not necessarily a particular constituent element but a perspective. The Japanese experience of the introduction of Esoteric Buddhism therefore suggests that if modern scholars truly insist on determining the historical origin of Esoteric Buddhism, their common method of identifying the earliest existing text, ritual, or icon that *they* regard as esoteric according to their own modern criterion is destined to fail. The more assured method would be to trace the historical processes through which emerged a system of indigenous discourse capable of constructing the Esoteric and the Exoteric as separate categories for a society or culture.

Perhaps the simplest way to understand Kūkai's construction is to examine the distinction he resorted to most often, the one based on textual intentionality (which I adopted as a working principle for this study). That is, exoteric texts are oriented toward doctrinal interpretation: they are those texts that are to be read, recited, and studied in the ordinary sense. In contrast, esoteric texts, which are in the nature of ritual manuals, cannot merely be read. If they are to be mastered, their content has to be transposed through ritual to the experiential realm of practice. Esoteric texts are to be grasped not through intellectual operations alone but through somatic exercises.

Mantras, which often consist of seemingly meaningless successions of syllables, or of a single syllable—such as *Aḥ*; *Om A Hūṁ*; *A Ra Pa Ca Na*—exemplify the esoteric language. They deny the possibility of rational reading and direct the reader to the ritual (that is, physical) acts of chanting—complete with specific movements of lung, vocal cord, tongue, lips, etc., framed in a certain bodily posture—which is the only way, according to esoteric scriptures, that each syllable is to be experienced as a manifestation of a certain Buddhist divinity's power of saving beings. Therefore, the mere reading or recitation of an esoteric text is still exoteric. The opposite is also true: if an exoteric text can be read as a guide for the practice of meditative rituals, that reading of an exoteric text can be esoteric. In fact, Kūkai wrote many of his treatises on exoteric scriptures to serve as their ritual commentaries. In these works he strives to interpret the seemingly straightforward doctrinal statements in

exoteric scriptures as metaphorical expressions of the meditative experiences of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas through which they generate their powers. In that sense, even the prosaic language of exoteric texts can be esoteric, serving a ritual function analogous to mantra. Therefore, according to Kūkai, by reading exoteric scriptures side by side with esoteric texts, which identify the ritual actions necessary to replicate the meditative experience of a divinity, one can unveil the secrets hidden in deep levels of the exoteric texts.

In short, exoteric texts provide the doctrinal foundation to esoteric ritual practices, while esoteric texts make it possible to translate the doctrinal statements in exoteric texts into religious practices. Yet Kūkai held the esoteric to be superior, inasmuch as it was through the esoteric that one understands that the two are complementary. In this manner, Kūkai integrated the discussions of both esoteric and exoteric subjects into his Esoteric Buddhist discourse, a completely new way of classifying, describing, and interpreting texts, rituals, icons, and their mutual relationship. It appears that Nara Buddhist leaders recognized the urgency of adopting Kūkai's discourse because they saw in it a new language that would enable them to explain in their own terms—rather than relying on the language of the *ritsuryō* state—such central issues as what aspects of their canonical scriptures generated the power of protecting the nation, in what way their ritual services were made efficacious, and what constituted the ideal relationship between the *Saṅgha* and the state.

In the final three chapters—which together form part III, Writing and Polity—I study Kūkai's invention of a Buddhist theory of language and the strategy, based on his new language theory, to replace Confucianism with Buddhism as the ideology of the state. In 827, Kūkai was promoted to senior priest general (*daisōzu*), the highest post in the Office of Priestly Affairs, in which capacity he presided over official services for the state, the emperor, and the imperial family. Kūkai was also employed by the emperor to draft formal proclamations. In 834, Kūkai founded the *Mishuhō*, the first Esoteric Buddhist annual service to be held at court. And in accordance with a request he made immediately before his death in 835, the court erected the Mantra Chapel (*Shingon'in*), the first permanent Buddhist structure at the imperial palace, for the performance of subsequent *Mishuhō*. These events suggest that during the final years of his life Kūkai had become one of the most prominent leaders of the early Heian Buddhist community and that he was exercising his influence in shaping the relationship between the state and Buddhism.

Chapter 7 consists of a reading of *Voice, Letter, Reality* (*Shōji jissōgi*), *On the Sanskrit Letter Hūm* (*Unjigi*), and *Transforming One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment* (*Sokushin jōbutsugi*). In these works, Kūkai elucidates mantra

as manifesting the primordial mode of language in which voice, the pristine, amorphous vibration of the six great elements, metamorphoses itself into “pattern-letters” (*monji*) and then into signs. Based on this interpretation of mantra, Kūkai created for the early Heian intelligentsia a distinctly Buddhist theory of signs, writing, and text, in which he argued that language in general is the manifestation of the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness. Although some of the most essential Indian Buddhist works on linguistic analysis had been known to Nara Buddhists, those texts were primarily concerned with logic. The Nara scholars remained utterly silent in their own intellectual efforts on the questions of what text is, how signs function, and above all, what language is. This apparent reticence on the part of Nara scholar-priests seems to have resulted from the fact that the *ritsuryō* system urged the Nara and early Heian intelligentsia to understand the working of language only within the framework of Confucianism. I show in chapter 7 that Kūkai’s language theory provided the Buddhist community a conceptual tool with which to challenge the ideological control Confucianism exercised over writing as a technology for intellectual production.

The discussion in chapter 8 revolves around a reinterpretation of Kūkai’s magnum opus, *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind According to the Secret Mandala* (*Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*), which he composed in response to a request from Emperor Junna (r. 786–846) in 830 to explain his new form of Buddhism. It was therefore written, first, for the perusal of the emperor and, second, for Kūkai’s peers in the Office of Priestly Affairs, the elite Nara scholar-priests, who were charged with interpreting Kūkai’s work for the emperor. The conventional view, which has made this work famous, holds that it is Kūkai’s manifesto of “doctrinal judgment” (*kyōsō hanjaku*), in which he ranked his Shingon School in the tenth and highest stage and the other major Buddhist schools of Nara and Tendai in lower stages. However, as I shall make clear, Kūkai had already announced this system of doctrinal judgment in earlier works and on such extremely public occasions as his granting of an abhiseka to an abdicated emperor.

In light of the historical circumstances under which it was written and the fact that its primary audience was the emperor, *Ten Abiding Stages* is most striking in its lengthy exposition on the subject of ideal rulership, which is framed in the ten-stage structure of the text, a structure which Kūkai designed to replicate the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana’s royal palace. In this discussion, Kūkai does recognize merit in the Confucian characterization of the Japanese emperor’s role, namely, to reign peacefully over his domain, relying on his virtue to maintain a harmonious balance between nature and society. However, Kūkai adds, in order for the ruler to be truly successful in this mission, he must model his rule after that of the cakravartin, the legendary universal monarch

described in Buddhist scriptures who pacifies the world with his knowledge of the Dharma. In this sense, *Ten Abiding Stages* is first and foremost a memorial urging that the Japanese emperor ground his rule in Buddhism.

The text of *Ten Abiding Stages* also exemplifies one of Kūkai's central theses on language: anything that distinguishes itself from other things by its own pattern (*mon*)—by shape, color, or movement—is a letter (*ji*). That is, a letter's identity derives from differentiation (*shabetsu*), the way in which it differentiates itself from other letters; and difference holds primacy over identity. Each letter therefore embodies what Buddhist philosophers refer to as “emptiness,” for there is no such thing as essence inherent in every letter that is prior to its difference from or relation to other letters. Not only the letters of the alphabet but all things in the world—even trees, mountains, and streams—have the same claim as letters, and together they form the “cosmic text.” The universe is the ultimate scripture of emptiness, and in Kūkai's trope, it is also the vast palace over which Mahāvairocana reigns. As a result, there is never a hard and fast distinction between text that describes the world and the world that is described in the text.

Although dwarfed and encompassed by Mahāvairocana's cosmic palace, the cakravartin's palace is a pivotal part of Kūkai's model because it symbolizes the ideal ruler's dharmaic reign as well as his patronage of the clergy's textual and ritual studies through which the cosmic scripture is revealed and made legible. *Ten Abiding Stages* is therefore justifiably regarded as Kūkai's magnum opus, not so much for its system of doctrinal judgment, but for its presentation of his grand model of cosmic order, integrating within itself language, society, and the very universe. It is a model I compare with that of Confucian orthodoxy. I also argue that the Mishuhō was Kūkai's attempt to realize his vision in *Ten Abiding Stages* by relying on Esoteric Buddhist language to redescribe ritually the Japanese emperor's palace as that of the cakravartin.

In chapter 9, the conclusion, I assess the consequences of Kūkai's invention of Esoteric Buddhist discourse in the context of the historical transition that was to take place soon after his passing—the decline of the *ritsuryō* system and the emergence of the medieval social order—in which Buddhism would take the place of Confucianism as the dominant ideology. Consideration is given to the possibility that several key developments indicative of the new, congenial relationship that would develop between the medieval state and the Saṅgha stemmed from the particular manner in which Kūkai's Esoteric Buddhist discourse was adopted by the Buddhist establishment, challenged the Confucian orthodoxy, and undermined the *ritsuryō* state's control over the Saṅgha. These developments include the institution of an imperial coronation ceremony in which the emperor was ordained as a cakravartin (*sokui kanjō*);

creation of the system of the Dharma Emperor (*hōō*), in which the abdicating sovereign retained his religious authority by becoming an Esoteric Buddhist priest and the head of the Saṅgha; and the establishment of national institutions that supported the combined study of the esoteric and the exoteric disciplines as the orthodoxy of the state.

By no means do I conclude that Kūkai alone was responsible for all the major developments that brought medieval Japanese society into existence, or that the many medieval legends attributing such power to Kūkai can be verified historically. On the contrary, I suggest simply that Kūkai's introduction of Esoteric Buddhism, a subject that heretofore has been studied within the narrow confines of Japanese Buddhology, was a watershed event that prepared the arrival of medieval society and therefore is relevant to the study of a broad range of issues in social, cultural, and political history.

In the postscript I assess the implication of this conclusion for Japanese Buddhist history in general by providing a critical appraisal of two controversial issues over which Japanese scholars are currently engaged in discussion. The first regards the question of periodizing Buddhist history according to the conventional method, in which Kūkai was understood as an exemplary representative of Heian Buddhism. I shall suggest that for students of Esoteric Buddhism and early Japanese history, "Heian Buddhism" is a false category, created by the intellectuals of the Meiji period (1868–1912), among whose agendas was to legitimize the status quo of Buddhism in their society in which the imperialist state and its nationalist Shintō ideology subjugated the Saṅgha. The second concerns *kenmitsu taiseiron* (the theory of exoteric-esoteric regime), an influential revisionist theory advanced by the historian Kuroda Toshio that asserts that Esoteric Buddhism, rather than Kamakura New Buddhism, constituted the religious mainstream of medieval society and that the integration by Esoteric Buddhism of exoteric disciplines, Shintō, and other forms of religion made possible the emergence of the system of dominance in medieval politics, economy, and culture. I shall point out that although it is suggestive of new possibilities for studying Kūkai, Kuroda's thesis suffers from some critical misconceptions of Esoteric Buddhism, its philosophy, and historical developments.

It has been a quarter century since Yoshito Hakeda's publication of *Kūkai: Major Works* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), a valuable English-language introduction to the traditional Japanese scholarly treatment of Kūkai. Yet reliable secondary materials in Western languages on Kūkai's texts remain few and far between. To remedy this problem, I discuss in this volume several of Kūkai's writings that have not been referred to or fully

studied to date in Western-language sources. In addition to those already mentioned, these include *Letter of Propagation* (*Kan'ensho*); *Abhiṣeka of Emperor Heizei* (*Heizei tennō kanjōmon*), *Introduction to the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (*Dainichikyō kaidai*); *Short History of Shingon Dharma Transmission* (*Shingon fuhōden*); *Notes on the Secret Treasury* (*Hizōki*), *Interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Hokeyō shaku*); and *Essential Characters of the Sanskrit Siddham Script and Their Interpretations* (*Bonji shittan jimo narabi ni shakugi*). Many of the scriptural sources quoted in these works of Kūkai's have been translated. I also discuss a wide range of Kūkai's letters to Nara Buddhist scholar-priests, members of the court aristocracy, and reigning and abdicated emperors.

In examining Kūkai's writings, I have striven to develop two issues that have not been addressed in previous studies. First, to the extent possible, I present and discuss Kūkai's works in the context of his life. In some instances, the dates of the texts are well established; in many others, it is possible to identify some event that offers a hint as to when a work was written. Second, rather than offering literal readings, I give closer attention to the figurative, rhetorical, and tropal strategies Kūkai employed—particularly the manner in which he alternated between his own words and citations from diverse scriptures and scriptural exegeses. It is often in this latter respect that Kūkai's texts demonstrate most vividly his sensitivity to the cultural and historical conditions in which he carried out his text production.<sup>7</sup> In combination, these two approaches make it possible to trace the development of Kūkai's thought. For example, in his earlier writings, Kūkai's explanation of the relationship between the esoteric and exoteric tended to emphasize what distinguished the two by underscoring the superiority of the former. By contrast, in his later writings, which seem to have been more effective in disseminating Esoteric Buddhism within the early Heian Buddhist community, Kūkai dwelled on how each complemented the other. It is my hope that this way of reading Kūkai's writings will shed light on both their denotative and performative aspects—not only on what he meant in his texts to his intended audience but also on what he was attempting to accomplish by creating a quintessentially Esoteric Buddhist mode of writing.

# CHAPTER I

## Kūkai and (Very) Early Heian Society *A Prolegomenon*

Anyone who has read about Kūkai (774–835)—in a college textbook or an art exhibition catalog, for example—must have first encountered him as a priest representing “Heian Buddhism” (*Heian bukkyō*), the Buddhism of the Heian period (794–1192), during which the Japanese capital was located in Heiankyō, present-day Kyoto. According to the conventional characterization as such, Kūkai, who succeeded in establishing the Shingon School, together with Saichō (767–822), who founded the Tendai School, created a new form of Buddhism suitable for Heian society and, by so doing, obliterated “Nara Buddhism,” the Buddhism of the monastic establishment whose stronghold was the former capital of Nara. Kūkai therefore personifies Heian Buddhism.

This approach to Kūkai framed in the concept of Heian Buddhism—promoted by Japanese Buddhologists and disseminated widely through introductory textbooks both in Japanese and in Western languages—does more harm than good in understanding the historical significance of Kūkai’s introduction of Esoteric Buddhism to early Heian society. The term *Heian Buddhism* naturally produces an association between Kūkai and the great Heian culture, the age of a thriving aristocracy in which the Fujiwara clan used its regency to deprive the emperor of political power, the lives of courtiers were interwoven with colorful religious services held at numerous splendid Buddhist temples in the capital and its environs, and both male and female writers at court produced masterpieces in the literary genres of *waka* and *monogatari*, poetry and fiction written in the native kana syllabary. However, none of these celebrated cultural traits unique to Heian society—typical of the late tenth century onward—yet existed in Kūkai’s epoch, the late eighth and early ninth century. In the world in which Kūkai lived, the emperor still enjoyed unparalleled political authority, thorough training in Confucian classics was mandatory for court officials to advance their careers, only a handful of

Buddhist temples were permitted to exist in the new capital while the center of activity of the Buddhist monastic community remained in Nara, and the courtiers' literary production was carried out almost entirely in the language of the learned, classical Chinese. It was an epoch in which the ruling class was still engaged in avidly importing, adopting, and upholding as its norm things Chinese, rather than digesting them and transforming them to give rise eventually to the quintessential cultural traits of Heian society. In the areas of government, religion, education, and art, the historical conditions of the very earliest phase of Heian Japan, when Kūkai launched his work of propagating Esoteric Buddhism, can be better described as a direct extension of late Nara society. (For a further discussion of Heian Buddhism as an invalid historical category for studying Kūkai, see the postscript to this volume.)

The fifth year of Hōki (774) was a year of calamity. A famine that began in the province of Sanuki on the island of Shikoku spread to other provinces including Iyo, Noto, Hida, and finally Yamato, where the capital of Nara was located; an epidemic of pox that broke out in many regions added to the sufferings of the common people. It was in that year—twenty years prior to Emperor Kanmu's transfer of the capital to Kyoto—in famine-struck Sanuki during the reign of Emperor Kōnin (r. 770–781) that Kūkai was born.<sup>1</sup> On the eleventh day of the fourth month, the emperor issued an edict:

I have heard that all the regions under heaven are now filled with the sick, and there is no medicine that has proven effective against the illness. I, the emperor, rule the world, and all in the nation are my children. Night and day I exhaust myself thinking of those who are suffering. It is said that the *Prajñā-pāramitā* (Perfection of Wisdom) is the mother of all the Buddhas. When I, the Son of Heaven, recite it, the nation is safe from invasions and rebellions; when my people invoke it, their households are protected from the demons of illness. Let us rely on its compassionate power to save us from our present misfortune. I therefore encourage all those in every province under heaven, both men and women, both young and old, constantly to recite the *Prajñā-pāramitā*. Those of you who serve my court, in both civilian and military ranks, recite the sūtra on your way to work and at any interval between your duties.<sup>2</sup>

Emperor Kōnin commanded the whole nation with the characterization of himself as the ideal Confucian ruler, Son of Heaven (Ch. *t'ien-tzu*; Jpn. *tenshi*), to recite the Buddhist scripture, *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*. His address is indicative of a pivotal role he played in the shift of the Nara regime's policy toward Buddhism, the shift that was to influence Kūkai's entire career. Prior

to Kōnin's reign, the imperial court often became an arena for the power struggle between those who allied with the powerful Buddhist institutions and those who opposed them by promoting Confucianism as the ideology of the state. In the mid-Nara period, Buddhism gained ground as it enjoyed the avid patronage of the rulers themselves. The Emperor Shōmu (r. 724–749), responsible for the erection of Tōdaiji, the central monastic complex at Nara, and for the creation of the network of state monasteries and nunneries in the provinces (*kokubunji*, *kokubun'niji*), took the tonsure in the first month of Tenpyō 21 (749). In the fifth month of the same year, the emperor moved his residence to Yakushiji, another major Nara monastery, and, finally in the seventh month, he abdicated the throne to the Empress Kōken (r. 749–758).<sup>3</sup> That is, Emperor Shōmu remained on the throne for six months following his priestly ordination and, for the last two months, governed the nation from the monastery of Yakushiji.

This development appears to have been a direct manifestation of the strife between pro-Buddhist and anti-Buddhist factions at court. For the opponents of Shōmu's priestly ordination, typically the literati-officials trained in the Confucian State College, the emperor's authority derived from his being the Son of Heaven who, relying on Heaven's mandate, rules the world with his virtue, the virtue of the father, for all of humanity. It was, therefore, the master metaphor of familial coherence of the Confucian discourse that justified the traditional authority of the Japanese emperor. As a direct descendant of the imperial progenitor, the sun goddess Amaterasu, the emperor presided over the Shintō rituals of ancestor worship as its supreme priest. The emperor's priestly ordination, which meant his abandonment of the imperial lineage, was utterly antithetical to their view of emperorship itself. It is thus possible to conclude that Emperor Shōmu, who showed no willingness to rescind his priestly status, was forced first to leave the imperial palace for Yakushiji and then to abdicate the throne (KISHI Toshio 1986:418–420).

However, until his death in 756, Shōmu managed to conduct affairs of state through his daughter, Empress Kōken, who had succeeded to the throne. Following her father's example, she abdicated the throne in 758, adopted the tonsure in 762 at Hokkeji, Nara, and ran the affairs of the state from there. Furthermore, she ousted Emperor Junnin in 764 and, while maintaining her sacredotal status, returned to the throne as Empress Shōtoku (r. 764–770).<sup>4</sup> This marked the height of the pro-Buddhist reign in which the nun-empress was assisted by her priest-ministers, headed by priest Dōkyō (?–772). In 765 she appointed him to the post of grand minister (*daijō daijin*), the supreme post in the court bureaucracy. In the following year, Empress Shōtoku created for Dōkyō the special executive office of *hōō*, King of Dharma, staffed with

Dōkyō's priestly ministers.<sup>5</sup> Kōken justified her own reenthronement in the following manner:

Although I took the tonsure and am dressed in the robe of the Bud-dhas, circumstances forced me to assume management of the affairs of the nation. According to Buddhist scripture, rulers should receive the pure precepts of bodhisattvas while they are on their thrones. How then can it be wrong for someone ordained to run the affairs of the state? Similarly, to assist me, the ordained ruler, in governing, the meditation master Dōkyō must be appointed to the office of grand minister–meditation master (*ōomi zenji*).<sup>6</sup>

Many Buddhist scriptures popularly recited during the Nara period do encourage sovereigns to receive precepts.<sup>7</sup> However, the reference is to the precepts for lay practitioners; that is, rulers are encouraged to be exemplary lay patrons of the Saṅgha, thereby ensuring the Saṅgha's autonomy from secular authority. The scriptures were by no means intended as a justification for a priest or nun to be enthroned as an emperor or empress. Empress Shōtoku's self-contradictory announcement was a symptom of the failure by the pro-Buddhist faction to formulate a persuasive theory to legitimize its rule.

The government of Empress Shōtoku paralyzed the court bureaucracy and seriously disrupted *ritsuryō*, the official legal procedures of the state (USHIYAMA Yoshiyuki 1986:125–126). By issuing haphazardly laws aimed only at elevating the power of the ecclesiastic establishment—for example, by destroying the economic foundations of the aristocratic clans of lay ministers, granting greater endowments to monastic institutions, relaxing the restrictions on ordination, and boosting the power of the clergy—Shōtoku's regime created confusion in state policy (HORIIKE Shunpō 1982:400; FUNAGASAKI Masataka 1985:269–270; MOCHIDA Yasuhiko 1990:195). That is, Shōtoku's court, as well as the Buddhist clergy that supported it, failed to produce a governing principle that would have replaced the *ritsuryō* system.

To restore order in the aftermath of the death of Shōtoku in 770 and the simultaneous fall of Dōkyō from power, Emperor Kōnin adopted a policy of rebuilding the *ritsuryō* system that took the form, on one hand, of revitalizing the State College (Daigaku), the official Confucian educational institution that trained elite students from the aristocracy for higher government service, and on the other, of imposing strict *ritsuryō* measures aimed at containing the influence of the Nara Buddhist establishment. Kōnin's policy was firmly maintained by his successors: with the intention of preventing the Nara clergy from interfering in the political decision-making process, Emperor Kanmu

(r. 781–806) transferred the capital to Kyoto (Heiankyō) in 794; and Emperors Saga (r. 809–823), Junna (r. 823–833), and Ninmei (r. 833–850) actively supported Confucian scholars' production of massive legal exegeses, the work necessary to realize the strict implementation of the *ritsuryō*.<sup>8</sup>

These efforts by the state to promote Confucianism and consolidate the *ritsuryō* system, which straddled the late Nara and early Heian periods, set the historical background against which Kūkai's career can be assessed. He entered the State College in 791, at the age of eighteen. Originally, his goal was government service. However, as he would later declare in his autobiographical writing, Kūkai soon became disillusioned with the Confucian education at the college, and it was this disillusionment that prompted him to turn to training in Buddhism. Between the ages of twenty-four (797), when he left the college, and thirty-one (804), when he was officially ordained, Kūkai lived as a privately ordained mendicant who lacked official state-certified clerical status, a practice that was specifically banned by the *ritsuryō*. In fact, he was inducted into the clergy only in 804, at age thirty-one, immediately prior to his departure for China. Kūkai was exceptional among Buddhist students commissioned by the state to study in China, most of whom were career scholar-priests at the grand monasteries in Nara, institutions under the control of the *ritsuryō* system. As I illustrate in the following chapters, Kūkai's deviation from the norm of the *ritsuryō* system was critical for his discovery and study in China, and his eventual mastery there, of Esoteric Buddhism.

Following his return to Japan in 806, Kūkai began the protracted work of legitimizing his new Buddhism. As testimony to the success of his effort to propagate Esotericism, in 824 Kūkai was inducted into the Office of Priestly Affairs, or the *Sōgō*, whose primary function was to manage the Buddhist Order by implementing the *ritsuryō* rules aimed at providing the clergy with legal privileges and obligations comparable to those of government bureaucrats. Three years later, he became senior priest general (*daisōzu*), the highest post in the *Sōgō*. Kūkai attained eminence by rising through the ecclesiastical hierarchy within the *ritsuryō* structure. Yet, in many respects, Kūkai's activities during his tenure at the *Sōgō* opposed the *ritsuryō* authorities. Chief among them was his effort to replace Confucianism with Buddhism as the ideology of the state that justified the emperor's authority. These observations suggest that Kūkai's entire career was intertwined with the *ritsuryō* system and that his stand vis-à-vis the dominantly Confucian authority structure of the state was critical for understanding the nature of his introduction of Esoteric Buddhism. A review of the *ritsuryō* state and its management of Buddhism is in order.

## Buddhism and the Ritsuryō State

In the first month of Hōki 11 (780), a severe thunderstorm struck the capital of Nara. In addition to the loss of lives among the ordinary folk, many Buddhist temples in Nara were damaged. Taking this as a sign of the priesthood's fallen moral state, Emperor Kōnin issued a warning:

Recently, because of misconduct by priests, Buddhist temples have met with misfortune. Although failure on my part [to exert leadership over the Buddhist community] is also to blame, those who reside in temples must repent of their misdeeds. I have heard that the priests' conduct has sunk so low that it is no longer distinguishable from that of the laity. They not only go against the Buddha's compassionate teaching but also violate the rules of our state. . . . They pay no heed to the force of karma and mislead people with their manipulative words. . . . Such behavior will no longer be tolerated. It is urged that priests work to convert our misery into happiness by fulfilling their rightful duty to protect the nation.<sup>9</sup>

This rebuke of the clergy identifies the most essential demand the Nara and early Heian courts made on Buddhism, a demand that required the courts to uphold Buddhism as their religious orthodoxy even at the time when they were most fervently espousing Confucianism as their official ideology. That is, the primary duty of the clergy was to protect the nation from misfortune by means of the efficacy of their services—typically, the recitation of scriptures said to have been impregnated with such power—and that efficacy was in turn believed to accrue from the pure religious conduct of the clergy. This explains the reasoning behind the following edict issued by Emperor Shōmu's court in 734, stipulating the basic requirements for novices to attain priesthood and nunhood.

Henceforth, all who are recommended for ordination must be capable of reciting from memory the *Lotus Sūtra* or the *Golden Light Sūtra*, have mastered the ritual of prostrating to the Buddhas, and have abided by the precepts for maintaining purity for over three years.<sup>10</sup>

The state insisted on strict observance of the precepts by the priests and nuns, for their violation would lead to the failure on the part of the clergy to avert calamities that might befall the nation. Traditionally, in South Asian nations, the administration of the Buddhist precepts of *vinaya*, or monastic rules, fell within the jurisdiction of the Buddhist community of the Saṅgha, which

determined punishments for violations independently of the state. However, in the belief that the effectiveness of sūtra recitations performed for the state was directly linked to the purity of those priests who recited and chanted sūtras, the Nara state found it necessary to infringe upon the Sangha's autonomy. HAYAMI Tasuku (1986:15) explains that this intervention by the state derived from the twofold religious authority of the Japanese emperor, who was at once the supreme priest of the worship of Shintō gods and the patron protector of the Buddhist Dharma.

If the strict observance of the precepts, accompanied by incessant religious training that guaranteed purity for priests and nuns discrete from the laity increased the magico-religious effects of Buddhist services, it also meant the elevation of the religious authority of the emperor, whose patronage legitimized Buddhism as an official religion of the state. The demand of the state that priests and nuns abide by the precepts was rooted in the ancient [Japanese] religious ethos that held pollution, both physical and spiritual, to be taboo. Since the “gods loathe taints,” the official Shintō services demanded that the practitioners [who officiated at the services] maintain purity—for example, by abstaining from eating meat and by celibacy. . . . The expression “reverence to gods and worship of Buddhas must be equally grounded in purity” that figures prominently in the imperial edicts of the Nara period<sup>11</sup> is symbolic of this religious view, in which the criterion for Shintō worship was applied to Buddhist priests and nuns.

Hayami here points to the parallel between Shintō and Buddhist services under the Nara political regime. Assisted by shamanistic priests, the emperor performed rites dedicated to his ancestral kami to guarantee the bounty of the harvest at the imperial palace, to prevent calamities or the spread of epidemics, and to achieve the destruction of enemies of the state.<sup>12</sup> Although the emperor was the quintessential patron of Buddhism and therefore a lay follower of the Buddhist community, the primary goal of the state in promoting Buddhism was to have Buddhist priests and nuns also perform a magico-shamanistic (*jujutsuteki*) function. That is to say, Buddhist priests and nuns were regarded as quasi-shamans serving the emperor. This explains why the major annual Buddhist ceremonies at the imperial palace developed in symmetry with the principal ceremonies for worshiping indigenous gods.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Ritsuryō System and the Rules for Priests and Nuns*

The emphasis placed by the state on Buddhism's role in protecting the nation provides the general framework within which to understand the nature of the

Rules for Priests and Nuns, or the Sōniryō, the provisions regulating Buddhist practitioners within the ritsuryō. The ritsuryō—the importation of the Chinese legal system of *ritsu* (Ch. *lù*), penal codes, and *ryō* (Ch. *líng*), administrative codes,<sup>14</sup> which had already begun during the rule of Prince Shōtoku (573–621)—was crucial to the transformation of the ancient Japanese nation from an archaic confederacy of aristocratic clans formed around the leadership of the Yamato clan of the imperial house into a centralized bureaucratic state comparable to other nations in East Asia (INOUE Mitsusada 1982:75; KITŌ Kyoaki 1991). The first recorded ritsuryō text compiled in Japan was the Ōmiryō in 668, which was followed by the *Kiyomegarararyō* in 689.<sup>15</sup> However, it was the promulgation of the *Taihō ritsuryō* in the eighth month of the first year of the *Taihō* years (701)<sup>16</sup> that accelerated the formation of the centralized state (AOKI Kazuo 1982; NAOKI Kōjirō 1981). The implementation of the ritsuryō system under the *Taihō* codes revolved around the creation of the administrative apparatus of a central government consisting of eight ministries headed by the Grand Ministry (Daijōkan);<sup>17</sup> the imposition of rigid class distinctions between ruling aristocrats, commoners, and servants; the establishment of a province-county (*kokugun*) system, in which governors (*kokushi*) appointed by the court imposed the authority of the central government by presiding over local aristocrats at provincial governments (*kokuga*); the nationalization and redistribution of farming land to households to create a uniform system of taxation; and the reorganization of regional warlords and militia forces into a national army.

Because the ritsuryō had been adapted from the legal system of the Sui and the T'ang, its rules originally were not always intended for literal enforcement. Rather, they were viewed as aiding the emperor's rule by virtue (*tokuchi*), reflecting the predominantly Confucian intellectual culture that shaped their development in China. This made Confucianism the official ideology of the regime that developed as the *Taihō ritsuryō* was implemented (MOMO Hiroyuki 1993:130–149). The importance of Confucianism for the ritsuryō state was manifest in the institution of the State College (Daigaku) and Provincial Colleges (Kokugaku), where those who were to become officials in the central and provincial governments received their training and where the study of Confucian classics constituted the nucleus of the curriculum.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the practice in China, the appointments to the highest offices of central and local government in Japan were not based solely on the academic merit of candidates; indeed, no one but a member of the most influential aristocratic clans would ever be considered (SUZUKI Yasutami 1982). As this difference suggests, Japanese adaptation of the Chinese legal system appears to have been a selective process.

AOKI Kazuo (1982:354) has observed that the creation of the centralized state under the *ritsuryō* system was prompted by the military expansion of the T'ang empire into the Korean peninsula in the mid-seventh century, which led to the fall in 660 of the kingdom of Paekche (Jpn. Kudara), Japan's traditional ally on the continent. Noting this ominous development in international relations, KITŌ Kyoaki (1991:18, 23–24) argues that the Confucian philosophy manifested in the *Taihō* *ritsuryō* codes was not so much a set of moral or ethical principles as an ideology useful in solidifying the power of the Japanese emperor and centralizing the authority of the state.

Originally [in China] the *ritsuryō* institution was an instrument used to uphold the Confucian ideals of rule by virtue and of a social order grounded in decorum. . . . However, the [international] climate surrounding the Japanese archipelago in the late seventh century encouraged neither rule by virtue nor the order based on decorum advocated by Confucianism but a centralized state system that would function in actual social and political circumstances. Confucian education spread through the adaptation of the *ritsuryō* system among court officials. However, the discipline of *meikeidō*, the core of ethical teaching, never attained prominence, and from the mid-eighth century onward, the discipline of *monjōdō*, the practical study of Chinese history and literature, became widespread among court officials and aristocrats. At the same time, there occurred the rise of *meihōka*, Confucian legal experts specializing in a much more literal, legalistic interpretation of the *ritsuryō* texts. These examples demonstrate that what was adopted through the importation of the *ritsuryō* by Japanese society was not the ethical ideals of Confucianism.

Furthermore, Confucianism, adopted in this way as a political ideology, provided the theoretical underpinning for the authority of the Japanese emperor.

Since the Han period, the Chinese emperor, who owed political responsibility to Heaven and the ruled, had been a ruler of limited authority. His emperorship was legitimized by the Confucian ethic of rule by virtue. . . . On the other hand, the Japanese emperor, who was one with gods and whose throne had been occupied in continuous succession by direct descendants of Goddess Amaterasu, was a ruler of limitless authority. *Ritsuryō* law was adopted in order to solidify the emperor's authority by placing the emperor system beyond *ritsuryō* legislation and its ideologies which therefore could not impose limits on it. (p. 24)

As a part of the *ritsuryō* system, the *Sōniryō* (Rules for Priests and Nuns) also contributed to the creation of the centralized state and the strengthening of the emperor's authority (INOUE Mitsusada 1982:75–82; SHIMODE Sekiyo 1994). Although their exact origin has not been ascertained, the *Sōniryō* were already included in the *Taihō ritsuryō* codes when they were promulgated in 701. In the sixth month of that year, Emperor Monmu's court summoned the leaders of the Saṅgha to Daianji to explain the content of the *Sōniryō* and how they planned to implement them.<sup>19</sup> The *Taihō ritsuryō*, now lost, underwent a minor revision in the second year of Yōrō (718), and the resulting edition, the *Yōrō ritsuryō*, became the basic body of law in the Nara and Heian periods.<sup>20</sup> The *Sōniryō*, occupying chapter 7, fascicle 3, of the *Yōrō ritsuryō*, consisted of twenty-seven articles and included not only the administrative procedures the state was to follow in supervising the Saṅgha but also punitive procedures restricting the activities of priests and nuns (NST 3:216–223).

Article 21 is of particular importance because it establishes the status of priests and nuns within the overall *ritsuryō* system, conferring on them legal privileges comparable to those enjoyed by government officials. For example, if a priest or nun were to commit a minor crime for which a commoner would be punished with a whipping or beating, the punishment would be reduced to forced labor (*kushi*). If the crime was grave, and normally punishable with imprisonment (*to*) or exile (*ru*), confiscation of the certificate of ordination (*dochō*)—that is, loss of the status of priest or nun—would be counted as one year of imprisonment and only the remainder of the sentence would be served by the accused.<sup>21</sup> However, for the most serious crimes, including murder, theft, and plotting against the state, the perpetrator would be defrocked and sentenced as a lay criminal, without any reduction in punishment (NST 3:221–222). That is to say, the state, intent upon transforming the Saṅgha into a quasi-bureaucracy, at once disregarded the exemption from state laws traditionally enjoyed by the clergy in South Asia *and* protected priests and nuns as if they were subjects of the emperor.

To the same end, the other twenty-six articles of the *Sōniryō* specify the rules the state imposed upon priests and nuns. At first glance, they seem to be in no particular order. However, INOUE Mitsusada (1982:291–354), in his detailed classification of the punishments prescribed in each article, suggests that they fall into two categories:

A. Transgression of the *ritsuryō* rules

1. Treason against the state (article 1)
2. Ordinations other than those sanctioned and certified by the state (articles 3, 16, 20, 22)

- 3. Residence, religious practice, and proselytizing outside temples, monasteries, and nunneries recognized by the state (articles 5, 13)
- 4. Disobeying government ministries, agencies, and officials in charge of supervising priests and nuns (articles 4, 8, 17, 19)
- B. Transgression of monastic rules
  - 1. Murder, theft, and other crimes constituting violations of basic moral principles (article 1)
  - 2. Heretical teachings and heretical teaching methods, especially oracles, magical spells, and trances (articles 2, 5, 23)
  - 3. Disturbing the harmony of the Buddhist community (articles 4, 5, 14)
  - 4. Violating everyday monastic rules (articles 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 26)

In both categories, the harshest punishments are levied against crimes described in subcategory 1, the next harshest for crimes in subcategory 2, and so forth. This view is consistent with that of HAYAMI Tasuku (1986:14), who summarized the Nara state's policy toward Buddhism as follows:

The essential purpose of the Sōniryō for the *ritsuryō* state (*ritsuryō kokka*) is to integrate Buddhism into its own ruling system by making priests and nuns the emperor's subjects. Having been given privileges comparable to those of government officials, they came to see service to the state as their primary duty. That private, uncertified ordinations (*shido*) or transfers of priestly titles for profit were viewed in the Sōniryō as crimes against the state as grave as treason demonstrates the state's vested interest in sustaining the Sangha as an organization of "priest-officials" (*kansō*). . . . The creation and maintenance of bureaucratized priests and nuns was the central purpose of the Sōniryō.

That is to say, the Sōniryō articles in Inoue's category B were secular laws enforcing the monastic rules for priests and nuns because they would have to maintain their "purity" in order to acquire magical and shamanistic prowess through their training, whereas the articles in category A were aimed at limiting the use of such power to acts or service benefiting the state. In other words, the state appreciated the charismatic power of priests and nuns and intended to put reins on it by means of the Confucian legal codes that would confine their roles to those comparable to the roles of bureaucratic officials.

Although the Sōniryō seems to have been inspired by the Tao-seng-kuo (Jpn. Dōsōkyaku, the Amended Rules for Taoists and Buddhists) in the T'ang legal system, the Sōniryō was generally more lenient than its Chinese predecessors in defining punishments.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the manner in which the Sōniryō laws were actually imposed by the Nara state was arbitrary, selective, and even

negligent. The government seems often to have failed to implement even the rules that required priests and nuns to have their ordinations certified by the state (articles 22, 3), the mechanism most essential to maintaining control over the Saṅgha (NAKAI Shinkō 1991:279–303; SAKUMA Ryū 1994:192–194).

As a result, private ordination of priests and nuns (*shido*), to which many of the impoverished and underprivileged resorted as a means of avoiding taxes, corvée labor, and the military draft, increased greatly in Nara society (NEMOTO Seiji 1991:115–144; YOSHIDA Yasuo 1988:1–41; YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1995:65–97). This was a direct consequence of the Nara rulers' belief in the shamanistic power of priests and nuns. That is, even if Buddhist practitioners did not receive governmental authorization for their ordination, if they abided by the precepts in their religious practice, they were considered “pure” and thus imbued with both virtue and power (FUTABA Kenkō 1984:309–316). To denounce them, punish them, and deprive them of their status as priests and nuns would be to engage in inauspicious acts.

### *The Office of Priestly Affairs (Sōgō)*

The institution that perhaps best illustrates the state of Buddhism under the ritsuryō regime is the Sōgō, the Office of Priestly Affairs. A division of the central government bureaucracy, it belonged to the Agency for Buddhists and Foreigners (Genbaryō), which in turn was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Aristocracy (Jibushō).<sup>23</sup> As a government agency, the Sōgō's principal function was to oversee Buddhist temples and their clerics and to carry out the policy of the state toward the Saṅgha. However, the Sōgō was unique among government offices in that it was run not by lay officials but by priests recommended by the Saṅgha. The Sōgō officials were leaders of the Saṅgha who represented to the state the interests of the Buddhist community as a whole. Because it had this dual character, the Sōgō seems to have been the locus for the tensions that emerged between the state and the Saṅgha.

According to a chronological list of the Sōgō appointees in the years between 624 and 1141 preserved at Kōfukuji, a major monastic complex in Nara, during the greater part of the Nara and early Heian periods the Sōgō consisted of the supreme priest (*sōjō*), the senior priest general (*daisōzu*), the junior priest general (*shōsōzu*), and the vinaya master (*risshi*).<sup>24</sup> The post of supreme priest was reserved for exceptionally honorific appointments and often remained vacant. Assisting the priests occupying these four highest posts were the ritual master (*igishi*) and the assistant ritual master (*jūgishi*), who supervised grand ritual services for the state held at the principal national temples.<sup>25</sup> Originally, the Sōgō seems to have been moved from one major temple to another in the capital (SAKUMA Ryū 1994:201–203; NAKAI Shinkō 1991:144); but in 722,

the court designated Yakushiji, another major Nara monastery, as its seat.<sup>26</sup> It seems to have remained there until the capital was transferred to Kyoto in 794, when the Sōgō, too, was moved and established at the temple Saiji.<sup>27</sup>

As a government agency, the Sōgō performed four principal functions. First, it prepared the certificates of ordination that the state issued to individual priests and nuns, preserved the records of their ordination and their temples of residence, and approved the appointments of new priests and nuns to monasteries and nunneries in the capital.<sup>28</sup> Second, it oversaw changes of personnel in the *sangō*, the offices of the three top administrators at the principal temples: the abbot (*jishū*), the principal (*gakutō*), and the secretary (*tsuina*). When, following the establishment of Tōdaiji in 752, the practice of having the chief administrator (*bettō*) supervise the *sangō* became the norm for major Buddhist temples, the appointment of the *bettō* became subject to approval by the Sōgō.<sup>29</sup> Third, it monitored the way in which the principal temples in Nara managed their assets by periodically demanding that they submit lists of their assets and statements of the status of their properties (*shizai rukichō*).<sup>30</sup>

As was true of many of the other government agencies, the formal jurisdiction of the Sōgō in carrying out these three functions was confined to the capital of Nara. This, however, does not mean that its authority (or that of the other government agencies) was restricted to the capital: it had the power to appoint the provincial masters (*kokushi*), the priest-official assigned to each province who performed functions identical to those the Sōgō performed but at the provincial level.<sup>31</sup> Provincial masters in turn were responsible for reporting to the Sōgō changes in temple administration and staffs, transgressions by priests and nuns, and the physical and financial condition of temples in their provinces. (In 795, the title of *kokushi* was changed to *kōdokushi*, master lecturer, and their tenure was limited to six years in one province; they continued to be responsible to the Sōgō, however.<sup>32</sup>) The selection and appointment of provincial masters and the supervision of their work constituted the fourth principal function of the Sōgō.<sup>33</sup>

The procedure for appointing the officials of the Sōgō is described in article 14 of the *Sōniryō*.

*Article 14.* Those who are to be appointed to the office of Sōgō must be models of virtuous conduct, exhibit strong leadership and be worthy of reverence of both ordained and lay people. Above all, they must be skilled in supervising matters relating to Dharma (*hōmu*). Those who recommend a candidate for the Sōgō must present a letter of endorsement, complete with all the sponsors' signatures, to the Ministry [of Aristocracy]. Should any conspire to endorse unqualified candidates, they will be punished with

one hundred days of forced labor. Once a candidate is appointed, he cannot be casually removed from duty. If a Sōgō officer is unable to perform his duty because of illness, advanced age, or because he is being punished for crimes he committed, his replacement must be chosen by the method prescribed above.<sup>34</sup>

Thus it is clear that appointment to the office of Sōgō—unlike appointment to other high offices in the government—was not completely controlled by the court, but rather was based on recommendations from the Saṅgha. Until the mid-Heian period, when an increasing number of priests of the Shingon and Tendai Schools were appointed to the Sōgō, its posts were monopolized by eminent priests of the great Nara temples, testifying to the continued strength of those temples.<sup>35</sup> Although the *Ritsuryō* describes the Sōgō as a subdivision of the Agency for Buddhists and Foreigners, it enjoyed relative autonomy within the government bureaucracy.<sup>36</sup> The *Anthology of Ritsuryō Interpretations* (*Ryō no shūge*), an authoritative collection of late Nara and early Heian exegeses on *ritsuryō* rules compiled by Koremune no Naomoto in about 868, says of the term *hōmu* (“Dharma matters”) in article 14, that it “refers to the vinaya of the Buddha Dharma, that is, the law within the Buddhist community” (KT 23:233). This suggests, as the legal historian INŌ Hideaki (1994) has pointed out, that the most important duty of the Sōgō was to oversee the Buddhist community and the activities of its members by administering the vinaya. That is, the Sōgō assumed the traditional role of the elders in the Saṅgha—maintaining order within the Buddhist community by means of their own legal system and protecting it from the interference of the secular authorities. This explains why the Sōgō’s day-to-day duties were processed in the office of the *rishi*, the vinaya master. Accordingly, in running the Saṅgha it strove to rely as little as possible on the secular law of the Sōniryō, which gave the state grounds for interfering in the affairs of the Buddhist community (INŌ 1994:45).

However, under the *ritsuryō* system, the Sōgō’s power to protect the interest of that community was limited because its members were not only leaders of the Saṅgha but also *sōkan*, priest-officials. With their bureaucratic status, they were expected to function like other officials in the court as the emperor’s subjects and were themselves under the jurisdiction of various *ritsuryō* codes regulating the conduct of courtiers (NAOBAYASHI Futai 1994:108–113). That is, the effective implementation of the vinaya, from which the Sōgō’s authority derived, was sustained only within the framework of the secular laws of the Sōniryō. In this sense, the Sōgō was the quintessential institution of *ritsuryō* Buddhism: it embodied the tension between the state and its effort to domesticate Buddhism, on one hand, and the Buddhist community and its

struggle to maintain its integrity under state control, on the other (NAKAI Shinkō 1991:86–87, 104–106).

In 760, the priest Ketatsu of Yakushiji, who indulged in gambling, fought with a certain priest Han'yō of the same monastery over a bet and killed him. Had the *ritsuryō* rules been applied strictly, his sentence would have been execution by hanging, the second severest penalty, preceded by his unfrocking.<sup>37</sup> Although Ketatsu was deprived of his priesthood, he was only exiled to Mutsu province.<sup>38</sup> In 854, another Yakushiji priest, Gyōshin,<sup>39</sup> was found guilty of calling down a curse upon a political enemy at court and causing his death. Had the *ritsuryō* been applied to the letter, Gyōshin would have been stripped of his priestly status and then sentenced as a layman to death by beheading, the severest of all penalties.<sup>40</sup> However, the actual sentence Gyōshin received was “exile” to Yakushiji in Shimotsuke, a national monastery of that province.<sup>41</sup> He was neither defrocked nor exiled, but rather demoted by way of reassignment to a provincial post. In 812, however, a certain priest Ryōshō’s sexual relations with a lay woman were exposed and he was laicized and sentenced to exile on a distant island.<sup>42</sup> The punishment for extramarital relations for laymen, which should have been applied to Ryōshō, was one year of imprisonment for a relationship with an unmarried woman and two years of confinement if the woman was married.<sup>43</sup> Unlike the priests in the previous two examples, Ryōshō’s case shows that priests violating the rules of celibacy were punished more severely than the actual *ritsuryō* rules demanded.<sup>44</sup> These examples, from the *Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihongi*) and other national histories, of clergymen who violated the *ritsuryō* suggest that implementation by the state of the Sōniryō and other related *ritsuryō* laws was frequently arbitrary and that there was disparity between the penalties the law called for and the sentences actually imposed.

In 806, the court of Emperor Heizei (r. 806–809) accepted a request by the junior priest general Chūfun of the Sōgō that priests and nuns henceforth be punished only in accordance with the Buddhist monastic law, the vinaya, except for the gravest violations such as murder, theft, and immoral sexual acts.<sup>45</sup> That is, only those committing cardinal crimes punishable by laicization under the vinaya rules would be sentenced in accordance with the criminal laws for commoners in the *ritsuryō*. The court’s approval of Chūfun’s memorial was of critical importance, for it meant that the state was actually abandoning the Sōniryō (NAKAI Shinkō 1991: 265, 299; YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1986:75). Chūfun’s petition exemplified the Sōgō officials’ interest in obtaining the maximum autonomy for the Sangha within the *ritsuryō* system, even if it meant losing the quasi-bureaucratic privileges the Sōniryō granted to the clergy. The court’s rationale in accepting Chūfun’s memorial seems to have been to make possible

the practical application of the *ritsuryō* rules, rather than to preserve ineffective legislation.

However, in 812, Emperor Saga's court reversed the decision of Heizei's court and reinstated the *Sōniryō*.<sup>46</sup> From that moment on, the policy for resolving the differences between the law and actual sentences in the early Heian period seems to have been to apply the *Sōniryō* rules strictly—that is, to make reality correspond to the law. As shown in the celebrated mistrial of priest Zengai, the change reflected the rise of legalist scholars at court who advocated a literal interpretation of the *ritsuryō* rules.<sup>47</sup> As a means to solidify his power at the new capital at Kyoto, Emperor Saga (r. 809–823) encouraged the ministries of his court to review the *ritsuryō* texts and identify laws relevant to their duties for effective administration of the government. Saga's initiative resulted in the compilation of the comprehensive collection of *ritsuryō* amendments (*Kōnin kyaku*) and bylaws (*Kōnin shiki*). His policy of reinvigorating the *ritsuryō* system was inherited by Emperor Junna (r. 823–833), who authorized the 833 compilation of the official exegesis of the *Tōryō ritsuryō* (*Ryōgi no ge*), which significantly contributed to the standardization of the interpretation of the *ritsuryō* rules.

The debates over the interpretation of the *Sōniryō* suggest that the early Heian court faithfully adhered to the Nara court's policy of keeping Buddhism under the control of the state. Furthermore, the *Sōniryō* no longer represented merely the idealistic goals of the state with regard to the practice of Buddhism; rather its rules were viewed as reasonable requirements to which the activities of the Saṅgha had to conform. In other words, the early Heian court continued to regard as orthodoxy the form of Buddhism developed under the Nara *ritsuryō* system, and, even more energetically than the Nara court had, it supported that part of the Buddhist community that conformed to the *ritsuryō* legal code. Accordingly, the Buddhism of Nara remained the mainstream, and the new schools of Shingon and Tendai were tolerated or accepted only within the *ritsuryō* framework.

### *The Six Nara Schools and Their Prosperity in the Early Heian Period*

The institutional nucleus of the Nara Buddhist community consisted of the seven great temples of the state (*Shichi daiji*)—Gangōji, Hōryūji, Daianji, Yakushiji, Kōfukuji, Tōdaiji, and Saidaiji—plus Tōshōdaiji, another monastic center, founded in 759.<sup>48</sup> These monasteries, which were identified by the state as *kokudaiji* (or, *kuni no ōtera*), the “great national temples,” were public edifices erected by order of the emperor or the imperial house to serve as the site for official religious services for the state. The great temples were also provided by the state with permanent fiefs that were to support them (NAKAI

Shinkō 1991:135–147). One of the important functions of these national temples was to promote the doctrinal study of the Six Nara Schools (Nanto Rokushū)—Sanron (Mādhyamika), Hossō (Yogācāra), Kegon (Avatarisaka), Kusha (Abhidharma), Jōjitsu (Satyasiddhi), and Ritsu (Vinaya). The Six Schools—whose doctrines often served as points of reference for Kūkai as he sought to establish the distinctiveness of Esoteric Buddhism in his writing—have repeatedly been described by modern studies as if they were centralized sectarian organizations. In fact, in introductory texts in English, the term *rokushū* is often rendered as the “Six Sects.”<sup>49</sup> However, there was nothing sectarian about the Six Schools, and to understand them as sects is to fall prey to a flagrant misconception of the Buddhism of Nara. None of these great national temples *belonged* to any of the Six Schools, nor did they serve as headquarters for other regional temples of the same school. In truth, the Six Schools were state-certified study groups that were organized individually at the great national temples.

This meant that—as ISHIDA Mosaku (1930:63–75) pointed out in his classic study—there was significant diversity among the study groups formed at different temples. Prior to the erection of Tōdaiji in 752 and the institution there of the Kegon School, only five of the Six Schools seem to have existed. However, even determining which schools constituted the original five schools is not a simple matter. For example, a document presented by Hōryūji to the Sōgō in 747 lists the following four study groups then in operation there: Risshū (Vinaya), Yuishikishū (Yogācāra), Sanronshū (Mādhyamika), and Betsusanronshū (“Separate-transmission” Mādhyamika).<sup>50</sup> In the same year, at Daianji, there existed the following five study groups: Risshū (Vinaya), Shōronshū (Later Yogācāra), Sanronshū (Mādhyamika), Betsusanronshū (“Separate-transmission” Mādhyamika), and Shutarashū (“Sūtra Study”).<sup>51</sup>

The erection of Tōdaiji in 752 as the national headquarters for the network of state temples located in each province (*kokubunji*) seems to have contributed to the emergence of highly organized study groups. It marked the first occasion on which the presence of all Six Schools was recorded at a single temple. In 751, on the eve of the completion of Tōdaiji, a number of study groups at major temples in Nara engaged in a grand project, the copying of their scriptural collections, which was to produce the library at Tōdaiji.<sup>52</sup> In his letter asking to borrow books from these study groups, a certain Tōdaiji priest, Chikei, who represented the Kegon School at Tōdaiji, indicated that there was at Tōdaiji, besides his Kegon School, a Hossō School, a Sanron School, a Ritsu School, a Kusha (Abhidharma) School, and a Jōjitsu School, and that each was headed by a provost (*daigakutō*), vice provost (*shōgakutō*), and secretary (*tsuina*).<sup>53</sup> Another Tōdaiji document shows that each of these six study groups had its own office in Tōdaiji, complete with an altar enshrining

the divinities responsible for transmitting the teachings of its school, and its own library.<sup>54</sup> It is probable, then, that the formation of these groups at Tōdaiji and the increased exchange between the groups at other great temples were the principal factors in the standardization of the content of doctrinal studies that led to the formation of the Six Nara Schools.

FUTABA Kenkō (1984:284) has pointed out that, in addition to the three top administrators, the Ritsu, Kusha, and Hossō Schools at Tōdaiji consisted of only eight officials, each including the lecturer (*kōshi*), assistant lecturer (*fukushi*), recitation master (*dokushi*), and chanting master (*baishi*).<sup>55</sup> Futaba therefore suggests that only those priests who had already excelled in a particular discipline and were capable of instructing students in it acquired official affiliation with one of the six study groups. He further suggests that, provided that the other three schools also consisted of three administrators and eight teachers each, a total of only sixty-six priests of Tōdaiji were members of the Six Schools. The exact number of resident priests at Tōdaiji is unknown, but it is believed to be around three thousand, about half of whom were likely to be advanced novices waiting to be ordained (Jpn. *shami*; Skt. *śrāmanera*) (HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:322).

Futaba's appraisal is extremely conservative.<sup>56</sup> It is likely that the eight teachers of each of the six schools at Tōdaiji had a handful of chosen disciples who were to succeed them, and those students may well have been included in the schools and received school stipends. However, the general picture of the Six Nara Schools presented by Futaba seems to be accurate: the Six Schools were study groups established at the great temples (*daiji*) at Nara; they were elite organizations open only to select members of the priestly intelligentsia; there was significant variation among the study groups of the same school at different temples; and the schools must have lacked a centralized sectarian structure.

It must also be noted that no existing record suggests the presence of any of the Six Schools outside these great temples in Nara<sup>57</sup> and that they should therefore be viewed as an urban phenomenon limited to the city of Nara. That is, clerics in the Nara Buddhist community belonged first to the temples where they resided, and only the chosen among them had school affiliations. One may find a priest of a certain school—that is, one who received training at one of the Six Schools—residing at a provincial temple. This, however, does not mean that that temple hosted any of the Six Schools or had any institutional affiliation with them. Similarly, none of the seven great temples represented a particular school, although it often happened that, in the course of time, a particular study group at a national temple acquired exceptional eminence, as in the case of the Sanron School at Daianji or the Hossō School at Kōfukuji.

In 798, four years after Emperor Kanmu transferred the capital from Nara to Kyoto, the court named ten large monastic centers as the “great national temples” (Jūdaiji). These were the seven great temples of Nara—Daianji, Gangōji, Hōryūji, Yakushiji, Kōfukuji, Tōdaiji, and Saidaiji—along with Gufukuji in Asuka, Shitennōji in Naniwa, and Sufukuji in Ōtsu, three ancient temples that had been important satellite monasteries for the Nara clergy and had been founded, respectively, by Empress Saimei (r. 642–645, 655–661), Prince Shōtoku (573–621), and Emperor Tenchi (r. 661–671).<sup>58</sup> By 824, the classification was expanded to include five additional temples: Tōshōdaiji and Shin'yakushiji in Nara, Motogangōji in Asuka, and Tōji (East Monastery) and Saiji (West Monastery) in Kyoto.

Tōji and Saiji were the only state monasteries constructed in the new capital of Kyoto. They were intended to replace the Nara national monasteries as the central monasteries of state-sponsored Buddhism. However, after the passing of their principal sponsor, Emperor Kanmu, enthusiasm for completing these costly projects seems to have diminished, and even after they were included in the list of the “great temples of the nation,” the two monasteries remained uncompleted.<sup>59</sup> As mentioned earlier, Saiji became the new seat of the Sōgō, whose administrative posts were filled by eminent priests of the Nara monasteries.<sup>60</sup> In 823, Kūkai was entrusted with the construction and management of Tōji,<sup>61</sup> which became a center of Esoteric Buddhist studies in the capital. However, as is shown later in this chapter, even the management of Tōji would have been impossible for Kūkai and his disciples without the close cooperation of the Nara monastic community. In short, all fifteen national temples were either strongholds of or under the direct influence of the Nara Buddhist establishment.

In the fourth month of Tenchō 1 (824), the court ordered the fifteen great temples of the nation to recite the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* to prevent the spread of drought and epidemic.<sup>62</sup> In the fourth month of Jōwa 4 (837), following a recommendation by the Sōgō relating to the prevention of recurring natural disasters, the court again commanded the fifteen great temples to recite the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*.<sup>63</sup> In the tenth month of Jōwa 8 (841), the court ordered the seven great temples of Nara to recite a sūtra for the emperor’s recovery from illness.<sup>64</sup> These acts, together with innumerable others recorded in the national history, the *Sequel to the Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihon kōki*), indicate that it was primarily in Nara and its major monastic institutions that the activities of the Buddhist community took place in the early Heian period and that, as in the Nara period, the state continued to rely on Buddhism for the magico-shamanistic power it wielded.

It was against this background that the Heian court put increasing effort into promoting the scholarship of the Nara clergy. In 802, Emperor Kanmu's court recognized the Misaie, the New Year's lecture by Nara scholar-priests on the *Golden Light Sūtra*<sup>65</sup> at the imperial palace, and the Yuimae, the annual lecture on the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*<sup>66</sup> at Kōfukuji, as official Buddhist scholarly conventions of the state and ordered that those chosen to lecture at the two meetings be drawn in equal numbers from the Six Schools.<sup>67</sup> In 804, the same court instituted at Tōshōdaiji an annual lecture and conference on Buddhist monastic law, the vinaya.<sup>68</sup> Similarly in 806, another imperial decree initiated an annual lecture on the *Sūtra of the Virtuous King*<sup>69</sup> during the summer retreat at all the great temples of the nation.<sup>70</sup> In 832, Daianji received the favor of Emperor Junna's court, which instituted at the monastery the Hokkei, an annual lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra*.<sup>71</sup> To give yet another example, the year 830 marked the beginning of the celebrated Saishōe, the annual lecture on the *Golden Light Sūtra* at Yakushiji.<sup>72</sup> That event, together with the Misaie at the imperial palace and the Yuimae at Kōfukuji, formed the Sanne, the three most prestigious lecture-conferences. Appointments to be the principal lecturer at the Sanne were considered the prerequisite for Buddhist scholar-priests who hoped for successful academic careers.

The scriptures chosen for these formal occasions were the essential texts for the Nara clergy's services for the state throughout the Nara period. These sūtras were all renowned for their power of protecting the nation (*gokoku* or *chingo kokka*). In particular, the *Golden Light Sūtra* was famed for its claim to offer the tutelage of the Four Guardian Kings for the nation devoting itself to upholding the sūtra.<sup>73</sup> The imperial decree of the third month of Tenpyō 13 (741) calling for the erection of state temples in every province (*kokubunji*) was aimed at facilitating nationwide monthly services dedicated to the Four Guardian Kings of the sūtra.<sup>74</sup> In a letter submitted to Emperor Shōmu, Jikun (d. 777), a prominent Hossō scholar-priest and abbot of Kōfukuji, once wrote: "The way of priests and nuns is found in their work of protecting the nation."<sup>75</sup> As Jikun's words illustrate, practices directed toward averting harm to the nation were regarded as the first priority for officially ordained priests and nuns.

The establishment of the formal lecture-conferences on these scriptures by the early Heian court meant that it continued to acknowledge the canonicity of these sūtras for the official services for the state. Its promotion of the Six Schools for studying these sūtras even intensified following the transfer of the capital to Kyoto in 792. One of the reasons for such active sponsorship of doctrinal studies, especially lectures on and discussions of sūtra, was the belief that the act of promoting the scholarship of eminent priests would itself generate merit that would help to protect the nation from harm. The *Sūtra of the Virtuous*

*King*, one of the most popular subjects of study throughout the Nara and Heian periods, counsels just such devotion: “O Great King, have a lecture given on this sūtra twice a day. There live in your realm one hundred clans of goblins. In each of these clans are one hundred families of goblins, all of whom desire to listen to lectures on the sūtra. When their wishes are fulfilled, they will be a shield for your nation” (T 8:830a).

In 859, Emperor Seiwa’s court decreed that henceforth only those who had completed a lecturership at the Misaie, Yuimae, and Saishōe could be appointed to the Sōgō.<sup>76</sup> This rule limited candidates for posts in the Sōgō to those well versed in at least one of the disciplines of the Six Nara Schools, making the academic accomplishments of Nara priests of direct relevance to their political success.

The Heian court also encouraged the Six Nara Schools by altering the system of *nembundosha*, annual ordinands. Since the time of Empress Jitō (r. 686–697), it had been customary for the court to have ten novices ordained during the New Year celebration at the imperial palace.<sup>77</sup> Unlike other, regular ordinands, these annual ordinands chosen to be in the emperor’s presence may well have been the cream of the novitiate, expected to become experts in the recitation and study of the *Golden Light Sūtra* and other scriptures renowned for their efficacy in protecting the nation (FUTABA Kenkō 1984:326–329). In 803, Emperor Kanmu’s court commanded that the annual ordinands be divided into two groups of five students to be assigned, respectively, to the exclusive study of the doctrines of the Sanron and Hossō Schools.<sup>78</sup> Three years later, on Saichō’s recommendation, the court increased the number of annual ordinands to twelve, to be allotted to the Six Nara Schools and Saichō’s Tendai School as follows: Kegon, 2; Tendai, 2; Ritsu, 2; Sanron, 3 (including one for Jōjitsu study); Hossō, 3 (including one for Kusha study).<sup>79</sup> This does not mean that only the designated number of ordinands would join each of the schools every year; those who were academically inclined among regular ordinands could also become students in the Six Schools. The decree (which treats the Jōjitsu and Kusha Schools as subdivisions, respectively, of the Sanron and Hossō Schools) was intended to guarantee each school a *minimum* number of new recruits. In this way, it seems to have provided the Nara Schools with an additional institutional footing that helped them to cohere as academic associations.

Although the edict was issued, on Saichō’s request, by the court of Emperor Kanmu, who is said to have looked with particular favor on the Tendai School (NAKAO Shunbaku 1987:190–192), the allocation of the annual ordinands between the Nara Schools and Tendai was ten to two. Contrary to the claim made by sectarian scholars of the Tendai School that Kanmu attempted to propagate Tendai over the Nara Schools, this decree—when placed in the

context of the general policy of the early Heian court of encouraging the academic activities of Nara Buddhists—simply suggests that the court was as interested in promoting Tendai as in assisting the Nara Schools. Kanmu may have been assiduous in imposing the *ritsuryō* laws on the Nara Buddhist community, but he by no means discouraged the Nara clergy from engaging in scholarly activities. Ironically for Saichō, many of the annual ordinands originally assigned to Tendai later changed their allegiance to Hossō and other schools,<sup>80</sup> testimony to the greater power, and therefore attractiveness, of the established Nara Schools.

In his study of a catalog of the Kōfukuji library collection prepared in 1094, INOUE Mitsusada (1982:227–266) has demonstrated that texts produced by Nara scholar-priests during the early and mid-Nara periods were extremely scarce, whereas during the late Nara and early Heian period their numbers began to grow exponentially. Inoue suggests that the earlier works of Nara scholar-priests, which in the main were interpretations of scriptures imported from China, paved the way for the explosion of indigenous writings by members of the Six Schools in the early Heian period (p. 235). Inoue's finding gives testimony to the policy of encouraging the academic activities of the Nara clergy adopted by Emperor Kanmu's court and the courts of successive emperors in the early Heian period. Among the most prolific authors Inoue identified were Shūen (fourteen works, 769–834) and Gomyō (sixteen works, 750–834), two Hossō masters who were Kūkai's colleagues at the Sōgō.

Inoue's study makes it clear that the early Heian period saw not the decline but the growth of the Six Nara Schools, not only in terms of academic maturity but also in terms of the expansion of their institutional hold on power (e.g., the number of annual ordinands they received, the annual lecture-conferences they were awarded, and the number of their members inducted into the Sōgō all increased).

These findings pose a serious challenge to the conventional understanding of Buddhism of the early Heian period as revolving around Kūkai and Saichō and the Shingon and Tendai Schools they founded.<sup>81</sup> On the contrary, at the core of the early Heian Buddhist community were the leaders of the Nara grand monasteries, who also represented the interests of the Six Schools. For these clerics, whose primary concerns were such matters as running the Misaie and other formal lecture-conferences, performing sūtra-chanting services for the state, and seeking appointments to the Sōgō, the new types of Buddhism advocated by Kūkai must have at first appeared not only unorthodox but of marginal interest.

In the face of the institutional dominance maintained by the Nara monastic community, Kūkai's success in promoting Esoteric Buddhism cannot have

stemmed simply from his establishment of a new school, given that his school would remain peripheral to the Buddhist mainstream of the time. Rather, it is best explained by Kūkai's winning of the interest of the Nara clergy, who in growing numbers adopted his new Buddhism. As the following section shows, the leaders of Nara Buddhism began to take Kūkai's work seriously only when it proved of direct relevance to areas of their immediate interest—for example, the religious services performed for the state, the Buddhist precepts whose strict observance was presumed necessary for making their services efficacious, and the role of the Sōgō in securing the maximum autonomy of the Saṅgha within the *ritsuryō* system—i.e., those areas that had a direct bearing on their relationship with the state.

## Kūkai and His Alliance with the Nara Clergy

In his letter dated the fifth day of the fifth month of Jōwa 3 (835), which was delivered to the Ch'ing-lung monastery in the T'ang capital, Ch'ang-an, Jitsue (786–847), Kūkai's senior disciple, reports the recent passing of his master and expresses his gratitude to the members of the monastery, whose hospitable reception of Kūkai three decades earlier made possible the transmission of the Esoteric Teaching from China to Japan.<sup>82</sup> At the beginning of the letter, Jitsue sketches out for his "Dharma brothers in the distant land" the events that led to Kūkai's success in propagating Esoteric Buddhism in Japan:

I, Jitsue, a Dharma-heir in the Shingon monastery in the nation of Japan, together with my Dharma colleagues, report: Our late master-abbot Kūkai, whose [esoteric] ordination name was Henjō Kongō [Ch. Pien-chao Chin-kang; Skt. Vairocana-vajra], journeyed to China in search of the Dharma. By good fortune, he met the imperial court priest Hui-kuo [746–805], the great abbot of Ch'ing-lung-ssu, and studied with him the secret teachings of the garbha and vajra [maṇḍalas]. He returned to Japan, carrying with him ritual instruments and other items entrusted to him by his teacher. Our master's way of Dharma was loftier than those of other [Japanese] schools and his teaching was different from the ordinary. The Dharma teachers of other schools then found his teaching contradictory to theirs and were not able to understand it, and for more than ten years [after his return to Japan], the master was unable to establish [his new school].

Eventually, however, the stream of his Dharma began to permeate people's minds as if to encourage [their seed of enlightenment] to sprout, and the number of people who received his abhiṣeka [initiation into the Esoteric

Teaching] among the priests and nuns of various schools and among the sons and daughters of good families increased. Thereafter the imperial house took an interest in Esotericism and its envoys constantly made visits to our master. When the Tenchō emperor [Junna, r. 823–833] succeeded to the throne, he prepared a maṇḍala altar in the inner palace and was initiated into the Esoteric Teaching. Extending his aegis over our school, the emperor granted Tōji in the capital to our master and designated it a Shingon monastery.

Later, [in 827,] the master was appointed to the post of senior priest general in the Office of Priestly Affairs at the emperor's court. Despite the master's repeated request to be exempted from duty, the emperor kept him in the post. The late grand emperor [Heizei, r. 806–809] and the members of his court, too, received our master's abhiṣeka, and his third son, Prince Takaoka [?–862], became a priest and joined our order. . . . Finally, those who received our master's abhiṣeka, both lay and ordained, both men and women, and of both high and low birth, numbered in the tens of thousands.<sup>83</sup>

The profile that Jitsue gives in his letter, probably the earliest biographical account of Kūkai, provides a unique perspective from which to reappraise Kūkai's life. First, Jitsue emphasizes that, because of the novelty of his transmission, Kūkai's effort to introduce Esoteric Buddhism to early Heian society remained ineffectual for the first ten years or so following his return to Japan in 806. Second, the letter makes it clear that Kūkai's performance of the ritual of abhiṣeka for a wide range of people, including eminent Nara Buddhist priests and dignitaries at the imperial court, played a crucial role in popularizing Esoteric Buddhism. Third, Kūkai's appointment to high office in the Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs, the heart of the Nara Buddhist establishment, demonstrates that the Nara Buddhist community eventually accepted Kūkai as one of its elite leaders.

### *Abiṣeka as a Means of Propagation*

Many modern scholars have argued that the eminence Kūkai attained through his friendship with Emperor Saga (r. 809–823; 786–842) and his alliance with Saichō, both of which began soon after his return to Japan in 806, swiftly paved the way for the establishment of his Shingon School (KATŌ Seiichi 1989:70–71; KUSHIDA Ryōkō 1981:272; WATANABE Shōkō and MIYASAKA Yūshō 1967:115–137). Contrary to this theory, Jitsue's letter suggests that whatever fame Kūkai attained did not translate immediately into success in proselytizing for Esoteric Buddhism.

Jitsue's portrait indicates that an important turning point in Kūkai's life came some ten years after his return from China, when the nature of his

relationship with Emperor Saga—which was friendship shaped by a mutual interest in Chinese poetry and calligraphy—began to change. A collection of Kūkai's letters, poems, and other writings compiled by his disciple Shinzei (800–860) includes eleven letters Kūkai sent to Saga between 809 and 816, all but one of which resulted from Saga's fascination with Kūkai's expertise in and mastery of poetry and calligraphy.<sup>84</sup> The letters show that Saga repeatedly asked Kūkai to produce calligraphic works, to engage in exchanges of poems, and to submit to the court samples of poetry and calligraphy, textbooks on poetics and calligraphic technique, and other related works Kūkai had acquired while in China.

In the sixth month of Kōnin 7 (816), departing from the aesthetic matters, Kūkai asked for Saga's permission to construct a monastery for Esoteric Buddhist training at Mount Kōya, located south of the former capital of Nara, in the middle of the Kii peninsula; and in the next month Saga granted Kūkai's request.<sup>85</sup> In 822, Saga's court gave Kūkai permission to establish the Abhiṣeka Hall (Kanjōdō) at Tōdaiji, Nara. The hall was the first (recorded) permanent structure designed and completed exclusively for the purpose of performing Esoteric Buddhist services in Japan. It is believed that the initiation into Esotericism by Kūkai in the same year of the abdicated emperor Heizei, who resided in Nara, was conducted as part of the opening ceremony of the Abhiṣeka Hall.<sup>86</sup> As mentioned earlier, Tōdaiji then was perhaps the most prestigious Buddhist institution, a grand monastic complex founded in 752 by Emperor Shōmu (r. 724–749, 701–756) to serve as national headquarters of the state temples (*kokubunji*) located in each province.<sup>87</sup> In 823, Saga gave Kūkai permission to reside at Tōji, a state-sponsored monastic compound under construction in the southeast corner of Kyoto, enabling Kūkai to propagate Esoteric Buddhist studies in the new Heian capital.<sup>88</sup> Following Saga's abdication, the new Emperor Junna officially appointed Kūkai as supervisor of the construction of Tōji (*zō tōji bettō*), giving him virtual control over the national monastery.<sup>89</sup> Later in the same year Kūkai conducted the abhiṣeka for Saga.<sup>90</sup>

The more active role Kūkai began to play as a religious leader seems to have been the result of his efforts to propagate Esoteric Buddhism by frequently performing its initiation ritual, the abhiṣeka. The ritual consists of two main parts. The first is a preliminary procedure in which the recipients pledge to hold fast to *samaya-śīla* (Jpn. *sanmaya kai*), the esoteric precepts, at the heart of which are the following four vows (*shijūkin*): (1) never to abandon the True Dharma; (2) never to negate *bodhi-citta*, the seed of enlightenment said to be shared by all beings; (3) never to be parsimonious in sharing Buddhist teachings with others; and (4) never to cause any sentient being harm.<sup>91</sup> The second part is the initiation proper, in which each recipient identifies as his or her personal tutelary

divinity one of the Buddhas or bodhisattvas on the *māṇḍala*. Kūkai's system employs two types of *māṇḍala* for the abhiṣeka: the *garbha māṇḍala* (*taizō mandara*, the womb of enlightenment) and the *vajradhatū māṇḍala* (*kongōkai mandara*, the realm of enlightenment as adamantine as a thunderbolt) based, respectively, on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*,<sup>92</sup> the two principal scriptures in the Esoteric Buddhist tradition introduced by Kūkai. Though the cosmic Buddha *Mahāvairocana* is the central divinity in both, the geometric arrangement in the two *māṇḍalas* of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas surrounding *Mahāvairocana* differs significantly.<sup>93</sup> (The two *māṇḍalas* and the ritual procedures followed in the second part of the abhiṣeka are discussed in detail in chapter 3).

The founder of the other new Buddhist school that began life in early Heian Japan, Saichō (767–822) was probably the first prominent Buddhist figure of the time who showed a serious interest in Kūkai's Esoteric Buddhism. Although briefly, Saichō himself studied Esoteric Buddhism in the port city of Yüeh-chou prior to his return from China in 805.<sup>94</sup> Eager to incorporate Esotericism comprehensively within the training curriculum of his Tendai-Lotus School, Saichō began his study with Kūkai at least as early as 809,<sup>95</sup> a study that consisted largely of his borrowing for copying and study of a majority of the esoteric scriptures from Kūkai's library. Saichō was probably the first to grasp the importance of Kūkai's new form of Buddhism and became Kūkai's important ally in the earliest phase of his effort to propagate Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>96</sup>

In 812, at Takaosanji—an ancient monastery in the northwest of Kyoto, which long served as Kūkai's principal residence—Saichō and his disciples received from Kūkai the *garbha māṇḍala* abhiṣeka of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. There were more than 190 participants—priests, novices and lay followers.<sup>97</sup> Following this initiation, Saichō entrusted some of his elite disciples to Kūkai for extended training in Esotericism. However, there appear always to have been unbridgeable differences between Saichō and Kūkai over the method to be used to establish Esotericism as a legitimate tradition in the Japanese Buddhist community. In particular, Kūkai opposed Saichō's move to integrate the study of the *Lotus Sūtra*, an exoteric scripture, and the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* under the umbrella of his Tendai-Lotus School. For Kūkai, the study of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* could not be divorced from that of the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, the two that made up the central scriptures around which Kūkai's system of Esotericism revolved. Kūkai also warned Saichō against the danger inherent in treating the esoteric scripture the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* in the same manner as the *Lotus Sūtra*, asserting that training in Esotericism required hermeneutical and pedagogical methods drastically different from those employed to teach exoteric texts. These differences between Saichō and Kūkai, which became

more evident following the abhiṣeka at Takao, are the reason their cooperation fell apart by the year 816.<sup>98</sup>

Saichō and his disciples at the Tendai School were not the only ones who took instruction from Kūkai in Esoteric Buddhism, however. In the seventh month of Kōnin 7 (816), the celebrated Sanron master Gonsō (758–827) and his disciples at Daianji traveled to Takaosanji and received Kūkai's abhiṣeka.<sup>99</sup> Age fifty-nine, Gonsō then was an influential leader of the Nara Buddhist community, and his initiation into Esoteric Buddhism may well have encouraged other Nara priests and nuns to follow suit. In 813 Gonsō delivered a lecture on the *Golden Light Sūtra*<sup>100</sup> to Emperor Saga at his court and was given the rank of vinaya master (*risshi*) in the Sōgō. In 819 he was promoted to junior priest general (*shōsōzu*) in the same office and became chief administrator (*bettō*) at Tōdaiji. He continued his Sōgō duty for the court of Emperor Junna, who assigned him to the management of Saiji in the capital. Gonsō held the rank of senior priest general (*daisōzu*) for two years until his death in 827.<sup>101</sup>

Other prominent figures representing the Nara priestly community known to have received Kūkai's abhiṣeka include the cloistered emperor Heizei (774–824); the priest Dōyū (?–851), the seventh patriarch of the Kegon School; Sanron master Dōshō (798–875), who became the chief administrator (*bettō*) of Gangoji in 866; the priest Shinnyo of Tōdaiji, the third son of Heizei and a former crown prince; and the priest Kenne (?–872) of the Hossō School, the founder of Butsuryūji at Muroo.<sup>102</sup> The priest Enmyō (?–851) of Tōdaiji, an eminent Sanron master, was also among them. An elite disciple of Gonsō, Enmyō received from Kūkai in 824 the most advanced abhiṣeka, that of Dharma transmission (*denkyō kanjō*), and shortly thereafter was appointed administrator (*bonsō bettō*) of Tōji. In 836, Enmyō became abbot of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji and, two years later, was appointed the twenty-first chief administrator (*bettō*) of Tōdaiji.<sup>103</sup> Enmyō's appointment set the precedent for later developments in which a Shingon master frequently received a joint appointment for the topmost posts at both Tōdaiji and Tōji.

In addition, prior to their study of Esotericism, Kūkai's most senior disciples Görin (767–837) and Jitsue were already famed specialists in Abhidharma and Yogācāra studies, respectively, at Tōdaiji and Daianji.<sup>104</sup> In fact, all of Kūkai's leading ordained disciples were originally resident priests of Nara monasteries and seem to have maintained close ties with Nara. In his letter to the Ch'ing-lung monastery in Ch'ang-an (quoted earlier), Jitsue had described the total number of students who received Kūkai's esoteric initiation as in the "tens of thousands," a number that might not have been an exaggeration. In 821 Kūkai copied a set of two painted scrolls of maṇḍalas as well as twenty-seven paintings of individual deities and Esoteric Buddhist patriarchs—the paintings

required for performing abhiṣeka. In his address at the celebration of the completion of the paintings, Kūkai spoke of the deteriorated condition of the two scrolls depicting the maṇḍalas that he originally brought from China as the reason for producing the new set: “Eighteen years have passed since [my departure to China in 804], and the maṇḍalas’ silk is turning to shreds, their paint deteriorating, and the images of deities about to fade away.”<sup>105</sup> It is reasonable to surmise that their condition was due to the frequency with which the maṇḍalas had to be rolled and unrolled for abhiṣeka.

These events suggest that through the ritual of abhiṣeka Kūkai was able to generate a significant and widespread interest in the study of Esoteric Buddhism within the Nara Buddhist community, which would justify Emperor Saga’s court’s approval in the erection of Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji in 822. There was no rule of exclusion between the members of the Six Nara Schools and those of the Shingon School. Kūkai’s inchoate Shingon School was at best a loosely organized club, open to members of both the Nara clergy and the Tendai School, who received his abhiṣeka.<sup>106</sup> However, unlike Kūkai’s strained relationship with Saichō, which ended in enmity, Kūkai’s alliance with the Nara Buddhist leaders further intensified with the institution of the Abhiṣeka Hall.

### *Abhiṣeka and the Polernic Over Precept Ordination*

One of the most likely reasons that the abhiṣeka generated serious interest among the Nara clerics is that it included a precepts ordination, a ritual in which ordinands pledged to uphold the esoteric samaya precepts. As discussed earlier, the management of precepts was of vital importance to the Nara Buddhist establishment because strict observance of precepts was considered essential to the efficaciousness of the clerics’ services for the state, and because the authority of the Sōgō derived from the successful implementation of the precepts. It is well known that in his final years Saichō strove to separate his Tendai School from the Sōgō’s jurisdiction, proclaiming that he and his Tendai disciples would abandon the traditional precepts and would henceforth abide by what he referred to as the “bodhisattva precepts” (*bosatsu kai*). Kūkai’s promotion of the abhiṣeka was his effort to introduce another new set of precepts, an endeavor whose impact on the Buddhist community must therefore be considered as seriously as that made by Saichō’s bodhisattva precepts.

In 815, at the watershed of his shifting alliance from Saichō to the Nara Schools, Kūkai launched a new initiative to spread Esoteric Buddhism. In the spring of that year Kūkai sent a letter to Buddhist leaders in many provinces, both lay and ordained, asking for their cooperation in copying and circulating a total of thirty-five fascicles of scriptures, the essential texts of Esoteric Buddhism, which he had selected from among the writings he had brought

with him from China.<sup>107</sup> At the close of this letter, commonly referred to as the *Letter of Propagation* (*Kan'ensho*), Kūkai states:

It has been many years since my return to Japan, yet time has not ripened and I remain incapable of spreading our teaching. Time passes by swiftly, just like the stream of water or the moon reflected upon it, just like a mirage or a flash of lightening that cannot be captured. My original vow is to circulate this transmission [of Esotericism]. How can I remain silent any longer? My wish now is to recite [the esoteric scriptures], provide lectures on them, and proclaim their teachings as a means of repaying my indebtedness to the Buddhas. Yet copies of these scriptures are still scarce, and the stream of our Dharma has stagnated. I am dispatching my disciples Kōshū, Angyō, and others to deliver this letter for your reference. To those of you who feel an affinity with our divine vehicle (*jintsūjō*) [of Esotericism], both men and women, both ordained and lay, who sympathize with my aspirations, I ask you for the sake of upholding this Dharma to copy these scriptures, recite them, practice what they teach and meditate on the principles they espouse.<sup>108</sup>

Here, as if to confirm Jitsue's portrait, Kūkai himself suggests that none of his activities until this point, neither his work with Saichō nor his friendship with the emperor, has succeeded in popularizing his Esoteric Buddhism.

In addition to the renowned Hossō priest Tokuitsu (781?–842?)<sup>109</sup> in Mutsu province, the addressees of the *Letter of Propagation* include the priest Kōchi (fl. 794–825) of Daijiin in Shimotsuke and the priest Kyōkō of Jōdoin in Kōzuke.<sup>110</sup> Both were immediate disciples of the priest Dōchū (fl. 735–800) of the Ritsu School who were believed to have been dispatched in 762 to Yakushiji in the province of Shimotsuke by their celebrated master Chien-chen (Jpn. Ganjin, 688–763) of Tōshōdaiji, Nara, to construct there one of the three national precept platforms (*kaidan*). With his arrival at Nara from China in 754, Chien-chen introduced to Japan the vinaya of the *Ssu-fen-lü*, or *Shibunritsu* in Japanese,<sup>111</sup> one of the standard systems of precepts for the clergy widely observed in the Chinese Buddhist community. The following year, Chien-chen founded Kaidan'in at Tōdaiji, the first permanent precept platform for ordaining priests and nuns in accordance with the *Shibunritsu*.<sup>112</sup> This was followed by the construction in 762 of the two additional ordination platforms, at the aforementioned Yakushiji and at Kannonji in Tsukushi provinces. With the state requiring all novices receiving ordination in the *Shibunritsu* to be inducted into the clergy, these three national precept platforms became the institutional backbone of Nara Buddhism.<sup>113</sup>

The survival of some copies of Kūkai's *Letter of Propagation* that were sent to Dazaifu (KZ 3:579, 585, 587), where the precept platform of Kan-nonji was located, has prompted TAKAGI Shingen (1990:111) to speculate that Kūkai focused his efforts on circulating the esoteric scriptures to those people immediately affiliated with the national ordination platform monasteries. Takagi's suggestion is important because it points out that Kūkai's work of disseminating Esoteric Buddhism was directly linked to issues surrounding the management of Buddhist precepts within the *ritsuryō* system.

There are essentially two separate systems of Buddhist precepts: *vinaya* and *śīla*. MORI Shōji (1993), an expert on the precepts in the Pāli canon, explains the difference in function between the two:

*Śīla* derives from the verb root *śīl* [to do, act, make], which originally signified custom, proclivity, or character and then became a word meaning good custom, good activities, and morality. In contrast, *vinaya*, which was formed from the combination of the prefix *vi-* and the verb root *nī* [to lead, train, educate], first meant education and discipline, and then took on the sense of rule. That is, *śīla* refers to voluntary acts of avoiding evil and cultivating good; while *vinaya* are externally imposed rules that stipulate punishments for transgressors. In short, *śīla* belongs to the realm of ethics, and *vinaya*, to the domain of law. (p. 6)

*Śīla*, then, express universal moral principles applicable to both the laity and the clergy. By contrast, *vinaya* is monastic law aimed at regulating the everyday conduct of priests and nuns. Mori is also quick to point out that, as distinct schools of thought developed within the Buddhist tradition, diverse sets of *śīla* came into being, reflecting the difference in the philosophical premises of schools and accommodating the needs of both lay and ordained practitioners. On the other hand, the *vinaya* remained rules strictly for the clergy. In the Chinese canon, both *vinaya* and *śīla* are generally translated as *chiai*, or *kai* in Japanese. As Mori (pp. 10–13, 32–60) has indicated, this convention of translation has frequently blurred the distinction between these two systems of precepts in the Buddhism of East Asia. Strictly speaking, however, *chiai* is the translation for *śīla*, whereas *vinaya* is translated as *lü* (Jpn. *ritsu*). From this perspective, Mori comments on Mahāyāna Buddhism's openness to the laity.

It is frequently overlooked by scholars of Buddhism that Mahāyāna Buddhism did not produce a *vinaya* of its own. *Vinaya* is law, which is incapable of regulating practitioners' minds. It is therefore only meant to prohibit evil acts in a passive way. It cannot positively generate good. An excessive emphasis

on vinaya could degenerate into a formalism in which any act that does not violate the rules is acceptable. Mahāyāna Buddhism, emphasizing cultivation of the good and help for others, refrained from producing a separate set of vinaya and instead developed its own system of śīla.

(p. 8)

In other words, what is commonly referred to as “bodhisattva precepts” (*bosatsu kai*) or “Mahāyāna precepts” (*daijō kai*) are the Mahāyāna śīla, and there is no such thing as the “Mahāyāna vinaya” (*daijō ritsu*).<sup>114</sup> Mahāyāna priests and nuns, together with their lay counterparts, are guided by the moral principles of the Mahāyāna śīla, and yet their daily conduct is regulated by the vinaya, which knows no distinction between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. This explains why—as ISHIDA Mosaku (1930:112–124) in his classic study and other recent researchers (INOUE Mitsusada 1982:227–266; FUNAGASAKI Masataka 1985:99–126; FUTABE Kenkō 1993:665–670) have demonstrated—the principal subjects of study for the Nara Schools, especially for the Ritsu School, consisted not only of the vinaya but also of the bodhisattva śīlas based on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the *Brahmājāla Sūtra*, and other Mahāyāna texts.<sup>115</sup> To designate the Ritsu School as merely a “Hīnayāna” school, as do many modern textbooks on Japanese Buddhism, distorts the actual precepts practiced by Nara Buddhists (TOKUDA Myōhon 1993).

Chien-chen’s arrival in 754 and his introduction of the Nan-shan tradition of ordination<sup>116</sup> accelerated the integration of the Mahāyāna śīla and the vinaya by the Nara Buddhist community (NEMOTO Seiji 1994:173–187). The manual for the ordination procedure at Kaidan’in of Tōdaiji, prepared by Chien-chen’s senior disciple, Fa-chin (Jpn. Hōshin, 709–778), shows that Chien-chen demanded that ordinands perform the repentance rite based on the śīla of the *Brahmājāla Sūtra* in conjunction with their reception of the vinaya.<sup>117</sup> A biography of Chien-chen prepared by his contemporary Ōmi no Mifune (722–785) describes the opening ceremony of the Precept Platform of Tōdaiji, at which Chien-chen first granted the bodhisattva precepts to the emperor, the empress, and the crown prince and then to four hundred priests and nuns, who abandoned their previous, less complete, vinaya to receive that of Chien-chen.<sup>118</sup> The system of precept ordination instituted by Chien-chen was maintained without change after Emperor Kanmu’s transfer of the capital from Nara to Kyoto in 794. Saichō’s disciple Kōjō (779–858), for example, reports on his ordination procedure as follows:<sup>119</sup>

On the eleventh day of the fourth month of Kōnin 3 (812), I received the complete vinaya rules (*gusoku kai*) at Kaidan’in of Tōdaiji. I spent the following three summer months at Kaidan’in and the seven great monasteries

[in the city of Nara] to gain the knowledge necessary to become a precept teacher. The great reverend Keijin, master of the Ritsu School, provided me with additional training in polishing the gem of pure precepts and avoiding violations. In the seventh month, I returned to Kaidan'in and, under the guidance of master Keijin of Tōdaiji, who conducted the ordination, received the threefold integral precepts of bodhisattvas (*bosatsu sanju jōkai*).<sup>120</sup>

These events provide historical background for understanding the drastic manner in which Saichō attempted to separate his Tendai School from the Nara Buddhist establishment by breaking the latter's monopoly on ordinations. In the second month of Kōnin 9 (818), Saichō expressed his desire to make his Mount Hiei monastery an exclusively Mahāyāna institution; the next month, as the first step toward realizing his vision, he announced that he would renounce the 250 vinaya rules (*nibyaku gojukkai*) for priests—the very precepts by means of which he had been inducted into the clergy at age twenty at Kaidan'in of Tōdaiji.<sup>121</sup> In his request on the fifteenth day of the third month of Kōnin 10 (819) for imperial permission to institute an exclusively Mahāyāna ordination system on Mount Hiei, Saichō declared:

There are two kinds of Buddhist precepts. One is the precepts for ordination into the full priesthood according to Mahāyāna, which consists of the ten primary and forty-eight secondary bodhisattva precepts [according to the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*]. The other is the precepts for ordination into the full priesthood in the Hīnayāna tradition, which consists of the 250 and other rules. There also are two kinds of precept ordinations.

The first is that of the Mahāyāna precepts (*daijō kai*), in which three masters [divinities] bearing witness are invoked according to the prescriptions in the *Samantabhadra Sūtra*.<sup>122</sup> Śākyamuni Buddha is invoked as the presiding master (*wajō*) of the bodhisattva precepts. Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is invoked as the officiating master (*katsuma ajari*) of the bodhisattva precepts. Bodhisattva Maitreya is invoked as the instructing master (*kyōju ajari*) of the bodhisattva precepts. All the Buddhas in the ten directions are invoked as the witnessing masters (*shōshi*) of the bodhisattva precepts. . . . The annual ordinands of the Tendai School who direct their minds to Mahāyāna to initiate their training curriculum are to be inducted into the priesthood with full status by means of this Mahāyāna precepts.

The second is that of the Hīnayāna precepts (*shōjō kai*). Based on the vinaya of Hīnayāna (*shōjō ritsu*), ten [human] masters are invited before the ordinands for the threefold evaluation (*byakushi katsuma*). Of these ten, three will be, respectively, the presiding, conducting, and instructing masters,

and the remaining seven will be witnessing masters. If even one of these is absent, the precepts ordination will be incomplete. The annual ordinands of the Tendai School who direct their minds to Mahāyāna to initiate their training curriculum are not permitted to be inducted into the priesthood with full status by means of these precepts.<sup>123</sup>

Thus it was clearly Saichō's strategy to denounce as Hīnayānistic the manner in which the precept ordination had hitherto been conducted at Nara. Saichō entrusted this petition to Kōjō and instructed him to obtain the endorsement of the Sōgō. Kōjō recorded his conversation with the Hossō priest Gomyō (750–834) of Gangōji, who then held the highest post in the Sōgō, that of *daisōzu*, or senior priest general.<sup>124</sup> Gomyō refused Saichō's request on the following grounds.

In China, there is no such thing as a “priesthood based on the bodhisattva precepts” (*bosatsu sō*). That is, there have never been priests who received ordination only by means of the bodhisattva precepts (*betsuju bosatsu sō*). On the other hand, there are priests who receive [in addition to the priestly ordination] the bodhisattva precepts that are shared [by both the laity and the clergy] (*tsūju bosatsu sō*). . . .

The Mahāyāna [precepts] do not require practitioners even to shave their heads. By contrast the Hīnayāna [precepts] require them to shave their heads. Therefore we priests first receive the Hīnayāna [precepts] and then take the bodhisattva precepts. There is no priest who, without receiving the Hīnayāna [precepts], was ordained in the bodhisattva precepts. Practitioners who do not receive the Hīnayāna [precepts] prior to their bodhisattva precepts cannot be inducted, on the basis of the bodhisattva precepts alone, into the priesthood. Because of this I cannot endorse your document.<sup>125</sup>

In Kōjō's account, it is unclear whether Gomyō himself used such terms as “Mahāyāna” and “Hīnayāna” for precepts, terms that appear to have been part of Kōjō's and Saichō's vocabularies to advance their argument. In his official rebuke, presented to the court two months after Saichō's petition, Gomyō does not use either “Mahāyāna” or “Hīnayāna” to refer to the precepts.<sup>126</sup> However, even presented in Kōjō's words, the logic of Gomyō's argument seems straightforward. That is, the bodhisattva precepts upon which Saichō grounds his assertion are *śila*, the ethical principles by means of which practitioners pledge that their lives will accord with the ideals of the bodhisattva path. On the other hand, Gomyō implies, what Saichō's petition refers to as the “Hīnayāna precepts” are *vinaya*, monastic regulations that separate the clergy from the laity

by designating the particular privileges and responsibilities of the clergy. In his use of the words “Mahāyāna precepts” (*daijō kai*) and “Hīnayāna precepts” (*shōjō kai*) in the 819 petition, Saichō seems to have been taking advantage of the ambiguity of the distinction between ethical principles and monastic laws in the Buddhist literature in Chinese. In other words, from Gomyō’s point of view, Saichō was treating the two distinct categories of *śīla* and *vinaya* in the Buddhist precepts as if they were alternative methods of inducting practitioners into the clergy.

Gomyō also denounces Saichō by suggesting that his proposal would deviate from the manner in which the bodhisattva precepts had been administered in China. This argument appears particularly persuasive in light of a report Saichō once made to the court on his disciple Gishin’s (781–833) induction into the clergy at Mount T’ien-t’ai. According to Saichō, Gishin, who accompanied him to China as his interpreter, “was granted the complete śrāvaka (i.e., Hīnayāna) precepts (*shōmon gusoku kai*, i.e., *vinaya*) from eminent priests at the Kuo-ch’ing monastery. Then, he [Gishin] received the bodhisattva precepts from abbot Tao-sui,” Saichō’s principal master in China.<sup>127</sup> As TAMURA Kōyū (1993:695–696) has pointed out, Saichō’s plan was even contrary to the method of ordination used in the Chinese T’ien-t’ai School.

In short, Saichō envisioned establishing his Tendai School as a purely Mahāyāna institution by eliminating from it what he interpreted as elements of the Hīnayāna precepts. For Gomyō and the Sōgō, however, it was a blasphemous attempt to create an anomalous monastic organization whose members would be guided only by ethical principles (*śīla*) and who would lack monastic laws (*vinaya*) to regulate their conduct.<sup>128</sup> This appears to be the reason that Gomyō’s criticism of Saichō gained unanimous support from the leaders of the seven principal temples of Nara, all of whom expressed to the court their disapproval of Saichō’s petition.<sup>129</sup> For them, Saichō had become a serious threat to the unity of the Japanese Saṅgha (NAKAO Shunbaku 1987:245–246). In particular, the Ritsu priest Keijin of Tōdaiji, who served as the precepts master at Kōjō’s ordination at Kaidan’in, composed an apologetic treatise to warn against Saichō’s separatism.<sup>130</sup> Yet despite the united opposition of the Nara Buddhist community, several days after Saichō’s death on the fourth day of the sixth month of Kōnin 13 (822), Emperor Saga’s court approved his petition (on the eleventh day of the sixth month),<sup>131</sup> and thus began a juxtaposition of the two competing systems of inducting practitioners into the clergy.

The court’s permission for Saichō’s Mahāyāna initiation made Mount Hiei independent from the Sōgō’s authority. However, this by no means meant that the Tendai School was exempted from the *ritsuryō* or in particular from the *Sōniryō*, or Rules for Priests and Nuns. On the contrary, at the cost of its

freedom from the institutional structure of the Buddhist establishment, the Tendai School placed itself under the jurisdiction of the *zoku bettō* (lay administrator) appointed directly by the court (Paul GRONER 1984:269–274). The leaders of the Nara Buddhist institutions, whose interest rested in securing the maximum autonomy of the Saṅgha within the *ritsuryō* system, must have regarded Saichō’s secession as an extremely dangerous move in which the Tendai School put itself directly under the secular authority of the *ritsuryō* state.<sup>132</sup>

Interestingly, in the year of Saichō’s posthumous victory over the Nara Buddhists, Kūkai erected, with imperial endorsement, Kanjōdō (also known as Shingon’in), the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji. The court gave Kūkai permission to officiate at the esoteric initiation at Tōdaiji every year during certain designated months as a means to promote the prosperity of the nation.<sup>133</sup> According to an official Tōdaiji document dated 1255, the Abhiṣeka Hall was erected in a prime location within the monastic complex, at the middle of the East and West Stūpas and thus directly in front of Daibutsuden, the monastery edifice in which was enshrined the gigantic statue of Vairocana Buddha.<sup>134</sup> This privileged position of the Abhiṣeka Hall appears to signal the enthusiasm with which Tōdaiji hosted the first permanent facility in Japanese history designed for the performance of ordination ceremonies in accordance with Kūkai’s new Buddhism.

As mentioned earlier, one of the important goals of the abhiṣeka initiation was to provide ordinands with the esoteric precepts known as *sanmaya kai* (Skt. *samaya śīla*). Already in 813 Kūkai had declared to his disciples that the esoteric precepts must be upheld jointly with those of the exoteric.

The goal of we the ordained is to attain of Buddhahood. It is no use for us to own the palaces of cakravartins or even those of Brahma and Indra. How much less use would it be for us to seek the trivial gains of the human world. When people aspire to travel far, they have to rely on their legs. For those who pursue the way of the Buddhas, the precepts are their legs. Beware, practitioners: hold fast to both the exoteric and esoteric precepts, our two legs, and live a pure life free of transgressions. The exoteric precepts consist of the three refuges, the eight prohibitions, the five admonitions,<sup>135</sup> the precepts for śrāvakas, bodhisattvas, and others. There are also separate rules for the four groups of the Saṅgha.<sup>136</sup> The esoteric precepts are called the precepts of samaya, of the aspiration for enlightenment, or of the unconditioned. All these precepts are rooted in the ten good deeds, consisting of the three acts of body, the four acts of speech, and the three acts of mind.<sup>137</sup>

In his liturgical texts composed for the abhiṣeka for the cloistered emperor Heizei at Tōdaiji’s the Abhiṣeka Hall in 822, Kūkai expresses the same attitude

toward the precepts but from a different perspective. Paraphrasing the *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind*,<sup>138</sup> an esoteric treatise attributed to Nāgārjuna, Kūkai states that all the esoteric samaya precepts derive from great compassion, pursuit of higher truth, and cultivation of samadhi—the three ingredients for acts that will save others. Then, resorting to the transliteration of Sanskrit terms, he distinguishes the two separate categories in the Buddhist precepts that often become confused in scriptures in classical Chinese.

There are two kinds of precepts. One is called *binaya* [Skt. *vinaya*], which means control; the other, *shira* [Skt. *śīla*], which means the pureness of the calm mind. . . . Because both of these arise from [the Buddhas'] vow of great compassion for saving beings, practitioners will naturally abandon thoughts of the ten cardinal evils.<sup>139</sup> To leave behind the ten evils is to gain complete self-control, that is, the mastery of *vinaya*. Because they free themselves from these evils, [practitioners] will actualize the pureness of serenity in their minds. This is none other than abiding in *śīla*. These are the precepts of benefiting sentient beings.<sup>140</sup>

In this passage, Kūkai articulates that the esoteric samaya precepts given to ordinands at abhiṣeka belong to the category of *śīla*, precepts delineating the particular moral principles for practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism. He is also suggesting that for clergy initiated into Esotericism, the samaya must be upheld on the basis of the *vinaya*—because of his belief that the moral guidelines of *śīla* and the monastic regulations of the *vinaya* must complement one another to further the training of practitioners.

In 823, the same year he was entrusted with the management of Tōji in Kyoto as a center for the propagation of Esoteric Buddhism, Kūkai presented to the court a catalog of canonical texts to be studied by students of his new school, which he called “Shingon” (literally, “the words of truth,” a Chinese translation of the term *mantra*). Along with esoteric ritual texts on the samaya, Kūkai includes in the catalog a long list of texts on *Yūburitsu* (*Ch. Yu-pu-lü*), the *vinaya* in the Sarvavāstivāda tradition (Jpn. *Konpon setsu issai yūbu ritsu*), the system of *vinaya* transmitted to him through the lineage of the esoteric patriarchs.<sup>141</sup> Thus the priests and nuns of the Shingon School had to master two systems of *vinaya*: first, the *Shibunritsu*, whose study was necessary for Shingon novices to receive ordination within the *ritsuryō* system, and then the *Yūburitsu*, within the Shingon School.

Despite his acquisition of Tōji as a new institutional center for the Shingon School, Kūkai kept the Abhiṣeka Hall at its original location, Tōdaiji in Nara. That is, those novices of the Shingon School who sought induction into the

clergy were required to train themselves first at Tōdaiji and there receive initiations in the vinaya, the Mahāyāna śīla, and the esoteric śīla. This bears out Kūkai's approach to the Buddhist precepts in which the taking of the esoteric samaya precepts at the abhiṣeka was incremental to the observance of the exoteric precepts, which included, for the clergy, observance of the vinaya. In short, Kūkai's attitude regarding his introduction of a new set of precepts was diametrically opposed to that of Saichō, who viewed his bodhisattva śīla as a new alternative destined to supersede the vinaya.

Kūkai's arrangement with Tōdaiji resulted in the concentration at the Nara grand monastery of the functions of Buddhist ordinations of the vinaya, the Mahāyāna śīla, and the esoteric śīla. It made plain the message Kūkai and Nara sent jointly to the Tendai School: the function of the vinaya could not be replaced by that of the śīla. For the Nara Buddhist community, the erection in 822 of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji—which took place in the same year as the court's approval of Saichō's Mahāyāna ordination on Mount Hiei—reaffirmed the authority of the Buddhist ordination at Tōdaiji. It mitigated the damage Tōdaiji and the Nara Buddhist community had suffered from Saichō's secession by showing that, although sanctioned by the state, Tendai's interpretation of the precepts was a deviation from the Buddhist orthodoxy.

### *Kūkai's Induction Into the Office of Priestly Affairs*

The growing influence that Kūkai was having on the Nara priestly community must have encouraged Emperor Saga and his court to change their view of Kūkai, who had enjoyed a longtime friendship with Saga based on literary and aesthetic matters. Like Saichō, Kūkai introduced a form of Buddhism distinct from that of Nara, but unlike Saichō he found a way to work together with the Nara monasteries. Saga gave permission to Kūkai to establish the two Esoteric Buddhist monasteries, Mount Kōya and Tōji, respectively, in 816—when Kūkai ended his alliance with Saichō and gave abhiṣeka to Gonsō, who was then already a member of the Sōgō in Saga's administration—and in 823, the year immediately following the approval by Saga's court of Saichō's Mahāyāna ordination system for his Tendai School. For the court, Kūkai may have been regarded as a vehicle for rebuilding its deteriorated relationship with the Buddhist leadership of Nara and enabling Saga to avoid losing control over the powerful monasteries of Nara.

The interest in Kūkai's Buddhism shared by the court and the Nara Buddhist leaders shaped the next and final cycle of Kūkai's propagation of Esoteric Buddhism, the period during which he was integrated into the early Heian Buddhist establishment. In 824, Kūkai was inducted into the Sōgō of Emperor Junna's court. He was first appointed to the post of junior priest general in

the office, and then three years later he was promoted to the rank of senior priest general.<sup>142</sup> The procedure for appointments for the Sōgō required that candidates receive *both* the endorsement of the principal monasteries of Nara *and* approval by the court.<sup>143</sup> This seems to be the reason that Saichō, even at the height of his influence during the Enryaku years (786–805), when he was given Emperor Kanmu's heavy patronage, never enjoyed that privilege. In contrast, by 824 the Nara leaders' alliance with Kūkai had so matured that they not only accepted Kūkai's introduction of the esoteric samaya precepts but also entrusted him with the office responsible for implementing the vinaya.

A record preserved at Kōfukuji containing a chronological list of appointees to the Sōgō posts in the years 624 to 1141 reveals the unusual manner in which Kūkai's appointment was carried out.<sup>144</sup>

#### THE FIRST YEAR OF TENCHO (824)

Senior priest general

Chōe

Junior priest general

Gonsō

Kūkai

*Appointed on the twenty-sixth day of the third month. The Shingon School of Tōji. Place of birth: Tado County of Sanuki Province. Of Saeki clan. Originally [registered] at Daianji. With imperial permission, stationed at Tōdaiji. During Enryaku years traveled abroad for the pursuit of Dharma. The progenitor of the tradition of the teaching gate of the three mysteries (sanmitsu kyōmon). Was appointed [to this post] without serving [the Sōgō] first as a vinaya master.*

Vinaya masters

Shūen

Shūtetsu

Sehei

Buan

Kūkai's colleagues in the Sōgō were leading career scholar-priests of the major Nara monasteries, all of whom had begun their academic training at an early age.<sup>145</sup> For them, induction into the Sōgō was the highest possible honor, testimony to their great learning, virtue, and ability as leaders. Most Sōgō appointees did not receive promotions beyond the rank of vinaya master. For

the select few who did, the process was slow, to say the least. Buan (744–840), for example, was a renowned Ritsu master, who entered Tōshōdaiji as an acolyte while still a child. Under his master Nyohō, he engaged in a thorough study of the vinaya literature. From the time of Nyohō’s death in 814, Buan served as the abbot of Tōshōdaiji. Although thirty years senior to Kūkai, Buan was inducted into the Sōgō only in 816, at age seventy-three. It was not until eleven years later, in 827, that he was promoted to junior priest general, and it was another seven years before he attained the rank of senior priest general, at age ninety-one.<sup>146</sup>

Unlike these career scholar-priests, Kūkai began his education at the Confucian State College and did not even become a priest until age thirty-one, when he was hastily ordained as he was about to depart for China.<sup>147</sup> Prior to studying Buddhism in China, Kūkai had no formal affiliation with any of the Six Nara Schools. He thus set a precedent for the induction into the Sōgō of individuals who were not members of the circle of Nara scholar-priests.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, Kūkai became junior priest general immediately, without first serving as vinaya master, and he was promoted to the rank of senior priest general only three years later.<sup>149</sup>

The exceptional manner of Kūkai’s appointment suggests that both the Nara Buddhist leadership and the court found it advantageous and perhaps necessary to have Kūkai become a member of their elite institution that was the Sōgō—even at the cost of deviating from standard procedure. Only a decade earlier, according to Jitsue, Kūkai’s Esoteric Buddhism had often been an object of suspicion. With his assignment to the offices of junior priest general in 824 and senior priest general in 827, Kūkai was able to carve out a niche in the religious establishment, which had heretofore been dominated by leaders of the powerful Nara monasteries. In 829 he assumed the office of chief administrator (*bettō*) of Daianji.<sup>150</sup> With that appointment, he was literally absorbed into the leadership of the Nara clergy.

As a senior member of the Sōgō, Kūkai performed various ceremonial functions for the court. At the temple Saiji in the capital, where the Sōgō was located, on the tenth day of the third month of Tenchō 3 (826), Emperor Junna (823–833) hosted a seven-day rite to commemorate the former Emperor Kanmu. Together with other Sōgō priests, Kūkai performed the ceremony, in which the *Lotus Sūtra* was recited and lectured upon.<sup>151</sup> In the ninth month of the following year, Junna hosted a similar ceremony at Tachibanadera in Asuka to restore the honor of Prince Iyo (d. 807), who, having been wrongly accused of leading an attempted coup, had committed suicide. A total of twenty eminent priests, including all the members of the Sōgō and representatives of the Hossō and Sanron Schools, participated.<sup>152</sup>

On each occasion, Kūkai prepared the opening address (*hyōhaku*), to be recited before the imperial princes, dignitaries of the court, and eminent priests of Nara. In each one, Kūkai liberally employed terms unique to Esoteric Buddhist scripture, *gobu manda* (Mañḍala of Five Families), *hōmandara* (dharma-maṇḍala), *katsuma shin* (the body of divinities consisting of karma), *aji kaku* (the palace of the letter *A*). Kūkai's use of these exotic terms in liturgical addresses does not necessarily suggest that they had already become part of the vocabulary of the educated and the privileged who took part in such public services. However, it seems that, even at such extremely formal ceremonial occasions, the use of Esoteric Buddhist terms, previously unknown in the normative discourse of Nara Buddhism, had become acceptable.

On the nineteenth day of the twelfth moth of Jōwa 1 (834), as a senior member of the Sōgō, Kūkai sent a memorial to the new Emperor Ninmei (r. 833–850) proposing to create an Esoteric Buddhist ritual on the *Golden Light Sūtra* for the annual New Year's festivity at the court.<sup>153</sup> Kūkai's intention was to conduct the esoteric service concurrently with the existing service of Misai, the seven-day lecture and recitation on the sūtra held by eminent scholar-priests of the Nara Schools at the Daigokuden Hall. Kūkai argued in his memorial that, although the *Golden Light Sūtra* was renowned for its power to protect a ruler and his nation from all manner of suffering, merely reciting it would be no more effective than reading a medical textbook to someone who became ill. For the sick to benefit from medical knowledge—that is, to assure the efficacy of the sūtra's power to protect the nation—it was necessary to add the esoteric ritual worship capable of invoking the divinities described in the sūtra who would bestow merit on the practitioners.<sup>154</sup>

Ten days later, only a few months before Kūkai's death, Ninmei's court hastily granted Kūkai's request to be allowed to perform the ritual proposed in his memorial.<sup>155</sup> On the eighth day of the first month of the next year, the court converted an administrative office into a makeshift facility for Kūkai to perform the seven-day esoteric service, known as Goshichinichi mishuhō, the Imperial Rite of the Second Seven Days of the New Year.<sup>156</sup> The next New Year, when the creator of this esoteric ritual had already passed away, the court designated an area immediately north of Daigokuden, at the heart of the imperial palace compound, for the construction of Shingon'in, the Imperial Mantra Chapel.<sup>157</sup> At the Mantra Chapel, Kūkai's senior disciples Shinzei (800–860), Shinshō (797–873), and Shinga (801–879) continued the new ritual tradition at court.<sup>158</sup> The Mishuhō was the first instance of an esoteric ritual being incorporated into the annual ceremonies of the imperial palace, and the Mantra Chapel was the first permanent structure built within the palace exclusively for the performance of Buddhist rituals.

The integration at the imperial palace of the Mishuhō with the Misaie could have posed a threat to the Nara Buddhist establishment, which had the sole responsibility for formal services for the state. In this regard, Kūkai's creation of the Mishuhō is comparable in historical significance to Saichō's establishment of the Mahāyāna precept platform on Mount Hiei—which broke another monopoly of the Nara ecclesiastic leadership. However, in contrast to Saichō's initiative, which met with fierce opposition from Nara and ended with the secession of Saichō and his school from the rest of the Japanese Buddhist community, Kūkai's proposal was accepted by the court without any sign of Nara's opposition. Kūkai's objective in instituting the Mishuhō was certainly not to make the Misaie obsolete. Rather, it was aimed at creating an Esoteric Buddhist extension to the Misaie as a means of rendering the existing service more effective in producing religious merit for the devotees, particularly the emperor.

The success with the Mishuhō and the construction of the Mantra Chapel therefore marked the legitimacy earned by Esoteric Buddhism in early Heian society. They demonstrated that Esoteric Buddhism was compatible with Exoteric Buddhism in that it helped to enhance the exoteric service for the prosperity of the nation. That is, the esoteric ritual was not only compatible with but complementary to the exoteric practice. The Mishuhō was thus the consummation of Kūkai's efforts to make Esoteric Buddhism acceptable to the Nara Buddhist establishment.

### *Rereading Kūkai in History, Rereading Kūkai's Texts*

The foregoing review demonstrates that the initial diffusion of Esoteric Buddhism in early Heian society resulted from the complex web of interactions between Kūkai, the Nara clergy, Saichō, and the court—relations that continued to shift in the conflict-ridden Japanese Buddhist community of the time. Within this historical context, Kūkai's alliance with the Nara leadership appears to be the most essential path along which developed the general acceptance of Esotericism. That is, Kūkai's introduction of Esoteric Buddhism took place even as the Buddhist monastic institutions of Nara maintained their dominance over the management of the Japanese Saṅgha, and as the early Heian court sustained the authority of Nara Buddhism within the framework of the *ritsuryō* system, because Kūkai chose the Nara Buddhist establishment as his primary audience.

This new view presents a direct challenge to modern sectarian scholarship on Kūkai, which has defined his propagation of Esoteric Buddhism as his foundation of the Shingon School—a new religious organization utterly independent from the Nara Buddhist community—and the developments

within the new school that led to its swift growth. The discussion thus far in this chapter prompts a reevaluation of the historical events that previous studies have identified as landmarks in Kūkai's establishment of the Shingon School—most notably the founding of the Mount Kōya monastery and of the center of Shingon studies at Tōji. Such a reading of these two events fails to recognize the fact that both sanctuaries were far from completion and by no means fully functional during Kūkai's lifetime. Nor did they enjoy religious prestige, political influence, or economic power comparable to that of the great monasteries in Nara.

For example, in 863, almost three decades after Kūkai's death, the state minted a new type of coins and decided to allot them annually to major monasteries for their maintenance and repair. In Nara, Tōdaiji, Kōfukuji, Gangōji, Daianji, Yakushiji, and Saidaiji received one hundred *kan* each. In contrast, Tōji and Mount Hiei received only fifteen *kan* each.<sup>159</sup> Emperor Junna originally promised Kūkai that he would provide stipends to support fifty resident priests at Tōji. However, probably because of the limits of the state's funds and the delays in construction there, in 836, one year after Kūkai's death, Emperor Ninmei assigned only twenty-four priests to Tōji.<sup>160</sup> It was only in 1113 that the number was increased to fifty, as originally promised by the court.<sup>161</sup> To put the size of Tōji's initial operation in perspective, already in 747, Hōryūji, one of the principal monasteries in Nara, but one of moderate size, supported eight times as many resident priests as were assigned to Tōji in 836 (AKAMATSU Toshihide 1962:21–22). In the case of Mount Kōya, apart from a few residence buildings that had been completed, Kūkai seems to have managed to initiate construction of only some principal halls in the envisioned monastic complex. It was only in 834 that he announced his plan to build two grand stūpas.<sup>162</sup>

Many modern scholars have asserted that the cornerstone of the Shingon Sect was laid when the court bestowed the management of Tōji on Kūkai. Based on a document in which Kūkai requested the court to limit the appointment of Tōji resident priests to those who were trained in Shingon Buddhism, these scholars have argued that Kūkai limited the resident priests of Tōji to those who "belonged" exclusively to the Shingon School.<sup>163</sup> With Emperor Junna's granting of Kūkai's request—so this argument would have it—Tōji became one of the earliest manifestly sectarian monasteries in Japanese history.<sup>164</sup> However, according to a document of 836 from the Sōgō certifying Tōji's resident priests, of the twenty-four who were assigned as the first Tōji resident priests—and therefore could be considered "charter members" in the alleged foundation of the Shingon School—fourteen were known to be Nara clerics; of those, eleven belonged to Tōdaiji, two to Gangōji, one to Kōfukuji, and

one to Hōryūji.<sup>165</sup> Only two of the priests mentioned in the document, Taihan (778–837) and Gōrin (767–837), are recognized as Kūkai's immediate disciples in standard Shingon School sources. The list also includes Shūei (809–884), one of Jitsuei's disciples, who originally was a Tendai priest. The identity of the remaining seven priests cannot be established in existing documents.<sup>166</sup> It appears that the reason for such a dearth of information within the literature of the Shingon School on many of these founding members of Tōji—crucial information, had Tōji indeed been seminal to Kūkai's alleged establishment of a sectarian school—was that these priests were already affiliated with one of the Six Schools prior to their study of the Shingon School and continued to identify themselves with the Nara institutions. In other words, as discussed earlier, membership in the Shingon School and in the Nara Schools were not mutually exclusive. The concentration of Tōdaiji priests among the initial Tōji masters seems to be the natural result of the erection in 822 by Kūkai of the abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji.<sup>167</sup> In short, it appears that Kūkai's Shingon School was originally made up largely of Nara clerics who received the initiation into Esoteric Buddhism, a small number of whom, being particularly devoted to the study of Shingon Buddhism, became Kūkai's private disciples.

Once Kūkai's career is extricated from the conceptual mold in which modern sectarian scholarship has placed it, the erection of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji, Kūkai's induction into the Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs, and the creation of the esoteric annual Mishuhō service at the palace appear far more critical to the dissemination of Esotericism than do the institutions of Mount Kōya and Tōji. Although they have received only marginal attention in sectarian studies, these three developments were milestones indicating the growing strength of the bond between Kūkai and Nara and the increasing tolerance among the religious and political authorities toward Kūkai's Esoteric Buddhism.

This conclusion also prompts a reevaluation of the manner in which Kūkai has been compared to Saichō in existing studies. It is not the case that Kūkai and Saichō instantaneously set the new standard for religious orthodoxy in early Heian society. On the contrary, both Saichō and Kūkai represented deviations from the norms of their time and struggled to find ways to legitimize their schools—that is, to justify their stands *in relation to* the Nara religious establishment. However, the strategies adopted by Kūkai and by Saichō to achieve a common goal could not have been more different. Saichō originally sought to establish the Tendai School as doctrinally superior to the Nara Schools within the institutional structure of the *ritsuryō* state. That approach was in accordance with the policy of Emperor Kanmu, Saichō's principal patron, who attempted to contain the power of the Nara monastic establishment through the stringent imposition of the *ritsuryō* rules (SONE Masato 1984:658–685).

However, Saichō's approach proved unsuccessful when the courts of Emperors Heizei, Saga, and Junna, who had inherited Kanmu's general policy of restraint toward Buddhism, no longer treated Saichō as a privileged exception (NAKAI Shinkō 1991:331–360). The continued hegemony of the Nara monasteries made it necessary for Saichō to abandon his original strategy of placing the Tendai School over the Six Nara Schools within the existing institutional framework. Only at the close of his life, perhaps as a last resort, did Saichō battle for independence from Nara as a means of assuring the survival of his nascent order (SONE Masato 1984:685–693; NAKAO Shunbaku 1987:228–235).<sup>168</sup>

By contrast, Kūkai's struggle appears to have been waged not in the arena of religious institutions but in the realm of discourse. Kūkai's strategy of persuasion opened a way for his aberrant form of Buddhism to be absorbed into the mainstream, where it could effect a metamorphosis in the religious establishment. The question that remains to be addressed is how Nara Buddhism came to accept Kūkai's Esoteric Buddhism. It is hoped that the reevaluation of Kūkai's career in this chapter has helped to identify the key sufficient conditions for that acceptance to take place. Kūkai's interpretation of the precepts and precept ordination provided him with an institutional common ground with the Nara Schools. This in turn made it possible for Kūkai and Nara to mount a joint opposition to Saichō and the separatist Tendai School. The court also found its patronage of Kūkai a useful means of ameliorating its strained relationship with the Nara clergy. These developments paved the way for Kūkai's abhiṣeka, Mishuhō, and other esoteric rituals to become integrated within the religious orthodoxy of the state, comparable in their legitimacy to the traditional sūtra recitations of and lectures by the Nara priests.

However, those did not constitute necessary conditions for Nara's adoption of Kūkai's Esotericism. Why, after all, did many of the Nara scholar-priests become interested in Esoteric Buddhism, seek initiation into it, and incorporate within their daily study and practice the esoteric scriptures and the meditative and ritual exercises prescribed in its texts? This question leads to another challenging problem: not everything in Esoteric Buddhism presented by Kūkai in his writings seems compatible with the Buddhism of the Nara Schools. Kūkai's celebrated theory of the ten abiding stages of the aspiring mind, for example, places the Esoteric Teaching of Shingon at the tenth stage, the summit of spiritual growth. According to this theory, the principal Nara Schools and Tendai are deemed lower provisional stages through which the developing mind must pass before reaching Shingon.<sup>169</sup> In 822, much prior to the completion of the *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind According to the Secret Maṇḍalas* (in about 830),<sup>170</sup> Kūkai had already announced this doctrine at his abhiṣeka of the abdicated emperor Heizei at Tōdaiji, in which many eminent priests of the

Nara monasteries participated.<sup>171</sup> Examples of other public addresses in which Kūkai declared the superiority of the esoteric over the exoteric are legion.<sup>172</sup> Thus Kūkai's amicable and collaborative attitude toward Nara does not seem to suggest conformism. Why, then, despite these seemingly disagreeable claims by Kūkai, did Nara embrace him, include him in its highest administrative organs, and incorporate Esoteric Buddhism into its system of religious practice?

One possible answer to these questions might be found by revisiting Kūkai's major works and rereading them as explanations to the intelligentsia within the Nara religious establishment of what exactly Esoteric Buddhism stood for and what merit would accrue to the Nara Buddhist community from studying it. This is not necessarily to invalidate the conventional view—namely, that Kūkai's compositions were intended to educate his disciples within the Shingon School and to preserve within it the authenticity of his Dharma. However, that purpose alone hardly explains why Kūkai produced his massive texts. Obviously, he must have had a stronger reason—or even an urge—to write about Esoteric Buddhism to those in other schools than to his own immediate disciples, who after all were already initiated into Esotericism and had other means of studying it with their master than to read what he had written. On various occasions, Kūkai emphasized to his disciples the superiority of receiving personal instruction (*menju*) over learning through writing (*hitsuju*) as a method of studying those esoteric disciplines that centered around meditative-ritual practice.<sup>173</sup> For the purpose of pedagogy, writing in its ordinary sense seems to have been of only secondary importance to Kūkai.

On the other hand, writing was the principal medium by which Kūkai chose to disseminate his ideas to those outside the circle of his private disciples. This seems to explain why he composed as many treatises on exoteric scripture as on their esoteric counterparts.<sup>174</sup> Among them, some were known to have been written for a specific audience in Nara. In 813, for example, upon the request of the Hossō scholar Shūen, Kūkai composed a short commentary in verse on the *Golden Light Sūtra*.<sup>175</sup> In 817 he wrote an interpretation of a chapter in the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* for an anonymous Kegon master at Tōdaiji.<sup>176</sup> His study of the *Brahmājāla Sūtra* was composed for his 828 lecture at a memorial for the Sanron master Gonsō, delivered to Gonsō's disciples.<sup>177</sup> Kūkai also prepared treatises on the *Lotus* and the *Prajñā-pāramitā Heart Sūtras* for his lectures at the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji in 834.

The scriptures addressed in these and many of Kūkai's other writings were those sacred texts related most directly to the Nara clergy's services for the state, i.e., the scriptures renowned for their power of protecting the nation. However, unlike the Nara scholar-priests who in their public lectures strove to demonstrate mastery of the doctrines contained in these sūtras, Kūkai in

his writings worked to illustrate the source of the scriptures' reputed efficacy. That is, whereas Nara scholars were concerned with the meaning of sūtra texts, Kūkai was engaged principally in analyzing their power. To that end, in his commentaries he called for attention to be shifted from reading texts by means of word-by-word exegesis to appreciating the "physical" qualities unique to the sūtras. Kūkai often argued that in and of itself each letter of the sūtras, both in its form and in its sound, was already a manifestation of the wisdom and compassion of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In one of his commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra*, for example, Kūkai wrote that the nine characters of the title of the sūtra written in Sanskrit in a script called Siddham (Jpn. Shittan)—*Sa-Ddhar-Ma-Pun-Da-Rī-Ka Sū-Tram* (Sūtra of the Lotus, the Excellent Dharma)—were graphic symbols of the nine principal divinities of the garbha maṇḍala described in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*: Mahāvairocana at the center and around him four Buddhas and four bodhisattvas, all seated on an eight-petaled lotus. Relying on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and its ritual commentaries, Kūkai went on to declare that the sound of each of these letters was a manifestation of the powers of the divinities depicted, such as the powers to defeat evil, to purify the practitioner of all defilement, and to comfort sentient beings.<sup>178</sup>

In this manner, Kūkai in his commentaries explored aspects of the scriptures' textuality yet to be charted in the scholarship of the Nara clergy. As he did with the title of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Kūkai grounded his analysis in Esoteric Buddhist texts that prescribed in detail ritual procedures for making manifest the latent power inhering in the texture of scriptural texts. He was therefore presenting the Nara scholar-priests with a particularly Buddhist explanation for the efficacy of sūtra recitation in protecting the nation. That is, by adopting Esoteric Buddhism, the Nara clerics would be acquiring a language of their own that they could employ to explicate the efficacy of the services they performed for the state. It meant that in order to make their services take effect, they no longer had to rely solely on the native Shintō belief that only spiritual and physical purity resulting from the most stringent observance of the precepts would give the clergy shamanistic power.

As discussed earlier, it was through this belief that state legitimized the exercise of legal control over the clergy and its activities by reducing it to a secondary bureaucracy—so that the clergy's magical power would be used only to serve the interest of the state. The Nara monastic institutions seem to have recognized that the incorporation of Esoteric Buddhism into their own system of religious practice would enable them to challenge the legitimacy of the Confucian ideology that had bureaucratized the clergy. In fact, as will be seen in the last two chapters of this study, the Mishuhō, an annual esoteric ritual

service at the imperial palace founded by Kūkai in his final years, was designed to bestow on the emperor exceptional merit, as promised in the *Golden Light Sūtra*. As an esoteric ritual extension to the New Year's chanting of the sūtra carried out by elite Nara priests at the palace, the Mishuhō represented an attempt to supersede the Confucian characterization of the emperor as the Son of Heaven with that of Buddhist ideal of *cakravartin*, the universal monarch who pacifies the universe by turning the wheel of the Dharma.

In short, Kūkai's historical significance seems to rest not in the creation of a new sectarian school, but in the introduction of a new type of Buddhist discourse aimed at diversifying and enriching the normative religious and political discourse of early Heian society. Placed within the context of Kūkai's exchanges with Nara Buddhist leaders, many of his texts, sanctified within the tradition as universal, timeless entities, begin to unfold their own historicity. Read as products of history, they reveal not only what Kūkai was actually saying but what use he was making (or, more precisely, attempting to make) of his new language. The historical qualities of Kūkai's writing seem in turn to derive from the particular dynamism generated by two opposing forces that ingrain his textual productions: the one moving him to deviate from the orthodoxy of his time; the other moving him to return to that orthodoxy with the goal of achieving its transformation. Just like the oscillating movement of a shuttle, these opposing forces produce the texture unique to Kūkai's writings. In the next chapter, I begin my reading of Kūkai's texts by examining earlier developments in his life in which these forces began their work—the work of interlacing the strands of the historical conditions surrounding the young Kūkai into his first major text, an autobiographical fiction.

## PART I

### *Origin, Traces, Nonorigin*

*We require history, for the past continues to flow within us in a hundred waves; we ourselves are, indeed, nothing but that which at every moment we experience of this continued flowing. It may even be said that here too, when we desire to descend into the river of what seems to be our own most intimate and personal being, there applies the dictum of Heraclitus: we cannot step into the same river twice.*

—Friedrich Nietzsche

## CHAPTER 2

### Kūkai's Dissent *Of Mendicancy and Fiction*

Kūkai stepped into history at a time when the nation was experiencing a great social upheaval. In 784, motivated by his desire to separate the Buddhist establishment from state politics, Emperor Kanmu (r. 781–806) abandoned the capital at Nara and moved his court to Nagaoka in the province of Yamashiro.<sup>1</sup> However, because of the severe political struggle this drastic change provoked and a series of natural disasters that struck Nagaoka,<sup>2</sup> the capital was deserted within a few years. Fujiwara no Tanetsugu, Kanmu's protégé assigned to take charge of the construction of the new capital city at Nagaoka, was assassinated there in 785,<sup>3</sup> and Ōtomo no Tsuguto, one of his political rivals, was found guilty of the crime and sentenced to death. Other prominent members of the Ōtomo clan were arrested and exiled. Crown Prince Sawara (d. 785), who had been among those opposed to the move, was also implicated and forced to commit suicide.

In the northern region of Mutsu, Kanmu's policy of expanding his domain led to rebellions by the native tribes known as Emishi. Despite repeated military expeditions by government forces, the uprisings persisted. In the summer months of 789, in hope of extirpating the rebel forces, Kanmu dispatched a force of 27,470 soldiers; they not only suffered defeat but incurred more than 3,000 casualties.<sup>4</sup> Fugitives from both the military draft and the corvée labor were everywhere. Also in 789, a severe draught in Yamato and its vicinity triggered an outbreak of famine and plague.<sup>5</sup> The streets of the capital were filled with the sick. The drought and epidemic spread to many other provinces and continued into the following year. Confronted with the miserable plight of his nation, the emperor canceled celebrations of annual festivals that were to take place at court.<sup>6</sup> Yet Kanmu continued his work of relocating the capital. Finally, in 794, he abruptly moved his court to Heiankyō (Kyoto), in the northeastern vicinity of Nagaoka, causing even greater confusion for the masses.

Kanmu legitimized the policy of centralizing his power by promoting Confucianism as the ideology of the state and by intensifying the ideological training of government officials at the State College (Daigaku), the formal educational apparatus of the state. In 784, Kanmu gave permission to the Confucian scholar Iyobe no Iemori to inaugurate a series of lectures on the *Kung-yang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Ch. *Ch'un-ch'iu kung-yung-chuan*; Jpn. *Shunjū kuyōden*) and the *Ku-liang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Ch. *Ch'un-ch'iu ku-liang-chuan*; Jpn. *Shunjū kokuryōden*), two classical commentaries that Iemori had personally brought back from China in 776.<sup>7</sup> *T'so's Commentary* (*Ch'un-ch'iu tso-shih-chuan*; Jpn. *Shunjū sashiden*), which had hitherto been accepted at the State College as the authoritative text on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Ch. *Ch'un-ch'iu*; Jpn. *Shunjū*), relies heavily on parables, metaphors, aphorisms, and other literary devices for elucidation. By contrast, the *Kung-yang* and *Ku-liang* commentaries partake of political philosophy and fervently advance the theory of *chun-kou* (Jpn. *chūgoku*) or *chun-hua* (Jpn. *chūka*) the “Middle Kingdom,” in which the emperor, as “Son of Heaven” (Ch. *t'ien-tzu*; Jpn. *tenshi*), expands his sphere of influence by means of the power of his virtue to barbarous lands and unites all under heaven in peace.

Kanmu found in the *Kung-yang* and *Ku-liang* commentaries the authority for his policies of centralization and expansion, moving the capital, and conquering the Emishi tribes in northern Japan. As KAJI Nobuyuki (1978:71), a leading scholar in the fields of Confucian philosophy and Chinese thought, observes,

From the theoretical perspective of the *Kung-yang* and *Ku-liang*, Kanmu's [military] actions can be explained as the Son of Heaven's demonstration of his might as a prerequisite for edifying barbarous tribes. The barbarians' disobedience to the emperor derives from their ignorance of *li* (Jpn. *rai*) decorum, the very foundation of culture. It is the duty of the Son of Heaven to edify, that is, to cultivate the virtue of, barbarous people by extending to them the decorum of his court, the ultimate cultural sophistication of the Middle Kingdom. Then they will joyfully acknowledge the emperor's suzerainty and willingly proffer gifts of treasures to the capital.

In 798, Kanmu officially added *Kung-yang's Commentary* and *Ku-liang's Commentary* to the required readings at the State College.<sup>8</sup> Kanmu's educational policy was swiftly transforming the State College into the institutional vanguard of his political ideology before the very eyes of Kūkai, who then was a student there pursuing his career in the governmental service.

## Kūkai's Youth: Confucian Learning vis-à-vis Buddhist Practice

In the seventh year of Enryaku (788), four years after Kanmu's ill-fated attempt to move his court to Nagaoka, Kūkai, age fifteen, arrived in the capital<sup>9</sup> and became a student of Ato no Ōtari, an uncle on his mother's side, who was serving as an imperial tutor to Kanmu's third son, Prince Iyo (?-807). Reminiscing in 821 about his early training in the Chinese classics with Ōtari, Kūkai wrote, "I devoted myself, in particular, to the study of poetry and rhetoric."<sup>10</sup> At eighteen (791), Kūkai entered the State College. Under the guidance of two professors, Umazake no Kiyonari and Okada no Ushikai, Kūkai began his official study of Confucian classics, which included the reading of the *Book of Odes* (Ch. *Mao-shih*; Jpn. *Mōshi*), the *Book of History* (Ch. *Shang-shu*; Jpn. *Shōsho*), and the *Tso's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*,<sup>11</sup> the required readings for those seeking appointments to high office at the imperial court.

The *Biography of Priest Kūkai* (*Kūkai sōzuden*), the earliest biographical work extant, whose authorship is attributed to Kūkai's senior disciple Shinzei (800–860),<sup>12</sup> relates that as a child Kūkai was renowned as a prodigy in his home province of Sanuki. He was the pride of his family, which belonged to a noble clan, the house of Saeki. Politically well connected, the Saeki prospered in the mid-Nara period and then went into gradual decline. Its most renowned figure was Saeki no Imaemishi (719–790), who served the courts of six successive emperors—Shōmu, Kōken, Junnin, Shōtoku, Kōnin, and Kanmu—and was best known for having supervised the construction of Tōdaiji. In 775 Imaemishi was appointed by Emperor Kōnin to be ambassador to China,<sup>13</sup> but because of illness was unable to assume that post. Later Kanmu appointed him one of the supervisors of construction for the new capital at Nagaoka. However, because the Saeki clan was a branch family of the Ōtomo clan, which had been held responsible for the 785 assassination of Kanmu's protégé Fujiwara Tanetsugu, many of the Saeki were implicated in the plot, and the clan's political influence was severely weakened. In 786, one year after Kūkai began his studies with Ato no Ōtari, Imaemishi, who had once held the high court office of *sangi*, special counselor, was demoted to magistrate of the port city of Dazaifu in Kyūshū, and in 789 he was forced to retire from public service altogether.<sup>14</sup>

According to the *True Records of the Reigns of the Three Emperors* (*Nihon sandai jitsuroku*), an authoritative history compiled by imperial edict in 901, Kūkai's father, Saeki no Tagimi, was a *gunji*, or head of the provincial government's regional office, in the county of Tado in Sanuki.<sup>15</sup> As described in the Rules of Education, or the *Gakuryō*, one of the divisions of the *ritsuryō* governing schooling in Kūkai's day, it was customary for sons of local aristocrats

cратic families to receive their education at the provincial colleges (Kokugaku) before being assigned civilian and military duties in their local governments; only those students with exceptional promise were recommended for study at the State College.<sup>16</sup> It seems that his family sent Kūkai to the capital with the expectation that the education reserved only for the elite would help Kūkai to succeed in restoring the glory of the Saeki clan. The Gakuryō also states that, under normal circumstances, to be admitted to the State College a student should be no older than sixteen years of age.<sup>17</sup> Kūkai was already eighteen years old when he entered the college in 791. It was in that year, however, that Okada no Ushikai, one of Kūkai's teachers and also a native of Sanuki, was promoted to head professor (*hakase*),<sup>18</sup> and it is not unlikely that Ushikai was instrumental in allowing Kūkai to enter the college as an exception to the general rule of the Gakuryō.

The State College in the late Nara and early Heian periods was important not only as the official institution for training candidates for elite bureaucratic services in the government but also as the center for promoting Confucianism as a religion. That is, the government expected its officials to be vehicles for propagating Confucianism. In the tenth month of Hōki 6 (775) the emperor ordered the reinstatement at the college of *shakuten*, the semiannual ritual worship of Confucius, to be performed with the ministers of his court in attendance.<sup>19</sup> This order forced the officials to literally observe the following article in the Gakuryō.

*Article 3.* Twice every year in the second month in spring and the eighth month in autumn at the state and provincial colleges, the rite to honor Confucius, our father and sage, must be performed. The food, wine, and ceremonial robes required for the ceremony shall be provided by the state.

(NST 3:262)

The State College offered six programs of study: classics (*meikeidō*); history (*kidendō*); law (*meihōdō*); mathematics (*sandō*); phonetics (*on'indō*); and calligraphy (*shodō*).<sup>20</sup> As the institutional historian MOMO Hiroyuki (1993:432–434) notes, classics, as the field considered most relevant to government affairs, enjoyed the greatest prestige throughout the second half of the Nara period. Classics consistently attracted more than four hundred students, far exceeding the popularity of law and Chinese language. However, during the early Heian period, demand for classics began to decline, and it was eventually replaced in popularity by history, a program that proved pragmatic for government service, whose study incorporated training in writing, namely, rhetoric and poetry. It is interesting to note that Kūkai, who had expressed fondness for

the art of writing, chose not history but classics as his area of concentration at the college.

Examinations were held every ten days and at the end of every year. Students who failed three consecutive annual examinations were expelled from the college. The *Book of Odes*, the *Book of History*, and *Tso's Commentary*, all of which Kūkai first took up at the college, were among the elective readings in the classics curriculum.<sup>21</sup> The classics student had to complete the *Book of History* within 200 days, the *Book of Odes* in 460 days, and *Tso's Commentary* in 770 days. Students who had mastered two classics from among the elective readings, in addition to the *Book of Filiality* (*Hsiao-shu*) and the *Analects* (*Lun-yü*), the two required readings of the curriculum, were allowed to take the examination for possible appointment to the central government. However, when a student reached the age of twenty-five, he could no longer qualify for the examination.<sup>22</sup>

It appears that Kūkai, as an older student, subjected himself to a strenuous regimen of study with the goal of completing the demanding requirements of the curriculum within the constraints set by the age limitation. As he described it in one of his autobiographical sketches:

Since I entered the State College at age eighteen, I worked sedulously to rival the student who [, being unable to pay for oil,] read at night by the light of fireflies and the famed one in older times who studied by the glow of the snow on his window sill. I often upbraided myself for not studying as hard as the celebrated student who [, to keep himself awake,] tied his neck to a rope hung from a beam, or the one who poked his own lap with a gimlet.<sup>23</sup>

However, Kūkai's initial enthusiasm for studying the Confucian classics and pursuing government service soon began to wane. As Shinzei's biography explains, "He repeatedly pondered: 'What I am learning is nothing but the dregs left by those who lived in the distant past. The merit this learning provides me in this life is next to nothing; how much less use will it be in the life after death. This body of mine is decaying right now. I must seek the true, only the true.'"<sup>24</sup>

From the Confucian classics, Kūkai first turned to Taoist texts and then to Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures,<sup>25</sup> but neither Kūkai himself nor his biographers provide any clue as to the reason for this sudden shift in interest. The assassination of Tanetsugu and the subsequent disappearance from the political scene of Imaemishi and other leaders of the Saeki clan may have seriously harmed his prospects for a position at court. However, it also seems to be true, as Shinzei noted, that despite his relatives' expectations, Kūkai had realized that his goals

lay elsewhere than in government. His disillusionment with the education at the State College coincided with his first experience of Buddhist meditation. In the introduction to *Demonstrating the Goals of the Three Teachings* (*Sangō shiki*),<sup>26</sup> a quasi-autobiographical fiction and Buddhist apologetic he composed at age twenty-four (797), Kūkai wrote of his new passion:

Then I met a Buddhist priest, who instructed me in the meditative practice of Ākāśagarbha [Jpn. Kokūzō] known as *gumonjihō*. The *gumonjihō* scripture says: “If one recites this mantra properly one million times, one will memorize the lines as well as the meanings of all the scriptures.”<sup>27</sup> Trusting the sincere words of the Buddha, I engaged in recitation, constantly and diligently, as if rubbing one branch against another in the hope of producing a spark. At one point, I scaled the cliff of Mount Tairyū in Awa; at another, I meditated intently at the Cape of Muroto in Tosa. Valleys echoed sonorously, the morning star brightened.<sup>28</sup>

It was *gumonjihō* (Ch. *chiu-wen-ch'ib-fa*), an Esoteric Buddhist meditation upon Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha (“One Whose Store of Wisdom Is as Vast as Empty Space”), that first introduced Kūkai to Buddhist training. If practiced in accordance with its scriptural prescription, the meditative exercise requires complex ritual procedures that include drawing an image of the bodhisattva, constructing a ritual altar in a meditative hall, preparing offerings—such as powdered perfume, flowers, incense, food, and lights—memorizing numerous mudrās that accompany the recitation of dhāraṇī, and visualizing the physical characteristics of the bodhisattva. All these ritual actions center on the recitation of Ākāśagarbha’s dhāraṇī one million times, a procedure requiring one hundred consecutive days of meditative practice.<sup>29</sup> Considering the fact that Kūkai was then merely an acolyte, it is doubtful that he practiced the *gumonjihō* exactly as described in the ritual manual. Rather, his own account, quoted above, implies that he engaged intently in the recitation of Ākāśagarbha’s dhāraṇī in the punishing environs of mountains, forests, and coastal cliffs. Kūkai hints that he found a deeper truth in the echo that rang through the valleys and the sparkle of the star at dawn than he had learned through his bookish studies at the college in the capital city.

Because the *gumonjihō* is an esoteric exercise, many modern scholars believe that it was critically important for Kūkai’s career, for they think it first motivated Kūkai to study Esoteric Buddhism, and for that reason they have speculated on the identity of the priest who taught him the meditation. Several historical sources of relatively late dates suggest that the priest who taught the meditation to Kūkai was Gonsō (758–827) of the Sanron

School at the Nara monastery Daianji, who studied the *gumonjihō* from his master Zengi (729–812).<sup>30</sup> HORIIKE Shunpō (1982:424–428) suggested that because Kūkai abstained from disclosing who the priest was, it had to be Kaimyō (d. 806?), another eminent Daianji priest, who became involved in a scandal, suffered a public disgrace, and lived the last years of his life in exile. However, as will be indicated later in this chapter, it seems that Kūkai then did not have any awareness that the *gumonjihō* was an Esoteric Buddhist ritual, nor did he show interest in other forms of esoteric rituals that were popularly practiced in the late Nara and early Heian periods. Therefore it appears that the identity of the priest who taught him the meditation is of secondary importance for understanding how Kūkai became attracted to Esoteric Buddhism. In fact, there is no need for this figure, whom Kūkai referred to as “a Buddhist priest,” to have been a distinguished scholar-priest or even someone whose name appears in historical records.

The sites of Kūkai’s ascetic training mentioned in his *Demonstrating the Goals*, Mount Tairyū and the Cape of Muroto, were located, respectively, in Awa and Tosa, the two provinces adjacent to Kūkai’s home province of Sanuki on the island of Shikoku. According to the Gakuryō, students were allowed to take a leave of absence from the college in the fifth and ninth months to return to their home provinces, and students from distant provinces were permitted to leave early and return late. However, any student who was absent from class for a total of one hundred days a year, including the two-month-long recesses, was expelled from school.<sup>31</sup> If Kūkai did indeed practice the *gumonjihō* to complete the dhāraṇī chanting one million times in one hundred days, he must have been automatically disqualified from school. Although it remains unclear exactly when Kūkai withdrew from the college, this exercise, which transformed Kūkai’s worldview,<sup>32</sup> made it impossible for him to continue his life as an elite student in the capital. At the close of his autobiographical sketch in the introduction to *Demonstrating the Goals*, Kūkai expressed his state of mind:

Thereafter, in each moment of thought, I despised the fame and fortune of city life; and day and night I longed to live in mountains and forests embraced by clouds and mists. I sighed with grief at those who take pride in their possession of delicate garments, well-fed horses and the luxurious mounts of the rich; all these are as evanescent as lightning or mirages. Every time I saw a cripple or a pauper, it reminded me of the force of karma, and I could not cease my laments. All that I saw urged me to renounce worldly life. Who can stop me, free of attachment like the fleeting wind?<sup>33</sup>

## The State, *Ubasoku*, and Popular Buddhism

According to Shinzei's *Biography of the Priest Kūkai*, it was at the time of Kūkai's decision to leave the secular world behind that "he composed *Demonstrating the Goals* in three fascicles and became an *ubasoku* (Buddhist practitioner). High in the mountains, on steep cliffs, in rocky gorges and on solitary shores, he lived by himself and, free of care, persevered in his strenuous training regimen.<sup>34</sup> The term *ubasoku* was originally a transliteration of *upāsaka*, a Sanskrit word denoting a male Buddhist householder. By Kūkai's time, however, it had already assumed a particular connotation in the cultural context of the Nara and early Heian Buddhist community; the Japanese word *ubasoku* was no longer limited to its original usage indicating a lay Buddhist. Hori Ichirō, Sakuma Ryū, Matsumoto Nobumichi, and other Japanese scholars have demonstrated the diverse—and often seemingly contradictory—manners in which the term can be defined. In his effort to sort out the confusion in studies of his predecessors,<sup>35</sup> FUTABA Kenkō (1984:351–372) has suggested that, rather than designating a specific class of Buddhists, *ubasoku* was a generic term referring to a variety of Buddhist practitioners who did not receive the official ordination sanctioned by the government. Guided by Futaba's study, it is possible to distinguish three major ways in which the term was used.

First, it referred to those novices who resided in temples in preparation for their ordination into the priesthood. Under the *ritsuryō* system, it was the court, not the Buddhist orders, that had the power to initiate lay practitioners into the priesthood. All priests and nuns were to be registered at the Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs, in the Agency for Buddhists and Foreigners (*Genbaryō*) of the Ministry of Aristocracy (*Jibushō*).

Although the Sōgō was run by priest-officials and had autonomy, the government maintained the quasi-bureaucratic status of the priests and nuns through a system in which the three levels of ordination certificates (*kokuchō*) were issued by the Ministry of Aristocracy. The first, *dochō*, was required when the candidate, an *ubasoku* or *ubai* (Skt. *upāsikā*), the female counterpart, took the tonsure and received the preliminary initiation (*tokudo*) into the ranks of advanced novices, the *shami* (Skt. *śramaṇera*) or *shamini* (Skt. *śramaṇerikā*). When the candidate completed basic training, which ordinarily took more than three years, the government issued *kaichō*, the second certificate, granting full ordination (*jukai*) as a *biku* (Skt. *bhikusū*) and *bikuni* (Skt. *bhikusunī*). The third certificate, *iki*, was issued when the court granted a *biku* and *bikuni* an honorary priestly rank (*sōi*) (NAKAI Shinkō 1986; HAYAMI Tasuku 1986).

According to the Sōniryō, Rules for Priests and Nuns, once a candidate for ordination received a *kokuchō*, he or she acquired privileges such as exemption

from taxation, the corvée, and the draft. In theory, before the issuance of the first certificates, candidates were required to take a government examination (*kugen*). It appears, however, that certificates were often issued simply on the recommendation of the Sōgō. In the eleventh month of Tenpyō 6 (762), in an effort to raise the standard of candidates for initiation, Emperor Shōmu's court announced detailed requirements that would have to be met before an ubasoku or ubai could receive the docho.

It always takes priests and nuns to promulgate the Buddha's teaching; it is accordingly the government's responsibility to select people of talent and experience to be ordained. These days, however, many of those ordained on the [Sōgō's] recommendation possess only scant knowledge [of Buddhism]. This goes against our goal of spreading the Dharma. From now on . . . all candidates for ordination are required to be able to recite from memory the *Lotus* and *Golden Light Sūtras*, to have mastered the ritual of prostration, and to have completed at least three years of a life of pure conduct (*jōgyō*).<sup>36</sup>

The term *jōgyō* (Skt. *brahmacarya*) refers to religious celibacy. As FUTABA Kenko (1984:355) writes: "These requirements for initiation define ubasoku and ubai not as lay believers but as religious trainees. Because they were required to have completed three years of *jōgyō*, they would first have to engage in priestly training. That is why ubasoku and ubai can be viewed as a kind of reserve force for the body of officially ordained priests and nuns."

Although they had not been officially initiated, these ubasoku and ubai most likely resided in monasteries and nunneries, serving as attendants to priests and nuns. In *Miraculous Episodes of Good and Evil Karmic Effects in the Nation of Japan* (*Nihonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki*), composed by the priest Keikai of Yakushiji in Nara in about 787,<sup>37</sup> the period coinciding with Kūkai's youth, one finds several occurrences of the term *ubasoku*, denoting novice residents at temples. The third episode in fascicle 1, for example, relates the story of the page (*dōji*) of Gangōji in Asuka, who, renowned for his great physical strength and bravery, had vanquished a man-eating ogre who visited the temple's bell tower nightly. "Afterwards, this page became an ubasoku and continued to live at Gangōji."<sup>38</sup> *Miraculous Episodes* then tells of another heroic deed in which the page subdued several vicious imperial princes who had attempted to steal the temple's irrigation water. "Because of his work, the temple's paddy field did not dry up. As a result, the priests of the temple gave permission for him to be ordained, and from that time on he was addressed as the Dharma master (*bosshi*) Dōjō."<sup>39</sup>

In the second and probably most common usage of the term, *ubasoku* refers to *shidosō*, those who independently proclaimed themselves to be priests and nuns, thereby violating the Sōniryō code. From the government's point of view, *shidosō* were criminals who, by drifting to distant provinces, attempted to evade their legal obligations under the *ritsuryō* by hiding behind privileges given only to officially ordained priests and nuns.

*Article 22.* Those who falsely claim to be ordained (*shido*) or falsely appropriate the identity of the ordained are to be forced to returned to lay life. If the violators, once returned to laity, dress themselves yet again in priestly robes, they will be chastised in accordance with the penal code (*ritsu*). Those supervisors, administrators, and other temple residents in priestly ranks who, cognizant of the violators' false identity, allow them [to remain in their temples], will be deprived of their ordained status. Any priest or nun who, cognizant of their false identity, allows these drifters (*fuchōnin*) to remain in his or her temple for more than one night is to be punished by one hundred days of forced labor.<sup>40</sup>

Although the Sōniryō required that *shidosō* be arrested and returned to household life in their own provinces,<sup>41</sup> it appears that the government often failed to enforce the law, and the large number of *shidosō* roaming the country were a persistent social problem for the Nara and early Heian state.<sup>42</sup>

The term *ubasoku*, used in the sense of *shidosō*, refers not only to lonely drifters. *Ubasoku* often formed large groups and engaged in collective work. Perhaps the most important example of organized *ubasoku* was the order of the Hossō priest Gyōki (668–749), renowned for building bridges, roads, ferry stations, irrigation systems, and canals. Under Gyōki's leadership, the order's members also built forty-nine monasteries and nunneries that served as hospitals for local residents (Shijūkuin) in the provinces of Kawachi, Izumi, Settsu, Yamashiro, and Yamato.<sup>43</sup> Because Gyōki welcomed not only priests and nuns but *shidosō* to his order, the government initially attempted to ban its activity. The imperial edict of the fourth month of Yōrō 1 (717) states:

Recently, a great many people have violated the law by taking the tonsure without official permission. Dressing themselves in monk's robes, they pretend to be ordained practitioners; but their hearts are no different from those of thieves. This fraud led to all sorts of despicable, nefarious activities. . . . There is today a petty priest (*shōsō*) called Gyōki who with his disciples has formed a faction that can frequently be seen the city streets. With their

manipulative preaching on good and evil karma and their scandalous show of asceticism, they go from one house to another and aggressively beg for donations. Pretending to practice the sacred way, they are craftily deceiving people. As a result, the distinction between priesthood and laity has broken down, and householders are abandoning their worldly duties. Their activities not only deviate from the teachings of the Buddha but transgress our penal laws. . . . Our laws permit priests and nuns to recite dhāraṇī and use medicine to save the sick. These people, however, visit the houses of the sick, confusing their minds with illegal acts of shamanism and divination, frightening young and old, and demanding rewards. Their disregard of the separation between priesthood and laity will inevitably lead to chaos.<sup>44</sup>

However, because of Gyōki's enormous popularity among the common people, by whom he was revered as "the bodhisattva Gyōki" (*gyōki bosatsu*),<sup>45</sup> the court gradually altered its policy toward him. An imperial edict issued in the eighth month of Tenpyō 3 (751) announced that leniency would be shown in some instances:

Among those ubasoku and ubai who follow the Dharma Master Gyōki, men who are sixty-one years of age or older and women who are fifty-five or older and are practicing the religion in accordance with the Dharma are allowed to be ordained. Others who continue to engage in mendicancy will be arrested and punished as prescribed by law.<sup>46</sup>

The reference to ubai in the above indicates that Gyōki's order included a significant number of female shidosō—those who proclaimed themselves nuns but had not received the state-certified ordination. Clad in priestly robes, both ubasoku and ubai in Gyōki's organization engaged in such activities as begging, preaching in the street, healing the sick, and building roads and bridges. The Sōniryō required priests and nuns to remain in their temple compounds. Departure from their temple residence, even for the purpose of begging and proselytizing, required the government's permission. Any organized activity outside the temple was prohibited.<sup>47</sup> All these regulations were designed to severely limit direct contact between the ordained and the masses. That is to say, among Gyōki's disciples, because of the works they carried out in defiance of the government, there existed virtually no distinction between officially ordained priests and nuns and male and female shidosō.

The shidosō in Gyōki's order presented a particularly thorny problem for the government: not all ubasoku and ubai could be categorically denounced

as drifters; many of them performed social functions that complemented the activities of priests and nuns residing in official temples. Recognizing their practice as an appropriate means to receive official ordination would certainly reduce the tension between the government and the shidosō. However, creating such a precedent would lead to the erosion of the government-controlled system of ordination certificates.

Despite these dangers, Emperor Shōmu's court chose to avoid a direct confrontation with the shidosō-ubasoku movement.<sup>48</sup> By the time of Emperor Shōmu's 743 edict announcing the erection of the statue of the Vairocana Buddha at Tōdaiji, the court not only had acquiesced in the activities of Gyōki's organization but had assigned Gyōki the responsibility of mobilizing the masses necessary to carry out that project.<sup>49</sup> In the first month of Tenpyō 17 (745), Shōmu conferred on Gyōki the title of Supreme Priest (*daisōjō*), and four hundred of his disciples received the court's permission for ordination.<sup>50</sup>

The third usage of the term *ubasoku*, a derivative of its second meaning, refers to those shidosō who lived the lives of ascetics in mountains and forests. The word *ubasoku* in this sense is used interchangeably with *gyōja*, which refers to ascetics endowed with shamanistic powers, particularly with the power of healing. The term frequently occurs in Nara and early Heian literature in conjunction with *zenji*, "meditation master," which refers to those officially ordained priests and nuns who were said to have attained supernatural powers through their austerities. Episodes involving *ubasoku* as mysterious, shamanistic ascetics abound in the *Miraculous Episodes*.<sup>51</sup>

Probably the best illustration of this use of *ubasoku* is a story regarding a certain Miteshiro no Azumabito, a layman who was mistaken for an *ubasoku*. In order to fulfill his worldly desires, Azumabito decided to mimic the practice of ascetics. During the Tenpyō Shōhō years (749–757), he traveled deep into the mountains of Yoshino and began to practice austerities. "Having recited Avalokiteśvara's name and having bowed low, he said to the deity, 'Namah! Please grant me thousands of copper coins, countless heaps of hulled rice and many beautiful wives.' At that time there was a daughter of Lord Awada, who suddenly fell ill.

Lord Awada sent his messengers in all directions to find zenji and ubasoku. They found Azumabito, respectfully invited him to the Lord's residence and had him recite [Avalokiteśvara's] dhāraṇī. Receiving the dhāraṇī's power, the princess recovered. She then fell in love with Azumabito and made love with him. Discovering their affair, the princess's relatives tied him [Azumabito] up and kept him in confinement.<sup>52</sup>

Azutabito was punished, despite his success in helping the princess recover her health, because it was assumed in Nara society that ubasoku would remain celibate under all circumstances.

These examples show that in Nara and early Heian cultural discourse none of the diverse usages of the term *ubasoku* suggest that the ubasoku's life was compatible with lay life. The word had assumed meanings contrary to that of the Sanskrit term *upāsaka*, indicating a lay Buddhist practitioner. According to Shinzei's biography, Kūkai became an ubasoku at the time he completed *Demonstrating the Goals* at age twenty-four. This meant that Kūkai decisively abandoned his status as a student at the State College. As discussed earlier, a State College student on turning twenty-five became ineligible to take the examination for appointments with the government and was returned to his home province. TAKAGI Shingen (1990:5–19), an authority on Kūkai's biographical literature, explains that, having become disillusioned with Confucian training and having no interest in seeking a career with the government, Kūkai remained as long as he could a State College student in name only, using the legal privileges it afforded him (e.g., exemptions from taxation, the corvée, and the draft) to prepare for his new life as an ubasoku.

Kūkai's metamorphosis from a student at the State College to a wandering mendicant, his fall from the elite corps of students at the center to a derelict at the periphery of *ritsuryō* society, appears even more dramatic in light of Emperor Kanmu's ongoing reforms aimed at tightening the reins on the Buddhist order.<sup>53</sup> In the seventh month of Enryaku 17 (798), he authorized the governor of Yamato province to investigate the conduct of priests and nuns and "to rectify their depraved behavior in the old capital of Nara (*heizei kyūto*),"<sup>54</sup> reports of which often reached him in Kyoto. In the tenth month the emperor announced that from then on the *Sōniryō* would be strictly enforced, and all priests and nuns found guilty of violating the precepts would be expelled from monasteries and nunneries.<sup>55</sup> Of particular relevance to Kanmu's effort to isolate the Buddhist clergy and keep them from interacting with and influencing ordinary people are the following *ritsuryō* articles in the *Sōniryō*:

*Article 5.* Those priests and nuns who leave their temples of residence to build their own shrine halls, to attract people and proselytize them, to mislead them by telling their fortunes, or to rebel against the elders of the community are all ordered to return to the laity. Officers of the provincial government who fail to proscribe these illegal activities will be punished according to the penal code. [Priests and nuns] who desire to practice mendicancy must first have the head administrator of their temples

report to the county and provincial officials and receive their permission. Only practices undertaken purely for the sake of spiritual progress will be permitted. Begging within the limits of the capital requires permission from the Agency for Buddhists and Foreigners. The practice of begging, which is confined to the morning hours, is permitted as long as begging bowls are clearly displayed. Begging for food in excess of one's needs is prohibited.

*Article 13.* Those priests and nuns who, in their effort to escape the world and attain peace of mind, wish to engage in meditative training and fasting in the mountains must have their temple administrators present a request to the authorities well in advance. Those who reside in the capital must report to the Sōgō in the Agency for Buddhists and Foreigners. Those who reside outside the capital must report to their provincial and county governments. Provincial government officials must always be informed of the location of the mountains in which austerities are to be performed. Priests and nuns are not allowed to move to other locations.

*Article 23.* Priests and nuns who entrust the unordained with Buddhist scriptures and sculptures, having these persons visit lay households for the purpose of proselytizing, will be punished by one hundred days of forced labor. Their unordained accomplices will be reprimanded according to the provisions of the penal code. (NST 3:217, 220, 223)

In the fifth month of the next year (799), Kanmu issued similar orders to other provincial governors, instructing them to question resident priests and nuns in their domains.<sup>56</sup> Kanmu's crackdown was also directed at ubasoku. In the eighth month of Enryaku 16 (797), he instructed imperial princes and high-ranking aristocrats to arrest illegal drifters hiding in their private domains.<sup>57</sup> And in the sixth month of Enryaku 18 (799), the emperor issued another order:

Recently there have been many reports of Buddhist practitioners who, leaving behind their temple residences, hide in mountains and forests and engage in heretical practices. As it transgresses not only the law of the nation but also Buddhist teachings, their conduct cannot be tolerated. I order all provincial governors to carefully search mountains and forests for hermitages and for any priests and ubasoku who may be residing there. Report their activities immediately; do not overlook even minute violations of the law.<sup>58</sup>

The restrictions Kanmu imposed on the Buddhist community were aimed, on the one hand, at enforcing the integration of ordinands into the government bureaucracy, and, on the other, at drawing a clear distinction between the bureaucratized priesthood and the shidosō, with the goal of depriving ubasoku and ubai of their de facto quasi-ordained status and destroying their power base among the ordinary people.

It was thus precisely as the political climate was becoming increasingly hostile toward Buddhism that Kūkai left the State College for the world of the ubasoku. Although it remains unclear exactly what sense of the word *ubasoku* applies to the life he assumed, the reference in his autobiographical writings to austerities in mountains and forests suggests that Kūkai became a shidosō. He mentioned in one of his letters that it was during this period of wandering from province to province to visit places associated with ascetic practice that he discovered Mount Kōya.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, according to *Sequel to the Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihon kōki*) and other historical sources, Kūkai remained unordained until he was thirty-one years old (804).<sup>60</sup> However, it would be a mistake to consider Kūkai during his years of wandering as being completely dissociated from the Nara Buddhist community. As will be discussed later, the references to and quotations from numerous Buddhist texts in *Demonstrating the Goals* suggest that on many occasions Kūkai immersed himself in the study of scriptural texts at temples in Nara.

The three meanings of *ubasoku* in the discourse of popular Buddhism in the Nara and early Heian periods discussed in this section—novice priests-in-training residing in monasteries; shidosō, self-proclaimed priests and nuns; and ascetic hermits in mountains and forests—were not expressive of separate, mutually exclusive categories. The fact that all were denoted by the same term suggests that the activities of the three types of ubasoku overlapped in many respects. This is why Kanmu, in the decrees discussed in this section, had to struggle to draw a clear line between the government-authorized priesthood and the shidosō. Under the rigorous implementation of the *ritsuryō* legal code by Emperors Kōnin and Kanmu, ubasoku, who had enjoyed greater freedom in the early and mid-Nara period, were driven to a precarious existence at the periphery of society, constantly at risk of being captured, returned to lay life, forced into hard labor constructing the new capital, or worse, sent to the battlefields in the north.

### Lacuna of Esotericism: The *Sangō shiiki* as a Self-Portrait

Composed in 797, when Kūkai was twenty-four, *Demonstrating the Goals* is his first major work, exceeding in length many of his principal later works.<sup>61</sup>

Written in highly ornate Six Dynasties-style Chinese, with recurring citation of a wide range of Chinese texts, it bears witness to Kūkai's rigorous training in rhetoric and poetics. However, its figurative complexity makes it one of the most difficult to read of Kūkai's compositions.

In the introduction to *Demonstrating the Goals*, dated the first day of the twelfth month of Enryaku 16 (797),<sup>62</sup> Kūkai proclaims that he has renounced the world to live the life of a Buddhist practitioner and then explains why he has set brush to paper.

I have a group of relatives and teachers who are trying to bind me with the snare of the five permanent virtues [of Confucianism, i.e., humaneness, righteousness, decorum, wisdom, and trust] and are castigating me, saying that I have betrayed the [Confucian] principle of loyalty and filiality. I believe, however, that living beings have characters that are different, one from another, and that their natures vary, just as birds flying in the sky are different from fish swimming in the ocean. That is why the sages of old provided us with the three teachings—Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Although they are not equal in their profundity, they are all the teachings of the ancient sages. Therefore if I have found myself saved in the seine of any one of the three teachings, how is it possible for me to be other than loyal and filial?

I have a nephew on my mother's side who is both untruthful and depraved. Day and night he is absorbed in hunting, gambling, drinking, and playing with women. Watching him it seems to me that his delinquent life is not the product of his nature but is due to the inappropriate surroundings in which he has placed himself. These two things [the criticism leveled at Kūkai by his teachers and relatives, and the depravity of his nephew], which have become my constant concerns, have impelled me to write this work . . . in three fascicles, which I have given the title *Sangō shiiki*.

(KZ 3:324–325)

Kūkai's mention of his debauched nephew side by side with his reference to his nagging relatives suggests that, from the point of view of his relatives and State College teachers, Kūkai, whose fall to the status of an ubasoku caused much grief to his parents and to his clan as a whole, was as guilty of moral transgression as his nephew, the shame of the clan. The story of the *Sangō shiiki* evolves around the fictional counterpart of this degenerate nephew, who in the text is given the name Shitsuga kōshi (Prince Leech's Tusk). Tokaku (Rabbit's Horn), Shitsuga's uncle, invites the prominent Confucian teacher Kimō (Turtle's Fur) to his house, hoping that a lecture on moral virtue

from him will convince Shitsuga to mend his ways. Tokaku then receives a visit from Kyobu (Voidness Vanished), the Taoist anchorite, and later from Kamei kotsuji (Beggar Boy “Pseudonym”) the Buddhist mendicant. They join Tokaku’s effort to reform the delinquent, but the disagreement between the three teachers over the proper method of saving Shitsuga turns into a philosophical contest between Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. As expected, it is Kamei, standing in for Kūkai in the story, who emerges victorious in the end.

By resorting to a peculiar naming of the characters by means of oxymoron, Kūkai as narrator underlines that the episode is recounted in the fictive mood. However, there is nothing fictional in Kūkai’s attempt, by means of narrating Kamei’s triumph over Kimō, to make clear his intention in writing the story: that is, to defend his decision to become an ubasoku by abandoning his elite education. He does this by demonstrating that Buddhism is far more effective than Confucianism in persuading Shitsuga to reform, thereby ending his defamation of the family; and that, consequently, Kūkai’s seemingly embarrassing deviation from the social norm, which resulted from his awakening to the Buddhist religion, cannot be confused with his nephew’s delinquency.

The first fascicle of *Demonstrating the Goals* opens with Kimō entering Tokaku’s house. Of stately bearing, elegantly dressed, and naturally articulate, Kimō boasts to Shitsuga that his lectures have the power to transform even someone on the lowest rung of the social ladder, such as Shitsuga, into a respected leader. That is because one’s nature can be purified through learning and the right environment: “When he acts in perfect accord with the teachings [of the Confucian classics], the son of a hired laborer will ascend to the highest ministerial office; when they deviate from moral principles, the emperor’s children will become servants. Even a tree can be straightened by tying ropes around it. It is as true now as in the distant past that people become worthy by following the teachings of the ancient sages” (KZ 3:327). In particular, Kimō emphasizes the importance of learning the ancient rites (Jpn. *rai*; Ch. *li*), which make one’s daily life the realization of Confucian virtue. “Then the way (*tao*) becomes the foundation of your house, virtue (*te*) your bed, humaneness (*jen*) your couch, righteousness (*i*) your pillow, decorum (*li*) your blanket, and trust (*hsin*) your clothing” (KZ 3:330).

Kimō then explains that there is a direct link between one’s literary skills, the fruit of intellectual cultivation, and worldly success.

Study assiduously. Spend every day wisely and cherish even a moment’s opportunity to read. Do not set aside your books even when your friend

visits you, do not drop your brush and ink even if you stumble and fall. Then felicitous speech will pour from your mouth incessantly like a pristine spring, as boundless as a vast ocean; and your writing will become as prolific, vigorous, and radiant as the luxuriant green of mountain forests. . . . When you accomplish this, the gate of your residence will be crowded with the chariots of princes and lords, who, seeking your advice, will bring you gifts of jade and silk. . . . Without toil, and without flaunting your talent, you will soon be dressed in the blue-purple robe of the regency and entrusted with the seal of the sovereign. You will serve the emperor as if he were your parent, and help your colleagues as if they were your brothers. The jeweled sword, the square jade and the wooden baton—the proof of your nobility and authority—embellishing your waist, you will enter and exit freely the emperor's inner palace and accompany him as his attendant in the royal garden. By presiding over the government, your honor will permeate all under heaven, and any tongue speaking ill of you will be cut off. Your name will be recorded in the dynasty's history and your eminence will be transmitted into the distant future. All honorary titles and awards will be yours, and you will be remembered with an elegant posthumous name. Isn't this indeed timeless glory? What more could one hope for?

(KZ 3:330–331)

Kimō concludes his homily by telling Shitsuga that because of the exalted social status he will enjoy, his life will be graced further by wives of the noblest pedigree and by many influential friends. Swayed by Kimō's eloquence, Shitsuga promises to give up his degenerate ways, accepting Kimō's reasoning that once Shitsuga masters his Confucian learning, all the pleasure he was pursuing in his life of debauchery will actually be his. But instead of notoriety, he will attain fame, wealth, and power; instead of disgrace, he will bring prosperity to his clan. To build Kimō's argument, Kūkai liberally cites and quotes from more than twenty Confucian classics and Chinese dynastic histories, which are indicative of the range of his studies at the State College.<sup>63</sup> Kimō's speech therefore seems to embody Kūkai's observations about the particular beliefs and ideals underlying the manifestly career-oriented, utilitarian education he received at the college.

The second fascicle of *Demonstrating the Goals*, its shortest section, is devoted to Kyobu's Taoist lecture. As soon as Kimō has completed his sermon, a recluse who happened to be at the gate of Tokaku's house and who overheard Kimō's speech enters. With disheveled hair, clad in a ragged robe and grinning mockingly, Kyobu pronounces his disapproval of Kimō's teaching. All the

worldly gains endorsed by Kimō are, according to Kyobu, nothing more than causes of misfortune.

Tangled in greed that tortures the mind, worldly beings are constantly driven by the demons of passion, who scorch their hearts. They exhaust themselves through hard work just to feed themselves in the morning and the evening, just to obtain clothing to protect themselves from summer's heat and winter's chill. Dreaming of building a great fortune, they painstakingly accumulate savings. But the wealth they gather is as evanescent as a floating cloud, as groundless as the frothing foam, for their life passes swiftly as a flash of lightning. . . . Before their life's drama draws to a close, their requiem is already heard. The gentry and ministers of today are the servants and slaves of tomorrow. Even rulers, the cat stomping on the mouse, can at any moment be reduced to the conquered, the sparrow under the eagle's claw. Yet people always forget that death is imminent and cling to their capricious lives, the evening dew on a blade of grass before dawn, the autumn leaf dangling on the tip of a twig in the frosty wind. How pitiful!

(KZ 3:338)

As Kimō and Shitsuga listen intently to him, Kyobu declares that there is nothing as valuable as eternal life. To attain immortality, people must first turn away from fame, wealth, and power, the "poisons that exhaust their vital spirit." "Abandon the emperor's throne like a worn-out shoe, run away from slender-waisted women as from goblins and monsters, and despise ministerial positions as you do dead rats" (KZ 3:336). Having rejected worldly values, Kyobu explains the Taoist sciences of compounding herbal and mineral medicine, of breathing, and of dietary control that, together, transform one's life into that of an immortal master of Tao, who travels freely to heavenly realms and playfully interacts with gods and goddesses. "Your mind is pure, remaining utterly indifferent to worldly affairs, your thoughts are calm, having silenced all woes. You will now live as long as heaven and earth endure, and enjoy your longevity together with the sun and the moon. What teachings are superior to mine? What accomplishments surpass this glory?" (KZ 3:337-338) Overcome with awe, Kimō, Tokaku, and Shitsuga kneel at Kyobu's feet and beseech him to instruct them.

Kūkai's presentation of Taoist teaching, fascicle 2, is not only the shortest of the three fascicles but also the least documented. Kūkai's writing makes clear that he was not only well versed in the classics of Taoist philosophy, such as the *Lao-tzu*, the *Chüang-tzu*, and the *Huai-nan-tzu*; but also, in describing Kyobu's expertise in the science of longevity, he relies heavily on the *Pao-p'oh-tzu*,<sup>64</sup> a seminal text of religious Taoism composed by Ko Hung in

317. However, the Taoist texts to which Kūkai refers in *Demonstrating the Goals* are far fewer in number than the Confucian texts cited in the first fascicle.<sup>65</sup> This reflects the strict censorship imposed by the Nara and early Heian state, which regarded Taoism as heresy (*sadō*). The government was particularly sensitive about the magico-religious aspect of Taoism. The practice of diverse rituals for healing, divination, and shamanism, strongly associated with Taoism, was banned by the *ritsuryō* code.<sup>66</sup> Mastery of such skills might give its practitioners charismatic power that could be used to upset the Nara political process, modeled on Confucian rationalist ideology. As the tragic death of Prince Nagaya (684–729) had demonstrated, for the courtiers to be implicated in Taoist magic often proved sufficiently scandalous to remove them from their posts in the government.<sup>67</sup> Kūkai's ranking of Taoism over the state orthodoxy of Confucianism was certainly an extremely radical, potentially dangerous move, indicative of how distantly he already positioned himself from the political authorities at the time he composed *Demonstrating the Goals*.

In the third fascicle, the Buddhist mendicant Kamei, who has stopped at Tokaku's residence in the course of making his rounds, joins the debate. His head is shaven and “looks like a worn-out copper kettle.” His outfit is far more ragged than Kyobu's, so that at the sight of him “even beggars in the marketplace cover their faces in shame and thieves in prison hold their knees in their arms and cry in pity for him.” To Kyobu, and to Kimō and Shitsuga, who have been converted by Kyobu's teaching, Kamei boldly announces: “I have heard your lectures and find both to be difficult to master, and they are fruitless to try, for to do so would be just like inlaying ice with jewels, like painting an image on water. Kyobu's teaching is far from perfect; and Kimō's, while holding some merit, remains incomplete” (KZ 3:340). When the bewildered Kyobu asks Kamei, “From what country are you, whose offspring, and who is your teacher?” Kamei's response is an expression of the Buddhist idea of transmigration:

I have no abode in the threefold universe [of desire, form, and formlessness]. Nor have I a permanent residence in the six transmigratory paths [of hell dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, human beings, and heavenly beings]. At times the heavenly pavilion was my address, at times hell's prison, my house. There were times when I was your wife or child, and also when I was your father or mother. I was once a student of the demon Pāpiyas. I also studied with my non-Buddhist heretic friends. All the hungry ghosts and animals are parents to both you and me, because the circle of *samsāra* is swirling transmigrating beings incessantly through the four forms of birth [from womb, egg, moisture, and karma] and along the six transmigratory

paths. Your hair has turned white as snow, yet you are not necessarily my elder; my hair is thriving like a rising dark cloud, but that does not guarantee that I am your junior. That is because, from the beginningless beginning of time, you and I have been transmigrating from one life to another without interruption, without termination. How is it possible for me to speak with certainty about my birthplace and parents? However, at this moment, I temporarily live my mirage-like life by the bay where camphor trees shade the sun's rays, on the island adorned by shining seaweed, in the land of the rising sun under the emperor's reign, in the continent south of Mount Meru. I have already lived for twenty-four years and have not yet realized my life's goal.

(KZ 3:346)

Kūkai makes plain in a notation that the “bay where camphor trees shade the sun’s rays (*yoshō bi o kakusu no ura*), on the island adorned by shining seaweed (*tamamo yorutokoro no shima*)” are flowery expressions indicating Kūkai’s birthplace, Tado county in the province of Sanuki.<sup>68</sup> Kamei’s age, twenty-four, matches Kūkai’s in Enryaku 16 (797), the year he composed *Demonstrating the Goals*. It is thus more than reasonable to infer that Kūkai intended many of his descriptions of Kamei to compose a self-portrait. In the opening scene of fascicle 3, for instance, Kūkai locates Kamei not in the milieu of the Nara Buddhist establishment but among ubasoku and shidosō. “The shidosō Abi is his [Kamei’s] best friend and companion, and the ubasoku Kōmyō is his pious patron. They climb gold-hued peaks and endure the snow, they remain on rocky summits to test their perseverance in fasting. At one point, Kamei met a maiden called Undō, whose charms distracted him from his devotions. However, with the advice of the nun Kobe, he was able to free himself from worldly attachments” (KZ 3:341).

These passages suggest that Kūkai’s characterization of Kamei reflects his own experience of living with shidosō and ubasoku and of practicing austerities on mountains and in forests. For Kamei, too, who locates himself at the margin of *ritsuryō* society, defending himself from Confucian criticism is a major concern.

Someone told Kamei: “You are fortunate to have parents who are still living. You also have the lord of your province to serve. Why do you not show filial respect and live with your parents; why do you not work loyally for your lord? It is such a shame that you have buried yourself among beggars and that you now live your life mingling with drifters and fugitives. Your scandalous behavior has defamed your ancestors and your notoriety will be remembered for generations.”

Kamei replies:

Decrepit, my parents are approaching the grave. Yet being foolishly stubborn, I have no means of repaying my indebtedness to them. The sun and the moon pass by like a flying arrow and deprive us of our short lives. Our family fortune has declined; our house is falling apart. My two elder brothers died young, causing us endless tears. My relatives are impoverished as well, and I live out my days and nights in grief and sorrow. . . . However, I have heard that “petty filiality is for those who toil vainly, but great filiality is that which permeates the world.”<sup>69</sup> For this reason, T’ai-po took the tonsure and lived forever in the barbarous land.<sup>70</sup> The bodhisattva took off his royal dress and offered himself to starving tigers.<sup>71</sup> In both examples, their parents fell to the ground in agony and their relatives’ laments reached heaven. . . . If what you have told me is correct, who surpasses these two in their transgressive acts of unfiliality? However, T’ai-po is extolled as the Ultimate of the Virtuous and the bodhisattva is praised as the Lord of Great Enlightenment. Therefore when people’s action conforms to the way [of great filiality], they must not be criticized for trivial details. The priest Maudgalyāyana saved his mother from the realm of the hungry ghosts; the Buddhist layman Naśa, too, saved his father from hell’s suffering.<sup>72</sup> Did they not practice great filiality? Are they not models of human conduct?

(KZ 3:343)

Having concluded Kamei’s confession with his resolve to live the life of a Buddhist mendicant, Kūkai, as narrator, says: “Being firmly determined to act thus, without obeying his parents, without contacting his relatives, he [Kamei] traveled many lands, drifting from one province to another like duckweed in a stream, like tumbleweed rolling in the wind” (KZ 3:343). The parallelism between Kamei’s life of mendicancy and that of Kūkai himself illustrates the literary quality of *Demonstrating the Goals* as Kūkai’s personal apologia, composed in a style that modern literary critics have identified as “I” novel (*shishōsetsu*).<sup>73</sup> The last lines of Kamei’s poem, which concludes the work, also echo Kūkai’s inner voice.

This world of the six sensory dusts (sound, sight, scent, touch, taste,  
concepts) is the ocean of the drowning  
The peak of the four virtues of nirvāṇa (permanence, bliss, identity,  
pureness) is our refuge  
Enough of the fetters of our world, the threefold universe  
How should I not throw away my courtier’s robe?

(KZ 3:356)

If Kamei can be understood as Kūkai's fictional double in *Demonstrating the Goals*, Kamei's exposition of Buddhism should illustrate Kūkai's own perspective on Buddhism. Hearing Kamei's speech on transmigration, Kyobu looks even more perplexed and asks him, "What do you mean by the heavenly pavilion and hell's prison?" Kamei then explains the idea of karma.

When you do evil, the ox- and horse-headed wardens of hell's prison instantly appear before you and punish you with terrible suffering. When you guard yourself by doing good deeds, you will be surrounded by the heavenly pavilions of gold and silver in which you will enjoy the taste of ambrosia. There are no such permanent fixtures as the heavenly pavilion or hell's prison; they are the manifestation of your own mind, which alone is difficult to change. Just as you are confused now, I in the past was doubtful about this. However, recently I had the fortune to meet an excellent teacher who awoke me from the long intoxication of my previous [transmigratory] lives. My master, Śākyamuni Buddha, out of his boundless compassion attained enlightenment at age thirty and lived on this earth for eighty years in order to save beings. (KZ 3:347–348)

Kamei's presentation of transmigration, and of karma as the driving force of samsāra, the cycle of death and rebirth, introduces the element of uncertainty to familial and social relationships—that is, in light of the endless cycle of rebirth, there is no intrinsic necessity underlying the father-son relationship, or its extension, the superior-subordinate relationship. Kamei accordingly relativizes the Confucian principles of filiality and loyalty founded on such relationships. He then recites a lengthy verse, composed in the style of ancient Chinese rhymed verse or *fu*, titled "Impermanence." Through the poem's ghastly description of samsāric transformation of all things Kamei shows that there exists no safe haven of immortality from the terror of impermanence. For Kamei, even the heavenly abode of immortals is not the refuge from but the product of one's own karma; and all karmic creations, including the world itself, are subject to decay and are therefore impermanent. At the end of a cosmic cycle,

Soaring Sumeru whose summit reaches the galaxy  
 Will be reduced to ashes by the kalpa-ending fire  
 The vast, endless oceans, brimming to heaven's rim  
 Will be evaporated by countless suns . . .  
 The gods in the highest celestial realm of formlessness  
 Perish as instantaneously as a flash of lightning

The heavenly immortals' carefree life span  
 Will be consumed as quickly as a blast of thunder  
 How much more evanescent are we, who  
 Are not endowed with their diamond-like bodies . . .

(KZ 3:348)

When Kamei finishes his recitation, the poem's horrifying prospects have caused Kimō, Kyobu, Shitsuga, and Tokaku to pass out. Kamei then consecrates water by chanting a dhāraṇī and sprinkles it on them. Revived, they all rush to Kamei for instruction on finding release from the terrors of samsāra. In response, Kamei concludes his teaching by composing another *fū* entitled "Ocean of Samsāra," in which he criticizes Kyobu's advocating escapism from worldly suffering and extols the bodhisattva practice of the six pāramitās, which "floats the raft of compassion on the stormy sea of samsāra in order to save the drowning."

Aspire to awakening in the evening and reach for  
 Enlightenment, the highest reward, in the morning  
 Otherwise who can rise out of the tenebrous ocean  
 Of samsāra and ascend to the grand Dharmakāya?  
 Release your raft of the six pāramitās  
 Into the drifting streams of delusion  
 With the paddles of the noble eightfold path  
 Row your boat against the billows of desire  
 Erect the masts of *vīrya*, raise the sails of *dhyāna*  
 With the armor of *kṣanti* repel the attack of pirates  
 With the sword of *prajñā* destroy enemy ships . . .  
 Thereupon you will be equal to Śāriputra, to whom  
 The Buddha bestowed his *vyākaraṇa*, and the princess  
 Of the Nāga king who revealed her enlightenment  
 No longer impossible to reach is the shore  
 Of enlightenment, three *asamkhye*s of eons away  
 You will speedily traverse the distant path  
 Of the ten stages of bodhisattva training

(KZ 3:353)

As this passage from Kamei's verse demonstrates, Kūkai's discussion of Buddhism in *Demonstrating the Goals* is based on the exoteric perspective of

Mahāyāna Buddhism. Kūkai's metaphor of *vīrya* (effort), *dhyāna* (concentration), *ksanti* (perseverance), and *prajñā* (wisdom)—four of the six pāramitās—as parts of the raft of compassion faithfully reconstructs the Mahāyāna context of the bodhisattvas' practice both as the way of completing their training and as their traversal to the shore of nirvāṇa (*pāramitā*).<sup>74</sup> The mention of the ten stages of bodhisattvas' spiritual advancement (*daśa-bhūmika*),<sup>75</sup> another standard Mahāyāna concept for measuring the practitioner's progress, shows that Kūkai understands Buddhist enlightenment in the framework of exoteric gradualism. In chapter 20, fascicle 6, of Kumārajīva's 404 translation of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, for example, the Buddha says, "Bodhisattvas, great beings, abide by these ten stages in which, out of their power of compassion, they practice the six pāramitās. . . . Having completed the nine stages, they will reach the tenth stage of Buddhahood" (T 8 #223:259c).

According to this gradualist approach, it takes three *asamkyeya* (Jpn. *asōgi*)—literally, "innumerable," a term in Buddhist literature used as an astronomical measurement—eons of transmigratory lives before practitioners complete their bodhisattva training to become enlightened. Chapter 4 of Nāgarjuna's *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* explains:

In the first asamkyeya, the practitioners do not know whether or not they will eventually attain enlightenment. In the second asamkyeya, although confidence in enlightenment grows in their minds, they do not yet speak of the certainty of their future enlightenment. Finally, in the third asamkyeya, the bodhisattvas become conclusively aware of their approaching enlightenment and openly announce their conviction [about accomplishing their goal].<sup>76</sup>

In Mahāyāna literature, to assist the protracted spiritual apprenticeship of bodhisattvas, the Buddha often resorts to *vyākaraṇa* (Jpn. *juki*), a public pronouncement in which, through a premonition, he ascertains a bodhisattva's transformation into a Tathāgata, or perfectly enlightened one, in the distant future. The Buddha announces to his assembly the Tathāgata's name, the age and place in which he will rise, his method of explicating Dharma, and so forth. Kūkai's reference in Kamei's poem to *vyākaraṇa* is to the events in chapter 3 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, in which the Buddha gives a *vyākaraṇa* to Śāriputra, his leading *arhat* disciple (namely, one who has attained enlightenment through the practice of Hīnayāna), demonstrating that the path of bodhisattvahood is open to the followers of Hīnayāna as well (T 9:11b–c).

Another important outgrowth of this Mahāyāna gradualism is the idea of *apratisthita-nirvāṇa* (Jpn. *mujūsho nehan*), the nirvāṇa of nondwelling. Because of their compassion toward sentient beings, those advanced bodhisattvas

assured of their approaching enlightenment intentionally defer their passage into nirvāṇa and continue their work of saving those drowning in the bitter sea of transmigration. Because these bodhisattvas have already conquered the terror of saṃsāra, wherever they dwell in the realm of saṃsāra, their abode becomes no different from the safe shore of nirvāṇa. That is to say, they have semantically equated saṃsāra with nirvāṇa. Kūkai's allusion to the princess of the Nāga tribe is to the episode in chapter 12 of the *Lotus Sūtra* in which the Nāga princess, as one such advanced bodhisattva, graphically displays her grasp of enlightenment by instantaneously manifesting herself as a Tathāgata (T 9:35b–c).<sup>77</sup>

The string of Mahāyāna ideas underlying Kamei's poem, the ideas to which Kūkai resorted to assert the superiority of Buddhism over Taoism and Confucianism, stands in clear contrast to the esoteric perspective demonstrated in Kūkai's later writing. In the *Catalog of Imported Items* (*Shōrai mokuroku*), which Kūkai composed immediately after his return from China in 806, there is this passage:

There are a number of ways to cultivate one's samādhi; some are swift, others, slow. To unsheathe the wisdom sword of the one mind is the Exoteric Teaching. To swing down the vajra of the three mysteries [i.e., the weapon capable of instantly destroying all sorts of delusions] is the Esoteric Teaching. When practitioners concentrate their minds in the Exoteric Teaching, their goal will be far and away, three asamkyeya kalpas from now. When they train their bodies through the Esoteric Teaching, they will immediately attain the life of the sixteen Vajrapānis [of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala]. The most sudden of the sudden approaches is the Esoteric Teaching.

Repeating the same point in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings of the Exoteric and Esoteric* (*Benkenmitsu nikyōron*), *Transforming, One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment* (*Sokushin jōbutsugi*), *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind* (*Jūjūshinron*), and many others of his works, Kūkai rejects the rationale for Mahāyāna gradualism in favor of the Esoteric Buddhist concept of instantaneous enlightenment.<sup>78</sup> Kamei's discussion of Buddhism in *Demonstrating the Goals*, therefore, contradicts directly the central thesis of Kūkai's systematics of the Esotericism in his mature writings.

Kūkai's citation of Buddhist texts in the third fascicle of *Sangō shiiki* consistently excludes esoteric scriptures, testimony to the absence of an Esoteric Buddhist perspective in his composition of the work. Katsumata Shunkyō, in his annotated edition of *Demonstrating the Goals*, has identified forty Buddhist canonical texts that Kūkai quotes, or to which he makes specific reference,

in the third fascicle (KCZ 3:40–79). Among them are twenty-eight sūtras, including major Mahāyāna texts—such as the *Lotus*, the *Golden Light*, the *Avataṃsaka*, the *Vimalakīrti*, the *Vajracchedikā*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, the *Śrīmālādevī*, the *Lankāvatāra*, and the *Śūrangama*—and many Āgama texts, in particular the *Dīgha-nikāya* and the *Majjima-nikāya*. Other works cited include such principal treatises as the *Abhidharmakośa*, the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, the *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* (Ch. *Ta-chih-tu-lun*; Jpn. *Daichidoron*), and the *Awakening of Faith* (*Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin-lun*; Jpn. *Daijō kishinron*).

These citations show that within a few years after his disillusionment with his studies at the State College, Kūkai had already read widely in the literature of Buddhist scriptures and doctrinal texts. Kūkai devoted his life as an ubasoku not only to asceticism in the mountains and forests but also to intensive textual studies. To attain the erudition in Buddhist literature exhibited in Kamei's argument, Kūkai must have had access to major Buddhist libraries, most likely at large Buddhist temples in Nara. However, curiously absent from the lengthy list of works Kūkai cites in *Demonstrating the Goals* are esoteric texts. This is particularly striking in light of the general popularity in Nara society of many esoteric sūtras and of dhāraṇī chanting based on them (which will be examined detail in chapter 4); and in light of the fact that Kūkai began his career as a Buddhist practitioner with the gumonjihō, the esoteric meditative ritual built around the chanting of the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha's dhāraṇī.

Many scholars who have studied the biographical sources for Kūkai assert that practicing gumonjihō introduced him to the world of Esoteric Buddhism and prepared him for the establishment of the Shingon Esoteric School in Japan.<sup>79</sup> However, a reading of *Demonstrating the Goals*, which Kūkai composed within a few years of his first experience with gumonjihō, makes it clear that at the time of its composition he did not manifest any interest in esoteric deities, sūtras, or dhāraṇīs, nor did he incorporate a particularly esoteric approach into his discussion of the superiority of Buddhism over Taoism and Confucianism. In fact, Kūkai refers to dhāraṇī only once in *Demonstrating the Goals*—in the passage mentioned earlier in which Kamei chants a dhāraṇī to consecrate water, which he then sprinkles on Kimō, Kyobu, and Shitsuga, who have fainted. Kūkai uses dhāraṇī here to comically highlight his argument for the superiority of Buddhism over Confucianism and Taoism. But such a use of dhāraṇī in the story has no direct relevance to his exposition through Kamei of Buddhist theory. In this sense, the Buddhism presented in *Demonstrating the Goals*—despite Kūkai's inclination to distance himself from the Buddhist establishment of the time—does not hint at Kūkai's later perspective, in which Esotericism is a distinct category within the Buddhist tradition.

## Apologetics or Apologia: The Fictivity of the *Rōko shiiki*

In addition to its importance as a source for understanding Kūkai's early spiritual development, *Demonstrating the Goals* has features that radically separate the work from other literary texts of its age. To begin with, it stands as the earliest Japanese example of the public defense of Buddhism vis-à-vis Taoism and Confucianism. In this respect, Kūkai's composition can be studied in relation to earlier Chinese Buddhist apologetics. For example, KAJI Nobuyuki (1978:89–90) has suggested that *On Distinguishing Orthodoxy* (*Pan-cheng-lun*), written in 626 by the early T'ang priest Fa-lin (572–640),<sup>80</sup> was a major source of inspiration for Kūkai. Fa-lin is known for his cooperation with Prabhākaramitra (fl. 627–633) in translating the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālmīkāra*. *Distinguishing Orthodoxy* was an outgrowth of many years of his ideological rivalry with the Taoist Fu-i (555–639), who, as one of Emperor T'ai-tsung's closest advisers, urged the emperor in 621 to launch a nationwide offensive against Buddhism.

A work in eight fascicles, it is a hypothetical debate between a government official, a historian, a Taoist teacher, and a Buddhist master. In the first two fascicles, Fa-lin defends the Buddhist position against Confucianism and Taoism, asserting on one hand the compatibility of Buddhist precepts and Confucian virtue, and on the other the supremacy of the Buddhist theory of dependent co-origination over the Taoist theory of nonbeing. Later fascicles are devoted to a study of Buddhist and Taoist interaction, which includes a survey of earlier Chinese dynasties that prospered through their patronage of Buddhism (fascicles 3 and 4), a historical inquiry demonstrating that Buddhism antedates Taoism (fascicle 5), and a bibliographical study exposing the apocryphal origins of a great majority of Taoist scriptures, Fa-lin asserts, were composed as adaptations of, or as responses to, Buddhist sūtras (fascicle 8).

It appears that Kūkai was aware of Fa-lin's work at the time he composed *Demonstrating the Goals*: a few passages in Kūkai's text seem to paraphrase Fa-lin's arguments. In fascicle 3 of *Demonstrating the Goals*, for instance, Kamei tells Kimō and Kyobu that they have to pay attention to his teaching because both Mānavaca and Mahākāśyapa, two of the Buddha's leading disciples, are Kamei's personal friends (KZ 3:345). According to fascicle 6 of *Distinguishing Orthodoxy*, the Buddha sent these two disciples to China, where they became, respectively, Confucius and Lao-tzu (T 52:524b). *Distinguishing Orthodoxy* is also quoted in fascicle 2 of Kūkai's 830 magnum opus, *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind* (KZ 1:183–184), where, in line with Fa-lin's thesis, Kūkai equates the Confucian five virtues (*wu-ch'ang*) with the Buddhist five precepts (*pañcasīla*,

proscribing killing, stealing, improper sexual relations, lying, and intoxication) (T 52:493b).

On the other hand, there are some significant differences between *Demonstrating the Goals* and *Distinguishing Orthodoxy* that make it difficult to consider the latter as the model for the former. First, Kūkai's major concern in *Demonstrating the Goals* is to defend his own Buddhist stand against the censure directed against him by those embracing Confucian ethics. In his text Kūkai uses Taoism as if it were a relay station for readers to shift their perspective from Kimō's Confucianism to Kamei's Buddhism. Although less sophisticated philosophically, Taoism, for Kūkai, locates itself much closer to Buddhism than does Confucianism. By contrast, in *Distinguishing Orthodoxy* Taoism is presented as Buddhism's archenemy, which, Fa-lin says, grew into a popular religion by stealing the principal ideas and ritual practices of Buddhism and distorting them. Fa-lin's aim is to analyze the doctrine of religious Taoism in minute detail, revealing numerous Buddhist elements hidden in Taoist theory and practice, and then to denounce the religious system of Taoism as a heretical transformation of Buddhism. Such a captious approach toward Taoism, however, is absent in Kūkai's *Demonstrating the Goals*.

Another perhaps more important difference between *Demonstrating the Goals* and *Distinguishing Orthodoxy* concerns literary genre. Although it takes the form of a hypothetical debate between fictitious characters, *Distinguishing Orthodoxy* is devoid of fictional quality. The four characters in Fa-lin's work have no roles to play other than as interlocutors in a theoretical debate. Fa-lin shows no intention to describe each character's personal background, nor does he narrate events outside the debate itself that would intertwine the characters' lives into a consistent story. The speeches by these characters lack the elements of hyperbole and histrionics that characterize Kūkai's text. *Distinguishing Orthodoxy* therefore can best be understood as an apologetic text of philosophical-doctrinal discourse.

Kūkai, on the other hand, makes it clear that he intends his to be a work of literature. The text, composed in 797, was originally entitled *Rōkō shiiki*, or *Demonstrating the Goal for Those Who are Deaf and Blind to the Truth*,<sup>81</sup> years later, after his return from China in 806—as pointed out by Yoshito Hakeda and Kaji Nobuyuki<sup>82</sup>—Kūkai prepared a new introduction, revised the concluding verse, and gave it a new title, *Sangō shiiki*, or *Demonstrating the Goals of the Three Teachings*. In his original introduction, Kūkai wrote:

Some people are adroit, others are clumsy. In the same way, some writings are lauded for their beauty, and others are dismissed as lacking charm. Even in the poems of the legendary Ts'ao Chien and Ch'en Hsiu,<sup>83</sup> I often find

flaws as well as deviations from the rules of poetics. Chang Wen-ch'eng of T'ang wrote a great book for entertainment. His prose flows brilliantly from one sentence to another, just like a string of gems. The poems that adorn his chapters are as dynamic as phoenixes ascending to heaven. I only regret that because Wen-ch'eng devotes much of his book to scenes of sexual love, his work is devoid of loftier feeling. Yet just opening his book is enough to thrill even the judge Liu-hsia Hui, and reading it transforms the tranquillity of a Buddhist monastery into tumult. In our nation, Hi no Obito composed *Stories to Keep from Falling Asleep* (*Suikakuki*). Unexcelled in his eloquence, he fills his book with fancy, taradiddle, and sophism, as thoroughly as a thundercloud covers the sky. Just hearing Obito's name causes even a fool to clap his hands and burst into laughter. Just reading a few phrases from his writing prompts even a mute to exclaim in delight. Despite its sophistication, I must admit that Obito's work lacks spiritual depth. These are the epitome of the beautiful writings of the past, yet they hardly serve as the standard for later generations.

(KZ 3:287–288)

Kūkai then tells the reader that he will begin his story by introducing the fictitious characters Shitsuga, Tokaku, Kimō, Kyobu, and Kamei. At the close of the introduction he allows himself an expression of exceptional immodesty: "It is hoped that those of you who read my work will polish the ax of your intelligence so as to abandon your writing styles, which are as worthless as broken tiles, and purify with the refinement [represented by my work] as refreshing as orchid and iris your proclivity for writings that are as base as garlic and onion" (KZ 3:288–289).

In this original introduction, Kūkai places *Rōko shiiki* in the tradition of popular Chinese and Japanese fictional literature and daringly proclaims that his work, far exceeding its predecessors in both content and style, will set a new standard of literary excellence that will endure for generations. The work by Chang Wen-ch'eng (ca. 660–740) that Kūkai refers to is *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals* (Ch. *Tu-hsien-k'u*; Jpn. *Yūsenkutsu*), a tale of love and adventure about an imperial messenger who, on his way to the source of the Yellow River, wanders into a Shangri-la of immortals where he is entertained by a maiden and her sister-in-law. Although the text was lost at an early date in China, it had been imported to Japan by the mid-Nara period, and its ornate style was a major influence on Nara *kanbun* literature, Japanese texts composed in classical Chinese.<sup>84</sup> Hi no Obito's *Stories to Keep from Falling Asleep*, another *kanbun* text mentioned by Kūkai, did not survive, and information on it is scarce. However, KAWAGUCHI Hisao (1982:412–413), an expert on Nara and Heian literature, has argued that Obito's work was a

comic fiction, probably inspired by the *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals*, and a rarity that must be considered a forerunner of *monogatari*, narrative fiction written in Japanese phonetic characters, or *kana*, beginning in the mid-Heian period.

While Kūkai extols the literary sophistication of Chang Wen-ch'eng and Hi no Obito, he complains that their works lack either loftiness (*gashi*) or spiritual depth (*gasei*). One then wonders why Kūkai insisted upon composing *Rōko shiiki* as a popular fiction. If his purpose was to express noble intentions with spiritual profundity, he could have done so in a more appropriate format, such as that of philosophical discourse, exemplified by Fa-lin's *Distinguishing Orthodoxy*. A line in the introduction to *Rōko shiiki*, just cited, provides a clue. "Just opening his [Cheng Wen-Ch'eng's] book is enough to thrill even the judge Liu-hsia Hui, and reading it transforms the tranquillity of Buddhist monastery into tumult." Liu-hsia Hui, a sagacious scholar-official in the kingdom of Lu during the age of Chou who is praised in the *Analects* for his rigor in upholding ethical principles, personified Confucian virtue<sup>85</sup> and was considered the model government official. Written in parallel construction, this passage ridiculing both the *ritsuryō* government and the Buddhist monastic establishment marks Kūkai's critical distance from both as a shidosō existing outside the *ritsuryō* system.

Kūkai's reference to the popular fiction *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals* to express cynically his criticism of the state and the clergy is indicative of his dissatisfaction with the normative political and religious discourse of the Nara and early Heian society. Writing, in Kūkai's day, on the eve of the invention of the Japanese syllabic script, was a sophisticated art that required knowledge of a foreign language, Chinese. Aristocratic officials, who constituted the main body of the literati class, were trained essentially in two types of discourse—Confucian classics and Chinese dynastic history—and were expected to use their literary expertise in the production of government documents, which, as exemplified by imperial edicts, were designed to further enforce the state's control over society. As a political technology, writing was under strict governmental control: literary training in Chinese was monopolized by the State College and its provincial branch schools, which were attended exclusively by those hoping to become government officials.<sup>86</sup> This explains the paucity of socially permitted genres of writing for production and consumption.

The *Written History of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*) and *Continued History of Japan*, compiled in 720 and 797 by literati officials at imperial behest, are the clearest examples of state-controlled discourse (MATSUMOTO Takuya 1990). As the principal repositories of imperial edicts, they narrate history by endlessly repeating identical Confucian motifs for constructing the ideal scenario for

the *ritsuryō* theater-state: that with utmost justice, each successive emperor—addressed on the basis of the authoritative Chinese histories as the “Son of Heaven”—governed the nation by appointing able officials; that the emperor led the nation to prosperity by observing signs from heaven, which manifests auspicious events in response to benign rule or calamities as warning to the ruler against unrighteousness; that emperors maintained peace in the nation by crushing traitors and rebels but generously pardoning venial crimes. In short, in the framework of the *ritsuryō* regime, with Confucian classics and Chinese dynastic histories as models, literati officials produced all sorts of writings for the practical purpose of legitimizing the emperor’s rule as based on virtue and righteousness.

The writing produced by the priesthood, the other component of the Nara literati class, can also be understood as state-controlled, utilitarian discourse. In the tenth month of *Yōrō* 2 (718), at the height of the government’s effort to suppress Gyōki’s popular movement, the Grand Ministry (*Daijōkan*) issued an edict to the leaders of the Buddhist community, which paints the picture of ideal clergy for the *ritsuryō* state.

If there are those who excel in learning, who are highly respected by their colleagues and worthy to be model Dharma practitioners, . . . their names must be reported to this office so that they may be publicly honored. The doctrines of the five schools [of Nara Buddhism] differ from one another in the manner in which they investigate, discuss, and understand the teachings of the three treasures [of sūtras, śāstras, and vinayas]. Therefore each school must recommend from within its own ranks those sufficiently versed in its doctrine to become masters. These teachers must distinguish differences in talent and character among the priests and nuns and guide them so that they will study subjects that are appropriate to their aptitudes. Do not let them run away from the temples. Let them immerse themselves in debate over diverse doctrines, studying detailed concepts, reading and chanting sūtras, and training themselves in meditation. . . . Then the names of those who distinguish themselves in their virtuous wisdom will eventually reach the Son of Heaven’s ear.<sup>87</sup>

The number of extant works composed by Nara Buddhists is limited, but a few early bibliographical catalogs exist that help provide a general picture of Nara Buddhist writing. The earliest of these is the *Catalog of the Transmission of the Torch to the East* (*Tōiki dentō mokuroku*),<sup>88</sup> prepared in 1094 by Eichō (1014–?), a priest of Kōfukuji in Nara, one of the strongholds of the Hossō school. It lists more than 1,590 titles of treatises and commentaries composed

in China and in Japan. The historian INOUE Mitsusada's study (1982:227–266) of Eichō's catalog identifies 111 titles composed by scholar-priests of the Nara period, which are all from the collection in the Kōfukuji library<sup>89</sup> and which therefore illustrate the range of writings by Nara Hossō priests. Of these, nearly half, 48 titles, are commentaries written on seventeen different sūtras and are texts Inoue characterizes as "scriptures for protecting the nation" (*gokoku kyōten*) (INOUE Mitsusada 1982:254–261)—those believed to have the power to protect the nation (*gokoku*) from natural disasters, rebellions, and foreign invasions.<sup>90</sup> According to Eichō's listing, the most frequently studied sūtras are the *Lotus* (16 commentaries), the *Golden Light* (5), the *Vimalakīrti* (5), and the *Virtuous King* (3). The second-largest group of works in the catalog composed during the Nara period, a total of 37, are commentaries on a small number of seminal Chinese Yogācāra texts, which were essential for the doctrinal training of Hossō scholars.<sup>91</sup> The remaining 26 titles are divided into two classes: treatises on specific issues within the Yogācāra doctrine; and studies of fields immediately related to Yogācāra, such as the analytical theories of the *Abhidharmaśāstra* and Mahāyāna logic as represented by the *Nyāya-pravēśaka*.

Eichō's catalog shows that the writing produced during the Nara period by Hossō priests affiliated with Kōfukuji fit comfortably within the government's guidelines for Buddhist scholarly activities, in that they contributed to the court's effort to propagate those sūtras considered effective for protecting the nation. In their writing, priests and nuns were urged to engage in highly specialized inquiries, and thereby to conform with the government's policy of dividing the Buddhist order into doctrinal schools and discouraging each school's clergy from proselytizing among the masses. In short, it appears that the discourse that dominated the Nara intelligentsia, both court officials and Buddhist clergy, consisted of those writings that had immediate utility for the ritsuryō regime that ruled the nation.

By contrast, Kūkai in writing *Rōko shiiki* exhibited no intention to comply with the government's policy of regulating Buddhist scholarly activities. On the contrary, he composed *Rōko shiiki* as an apologia for his own actions, a defense for turning his back on the education provided at the Confucian State College, which was intended to form the ideological underpinning for the ritsuryō government, and for his choice of life as an ubasoku outside the quasi-bureaucratic Nara clergy. In this sense, the writing of *Rōko shiiki* itself represents Kūkai's disengagement from the normative discourse of Nara culture, which had constructed and was sustaining ritsuryō society. Kūkai reproduces that disengagement in the narrative of his own text. It will be recalled that in fascicle 1, the Confucian teacher Kimō, in his sermon to the delinquent Shitsuga, emphasizes how important it is for Shitsuga's rehabilitation that he polish his

literary skills. For Kimō, the art of literary persuasion is the very foundation of success as a government official, the expertise that rewards its possessor with fame and fortune at the court he serves. In fascicles 2 and 3, however, Kimō's argument is repeatedly refuted by Kyobu and by Kamei. Kūkai's text, as he writes, becomes the process of decentering the essential premise of the dominant discourse of Nara society, the premise that Kūkai has embodied in Kimō's utilitarian approach to writing as an indispensable tool for worldly success.

In contrast to national histories, treatises on Confucian classics, commentaries on Buddhist texts, and other quintessential *ritsuryō* writings, fiction as a literary category made no claim of utility to the state. In his introduction to *Rōko shiiki*, for instance, Kūkai describes *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals* and *Stories to Keep from Falling Asleep* as *sanrō no sho* (Ch. *san-lao-shu*, KZ 3:287), literally, “writing to dispel fatigue,” or “writing for refreshment.” Fiction aims at entertaining readers, not at serving the authorities. This explains why, as IGARASHI Chikara (1937:164–165) has suggested, fiction was not established as a legitimate literary genre during the Nara and early Heian periods. The direct correspondence between the *ritsuryō* authority structure and the normative discourse of society does not provide a *raison d'être* for fiction. As a useless appendage, it was relegated to the periphery of the Nara cultural space.

One edition of *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals* carries a preface that relates an episode in which the Emperor Saga (r. 810–823) happened to come across the work in his library. Impressed by the book's sophisticated language, he summoned the Confucian scholars of the State College, who were specialists on literature, philosophy, and history, to instruct him how to read the book. None of them, however, could do so. Then Doctor Koretoki, a professor at the college, learned that an old recluse who lived in the forest of Konoshima had preserved knowledge of how to read the book. The emperor sent Koretoki to the old man, who recited from memory the entire *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals* to demonstrate the Japanese reading of all the Chinese characters in the text.<sup>92</sup>

It is possible to speculate further that the Confucian ideology promoted by the state in the late Nara and early Heian periods not only ignored but suppressed fictional writing. Paul RICOEUR (1981:141), for example, has suggested that at the heart of fiction, or of literature in general, is the will to “destroy the world”—that is, to destroy the world of objects of conventional reality and establish on its ruins the secondary referents of subjunctivity, the other reality. “Everyday reality is thereby metamorphosed by what could be called the imaginative variation which literature carries out on the real” (p. 142). In that sense the goal of fiction is diametrically opposed to the Confucian

state ideology, which regarded literary productions and writing in general as a practical technology for maintaining social order. This seems to explain why in Confucian tradition fiction is often given the derogatory designation *kyōgen kigo*, “crazed speech, flowery words” (ŌMURA Mikio 1986:103). For the political regime under which Kūkai launched his writing career, fiction represented a potential hazard to its rule.<sup>93</sup> While Confucian scholars, aristocratic officials, and Buddhist pundits were praised by the government for their textual creations, fiction writers of the Nara period—such as Hi no Obito, whose work did not survive—were ignored, derided, even loathed by the establishment.

It is this marginality of fiction in the cultural milieu of the Nara and early Heian periods that makes Kūkai's ridiculing of the government and priesthood effective: “Just opening his [Cheng Wen-Ch'eng's] book is enough to thrill even the judge Liu-hsia Hui, and reading it transforms the tranquillity of a Buddhist monastery into tumult.” That is to say, although the *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals* may be a petty work of writing, lacking in substance, its elaborate narration, rhetoric, and poetics depicting a Chinese scholar-official's erotic adventures in a mysterious Shangri-la are powerful enough to mesmerize those literati who dominated the production of discourse in *ritsuryō* society. What Kūkai proposes in his introduction, then, is that *Rōko shiiki* be considered as a new type of fiction—a fiction that not only exhibits literary sophistication comparable to that of *Journey Into the Cave of Immortals* and *Stories to Keep from Falling Asleep*, but also rivals in its significance national histories, philosophical treatises, and other normative writings. Such a genre, Kūkai suggests, would not only fascinate the *ritsuryō* intelligentsia but seriously challenge their monopoly over legitimate writing.

In this sense, *Rōko shiiki* is an apologia for its own textuality, a defense of fiction. Although it does not contribute to the maintenance of the *ritsuryō* order, for Kūkai it had its own *raison d'être*, which could not easily be dismissed by the literati. By fictively recapitulating the State College student's successive encounters with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, it addressed the issues that were central to *ritsuryō* discourse. Yet Kūkai did not elect to compose *Rōko shiiki* as a work of an apologetics—a medium of doctrinal analysis that was congenial to the major works of the Nara priesthood. That is because Kūkai's intention was not merely to persuade readers, through logic, of the superiority of his chosen faith of Buddhism over Taoism and Confucianism, nor was it to construct a generalized, abstract, impersonal theory. Rather, he strove to express through the fictivity of *Rōko shiiki* his own inner pathos. His initial enthusiasm for building a career by means of an education at the State College, which had given way to deep disappointment, remorse over betraying his parents, shame at the censure leveled at him by his relatives, and

the solace he discovered in a hermitage in the wilderness—all of which marked the turning point in Kūkai’s life—manifested themselves as major motifs of *Rōko shiiki*. “I have written this only to release my irrepressible emotions,” Kūkai wrote candidly at the close of the introduction (KZ 3:325). To express his inner feelings, he chose as his medium the mythos of a literary text over the logos of philosophical discourse.

Kūkai’s emphasis on the poetic over the logical sheds light on another important trait of *Rōko shiiki*’s textuality: the numerous citations of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist texts as well as Chinese histories and poems. Kūkai’s indefatigable effort to refer to and quote from these texts can be seen as an immature, flagrant display of the exceptional breadth of his learning. However, the reader of *Rōko shiiki* notices that his citations primarily concern metaphors, parables, and aphorisms, and for the most part are intended to achieve rhetorical effects, not to fortify his reasoning, as is frequently the case in his doctrinal writings.<sup>94</sup> What *Rōko shiiki*’s citations aim at is not rigor and precision of argument, but a demonstration of the author’s ability to play with words, his tropological technique. It will be recalled that when Kūkai began his preliminary Confucian education at age sixteen with his uncle Ato no Ōtari, he became particularly fond of the study of poetry and rhetoric,<sup>95</sup> whose mastery was considered an essential skill for literati-officials. Kūkai’s unswerving love of poetry and rhetoric later led him to compile the *Secret City of the Mirror of Writing* (*Bunkyō bifuron*), an extensive compendium summarizing the major poetic theories and rhetorical strategies of classical Chinese literature and a work that had a lasting influence on the development of Japanese poetry and poetics.<sup>96</sup>

In light of its countless citations, which form an intertextual link with the gamut of major texts written in Chinese—histories, Confucian classics, poems, Taoist scriptures, popular fictions, Buddhist sūtras—*Rōko shiiki* can be seen as an early expression of Kūkai’s devotion to writing. Although he has abandoned his Confucian education, Kūkai suggests to his reader, his study of rhetoric and poetics has not been wasted: he has invented a new genre of literature in which the art of writing is better served than in the decrees, laws, and other governmental documents composed by literati-officials. In this sense, *Rōko shiiki*, in its literary function as a discourse, replicates Kūkai’s dissident posture as a shidosō-ubasoku. From his critics’ viewpoint, Kūkai now lived as a beggar and a drifter—and to rituryō society he was a pariah. But Kūkai’s response was that, in escaping to the outermost periphery of the rituryō political order, he had discovered a way of practicing Buddhism that he claimed surpassed in profundity the orthodox ideology of Confucianism. From the point of view of the court literati, the fiction of *Rōko shiiki* too, was at the margin of rituryō

discourse. However, here at the outer limit of the *ritsuryō* cultural space, Kūkai announced that he had invented a new genre: the religio-philosophical fiction that—he asserted—surpassed the normative discourse of his age in its figurative sophistication and was a form that could convey one's personal, innermost experience. For Kūkai, this power to express one's inner experience was the fundamental reason for a literary work to exist, and one certainly more compelling than maintaining the government bureaucracy. In the challenge it flung at the authoritative structure of *ritsuryō* society, not only Kamei as a fictional character but the text of *Rōko shiiki* itself is Kūkai's double.

### The Dilemma of Kūkai's Fiction and Mikkyō

By demonstrating through the text of *Rōko shiiki* his approach to writing as antithetical to that of the orthodox Confucianism, Kūkai as a writer stepped outside the cultural framework of *ritsuryō* discourse. The radical quality of Kūkai's text becomes apparent at once when one compares it with Keikai's *Miraculous Episodes of Good and Evil Karmic Effects* (*Nihonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki*), discussed earlier. True, Keikai frequently praises the proselytizing activities of shidosō and ubasoku among ordinary people. There are even suggestions that Keikai himself was a shidosō (episode 38, fascicle 3). However, Keikai's shidosō and ubasoku do not openly criticize the government, and *Miraculous Episodes* is far more compromising than *Rōko shiiki* with Confucian political orthodoxy. In fact, one of its central themes is the compatibility of Confucian ethical teaching and the Buddhist teaching of karma, which extols loyal, dedicated service to the emperor and filial devotion to parents as the sources of good karma, and denounces their opposites as leading to evil karma.<sup>97</sup> In addition, despite the atmosphere of fantasy permeating the *Miraculous Episodes*, Keikai presented it as a work of history, a legitimate literary genre in *ritsuryō* society. This can be seen from that fact in the great majority of his episodes he took care to indicate the particular emperor during whose reign the events related were supposed to have taken place. Keikai also remarked that he was writing his text at a turning point in Buddhist history, when the Age of Degenerating Dharma (*mappō*) had finally arrived. In his introduction to fascicle 3 of the *Miraculous Episodes*, Keikai wrote:

Since the time of the Buddha's entrance into nirvāṇa until this present day, the sixth year of Enryaku [789], 1,722 years have passed. The Ages of Right Dharma and of Imitated Dharma have both gone by and we have entered the Age of Degenerating Dharma. From the time of the first introduction of

the Buddha Dharma to Japan to this present day, the sixth year of Enryaku,  
236 years have passed.

(NKZ 6:260)

*Miraculous Episodes*, both in its conciliatory attitude toward authority and in terms of its conventional format, is presented in such a way that it fits well within the structure of *ritsuryō* discourse.

By contrast, one does not find an element of compromise in Kūkai's *Rōko shiiki*. By subordinating Confucianism to both Taoism and Buddhism, it goes directly against Emperor Kanmu's policy of elevating Confucianism and confirming it as political orthodoxy and of subjugating the Buddhist order by absorbing it within the *ritsuryō* bureaucracy. On the other hand, it is not immediately evident what role the composition of *Rōko shiiki* played in Kūkai's personal spiritual growth. It appears that Kūkai wrote the work to mark the end of the series of crises in his life, which had begun with his disillusionment with the Confucian training he had received at the State College. It was to be his final answer to the reproaches of his relatives and teachers—to their despair over his metamorphosis from elite student to beggar, to their disappointment at seeing the last hope of the Saeki clan destroyed. Although *Rōko shiiki* might have silenced his critics, however, it did not resolve his problems; on the contrary, it appears that the writing of *Rōko shiiki* plunged Kūkai into yet another, even more serious crisis. In one of the rare texts describing his state of mind during the period of seven years between the composition of *Rōko shiiki* and his departure to China in 804,<sup>98</sup> Kūkai wrote:

Since my awakening to the Buddha Dharma, I, Kūkai, was striving to return to the home of originally enlightened mind. However, I was in the midst of a labyrinth and had lost my way back. Standing at a loss at the crossroads, there was many a time when I cried. With the kind guidance of the Buddhas, I then discovered this secret gate of Dharma. However, as soon as I opened its scroll to read its lines, my mind was darkened again. It was at this time that I vowed to travel to China to study it.<sup>99</sup>

The date of this pronouncement was the seventh day of the ninth month of Kōnin 12 (821), and it was made at a ceremony celebrating the completion of the work of restoring the two scrolls of maṇḍalas he had brought back from China. A passage in Shinzei's *Biography of Kūkai* corresponds to Kūkai's statement just quoted.

Facing the image of the Buddha, he [Kūkai] prayed. "Since I began practicing the way of Buddhism, I have been seeking to grasp its essence. I have read

through all the scriptures of the three vehicles, the five vehicles, and the twelve divisions.<sup>100</sup> Yet I still have doubt in my mind and have not been able to resolve it. O, I beseech you, all Buddhas, reveal to me the ultimate." He kept praying single-mindedly. In his dream, a person appeared and said, "It is the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* that you are searching for." Awakened, he was filled with bliss. He obtained a copy of the sūtra and rushed to open the scroll. However, as he read it over, he found one stumbling block after another. It only reminded him of his lack of ability. No one was able to help him answer his questions. This made him resolve to travel to China and study there.

(KZ shukan:34)

According to later biographies of Kūkai, the statue of the Buddha to whom Kūkai addressed his prayer was the Buddha Vairocana at Tōdaiji, and the site at which Kūkai discovered the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* was the stūpa of Kumedera, a temple in the vicinity of the ancient palace of Kashiwara, south of Nara.<sup>101</sup> Those sources agree with Shinzei's biography in asserting that Kūkai continued his assiduous study of Buddhist scriptures in all their categories of "the three vehicles, five vehicles and twelve divisions." HAKEDA Yoshito (1975:55) has noted that "After writing *Rōko shiiki* at age twenty-four—his comparative study of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism—Kūkai maintained the same comparative perspective. Relying on the intellectualist approach, he now attempted to determine the highest teaching offered by the competing Buddhist schools."

However, Kūkai's studies seem to have come up against a barrier, and his progress came to a halt. It will be recalled that it was Kūkai's escape from bookish study of Confucianism at the State College to the gumonjihō training in the wilds that became the first turning point in his spiritual life. The self-portrait of Kūkai revealed in both *Rōko shiiki* and *Sangō shiiki* shows that he maintained this experiential, nonbookish approach to Buddhism by living among shidosō and ubasoku, whose routine included daily rounds of begging and occasional retreats deep into the recesses of the mountains and forests. At the same time, however, Kūkai's composition of *Rōko shiiki* embodied his unceasing passion for textual studies. In this sense, it presents a schizophrenic contradiction: its contents extol experiential practice and dissociation from scholastic learning; but its textual structure celebrates pedantry. This illustrates the root cause of Kūkai's personal crisis: unable to find an integrating principle, his life was bifurcated into two opposing approaches to knowledge.

It appears that Kūkai's crisis reflected within itself the limitation of Nara Buddhist scholarship, which lacked (as will be studied in detail in part II of this

book) theories capable of bridging the existing gap between doctrinal studies and ritual practices. For Kūkai, whose composition of *Rōko shiiki* had only led him up a blind alley in the labyrinth of his youth, the training within the Six Schools at the major Nara monasteries were of no assistance. Despite their differences, all had as their principal concern the interpretation of essential Chinese Buddhist sūtras, śāstras, and treatises. In Kūkai's view, all were as pedantically oriented as the State College. He searched for a new type of knowledge that would bridge the gap between the religious practices he carried out as an ubasoku and the doctrinal knowledge he had acquired through his reading of the Buddhist texts. Austerities in the wilds, recitation of dhāraṇī, wandering on pilgrimages, begging—not only were most of these activities in which Kūkai engaged proscribed by the ritsuryō government; the Nara Buddhist intelligentsia did not even have a language to properly address such practices. Again, Kūkai was facing a problem whose answer could not be found within the confines of ritsuryō discourse.

It is in the context of this predicament that Kūkai first read the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, a text that had a lasting influence on his thinking. According to the registry of the Office of Sūtra Reproduction (Shakyōsho) in the government, the sūtra was copied at least four times in the Nara period: in 737, 747, 748, and 753.<sup>102</sup> However, unlike other major esoteric sūtras already popularly recited and studied during that era, such as the *Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* and the *Buddhoṣṇīśa Sūtra*, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* remained obscure. Never integrated into the essential canonical texts of any of the Nara clergy, it seems to have been forgotten by the time Kūkai studied it half a century after its last official copying.

The *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* is unique having a textual structure distinct from other popular esoteric scriptures of the Nara and early Heian periods, which generally consist of episodes demonstrating the efficacy of a particular dhāraṇī and a description of ritual procedures for chanting it. By contrast, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* does not revolve around the chanting of a single dhāraṇī. A voluminous scripture comprising thirty-six chapters in seven fascicles, the sūtra can be divided into three parts. The first chapter, which takes the form of a discourse between cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana and Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, is a theoretical analysis of the ultimate, all-embracing wisdom (Skt. *sarvajñajñāna*; Jpn. *issai chichi*), followed by a methodological proof that it is obtainable. The chapter presents itself as a summary of major Mahāyāna theories of enlightenment and makes liberal reference to key concepts within the Mādhyamika, Yogācāra, and Tathāgatagarbha doctrines.<sup>103</sup>

The next section of the sūtra, chapters 2 through 31, describes various esoteric ritual procedures for practitioners, aimed at actualizing in their med-

itative experience the *sarvajñajñāna* that is treated theoretically in the first chapter. They form a comprehensive catalog of the principal Esoteric Buddhist rites: construction of the *maṇḍala* called the “procreation of the matrix of the great compassion” (Skt. *mahākaruṇā-garbhodhaya*; Jpn. *taihi taizōshō*); recitation of mantras for invoking the *maṇḍala* deities (chapter 2); a pledge of fidelity to the esoteric precepts of *samaya* (Jpn. *sanmaya*) prior to ordination (chapters 15, 18); the esoteric ordination ritual of *abhiṣeka* (Jpn. *kanjō*); and the meditative techniques of the “three mysteries” (Skt. *tri-guhya*; Jpn. *sanmitsu*) that combine silent recitation of mantras, the gestural actions of mudrās, and visualization of the designs of mantra letters in Sanskrit script (chapters 19–23).

The last five chapters of the *sūtra*, collected in fascicle 7, illustrate another kind of ritual sequence, the devotional practice of addressing an offering (Skt. *pūja*; Jpn. *kuyō*) to Mahāvairocana that consists of yogic exercises, the purpose of which is to translate meditative insights into bodhisattva acts of saving others.<sup>104</sup>

Because the central thesis of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* is the transposing of the theoretical analysis of enlightened mind to a meditative experience, it is not surprising if Kūkai anticipated the final resolution of his crisis in the *sūtra*'s mediation between text and ritual. In other words, the *sūtra* presented for Kūkai a model of a new type of training in which the textual study and ritual practice were integrated. The theoretical discussion in chapter 1 of the *sūtra* must not have posed difficulties for Kūkai, who was already well versed in diverse Mahāyāna texts. On the other hand, the *sūtra*'s discussion of ritual procedures is filled with novel esoteric elements—such as *maṇḍala*, *samaya*, and *abhiṣeka*—that had remained alien to Nara Buddhist culture. Many of the deities of the *maṇḍala* mentioned in the *sūtra*, including Mahāvairocana, and their iconographic images, had yet to be introduced to Japan. In addition, the *sūtra* often describes its mantras and dhāraṇīs not in transliterated Chinese characters, as had been done for the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara and other popular Nara esoteric scriptures, but in the original Sanskrit script called *Siddham* (Jpn. *Shittan*). “As soon as I opened its scroll to read its lines, my mind grew dark again. It was then that I vowed to travel to China to study it.” This statement by Kūkai, quoted earlier, suggests that he was unable to find teachers capable of deciphering the cryptic passages of the *sūtra*. Shinzei's biography, also quoted above, corroborates this point: “He obtained a copy of the *sūtra* and rushed to open the scroll. However, as he read it, he found one stumbling block after another: it only reminded him of his lack of ability. No one was able to help him answer his questions. This made him resolved to travel to China and study there.” It therefore appears that what urged Kūkai to travel to China was his desire to study the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*.

Recent developments in philological study of Kūkai's biographical sources have revealed that Kūkai did not receive ordination officially until 804. That is, he maintained his illegitimate status as shidōsō and ubasoku until he was thirty-one.<sup>105</sup> The procedures for Kūkai's ordination were both irregular and hurried. Ordinarily, novices were required first to obtain the permission of the state that granted them the status of *shami* (Skt. *śramaṇera*), or priestly intern. After at least three years of additional training, they were allowed to receive the ordination as *biku* (Skt. *bhikṣu*), or full-fledged priest.<sup>106</sup> As UHEYAMA Shunpei (1981:160–168) has pointed out, except for some forgeries dating from much later periods, there exists no document that indicates that Kūkai ever received the official status of *shami*. By contrast, a document issued by the Ministry of Aristocracy states that Kūkai received the full ordination for *bhikṣu* at the vinaya platform of Tōdaiji in the fourth month of Enryaku 23 (804).<sup>107</sup> The following month, he was already aboard the first ship of the diplomatic fleet to the T'ang empire.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the official certificate of Kūkai's ordination issued by the Grand Ministry was dated the eleventh day of the ninth month of Enryaku 24 (805),<sup>109</sup> that is, when Kūkai was studying in Ch'ang-an.

These events point to the element of fortuity that made possible Kūkai's voyage to China. On the sixteenth day of the fourth month in Enryaku 22 (803), the year prior to Kūkai's ordination, the embassy to the T'ang court headed by the ambassador Fujiwara no Kadonomaro (754–818) departed from the port of Naniwa. However, on the twenty-first day of the same month, the diplomatic fleet encountered a severe storm. Only a few ships were able to return safely, and many lives were lost.<sup>110</sup> It was customary to view those priests who survived aboard a sunken ship as bad luck, and they were therefore not allowed to travel again.<sup>111</sup> This seems to have made it necessary for the court to recruit replacement personnel within a short period of time and thus to give Kūkai the opportunity to participate in the mission. On the twenty-eighth day of the third month of Enryaku 23 (804), Kanmu's court gave Kadonomaro a second decree instructing him to lead the envoys to China.<sup>112</sup> It is only the urgency of the situation that makes the irregular procedure followed in the ordination of Kūkai understandable. Existing historical sources do not show how many years had elapsed between Kūkai's discovery of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and his voyage to China. But he must have had sufficient time to prepare for his journey, for he was already fluent in conversational Chinese at the time of his departure from Japan.<sup>113</sup> Despite his unordained status, Kūkai appears to have been selected to participate in the 804 mission mainly because of his command of spoken and written Chinese.<sup>114</sup>

The events surrounding Kūkai's ordination and his departure to China shortly thereafter suggest that the highest priority for Kūkai, who continued to

live his life as an ubasoku, was to prepare himself for studying the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* in China, rather than to seek admission to the priesthood. He was inducted into the clergy at the very last moment prior to the journey because without being officially ordained it was impossible to be accredited to the Japanese mission to China as a Buddhist student. This does not warrant, however, the interpretation that Kūkai's intention in traveling to China was to study Mikkyō (Esoteric Teaching) per se. For Kūkai, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* was crucial not because he recognized it as an Esoteric Buddhist text—that is, as a sūtra that, together with other esoteric sūtras, should be classified separately from the body of Mahāyāna sūtras—but because he found that the sūtra would enable him to resolve his personal crisis, the stagnation induced in him by the limitation in the knowledge of Buddhism available in ritsuryō society.<sup>115</sup>

# CHAPTER 3

## Journey to China *Outside Ritsuryō Discourse*

In *Mount Kōya Diary* (*Kōya nikki*), the collection of poems he composed during his pilgrimage to the sacred mountain, the eminent medieval poet-priest Ton'a (1301–1384) relates the story of how Kūkai came to invent the native Japanese *kana* syllabary. According to Ton'a, Kūkai created the Japanese alphabet as a means of facilitating the work of carpenters who were attempting to put together overwhelmingly numerous parts to build on Mount Kōya an Esoteric Buddhist stūpa, the hitherto unknown architectural structure requiring complex assembly (ZG 18B:1248b–1249a). Ton'a's story is one of many anecdotes in medieval literature that portray Kūkai as the inventor of the Japanese syllabary.<sup>1</sup>

On his return in 806 from his two years of study in China, Kūkai reported to the court of Emperor Heizei that he had brought back with him a total of 216 scriptural texts, all of which either had yet to be introduced to Japan or had been lost following their importation in the past. Of these, 42 titles, or nearly one fifth of the Buddhist texts imported by Kūkai, were in Sanskrit. In addition to sūtras, liturgical texts, and ritual manuals containing numerous mantras and dhāraṇīs in Sanskrit, Kūkai's list included textbooks in Chinese on the Sanskrit script system, phonetics, and grammatical rules, and concordances of Sanskrit syllables and their Chinese translation or transliteration.<sup>2</sup>

These texts constituted the first wave in the influx of Sanskrit, introduced to early Heian Japan by Japanese priests who, following Kūkai's example, traveled as pilgrims to China to study Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> They made it possible for Japanese scholar-priests to establish for the first time the correct pronunciation of mantras and dhāraṇīs transliterated in Chinese in many Buddhist texts, both exoteric and esoteric, that had widely circulated in Nara and early Heian Japan. Perhaps more important, the systematic importation of Sanskrit meant for the early Heian intelligentsia the acquisition of a phonetic writing system, which was far more effective than the ideographic script of Chinese for writing

Japanese. This seems in turn to have encouraged the emergence of the native script of kana characters, which were developed as cursive, abbreviated means of writing Chinese characters so as to use them only for their tonal values. The Japanese kana alphabetical table (*Gojūonzu*) emulates that of Sanskrit (YAMADA Yoshio 1938:79–93), pointing to the reason underlying the belief widespread in the medieval period that Kūkai was the inventor of the kana syllabary.

Kūkai's study in China was therefore as significant for his importation of a new language—more specifically, a new writing system—as for his introduction of a new school of Buddhism. Unlike scholar-priests in the existing Buddhist schools in early Heian Japan, Kūkai found it necessary to study Sanskrit. That is, his decision to study in China was motivated by his desire to master Sanskrit, which was necessary if he was to study ritual languages described in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the scriptural text in which Kūkai saw the possibility of integrating textual study and ritual-meditative exercise in a manner hitherto impossible for the Nara Schools. In fact, in his official catalog of the canonical texts of the Shingon School submitted to Emperor Saga's court in 823, Kūkai included forty Sanskrit texts whose mastery was required for students of the Shingon School.<sup>4</sup> This points to the possibility that Kūkai's Buddhism was most clearly distinguished from the existing Japanese Buddhist schools in its approach to writing, ritual, text, and language in general.

## Foreign Language Studies and Esoteric Buddhism

On the sixth day of the seventh month of Enryaku 23 (804), the four-ship diplomatic fleet headed by Ambassador (*kentō taishi*) Fujiwara no Kadonomaro (?–818) left the port of Tanoura in Hizen province on the island of Kyūshū. The next day, the third and fourth ships were lost in a storm.<sup>5</sup> Within the next few weeks, the second ship, headed by Vice Ambassador (*kentō fukushi*) Ishikawa no Michimasu and bearing the Tendai priest Saichō, made its way to the port city of Ming-chou, south of the mouth of the Yang-tze and north of Mount T'ien-t'ai. However, Vice Ambassador Michimasu died of illness in Ming-chou on the twenty-fifth day of the seventh month,<sup>6</sup> probably only a few days after his ship's arrival there following its exhausting voyage. Ambassador Kadonomaro's first ship, which carried Kūkai, drifted further south in the South China Sea, and on the tenth day of the eighth month arrived at a port near the city of Fu-chou in the present-day province of Fujian. It was unusual for a Japanese mission to land so far south, and the local authorities did not permit the emissaries to land until the third day of the tenth month, when they finally entered Fu-chou.<sup>7</sup>

Although Kadonomaro's ship was staffed with official interpreters (*tsūji*) and scribes (*rokuji*), the ambassador, perhaps after several failed attempts to secure permission to land, entrusted to Kūkai the task of writing on his behalf to the Chinese authorities.<sup>8</sup> Unlike many other Japanese Buddhist pilgrims of his time, such as Saichō, who relied on their command of written Chinese for communication,<sup>9</sup> Kūkai arrived in China with fluency in both spoken and written Chinese, which was necessary if he was to study the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. Because all its mantras and dhāraṇīs were inscribed in Sanskrit letters, mastery of the sūtra meant for Kūkai the acquisition of another foreign language via Chinese.

On the third day of the eleventh month, at the invitation of the T'ang court, Ambassador Kadonomaro finally left Fu-chou for Ch'ang-an. However, the local authorities limited the size of his party to twenty-three members.<sup>10</sup> The rest of the mission followed the interpreter and scribe Yamada no Ōba, who took the ship north to Ming-chou and prepared for the embassy's return voyage.<sup>11</sup> Kūkai was originally not among those permitted to travel to the capital, and he wrote a petition directly to the magistrate of Fu-chou requesting that he be included in the party.<sup>12</sup> It was not unusual for the Chinese authorities to deny Japanese students' access to the capital, however. The Tendai priest Ennin (794–864), for example, reported that in his mission of 835 only two of a group of more than ten students of Buddhism and Confucianism were allowed entry to the capital. Initially, Ennin himself was not even permitted to visit Mount T'ien-t'ai, where Saichō had studied earlier.<sup>13</sup> Kūkai's petition indicates that it was imperative for him to reach the capital of Ch'ang-an, the principal site of the state-sponsored scriptural translation projects, where priests of diverse national origins knowledgeable in Indian and Central Asian languages could accommodate Kūkai's particular demands for linguistic expertise.

Ambassador Kadonomaro's party reached Ch'ang-an on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month and was reunited with officers from the second ship, who had arrived in the capital the previous month. On the twenty-third day of the first month of the next year (805), Chen-yüan 21—or Enryaku 24 according to the Japanese calendar—Emperor Te-tsung (r. 780–805) died. A series of mortuary rites held by the state forced the Japanese embassy to remain in the capital until the tenth day of the second month of that year.<sup>14</sup> During that period, Kūkai stayed with other members of the embassy at one of the diplomatic facilities of the T'ang court and seems to have continued his secretarial work for the ambassador.<sup>15</sup> In the second month, for example, Kūkai composed another diplomatic missive for Kadonomaro addressed to a prince of the Kingdom of Pe-huai.<sup>16</sup>

Prior to the embassy's departure for Ming-chou for its return trip to Japan, Kūkai entrusted Kadonomaro with a copy of the epitaph of the priest I-hsing

(683–727), composed by Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 713–756), to be delivered to Emperor Kanmu's court.<sup>17</sup> An accomplished mathematician and astronomer famed for his invention of a new calendar system, I-hsing also played a pivotal role in the spread of Esoteric Buddhism in China. He studied with both Śubhakarasiṁha (673–735) and Vajrabodhi (671–741), who brought to China, respectively, the Esoteric Buddhist traditions of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajrasēkhara Sūtra*. I-hsing in particular was renowned for his cooperation with Śubhakarasiṁha in the translation of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the production of its extensive Chinese commentary.<sup>18</sup> Kūkai's present to the Japanese court of I-hsing's biography appears to be another piece of evidence that Kūkai was intent upon mastering the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and returning to Japan with the knowledge of a religious system that centered on that sūtra.

On the tenth day of the second month, upon the departure of the Japanese mission, the T'ang court decreed that Kūkai should be a resident priest at Hsi-ming-ssu, a large monastic complex in the northwestern section of the capital, located immediately to the southeast of the Western Bazaar of the capital. At that point, Kūkai's study of Buddhism in China began.<sup>19</sup> Since its foundation in 656 by Emperor Kao-tsung, with the endorsement of the celebrated Chinese pilgrim to India Hsüan-tsang (602–664), the Hsi-ming monastery had been a major center of Buddhist academic activities.<sup>20</sup> In his report to the Chinese authorities in 806, Kūkai identified as his two principal teachers the Indian Tripitaka master Prajñā (734–810?) and the priest Hui-kuo (746–805) of Ch'ing-lung temple.<sup>21</sup> Kūkai's residence at Hsi-ming monastery provided him with a plethora of information and personal contacts that led to his meeting with those two masters in Ch'ang-an.

It was at Hsi-ming-ssu that Hsüan-tsang began the work of translating the voluminous Prajñā-pāramitā and Yogācāra texts he had imported from India. His successors K'uei-chi (632–682), Yüan-t'se (613–696), and others launched doctrinal studies at the monastery that gave rise to the tradition of Fa-hsian (Jpn. Hossō), or Chinese Yogācāra.<sup>22</sup> Another eminent Chinese pilgrim to India, I-ching (635–713), also engaged in his translations at the Hsi-ming monastery. His new translation there of the *Golden Light Sūtra* in 703, which had already been copied for circulation in Japan in 725, inspired Emperor Shōmu to erect Tōdaiji and state temples in every province dedicated to the sūtra.<sup>23</sup>

The Indian Tripitaka Master Śubhakarasiṁha, too, began his translation of Esoteric Buddhist scriptures at Hsi-ming-ssu. It was the first Chinese translation Śubhakarasiṁha completed at this temple in 717, a devotional ritual text on Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha (i.e., gumonjihō),<sup>24</sup> that lured the young Kūkai away from Confucian studies at the State College and into training in Buddhism.

In 787, Emperor Te-tsung extended his auspices to Prajñā, another Tripitaka master of Kashmiri origin, for his translation at Hsi-ming-ssu of the *Mahāyāna Six Pāramitā Sūtra*.<sup>25</sup> This sūtra, which Kūkai introduced to Japan in 806, provided Kūkai with a critical theoretical underpinning for defining Esoteric Teaching (*mikkyō*) as a category distinct from Exoteric Teaching (*kengyō*).<sup>26</sup>

The Hsi-ming monastery was also celebrated for its comprehensive library, and many major bibliographical studies were carried out by its resident priests during the T'ang period. The monastery's collection began to be assembled by the eminent vinaya master Tao-hsüan (596–667), who was the first abbot of the monastery. In 664 he completed the compilation of the *Catalog of the Buddhist Canon of the Great T'ang* (*Ta-t'ang nei-tien-lu*) in ten fascicles. Fascicle 8 of the catalog consists of the titles of scriptures preserved at the Hsi-ming-ssu library, which already boasted a collection of 779 titles in 3,361 fascicles.<sup>27</sup> Tao-hsüan made it a rule that all the texts translated, authored, and copied at the monastery would be added to the library. Tao-shih (?–683), a vinaya master and Tao-hsüan's Dharma colleague at the monastery, is renowned for his composition of *Collected Essential Phrases from All the Scriptures* (*Chu-ching yao-chi*), a twenty-fascicle collection of quotes from scriptures classified under separate categories, and *Forest of Gems in the Garden of Dharma* (*Fa-yüan chu-lin*), a comprehensive lexicon of Buddhist terminology in one hundred volumes.<sup>28</sup>

In 800, only a few years prior to Kūkai's arrival at the monastery, the priest Yüan-chao (fl. 785–804), another vinaya expert at Hsi-ming-ssu, composed the thirty-fascicle *Catalog of the Buddhist Canon Newly Compiled in the Chen-yüan Years* (*Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu*).<sup>29</sup> Yüan-chou's catalog significantly enlarged on the *Catalog of the Buddhist Canon of the K'ai-yüan Years* (*K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu*), compiled in twenty fascicles by priest Chih-sheng (669–740) of Ch'ung-fu-ssu in 730, which in turn was a major improvement over Tao-hsüan's 664 catalog. Yüan-chao was also renowned for his compilation of the *Collected Writings of the Tripitaka Master Amoghavajra* (*Pu-k'ung san-ts'ang piao-shih-chi*),<sup>30</sup> a collection of letters, official documents, and biographical writings regarding the Indian Tripitaka master Amoghavajra (705–774), who was largely responsible for the spread of Esoteric Buddhism during the reigns of Emperors Hsüan-tsung (r. 713–755), Su-tsung (r. 776–762), and Tai-tsung (r. 763–779).

Yet another important aspect of Yüan-chao's scholarship was the contribution he made to scriptural translation. Yüan-chao assisted Prajñā's translation of both the *Mahāyāna Six Pāramitā Sūtra* in 788 and the forty-fascicle *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in 798.<sup>31</sup> Based on the knowledge he had acquired from his collaboration with Prajñā, Yüan-chao produced a concordance of the principal

terms in the *Mahāyāna Six Pāramitā Sūtra* that provided the pronunciation and meaning of each, and, whenever appropriate, the original term in Sanskrit.<sup>32</sup> Yüan-chao's concordance may well have inspired the compilation of a gigantic Buddhist lexicon, the *Pronunciation and Meaning of Words from the Complete Buddhist Scriptures* (*I-ch'eih-ching yin-i*), in one hundred fascicles,<sup>33</sup> by another resident priest of the Hsi-ming monastery, Hui-lin (737–820). A priest of Kashgarian descent who studied Esoteric Buddhism with Amoghavajra, Hui-lin was famed for his mastery of Chinese and Sanskrit and for his ability as a translator.<sup>34</sup> Hui-lin's lexicon, which included more than 650,000 words from 1,300 scriptural texts, was completed in 807,<sup>35</sup> the year after Kūkai's return to Japan.

Upon his arrival in 805 at the Hsi-ming monastery, Kūkai must therefore have had immediate access to teachers and materials for his study of Sanskrit, mantra, and Esoteric Buddhist texts in general. Kūkai was the first Japanese pilgrim to bring Yüan-chao's *Chen-yüan Catalog* to Japan, for example. And because the collection of Buddhist scriptures that had been assembled in Japan was based on Chih-sheng's 730 *K'ai-yüan Catalog*, Kūkai's access to the *Chen-yüan Catalog* made it possible for him to identify and import texts hitherto unavailable in Japan.<sup>36</sup> This must also have made Kūkai aware of the importance of Amoghavajra, for the great majority of the texts translated during the seven decades separating the two canonical catalogs were esoteric texts, and the majority of those had been translated by Amoghavajra.<sup>37</sup> Kūkai also imported the collection of letters and documents by and about Amoghavajra compiled by Yüan-chao, which must have provided him with biographical information on Amoghavajra and also enabled him to identify the latter's surviving disciples, among them Hui-kuo of the Ch'ing-lung monastery.<sup>38</sup> Thus, only four months after his arrival at the Hsi-ming monastery, Kūkai began his study of Esoteric Buddhism under Hui-kuo.

Kūkai's familiarity with these pivotal works of Yüan-chao must have made him aware of Prajñā, with whom Yüan-chao had carried out many translation projects. It is not clear when Kūkai met Prajñā or exactly what he studied with the Indian master. At the time of Kūkai's residence at the Hsi-ming temple, Prajñā was a resident master at nearby Li-ch'üan-ssu, another large monastery located across the Western Bazaar to the north. Kūkai mentioned only that his training with Prajñā included the study of Brāhmaical philosophical systems popular in southern India.<sup>39</sup> However, circumstantial evidence suggests that the study of Sanskrit constituted a significant part of that training. For example, when Kūkai met Hui-kuo in the sixth month of Chen-yüan 21 (805), Hui-kuo immediately permitted him to begin the study of esoteric rituals.<sup>40</sup> Hui-kuo's lay disciple Wu-yin reported in 806 that

Kūkai was able to absorb with ease and accuracy the master's instruction in both Sanskrit and Chinese.<sup>41</sup> Kūkai therefore must have acquired at least some knowledge of Sanskrit during the four months between his arrival at the Hsi-ming monastery in the second month and his meeting with Huikuo in the sixth month of 805. Upon Kūkai's departure to Japan, Prajñā entrusted him not only with his new Chinese translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* but also with the Sanskrit original in three boxes, an unlikely gift unless Kūkai had studied Sanskrit with him and attained some essential knowledge of the language.

*Writing in the Siddham Script (Hsi-t'an tzu-chi)*, one of the textbooks on Sanskrit imported by Kūkai, explains in eighteen chapters the rules for joining vowels (*mātrkā*) and consonants (*vyañjana*) in the Sanskrit script system of Siddham. The author of that textbook, priest Chih-kuang (?–806), states in his introduction that his discussion is based on the lessons he received from Prajñā at Mount Wu-t'ai.<sup>42</sup> The Japanese Hossō priest Ryōsen (?–826?) of Kōfukuji, Nara, who journeyed to China together with Kūkai and Saichō in the same diplomatic mission of 804, also studied Sanskrit with Prajñā. But Ryōsen died at Mount Wu-t'ai without ever returning to Japan. A record dated 811 indicates that Ryōsen was at the time a resident priest of the Li-chüan monastery who, as a leading disciple of Prajñā, served as the Indian master's primary collaborator in the translation at that monastery of a Mahāyāna sūtra.<sup>43</sup> These events show that Prajñā was serving the Buddhist community of Ch'ang-an as a leading translator of Buddhist texts and an authority on Sanskrit.

Most likely, Kūkai first went to Prajñā in the hope of engaging in an intensive study of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. According to his biographical sketch in Yüan-chao's *Chen-yüan Catalog*, Prajñā began his life as a Buddhist novice at age seven and first trained himself in the Abhidharma and Vinaya traditions. At age twenty, he went to the Buddhist academy at Nālanda, was inducted there into the clergy, and mastered various Mahāyāna doctrines. Later, he traveled to southern India, where just prior to his departure for China, he studied the "Treasury of Dhāraṇī" (Ch. *ch'iib-ming-ts'ang*; Jpn. *jimyōzō*).<sup>44</sup> Thus it seems that, like many Indian priests of his time, Prajñā had some knowledge of Esoteric Buddhism. However, unlike Śubhakarasiṁha and Vajrabodhi, who initiated their Chinese students into esoteric disciplines, there is no record suggesting that Prajñā propagated Esoteric Buddhism in China. He must have been an appropriate teacher of Sanskrit for Kūkai. However, to master the esoteric ritual language of mantras and other ritual systems of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, Kūkai seems to have needed a different teacher.

## Master Hui-kuo and the Study of Esoteric Rituals

In the *Catalog of Imported Items* (*Shōrai mokuroku*), the official report to Emperor Heizei's court prepared upon his return to Japan in 806, Kūkai described his meeting with Hui-kuo in the sixth month of the previous year at Ch'ing-lung-ssu, an ancient monastery on a scenic hill just above the southeastern corner of the capital.

Having taken up residence at the Hsi-ming monastery, I visited and searched among eminent masters in the city. One day, I chanced to meet Master Hui-kuo, abbot of the East Stūpa Hall of the Ch'ing-lung monastery. A Dharma heir disciple of the late Tripitaka Master Ta-kuang-chih [Amoghavajra], he was a paragon of virtue for our age and a guide for the nation's rulers. Three successive emperors and their ministers received his initiation [into Esoteric Buddhism], and Buddhist practitioners of all the four classes studied the Secret Treasury with him.

Accompanied by Chi-ming, T'an-sheng, and several other Dharma masters from the Hsi-ming monastery, I went to visit him [Hui-kuo] and was granted an audience. As soon as he saw me, the abbot smiled, and said with delight, "Since learning of your arrival, I have waited anxiously. How excellent, how excellent that we have met today at last! My life is ending soon, and yet I have no more disciples to whom to transmit the Dharma. Prepare without delay the offerings of incense and flowers for your entry into the abhiṣeka maṇḍalas."<sup>45</sup>

Although the identities of Chi-ming and T'an-sheng cannot be established in existing sources, Kūkai's description here implies that his meeting with Hui-kuo was arranged by his fellow priests at the Hsi-ming monastery. Hui-lin, a resident priest of Hsi-ming-ssu, who in 805 was about to complete his immense lexicographical project, was also a disciple of Amoghavajra's and may well have known Hui-kuo. Another potential link between Kūkai and Hui-kuo was I-chih, a disciple of Hui-kuo's and a resident priest of Li-ch'üan-ssu, where Kūkai studied with Prajñā. In 804, the year at the end of which Kūkai arrived in Ch'ang-an, Hui-kuo performed a grand esoteric ordination for I-chih at the Li-ch'üan monastery, in which Prajñā was one of the principal participants.<sup>46</sup> Prajñā and Hui-kuo must therefore have been acquainted prior to Kūkai's studies with them.

Through personal relations in the Buddhist community of Ch'ang-an such as these, Hui-kuo obviously knew about Kūkai's arrival and his residency at the Hsi-ming monastery. He may have taken a particular interest in Kūkai,

for unlike other Japanese Buddhist students who had come to Ch'ang-an to study the San-lun, Fa-hsiang, and other doctrinal schools, Kūkai's primary concern was the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. Hui-kuo seems to have been informed of Kūkai's qualifications as well as of his progress with Prajñā, or certainly he would not have taken the unusual step of granting Kūkai permission to be inducted as a formal disciple at their first meeting.

Hui-kuo began his Buddhist training at age nine under the guidance of T'an-chen of Ch'ing-lung-ssu, who was one of Amoghavajra's senior disciples.<sup>47</sup> After T'an-chen later became one of the chaplains at the imperial palace, Hui-kuo continued his training under the direct supervision of Amoghavajra. At age twenty (756), Hui-kuo was ordained into the priesthood. Two years later, he studied the esoteric systems of the *garbha* (Ch. *t'ai-tsang*; Jpn. *taizō*) mandala of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *vajradhātu* (Ch. *chin-kang-chiai*; Jpn. *kongōkai*) maṇḍala of the *Vajrasēkhara Sūtra*. (The two maṇḍalas and their principal ritual practices will be discussed shortly.) In the same year, Amoghavajra performed abhiṣeka to formally establish Hui-kuo as a master of Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>48</sup>

In the fifth month of Ta-li 9 (774), a month prior to his death at age seventy, Amoghavajra prepared his will, in which he identified six select disciples as the legitimate heirs to his Dharma: Han-kung of Chin-ko-ssu of Mount Wu-t'ai, Hui-ch'ao of Silla, Hui-kuo of Ch'ing-lung-ssu, Hui-lang of Ch'ung-fu-ssu, and Yüan-chiao and Chio-ch'ao of Pao-shou-ssu.<sup>49</sup> Although Hui-kuo was only twenty-nine years old then, he was included among those Amoghavajra had chosen as carriers of his torch of Dharma. The following year, Emperor Tai-tsung's court having established the East Stūpa Hall at Ch'ing-lung-ssu, Hui-kuo was made its abbot, and following his appointment he was invited to the imperial palace frequently to perform services for the state. T'ai-tsung (r. 763–780) and the two emperors who succeeded him, Te-tsung (r. 780–805) and Shun-tsung (r. 805–2806), received Hui-kuo's abhiṣeka.<sup>50</sup> Attached to Hui-kuo's temple in the Ch'ing-lung monastery was Kuan-ting-yüan, the Abhiṣeka Chapel, at which he initiated Kūkai into Esoteric Buddhism. Wu-yin, one of Hui-kuo's lay disciples, reported that at the center of the Abhiṣeka Chapel was a miniature stūpa and that its base and all the walls of the chapel, both inside and outside, were filled with the painted images of the vajradhātu and garbha maṇḍalas and their individual divinities.<sup>51</sup>

It appears that Hui-lang, rather than Hui-kuo, was first recognized among Amoghavajra's disciples as the principal successor to their master, the "third patriarch, following Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra."<sup>52</sup> However, by the time of Kūkai's arrival in Ch'ang-an, some thirty years after Amoghavajra's passing, Hui-kuo had emerged as the leader among those surviving who had inherited

Amoghavajra's teachings on Esoteric Buddhism. Hui-kuo's renown drew students from beyond the Chinese empire, and his Ch'ing-lung monastery was crowded with foreign students who had come there from Korea, Central Asia, and as far away as Java. They studied along with Hui-kuo's Chinese disciples, both ordained and lay, who were said to have numbered more than one thousand.<sup>53</sup> It was certainly not unusual for Hui-kuo to have accepted another foreign student. However, the speed with which he transmitted to Kūkai the most advanced, highly secret disciplines of abhiṣeka appears to have been exceptional. Kūkai describes the events that followed their initial meeting:

I immediately returned to my residence temple [Hsi-ming-ssu] and began preparing for the initiation. Earlier in the sixth month, I was guided into the abhiṣeka maṇḍala of mastering the Dharma [Ch. *hsüeh-fa kuan-ting*; Jpn. *gakuhō kanjō*]. Standing at the garbha maṇḍala of great compassion, I threw a flower on the maṇḍala according to the ritual prescription [of the sūtra]. It fell on the body of the Tathāgata Mahāvairocana at the center. Delighted, the master exclaimed: “Marvelous, marvelous!” He praised me repeatedly. Thereupon I was sprinkled with the water of the fivefold wisdom and received the empowerment [Skt. *adhisthāna*; Ch. *chia-ch'ih*; Jpn. *kaji*] of the three mysteries. Following the initiation, I was instructed in the Sanskrit terms and ritual procedures of the garbha maṇḍala and trained in the visualizing meditation of the divinities in the maṇḍala.<sup>54</sup>

The garbha maṇḍala, or more precisely the “maṇḍala generated from the womb of great compassion” (*mahākarunāgarbhodhava-maṇḍala*), represents the ritual construction of the realm of enlightened beings delineated in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. Kūkai here describes the central procedure of the Esoteric Buddhist initiation of abhiṣeka, as it is provided in chapter 2, fascicle 2, of the sūtra (T 18:11b–12b): first, the practitioners pledge that they are resolved to uphold the esoteric precept of samaya; then, blindfolded by their master, they are guided to the altar of the maṇḍala, at which they throw a flower. The particular Buddha or bodhisattva in the maṇḍala upon whom the flower of the practitioner alights becomes his or her personal divinity (*īśvara*). Thereupon, the practitioners' blindfolds are removed so they can identify themselves with the divinities in the maṇḍala.

The ritual concludes with the master's sprinkling of the water of the fivefold wisdom on the practitioners' crowns, symbolic of their new birth into the family of the Tathāgatas, the family whose members are represented by the divinities in the maṇḍala. The fivefold wisdom consists of the ultimate wisdom of enlightenment, personified by Mahāvairocana, the central divinity of the maṇḍala,

and its four attributes, the wisdoms of the great mirror, equality, observation, and action. These four wisdoms are in turn represented, respectively, by the Buddhas of the four directions in the *māṇḍala*, who surround Mahāvairocana—Akṣobhya in the east, Ratnasarībhava in the south, Amitābha in the west, and Amoghasiddhi in the north. The attainment of the fivefold wisdom by the practitioners is said to purify their physical action, speech, and thought as they become identical with the three mysteries: the body, speech, and mind of the divinities in the *māṇḍala*.<sup>55</sup> The practitioners are also given Esoteric Buddhist names that indicate the new identities they have assumed through the ritual of throwing flowers.

Following the abhiṣeka of the garbha *māṇḍala*, Kūkai was trained by Hui-kuo in the mantras and Sanskrit hymns, the mudrās, and visualization of the sacred symbols, all of which constitute the yogic system of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the knowledge necessary for mastery of its religious system. Kūkai's original goal in traveling to China seems to have been fulfilled by this course of study with Hui-kuo. However, this was only the beginning of the training he received from Hui-kuo. Kūkai's account continues:

In the early part of the seventh month, I was guided into the vajradhātu *māṇḍala* and was sprinkled for the second time with the water of the fivefold wisdom. As I dropped the flower, it fell on Mahāvairocana again. The master exclaimed in delight just as before. Early in the eighth month, I received yet another abhiṣeka: it was, this time, to grant me the rank of Dharma transmission master [Ch. *ch'u-an-fa a-tu-li-wei*; Jpn. *denbō ajarii*]. On that day, I gave a feast for five hundred priests, nuns, and male and female lay practitioners. Eminent priests of Ch'ing-lung-ssu, Ta-hsing-shan-ssu, and other monasteries also took part in the celebration. Thereafter I received instruction from my master in the mantras and mudrās of the five Buddha families [of the vajradhātu *māṇḍala*] and in the yogas prescribed in the *Vajrasekhara Sūtra*, followed by additional training in Sanskrit and Sanskrit hymns.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, after the first initiation into the garbha *māṇḍala* of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, Kūkai received two additional abhiṣekas from Hui-kuo. The one that took place in the seventh month initiated him into the vajradhātu *māṇḍala*, the “*māṇḍala of the realm of the adamantine weapon of vajra*,” or thunderbolt, the ritual instrument signifying the wisdom of enlightenment instantaneously destroying follies, delusion, and ignorance. As described in the *Vajrasekhara Sūtra* and its analogs,<sup>57</sup> the procedure of throwing a flower on the *māṇḍala* to obtain a personal divinity—identical to the first abhiṣeka—was repeated.

Kūkai's flower fell again on the central Buddha Mahāvairocana, in the vajradhātu maṇḍala. Although Mahāvairocana at the center and the Buddhas of the four directions are identical in the garbha and vajradhātu maṇḍalas, the arrangement of divinities surrounding these principal Buddhas in the vajradhātu maṇḍala is significantly different from the layout of the garbha maṇḍala.<sup>58</sup>

Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* identifies the three levels of Esoteric Buddhist initiation (T 39:613a–c, 617a, 625a, 674c–675a). The ritual procedures of the three levels of abhiṣeka can be identical. However, they differ from one another in the content of the post-abhiṣeka training that determines the meaning of the abhiṣeka for participants. The first of the three levels is the rudimentary abhiṣeka of “binding karmic affinity” (Ch. *chieh-yüan kuan-ting*; Jpn. *kechien kanjō*) between practitioners and the Esoteric Teaching, the initiation that makes practitioners followers of Esoteric Buddhism. At the close of the ritual, the individual participants in this abhiṣeka are given particular mantras for the worship of the personal divinities they have obtained during the initiation. The second level is the intermediate abhiṣeka of “studying the Dharma” (Ch. *hsüeh-fa kuan-ting*; Jpn. *gakuhō kanjō*), which qualifies participants to study the elaborate yogic exercises consisting of numerous combinations of mantras, mudrās, and visualizations aimed at ritually invoking the personal divinities of the initiates and attaining the meditative union with them. Some talented candidates are permitted to study the yogas of other divinities in the maṇḍala, enabling them to visually construct the maṇḍala in their meditative exercises. Those advanced candidates are permitted to proceed to the third and highest level of abhiṣeka, that of transmitting the teaching (Ch. *ch'uan-chiao kuan-ting*; Jpn. *denkyō kanjō*), which establishes ordinands as masters of Esoteric Buddhism. The post-abhiṣeka training of these most advanced candidates consists of acquiring detailed knowledge of how to construct mandalas, both in a ritual setting and through visualization, and how to conduct abhiṣeka in the maṇḍala's ritual space.

According to this classification in Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary*, Kūkai's training with Hui-kuo began with the intermediate level abhiṣeka of studying the Dharma, held twice, first in the garbha maṇḍala in the sixth month, and next in the vajradhātu maṇḍala in the seventh month. Kūkai does not describe the ritual procedure for his third abhiṣeka, which Hui-kuo granted to him in the eighth month to certify him as a master capable of transmitting the Dharma of Esoteric Buddhism. The omission may result from the fact that, as mentioned in the *Commentary*, this third level of abhiṣeka can be performed in its entirety in a maṇḍala visually constructed in the meditation of master and disciple.<sup>59</sup>

Kūkai's *Notes on the Secret Treasury* (*Hizōki*) consists of one hundred fragmentary sections of his handwritten record of the oral instruction he

received from Hui-kuo.<sup>60</sup> Of these, only three sections concern doctrinal issues and all the rest deal with technical details relating to the performance of rituals and meditative exercises. Many revolve around knowledge of Sanskrit. One, for example, describes the preliminary purification procedure required prior to the practice of any ritual or meditation (KZ 2:11–12). In this exercise, a practitioner visualizes the Sanskrit characters *A*, *Vi*, *Ra*, *Hūṁ*, and *Khaṁ*, the *bija* (or single-letter seed mantras) of Mahāvairocana and the Buddhas of the four directions, which are placed, respectively, at five points on the practitioner's body (throat, forehead, right and left shoulders, and chest), aimed at transforming through meditation his or her somatic existence into the world of mandala. In another section of *Notes on the Secret Treasury*, Hui-kuo explains to Kūkai the following five techniques for chanting mantras, dhāraṇīs, and other hymns in Sanskrit, for both liturgical and meditative purposes.

The five kinds of chanting are the chanting of lotus, of vajra, of samādhi, of echo, and of light. Lotus chanting is that in which you hear your own chanting voice. In vajra chanting, with your lips and jaws remaining closed, you use only the tip of your tongue for utterance. In samādhi chanting, even the movement of your tongue ceases. You chant only in your mind, which you now visualize as a lotus blossom. Above the lotus is a circle of the moon, in which you see the [Sanskrit] character for the syllable *A* [the mother of all other syllables]. In this manner, there will always be a perfect correspondence between your visualization and your chanting in meditation. For echo chanting, visualize śāṅkha [a white conch] and generate an exquisite voice for chanting from the śāṅkha shell. Use this for chanting accompanied by musical instruments, such as vajra bells. In light chanting, you simply visualize your voice issuing forth from your mouth as beams. This is used for both voiced and unvoiced chanting. (KZ 2:38)

It appears that following the third abhiṣeka he administered to Kūkai in the eighth month, Hui-kuo's health deteriorated rapidly, and his life was to end before the close of the year. He may well have chosen to teach Kūkai the most essential yet secret aspects of Esoteric Buddhism, such as the methods for breathing and visualizing in the course of meditation, vocalizing mantras, folding and unfolding fingers to form a sequence of mudrās, drawing mandalas, and constructing altars for abhiṣeka. This appears to be the reason that among the scriptural texts Kūkai had collected for transmission to Japan the largest group consisted of neither sūtras nor śāstras but *vidhis* (Ch. *i-kuei*; Jpn. *giki*), ritual manuals that explain in detail the often cursory or cryptic descriptions of ritual and meditative sequences found in certain sūtras. As KUSHIDA Ryōkō

has noted (1981:198–197), there is no surviving record suggesting the importation to Japan of a *vidhi* prior to Kūkai's journey to China, and he was thus responsible for the introduction to the early Heian Buddhist community of *viddhi* as a new bibliographical category.

On the other hand, however detailed the discussions in ritual manuals, the complicity of ritual and meditative techniques in Esoteric Buddhism often makes their perfect mastery impossible without personal instruction and demonstration by a master. That is, unlike exoteric texts, which discuss doctrinal issues, esoteric texts cannot be fully grasped merely by reading them, because they require practical knowledge of ritual and meditative processes external to the text itself. In particular, mantras, *dhāraṇīs*, and other hymns in Sanskrit in esoteric texts make this distinction manifest. These ritual languages cannot be reduced to mere ideas and concepts for reading, because the sheer physical presence of their syllables, in both their graphic and sonic aspects, is the immediate object of ritual and meditative action. This unique quality of textual language inseparably intertwined with religious practice may be the essential characteristic that distinguishes the Buddhism Kūkai brought back from China to Japan from the Buddhism previously imported by Nara Buddhist scholars.

Hui-kuo died on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month of Yung-chen 1 (805). The earliest dated biography of Hui-kuo, composed on the third day of the first month of Yüan-ho 1 (806) by his lay disciple Wu-yin, relates Hui-kuo's words during his final days, in which he designated six of his disciples as the principal heirs of his Dharma.

The great teachings of the two *māṇḍalas* of the vajradhātu and the garbha are the secret treasury of all the Buddhas, the direct path to attaining Buddhahood in one's own lifetime. May these teachings pervade the whole universe to give salvation to living beings. I have granted mastership in the garbha *māṇḍala* to Pan-hong of Java and Hui-jih of Silla. I have entrusted the great teaching of the vajra *māṇḍala* to Wei-shang of Jian-nan and I-yüan of Ho-pei. To Imperial Chaplain I-ming, I have conferred the great teachings of the two *māṇḍalas*. Also with us today is the Japanese priest Kūkai. Because he came to seek the sacred teaching, I have granted the secret *māṇḍala* rituals and the mudrās of the two *māṇḍalas* to him. Whether in Chinese or Sanskrit, he has absorbed all my instructions in his mind. It was just like pouring water from one vase into another. I entrust these six disciples with the role of carrying on the torch of my Dharma. (KZ 1:44)

Kūkai seems to have occupied a special place among Hui-kuo's disciples. According to Wu-yin's account, this was because only Kūkai, together with

I-ming, received recognition as a master of the teachings of both the garbha and vajradhātu maṇḍalas. This may be the reason that, following Hui-kuo's death, Kūkai was chosen by Hui-kuo's followers to compose their master's epitaph.<sup>61</sup> Kūkai related his master's last words to him as follows.

My life in this world is drawing to a close. I cannot last long. I urge you now to return to your homeland. Take with you these two great maṇḍalas, the teaching of the Vajrayāna in more than a hundred scrolls, the keepsakes I received from my Tripitaka Master [Amoghavajra], as well as these ritual instruments that have belonged to me.<sup>62</sup> Spread this teaching throughout your nation.

When you first came to me, I was afraid of my life running out. But now my entrusting to you of the Dharma is complete. Also finished is the work of copying scriptures and producing the sacred images [of maṇḍalas]. Hasten home, present these things to the state, spread them far and wide for the benefit of people. . . . Imperial Chaplain I-ming will remain here and preserve my teaching. You are to transmit it to the land in the east. Strive! Strive!<sup>63</sup>

The funeral ceremonies for Hui-kuo were completed by the seventeenth day of the first month. Around that time, another Japanese diplomatic mission, led by the special envoy (*kentō bangan*) Takashina no Tōnari, arrived in Ch'ang-an. The goal of this ad hoc mission was to extend the congratulations of the Japanese court on the enthronement the previous year of Emperor Shun-tsung. Before the end of the month, Tōnari received the T'ang court's permission to include Kūkai in his party returning to Japan.<sup>64</sup> Tōnari's embassy seems to have left the capital by the earlier part of the third month for the coastal city of Yüeh-chou, and in the eighth month his ship left Yüeh-chou for Japan.<sup>65</sup> It is unknown exactly when the mission returned. However, on the twenty-second day of the tenth month of the same year—Daidō 1 (806), according to the Japanese calendar—Kūkai was in Dazaifu, the port city in Tsukushi in Kyūshū, where he entrusted to Tōnari his report to the Heian court on his studies in China.<sup>66</sup>

### Mantra and Abhiṣeka, the Genealogical Technologies

Kūkai studied under Hui-kuo for less than six months. Despite its brevity, his study enabled Kūkai to gain exposure to Buddhist practices unknown in the Japanese Buddhist community. The knowledge of maṇḍala, for example,

must have enabled him to recognize that some dhāraṇīs, iconographic images of certain divinities, and devotional rituals to those divinities that had been popularized in a random, unrelated manner in Nara and early Heian society belonged, in fact, to a yet-to-be-introduced class of teaching called Esoteric Buddhism. He realized that many ritual practices familiar to early Heian Buddhists could be combined with Esoteric Buddhist ritual elements he had studied in China—such as mudrās, symbol instruments, and Sanskrit seed mantras—to compose an integral system of Buddhist practice that was utterly alien even to the most learned Japanese scholar-priests. The rituals of abhiṣeka—the very manner by which Hui-kuo transmitted his teaching to Kūkai and authorized Kūkai’s mastery of it—exemplified this new system of integration, whose essential premises differed from those of ordinary Buddhist practice so significantly that they had to be classified as belonging to the distinct category he called “esoteric.” In a letter written in 815 addressed to those he hoped would collaborate with him in the propagation of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan, Kūkai described one of the teachings he received from Hui-kuo.

My master once told me: “If you realize what your mind truly is, then you understand the mind of Buddhas. If you realize the mind of Buddhas, then you understand the mind of sentient beings. Those who realize the oneness of these three minds—the minds of practitioners, Buddhas, and sentient beings—are perfectly enlightened. To attain perfect enlightenment, study the self-proven teachings of all the Buddhas, that is, the teachings contained in the *Vajrasēkhara Sūtra* in one hundred thousand verses and in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* in one hundred thousand verses. These sūtras convey the teaching expounded incessantly, eternally by the pure, subtle Dharmakāya Buddha Mahāvairocana as he resides in his secret universal palace. . . .

“These are the teachings contained only in the esoteric scriptures, the teachings that cannot be found in other, exoteric texts, the deepest and finest of the Buddha Dharma, teachings transmitted to me via the six generations of patriarchs, which began with the Dharmakāya Tathāgata and continued without interruption to my master Amoghavajra. Now is the time for you to study them and awaken yourself, in order to guide others to enlightenment.”<sup>67</sup>

Thus Kūkai relates Hui-kuo’s words claiming that—against the general axiom that all Buddhist sūtras grew out of teachings delivered by Śākyamuni, who was a Nirmāṇakāya Buddha, the Buddha who manifested himself as a human being in our historical processes—the two sūtras on which Hui-kuo based his transmission originated with the Dharmakāya Buddha, the timeless Buddha whose

body consisted of the Dharma itself. In addition, having identified the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana as the Dharmakāya, Hui-kuo asserted that the genealogy of Esoteric Buddhist mastership, to which he belonged, and which was to be extended to Kūkai, also originated with the Dharmakāya. Elsewhere Kūkai identifies the succession of masters who preserved and extended to East Asia the tradition of Esoteric Buddhism: (1) the Buddha Mahāvairocana, the teacher of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajrasekhara Sūtra*; (2) Vajrasattva, Mahāvairocana's principal interlocutor in the two sūtras; (3) Nāgārjuna, the celebrated master of Mādhyamika philosophy; (4) Nāgabodhi, Nāgārjuna's secret disciple; (5) Vajrabodhi, one of the pioneers who translated into Chinese the esoteric scriptures; (6) Amoghavajra, Vajrabodhi's celebrated disciple; and (7) Hui-kuo.<sup>68</sup> Contrary to the Buddhist schools hitherto established in Japan, which all claimed to trace their history to Śākyamuni Buddha, Kūkai's genealogy bypassed the historical Buddha and alleged a direct descent from the Dharmakāya Buddha.

At the heart of this seemingly radical claim of Esoteric Buddhism is the idea of the three mysteries (Skt. *tri-ghya*; Ch. *san-mi*; Jpn. *sanmitsu*), the secret language of the Dharmakāya's body, speech, and mind, through which the cosmic Buddha unveils his innermost enlightenment, the language that, according to the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 18:4a–5a), is ritually replicated in the gestural sequences of mudrās, the chanting of mantras, and the visualization of maṇḍala images. Kūkai explains:

As manifestations of the Dharmakāya, each and every one of the divinities who fill the maṇḍala is endowed with the three mysteries. As a result, the three mysteries of the divinities intertwine with one another, multiply, and permeate the universe. The permeation as such is also true for the three mysteries that inhere in the body, speech, and mind of every sentient being. Therefore the three mysteries of the Dharmakāya and sentient beings correspond, making it possible for sentient beings to be blessed and empowered by the Dharmakāya. When, having observed this meaning, the practitioners of Mantrayāna form mudrās with their hands, recite mantras with their mouths, and fix their minds in samādhi, then their three mysteries become immersed in those of the Dharmakāya, resulting in the attainment of great perfection.<sup>69</sup>

Elsewhere, from a different angle, Kūkai relates Hui-kuo's instruction concerning the permeation of the universe by the language of the Dharmakāya.

Each of the three mysteries interfuses equally with the others to pervade all the corners of the world. Practitioners must therefore understand that all

the objects of their sight are the all-permeating body [of the Dharmakāya]. All the sounds they hear are dhāraṇīs, the voices of the [Dharmakāya] Buddha's preaching of Dharma. Whatever is uttered by the practitioners, too, is the Buddha's preaching. . . . The practitioners' mind that understands this principle underlying all the sights and sounds of the world is the reality that is the divinities of the maṇḍala. The reality is the divinities; the divinities, the practitioners' own minds.<sup>70</sup>

According to Hui-kuo, the entirety of the universe is the Dharmakāya, and all the sights and sounds of the universe—as long as they demonstrate the Buddhist truth of the impermanence of all things, or emptiness—are the Dharmakāya's revelation of the Dharma. However, precisely because of this identity of the Dharmakāya with nature—perhaps *deus sive natura*, the numinous as the natural—the cosmic Buddha's “natural” language remains both transparent and hidden. Therefore, esoteric scriptures claim that the Dharmakāya also reveals the ritual language of the three mysteries, mudrā, mantra, and maṇḍala, by means of which the divinities in the maṇḍala communicate with one another to illumine the universe as a realmsaturated with the Dharmakāya's language.

Hui-kuo also implies that because practitioners of Mantrayāna are also parts of the universe, their bodies, speech, and minds are intrinsically continuous with the body, speech, and mind of the Dharmakāya. That is to say, the secret language of the three mysteries provides the immediate link between the Dharmakāya and practitioners. The goal of the ritual of abhiṣeka can now be seen as the transmission of the knowledge, or technology, that makes the hidden language of the Dharmakāya Buddha audible and legible by means of mastery of mudrā, mantra, and maṇḍala. This centrality of the three mysteries as the language for Esoteric Buddhist practice explains why both the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajrasēkhara Sūtra* consist primarily of descriptions of the ritual of abhiṣeka, which is none other than a “text” written in the ritual languages of mudrā, mantra, and maṇḍala.

Though abhiṣeka is a text composed in an uncommon language, it still must be described in ordinary language in scriptural texts. This task of description gives mantra a privileged position in esoteric scriptural literature on two grounds. First, as (re)presentation of the “speech” of the Dharmakāya, it is far more akin to conventional language than is the gestural language of mudrā or the visual language of maṇḍala. Second, mantra, the ritual manifestation of the utterance of the Dharmakāya, includes within itself both the physical and mental aspects of the Dharmakāya. Mantra is therefore essential to the intertwining and mutual permeation of the three mysteries discussed by Kūkai

in the last passage quoted, a critical interface consisting of the coordinated ritual presentation of the Dharmakāya's body, speech, and mind.

The nature of the transmission Kūkai received from Hui-kuo can be illustrated further by studying in these two esoteric scriptures, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, the way in which the ritual languages—especially mantra—work as protocols for the procedures surrounding the flower-throwing, the principal ritual sequence of abhiṣeka, which Kūkai described in his official report to the Japanese court.

The *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, which provides the scriptural context for Kūkai's first abhiṣeka, opens with a mystical scene of Mahāvairocana's universal palace of the vajra (Ch. *chin-kang fa-chieh-kung*; Jpn. *kongō hokkaigū*), signifying the entire universe as Mahāvairocana's palace, the realm of instantaneous enlightenment. There in his cosmic palace, surrounded by his entourage of vajradharas (Ch. *chih-chin-kang*; Jpn. *shukongō*), who were headed by Vajrasattva (Ch. Chin-kang sa-tou; Jpn. Kongō satta), and also of great bodhisattvas, Mahāvairocana, “on the day of the Tathāgatas that transcended the three divisions of time [past, present, and future], expounded the Dharma by means of the gate of the Dharma of the perfect interfusion of his body, speech, and mind” (T 18:1a).

Thus begins Mahāvairocana's preaching of the Dharma to the vajradharas and, bodhisattvas—which takes place in the Dharmakāya's temporality of eternal, timeless present—the preaching that unfolds through his secret language of the three mysteries. In this manner, Mahāvairocana unveils before his assembly *sarvajñajñāna* (Ch. *i-ch'ieh-chih-chih*; Jpn. *issai chichi*), the all-embracing wisdom of the Thatāgatas, which, the sūtra claims, is the wisdom of perfect enlightenment. However, chapter 1 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 18:1a–4a) dares to describe in conventional language this eternal revelation of the Dharma in the Dharmakāya's transparent language of the three mysteries. As a result, Mahāvairocana's preaching in the sūtra's text takes the form of a philosophical discourse with his interlocutor Vajrasattva, a discourse whose principal subject is all-embracing wisdom. In reply to Vajrasattva's question about the cause, foundation, and goal of all-embracing wisdom, Mahāvairocana says:

O, Lord of Secrecy [Vajrasattva], the enlightened mind is the cause, compassion is the foundation, and expedient means is the goal. Lord of Secrecy, what is enlightenment? That is none other than realizing one's own mind as it truly is. As for realizing this unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment, there is not even a hair's breadth of anything that the practitioner has to acquire anew. That is because enlightenment has no form except for the form of empty space. It has no one who can analyze it, it has nothing that has to

be unfolded. That is because enlightenment is free of form. Likewise, Lord of Secrecy, all things are without form, for they are equal to the form of empty space.

(T 18:1c)

Chapter 1 of the sūtra thus attempts to “translate” the Dharmakāya’s revelation of the all-embracing wisdom in the language of three mysteries into a philosophical dialogue aimed at analyzing its subject, i.e., the all-embracing wisdom. At the same time, however, the text of chapter 1 demonstrates its own limitations. It does not fall short of stating that the all-embracing wisdom, as well as *bodhicitta* (Ch. *p'u-t'i-hsin*; Jpn. *bodaishin*), the original enlightenment of all sentient beings that is its foundation, is utterly formless and thus escapes the grid of the logic of the text’s philosophical discourse. That is, the chapter’s philosophical analysis has at best merely isolated its subject as its own excess, its outside.

Although the discussion in chapter 1 indicates that Mahāvairocana revealed to his assembly all-embracing wisdom and transmitted it to the divinities in the assembly, for readers of the sūtra who rely on conventional language this all-embracing wisdom remains invisible. For this reason, Mahāvairocana’s discourse with Vajrasattva in chapter 2 (T 18:4a–13b) turns from philosophy to ritual. For those sentient beings, the readers of the sūtra, who understand only conventional language and lack access to the Dharmakāya’s language of the three mysteries, Mahāvairocana first generates a maṇḍala out of his *garbha*, or womb, of great compassion, which serves as the model of his universal vajra palace where his revelation of the three mysteries unfolds. Following the description of the maṇḍala, with the specific forms and colors of the divinities who occupy it, Mahāvairocana delineates the ritual sequence of abhiṣeka, in which a master and his disciple replicate in the maṇḍala Mahāvairocana’s transmission of all-embracing wisdom to Vajrasattva. However, before Mahāvairocana begins his discussion of ritual, he is met with the following objection from Vajrasattva:

The Dharma of Buddhas transcends all forms. Free of all forms, free of movements, the Dharma permanently abides at the seat of the Dharma. Therefore it cannot be unfolded by discourse, nor can it be approached by metaphor or analogy. Why then do you, one endowed with great diligence, now expound the teaching of the particular forms, voices, and practices [of the maṇḍala], the teaching that appears to deviate from the natural way of the Dharma?

Vajrasattva points to a seeming contradiction between the conclusion of chapter 1, which emphasizes the formlessness of the Dharma, and the approach

of chapter 2 that strives to express the Dharma by means of the forms, colors, and movements of the ritual. Mahāvairocana delivers the following reply to Vajrasattva:

The Dharma is forever free from discrimination, from all sorts of delusions. As practitioners purify their delusions, thoughts, and actions, they will realize unsurpassed enlightenment, pristine as empty space. Yet ignorant of this, ordinary beings attach themselves to the wicked and the illusory by seeking blindly objects in time, direction, form, and appearance. As an expedient means of saving these beings, by condescending to their proclivities, I have expounded this teaching [of the maṇḍala]. And yet in truth there is no time, no direction, no action, and no creator in this teaching [of the maṇḍala], for all things having form simply abide in their true form of emptiness. (T 18:4c)

Mahāvairocana here responds with the same argument used by Vajrasattva, that is, that all things are empty and without form. Precisely because of this, however, Mahāvairocana asserts that the ritual of the maṇḍala with its particular forms, sounds, and colors, which are also empty, can serve as a teaching device, one that allows practitioners to experience reality as emptiness and formlessness.

The ritual proper of abhiṣeka begins with a meditative sequence in which the master and disciple, respectively, visualize themselves as Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva (T 18:6b; T 39:630a).<sup>71</sup> From this moment on, the dialogue between Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva in chapter 2 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* recounts the ritual interaction between the master and disciple, who play the roles of Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva in order to recapitulate ritually the episode of transmission that was presented as a philosophical discourse in chapter 1. Thus the narrative of the sūtra pluralizes itself, becoming a drama within a drama as it simultaneously describes the discourse between Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva and the ritual acts of the master and disciple.

With the completion of this visualization exercise, the master immediately begins his (her) drawing of the maṇḍala on the central altar (T 18:6b–9b; T 39:630c–642c). When he (she) has completed the maṇḍala, the master prepares the disciple's entry into the maṇḍala.

Guide the disciple into [the hall enshrining the maṇḍala]. First perform the ablution of the disciple's hands with scented water, and into his (her) purified hand, bestow perfume powder and a flower. Urge the disciple to think of all the Buddhas so as to rouse the mind of enlightenment, which would

instantaneously cause the disciple to attain a new birth in the family of the Buddhas [of the *māṇḍala*].

(T 18:1la)

Śubhakarasiṁha's commentary explains that to encourage the disciple to rouse the enlightened mind, the master recites the passage from chapter 1 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* describing the enlightened mind as the source of all-embracing wisdom—the passage quoted and discussed earlier—reminding the reader of the continuity between the philosophical discussion in chapter 1 and the ritual description in chapter 2 (T 39:661b).

Mahāvairocana's explication of abhiṣeka in chapter 2 then moves on to the flower-throwing sequence.

With his (her) hand formed in the mudrā of Buddhas, the master purifies the disciple's robe three times. Then the master blindfolds the disciple and whispers to him (her) three times the precepts of samaya. Have the disciple visualize the [Sanskrit] letter *Raṁ*, with its *anusvāra* [the diacritical mark of a dot over the character *Ra*, indicating its nasal ending] clearly visible. A blazing halo surrounds the letter like festooned flowers. It issues forth white beams as does the full moon. Then the master guides the disciple to the front gate of the *māṇḍala*, which is guarded by the two Nāga kings. Have the disciple stand there, steadfast, and throw his (her) flower toward the world-saving beings in the *māṇḍala*. Then[, having removed the disciple's blindfold], the master shows the disciple the divinity he (she) obtained and teaches the devotional rites to the divinity, causing the disciple to be freed from all sorts of faults.

(T18:11a-b)

On the eve of the abhiṣeka, the master officiates at a ritual to bestow on the disciple the esoteric precepts of the samaya (Ch. *san-mo-yeh*; Jpn. *sanmaya*), the prerequisite for the ordination, which is based on the four essential precepts: to uphold the authentic teaching of the Buddhas; to be steadfast in guarding one's own enlightened mind; to be unreserved in sharing with students the knowledge of Buddhism; and not to abandon one's effort to save sentient beings (T 18:5c-6a). It is these four essential precepts that the master repeats in the disciple's ear immediately prior to his (her) entry into the *māṇḍala*. Śubhakarasiṁha explains that the visualization of the letter Raṁ, symbolic of the fire of wisdom, was intended to consume any residue of delusion the disciple might have, subsequent to his (her) vow to uphold the samaya (T 39:661c). The ritual of flower-throwing to obtain the personal divinity is therefore presented as the culmination of the purificatory procedure carried out by the disciple.

In his commentary, Śubhakarasiṁha illustrates how this ritual, in which the disciple obtains his (her) personal deity from among the three hundred divinities of the garbha maṇḍala, presents the master with an opportunity to assess the student's qualification as a religious leader. If, for example, the disciple's flower falls on the head of a Buddha, the student will excel in grasping the Buddha's wisdom. If it falls on the face of a Buddha, the disciple will gain the meditative insight of the Buddha's eye. The landing of the flower on a Buddha's legs means that the student will live as the messenger of the Buddha. If the flower lights upon the Buddha's body, the commentary says, "the student will perfect all the mental faculties of the Buddha" (T 39:662a). Kūkai reported that his flower fell on the body of Mahāvairocana at the center of the maṇḍala. This seems to have been the reason for the particular praise Hui-kuo lavished on Kūkai at his flower-throwing.

With the completion of the process by which disciple obtains his (her) personal divinity, Mahāvairocana's discussion turns to the ritual of sprinkling the water of wisdom on the crown of the disciple's head, the act that constitutes the etymology of the term *abhiṣeka*. Śubhakarasiṁha points to the analogy between this abhiṣeka and the ritual of royal enthronement in India.

When worldly people in India perform the rite of abhiṣeka, they collect water from the four great oceans of the world and from all the rivers and lakes in their kingdom. The water collected in a vase is mixed with various gems, herbs, and grains. Then they seat their crown prince on a lion's throne, which is placed before the map of their kingdom. Adorned with all sorts of precious jewels, all the ministers and subjects who serve the kingdom surround the crown prince, aligning themselves in circles according to their power. The prince's teacher in the discipline of the Veda seats himself behind the prince on an elephant-shaped throne. Holding the jeweled water in an elephant tusk, he pours it on the summit of the prince's head. Praising great ancient monarchs who saved the world through their peaceful rule, the teacher proclaims, "This prince who follows the tradition of the *cakravartin* [universal monarchs] of the past will attain the longevity and prosperity of his family and his entourage."

Śubhakarasiṁha then contrasts this royal abhiṣeka with the abhiṣeka of Esoteric Buddhism.

Our abhiṣeka for the prince of the Dharma must be understood differently. In this abhiṣeka, the prince of the Dharma sits on the miraculous lion throne adorned with the lotus blossoms of the subtle Dharma, the throne being

placed before the great map [maṇḍala] of the secretly glorified universe, the Dharmakāya's domain. Then the water of wisdom and compassion, impregnated with goodness, is poured on the Dharma prince's mind. Then all the bodhisattvas and the guardians of Buddhism express their joy, praise, and reverence [to the Dharma prince]. Thereupon the master, following the tradition of the ancient kings of the Dharma [Buddhas], announces, "From now on, this prince of the Dharma will attain birth in the family of the Tathāgatas and succeed to the throne of the Buddhas." (T 18:667a)

Upon the completion of the ritual of sprinkling, described in chapter 2 of the sūtra, the master recites a Sanskrit hymn in eleven verses, praise to the enlightenment attained by the Buddha Śākyamuni.<sup>72</sup> That is, by means of recitation of the hymn, the master confirms that the student is an heir in the family of the Buddhas, an achievement recognized as comparable to Śākyamuni's enlightenment. Then, providing an additional testimonial to the disciple's realization, the master bestows upon the disciple three ritual instruments, whose meaning he conveys to the disciple: a vajra-scalpel, with which the Buddhas, the "kings of medicine," have removed ignorance from the disciple's eye; a bright mirror, the Buddha's pure, illuminating mind from which the disciple has attained his new birth; and a conch trumpet, the Buddha's eloquence in promulgating the Dharma (T 18:12a). The sequence of sprinkling concludes with Mahāvairocana's praise of those students initiated into the garbha maṇḍala:

Lord of Secrecy, the merit accumulated by these sons and daughters of good families [who have entered the maṇḍala] is exactly equal to that of the Tathāgatas. For this teaching gate [of the maṇḍala] has shown that these sons and daughters have now attained birth from the mouths [teachings] of the Tathāgatas. They are children of the mind of the Buddhas. Wherever they go, Buddhas accompany them to perform their saving works. For this reason, those who desire to reverence the Buddhas should reverence these sons and daughters. Those who desire to see the Buddhas should find them in these sons and daughters. (T 18:12b)

Thus far, the disciple in the abhiṣeka ritual has played only a passive role. However, that changes at once in the next and concluding section of chapter 2 of the sūtra (T 18:12b–13b), in which Mahāvairocana reveals his secret, inaudible speech of the Dharmakāya as mantras to be recited by the disciple. The section begins with Mahāvairocana's pronouncement that he is endowed with a secret tongue, "which is vast and boundless as the universe, shaped and colored like the maṇḍala endowed with immeasurable goodness that fulfills all

wishes” (T 18:12c). Responding to the request of Vajrasattva and other divinities in the assembly to reveal it, Mahāvairocana enters into the samādhi called the “banner of the Dharma on the highest summit” and opens his mouth to reveal his long, broad tongue, which immediately permeates all the realms of Buddhas in the universe. Then, instantaneously, his tongue turns into the “utterances of all the Tathāgatas filling the universe, utterances made out of their pity for sentient beings [suffering] in samsāra, and which, in unison, become the mantra called the ‘queen of the light (Skt. *vidyā-rājñī*; Ch. *ming-fei*; Jpn. *myōhi*) of the great protection.’”

*Namah sarvatathāgatebhyah; sarvabhayavigatebhyo viśvamukhebhyah; sarvathā khāṁ rakṣa-mahābale sarvatathāgata-punyanirjāte hūṁ hūṁ traṭ traṭ aप्रतिहते svāhā.*

(T 18:12c)

[Homage to all the permeating Tathāgatas, who have left behind all fears, who are endowed with omnipotent mouths. O, (praise to) you (feminine), *Khāṁ*, who constantly protect (beings) with great power, who has arisen from the goodness of all the Tathāgatas. You (feminine), *Hūṁ*, *Hūṁ*, *Traṭ*, *Traṭ*, the unconquerable one, *svāhā*!]

Śubhakarasiṁha interprets the single-syllable, seed mantras of Khāṁ, Hūṁ, and Traṭ as representing three aspects of bodhicitta, the enlightened mind of sentient beings, the seed of Buddhahood. Khāṁ—consisting of *kha*, which literally means sky, or empty space, with *anusvāra*, the pure nasal ending, signifying realization, the perfection of the syllable to which it attaches itself—is explained as the transcendental wisdom of emptiness. This is the wisdom of the feminine bodhisattva Prajñā, who “is the mother of all the Buddhas, the queen of the light herself.” Hūṁ, on the other hand, signals the realization of *hetu*, cause. Reiterating the discussion in chapter 1 of the sūtra, Śubhakarasiṁha further elucidates it as the quality of the enlightened mind that is the “cause of all-embracing wisdom, the true seed of Buddhahood, which is the banner of the True Dharma” (T39:673c). Finally, Traṭ is explained as a sound that emulates the roar of the mother lion protecting her cubs, symbolic of the enlightened mind’s power to dissipate delusions.

Śubhakarasiṁha describes the mantra of the “great protection” guarding within itself the seed mantras, the seeds of Buddhahood, as evocative of the image of the female warrior bodhisattva Prajñā holding her banner high in the sky on a mountain peak, bravely protecting the children of the Buddhas’ family. This female warrior, who commands her army with her banner and makes her camp on the highest summit with the maximum vista, is said to be undefeatable. According to Śubhakarasiṁha, the vision of Bodhisattva Prajñā is the samādhi

originally entered by Mahāvairocana, the samādhi that gives rise, in turn, to the mantra “the queen of light of great protection” (T 39:673c–674a).

Śubhakarasiṁha also describes this mantra as the “birthplace of all mantras” (T 39:673b), the mantra that explains the generative process of all mantras by bringing together some of the key metaphors of chapter 2 of the sūtra. First, Mahāvairocana’s act of revealing his vast, mystical tongue, shaped and colored like the garbha maṇḍala, recapitulates the original motif of the chapter. That is, Mahāvairocana, out of his compassion for those sentient beings to whom the Dharmakāya’s secret language of the three mysteries remains inaccessible, unveils it (tongue/language) as his ritual language for the initiation into the garbha maṇḍala. Put another way, the long, broad tongue Mahāvairocana reveals is the Dharmakāya’s secret speech that permeates the universe, which can now be heard as the simultaneous chanting of the mantra by all the Tathāgatas. The mantra, then, is the maṇḍala’s manifestation in sound.

The affinity between mantra and maṇḍala thus revealed relates directly to the second metaphor, that of the womb. Earlier in the sūtra’s second chapter, the symbolism of the womb is explained as Mahāvairocana’s compassion, in which the cosmic Buddha nurtures the seed of Buddhahood, the enlightened mind of sentient beings (T 18:4a; T 39:609c–610a). This is the meaning of the garbha maṇḍala, the “maṇḍala generated from the womb of great compassion” (*mahākaruṇāgarbhodbhava-maṇḍala*). The mantra now presents itself as the embodiment of this compassion, Bodhisattva Prajñā, mother of all the Buddhas, who in her mantra syllables—the womb—preserves the seed mantras, the seed of Buddhahood.

However, the mantra expresses its femininity not merely in the image of a mother but also in that of a fighter. This points to yet another metaphor of power, or empowerment, that underlies all the sequences of the abhiṣeka. Śubhakarasiṁha identifies the “great power” that impregnates this mantra as the “great wind that freely dashes across, whirls around, and pervades the empty space of the universe” (T 39:673c), the cosmic breath of Mahāvairocana, the inaudible speech of the Dharmakāya. Yet, as discussed above, according to chapter 2 of the sūtra, when the Dharmakāya’s cosmic breath is filtered through the omnipotent mouths of compassionate Buddhas and permeates the universe, it changes itself into mantra, which in the ritual context of the abhiṣeka takes the following form.

*Namah sarvatathāgatebhyah sarvabhayavigatebhyo viśvamukhebhyah; sar-vathā khaṁ rakṣa mahābale sarvatathāgate puṇyanirjāte hūṁ hūṁ traṭ traṭ apratihate svāhā.* (T 18:12c)

[Homage to all the permeating Tathāgatas, who left behind all fears, who are endowed with omnipotent mouths. O, (praise to) you (feminine), *Kham*, who constantly protect (beings) with great power, who have arisen from the goodness of all the Tathāgatas. You (feminine), *Hūm*, *Hūm*, *Trat*, *Trat*, the unconquerable one, svāhā!]

When translated as literally as possible, the mantra consists of two parts: the prefatory reverence expressed for all the Buddhas, a string of appositional phrases in the masculine, dative, plural; and the mantra proper, the invocation in the feminine, vocative, singular, of the queen of the light of wisdom (*vidyā-rājñī*), who is endowed with the “great power” (*mahābale*) that is the mantra itself. That is, this mantra self-reflexively describes the process through which the “great power” of the Dharmakāya passes through the mouths of all the Tathāgatas to manifest itself as a phenomenon called mantra. The mantra of “mighty protection” can therefore be understood as the *arche-mantra* or *meta-mantra*, illustrating the mythic condition through which the linguistic phenomenon of mantra first comes into existence and suggesting what, generically, mantra is and is about. This appears to be the reason that Śubhakarasiṁha describes this mantra as the “birthplace of all mantras” (T 39:672c).

For the practitioners, who recite this mantra near the conclusion of their abhiṣeka, the mantra provides the ritual means to immerse their speech in Mahāvairocana’s cosmic breath, and it enables them to participate in this way in Mahāvairocana’s manifestation of mantras from out of the otherwise serenely silent universe of the Dharmakāya. In other words, they attain the power to reveal in their ritual the Dharmakāya’s hidden language as mantras, the primary requisite for Esoteric Buddhist masters.

Upon the disciple’s mastery of the power of mantras, Mahāvairocana pronounces the following three mantras, which are called, respectively, the “entry into unity with the Buddhas,” the “birth into the universe,” and “vajrasattva.”

*Namah samantabuddhānām asame trisame samaye svāhā*

[Homage to all the permeating Buddhas. O, you (feminine), samayā, who are incomparable, who realize in yourself the unity of the three.]

*Namah samantabuddhānām dharmadhātu-svabhāvātmako’ham*

[Homage to all the permeating Buddhas. I am the intrinsic nature of the universe.]

*Namah samantavajranām vajrātmako'ham*

[Homage to all the permeating vajra holders. I am the one who possesses the vajra as my own self.] (T 18:12c–13a)

Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary* describes the first mantra as marking the practitioner's attainment, upon entry into the garbha maṇḍala, of unity (*samaya*) with all the Tathāgatas. By immersing themselves in the maṇḍala, the practitioners attain “oneness with the Buddhas in their equanimity, their original vow of saving beings, their power of removing obstacles, and their acts of awakening sentient beings from intoxication by delusions” (T 39:674c). The practitioner's equality with the Buddhas is actualized in themselves as the wisdom of emptiness expressed in various triads: the oneness of the past, present, and future; of body, speech, and mind; of Buddhas, sentient beings, and practitioners, for example (T 39:675a). Again, this mantra takes the form of an invocation to Bodhisattva Prajñā—addressed as *samayā*, with the feminine ending -ā—who, with her transcendental wisdom of emptiness, personifies unity realized (YORITOMI Honkō 1975:81–82).

The second mantra, by contrast, is explained as the utterance by practitioners at the moment they emerge from the garbha maṇḍala, the womb of the Buddhas' compassion, the moment at which they attain their new life as heirs in the family of the Tathāgatas. “Thereupon, having realized that they are no different from the intrinsic nature of the universe permeated by Mahāvairocana, they [practitioners] free themselves from all discriminatory views and realize the wisdom of pure vision” (T 39:675b). This realization leads to the third mantra, which establishes the identity of the practitioners as Vajrasattva, the principal interlocutor of Mahāvairocana in the sūtra, who has received the transmission from Mahāvairocana of all-embracing wisdom.

Of the power of these three mantras, Śubhakarasiṁha states: “The first mantra generates the maṇḍala of the womb of great compassion. The second mantra completes the work of the master as Mahāvairocana. The third mantra perfects the work of the disciple as Vajrasattva.” He adds, “The first mantra is like the bud of a lotus, the second, the blooming of the lotus, and the third, the seed from the lotus flower (T 39:675c). That is, with the third mantra, the disciple has succeeded not only in receiving the transmission from the master but in making himself (herself) capable of transmitting the teaching of the maṇḍala to the next generation of disciples. The disciple has already attained his (her) adulthood in the family of the Buddhas.

To bear out this accomplishment by the disciple, Mahāvairocana reveals a sequence of twelve mantras to close the discussion in chapter 2 (T 18:13a–b).

These are the mantras that bestow upon the disciple Buddha's belongings—such as the armor of wisdom, the torch of reality, and the water of purity—and physical attributes—such as the Tathāgata's eye, crown, and halo. The sequence ends with the mantra of Buddha's tongue, the tongue of omnipotent speech generative of mantras.

*Namah samantabuddhānām mahāmahātathāgata-jihva satyadharma-pratiṣṭhita svāhā.*

[Homage to all the permeating Buddhas. O, you (neuter) the great, great tongue of the Tathāgatas, in whom dwells the ultimate truth.]

Therefore, these mantras for the disciple's recitation—as instructed by the master, who plays the role of Mahāvairocana—conclude with the disciple's acquisition of Mahāvairocana's cosmic tongue/language through which he (she), as Vajrasattva, participates in Mahāvairocana's construction of the garbha maṇḍala. The master and the disciple, in their ritual functions, are now indistinguishable from Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva, who through their discourse map out the garbha maṇḍala as a ritual matrix for the production of the genealogy of the Buddhas. In other words, chapter 2 ends with the mantras that significantly blur the distinction between the primary episode of the sūtra, the exchange between Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva in the former's universal palace, and its secondary episode, the ritual of the initiation into the garbha maṇḍala illustrated in their exchange, which constitutes a drama within a drama in the sūtra. As a result, the events unfolding in the ritual (ritual signifiers) coalesce with the events to which they refer (ritual referents)—namely, what the ritual strives to describe as its outside, Mahāvairocana's transmission to Vajrasattva of the all-embracing wisdom. The words uttered in the ritual space of the abhiṣeka become reality, for there is no longer a distinction between the signifier and the signified in the ritual language. This appears to be the particular power of signification that mantra claims for itself.

## Abhiṣeka as a General Theory of Enlightenment

The ritual of abhiṣeka in the garbha maṇḍala, as described in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, is an attempt to demonstrate that the attainment of Buddhahood is not a one time historical event in the distant past involving the Buddha Śākyamuni but rather an art—or, more appropriately, a science—of ritual practice, a work that can be reproduced regardless of historical conditions.

The abhiṣeka is introduced in the sūtra as a religious technology of enlightenment, in which knowledge of the linguistic function of mantra is essential. The same appears to be true of the abhiṣeka of the vajradhātu maṇḍala of the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*. In that sūtra, the principal ritual sequence of the abhiṣeka, which centers on the act of throwing a flower onto the maṇḍala (essentially identical with the ritual actions for the abhiṣeka of the garbha maṇḍala) is framed in the episodic structure of the Esoteric Buddhist account of Śākyamuni's enlightenment. In other words, the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* attempts to narrate what "really" happened when Prince Siddhārtha became the Buddha from the viewpoint of a narrator who understands the esoteric ritual and linguistic technology of the three mysteries.

The sūtra opens with the scene of the manifestation of the Buddha Mahāvairocana—"whose presence is equal to the bodies, speech, and minds of all the Buddhas in the universe"—in the Akaniṣṭha Heaven, the highest heaven in the realm of form of the triple world in this cosmic system of Sahā (T 18:207a). The appearance of Mahāvairocana in that heaven, with countless Buddhas and bodhisattvas accompanying him, coincides with the moment on earth of the entry into final meditation by Prince Sarvārthasiddhi (the One Who is Possessed of the Perfection of All His Goals, the esoteric variation of the name Siddhārtha) before he attains Buddhahood as Śākyamuni on the bank of the Nairāñjanā. At Akaniṣṭha, far above the prince's seat of meditation, Mahāvairocana reveals to the assembly his true identity, which the sūtra describes as *samantabhadra*, universal goodness, the quality of the enlightened mind as the intrinsic goodness shared equally by all sentient beings. Mahāvairocana first exudes samantabhadra from his mind in the form of the mantra of all the minds of the Tathāgatas, namely, vajrasattva, or "that which holds vajra as its inherent nature," signaling the indestructible nature of universal goodness.

At the moment it rose from his mind, which is also the minds of all the Tathāgatas, that [mantra of] samantabhadra transformed itself into myriad circles of the moon, purified the minds of all living beings, returned to all the Tathāgatas to encircle each one of them, and manifested within each circle the wisdom of the Tathāgatas in the form of vajras. These vajras, thus produced, emerged from each circle of the moon as the physical, verbal, and mental acts of all the Tathāgatas and reentered the mind of Mahāvairocana, where they formed a great vajra of five effulgent peaks, which is now held in the Buddha's [Mahāvairocana's] palm. (T 18:208b)

The sūtra then describes the manner in which, from within the gleams of this great vajra, are produced the bodies of all bodhisattvas, who permeate all the

corners of the universe, generate the resolve to realize Buddhahood, engage in various bodhisattva practices, sit on their seats of enlightenment, conquer there the armies of Māra, realize enlightenment, and save the worlds of living beings. Then, all these bodhisattva manifestations of the vajra who have realized Buddhahood merge into a single body to become Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. Thus, Mahāvairocana makes his samantabhadra tangible in three stages—the mantra, the ritual instrument of vajra, and the image of the bodhisattva—which all constitute the objects of the ritual of the body, speech, and mind.

While Mahāvairocana is revealing his inmost secret in the Akaniṣṭha Heaven, Prince Sarvārthasiddhi on earth enters into a samādhi called *āśphānakā*, an extremely ascetic meditation aimed at annihilating all desires by means of ceasing one's own breath. All the Tathāgatas who appeared with Mahāvairocana then gather around the prince and awaken him from his samādhi, which they inform the prince would not have led him to enlightenment. Instead, the Buddhas teach him an esoteric meditation on five mantras in which the prince will first see his bodhicitta as the full moon; then see his samantabhadra, the wisdom of enlightenment he shares equally with all the Buddhas, as the vajra amidst the moon; and then finally, by grasping the vajra, transform himself into a Tathāgata.

*Om cittaprativedham karomi.*

[Om, I have penetrated into the [depth] of my mind.]

*Om bodhicittam utpādayāmi.*

[Om, I am making manifest my enlightened mind.]

*Om tiṣṭha vajra.*

[Om, arise, vajra.]

*Om vajrātomako' ham.*

[Om, I am the one whose self is the vajra.]

*Om yathā sarvatathāgatās tathāham.*

[Om, just as all the Tathāgatas are, I am.]

(T 18:207c–208a)

It appears that the narrative of the *Vajrasēkhara Sūtra* here underscores the turning point in the prince's spiritual pursuit, at which he abandoned asceticism as practiced widely in various Brāhmaṇical systems and discovered the middle path, the right approach toward enlightenment. However, contrary to the standard account of the event in exoteric scriptures—in which the prince ends

his asceticism by receiving a bowl of porridge from the village maiden Sujāta and begins his final meditation—the sūtra suggests that even after the prince began his meditation, the remnant of asceticism persisted in his mind and that it took these esoteric ritual procedures to annihilate his attachment to ascetic means and guide him to the right path.

Before the prince, who has now attained Buddhahood, all the Buddhas (who all are the manifestations of Mahāvairocana who is at Akaniṣṭha) assemble, perform the abhiṣeka to ascertain his enlightenment, and grant him his new name as a Buddha, Tathāgata Vajradhātu. He then ascends to the summit of Mount Sumeru. Atop Sumeru—that is, at the Trāyastrīmśa Heaven—the Buddha Vajradhātu begins to construct the maṇḍala of the vajradhātu, the realm of vajra, symbolic of the permeation of the universe by the samantabhadra. The Buddha Vajradhātu accomplishes this, first, by placing himself at the center of the maṇḍala, thereby assuming a position in which he will transform himself into Mahāvairocana, and, second, by issuing forth the Buddhas of the four directions—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi—as his primary entourage (T 18:208b). Then Vajradhātu, as Mahāvairocana, performs his abhiṣeka for the exoteric bodhisattvas in the assembly by bestowing his vajra on each of them, an act that converts the bodhisattvas, one after another, into the esoteric divinities who constitute the vajradhātu maṇḍala (T 18:208b–216c).

The first bodhisattva to receive Vajradhātu’s abhiṣeka is Samantabhadra, who, having manifested his esoteric form as Vajrasattva, assumes the position of leader of the divinities in the maṇḍala. When Vajradhātu Buddha completes his construction of the maṇḍala at the apex of Mount Sumeru, at the request of all the Tathāgatas present Vajrasattva describes for Esoteric Buddhist practitioners (i.e., the readers of the sūtra) the method of ritual reenactment of the Buddha Vajradhātu’s abhiṣeka. This abhiṣeka is designed to transmit from master to disciple the samantabhadra, which expresses itself in the ritual space as multiple symbols, such as the water of abhiṣeka, the ritual instrument of vajra, and Vajrasattva’s physical attributes, especially his eye of wisdom. The sequence of the flower-throwing, for example, unfolds around the following mantras.

*Vajrasatvah svayam te 'dya hrdaye samavasthitah / Nirbbidya tatksanam  
yāyād yadi brūyād imān nāyam // Vajodhka thah //*

[Today Vajrasattva has established himself naturally in your heart. If you tell this (secret) truth (to others), he will at that moment leave you by destroying (your heart). O Vajra-water, Thah.]

*Tiṣṭha vajra dṛḍho me bhava śāśvato me bhava hrdayam me 'dhi-tiṣṭha sar-  
vasiddhim ca me prayaccha hūṁ ha ha ha hoḥ.*

[Arise, O, vajra. Be solid for me. Be permanent for me. Abide in my heart and grant me all perfections. Hūm Ha Ha Ha Hoh.]

*Om vajrasatvah svayam te 'dyo caksūdghātanataparah / Udgħātayati sar-vākṣo vajracaksur anuttaram //*

[Om, today, Vajrasattva concentrates himself in opening your eye (of wisdom). He who possesses the omnipotent eye causes to open [in you] the unexcelled vajra eye.]

(T 18:218a–b)

The master, who assumes the role of the Buddha Vajradhātu, utters the first mantra to his (her) disciple at the time the disciple proceeds to the maṇḍala to throw his (her) flower. The second mantra is chanted by the disciple, who expresses his (her) resolve in response to the master's mantra immediately prior to throwing the flower onto the maṇḍala. The third mantra, too, is uttered by the master, when he (she) removes the disciple's blindfold, causes the disciple to see the maṇḍala, and places in his (her) palm the ritual instrument of the vajra, testimony to the disciple's transformation into Vajrasattva. The sūtra concludes with Vajrasattva's describing for the disciple, now an equal in his (her) ritual competence, three separate modes of invoking all the divinities in the vajradhātu maṇḍala for the construction of that maṇḍala: visualization of individual divinities in their iconographic forms; recitation of the mantras of the individual divinities; and imitation of the individual divinities' karmas, their saving activities through ritual dances and songs (T 18:220b–221b, 221b–c, 221c–222a).<sup>73</sup>

The *Vajrāśekhara Sūtra* therefore portrays the enlightenment of Prince Siddhārtha as his reception of the abhiṣeka from Mahāvairocana and the subsequent construction of the vajradhātu maṇḍala by the prince, who has turned into the Tathāgata Vajradhātu. The sūtra thus insinuates that the enlightenment of any Buddha in any realm of the universe and in any historical period takes the form of his abandonment of asceticism as he is awakened by Esoteric Buddhist divinities, his practice of esoteric meditation, and his acquisition of the knowledge of constructing a mandala. This is because the sūtra sees the attainment of Buddhahood by every Buddha as the unfolding, in the form of the maṇḍala, of Mahāvairocana's samantabhadra, which is not only all-permeating but timeless. Śākyamuni Buddha's enlightenment on this earth is just one example of that unfolding. The ritual sequence of the abhiṣeka narrated in the sūtra extracts the abstract quality of the samantabhadra from the story of Prince Siddhārtha's attainment of Buddhahood and embodies it in some key ritual objects, the vajra in particular, to make possible its transmission from master to disciple.

In sum, the two abhiṣeka rituals Hui-kuo conducted for Kūkai have in common the intentionality of reenacting Mahāvairocana's transmission to Vajrasattva in the mythical, timeless realm of the maṇḍala of enlightenment, described by the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* as sarvajñajñāna, all-embracing wisdom, and by the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* as samantabhadra, universal goodness. The abhiṣeka is therefore a ritual device that evokes within itself the temporality of the scriptures' mythopoetic, primordial origin. By doing so, the abhiṣeka spins the genealogical thread of masters and disciples of Esoteric Buddhism in order to extend it into historical processes. The genealogy maintains its continuity from one generation to another by mediating between the time of history and that of mythical eternity. At the heart of this mediation is mantra's semantic function as a ritual language—especially its effacement of the boundary between the narrative lines of the scriptures and the rituals of abhiṣeka described for readers within those narratives.

In his application of J. L. Austin's language action theory to ritual study, the anthropologist Maurice BLOCH (1989:19–45) argues that once a language is transferred from its everyday semantic milieu to a ritual context—once it is ritually “formalized”—its locutionary force declines and its illocutionary force intensifies. A language in ritual processes grows less and less descriptive, propositional, or discursive, and becomes, instead, connotative. As a result, communication via ritual language depends less on logic and reason than on metaphor and repetition aimed at inspirational and emotional persuasion. To illustrate this point, Bloch cites the example of songs chanted in rituals. In a song, as in a mantra, “no argument or reasoning can be communicated, no adaptation to the reality of the situation is possible. *You cannot argue with a song*” (p. 37; emphasis in original).

Formalization therefore demonstrates the uniqueness of ritual language's semantic in two aspects. First, the language becomes an integral part of other media of ritual communication, such as bodily movements and ritual instruments.

As with speech, the formalization of body movement implies ever-growing control of choice of sequences of movement, and when this has occurred completely we have dance. We therefore find dance, as well as formalized body movements, typical of religion. The implications of this transformation from ordinary bodily control to dance are the same as they are for language: argument and bargaining with bodily movements are replaced by fixed, repeated, fused message. (p. 38)

This, however, does not necessarily result in an impoverishment or ossification of ritual language's semantic movements—as is often suggested by Bloch's discussion, which is neo-Marxist in orientation—for ritual language, like song and dance, is rich in implications. This is where ritual language's affinity with ritual instruments becomes manifest. Citing Victor TURNER's (1967:50) study of the "polysemy or multi-vocality" of material symbols, Bloch himself recognizes this point.

If words in ritual have little explanatory power but much socially useful ambiguity and are little separated from their context, they begin to perform less as parts of a language and more as things, in the same way as material symbols. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that rituals seem to show a predilection to use not only song and dance but also material things for communication. . . . Material symbols are therefore of their nature like words in formalized communication. They can only be part of a message with very weak propositional force but as a result gain in ambiguity and hence their illocutionary and emotional force. (Bloch, 1989, p. 41)

Bloch's discussion of the interchangeability of ritual language with material symbols, and, by extension, with bodily movements, is particularly suggestive for understanding the nature of mantra in Esoteric Buddhism, in which mantra is presented as one of the linguistic modalities that manifest in rituals the Dharmakāya's secret language of the three mysteries. Like the ritual instruments, mudrās, dances, and visualized sacred images that constitute the ritual "languages" of Esoteric Buddhism, mantra presents itself as a medium through which practitioners communicate with divinities in maṇḍalas. Bearing out Bloch's point, mantra appears to share with other ritual media its propositional ambiguity, which is the source of its polysemy, or multiplicity of meaning.

This curious combination of propositional weakness and multivocality leads to Bloch's second line of argument on the uniqueness of ritual language. Bloch points out that because of its ambivalence, ritual language deprives itself of specificity in both its subject and predicate and undergoes a dual semantic generalization, which he describes as *depersonalization* and *dehistoricization*.

As the leader [presiding at a ritual] turns to formalization his individual will disappears as he transforms reality in a timeless placeless zone. . . . Formalization thus [has] not only removed what is being said from a particular time

and a particular place, it has also removed it from the actual speaker, and thus created another supernatural being which the elder is slowly becoming or speaks for.

This is because

the increasing ambiguity of terms [formalized in ritual] means that the statements of a particular event take the form of a statement of all events of this kind. The effect of a comparison back to a set body of references which are very general is that the person is dissolved into the past, and the future is made to seem an inevitable repetition of this past. (p. 44)

In short, the polysemic quality of formalized, ritual communication figures the ritual space as another realm, whose dissolving of differences in temporality and individuality in the ordinary realm makes possible the simultaneous manifestation of the past and the present in the present of the ritual actors. Bloch's discussion of ritual language's condensation of time seems, again, to be illustrative of the function of mantra in the ritual of abhiṣeka, in which mantra's semantic polyvalence, which it shares with mudrā, material symbols, and other ritual media, is directly responsible for producing the lineage of masters and disciples.

Mantra is therefore the heart of the genealogy of Esoteric Buddhism claimed by Hui-kuo, which he described as originating with the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana's transmission to Vajrasattva of the lineage that was extended to him through four generations of patriarchs—Nāgārjuna, Nāgabodhi, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra—and which was now being passed on to Kūkai. Kūkai's journey to T'ang China, which began with his desire to master the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, led via the study of Sanskrit language to his exposure to knowledge of ritual language in Sanskrit embedded in the scriptural texts, knowledge hitherto unknown in the Buddhist discourse of early Heian Japan. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the type of dhāraṇīs already popularized in Nara and early Heian Japan were understood as appendages to sūtras' main text, as memory or recitative aides. In contrast, the mantras and dhāraṇīs studied by Kūkai were the sūtras' primary texts to which the prosaic lines were running commentaries. Unlike the mantras introduced by Kūkai, the dhāraṇīs known to the Japanese Buddhist community had little to do with the production of patriarchal genealogies in the existing Japanese Buddhist schools.

Upon his return Kūkai declared himself as a legitimate heir to Hui-kuo's Dharma, but upon doing so he had to face a new challenge, one far greater than his voyage to China. He now had to prove the authenticity of his status

to the Japanese Buddhist establishment, which must have found the claim of a school originating directly with the Dharmakāya Buddha not merely novel but heretical. Kūkai thus had to begin with the most basic level, with the construction of the very concept of Esoteric Buddhism, a taxonomic category whose contours were to be delineated as Kūkai developed his theories of how the ritual language of mantra worked.

## CHAPTER 4

### (No) Traces of Esoteric Buddhism *Dhāraṇī and the Nara Buddhist Literature*

In 716 the eminent Indian Esoteric Buddhist master Śubhakarasiṁha (637–735) was welcomed by the court of the Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 712–756) at Ch'ang-an. Having completed the strenuous journey from the great monastery of Nālandā via the Central Asian silk route, Śubhakarasiṁha immediately began his ambitious project of translating Esoteric Buddhist scriptures. Among those who seized the opportunity and studied with the Indian master was Dōji (675–744), a priest of Daianji in Nara, who completed his sixteen years of study in China and returned to Japan in 718.<sup>1</sup> Dōji became particularly renowned for his importation of an esoteric meditation known in Japan as *gumonjihō*, a devotional meditation upon Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha, based on the first text that Śubhakarasiṁha translated into Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Many among the Nara clergy were soon assiduously engaging in this meditation, which was believed to be effective in increasing one's power of memorizing sacred texts. Prominent figures who were known for their mastery of the *gumonjihō* included Zengi (729–812), Gonsō (758–827), Gomyō (750–834), and, of course, Kūkai.<sup>3</sup> Because Dōji had remained strongly associated with the *gumonjihō* and Śubhakarasiṁha, the popularity of the meditation gave rise to a legend that Śubhakarasiṁha had come to Japan with Dōji to promulgate Mikkyō, or the “secret teaching.”<sup>4</sup>

In the same year that Dōji returned to Japan, another Japanese priest, Genbō of Kōfukuji (?–746), arrived in China and in P'u-yang began an extensive study with Chih-chou (fl. 718), the third patriarch of the Chinese Yogācāra lineage. Word of Genbō's superior learning reached the ears of Emperor Hsüan-tsung, who rewarded him with the gift of a purple robe. In 734, bearing five thousand fascicles of Buddhist scriptures, Genbō returned to Japan and swiftly rose to eminence as the trusted adviser of Emperor Shōmu (r. 724–749).<sup>5</sup> In 739 Genbō became ill and Kanmu sanctioned the copying of the *Buddhasaṅīsa Sūtra*,<sup>6</sup>

another esoteric text, to pray for the priest's recovery.<sup>7</sup> In return, in 741, Genbō vowed to produce one thousand copies of the *Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* in hope of saving all living beings in the three evil transmigratory paths.<sup>8</sup> As exemplified by these sūtras, the Buddhist texts imported by Genbō included a large number of Mikkyō scriptural texts, among them the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*,<sup>9</sup> an essential scripture for the Esoteric Buddhist tradition in East Asia that had been translated by Śubhakarasiṁha in 724.

The recent growth in research on Nara Buddhism has made it evident that—as demonstrated by the cases of Dōji and Genbō—from early on in the Nara period, there was a constant influx of Mikkyō texts from China, with the result that the recitation of some of the dhāraṇīs prescribed in those texts was incorporated into the existing body of Nara Buddhist ritual. Already widespread, too, was the worship of deities in their esoteric representations, such as the Eleven-Faced and the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, historians generally agree that it was Kūkai who first succeeded in introducing Mikkyō and in establishing it as a new form of Buddhism that marked the beginning of a new era in Japanese Buddhist history. What, then, distinguishes Kūkai's transmission of Mikkyō from the previous importation of it? Is it legitimate to single out Kūkai in Japanese Buddhist history as the founder of Mikkyō?

### The *Zōmitsu/Junmitsu* Scheme and Its Limitations

Scholars of Japanese Buddhist history have characterized the Mikkyō of the Nara period as *zōmitsu*, “miscellaneous Mikkyō,” distinguishing it from *junmitsu*, the “pure Mikkyō” of the Shingon and Tendai Schools transmitted from China during the early Heian period by such masters as Kūkai, Jōgyō (d. 866), Ennin (794–864), and Enchin (814–891). According to ŌMURA Seigai (1918:373–375), one of the pioneers of modern Mikkyō studies, the junmitsu differs from the zōmitsu in four respects: (1) junmitsu rituals consist of the gestural actions forming mudrās, the recitation of mantras and dhāraṇīs, and the visualizing of mandala images; (2) junmitsu practices aim at transforming the practitioner's life into that of an enlightened being (*sokushin jōbutsu*); (3) junmitsu scriptures are preached by Mahāvairocana Buddha, who is identified as the Dharmakāya; and (4) at the heart of the junmitsu system are the two realms (*ryōbu*), the mandalas of the vajra realm (Skt. *vajradhātu*; Jpn. *kongōkai*) and the garbha realm (Skt. *garbha*; Jpn. *taizō*) as described, respectively, in the *Vajrasekhara Sūtra* and the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. With Mahāvairocana as the central deity surrounded by numerous other Buddhas and bodhisattvas, these two realms form a nondual (*funi*) relationship.

By contrast, as Ōmura describes them, zōmitsu practices consist of ritual recitations of dhāraṇī, accompanied only rarely by ritual practices of mudrās and visualizations. The goal of zōmitsu practices is not the attainment of enlightenment but healing illness, attaining supernatural power, causing the rain to fall, preventing calamities, and other mundane effects. Preached by Śākyamuni, the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha, zōmitsu is devoid of the theoretical concepts of the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana and of their iconographic representation as Mahāvairocana's two maṇḍalas.

The zōmitsu/junmitsu theory, which is widely accepted by Japanese scholars today, provides a convenient means of distinguishing the Esotericism of the Nara period from that of the Shingon School. Some scholars have even gone so far as to apply this theory to explain the history of Mikkyō in China, and more extremely, in India.<sup>11</sup> However, as MISAKI Ryōshū (1988:146–147) has demonstrated, the terms *zōmitsu* and *junmitsu* themselves developed relatively late in Japanese Buddhist history. Conceived as a pair of opposites, the terms first appeared in the work of the mid-Tokugawa scholar-priest Ekō (1666–1734). Prior to Ekō's invention, this way of categorizing forms of Mikkyō can be found nowhere in the history of Japanese, Chinese, or Indian Buddhism.<sup>12</sup> That is to say, the zōmitsu/junmitsu paradigm does not help in understanding the mode in which diverse Esoteric Buddhist elements existed in the historical and cultural context of the Buddhism in Nara and early Heian society.

Perhaps the most obvious shortcoming of the zōmitsu/junmitsu theory is its excessive simplification. YAMAORI Tetsuo (1989:144), for example, states: “The type of Mikkyō that thrived during the Nara period was zōmitsu. That is, the systematic Mikkyō as represented by the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajrasēkhara Sūtra* had not yet been incorporated into Japanese Buddhism. . . . It was an age of zōmitsu. The new era of junmitsu begins with Kūkai.” However, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the quintessential “junmitsu” scriptural text, together with the extensive commentary by Śubhakarasiṁha, had already reached Japan by the mid-Nara period. Although the other root scripture, the *Vajrasēkhara Sūtra*,<sup>13</sup> which, with the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, forms the nondual core of the junmitsu system, was first imported by Kūkai in 806, an earlier, abbreviated translation by Vajrabodhi had also found its way to Japan by the mid-Nara period.<sup>14</sup> The *Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, another junmitsu text integral to the Shingon liturgy, had already been copied in Japan in 736, 746, 747, 753, and 755.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, it is impossible to understand the Mikkyō transmitted by Kūkai merely as junmitsu, because among the texts he imported were a large number of “zōmitsu” scriptures. In 823 he presented to the court of Emperor Saga (r. 809–823) the *Catalog of the Three Studies* (*Sangakuroku*),<sup>16</sup> which

identified all the essential scriptural texts in the Shingon School. Included in the catalog are 150 volumes of sūtras, which Kūkai organized into three groups: 62 volumes of *kongōchōshūkyō*, sūtras of the “vajra teaching” class; 7 volumes of *taizōshūkyō*, sūtras of the “garbha teaching” class; and 61 volumes of *zōbu shingonkyō*, sūtras of the “miscellaneous mantra” class. In Kūkai’s view, these “zōmitsu” sūtras were indispensable canonical texts of the Shingon School and, as will be discussed in the next two chapters, they were critical to his winning the cooperation of the Nara clergy for propagating Esoteric Buddhism. By contrast, there are no words in Kūkai’s vocabulary corresponding to *junmitsu*. Simply stated, at no time in Japanese Buddhist history can there be said to have existed the particular forms of Esoteric Buddhism called zōmitsu and junmitsu. They are modern categories, the products of the imagination of modern Buddhist scholars.

It now becomes clear that the concept of junmitsu cannot illuminate the process through which Kūkai distinguished his Mikkyō from that of his Nara precursors. This also leads to the conclusion that the various Mikkyō scriptural texts copied during the Nara period and the dhāraṇī rituals practiced during that time were not perceived by Kūkai and his contemporaneous Buddhist practitioners as “zōmitsu,” that is, as the Mikkyō falling short of or breaking off from that denoted by the term *junmitsu*. To observe the transition of Mikkyō effected by Kūkai and to appraise its magnitude, it is necessary to set aside the zōmitsu/junmitsu theory, together with the reading of Japanese Buddhist history that naively follows the rigid periodization it imposed.

### (In)visibility of Esoterism in the Nara Buddhist Culture

The copying of Buddhist scriptures was among the most important state-sponsored efforts to propagate Buddhism in the Nara period. In addition to its purpose of providing the textual foundation for the training of priests and nuns, the imperial court enthusiastically endorsed the copying of sacred texts because of the merit said to accrue to all who contributed to that activity. In 734, upon completion of the reproduction of *issaikyō*, the comprehensive collection he had ordered of Buddhist scriptures, Emperor Shōmu (r. 724–749) announced:

I, the emperor, have worked to find time on all occasions to engage in study and have determined that among the classics the Buddhist teachings are the most excellent with regard to extending people’s life spans and bringing them peace. Therefore I have revered the three jewels [Skt *triratna*; Jpn. *sanbō*],

taken refuge in the One Unifying Vehicle [Skt. *ekayāna*; Jpn. *ichijō*], and, with respect, have completed the copying of the comprehensive collection of Buddhist scriptures. Those who read them are verily the ones who, with sincere minds, do service to the nation and help all living beings. Let us study them for hundreds of years; let us pray for the boundless fortune they will produce. Even those who only hear them recited will not fall into the evil transmigratory paths for countless eons. Let us altogether abandon the mesh of our delusions and ascend to *nirvāṇa*.<sup>17</sup>

During Shōmu's reign, the Office of Sūtra Reproduction, or Shakyōsho, staffed with officers specialized in copying, editing, proofreading, and decorating scrolls, was established at court.<sup>18</sup> The historian Inoue Kaoru has demonstrated that the Empress Kōmyō (701–760), Shōmu's wife, was particularly instrumental in developing and managing the sūtra-copying project.<sup>19</sup> The copies of scriptures produced by the Shakyōsho were distributed widely through the major provinces via the network of *kokubunji* and *kokubun'niji*, the state-sponsored monasteries and nunneries. It appears that Genbō's return from China in 734 and his importation of a new set of *issaikyō* spurred renewed interest in sūtra reproduction. In 740, by Kōmyō's order, another extensive sūtra-copying project was launched by the Shakyōsho,<sup>20</sup> and the same office began yet another project twenty years later, upon the death of the empress.<sup>21</sup>

The aim of these efforts was to reproduce in their entirety the Chinese Buddhist canonical texts listed in the comprehensive *Catalog of the Buddhist Canon of the K'ai-yüan Years*, which had been compiled in twenty fascicles by Chih-sheng (fl. 669–740) of Ch'ung-fu-ssu in 730.<sup>22</sup> As stated in a document issued in conjunction with Empress Kōmyō's sūtra-copying project by the Shakyōsho, dated the thirteenth day of the third month of Tenpyō 11 (739), "it is to announce that the entire Buddhist canon, consisting of 5,048 fascicles, will be reproduced in accord with the *K'ai-yüan Catalog*."<sup>23</sup> The catalogs of copied sūtras prepared by the same office demonstrate that major projects were indeed carried out in the latter half of the Nara period to that end.<sup>24</sup>

Included in Chih-sheng's catalog were the Mikkyō scriptures translated by Bodhiruci (?–727), Śubhakarasiṁha (637–735), and Vajrabodhi (671–741), the Indian patriarchs responsible for the introduction and swift propagation of Esoteric Buddhism in China during the mid-T'ang period. All of these masters were active in Ch'ang-an when Chih-sheng completed his catalog. In fact, Bodhiruci made Ch'ung-fu-ssu the base for his translation activities, and his residence there coincided with that of Chih-sheng. MATSUNAGA Yūkei (1969:160–161), a specialist in Shingon historiographic literature, has identified 130 esoteric sūtras and ritual manuals—or nearly a quarter of the Mikkyō texts

compiled in the Taishō Daizōkyō edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon—copied during the Nara period.<sup>25</sup> Matsunaga's study points out that by the mid-Nara period most of the Mikkyō texts listed in the *K'ai-yüan* catalog were readily available in Japan.

On the other hand, anyone who reads Chih-sheng's authoritative catalog with Mikkyō texts in mind will notice a curious lacuna: despite the large number of Esoteric Buddhist texts listed, there is no separate category for esoteric scriptures. The entire canon is first divided into three major categories: tripiṭaka texts for bodhisattvas (*Mahāyāna*); tripiṭaka texts for śrāvakas (*Hīnayāna*); and biographies of the Buddha, his disciples, and other prominent teachers. The *Mahāyāna* and *Hīnayāna* texts are then categorized into the three classes of sūtra, vinaya, and abhidharma. In fascicles 11 and 12 of his catalog, Chih-sheng divides *Mahāyāna* sūtras further into six categories:

1. Prajñā-pāramitā class: Prajñā-pāramitā sūtras and their analogs.
2. Jewel Heap class: scriptures that make up the *Great Jewel Heap Sūtra*<sup>26</sup> and other related texts.
3. Great Collection class: scriptures compiled in the *Great Collection Sūtra*<sup>27</sup> and other related texts.
4. Flower Garland class: translations of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and of its individual chapters that circulate as independent texts.
5. Nirvāṇa class: the *Mahāyāna Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and its analogs.
6. Miscellaneous class: *Mahāyāna* sūtras not belonging to the other five classes.

A large proportion of the catalog's esoteric scriptures were placed in the sixth category. The *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, for example, is there (T 55:603a), together with other major *Mahāyāna* sūtras such as the *Lotus*, the *Vimalakirti*, and the *Lankāvatāra*. Other Mikkyō texts were scattered among the Prajñā-pāramitā and Great Collection classes. Several esoteric texts on the worship of Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha were clustered together in the third class. However, the text on Ākāśagarbha's mnemonic meditation, *gumonjihō*, translated by Śubhakarasiṁha and popularized in Japan, was included in the sixth category. Although the *K'ai-yüan Catalog of the Buddhist Canon* was doubtless one of the most complete listings of Chinese Buddhist scriptures and served as a model for the compilation of the Buddhist catalogs of later periods, it shows no consistency in classifying esoteric texts.

In 800, the priest Yüang-chao of Hsi-ming-ssu composed the *Catalog of the Buddhist Canon Newly Compiled in the Chen-yüan Years*,<sup>28</sup> another comprehensive work aimed primarily at incorporating new texts that had been translated

into Chinese by eight Indian tripiṭaka masters in the period since the appearance of Chih-sheng's catalog. In the seven decades separating these two catalogs, there had been a drastic increase in the number of esoteric texts translated into Chinese, largely due to the work of Amoghavajra (705–774), who alone, according to Yüang-chao's account, produced 110 translated works in 142 fascicles (T 55:772a–773b). In spite of the phenomenal growth in the Mikkyō literature of the works from the Chinese canon, Yüang-chao maintained the *K'ai-yüang* catalog's format for classifying Buddhist sūtras, without attempting any systematic classification of the esoteric texts. This is noteworthy because Yüang-chao is renowned for his compilation of the *Collected Writings of the Tripitaka Master Amoghavajra*,<sup>29</sup> an extensive collection of letters and official records documenting Amoghavajra's activities, including numerous instances in which he performed esoteric rituals at the imperial court. One must therefore conclude that despite the conspicuous proselytizing activities of Esoteric Buddhist masters, and in the mid-T'ang religious scene where the development of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism reached its apex, Chinese Buddhism's two most prominent catalogers did not develop a concept for distinguishing between esoteric texts and other Mahāyāna Buddhist works.

If the prism of Chinese Buddhist bibliography had failed to isolate Esoteric Buddhist texts as one of its spectra, it was inevitable that as a bibliographical category, Mikkyō remained transparent to the Nara Buddhists, who viewed the structure of Buddhist literature through the same prism. That is to say, those Buddhists of the Nara period who actually copied and studied esoteric texts did not necessarily see them as belonging to a particular class in the Buddhist tradition, and certainly not to that which modern scholars refer to as "Mikkyō." It therefore is an abuse of historical hindsight to argue that because esoteric texts had been imported, reproduced, and circulated in Japan prior to the time of Kūkai, Ennin, and Enchin, Mikkyō had already been transmitted to Japan during the Nara period as an independent Buddhist tradition.

This indistinguishability, or invisibility, of Mikkyō in the Nara period to which the standard Chinese Buddhist bibliographical classification system bears witness also applies to the widespread worship of esoteric deities in the great Nara temples. By the end of the Nara period, the various esoteric images—such as Vajrapāṇi (Shukongō), Sudṛṣṭi (Myōken) and Amoghapāśa (Fukū kenjaku)—were already enshrined and being worshiped at "exoteric" temples.<sup>30</sup> Extant images celebrated as among the finest examples of Buddhist sculpture dating from the late Tenpyō period (752–794) include the standing image of the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara at Tōshōdaiji, Nara; the seated image of the same bodhisattva at Fujiidera (Gōrinji) in Kawachi, Ōsaka prefecture; the standing image of the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara at Kannonji in Tanabe,

Kyoto prefecture; and the standing image of the same deity at Shōrinji in Sakurai, Nara prefecture.<sup>31</sup> The historian HORIIKE Shunpō (1979:50–83) has identified a total of forty-three temples and shrines at which Avalokiteśvara was enshrined during Nara period. Of these, the eleven-faced bodhisattva was worshiped at eleven locations, and the thousand-armed manifestation at thirteen.

The pervasiveness of the worship of the esoteric transformation Avalokiteśvaras (*henge kannon*) during the late Nara period, suggested by these images, can also be witnessed in contemporaneous Japanese Buddhist literature. Keikai's *Miraculous Episodes of Good and Evil Karmic Effects in the Nation of Japan* (*Ninonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki*)<sup>32</sup> includes sixteen episodes related to the worship of Avalokiteśvara. This far exceeds the number of stories about other popular deities—five each about Maitreya (Miroku) and Śākyamuni (Shaka); three about Sudṛṣṭi; two each about Bhaisajyaguru (Yakushi), Amitābha, and Mahāśrī (Kichijō); and one each about Vajrapāṇi and Kṣiti-garbha (Jizō).

However, the fact that they were worshiped in the Nara period does not mean that they were recognized by Nara Buddhist practitioners as esoteric deities, as distinct from exoteric. Historians of Japanese Buddhist art have pointed out that, despite the popularity of esoteric deities during the Nara period, maṇḍalas do not appear in Nara Buddhist iconography. (SAWA Ryūken 1961:78–104, 165–203). They have also demonstrated that it was the systematic importation of the vajradhātu and garbha maṇḍalas, together with their elaborate meditative rituals, beginning in the early Heian period, that gave rise to a clear iconographic distinction between esoteric and exoteric images. NAKANO Genzō (1983:22–24), director of the Kyoto National Museum, has identified three major changes in Japanese Buddhist sculpture prompted by the transmission of the two maṇḍalas. First, importation of the maṇḍalas led to an explosion in the number of Buddhas and bodhisattvas to be represented; second, this plethora of deities engendered a new maṇḍala-like arrangement of images in the inner temple halls; and, third, the introduction of a new type of wrathful deity, *vidyā-rāja* (*myōō*), who characteristically wore a fearful and often grotesque expression, pushed Japanese Buddhist sculptural representations in an entirely new direction.

Nakano asserts that prior to the Tenpyō era (729–749) there were only five Tathāgatas known to Japanese Buddhist sculpture: Śākyamuni (Shaka), Bhaisajyaguru (Yakushi), Amitābha (Amida), Maitreya (Miroku), and Akṣobhya (Ashuku). The two maṇḍalas not only introduced new Tathāgatas to be represented sculpturally, it provided a novel context in which old and new Buddhas were related to one another. Śākyamuni, for instance, was

now understood as the Nirmāṇakāya manifestation of Mahāvairocana, who reigned over one of the major assemblies of the garbha maṇḍala. Akṣobhya and Amitābha were now represented as Mikkyō deities, two of the four central Buddhas of the four directions and the personification of two of Mahāvairocana's five forms of wisdom in the vajra maṇḍala. Thus it was not merely the particular types of deity but rather the particular relational context in which deities were represented that made possible the iconographic distinction between exoteric and esoteric. As in the case of the esoteric scriptures listed in the *Kai-yūan Catalog*, which failed to form a distinct bibliographical category of their own and allowed themselves to be classified as Mahāyāna texts, the esoteric deities worshiped in the Nara monastic institutions prior to the introduction of the maṇḍalas remained immersed among Mahāyāna Buddhist icons.

## Dhāraṇī: Exoteric and Esoteric Functions

Another effective method for reconstructing the cultural setting in which Mikkyō existed in the Nara and early Heian periods is to study the actual ritual practices into which the elements of Esotericism were incorporated. There exists a group of Nara documents known as *ubasoku kōshinge*,<sup>33</sup> letters of endorsement presented by Buddhist masters to the government to obtain official approval for the ordination of their novice disciples. Under the Nara state's legal code, or the *ritsuryō*, every ordination had to be reported to, and authorized by, the Agency for Buddhist and Foreign Affairs (*Gembaryō*) of the Ministry of Aristocracy (*Jibushō*).<sup>34</sup> The letters of the *kōshinge* identify the length of the candidate's training, the particular sūtras he or she studied, and the sūtras and dhāraṇīs he or she was able to recite from memory. In a letter in the spring of 732, for example, the priest Chishū seconds the ordination of his disciple Hata no kimi Toyotari:

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY, THIRD MONTH, TENPYŌ 4

Hata no kimi Toyotari of Taruho village, Toshi county, the province of Mino.

Twenty-nine years old.

*Sūtras studied:* the *Lotus*, the *Golden Light*, the *Great Collection*, the *Maitreya*, the *Mahāyāna Nirvāṇa*, and fifteen other sūtras.

*Additional sūtras for recitation:* the *Bhaiṣajyaguru*, the *Avalokiteśvara*, the *Prajñā-pāramitā Heart*.

*Dhāraṇīs*: the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*, Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara; Eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara, the *Golden Light*, Ākāśagarbha, Bhaiṣajyaguru, consecrating water, concealing ritual space. Has mastered the [dhāraṇī] rituals of prostration.

*Length of novice training*: eight years.

Priest Chishu (DK 1:447)

As Chishu's letter demonstrates, the ability to recite dhāraṇīs was an important requirement for Nara priests and nuns. Some were contained in the *Lotus*, the *Golden Light*, and other exoteric sūtras; others were described in esoteric texts for the worship of particular deities; still others were required for such esoteric rituals as sprinkling consecrated water and protecting ritual sites from evil influences. In his study of fifty-three kōshinge letters for both male and female ordinands, HORIIKE Shunpō (1960:629) has pointed out that it is the dhāraṇīs of esoteric deities, such as the Thousand-armed, the Eleven-faced, and Amoghapāśa manifestations of Avalokiteśvara, as well as Buddhoṣṇīśa, that appear most frequently, attesting to the fact that the incantation of these dhāraṇīs had become particularly popular among Nara Buddhists.

In another study of kōshinge letters, YOSHIDA Yasuo (1988:155–168) has identified the sūtras most commonly studied by ordinands between the years 732 and 745. Of the twelve most frequently studied, six, including texts describing dhāraṇī worship of the aforementioned deities, are esoteric texts.<sup>35</sup> The *Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* is ranked fourth, followed by the *Buddhoṣṇīśa Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, and the *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, ranked, respectively, eighth, tenth, and twelfth.<sup>36</sup> The *Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, a “junmitsu” scripture, is ranked seventh. Yoshida's research makes it clear that the study of esoteric sūtras, together with mastery of the dhāraṇī incantations they prescribed, formed the core of the Nara Buddhist training curriculum. Complementing Horiike's study, it seriously challenges the conventional historical view, which holds that the Buddhism of Nara period consisted primarily of doctrinal schools of exoteric Buddhism.

Both Horiike and Yoshida attribute the pervasiveness of dhāraṇī chanting during the Nara period to the popular belief in the power of dhāraṇīs to heal. In the *Buddhoṣṇīśa Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, for example, Śākyamuni Buddha explains to the Four Guardian Kings of the four directions the saving power of the dhāraṇīs that were impregnated with the wisdom of enlightenment, symbolized by *buddhoṣṇīśa* (Jpn, *butchō*), the summit of the Buddha's head:

On the day of a full moon, recite this dhāraṇī one thousand times. All living beings with short life spans will immediately be rewarded with longevity and forever freed from suffering from illness. All their karmic obstructions will be extirpated. . . . Even those who are gravely sick, upon hearing this dhāraṇī recited, will be emancipated from all forms of illness and prevented from transmigrating through evil realms.

(T 19:351c)

In the *Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, in the course of his conversation with Śākyamuni Buddha, Avalokiteśvara reveals his compassion-manifesting dhāraṇī as *amoghapāśa* (Jpn. *fukū kenjaku*), the seine that saves the drowning from the ocean of saṃsāra. The bodhisattva then provides a list of “indications” against which the dhāraṇī proves effective: “pains in the eye, ear, nose, teeth, lips, tongue, jaws, heart, stomach, waist, back . . . pains in the joints, hands, feet, head, throat . . . cold, pneumonia, diarrhea, leprosy, pox” (T 20:404c). The list continues as if to include every imaginable illness. Later, Avalokiteśvara identifies twenty auspicious outcomes that can be attained by chanting the dhāraṇī. These include not only purifying one’s karma but also gaining health and beauty, preventing demons from stealing one’s vital breath, warding off possessions by evil spirits, and protection from all sorts of poisons and disasters (T 20:405b). Although not as specific as these two sūtras, the *Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* and *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* also make brief references to their dhāraṇīs’ power against diseases (T 20:107a–b, 152b).

The popularity of chanting dhāraṇīs can be seen from the government’s legal code. In its effort to prevent Buddhists from acquiring power over the masses, the Nara regime sternly proscribed the public display of magico-religious skills by Buddhist priests and nuns. Nonetheless, it permitted dhāraṇī chanting for medical purposes. The first two articles of the *Sōniryō* (Rules for Buddhist Priests and Nuns), the *ritsuryō* code’s laws governing Buddhist clerics, promulgated in 718, are as follows:

*Article 1.* Those priests and nuns who read auspicious or ominous signs in nature as a means of telling people’s fortunes, who publicly discuss affairs of the state in an effort to mislead people, who study military strategy in order to commit murder and theft, or who falsely proclaim their own attainment of enlightenment are, without exception, transgressors of the laws of the nation and will be punished by the lay officials responsible for enforcing the penal codes.

*Article 2.* Priests and nuns who practice divination, distribute charms, perform spirit-possession, or practice medicine will, without exception, be deprived of their ordained status. *Exempt from this rule is the healing of the sick by chanting dhāraṇīs in accordance with the Buddha Dharma.*<sup>37</sup>

According to the *Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihongi*), an official historiography of the Nara period compiled at the behest of Emperor Kanmu in 797, there existed in the Nara imperial court a group of priests known as *kanbyōzenji*, or “healer-meditation masters,” priests well versed in dhāraṇīs for protecting the health of the ruler and the members of his or her family. For example, on the twenty-third day of the fifth month of Tenpyō Hōshō 8 (756), the reigning empress Kōken said:

The Meditation Master (*zenji*) Hōei is endowed by birth with a virtuous nature and excels in upholding the vinaya. Unsurpassed in the art of medicine, he was invited from a faraway province to the court to serve as an attendant to the retired emperor [Shōmu]. Hōei has made countless contributions to [Shōmu’s] well-being, and the retired emperor’s trust [in Hōei] grew so deep that he would not accept the services of other physicians. Despite Hōei’s efforts, however, just as the river’s flow cannot be stopped, the retired emperor finally passed away.<sup>38</sup>

On the following day, Kōken issued an edict to “exempt from taxation and mandatory duties the one hundred twenty-six kanbyō zenji who were invited to attend the retired emperor.”<sup>39</sup> It appears that on the eve of Shōmu’s death an unusually large number of healer-meditation masters were summoned to the court to pray for Shōmu’s recovery.

*Miraculous Episodes of Good and Evil Karmic Effects in the Nation of Japan* contains eleven stories relating to the practice of dhāraṇī chanting, of which four specifically concern the power of dhāraṇīs to heal. The collection contains an additional seven stories that identify as methods of healing recitation of the *Diamond Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*, engaging in the acts of devotion to the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara and Bhaisajyaguru, the Buddha of Medicine, releasing animals from captivity, and taking herbal medication. The stories show that for ordinary people, too, the recitation of dhāraṇīs by priests and nuns was one of the most common methods of healing during the Nara period.<sup>40</sup>

At the beginning of fascicle 3 of Keikai’s compendium is a story of the Meditation Master Eigō, a priest of Kōfukuji in Nara. During the reign of Empress Shōtoku (764–770), Eigō traveled south to the province of Kii and settled in the fishing village of Kumano in Muro county. Eigō taught Buddhism

to the local people, who, out of respect, called him the “bodhisattva of the south.” “One day a villager became sick and went to Eigō’s temple seeking his help. When the meditation master recited a dhāraṇī, the villager got well. However, when the master left him, the symptom returned to the villager, and the master was called in again for dhāraṇī chanting. But as soon as the master finished chanting, the villager became sick again.”<sup>41</sup> When Eigō forced himself to continue his chanting, he exposed an animal spirit who had taken possession of the villager and caused his illness.<sup>42</sup>

Yet another important area of Nara Buddhist practice redolent of esoteric elements was *keka*, a ritual act of repentance common in the daily life of the Nara and Heian periods.<sup>43</sup> Keka rites were ordinarily dedicated to popular deities, such as Lakṣmī (Kichijō), Bhaisajyaguru, and Amitābha. YAMAGISHI Tsuneto’s survey of surviving records (1980:4–7) has found entries for fifty-six occasions between the years 736 and 785 on which the repentance rite was performed, of which twenty-five indicate the names of keka deities, including nine addressed to Avalokiteśvara in his esoteric eleven-faced and thousand-armed forms.

Many keka ceremonies were performed at imperial behest. On the fourth day of the twelfth month of Tenpyō 16 (744), to prevent the spread of an epidemic, Emperor Shōmu ordered the nation to perform the keka ritual dedicated to Bhaisajyaguru, the Buddha of Medicine, for seven days and seven nights. On New Year’s day, Tenpyō Shōhō 1 (749), the same emperor announced the prohibition of all forms of killing for the day and ordered the major temples in the nation to perform the keka by reciting the *Golden Light Sūtra*.

Keka rites were also performed at local temples and shrines for private purposes. In a story in *Miraculous Episodes*, the nuns of Sayadera<sup>44</sup> in Kii province invite from Nara a certain meditation master, Daie of Yakushiji, to preside at a repentance rite before the eleven-faced bodhisattva. Among the village folk participating in the repentance rite is a woman whose husband is notorious for the atrocities he has committed. The husband returns home at night, and, enraged by his wife’s absence, rushes to the temple. He rebukes Daie for stealing her, drags her home, and forces her to make love to him. The episode concludes when poisonous ants suddenly attack the husband’s genitals, causing his immediate death and bringing an end to his tyranny over his wife.<sup>45</sup>

Historians of early Japanese Buddhism have pointed out an affinity between the traditional Buddhist repentance rite of *deśanā* and the popular practice of keka.<sup>46</sup> However, whereas the purpose of *deśanā* is to exculpate individual practitioners from moral transgressions, keka is usually practiced by a group of ordained or lay Buddhists for the purpose of collectively purifying their past

evil karmas. This explains why, during the repentance ceremony, priests and nuns not only confess their own offenses but repent for the sake of the entire nation. It is this collective cleansing of karmic defilement that was believed to achieve various auspicious outcomes, such as healing illness, ending drought, preventing epidemics, and suppressing rebellions. The belief in the power of keka to influence the course of events is homologous to the belief in dhāraṇīs' supernatural power. In his study of highly ritualized keka practices in the late Nara to early Heian periods, YAMAGISHI Tsuneto (1984:35–36) points out that at the beginning of the ninth century there was a dramatic increase in the performance of a particular public ritual in which the worshipers recited or presented lectures on a sūtra during the day and at night performed keka by chanting dhāraṇī. Yamagishi's study provides clues to the affinity between keka and dhāraṇī and the origin of that affinity in pre-Heian developments.

HORIIKE Shunpō (1960), YAMAORI Tetsuo (1989:143–146), MATSUNAGA Yūkei (1969:155–164), and many other scholars have asserted that the conspicuous presence of dhāraṇīs in Nara Buddhist practice was evidence of the early infiltration of Mikkyō into Japanese Buddhism, a phenomenon that they claim paved the way for the establishment of the Shingon School by Kūkai. At first glance, the popularity of dhāraṇī as a subject of study for the Buddhist ordinands, its use as a method of healing, and its affinity with keka seem to support their view. However, one must not forget that dhāraṇī, as a linguistic phenomenon, is not unique to esoteric texts. As demonstrated in chapter 26 of the *Lotus Sutra*, which immediately follows the famous Avalokiteśvara chapter, dhāraṇīs are also important elements in exoteric Mahāyāna scriptures.<sup>47</sup> In particular, dhāraṇīs figure prominently in prajñā-pāramitā sūtras, in which the Buddha praises dhāraṇī incantation, along with the cultivation of samādhi, as virtuous activity of a bodhisattva. Other exoteric texts popularly recited or copied during the Nara period, such as the *Golden Light Sutra* and the *Great Collection Sutra*, also abound with dhāraṇīs whose chanting is said to guarantee protection from harm.<sup>48</sup> In short, dhāraṇī chanting can take place in an exclusively exoteric context. Therefore, in the absence of any clear indication that the Nara Buddhist possessed the knowledge not only to distinguish esoteric from exoteric scriptures but also to use esoteric dhāraṇīs in a manner different from their exoteric counterparts, it is difficult to designate the mere fact of dhāraṇī recitation during the Nara Period as the immediate reason for the rise of the Heian-period Mikkyō of the Shingon and Tendai Schools, as do Horiike, Matsunaga, and Yamaori.

For example, letters of recommendation for the ordination of novices, mentioned earlier, show that ordinands randomly studied both the dhāraṇīs of esoteric deities and those appearing in exoteric sūtras such as the *Greater*

*Prajñā-pāramitā*, the *Lotus*, and the *Golden Light*.<sup>49</sup> In Keikai's *Miraculous Episodes*, both esoteric and exoteric dhāraṇīs are chanted to bring about healing. And there are episodes in which not dhāraṇī incantation but the recitation of such exoteric texts as the *Diamond Sūtra* or the *Lotus Sūtra* causes a blinded worshiper to regain his sight (episode 21, fascicle 3), saves a traveler from contracting a fatal illness (episode 24, fascicle 2), or revives a deceased court noble (episode 9, fascicle 3).

Despite their nearly universal use throughout the Nara religious scene, and precisely because of their general acceptance, the dhāraṇīs popularly chanted during the Nara and early Heian periods appear to have constituted a mélange of the exoteric and esoteric. Keikai once referred to the *Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* as a “Mahāyāna Sūtra (*daijōkyō*)” and elsewhere to the esoteric dhāraṇī of the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara in the same sūtra as the “divine dhāraṇī of Mahāyāna (*daijō shinju*).<sup>50</sup> In the vocabulary of Kūkai's Esoteric Buddhism—in which Esotericism is defined as Vajrayāna (*kongōjō*), Mantrayāna (*shingonjō*), and the Secret Treasury (*mitsužo*) and distinguished from the Mahāyāna of Exoteric Schools (*kengyō*)<sup>51</sup>—to designate an esoteric dhāraṇī as *daijō shinju* or an esoteric sūtra as *daijōkyō* seems to be a contradiction.

Thus the prevalence of the practice of dhāraṇī recitation in Nara society points once again to the invisibility of Esoteric Buddhism as a distinct category within the religious culture of the time. Adherents of the zōmitsu/junmitsu theory ignore this ambiguity by claiming that “there is essentially no difference between the mantras and dhāraṇīs of zōmitsu scriptures and those of Mahāyāna scriptures, for both are chanted for worldly gain (*genze riyaku*), not for the realization of enlightenment. . . . It was the mantras in junmitsu scriptures, aimed as they were at the attainment of enlightenment, that made it possible to clearly distinguish esoteric texts from Mahāyāna scriptures” (UJII E Kakushō 1984:30–31). But, as repeatedly pointed out, “junmitsu” scriptures did reach Nara Japan. True, in light of their purported efficacy, the “zōmitsu” dhāraṇī and Mahāyāna dhāraṇī may seem similar. However, there are essential differences between them in terms of their textuality, that is, in terms of the relationship between the body of the text, the dhāraṇīs inserted in it, and the prescribed ritual of incantation.

In the Mahāyāna sūtras, dhāraṇīs are strongly associated with the preservation of sūtra texts and their teachings. In the dhāraṇī chapter at the close of the *Lotus Sūtra*, *devas* (heaven dwellers) and *rāksasās* (man-eater demons), having received the Buddha's preaching and, having been led by Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja, pledge to uphold and preserve the teaching of the *Lotus* and to reveal dhāraṇīs that “protect those practitioners who memorize even a line

of the sūtra's verse and those who read, recite, and understand its meaning" (T 9:58b). In fascicle 5 of the *Great Collection Sūtra*, Bodhisattva Sāgaramati asks the Buddha how to guard the sūtra from the evil influence of Māra, the demon, and his retinue. The Buddha replies, "As long as there are beings who uphold the sūtra, desire to propagate it, and accumulate merit by following its teaching, they will acquire the power to suppress [evil forces] and protect this gate of Dharma. Sāgaramati, take heed and mark my words in your mind. They should be encouraged to chant this dhāraṇī that will summon the four deva kings safeguarding the teachers of Dharma" (T 13:73c). Even the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, generally known for its recondite philosophical content, abounds with protective dhāraṇīs. In the sūtra's dhāraṇī chapter, the Buddha addresses Mahāmati, saying, "You should uphold the dhāraṇī of the *Lankāvatāra* that was chanted, is chanted, and will be chanted by the enlightened ones of the past, present, and future. . . . When sons and daughters of good family preserve, grasp, and propagate the dhāraṇī, they will memorize all the words of the sūtra and there will be no beings in the universe able to do them harm" (T 16:564c–565a).

The dhāraṇī's power of protection appears to have derived from its basic function as a mnemonic device for bodhisattvas. Fascicle 5 of the *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* (*Ta-chih-tu-lun*), attributed to Nāgarjuna, explains the effectiveness of dhāraṇī in light of preservation and rejection:

Dhāraṇī is a "preserver" because it collects all good dharmas, retains them, and prevents them from being scattered and lost. It is just like a flawless vessel that is capable of containing and retaining water. Dhāraṇī is also a "rejectant" because it keeps the mind from entertaining unrighteous thoughts, the cause of all forms of evil. . . . Bodhisattvas who have mastered dhāraṇī are able to retain, with their mind's power, all the teachings they received, receive, and will receive." (T 25:95c)

Fascicle 45 of Hsüan-tsang's translation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* further illustrates the centrality of dhāraṇī for bodhisattva practice. First, it enables bodhisattvas to memorize sūtra passages. Because they have this power, bodhisattvas are able to understand the meanings of countless sūtras. This understanding, in turn, enhances their power of samādhi, through which they chant dhāraṇīs to guard sentient beings from calamities. Finally, dhāraṇī chanting enhances the perseverance (Skt. *upeksā*, Jpn. *nin*) of bodhisattvas, which sustains their spiritual advancement (T 30:542c). These examples indicate that despite the broad efficacy claimed for them in a number of Mahāyāna texts, the dhāraṇīs in the exoteric sūtras can be understood essentially as appendages to the sūtras'

main body of text. As a linguistic device for accelerating the learning process, dhāraṇī recitation is auxiliary to the reading, understanding, and memorizing of a sūtra.

By contrast, dhāraṇīs in esoteric texts cannot be understood merely as supplementary devices. The *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*,<sup>52</sup> a “zōmitsu” text popularly read by the Nara clergy, opens with Avalokiteśvara’s relating to Śākyamuni Buddha a story of the previous transmigratory lives in the course of which the bodhisattva encountered 110 million Buddhas of the past, all of whom taught him the same sacred dhāraṇī, known as the “Eleven-Faced One.” With the Buddha’s endorsement, Avalokiteśvara teaches those present at the assembly to recite and uphold it. Because this dhāraṇī is the “wisdom treasury of all the Buddhas’ great compassion,” Avalokiteśvara explains, those who recite it will immediately be released from their sufferings, expunge even the heaviest of their sins, and attain enlightenment (T 20:152b–c).

In the next section of the sūtra, the bodhisattva describes the seven ritual procedures that surround the recitation of the “root dhāraṇī” that ensures the manifestation of Avalokiteśvara in the practitioner’s meditation. These are ablution, offering incense, offering flower garlands, offering food, *homa* (the oblation of firewood into a ritual fire), sealing the ritual site, and returning the bodhisattva to his own abode, which marks the end of the ritual. Each of these ritual acts is assigned its own accompanying dhāraṇī (T 20:153a–c). The sūtra ends with a section describing methods of carving the image of the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara (with a depiction of its major iconographic features), of enshrining it, and of practicing the seven-day or fifteen-day devotional ritual before the image (T 20:154a–c).

Obviously, in the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, the dhāraṇī is not presented as aiding the recitation and memorization of the text. On the contrary, it is the sūtra text that encourages the recitation of the dhāraṇī. It is no longer the reading, reciting, and memorizing of the sūtra but the ritual actions prescribed in the sūtra that provide the context for recitation of the dhāraṇī. That is to say, the esoteric sūtra partakes of the function of a ritual manual. One of the features that distinguish esoteric scriptures from exoteric Mahāyāna sūtras is this shift from sūtra reading to ritual action as a normative method of mastering the text.

The following section examines the liturgy of a major keka ritual at Tōdaiji and attempts to illustrate the manner in which esoteric dhāraṇīs—despite being significantly different from their exoteric counterparts with respect to textual and ritual functions—remained indistinguishable from exoteric dhāraṇīs in Nara ritual practice.

## Esoteric Dhāraṇī in the Nara Ritual Space

There continues at Tōdaiji, Hōryūji, Hasedera, and several other temples in the Nara area the annual repentance rite of *shunie*, the “Service of the Second Month,” the month in the lunar calendar marking the end of winter and the beginning of a new seasonal cycle. Fused with native purification and fertility rites, the shunie became one of the standard media through which keka was performed. The *Three Jewels* (*Sanbōe*), a work of Buddhist literature composed in 984 by the courtier Minamoto Tamenori (941–1011), describes the shunie as a large-scale ceremony held at major temples beginning the first day of the month, with offerings of artificial flowers, exquisite incense, and elaborate altar decorations unique to the occasion. Tamenori comments on the participants’ painstaking preparations for the service: “One may find making flowers from pieces of cut silk to be trifling play and burning incense to be mere arousal of sensory pleasure. However, all these are proffered in accordance with the Buddha’s teaching.”<sup>53</sup>

One of the most extensive and well-preserved Nara repentance rites is the shunie at Nigatsudō (“Second Month Hall,” also known as Kenjakuin), Tōdaiji. In the fourth month of Kōnin 6 (815) the eighty-five-year-old Tōdaiji priest Jitchū (d. 824), as acting administrator (*gon bettō*) of the temple, composed a twenty-nine-article series of instructions to his disciples. In article 22, concerning the keka to the eleven-faced bodhisattva, Jitchū states that for the seventy years between Tenpyō Shōhō 4 (752) and Daidō 4 (809), he had practiced the service every year beginning on the first day of the second month.<sup>54</sup> On the basis of this document it is claimed that, since its institution in 752 by the Kegon priest Jitchū, the fifteen-day rite of shunie, the Second Month Service, has continued to be conducted without interruption.

Because Jitchū was one of the Tōdaiji priests to whom the Empress Dowager Kōmyō provided patronage, Fukuyama Toshio, Horiike Shunpō, and other historians speculate that he originally performed the service at the Repentance Hall of the empress’s administrative office (*shibi chūdai*), and that following Kōmyō’s death in 760 and the resulting abolition of her executive office, Jitchū transferred the Repentance Hall from the empress’s inner palace to Tōdaiji to institute Nigatsudō.<sup>55</sup>

Among the duties of the participating priests is the keeping of a daily record of the ritual proceedings (*Nigatsudō shūjū rengyōshū nikki*).<sup>56</sup> The earliest such journal dates from 1124, and every journal since that time, except for the record for the years 1270 to 1318, has been preserved. Because the earliest journals already describe all the major activities in the fifteen-day ritual performed today,

it is believed that by the late Heian period the shunie had already developed the foundation for its present form.<sup>57</sup>

Popularly renowned for its closing Omizutori (water-scooping) ceremony—in which the water of youth (*wakamizu*) is scooped from the divine well (*akai*) and offered to the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara, following a purificatory procession of gigantic torches—the shunie as a whole is a highly complex ritual that incorporates various non-Buddhist elements of Central Asian and native Japanese provenance.<sup>58</sup> According to a 1586 illustrated text describing the legend of the origin of the shunie (*Nigatsudō engi emaki*),<sup>59</sup> Jitchū wandered into the dragon cave in Mount Kasagi in the tenth month of Tenpyō Shōhō 3 (751). As he proceeded north, the cave led him into the heavenly realm of Tuṣita. Among the forty-nine celestial pavilions he visited was Jō'nen kannon'in, the Hall of Constant Prayer for Avalokiteśvara, which was crowded with heavenly beings practicing the repentance ritual dedicated to the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara (*jūichimen no keka*), circumambulating the bodhisattva, and prostrating themselves before him. Jitchū was deeply moved by the beauty of their worship and wished to reproduce the ritual on earth. However, a heavenly being explained that this would be difficult because one day in Tuṣita corresponds to four hundred years on earth and because the ritual requires the actual presence of the bodhisattva. In reply, Jitchū expressed his resolve not to pause in his prayers until the bodhisattva left his earthly abode at Mount Potala and traversed the ocean to land on the shores of Naniwa, and then when he had welcomed the deity to his temple, he would circumambulate him with ever-increasing speed, hundreds and thousands of times, to “catch up with” the passage of time in Tuṣita.

The same illustrated text then describes a second episode in which Jitchū arrives at Naniwa Bay and, adorning his ritual water vessel (*akaki*) with flowers and incense, floats it across the sea. A hundred days later, as the vessel returns with the bodhisattva from Potala riding inside, Jitchū welcomes the deity and enshrines him in the Nigatsudō. In the next episode, as Jitchū finally begins to perform the keka in the Nigatsudō, eight celestial beings descend from Tuṣita and participate in the service, joined by the nation’s Shinto deities, 13,700 in all. The deity Onyū of Wakasa province, however, is busy catching fish and arrives late. In apology, he proclaims to Jitchū that he will make an offering of divine water to the bodhisattva. As soon as he has made his announcement, a pair of black and white cormorants fly out of a nearby rock, followed by a great spring that gushes forth.

Jitchū’s legend appears devoid of historical facts, but in its narrative structure the meaning of some distinctive elements of the ritual—such as the running circumambulation (*hashiri*), the dance of the heavenly beings (*dattan*), and

the scooping of water from the divine well Wakasai (*mizutori*)<sup>60</sup>—become understandable. From the complex narrative-ritual context emerges the ritual intentionality of the shunie crystallized in the ancient legend, transfiguring and perpetuating the popular practice of keka as a celestial rite transported to the terrestrial realm.

The shunie at Tōdaiji is currently performed by a group of eleven priests called *rengyōshū* (those who practice continuously), who engage in the six daily sessions of repentance performed in late evening (*shoya*), at midnight (*yahan*), after midnight (*goya*), at dawn (*jinjō*), at midday (*nitchū*), and at dusk (*nichimotsu*).<sup>61</sup> With only a few exceptions, all the rituals take place in the inner chamber (*naijin*) of the Nigatsudō, at whose central altar the image of the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara is enshrined. Only the *rengyōshū*, who are seated around the altar, and their lay attendants are allowed to enter the inner chamber. The most extensive of the six sessions is *shoya*, the late evening session, which requires more than three hours to complete. It serves as the model for the other, shorter sessions. Because it is supposed to be based on the textual authority of the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, it is believed that the *shoya* session represents the earliest layer of the shunie and the nucleus of the keka ritual instituted by Jitchū. Although it is performed with numerous preliminary and posterior procedures, the keka proper of the *shoya* session consists of four acts: *shōmyō* keka (repentance by addressing to the bodhisattva), *hōgō* (invocation of the bodhisattva's name), *nyohō nenju* (dhāraṇī recitation), and *hotsugan* (proclamation of vows).

The liturgy of the shunie at the Nigatsudō was originally transmitted orally. The earliest existing liturgical text (*Nigatsudō jisahō*), written by the priest of Kannon'in Jōken and dating from 1485, shows that the current liturgy of the shunie has preserved the format performed in Jōken's time (SATŌ Michiko 1985:214–215). The following is the liturgical text of the second half of the *shōmyō* keka, consisting of quotations from and paraphrases of the passages of the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*. Each line is recited twice, first by the lead chanter (*tō*) and then by the remaining *rengyōshū* priests chanting in unison. The recitation of each line of the liturgy is followed by the full prostration of the priests, who rise from their places, join their palms together, and then kneel on the floor. (The numbers in parentheses indicate the corresponding locations of the sūtra passages in the Taishō daizōkyō edition.)

*Jūichimen shinju shingyō*

The *Eleven-Faced Araoliteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*.

*Jūichi kutei shobutsu shosetsu shinju shingyō*

The *Dhāraṇī Sūtra* preached by the 110 million Buddhas.

(T20:152a, lines 21–22)

*Namu issai shobutsu dōsan zuiki*

*Namu issai nyorai okuji shugo*

We make obeisance to all the Buddhas, who equally praise and are rejoiced [by this dhāraṇī]. We make obeisance to all the Tathāgatas, who memorize and protect [the dhāraṇī]. (152b, lines 9–10)

*Namu koji shōji chō shimangō*

We make obeisance to that lay practitioner [(i.e., Avalokiteśvara) who attained the dhāraṇī] after forty thousand *kalpas* [eons] of countless rebirths. (152c, line 15 paraphrased)

*Namu shaba sekai nōkeshu*

We make obeisance to the savior of the sahā world.

(152c, lines 23–28 paraphrased)

*Namu jūichimen daihisha*

We make obeisance to the Eleven-Faced Great Compassionate One.

(153a, lines 14, 22, 28; 153b, lines 7, 14, 24; 153c, line 4; 154b, line 4)

*Namu tōzen sanmen jihisō*

*Namu sahen sanmen shinnusō*

*Namu uhen sanmen byakugesō*

*Namu tōgo ichimen boshōsō*

We make obeisance to the three front faces of compassion; we make obeisance to the three left faces of wrath; we make obeisance to the three right faces with white tusks; we make obeisance to the back face of laughter. (154a, lines 6–8)

*Namu chōjō ichimen nyoraisō*

*Namu chōjō butsumen joyakubyō*

*Namu saiōjō butsumen gan manzoku*

We make obeisance to the summit face of the Tathāgata; we make obeisance to the summit Buddha face which annihilates calamities and diseases; we make obeisance to the unexcelled Buddha face which grant wishes. (154a, lines 8–9, 154b, 21–23)

*Namu shozukanchū jūkebutsu*

*Namu sa gurenge gunjishu*

*Namuu keishuju semuishu*

*Namu shuhō yōraku sōgontai*

We make obeisance to the (Amitābha) Buddhas abiding in the jeweled crowns (adorning each of his faces); we make obeisance to the one whose left hand holds a water vase with a crimson lotus; we make

obeisance to the one whose right hand holding a rosary is formed in the mudrā of providing fearlessness (Jpn. *semui*, Skt. *abhayadada*); we make obeisance to the one who has festooned jeweled nets adorning his solemn body. (154a, lines 5, 9–10)

*Namu muryō jinsen inyō*

*Namu daijippi setsu konpontōju*

We make obeisance to the one surrounded by countless seers.

We make obeisance to the Great Compassionate One who expounds the root dhāraṇī. (152a, lines 18–12)

*Namu riyaku anraku shoujō*

We make obeisance to the one who benefits and brings relief to all sentient beings. (154c. lines 24–25)<sup>62</sup>

Immediately following the shōmyō keka is the hōgō, the climax of the keka ritual in which the priests invoke Avalokiteśvara by chanting his name aloud: *Namu kanjizai bosa* (“We make obeisance to you, O Lord, Avalokiteśvara!”). The phrase is chanted repeatedly in three sections, first in its entirety and then, in the second and third sections, in a progressively abbreviated manner with accelerating speed. The chanting of each section consists of four alternating pitches: *hiraku*, the medium, standard pitch of the hōgō chanting; *hokku*, the same medium pitch used in the opening line of each section, in which each syllable is pronounced in a carefully articulated manner; *agegōe*, the higher pitch; and *kaeshigōe*, chanting starting with a higher pitch that drops rapidly to the middle pitch. As in the case of the shōmyō keka, each line of the hōgō liturgical text consists of a chant by the lead priest that is then repeated by a chorus of the remaining priests. The hōgō is performed in a standing position with a half prostration (a low bow bending the body at the waist) accompanying each invocation.

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (hokku, once)

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (hiraku, nine times)

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (agegōe, once)

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (kaeshigōe, once)

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (hiraku, five times)

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (agegōe, once)

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (kaeshigōe, once)

*Namu kanjizai bosa* (hiraku, five times)

*Namu* (daidōshi)<sup>63</sup>

*Namu* (daidōshi)

*Kanjizai* (chorus alone)

*Namu kanjizai* (hokku, once)  
*Namu kanjizai* (hiraku, five times)  
*Namu kanjizal bosa* (hokku, once)  
*Namu kanjizal* (agegoe, once)  
*Namu kanjizai* (kaeshigoe, once)  
*Namu kanjizai* (hiraku, five times)  
*Namu kanjizai* (agegoe, once)  
*Namu kanjizai* (kaeshigoe, once)  
*Namu kanjizai* (hiraku, five times)  
*Namu* (daidōshi)  
*Namu* (daidōshi)  
*Kan* (chorus alone)  
*Namu kan* (hokku, once)  
*Namu kan* (hiraku, five times)  
*Namu kan* (agegoe, once)  
*Namu kan* (kaeshigoe, once)  
*Namu kan* (hiraku, five times)  
*Namu kan* (agegoe, once)  
*Namu kan* (kaeshigoe, once)  
*Namu kan* (hiraku, five times)<sup>64</sup>

It appears that the *hōgō* chanting is inspired by the following description in the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* encouraging the invocation of the bodhisattva's name: "There may be a practitioner who recites the names of all the Buddhas hundreds, thousands, millions, and billions of times. However, if there is a practitioner who recites my name for even a short moment, the latter's merit will equal that accrued by the practice of the former" (T 20:152c).

The style of the *hōgō* chanting was so unique that the Nigatsudō became known as "Namukanji," the temple of the *namukan* recitation. In the diary of his pilgrimage to the seven great Nara temples composed in 1140, the prominent court noble Ōe no Chikamichi describes his visit to Nigatsudō:

The temple [Nigatsudō] is located on the eastern hill of Tōdaiji. Ordinary people call it Namukanji. It is at this temple that the Second Month Service is performed. . . . About fifteen priests seclude themselves in the hall, and from the first day until the evening of the fourteenth day they perform the rite grasping the vajra-bells (*kongōrei*) in their hands or holding torches upside down under their arms. After the procession of flames, they chant vigorously in unison the name of the Bodhisattva—*namukan*—and then race around the altar.<sup>65</sup>

Toward the close of the hōgō chanting, one of the priests, designated *gotai'nin*, or prostrater, proceeds from the inner chamber to the prayer hall (*raidō*), the outer chamber that forms the facade of Nigatsudō. Repeatedly hurling his own body to the floor in a highly exaggerated manner, he performs there the act of prostration, repenting for the sake of all sentient beings the countless transgressions they committed in the past. When the *gotai'nin*'s prostration is complete, the *rengyōshū* priests begin the *nyohō nenju*, in which they seat themselves in the inner chamber and quietly recite the root dhāraṇī of the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* one hundred times. In contrast to the dramatic chanting of the hōgō, the dhāraṇī here is recited silently by each priest. As Satō Michiko has observed, from the beginning of the nineteenth century mention of the *nyohō nenju* began to disappear from the liturgical text, so that the dhāraṇī recitation is currently practiced only in an extremely abbreviated manner.<sup>66</sup>

The completion of dhāraṇī recitation leads the *rengyōshū* to the final procedure of the keka practice, the hotsugan, in which the priests express their gratitude for Avalokiteśvara's protection and their resolve to dedicate themselves to serve all sentient beings. The chanting of the following liturgy, which again consists of the quotation and paraphrasing of the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, concludes the hotsugan ritual. (The liturgical phrases not pronounced by chanters are in brackets. The numbers in parentheses at the end of each line indicate the corresponding location of the sūtra passages in the *Taishō daizōkyō* edition.)

*[Is]sai kugyō namu j[ū ichimen gudaiiriki shinju shingyō]*

We make unconditional obeisance to the *Eleven-[faced] Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* impregnated with magnificent power.]

*Ichiju sokujo [shi konponzai]*

A single recitation of it will instantaneously eliminate [even the four cardinal sins]. (152c, line 8)

*Ichiju nō[metsu go mugenzai]*

A single recitation of it can [release the sinners in the five eternal hells]. (152c, lines 8–9)

*Namu nō[gu shushu ku'nan]*

We make obeisance to the one who is capable [of saving us from all kinds of sufferings]. (152c, lines 2–3)

*Jutoku [bosatsu gedatsu hōmon]*

By reading it, one will attain [the bodhisattvas' Dharma-gate of enlightenment]. (152c, lines 1–2)

*Jitoku [shobutsu daihi chizō]*

By memorizing it, one will attain [all the Buddhas' treasury of wisdom].  
(152c, line 1)

*Nenju /hyaku hachi genshin jūri/*

By meditating upon it [for one hundred eight times, one will attain the ten kinds of victory in his own lifetime].  
(152b, lines 17–18)

*Rinjū /go shishū shōji/*

At one's rebirth, [one also gains the four victories].(152b, lines 23–24)

*Jyūichimen /daihisha/*

O, you, the Eleven-Faced [Great Compassionate One]!

(153a, lines 3–4)

*Myōgō /sonki nan toku mon/*

[Even rulers and aristocrats are rarely fortunate enough to hear] your name.  
(152c, line 16)

*Shōsan /myōgō metsu chōzai/*

Calling your name in praise [will destroy the heaviest sins].

(152c, lines 18–20)<sup>67</sup>

These concluding liturgical lines exemplify the particular semantic transformation of the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* effected by the performance of the keka practice in the framework of the shunie ritual. As noted earlier, the *Dhāraṇī Sūtra* is an esoteric sūtra whose textual narrative aims at describing the appropriate method for the meditative recitation of the root dhāraṇī. It prescribes a series of esoteric ritual actions—ablution, the offering of incense, the offering of flower garlands, the offering of food, the oblation of fire, and the shielding of the ritual site—that culminates with the chanting of the root dhāraṇī. The keka liturgy, in contrast, removes the root dhāraṇī from this esoteric context of *ritual action* and places it in the exoteric context of the *textual reading*. Here the dhāraṇī plays only a marginal role in enhancing the understanding and memorization of the sūtra text and in providing protection to practitioners invoking the name of the bodhisattva who preached the sūtra.

The opening lines of the concluding section of the hotsugan cited above read: “We make unconditional obeisance to the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* impregnated with magnificent power. A single recitation of it will instantaneously eliminate even the four cardinal sins. A single recitation can release the sinners in the five eternal hells.” What the liturgical text extols here is the act of reading the sūtra text. By contrast, the original lines of the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* read: “Bagavat, this dhāraṇī of mine [Avalokiteśvara] is impregnated with magnificent power. A single recitation will instantaneously eliminate the four cardinal sins and release all

the sinners in the five eternal hells. How much greater power will be attained by the practitioner who studies it as I will describe now!" (T20:152c, lines 7–9)

True, the *Dhāraṇī Sūtra* encourages the invocation of Avalokiteśvara's name. However, the original scriptural context differs significantly from that of the exuberant hōgō chanting, in which the bodhisattva's name, as well as the act of invoking it, is glorified:

There may be a practitioner who recites the names of all the Buddhas for hundreds, thousands, millions, and billions of times. However, if there is a practitioner who recites my name for even a short moment, the latter's merit will equal that accrued by the practice of the former. . . . Then how much greater merit will be attained by those who chant my dhāraṇī, memorize it, and practice it as I will describe now! (T20:152c, lines 16–20)

Here, invocation of Avalokiteśvara's name is mentioned merely as a point of reference to indicate the greater merit to be gained from recitation of the dhāraṇī. By contrast, the liturgical text of the shunie, which extols the act of reciting the body of the sūtra text and of chanting the bodhisattva's name, treats Avalokiteśvara's root dhāraṇī as if it were an exoteric dhāraṇī. That is to say, the keka liturgy of the shoya decontextualizes the root dhāraṇī from the esoteric textual context of the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* by reducing it to an auxiliary to the shunie's ritualized reading of the sūtra text and invocation of the bodhisattva's name.

## Discourse, Taxonomy, and Kūkai's Bibliography

The exotericization of the esoteric dhāraṇī in the ritual space of the shunie at Nigatsudō illustrates the cultural milieu in which various elements of Esotericism existed in Nara and early Heian society. The abundance of esoteric deities worshiped, esoteric sūtras copied and studied, and esoteric dhāraṇīs chanted by the Nara clergy raises serious doubts about the conventional depiction of the Buddhism of Nara society as consisting of exoteric doctrinal schools and as distinct from the allegedly predominantly esoteric form of Buddhism in the Heian period. However, the conspicuous presence of esoteric elements in Nara Buddhism remarked by modern observers does not necessarily mean that the Nara clerics had an ability to distinguish the esoteric deities, sūtras, and dhāraṇīs from their exoteric counterparts. As suggested by Keikai's depiction of an esoteric dhāraṇī in his *Miraculous Episodes* as the "divine dhāraṇī of Mahāyāna," or *daijō shinju*, the esoteric and the exoteric existed in a farrago in

which esoteric sūtras, such as the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra* promoting the worship of the bodhisattva though the chanting of his dhāraṇī, were bleached of their esoteric textuality and treated exactly like exoteric sūtras.

This force of exotericization seems to have been both unintentional and ineluctable. It was not due to the intentions of a particular individual or individuals who created the shunie rite. Rather, it derived from the most fundamental level of the Nara Buddhist discourse formation,<sup>68</sup> in which the Buddhist intelligentsia possessed as its basis for producing and accumulating knowledge only exoteric theories, as represented by the *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* (*Ta-chih-tu-lun*) and the *Yogācārabhūmi*. What was absent in Nara Buddhist discourse—on such matters as textual interpretation, medicine, rituals, and statecraft—was not the elements, but the alternate theories, or perhaps more precisely the paradigm of Esoteric Buddhism that would detach from the general Mahāyāna context of religious practice the methods of worshiping esoteric deities, studying esoteric sūtras, chanting esoteric dhāraṇīs, and understanding the efficacy of the sūtras and dhāraṇīs chanted.

This lack in Nara Buddhist discourse of the knowledge needed to distinguish between the exoteric and the esoteric exposes the particular selectivity, or system of exclusion,<sup>69</sup> inherent in Nara society's adoption of esoteric elements. As indicated by MISAKI Ryōshū (1968:66), Nara historical records—such as the registries of sūtras copied at the Shakyōsho, the letters of ubasoku kōshinge, and the journals of keka performed at temples in the capital and the imperial court—frequently mention esoteric deities, texts, and dhāraṇīs but remain curiously silent about mantra, maṇḍala, and mudrā. Whereas terms for dhāraṇī (*darani*, or *ju*) appear frequently in the same sources, the term for mantra (*shingon*) is extremely rare. Misaki's observation suggests that although there was a continuous influx of esoteric deities, texts, and dhāraṇīs from T'ang China into Nara Japan, mantra, maṇḍala, and mudrā, representing those elements of Esotericism that were foreign to the exoteric tradition and could not be absorbed within the framework of Mahāyāna Buddhist practices, remained unrecognized by the Nara Buddhist. Because of their incongruity, these elements were excluded from Nara society both unconsciously and systematically. The Nara clerics, who saw these alien aspects of Buddhism through the lens of the exoteric paradigm, would have had to dismiss them at once as nonsense, because any attempt to include alien elements within the system of existing religious practice would immediately throw the logic of Nara Buddhist discourse into question and threaten its stability by exposing the inability of its epistemic foundations to provide explanations for them.

That is not to say that, had all of these ingredients of Esotericism been introduced, Mikkyō would have arisen as a discrete religious tradition. For

that to have happened, Nara society would have to have had a perspective of categorization, or taxonomy, that encompassed the diverse elements of Esoteric Buddhism—both those incorporated into the Nara Buddhist culture and those excluded from it—and integrated them into a systematic relation. In the mélange of the exoteric and the esoteric that was the Buddhism of Nara, those esoteric elements miscible with *Mahāyāna* were disseminated through many of the religious activities of that society; but lacking any system of logical, consistent distribution, they were strewn across the Nara religious landscape in no particular relationship to one another.

This failure in the taxonomic function of Nara Buddhist discourse helps to explain why Esotericism was never established as a cultural category in Nara society.<sup>70</sup> Simply stated, Esoteric Buddhism becomes a category only with the development of an Esotericist taxonomy, which in turn occurs only with the emergence of the Esoteric *Buddhist*. For Esoteric Buddhism to become visible as a discrete category, there must not only be diverse esoteric factors present in the study of texts and the performance of rituals. There must also be constructed the “subject” of Esoteric Buddhists who, as they strive to integrate the diverse esoteric elements into a system of religious practice, view themselves and their religious system as separate from the rest of the Buddhist tradition, thereby creating simultaneously the categories of the esoteric *and* the exoteric.

Because of the simultaneous pervasiveness and transparency of esoteric elements in Nara Buddhist culture, the Nara clerics can be labeled “Exoteric Buddhist” only in a limited sense, because they were not necessarily non-Esotericists or anti-Esotericists but rather *Mahāyānists* who understood their religious systems neither as exoteric nor as esoteric. This ambivalence best illustrates the limitation of the *zōmitsu/junmitsu* theory discussed earlier in this chapter. Just as there was no part of the Nara clergy whose members considered themselves “*zōmitsu* Buddhists,” there was not even the concept of *zōmitsu*, to which modern scholars have so frequently resorted to explain the esoteric aspects of what they have referred to as Nara Buddhism. In the same manner, none of the practitioners of Heian Esotericism identified themselves as “*junmitsu* Buddhists” to distinguish themselves from their Nara “*zōmitsu* Buddhist” precursors. The concept of *zōmitsu*, therefore, does not capture the particular historical condition in which the elements of Esotericism continued to be buried in the ritual and discursive layers of Nara Buddhist culture.

The impossibility of constructing the “subject” of the Esoteric Buddhist within the Nara Buddhist discourse corresponds to the conspicuous absence from the ritual theater of Nara Buddhism of the most important ingredient of Esotericism—*abhiseka*, Esoteric Buddhist ordination. It is *abhiṣeka*’s ritual synthesis of *maṇḍala*, *mudrā*, and *mantra* for the worship of esoteric deities that

produces the Dharma genealogy of Mikkyō, the lineage of masters and disciples that germinates and grows as the cleavage of the esoteric from the exoteric. Prior to this distinction, Esotericism during the Nara period was simultaneously present and absent—salient as isolated elements of practice, but transparent as an independent category. This simultaneous traceability (as elements) and invisibility (as a category) of Esotericism in the Nara Buddhist system allows a new understanding of Kūkai's relationship with Nara Buddhism in light of both contiguity and disjunction.

In 806, immediately following his return from two years of study in China, Kūkai prepared for submission to the imperial court the *Catalog of Imported Items* (*Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:69–104), which listed the scriptural texts, religious icons, and other items he had brought back with him. He organized it into seven categories:

1. Sūtras: 142 titles (247 fascicles).
2. Mantras, hymns, and liturgical texts in Sanskrit: 42 titles (44 fascicles).
3. Treatises and commentaries: 32 titles (107 fascicles).
4. Maṇḍalas and portraits of patriarchs: 10 scrolls.
5. Ritual instruments: 18 items in 9 kinds.
6. Gifts from the master Hui-kuo: 13 items.
7. Sūtra manuscripts in Sanskrit: 3 copies. (KZ 1:71–72)

The sūtras are further classified as follows.

1. New translations
  - a. Translations by Amoghavajra: 118 titles (150 fascicles).
    - i. Those which are listed in Yüang-chao's *Chen-yüan Catalog*: 105 titles (135 fascicles).
    - ii. Those which are not included in the *Chen-yüang Catalog*: 13 titles (15 fascicles).
  - b. Translations by Prajñā, Śīladharma, and other Tripitaka masters: 9 titles (75 fascicles).
2. Old translations: 15 titles (18 fascicles). (KZ 1:72–87)

Kūkai divided the sūtras into two groups. The first contained those sūtras translated subsequent to Chih-sheng's 730 *K'ai-yüan Catalog of the Buddhist Canon*, the authoritative Buddhist bibliography that had served as the standard for the collection and copying of sūtras throughout the Nara period. The second group contained those sūtras “known [in Japan] only by their names” (KZ 1:87). This group included sūtras listed in the *K'ai-yüang Catalog* that

were either yet to be imported to Japan or had already been lost there. Kūkai's classification of the sūtras demonstrates that he had a good grasp of the range of sūtras then available in Japan. Of all the esoteric sūtras Kūkai imported, only four had been copied in Japan during the Nara period.<sup>71</sup> As he indicated in his listing of sūtras translated by Amoghavajra, Kūkai was aided by his knowledge of the *Chen-yüan New Catalog of the Buddhist Canon*. That work, mentioned earlier, was the new comprehensive bibliography of the Buddhist tripiṭaka, composed in 800—only four years before Kūkai's arrival in China—by the priest Yüang-chao of Hsi-ming-ssu under the aegis of Emperor Te-tsung (r. 780–804). In fact, Kūkai lists the *Chen-yüan Catalog* itself as one of the works he had just imported (KZ 1:92). Kūkai's catalog is testimony to the fact that the great majority of sūtras translated into Chinese during the seven decades between Chih-sheng's *K'ai-yüan Catalog* and Yüang-chao's *Chen-yüan Catalog* had not yet been introduced to Japan.

When one adds other texts to the sūtras, the total number of works Kūkai had imported comes to 216 titles, of which 192 were esoteric texts and only 24 were exoteric. According to TAKAGI Shingen's bibliographical study (1982a:240), 62 of these 192 texts are related to the *Vajrāśekhara Sūtra* and 7 texts are directly linked to the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. Although those 69 titles can be called “junmitsu” texts, the remaining 123 titles should be considered “zōmitsu.” This breakdown again demonstrates that Kūkai's introduction of esoteric texts cannot be simply characterized by the concept of junmitsu. Thus, so long as one looks at Kūkai's transmission only in terms of individual texts imported, its difference from the transmission of esoteric texts during the Nara period is only quantitative. Both zōmitsu and junmitsu texts had arrived in Nara Japan. In this sense, Kūkai's importation, which exponentially increased the number of esoteric texts available, can merely be understood as an acceleration of a process of cultural importation that was continuing from the Nara period. Its historical significance would be that it introduced to Japan the texts newly listed in the *Chen-yüan Catalog*.

On the other hand, once the emphasis in interpreting Kūkai's catalog is shifted from what texts Kūkai imported to how he classified them, one immediately recognizes a drastic qualitative break from previous examples. Kūkai attached the following comment to the list of sūtras translated by Amoghavajra. With expressions evoking the image of genealogical continuity—mainstream, tributary, fountainhead, root, branches—Kūkai links the sūtras translated by Amoghavajra to the “secret treasury” (*mitsuzō*), or Esoteric Buddhism, and to the particular lineage of masters that introduced Esotericism to China. He then proclaims that the 118 sūtra texts translated by Amoghavajra belong to

the class of Esoteric Teaching (Mikkyō), because they represent the teaching transmitted by the particular esoteric lineage of masters:

These one hundred eighteen sūtras in one hundred fifty fascicles are translations by the tripiṭaka master Amoghavajra. . . . The ocean of Dharma possesses only one flavor, yet in response to the practitioner's capacity, it manifests differences in depth. Therefore the five vehicles as well as the sudden and gradual approaches were distinguished. Within the sudden approach, there are Exoteric (*kengyō*) and Esoteric Teachings (*mikkyō*). Within the secret treasury (*mitsuzō*) [i.e., Esotericism] there is yet another distinction between the mainstream and tributaries. Dharma masters of the past entered into the tributaries of the treasury only to reach points along its periphery, thereby mastering the branches [of the secret treasury] but not the trunk. The present transmission, on the other hand, represents the mainstream [of Esotericism] flowing directly from its fountainhead, the [tree's] root. The reason is that in the distant past Vajrasattva personally received it [Esotericism] from the Tathāgata Vairocana. Several hundred years later, he [Vajrasattva] bestowed it upon Bodhisattva Nāagarjuna. Nāagarjuna transmitted it to the master Nāgabodhi. Nāgabodhi taught it to Vajrabodhi, who during the K'ai-yüan era [713–741] first introduced [to China] the teaching of the maṇḍala of the five families. Although he [Vajrabodhi] received the emperor's worship, the teaching was yet to be widely propagated. Then, our great patriarch, the Master of Boundless Wisdom [Amoghavajra], inherited the teaching from the tripiṭaka master Vajrabodhi.

(KZ 1:83)

Kūkai then describes how Amoghavajra (705–774) brought Esoteric Buddhism in the T'ang empire to the height of its popularity. In contradistinction to exoteric teaching, whose lineage originated with Śākyamuni Buddha, according to the passage above, Esoteric Buddhism derives from the Tathāgata Mahāvairocana, whom Kūkai in his other works identifies as the Dharmakāya.<sup>72</sup> Later in the *Catalog of Imported Items*, Kūkai presents a list of thirteen gifts he received from his Esoteric Buddhist master Hui-kuo (746–805): eight originally belonged to Vajrabodhi and were entrusted through Amoghavajra to his leading disciple Hui-kuo; the other five were Hui-kuo's personal possessions.<sup>73</sup> In the commentary attached to the list of these gifts, which describes the intensive study of Esoteric Buddhism he undertook with his master, Kūkai quotes Hui-kuo's words characterizing the sūtras he entrusted to Kūkai as “the Vajrāśekhara and other sūtras of the secret treasury of the unsurpassable vehicle (*saijōjō mitsuzōkyō*)” and as “over one hundred sūtras of the Vajrayāna (*kongōjō*)” (KZ 1:100). Elsewhere in his catalog Kūkai himself describes the

sūtras translated by Amoghavajra as the “teachings of Vajrayāna (*kongōjōkyō*)” (KZ 1:70).

Here Kūkai is proposing to his audience, the imperial court and the Nara Buddhist establishment, a wholly new bibliographical taxonomy setting apart the core group of Kūkai’s imported texts as “esoteric” and contrasting them with the remainder, which will now be identified as “exoteric.” At the same time, Kūkai is attempting to reconfigure the contour of the entire field of Buddhist literature by introducing the new category of Vajrayāna (*kongōjō*). The esoteric texts are presented as belonging to the “unsurpassable vehicle” (*saijōjō*), which is distinguished from the other vehicles, or *yānas*, of Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. Kūkai legitimizes this remapping of the field of Buddhist literature by asserting that the esoteric texts directly convey the teachings of the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana, rather than those of Śākyamuni Buddha, the Nirmānakāya, and by demonstrating his own authority derived from Hui-kuo’s designation of Kūkai as his heir in the Vajrayāna’s Dharma lineage, which is traced back to Mahāvairocana.

It will be recalled that neither the *K’ai-yüan* nor the *Chen-yüan* catalog systematically classifies esoteric texts. Throughout both, esoteric texts are randomly scattered among Mahāyāna scriptures. This suggests that throughout the mid-T’ang period, despite its popularity, the Esoteric Teaching as an independent bibliographical category was never publicly recognized in the Chinese Buddhist community. Esoteric Buddhism in China went into a swift decline with the Emperor Wu-tsung’s persecution of Buddhism in 845. In 946 the priest Heng-an composed the *Sequel to the Chen-yüan Catalog of the Buddhist Canon*,<sup>74</sup> another comprehensive Buddhist bibliography that was intended to supplement Yüang-chao’s *Chen-yüan Catalog*. Yet there again, one finds no attempt to classify esoteric texts as distinct from those of Mahāyāna. In this sense, Kūkai’s *Catalog of Imported Items* is important not only for Japanese Buddhism; it is the earliest Buddhist bibliographical catalog in East Asia to create an entry exclusively for esoteric texts. The failure of Esoteric Buddhism to establish itself in China as an independent bibliographical category—i.e., as Vajrayāna as opposed to Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna—may be an important factor in explaining the serious decline of the Chinese Esoteric Buddhist tradition at the fall of the T’ang dynasty.<sup>75</sup>

As a taxonomic discourse, the text of Kūkai’s catalog not only presents a new map of Buddhist literature; it also constructs the subject of its author-narrator, giving Kūkai his new identity as an Esoteric Buddhist master. It is through this reconfiguration of the field of Buddhist literature by means of Kūkai’s perspective as a Vajrayāna taxonomist that his catalog challenged the system of classification in the Nara Buddhist discourse, in which Esotericism

as a category did not exist. In this manner, Kūkai began his effort to lift the ban Nara Buddhist society placed on key elements of Esotericism—mantra, maṇḍala, mudrā, and abhiṣeka—and to transform the nature of Japanese Buddhist discourse through their introduction.

Kūkai's catalog, in short, can be understood as a countertaxonomy, which, if acknowledged immediately by the authorities, would have eroded the domination of existing Nara Buddhist discourse and deconstructed its established manner of classifying things Buddhist.<sup>76</sup> Such an understanding sheds light on the uniqueness in the historical context of Kūkai's introduction of Esotericism to Japan. Prior to Kūkai, many Japanese Buddhist priests had studied in T'ang China, where Esotericism was already prospering. Some, like Dōji of the Sanron School, had studied with Esoteric Buddhist masters; others, such as Genbō of the Hossō School, had brought back a large number of esoteric texts. However, those priests who returned from their studies in China to attain eminence in Nara society were elite scholar-priests of the Nara doctrinal schools, which maintained their predominance in the Buddhist community within the framework of the *ritsuryō* state. Their aim was to solidify or increase the prestige and authority of their schools by importing and producing new writings that would confirm the validity of the Buddhist establishment to which they belonged and of their own system of taxonomy—i.e., the way in which the Nara clergy classified things and gave meaning to them.

By sharp contrast, prior to his China journey, Kūkai had maintained his distance from the Nara schools. In fact, as mentioned in chapter 2 he did not receive the government-controlled official ordination to the priesthood until a few months before his departure for China. As also discussed in chapter 2, Kūkai recognized the significance of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the reading of which led him to the study in China, not because he saw it as one of many esoteric elements that inhered in the religious practice of the Nara clergy. Rather, it was Kūkai's own disengagement from the Nara Buddhist establishment, his dissent from the center, that impelled him to study the sūtra that had largely been forgotten by the Nara clergy. That is to say, Kūkai's dissidence from the establishment also meant his dissimilation from the Nara Buddhist discursive practice, which had blended only those absorbable elements of Esoteric Buddhism into its *Mahāyāna* system until they lost their esoteric traits. Contrary to the view held by many modern historians, the recitation of dhāraṇīs, the worship of esoteric deities, and other signs of *Mikkyō* in Nara Buddhism were not the impetus for Kūkai to travel to China and study Esoteric Buddhism there. In other words, Kūkai realized the importance of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* not because he was interested in the conventional way

in which some esoteric elements existed within Nara Buddhist culture, but, on the contrary, because he was able to break away from it.

These observations demonstrate that there was no direct causal link between the esoteric features of Nara Buddhist culture and Kūkai's establishment of himself as an Esoteric Buddhist master. Kūkai's activities prior to his return to Japan in 806 can certainly point to the reason it was he who became identified as the introducer of Mikkyō to Japan. But that reason can only be found in and as the rupture Kūkai created between the establishment and himself—that is, in the break between the way in which esoteric elements were treated in the ritsuryō political and religious discourse and the way in which he studied them in China. It is this void, the space of differentiation, the origin of no origin, that gave rise to Kūkai's new taxonomic perspective, a paradigm from which the entire field of Esoteric Buddhism was to emerge as a discrete category in the history of Japanese Buddhism.

## PART II

### *Cartography*

*The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full-stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences; it is a node within a network.*

—Michel Foucault

*When a science has no concrete units that are immediately recognizable, it is because they are not necessary. In history, for example, is the unit the individual, the era, or the nation? We do not know. But what does it matter? We can study history without knowing the answer. But just as the game of chess is entirely in the combination of the different chess pieces, language is characterized as a system based entirely on the opposition of its concrete units. . . . Language then has the strange, striking characteristic of not having entities that are perceptible at the outset and yet of not permitting us to doubt that they exist and that their functioning constitutes it.*

—Ferdinand de Saussure

# CHAPTER 5

## Category and History *Constructing the Esoteric, I*

Kokan Shiren (1278–1346), in his celebrated history of Japanese Buddhism, relates an anecdote about the priest Gyōga (729–803) of Kōfukuji, who at an early age was already a renowned scholar.<sup>1</sup> In 753, at age twenty-five, he was chosen by the state from among the elite scholar-priests of his day to travel to China to study. Seven years later, he returned home safely, carrying with him more than five hundred volumes of new sūtras and commentaries that were particularly relevant to Hossō (Ch. Fa-hsiang) and Tendai (Ch. T'ien-t'ai) studies. The court immediately appointed thirty novices to be trained under his guidance. However, Gyōga suffered public disgrace when the priest Myōitsu (728–798) of Tōdaiji presented him a question about the relationship between the two disciplines he had studied in China.<sup>2</sup> Gyōga was at a loss to answer; the scriptures he had imported provided no clue as to how to respond. Myōitsu denounced Gyōga for returning home prematurely and being humiliated by a priest who had never had the privilege of studying in China. To demonstrate that Gyōga's study in China had not been simply a drain on the treasury of the state, the court was impelled to issue a statement in his defense: "To stumble once on a long road does not make a journey of thousands of miles pointless; a great tree with a broken branch still provides shelter to hundreds of beings" (KT 31:234).

The priest Ssu-t'o (Jpn. Shitaku; ?–805) of Tōshōdaiji, who in 754 traveled from China with his renowned master Chien-chen (Jpn. Ganjin; 688–763) to bring the authentic vinaya tradition to Japan, reports in his *Records of Priests of the Enryaku Years* (*Enryaku soroku*) a similar incident, which occurred in 778.<sup>3</sup> A multitude of priests in the capital of Nara gathered at Daianji in protest against Kaimyō (d. 806?),<sup>4</sup> a resident priest of that monastery and an authority on Sanron (Ch. San-lun) and Kegon (Ch. Hua-yen) studies, who had returned the previous year from studying in China. The protesters demanded that Kaimyō sign an agreement to burn one of the sūtras he had brought back, a

scripture on the worship of the bodhisattva Buddhoṣṇīṣa,<sup>5</sup> which they believed was apocryphal. Kaimyō rejected their request, retorting that destroying a Mahāyāna scripture was a cardinal crime that would be punished with many rebirths in the hellish realms (KT 31:88). However, he was discredited further in the same year when Ōmi no Mifune (722–785), the head of the State College and formerly a Buddhist priest, famous for his mastery of both Confucianism and Buddhism, sent a letter to Kaimyō<sup>6</sup> expressing doubt about the authenticity of another text Kaimyō had imported, *On the Interpretation of Mahāyāna*,<sup>7</sup> which claimed to be Nāgārjuna's commentary on Aśvaghoṣa's *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*,<sup>8</sup> “Reverend, wisest of the pundits of our age,” Mifune cynically concluded his letter, “having traveled afar, why did you bother to bring back a fraudulent text? . . . I urge you hurriedly to hide the commentary and save yourself from the derision of the world, a derision that will not fade away for countless generations” (T 77:821a).

Even to the present day, the authenticity of *On the Interpretation of Mahāyāna* has remained the subject of scholarly debate. Part of the problem is that the work was not mentioned in the 730 *K'ai-yüan Catalog*, the official bibliography of the Buddhist canon maintained in T'ang China, based on whose authority scriptures were acquired and copied in Japan during the latter half of the Nara period.<sup>9</sup> Saichō (767–822), for example, in his celebrated debate with the Hossō priest Tokuitsu (781?–842?),<sup>10</sup> rejected the text, declaring that the Senior Priest General (*daisōzu*) of Owari—the Hossō priest Kenkei of Kōfukuji (705–793)—had already determined it to be spurious.<sup>11</sup> Probably following his failed attempts to prove that the text in question was authentic, Kaimyō was ostracized from the clerical circles in the capital and received an appointment at a provincial temple in Tsukushi in Kyūshū.<sup>12</sup>

The cases of Gyōga and Kaimyō show that importing new scriptural texts was an extremely sensitive matter that could make or break a returnee's reputation, or even career. This was particularly true for Kūkai, who, unlike Gyōga and Kaimyō, did not enjoy renown as a scholar-priest prior to his journey to China. Kūkai was not even officially a priest and therefore had no formal affiliation with any of the Nara doctrinal schools. The texts Kūkai imported included not only several on Buddhoṣṇīṣa<sup>13</sup> but numerous others on the worship of diverse esoteric divinities hitherto unknown in Japan. To make matters more interesting and yet confounding for students of Kūkai and early Shingon history, in his catalog of the canonical scriptures of the Shingon School,<sup>14</sup> which he officially submitted to the court in 823, Kūkai included *On the Interpretation of Mahāyāna*. In fact, as will be discussed later, Kūkai cites that text, often extensively, in his own writings to advance his arguments.<sup>15</sup>

Despite Kūkai's readiness to import texts utterly unknown to Japanese Buddhist scholars and to adopt seemingly apocryphal, controversial titles, in the end, as discussed in chapter 1, he was integrated into the leadership of the Nara Buddhist community. Moreover, many influential Nara scholar-priests became students of Kūkai's Esoterism. That acceptance suggests that Kūkai's method of introducing his transmission of Buddhism from China was significantly different from those of his predecessors. How did Kūkai establish the esoteric as a legitimate category in the Japanese Buddhist order? And how did Kūkai's characterization of this new form of Buddhism make it possible for him to forge and maintain amicable relations with the Nara Buddhist establishment?

These two questions, which are closely linked, call for a new approach to understanding the swift assimilation of Esoteric Buddhism within the Buddhist community of the early Heian period. Had Kūkai merely presented his transmission as diametrically opposed and unconditionally superior to Exoteric Buddhism, consisting of the six Nara Schools and Tendai—which is how most modern Kūkai studies have characterized Kūkai's Mikkyō—the result of his interaction with the Nara Schools would have been antagonism, polemics from both sides, and a schism. Indeed that is precisely what happened when Saichō pushed his work toward establishing a new precepts system for his Tendai School and, in the end, broke away from the institutional framework of the existing monastic community. To resolve this seeming contradiction, it may help to assume the viewpoint of the Nara Buddhist community. In what way did Kūkai succeed in making his Esoteric Buddhism accessible to the scholar-priests of the Nara Schools, many of whom eventually became his students? Through what particular arguments in his compositions did Kūkai make it clear to his audience that Esoteric Buddhism was compatible with the Buddhism being practiced in the Nara priestly community? What aspects of Kūkai's new transmission did members of the Nara clergy find attractive, useful, even necessary to integrate within their own religious activities?

### "Shingon School" as an Ambivalence in Kūkai's Writings

At the port city of Dazaifu on the twenty-second day of the tenth month of Daidō 1 (806), shortly after his return from two years of study in China, Kūkai prepared the *Catalog of Imported Items* (*Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:69–102). Together with scriptural texts, religious icons, and other ritual symbols listed in the catalog, it was presented to Emperor Heizei, the priest-officials at Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs, who were to interpret it for the emperor, and the

Ministry of Aristocracy (Jibushō) to which the Sōgō belonged. The *Catalog of Imported Items*, which includes Kūkai's prefatory report on his activities in China, was his first attempt to explain to the authorities the nature of his transmission of the Dharma. In the catalog Kūkai repeatedly employed two terms to characterize the new form of Buddhism he had studied: *kongōjō* (Skt. *vajravāna*), "thunderbolt vehicle," and *mitsuzō* (Skt. *guhya-piṭaka*), "secret treasury." For instance, he wrote: "I have just brought back with me the teaching of *kongōjō*, consisting of over one hundred volumes [of scriptures] and the two great maṇḍalas of the ocean-like assembly [of deities]" (KZ 1:70); "my master [Hui-kuo] said: 'the sūtras and commentaries of *shingon hizō* (the secret treasury of mantra[yāna]) are so subtle and abstruse that they cannot be transmitted without the help of pictures and diagrams.' Thus he commissioned the court painter Li Chen and ten other artists to produce the garbha and vajradhātu maṇḍalas and had more than twenty students reproduce the scriptures of *saijōjō mitsuzō* (the secret treasury of the unexcelled vehicle)" (KZ 1:100); and "when practitioners discipline themselves in *mitsuzō* (the secret treasury), they will immediately acquire the [eternal] life of the sixteen [Vajrapāṇis]" (KZ 1:102).

As these examples show, the terms *kongōjō* and *mitsuzō* are not of Kūkai's creation. It seems that Hui-kuo used them occasionally to refer to the tradition he represented, because the words also appear in his speech quoted by Kūkai elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> The same words are found in some of Amoghavajra's letters<sup>17</sup> and far more frequently in the esoteric scriptural texts Kūkai studied with his master.<sup>18</sup> However, what distinguishes Kūkai's use of *kongōjō* and *mitsuzō* is the exceptional consistency with which the words characterize Kūkai's own Buddhist affiliation. They serve as the criteria for Kūkai's thinking in delineating the categories of the exoteric and esoteric. After the composition of the *Catalog of Imported Items*, there were several instances in which he described his reception of the Dharma transmission from Hui-kuo. In the 815 *Letter of Propagation* (*Kan'ensho*),<sup>19</sup> which Kūkai sent out to his allies and potential supporters in the provinces to request assistance for the work of copying and circulating the scriptures he had imported, Kūkai wrote: "I, a humble priest, journeyed to the great T'ang and pursued a profound Dharma. By good fortune, I studied with the master of Ch'ing-lung monastery, Hui-kuo, heir of the Dharma to the late tripiṭaka master Ta-kuang-chih [Amoghavajra]. Under his guidance, I was able to receive this secret, divinely powerful, unexcelled teaching of *kongōjō* (vajrayāna)" (KZ 3:528). In the cover letter addressed to priest Kōchi of Daijiin in the province of Shimotsuke, which he attached to his request, Kūkai wrote, "What this humble priest studied in the great T'ang, *shingon hizō*, has produced only an

insignificant number of teachers and students and its circulation has stagnated” (KZ 3:566).

Interestingly, there is not a single occurrence in the *Catalog of Imported Items*, or any other of the texts cited in the last two paragraphs, of the word *shingonshū*, or Shingon School, which eventually emerged as the most commonly used designation for the tradition that claims Kūkai as its progenitor. As illustrated in the following table, a survey of those works of Kūkai whose authenticity has been established shows that his own use of the term *shingonshū* was extremely rare. It was also limited to special usage, as will be discussed shortly. Instead, it was with the terms *mitsuzō*, *kongōjō*, and their variant expressions—such as *kongō ichijō* (singular vajrayāna); *himitsu jō* (secret vehicle); *saijōjō* (unexcelled vehicle); *shingonjō* (Skt. *mantrayāna*, mantra vehicle); *hizō* (secret treasury); *shingon hizō* (secret treasury of mantrayāna); *shingonzō* (mantra treasury); *himitsu hizō* (secret treasury); *himitsu hōzō* (secret Dharma treasury); *himitsu shingonzō* (secret mantra treasury)—that Kūkai throughout his writing career identified his own Buddhist teaching.

TITLE	YEAR	TERMS USED FOR “VEHICLE” AND “TREASURY”	“SCHOOL”
<i>Shōrai mokuroku</i>	806	kongōjō, saiōjō, hizō, shingon hizō (KZ 1:70, 83, 95, 100, 102)	
<i>Konshōōkyō kada</i>	813	mitsuzō, hizō (2:825, 826)	
<i>Kan’ensho</i>	815	kongōjō, mitsuzō, himitsu hōzō (3:526, 527, 528)	
<i>Benkenmitsu nikyōron</i>	815? <sup>20</sup>	kongōjō, saiōjō mitsuzō, hizō, himitsu, shingon himitsu (1:474, 475, 480, 482, 483, 486, 491, 494, 499, 504, 505, 510)	
<i>Jissōkyō tōshaku</i>	817	hizō (1:570)	
<i>Shingon fuhōden</i>	821	mitsuzō, hizō, himitsu himitsu shingonzō, (1:52, 58, 59)	
<i>Himitsukyō fuhōden</i>	821? <sup>21</sup>	saiōjō, mitsuzō, hizō, himitsu (1:5, 9, 10, 20, 38, 44)	

*continued*

TITLE	YEAR	TERMS USED FOR “VEHICLE” AND “TREASURY”	“SCHOOL”
<i>Heizei</i>	822	kongō ichijō; shingon hizō	
<i>kanjōmon</i>		(2:154, 156, 157)	
<i>Dainichikyō</i>	824		
<i>kaidai</i>			
(version a)			
<i>Dainichikyō</i>	ca. 824	hizō (1:647)	Shingonshū
<i>kaidai</i>			(1:651)
(version b)			
<i>Dainichikyō</i>	?	kongō ichijō (1:653)	
<i>kaidai</i>			
(version c)			
<i>Dainichikyō</i>	?	saijōjō, hizō (1:658, 664)	
<i>kaidai</i>			
(version d)			
<i>Dainichikyō</i>	ca. 824		Shingonshū
<i>kaidai</i>			(1:675)
(version e)			
<i>Dainichikyō</i>	?	hizō (1:679)	
<i>kaidai</i>			
(version f)			
<i>Dainichikyō</i>	ca. 824		Shingonshū
<i>kaidai</i>			(1:688)
(version g)			
<i>Hokekyō kaidai</i>	829	himitsujiō, shingonzō (1:793, 803)	
<i>Jūjūshinron</i>	ca. 830 <sup>22</sup>	kongō ichijō, hizō (1:128, 407)	
<i>Hizō hōyaku</i>	ca. 830	shingonjō, hizō (1:440, 452, 473)	
<i>Hokekyō shaku</i>	834	shingonzō (1:781, 782, 786)	
<i>Hizōki</i>	?	kongō ichijō (2:27)	
<i>Kongōchōgyō</i>	?	saijōjō (1:740)	
<i>kaidai</i>			
<i>Kongō</i>	?	saijōjō (1:841)	Shingonshū
<i>hannyakyō</i>			(1:841)
<i>kaidai</i>			

In all of Kūkai's works, those whose dates of composition have been established and those whose dates have not, the term *shingonshū* occurs only four times.<sup>23</sup> It is suggestive of the greater importance the term assumed within just a few generations following Kūkai's that it appears more frequently in those texts of false authorship, fabricated later but attributed to Kūkai.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Kūkai's own frequent use of the terms *kongōjō*, *mitsuzō*, and their variations makes it clear beyond a doubt that Kūkai understood, and intended to introduce, his own transmission of Buddhism first and foremost as a class of *jō*, or "vehicle" (Skt. *yāna*), and *zō*, or "treasury" (Skt. *piṭaka*), and only secondarily as a *shū*, "school."

This is not to say that the idea expressed by *shingonshū* was of no significance to Kūkai. The Hossō priest Tokuitsu, for example, in a work composed as early as 815, referred to Kūkai's new form of Buddhism as *shingonshū*.<sup>25</sup> So do several edicts issued by the court as early as 823.<sup>26</sup> These documents show that even prior to the formal establishment of Kūkai's school on a comparable institutional footing with the Six Nara Schools—which did not take place until 834, when the court granted it an annual allotment of three ordinands<sup>27</sup>—Kūkai's order was often referred to as the "Shingon School." Precisely because of this and in opposition to the general tendency in the cultural milieu of the time to view it merely as just another *shū*, or school, Kūkai seems to have emphasized throughout his writings that he had introduced new genres of *yāna* and *piṭaka* to Japan.

One of the texts that prominently illustrates Kūkai's strategy for creating a legitimate category for his new Buddhism is the *Abhiṣeka of the Abdicated Emperor Heizei* (*Heizei tennō kanjōmon*, KZ 2:157–172), a liturgical text prepared by Kūkai in 822 for recitation at the initiation into Esoteric Buddhism he performed for the cloistered Emperor Heizei (774–824; r. 806–810). When illness forced the emperor to abdicate his throne to his younger brother Saga in 810, ending his reign after only three years, Heizei retired to his palace in Nara. However, in the fall of the next year, his consort Kusuko and Kusuko's brother and Heizei's trusted adviser Fujiwara Nakanari set in motion a plot to reenthrone Heizei by returning the capital to Nara from Kyoto. Kusuko and Nakanari were soon captured by Emperor Saga's army. Heizei immediately forsook his authority and entered the priesthood.<sup>28</sup>

Very little is known about Heizei after this incident, other than that he was confined to Nara except for a few occasions when he was allowed to make pilgrimages to the sacred mountains of Kumano.<sup>29</sup> Heizei's son Takaoka (?–862), who was crown prince during Heizei's reign, became a resident priest at Tōdaiji and studied under the Sanron master Dōsen. The prince later became one of Kūkai's distinguished disciples and was known by the name of Shinnyo.<sup>30</sup>

Based on the fact that while he was emperor Heizei gave his political favor to the Nara Schools over the Tendai, the historian NAKAI Shinkō (1991:353) has argued that Heizei's cloistered retirement in Nara is indicative of the Nara Buddhist community's support for Heizei's attempt to return the capital to Nara, which would have disrupted the government's policy, advocated by the Emperors Kōnin (r. 770–781) and Kanmu (r. 781–806), to promote Confucianism as the ideology of the state on the one hand and on the other to isolate the Nara Buddhist establishment from the political decision-making processes.<sup>31</sup>

It remains unknown where Kūkai's abhiṣeka for Heizei took place. However, the year 822 coincides with Kūkai's erection of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji (in the second month of Kōnin 13). In fact, a record preserved at Tōdaiji dating from the early Kamakura period states that it was Heizei who patronized the construction of the hall.<sup>32</sup> Heizei's and Tōdaiji's cooperation with Kūkai, who then was Saga's close friend, may have been symbolic of Saga's pardon of his elder brother's earlier crime and of the Nara temples' possible collusion with Heizei. It therefore seems highly probable that, with the participation of eminent priests of the major Nara monasteries, Kūkai performed abhiṣeka for Heizei as a part of the grand celebration upon the completion of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji, which in turn symbolized the improved relationship between the state and the Nara monastic community. Kūkai's liturgical text recited at that service must have provided the ideal occasion for him to proclaim the significance of his new transmission and to shape his relationship with the Nara Buddhist Schools.

In the *Abhisēka of Heizei*, Kūkai employs three discrete levels of taxonomy to distinguish his Buddhist transmission from its predecessors. The first is the level of yāna, the level on which Buddhist teachings are classified according to the different conditions under which the Tathāgata(s)'s discourse on the Dharma was formed. Kūkai illustrates his point by quoting the following from a vajraśekhara sūtra entitled *Discernment of the State of Enlightenment*.<sup>33</sup>

Having attained the unequaled realization at his seat of enlightenment in the kingdom of Magadha in the realm of Jambudvīpa, the Nirmāṇakāya manifestation of the Tathāgata expounded the teachings of the three vehicles for the bodhisattvas yet to enter the last ten stages, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and other unenlightened beings. [The Buddha] preached some of these teachings as a means of guiding beings and others to reveal his own realization. . . . [Kūkai's notation inserted:] This delineates the preaching of the Dharma of Śākyamuni Buddha.

These teachings must be distinguished from the Saṁbhogakāya Buddha's instantaneous unfolding of his unexcelled enlightenment at the celestial

palace of Akaniṣṭha, the highest heaven in the realm of form, which was witnessed by all the Buddhas and the great bodhisattvas completing the last ten stages of enlightenment, who permeated space like a great cloud. [Kūkai's notation inserted:] *This exemplifies the preaching of the Dharma of Sambhogakāya Buddhas.*

The Buddha of the Dharmakāya issued forth from his mind countless Buddhas and bodhisattvas, all of whom shared the identical quality [that the Dharmakāya Buddha had], the quality of the vajra. Having received the abhiṣeka from the Tathāgata Vairocana, each of these bodhisattvas expounded the teaching of the three mysteries and beseeched Mahāvairocana and all the Tathāgatas to empower them to propagate this teaching. Mahāvairocana said, “I urge you, [bodhisattvas], to enable those beings of the supreme vehicle in the countless realms in the future to accomplish both their worldly and otherworldly goals within their own lives.

(T 18:287c–288a; KZ 2:155–156)

Immediately following this quotation, Kūkai writes, “This Tathāgata Mahāvairocana of Dharmakāya, . . . accompanied by Vajrasattva and other innumerable Buddhas and bodhisattvas, residing at his universal palace (*hokkaigū*) or at the palace of Samantabhadra’s mind (*fugen shinden*), eternally, incessantly expounds this secret treasury of mantra[yāna], the singular vajrayāna” (KZ 2:156).

The point raised by Kūkai concerns not only the different manifestations of Tathāgatas—Nirmāṇakāya, Sambhogakāya, and Dharmakāya—but the difference in the languages through which they expound their teachings and in the circumstances in which those languages function—differences in audience, place, and the historical ages of the Tathāgatas’ revelation of Dharma. Kūkai underscores that his transmission originated with the preaching by the Dharmakāya Buddha addressed to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who were none other than the manifestations of Dharmakāya himself. Dharmakāya’s preaching of the Dharma is in this sense a monologue within his pluralized self. At the same time, based on the theoretical premise of the omnipresence of the Dharmakāya—his eternal presence permeates the universe and all the beings within—Kūkai claims that the Dharmakāya preaches without ever pausing. The Dharmakāya’s discourse takes place in his “universal palace,” the entirety of the universe, and in the “palace of Samantabhadra’s mind,” symbolic of the intrinsic potential for enlightenment all beings possess. As a result, according to Kūkai, the efficacy of the language of the Dharmakāya’s preaching of the Dharma—that is, of the three mysteries consisting of the phonic language of mantra, the gestural language of mudrā, and the graphic language of maṇḍala—is neither limited by the capacities of its listeners,

nor confined to any local dialect, nor conditioned by a specific historical circumstance.

In short, Kūkai presents his transmission as unique and in sharp contrast to all the other forms of Buddhist teaching known to the Buddhist communities of early Heian society under the conventional classifications of *yānas* as described in *Mahāyāna* texts: the “three vehicles” (Skt. *triyāna*; Jpn. *sanjō*), the three separate teachings prepared by Śākyamuni Buddha for the śrāvaka (śrāvaka-*yāna*) and the pratyekabuddhas (pratyekabuddha-*yāna*) and the bodhisattvas (bodhisattva-*yāna*); the “five vehicles” (Skt. *pañca-yāna*; Jpn. *gojō*), the expanded version of the three vehicles with the addition of the teachings for humans (*māṇusa-yāna*) and for celestial denizens (*deva-yāna*) by the Śākyamuni Buddha; and the “Buddha vehicle” (Skt. *buddha-yāna*; Jpn. *butsujō*) expounded by a Buddha of Nirmāṇakāya or Saṃbhogakāya manifestation to communicate his enlightenment to other Buddhas and advanced bodhisattvas destined to attain Buddhahood. In the Tendai (T’ien-t’ai) and Kegon (Hua-yen) doctrines, the Buddha vehicle is often identified with the “one unifying vehicle” (Skt. *ekayāna*; Jpn. *ichijō*), the ultimate *Mahāyāna* that integrates within itself all the three and five vehicles.<sup>34</sup> Kūkai, however, presents his transmission not even as the *ekayāna*: his transmission defies all these categorizations within the established framework of Hīnayāna and *Mahāyāna*; it has to be classified as a new category, that of the Vajrayāna, the lightning-fast vehicle for those who are endowed with the Dharmakāya’s adamantine vajra-like quality of enlightenment.

The second level of taxonomy employed by Kūkai in the *Abhiṣeka of Heizei*, that of *piṭaka*, “treasury,” also addresses the problem of the language in which the Buddha preached the Dharma. However, whereas Kūkai’s first classification according to *yāna* places emphasis on the circumstances in which the Tathāgatas engaged in the discourse on the Dharma, the “treasury” system seems to focus on the problem of how to preserve the language of Dharma discourse. To illustrate the uniqueness of his transmission, Kūkai resorts— instead of to the more common division of Buddhist teachings into the three treasures (*sūtra-piṭaka*, *vinaya-piṭaka*, and *abhidharma-piṭaka*)—to the five treasures (Skt. *pañca-piṭaka*, Jpn. *gozō*) as described in the first chapter of the *Mahāyāna Six Pāramitā Sūtra*,<sup>35</sup> a *prajña-pāramitā sūtra* translated in 788 by Kūkai’s teacher Prajñā, which Kūkai had brought with him back to Japan. Kūkai quotes from the *sūtra* Śākyamuni Buddha’s explanation to Bodhisattva Maitreya of his purpose in providing sentient beings with different types of teachings:

I have preached the *sūtra-piṭaka* (*sotaranzō*) to those beings who desire to reside in the mountains and forests to quietly cultivate meditation; the

vinaya-piṭaka (*binayazō*) to those beings who desire to study the appropriate manners in which to live harmoniously in monasteries to preserve the true Dharma there; the abhidharma-piṭaka (*abitatsumazō*) to those beings who desire to analyze the nature of things and to realize the ultimate reality; the prajñā-piṭaka (*hannyazō*) for those beings who desire to extricate themselves from all sorts of sophistry and immediately abide in the state of no discrimination for realizing the ultimate calm [of nirvāṇa]; and, finally, the dhāraṇī-piṭaka (*sōjizō*) to those beings who desire swiftly to attain deliverance in the sudden realization of nirvāṇa by effacing even their most grievous offenses.

(T 8:868b–c; KZ 2:163–164)

In the sūtra the Buddha continues his dialogue with Maitreya:

Now, Maitreya, as for what will become of my teaching following my passing, I have entrusted [my disciple] Ānanda with the preservation of the sūtra-piṭaka, [disciple] Upāli with the vinaya-piṭaka, [disciple] Kātyāyanīputra with the abhidharma-piṭaka, the Bodhisattva Maṇjuśrī with the prajñā-piṭaka, and the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi with the dhāraṇī-piṭaka. These teachings of mine equally enable sentient beings to swiftly disentangle themselves from their delusions of saṃsāra, the long night of darkness, and escape to liberation.

(T 8:868c)

In this manner, the sūtra designates five figures—the three śrāvakas and the two bodhisattvas—as the progenitors of the five discrete lineages of Buddhist discourse. The five piṭakas are now presented as the principal genealogical categories of Buddhist teaching. Kūkai, however, comments that all five “are of Exoteric Teaching (*kengyō*). Although these five appear to be thorough, comprehensive, presenting the Buddha’s teachings in progressively more profound stages, all are the discourses of the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha, the cure prepared in response to various symptoms” (KZ 2:165). Against these, with the following passage, again from *Discernment of the State of Enlightenment*, Kūkai posits his piṭaka, the “mantra-dhāraṇī treasury” (*shingon daranizō*).

The mantra-dhāraṇī-piṭaka, the inmost secret of all the Tathāgatas, teaches the sacred wisdom of the intrinsic enlightenment already attested to by [all the Tathāgatas’] practices. This is the meditative discipline consigned by the [Dharmakāya] Buddha to those bodhisattvas who, without exception, having received the Tathāgatas’ precepts of immeasurable purity, entered the maṇḍala of the ocean-like assembly of all the Tathāgatas and were granted the authorization of the abhiṣeka.

(T 18:287c–288a; KZ 2:154–155)

With this citation Kūkai emphasizes that as a genealogy, his mantra-dhāraṇī treasury is independent from the five treasures described in the *Mahāyāna Six Pāramitā Sūtra*, not only because it originates with the Dharmakāya Buddha, rather than with Śākyamuni Buddha, but because the mode of its transmission requires the ritual practice of abhiṣeka. Following yet another lengthy quotation from *Discernment of the State of Enlightenment* describing the Tathāgata Mahāvairocana's ritual act of abhiṣeka granted to Vajrasattva, his principal consignee, and other bodhisattvas, Kūkai describes the lineage of the “secret treasury of mantra” (*shingon hizō*).

This Dharmakāya, Tathāgata Mahāvairocana, . . . surrounded by Vajrasattva and other innumerable Buddhas and bodhisattvas and residing [both] at his universal palace and at the palace of Samantabhadra's mind, eternally, incessantly expounds this secret treasury of mantra, the singular Vajrayāna.

In the past, a long time after the passing of the Tathāgata Śākyamuni, there lived a great being, whose name was the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna. He received the abhiṣeka from Vajrasattva and learned this secret teaching. His disciple Nāgabodhi, under the personal guidance of Nāgārjuna, then mastered this Dharma. Having survived over nine hundred years but having an appearance of a thirty-year-old, the bodhisattva Nāgabodhi still lives in southern India and propagates this teaching.

His disciple Vajrabodhi [671–741] traveled from southern India and arrived in the great empire of T'ang in the eighth year of K'ai-yüan [720], thus transmitting the teaching for the first time to China. During the T'ien-pao years [742–746], his senior disciple, the Tripitaka master Ta-kuang-chih [Amoghavajra] made a pilgrimage [to southern India] to study with Nāgabodhi. Having obtained the *Vajrasēkhara*, the *Mahāvairocana*, and other sūtras, as well as the maṇḍalas of the five families of divinities, he returned to the domain of T'ang. Accordingly, the three successive emperors, Hsüan-tsung [r. 713–756], Su-tsung [r. 756–765], and T'ai-tsung [r. 765–780] received from him the Tathāgatas' precepts, the ordination of abhiṣeka, and instruction in the practice of the three mysteries.

There were eight disciples to whom the Tripitaka master entrusted his Dharma. Among them was the master of Ch'ing-lung-ssu, who excelled in preserving the teaching of his master. He gave the precepts and abhiṣeka to Emperor Te-tsung [r. 780–805] and his crown prince. He thus was the seventh-generation patriarch of the transmission of this teaching.

Kūkai then relates the abhiṣeka performed on his behalf by his master Hui-kou: “On the thirteenth day of the sixth month of Chen-yüan 22,<sup>36</sup> or Enryaku 24, according to our calendar, at the Abhiṣeka Chapel in the East Stūpa Hall of Ch’ing-lung-ssu in Ch’ang-an, having received the samaya precept of all the Buddhas and having been initiated into the realm of the five sacred families and entrusted with the two maṇḍalas, I became the bearer of the teaching of *kongō ichijō* (singular vajrayāna).”<sup>37</sup>

Kūkai’s description of the lineage of the mantra-dhāraṇī piṭaka makes it clear that even in China, this tradition was only discovered less than a century prior to his sojourn there. As a genealogy, this piṭaka brought a new knowledge of the ritual language of the three mysteries through which it claimed to have preserved within itself the Dharmakāya’s eternal discourse on the Dharma. The novelty of Kūkai’s transmission in this regard lies in his importation of the science of the ritual of abhiṣeka and of the language of the three mysteries, the essential ingredients for performing the ritual of abhiṣeka.

On the ground prepared by the classifications according to yāna and piṭaka, Kūkai presents his third level of taxonomy, that of “school,” or *shū*, in Japanese. Whereas the yāna and piṭaka classifications concern, respectively, the “production” and “preservation” of the Tathāgatas’ Dharma discourse, the school classification appertains to the difference in the “consumption,” reading, or interpretation of the discourse. As Kūkai puts it in the *Abhiṣeka of Heizei*:

The division into these five categories [of piṭakas] reflects the different ways in which the Buddha delivered his teachings [as recorded] in the scriptures. As for the ways in which bodhisattvas advanced their theories and human masters presented their discussions [on the Buddhist scriptures], there are eight major branches. The first is the Vinaya School (*risshū*), the second, the Abhidharma School (*kushashū*), the third, the Satyasiddhi School (*jōjitsushū*), the fourth, the Yogācāra School (*hossōshū*), the fifth, the Mādhyamika School (*sanronshū*), the sixth, the Tendai School (*tendaishū*), the seventh, the Kegon [School] (*kegon*), the eighth, the Shingon [School] (*shingon*). The first three belong to the Hīnayāna, the second four correspond to the Mahāyāna, and the last one is the Vajrayāna of secrecy (*himitsu kongōjō*). (KZ 2:164–165)

In this passage Kūkai does not actually say “Shingon School.” Instead, he simply uses the word *shingon*, omitting the suffix *-shū* for “school.” In fact, there are many other places in Kūkai’s works in which he uses the term *shingon*, “mantra,” without the suffix *-shū*, in lieu of *shingonshū*.<sup>38</sup> This is certainly one

of the reasons that the term *shingonshū* occurs only rarely in Kūkai's works, as mentioned earlier. (The particular taxonomic implications of Kūkai's omission of *-shū* will be considered momentarily.)

Provided that *shingon* in the above quote can indeed be understood as an abbreviation for the Shingon School, eight schools are identified—the six official schools of Nara Buddhism, plus Saichō's Tendai and Kūkai's Shingon—and they are organized by Kūkai into three groups, which correspond to the three vehicles of the Hinayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna. By introducing the categorization according to *shū*, or school, Kūkai is informing the audience of the *Abhiseka of Heizei* (both those who participated in Heizei's initiation and the readership of the liturgical text) that he is grafting onto the general problem of scriptural taxonomy the local problem in the early Heian Buddhist community concerning contrasting schools of thought for interpreting scriptures. Kūkai here underscores again the uniqueness of his transmission. Unlike other schools, the Shingon School is concerned with the interpretation of the scriptures that belong to the Vajrayāna and the mantra-dhāraṇī treasury. Although the Sanron, Hossō, Kegon, and Tendai Schools, for example, may differ in their interpretations of Mahāyāna texts, they still share general Mahāyāna discourse as the linguistic foundation for their intellectual activities. By contrast, Kūkai suggests that the Shingon School bases its interpretive operation on Vajrayāna discourse, whose salient orientation toward the ritual languages of mantra, mudrā, and maṇḍala distinguishes Shingon from the other schools. Shingon differs from other schools not only in its choice of canonical scriptures but in its hermeneutical, semantic, and semiotic theories regarding the workings of textual language.

Kūkai's effort to set his own school apart from others can be ascertained in the four places in his writings (identified in the table on page 192) where he actually employs the term *shingonshū*. Of these, three are in the three different versions of *Introduction to the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (*Dainichikyō kaidai*). Currently, there exist seven texts bearing the title of *Dainichikyō kaidai* (KZ 1:633–689), all of which seem to be fragments of a once complete text or texts. Only for version *a* (“*hokkai joshin*,” KZ 1:633–642), is the date of composition known: it is part of a lecture Kūkai gave to his lay follower, one Kasa no Nakamori, on the twenty-second day of the tenth month of Tenchō 1 (824) (KZ 3:479). Versions *b*, *e*, and *g* (“*shujō kyōmei*,” “*ryūshū nishite itadaki miezaru*,” and “*kan o mote jiraku o uku*,” KZ 3:643–651; 665–677; 684–689) all have parts that recapitulate the discussion in version *a* and thus are thought to be variations that continue the beginning fragment of the same lecture recorded in version *a*.

The paragraphs in which the term *shingonshū* occurs in versions *b*, *e*, and *g*

are identical. In them, Kūkai emphasizes that to thoroughly grasp the sūtra in question, an exemplary esoteric sūtra, a particularly esoteric reading is necessary: “All [Buddhist] schools interpret a scripture by dividing it into three parts. The Shingon School (*shingonshū*) also approaches this sūtra by dividing it into three sections. The section beginning with ‘Thus I have heard . . .’ is the introduction. It represents the mystery of the body because the bodies of the divinities are inexhaustibly plentiful.” (KZ 1:651, 675, 688). Kūkai here refers to a method of textual analysis called *san-fen k'o-ching* (Jpn. *sanbun kakyō*), the “partition of a sūtra text into three sections.” Widely practiced for centuries by scholar-priests in China and subsequently adopted by their Japanese counterparts, this interpretive technique is aimed at illustrating the structure of a sūtra text by establishing the division between its introduction (Ch. *hsü-fen*; Jpn. *jobun*), the discussion proper (Ch. *cheng-tsung*; Jpn. *shōshūbun*), and the conclusion, which describes the methods of propagating and preserving the sūtra’s message (Ch. *liu-t'ung-fen*; Jpn. *rutsūbun*).<sup>39</sup> Kūkai, however, employs this common interpretive technique to highlight the manifest gravitation of the Vajrayāna discourse toward ritual language, as it is expressed in the text of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. He identifies the opening section of the sūtra, which introduces Mahāvairocana Buddha and the countless deities in his assembly, as the mystery of body (*shinmitsu*); the discussion proper as the mystery of speech (*gomitsu*); and the ending, in which the recipients of Mahāvairocana’s teaching pledge to preserve the Dharma revealed in the sūtra, as the mystery of mind (*shinmitsu*). That is to say, according to the interpretation of the Shingon School, the text, and scriptural text in particular, is an entity that is endowed, just like divinities, with the three mysteries as three discrete modes of communication.

The term *shingonshū* in the fourth case, in the *Introduction to the Diamond Sūtra*,<sup>40</sup> appears in reference to the two different approaches through which this popular prajñā-pāramitā sūtra can be interpreted. “For those who aspire to the goal of Mahāyāna, the sūtra generates its Exoteric Teaching (*kengyō*). But for those who pursue the unexcelled vehicle (*saijōjō*), that is, for the practitioners of *shingonshū*, the sūtra reveals its profoundest, secret meaning” (KZ 1:841). With the term *shingonshū* in this context, Kūkai is making the claim that the interpretive philosophy of the Shingon School serves not only the purpose of deciphering the cryptic writings of Vajrayāna sūtras but also that of exposing the deeper levels of truth hidden in Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna sūtras. This explains Kūkai’s motive in composing commentaries on diverse exoteric texts essential for the Nara Schools, including the *Golden Light*, the *Lotus*, the *Prajñā-pāramitā Heart*. As will be discussed later in this chapter and in the next chapter, it was indeed Kūkai’s continuing study of exoteric

scriptures and his effort to present a new, esoteric approach to reading those popular scriptures that created his principal channel of intellectual exchange with the scholar-priests of the Nara Schools.

However, it is necessary first to return to the question of why, as a general rule, Kūkai did not add the suffix *-shū* when employing the term *shingon*. In the passage from the *Abhisēka of Heizei* quoted earlier, Kūkai omits *-shū* not only from “Shingon” but also from “Kegon,” which precedes “Shingon.” In another context this could be seen as a casual abbreviation. However, in light of Kūkai’s manifest preference for *jō* (*yāna*) and *zō* (*piṭaka*) over *shū* to designate his new form of Buddhism, it may be seen as a conscious decision. Certainly, the fact that he did not use *-shū* with Kegon makes his omission of *-shū* after Shingon less conspicuous. Had Kūkai added *-shū* after both Kegon and Shingon, it would have highlighted a certain awkwardness in the expression *shingonshū*. With this expunction, Kūkai plays down the fact that, except for Shingon, all seven schools were direct inheritors of long-established intellectual traditions in Chinese Buddhism prior to their transplantation in Japan. During the T’ang dynasty, and in some cases earlier, terms such as *lü* (*Vinaya*), *chü-she* (*Abhidharma*), *cheng-shih* (*Satyasiddhi*), and *san-lung* (*Mādhyamika*) circulated as names of particular exegetical schools, each with its own body of canonized, highly developed commentaries for systematic interpretation of scriptural texts (Stanley WEINSTEIN 1987a:258–260). By contrast, no such term as *chen-yen-tsung* (Shingon School) was ever coined on Chinese soil.<sup>41</sup> Conspicuously absent in China, where the canonical texts for the seven Japanese schools widely circulated among the Buddhist intelligentsia, was the formation of a native exegetic and analytical scholarship on the Vajrayāna scriptures that might have given rise to a “Shingon School.” In the context of early Heian society, Shingon existed only as a school to be, a school of the future, whose construction began only with Kūkai’s own theoretical writings.

Another example of Kūkai’s use of the term *shingon* without the suffix *-shū*, apparently for the same purpose, is found in *Jeweled Key to the Secret Treasury* (*Hizōhōyaku*, KZ 1:417–473), written in about 830. In just the same order in which Kūkai lists the first seven schools in the *Abhisēka of Heizei*—Ritsu, Kusha, Jōjitsu, Hossō, Sanron, Tendai, and Kegon—he presents them as the fourth to ninth stages in the model of the ten stages of mind he has expounded in his magnum opus, *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind According to the Secret Mandalas* (*Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*, KZ 1:125–415). In *Jeweled Key*, Kūkai’s own abridgment of *Ten Abiding Stages*, he describes the ninth stage as the gate of Dharma of *kegonshū*, the Kegon School (p. 464), whereas the tenth stage is designated merely as the gate of *shingon*, the Shingon (p. 466). Nowhere in *Ten Abiding Stages* does Kūkai attempt to designate his Buddhism

as a school; rather, he characterizes the tenth stage as the mind of *shōgon hizō* (“magnificent secret treasury”) and *kongō ichijō* (“singular Vajrayāna”) (KZ 1:128, 407). At the close of *Jeweled Key to the Secret Treasury*, Kūkai summarily presents his theory of the ten stages. Having characterized the first three stages of mind—animal instinct dominated by the drive for food and sex; moral conduct, the foundation of social order; and primitive worship of heavenly deities—Kūkai proceeds as follows:

The fourth and fifth stages, the minds of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, are the teaching of Hīnayāna. The fifth stage, the mind of compassion to others, marks the beginning of the stages of Mahāyāna. Of these the first two stages [which correspond, respectively, to the Hossō and Sanron Schools] belong to the bodhisattvayāna (Jpn. *bosatsu-jō*), and the second two stages [corresponding to Tendai and Kegon Schools] to the Buddhayāna (Jpn. *butsujō*). . . . My expression “the secret vajra is the utmost reality” is intended to demonstrate that this teaching of *shingonjō* (Skt. *mantrayāna*) is the ultimate reality, surpassing every sort of yāna. (KZ 1:472–473)

Here again Kūkai shuns the suffix *-shū* and describes the tenth stage as *shingonjōkyō*, the teaching of mantrayāna. The fact that this parallels precisely his classification of the eight schools into three yānas in the *Abhiṣeka of Heizei* is an indication that the essential taxonomic strategy found in Kūkai’s most mature writing was already in place as early as 822, when he performed the abhiṣeka for the abdicated Emperor Heizei.

To sum up, Kūkai typically employed the term *shingon* when he was comparing the form of Buddhism he introduced to early Heian society to those of the seven schools in existence then. Kūkai normally did not attach suffix *-shū* to *shingon* because he intended to present it as more than merely a school. The omission of *-shū* is indicative of the oblique relationship Kūkai saw between his own transmission and the other schools. It was meant to accentuate the innovative quality of his Dharma transmission by introducing *shingon* as *kongōjō*, the Vajrayāna, and *mitsuzō*, the secret treasury, each representing a class of yāna and piṭaka hitherto unknown in the Japanese Buddhist community. At the same time, it appears that Kūkai was attempting to deemphasize the imprecision of designating *shingon* strictly as a school given that the development of the bodies of doctrinal exegeses, commentaries, and treatises, which would have provided the textual foundation comparable to the seven schools for the Shingon (School), was yet nascent.

In other words, *shingon*(*-shū*) was a nonschool in two senses: it was not yet a full-fledged school, nor was it *merely* a school. It was at once *shingon-jō*, the

Mantrayāna, and *shingon-zō*, the mantra piṭaka. Kūkai takes advantages of this ambiguity—that his *shingon* does not sit well with the accepted idea of *shū*—to present *shingon*, or *mantra*, as a hallmark for his new taxonomic paradigm and to announce to the early Heian monastic community the arrival of the scriptural discourse of Vajrayāna literature and of the textual genealogy of the mantra-dhāraṇī treasury. Kūkai's original usage of the term *shingon* had very little to do with the way in which the term is generally understood in modern studies of Kūkai, that is, as the sectarian institution allegedly created by Kūkai. There were occasions in which Kūkai did present his Shingon as comparable to the Six Schools of Nara; he did so, however, only obliquely, refusing to reduce it to a *shū*. Furthermore, the Six Schools of the early Heian period were not sectarian establishments either. They were rather heirs to the rich exegetic traditions of the Chinese doctrinal schools. The common premise of modern Kūkai studies, that Kūkai was intent upon establishing Shingon as a sect and that his historical significance derives primarily from his success in doing so, needs to be reexamined.

## Tokuitsu and Kūkai: The Delineation of *Mikkyō*, the Esoteric

Because Kūkai characterized his transmission of the Dharma with such unfamiliar concepts as “vajrayāna,” “secret treasury,” and “*shingon*,” it seems unlikely that the scholarly circles of the Nara Buddhist community immediately afforded him recognition as the representative of a legitimate form of Buddhism. The Hossō priest Tokuitsu (781?–842?) provides a valuable insight to the initial reaction by the Buddhist scholarly establishment in his work *Unresolved Issues on the Shingon School* (*Shingonshū miketsumon*, T 77 #2458). Addressing to Kūkai, Tokuitsu lays out his doubts about the validity of Kūkai's claims. Beginning in 815, Kūkai had launched an initiative to promote Esoteric Buddhism, requesting the cooperation of a number of priests and lay Buddhist leaders in distant provinces in copying and circulating the scriptures of the secret treasury. That request, the *Letter of Propagation*,<sup>42</sup> was accompanied by a cover letter for each addressee, including a list of the titles of the scriptures he or she was to copy and a complete set of scriptures in thirty-five fascicles. Because Kūkai's list does not survive, it remains unclear exactly which texts these were.<sup>43</sup>

On the fifth day of the fourth month of Kōnin 6 (815), Kūkai sent his request to Tokuitsu, who was then residing at Aizu in the province of Mutsu.<sup>44</sup> Although undated, *Unresolved Issues* was prepared by Tokuitsu as his response to Kūkai's letter. It thus seems highly likely that it was also written in 815 or at most a few years later.

Only a little is known about Tokuitsu's life. It appears that he became a student of the Hossō School at Kōfukuji, Nara, at an early age, and that he continued his Hossō study at Tōdaiji.<sup>45</sup> Some sources identify Tokuitsu's teacher as a priest at Kōfukuji, Shūen (769–834), who was one of Kūkai's allies within the elite circle of Nara scholar-priests.<sup>46</sup> According to Saichō, Tokuitsu "left the capital [of Nara] at age twenty, and since then has resided in the provinces."<sup>47</sup> Tokuitsu is known to have established many temples and engaged actively in proselytizing Buddhism in the eastern provinces.<sup>48</sup> Two of these temples have been identified in traditional sources: Chūzenji in Tsukuba in the province of Hitachi, and Enichiji at Aizu in the province of Mutsu.<sup>49</sup> This recognition suggests that by the time Kūkai sent his letter of request, Tokuitsu had established himself as an influential leader in the Buddhist community of eastern Japan.

Tokuitsu was also a prolific author who had undergone a thorough doctrinal training. The great majority of his writings resulted from the celebrated, prolonged, and bitter debate in which he engaged with Saichō, which began with Saichō's journey to the eastern provinces in 817.<sup>50</sup> A catalog of the collection at Kōfukuji library composed in 1096 lists nine works by Tokuitsu.<sup>51</sup> Another official catalog of the texts adopted by the Hossō School, compiled in 1176 by the Kōfukuji priest Zōshun (1104–1180), lists two other titles by Tokuitsu.<sup>52</sup> These two catalogs indicate that Tokuitsu's works had for generations been preserved and studied in the Hossō scholarly community in Nara. In both catalogs, Tokuitsu is referred to not only as "Tokuitsu of Mutsu Province," but as "Tokuitsu of Tōdaiji," suggesting that he maintained a strong tie with the Nara Buddhist establishment. Modern bibliographers have identified a total of seventeen titles by Tokuitsu and a number of fragments, which are also often quoted in Saichō's compositions. However, only *Unresolved Issues of the Shingon School* has survived as an independent text.<sup>53</sup>

Because of the acrimonious tone that dominated the exchange between Tokuitsu and Saichō—in which Saichō vilified Tokuitsu as the "one who eats only coarse, meager food" (*sojikisha*), and Tokuitsu responded by calling Saichō's idol Chih-i and other T'ien-t'ai patriarchs "biased rustics" (*henju*)—many scholars have viewed *Unresolved Issues* as yet more vitriol from Tokuitsu, but in this case directed at Kūkai (SHIMAJI Daitō 1986:88–92; YUKI Yoshifumi 1986:114; ONOZUKA Kichō 1975:45). That assessment, however, is not necessarily correct. To begin with, Kūkai's letter to Tokuitsu predates Saichō's encounter with Tokuitsu by at least two years. Therefore Saichō's argument with Tokuitsu did not set the stage for Kūkai's interactions with him. As TAKAGI Shingen (1981:40–44) has pointed out, the tone of the cover letter Kūkai attached to the *Letter of Propagation* he sent to Tokuitsu is extremely polite,

making it clear that he had not previously been acquainted with Tokuitsu. Kūkai addresses Tokuitsu as the “Bodhisattva Tokuitsu (*tokuitsu bosatsu*), whose observance of precepts is as pure as crystal, whose wisdom is as vast as the ocean” (KZ 3:365). He praises Tokuitsu’s efforts at proselytizing in the eastern provinces as comparable to those of the ancient Indian and Central Asian pilgrims who first brought Buddhism to China. It is true that Tokuitsu’s reply to Kūkai in the *Unresolved Issues* is terse, detached, and often critical or suspect of the scriptures Kūkai asked Tokuitsu to help circulate. However, one does not find there a sense of derogation, such as Tokuitsu often expressed in his writing to Saichō. And he concludes his *Unresolved Issues* on a cordial note:

I am anxious that the very act of addressing these questions to you may constitute an offense against the Dharma, an offense that would destine me to punishment in the endless hell. However, my intent has been merely to resolve my doubts about and increase my clear knowledge [of your school], so that I will be able to develop a genuine trust in, and to devotedly study, the teaching of your school.

(T 77:865a)<sup>54</sup>

Even as the accomplished pundit he was, Tokuitsu seems to have found the scriptures sent to him by Kūkai puzzling, as he did Kūkai’s explanation of the new Buddhist school based on those scriptures. Tokuitsu’s goal in composing *Unresolved Issues* therefore was simply to request a further explanation regarding the validity of the scriptures so that he could decide whether or not to accede to Kūkai’s request for assistance in copying them. Because Tokuitsu remained neutral to Kūkai’s cause at the time he composed it, *Unresolved Issues* serves effectively to illustrate the particular difficulties posed for scholar-priests of the Nara Schools by the scriptures Kūkai introduced. Kūkai’s reply to Tokuitsu can thus be studied as a firsthand source demonstrating Kūkai’s strategy for making his scriptures accessible, relevant, and significant to Nara scholarship.

In *Letter of Propagation*, a copy of which Kūkai sent to Tokuitsu in 815 to open their exchange, he makes an appeal for the importance of the scriptures of Mikkyō, the Esoteric Teaching.

I encourage all of you who would be my partners to join together in an effort to copy the thirty-five fascicles of scriptures of the secret treasury of the Dharma (*himitsu hōzō*). [Kūkai’s notation:] *The actual titles of these scriptures are listed on a separate sheet.*<sup>55</sup>

The [Buddhist] teaching manifests itself differently to different audiences, despite the fact that its truth, the Dharma, inheres in the minds of all living be-

ings. Because we have different abilities—some of us are enlightened, others deluded—we respond differently to the teaching. Because of this, while the Buddha of principle and wisdom [Dharmakāya] remains in his secret palace to enjoy the bliss of the Dharma, his transformations [Saṁbhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya] manifest themselves in great number, to correspond to our diversity. Thus, the One Unifying Vehicle [*ekayāna*] and the Three Vehicles [*triyāna*] were separated in their paths of guiding beings. The Exoteric Teaching (*kengyō*) and the Esoteric Teaching (*mikkyō*) are distinguished from each other in their methods of leading beings to enlightenment. The Exoteric Teaching is nothing other than the scriptures preached by the Saṁbhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya Buddhas. The Esoteric Treasury (*mitsuzō*) consists of the discourse of the Dharmakāya Tathāgata. The Exoteric (*ken*) revolves around the six pāramitās of cause and effect. It endorses the practice of bodhisattvahood, which is none other than the teaching gate of expedient means that accords with the languages of its audience. By contrast, the Esoteric (*mitsu*) is a teaching consisting of the eternally unceasing three mysteries (*bonnu sanmitsu*), which is the language of suchness (*nyogigo*) that immediately describes the [Dharmakāya's] inmost enlightenment (*naishō*). Thus, as explicated in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* [T 16:525b, 560c–561a], . . . the Saṁbhogakāya Buddhas extensively describe [in their teaching] the nature of things, which in truth are only illusory, and the Nirmāṇakāya Buddhas exhaust themselves in their work of saving beings and therefore deviate from preaching the Dharma as it truly is. These Buddhas speak of neither the Dharma of [the Tathāgatas'] innate enlightenment nor [their] realm of noble wisdom. It is the Dharmakāya alone who expounds the realm of his noble activity of innate enlightenment (*naishō shōgyō*). (KZ 3:527)

In succinct form this is the principle that Kūkai intends to establish the two categories of the exoteric and the esoteric—that is, only the esoteric is the direct revelation by the Dharmakāya Buddha of the Dharma, his inmost realm of enlightenment; all the rest, the teachings delivered by the Saṁbhoga and Nirmāṇa Buddhas, the secondary revelations, are the Exoteric. The way in which Kūkai separates the esoteric from the exoteric here seems accurately to summarize his lengthier presentation on his system of classification in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings of the Exoteric and Esoteric* (*Benkenmitsu nikyōron*, KZ 1:474–805). It is for that reason that KATSUMATA Shunkyō (1970:37–44; 1982:247–254) used the 815 *Letter of Propagation* to determine the date of the composition of *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*.

However, the plainness of Kūkai's method of separating the exoteric and the esoteric in his *Letter* does not necessarily indicate that the actual content

of what Kūkai had categorized as the esoteric was understandable to Tokuitsu. From Tokuitsu's point of view, Kūkai's letter simply asserted that the Dharmakāya preaches the Dharma. It did not explain *why* it was that—in contradistinction to the general premise in Mahāyāna literature that the Dharmakāya is utterly abstract—the Dharmakāya, like the Buddhas of the Nirmāṇa and Saṃbhoga manifestations, could preach the Dharma. Nor did Kūkai provide any evidence for the Dharmakāya's preaching. The eleven questions Tokuitsu put forth to Kūkai in *Unresolved Issues on the Shingon School* seem to have derived from the imperfect knowledge Tokuitsu received from Kūkai of the nature of the scriptural texts upon which what Tokuitsu understood as the “Shingon School” was based. The following summarizes Tokuitsu's questions to Kūkai.

1. Question on the compiler of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*: The sūtra opens with the statement “thus I have heard” (T 18:1a). But who is this “I” who has heard and preserved the teaching? Because the sūtra is said to have been preached eight hundred years after Śākyamuni Buddha’s death, the “I” cannot be Ānanda, Kāśyapa, or other disciples of the Buddha who were compilers of other sūtras. It is also said that the sūtra was transmitted from Vairocana to the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (who manifests himself in the sūtra in his esoteric form as Vajrasattva) and then to Nāgārjuna. Because of the order of transmission, the compiler who received the teaching from Vairocana cannot be Nāgārjuna. On the other hand, Samantabhadra is an extremely advanced bodhisattva whose physical presence cannot be perceived by the followers of Hīnayāna and other unenlightened beings. If Samantabhadra is the compiler, then, does the sūtra exclude from its audience these less advanced beings?

2. Question on the place of the preaching of the sūtra: The *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* claims to have been preached by Vairocana, who was then residing at his universal palace of vajra (*kongō hokkaigū*). Is this palace of Vairocana a pure land created out of his own Dharma bliss (*jijuyō jōdo*)? If so, such a pure land of the Buddha could not be seen even by bodhisattvas in the final ten stages of enlightenment. Therefore it is impossible for Vairocana to have been accompanied by countless bodhisattvas as asserted in the sūtra. If, on the other hand, his pure land was manifested for the bliss of other beings (*tajuyō jōdo*), then, such a pure land must be a particular place in the universe. This contradicts the sūtra, which describes Vairocana’s vajra palace as penetrating to all the corners of the universe.

3. Question on the doctrine of “attaining enlightenment in one’s present life” (*sokushin jōbutsu*): *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind* declares that those

who practice the discipline of Shingon (mantra) will attain enlightenment in their present lives by leaping over the ten bodhisattva stages (T 32:572c). This statement has two faults. First, for bodhisattvas to realize enlightenment, they must perfect six pāramitās (charity, precepts, forbearance, effort, meditation, and wisdom). Those who practice Shingon remain incomplete in their training of the six pāramitās, because they master at best only one: meditation. Second, if bodhisattvas, following the mantra training described in *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind*, rush to reach enlightenment, they betray the very principle of bodhisattvahood—which is that, out of compassion for others, they intentionally defer their enlightenment, remain in samsāra, and continue to save others.

4. Question on the five Buddhas and the five wisdoms: According to the *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind*, Vairocana at the center and the four Buddhas of the four directions personify, together, the fivefold wisdom (T 32:573c–574a).<sup>56</sup> However, if this is so, none of these Buddhas is perfectly enlightened, because perfect enlightenment consists of all of these five wisdoms. The *Discourse* thus breaks with the *Yogācāra-bhūmi*, the *Buddha-bhūmi* and other major treatises, which hold that all the Buddhas in the universe are equal because they are all identically endowed with perfect wisdom.

5. Question on the nirvāṇa of the Hīnayānists: In *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind*, it is said that even those who are thoroughly schooled in the Hīnayāna (*ketsujō nijō*) and have attained nirvāṇa by annihilating their physical form (*keshin metsuchi*) can generate the wisdom of the Buddha by practicing mantras for eons (T 32:573a). However, these Hīnayānists attained their deliverance as arhats, that is, by escaping from samsāra to the complete cessation of nirvāṇa. By definition, they are not subject to further transmigration, and it therefore is impossible for them to attain Buddha's wisdom, now or even many eons in the future.

6. Question on the interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra*: In the *Lotus Sūtra* it is said that the Buddha first opens the eyes of sentient beings, then demonstrates the Buddha's insight to them, then has them realize the Buddha's insight, and then, finally, makes it possible for them to enter the Buddha's insight (T 9:7a).<sup>57</sup> According to a notation in *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind*, “opening,” “demonstrating,” “realizing,” and “entering” correspond, respectively, to the practitioners' initial awakening to, training in the practice of, realization of the fruit of, and, finally, entry into the calm of the enlightened mind (T 32:574a–b). Such an interpretation contradicts Vasubhandu's *Treatise on the Lotus Sūtra*,<sup>58</sup>

in which these four acts are explained as differences in the spiritual depth attained by heretics, Hīnayānists, bodhisattvas, and the Buddhas.

7. Question on the ten stages of bodhisattvas: According to fascicle 6 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, bodhisattvas attain enlightenment by completing the ten stages (T 18:42c). The *Avataṃsaka* and *Brahmājāla Sūtras*, the two other sūtras preached by Vairocana, also describe the ten stages as the bodhisattvas' legitimate path to enlightenment. On the other hand, *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind* advocates the attainment of instantaneous enlightenment by overleaping the ten stages, thereby contradicting these sūtras.

8. Question on Sanskrit alphabet: The followers of Shingon claim that the Sanskrit alphabet was invented neither by Brahmā (as asserted by non-Buddhist schools) nor by the Buddhas; that Sanskrit exists spontaneously, naturally, without a creator, and therefore that it is neither a conditioned phenomenon nor an unconditioned phenomenon. However, phenomena that are neither conditioned nor unconditioned can only be false, illusory objects of unreality, such as a "rabbit's horn." Because the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, like any other characters, are made manifest by means of brush, ink, and paper, Sanskrit cannot but be a conditioned phenomenon.

9. Question on the Dharmakāya Buddha's preaching of the Dharma: According to *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the Buddha who preached the sūtra was "Vairocana, the very essence of the Dharmakāya (*honji hōsshin*)" (T 39:580a). However, the essence of the Dharmakāya is nothing but the principle and wisdom of enlightenment, the abstract realities that cannot be perceived even by the bodhisattvas of the final ten stages. Even if the Dharmakāya does preach, who is able to receive his (its) teaching? And for what audience does the Dharmakāya preach the Dharma? If the Dharmakāya's preaching is for the bodhisattvas in the ten stages, it makes redundant the teachings of the Sarībhogakāya Buddhas. If it is for the Hīnayānists and other unenlightened beings, it makes the teachings of the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha redundant.

10. Question on the number of fascicles of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*: According to the *K'ai-yüan Catalog of Buddhist Teachings*, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, translated by Śubhakarasiṁha, consists of seven fascicles (T 55:603a). However, I have studied the sūtra, and only the first thirty-one chapters in fascicles 1 through 6 describe the sermon preached by Vairocana to his principal interlocutor, Vajrapāṇi. Fascicle 7, by contrast, begins with the invocation,

“I prostrate myself before Vairocana” (T 18:45a), making plain that it is not Vairocana’s teaching.

II. Question on the iron tower: The followers of the Shingon School assert that the canonical scriptures of that school were transmitted from Vajrasattva to Nāgārjuna at the iron tower in south India about eight hundred years after Śākyamuni Buddha’s death. Where is the proof for their transmission? Is the evidence based merely on an oral tradition? If it is an oral tradition without textual foundation, the transmission cannot be trusted. If there is indeed textual evidence, the exact passage describing the transmission must be presented.

These questions bear witness to Tokuitsu’s careful reading of the scriptures he received from Kūkai, which totaled thirty-five fascicles. Although it remains unclear exactly which scriptures these were, the content of *Unresolved Issues* indicates that at the very least they included, and Tokuitsu studied in particular detail, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (seven fascicles), Śubhakarasiṁha’s *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (twenty fascicles), and *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind* (a single fascicle),<sup>59</sup> a concise treatise on vajraśekhara sūtras attributed to Nāgārjuna. In his tenth question, for example, Tokuitsu correctly points out that fascicle 7 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* is an addendum to the sūtra proper written by an anonymous author or authors; it is a manual describing the procedure for making ritual offerings to Mahāvairocana. The great majority of Tokuitsu’s questions arise from his reading of these three texts. In addition, the thesis to which Tokuitsu refers in question 8, that Sanskrit is a natural, uncreated language, is proposed in *Vajraśekhara Interpretation of Sanskrit Vowels* (single volume),<sup>60</sup> and the episode of the transmission from Vajrasattva to Nāgārjuna discussed in question 11 appears in *Birth of the Thirty-seven Divinities in the Vajraśekhara Yoga* (single volume).<sup>61</sup> It is probable, therefore, that Tokuitsu also read these two scriptures in Amoghavajra’s translation, both texts having been imported by Kūkai.

Tokuitsu’s questions also make plain that nowhere in *Unresolved Issues* does he directly address Kūkai’s *Letter of Propagation* and its central thesis—that is, that the Esoteric and the Exoteric are two distinct categories. Tokuitsu seems to have completely overlooked the taxonomic issue proposed by Kūkai. In fact, it is possible to understand all of the questions Tokuitsu addressed to Kūkai as deriving from his treatment of Kūkai’s scriptural texts as (or, as if they were) Mahāyāna texts. That is to say, Tokuitsu assumes that, if they are legitimate Buddhist scriptures, the principal axioms of Mahāyāna Buddhism should apply to them—that one must complete the ten bodhisattva stages before attaining enlightenment; that the Dharmakāya is abstract and

beyond language; that all the Buddhas are equal in their wisdom of enlightenment. In other words, all the questions Tokuitsu has posed concern the seeming deviations of the scriptures submitted by Kūkai from Mahāyāna axioms.

In his first and eleventh questions, for example, Tokultsu errs in placing in historical time Vairocana's preaching of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* eight hundred years after Śākyamuni Buddha's passing. As will be discussed shortly, this according to Kūkai was not the time when Vairocana revealed the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* but the time at which Vajrasattva passed on the Dharma of the secret treasury to Nāgārjuna. This bears out the earlier observation that even erudite scholar-priests of the Nara Schools, such as Tokuitsu, were utterly unfamiliar with the very concept of the esoteric as sketched out in Kūkai's letter, despite the fact that the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and many other scriptures of Vajrayāna descent were readily available for study in Japan by the middle of the Nara period. In short, Kūkai was not able to persuade Tokuitsu that the scriptures he had sent out to be copied stood out from all Mahāyāna texts and represented a completely new scriptural genre.<sup>62</sup>

A search of Kūkai's entire corpus of compositions shows that he answered directly only two of the eleven questions addressed to him by Tokuitsu. Kūkai's *Distinguishing the Two Teachings of the Exoteric and the Esoteric* (*Benkenmitsu nikyōron*, KZ 1:474–505) revolves around a question identical to Tokuitsu's question 9; and at the conclusion of *Record of the Transmission of the Dharma of the Secret Mandala Teaching* (*Himitsu mandarakyōfuhōden*, KZ 1:1–49), Kūkai discusses the problem raised in question 11 of *Unresolved Issues*. Other questions by Tokuitsu (especially, 3, 4, 7, and 8) may have been the inspiration for such major works as *Transforming One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment* (*Sokushin jōbutsugi*, KZ 1:506–520), the *Voice, Letter, Reality* (*Shōji jissōgi*, KZ 1:521–534), and *On the Sanskrit Letter Hūm* (*Unjigi*, KZ 1:535–553). All of the issues raised by Tokuitsu appear to have been of critical importance for Kūkai to produce theoretical treatises on the Esoteric Buddhist system.

Yet Kūkai singled out only questions 9 and 11 from *Unresolved Issues*, the former having to do with the validity of the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma; the latter concerning the legitimacy of the lineage that claimed to preserve the unique language of the Dharmakāya's preaching. Kūkai must have found that those two questions related most directly to his taxonomic project of distinguishing the esoteric from the exoteric. Tokuitsu's failure to understand the distinction, or—put the other way—Kūkai's inability to explain the distinction to Tokuitsu, was the reason for most of the other doctrinal questions raised by Tokuitsu. In addition, the ninth and eleventh questions relate to the ideas of *yāna* (vehicle) and *piṭaka* (treasury), respectively, the two conceptual

vectors at whose intersection Kūkai had located the identity of his school, which he referred to by the term *shingon*, or mantra.

### Proof of the Dharmakāya's Preaching of the Dharma

The text of *Distinguishing the Two Teachings of the Exoteric and the Esoteric* consists of three sections: a short introduction (KZ 1:474–477), in which Kūkai sketches out the major criteria that together constitute the distinction between the Esoteric and Exoteric; a lengthy discussion (1:477–504), consisting almost entirely of quotations from diverse scriptural sources, with Kūkai's brief comments on each; and concluding remarks (1:504–505). In the introduction, Kūkai repeats the assertion he made in the *Letter of Propagation*—that the Esoteric is distinguished from the Exoteric by the different types of Buddhas who preached the Dharma. However, as if to respond more specifically to Tokuitsu, Kūkai relates this distinction to the different kinds of audience to which the Esoteric and the Exoteric are directed.

The Tathāgata in his Nirmāṇakāya form preached the teaching of the Three Vehicles (*triyāna*) for the bodhisattvas prior to their final ten stages, the Hīnayānists, and deluded beings. In his Saṃbhogakāya forms, [the Buddha] preached the One Unifying Vehicle (*ekayāna*). Both of these are Exoteric Teachings. [In contrast,] for the sake of expressing his own bliss in the Dharma, the Buddha in his intrinsic Dharmakāya form expounded the [teaching] gate of the three mysteries to his entourage, which was also a manifestation of himself. This gate of the three mysteries is the revelation of the realm of the wisdom of the Tathāgatas' inner enlightenment, which refuses entry to even the most advanced bodhisattvas in the final ten stages.

(KZ 1:474)

The discussion proper, which immediately follows the introduction, consists primarily of quotations from eighteen scriptural sources that are cited as his textual evidence that the Dharmakāya does actually preach the Dharma. Kūkai begins with a counterargument against his own thesis.

*Question:* All different schools acknowledge that the Dharma was preached by the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha [Śākyamuni]. It is said in various sūtras and śāstras, on the other hand, that Dharmakāya is without form, without image, that it [Dharmakāya] transcends verbalization and defies conceptualization and that any effort to describe or illustrate it is destined to fail. Now, on

what ground are you contending that Dharmakāya preaches Dharma? What is your proof?" (1:475–476).

This is the gist of Tokuitsu's question 9, which asserts the Mahāyāna axiom that Dharmakāya is utterly abstract, that it is endowed with no anthropomorphic qualities. In response, Kūkai argues that in fact a number of sūtras and sāstras contain passages that provide support for his position. However, in the vast, dense forest of sūtras, "such passages easily hide themselves because of the biased predilection of the reader, and their meanings can be retrieved only by those endowed with the vision [of the esoteric], just as celestial beings and demons see the same water pond differently, just as people and night birds experience differently the light of day and the darkness of night" (KZ 1:476).<sup>63</sup>

The discussion section in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* is further divided into two subsections. In the first half (KZ 1:477–491), Kūkai quotes primarily from the principal commentaries adopted by the major Nara Schools, including Bhāvaviveka's *Torch of Prajñā*, Nāgārjuna's *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* (Sanron), K'uei-chi's *Garden of the Dharma and the Forest of Meaning of Mahāyāna* (Hossō), Chih-i's *Śamatha and Vipāśyanā of Mahāyāna* (Tendai), and Fa-tsang's *Five Chapters on the Hua-yen* (Kegon).<sup>64</sup> In one way or another, the passages from these treatises make it clear that it is possible to put into words only the process of attaining enlightenment, not the realm of enlightenment itself. For example, the work Kūkai cites most extensively on this issue is *On the Interpretation of Mahāyāna*,<sup>65</sup> a massive exegesis of *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, attributed to Nāgārjuna. At one point, Kūkai refers to the celebrated passage in fascicle 5 of the text that says of the ultimate reality of enlightenment that "the nondual Mahāyāna (Ch. *pu-erh mo-bo-yen*; Jpn. *funi makaen*) can be expressed only as the nondual Mahāyāna" (T 32:637b).

On this point, Kūkai comments: "What can only be described as the nondual Mahāyāna [in Mahāyāna texts] . . . is none other than the Dharmakāya, the most intrinsic nature [of all the Buddhas], whose preaching forms the secret treasury (*himitsuzō*) of the vajrāśekhara sūtras" (KZ 1:480). That is to say, it is precisely that which these standard Mahāyāna commentaries declare is beyond language that constitutes the content of esoteric scriptures.

Kūkai argues from two angles against the Mahāyāna premise that the ultimate reality of the Dharma, or Dharmakāya, is beyond language. First, as the expression "nondual Mahāyāna" in *On the Interpretation of Mahāyāna* demonstrates, these Mahāyāna texts have a variety of ways to describe, or at least refer to, the ultimate reality. Fa-tsang, for example, characterizes it as the "ineffable ocean of the original nature" (Ch. *hsing-huai pu-k'o-shuo*; Jpn. *shōkai fukasetsu*, T 45:477a), and K'uei-chi expresses it as the "ultimate truth of the

ultimate truth” (Ch. *sheng-i sheng-i-ti*; Jpn. *shōgi shōgitai*, T 45:287b). The fact that these terms can refer to the ultimate reality implies that the Dharmakāya is not utterly isolated from language and that at least some of the Dharmakāya’s attributes are linguistic. Second, these Mahāyāna texts differ in the ways they describe the same ultimate reality, which they all argue is beyond language. Those differences prove that the sūtras on which these commentaries are based are preached either by the Nirmāṇakāya or the Saṃbhogakāya Buddha. That is, these texts do not agree about how to express the ultimate, ineffable truth because these Buddhas preached in the languages of their audiences (*zuitaigo*), because the languages they resorted to in their sermons was provisional (*gon*), and because the languages were employed only to remove the delusions of their audiences (*shajōmon*) and were therefore of limited efficacy. In other words, from Kūkai’s point of view, the Mahāyāna axiom that the ultimate is beyond language is a tautology: Mahāyāna treatises based on the provisional languages of the Nirmāṇakāya or the Saṃbhogakāya Buddha, rather than on the Dharmakāya’s language, cannot describe the Dharmakāya and the Dharma revealed by the Dharmakāya.

Having completed in this manner his critique rebutting the Mahāyāna claim that the Dharmakāya is a pure abstraction devoid of the act of preaching, in the second half of the discussion proper Kūkai presents another set of passages aimed directly at submitting the textual evidence that the Dharmakāya did (does) preach the Dharma. Ten scriptures are cited, all of them sūtras except for Nāgārjuna’s *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*. One sūtra on which Kūkai relies heavily is the *Laṅkāvatāra*, a quintessential Mahāyāna text that purports to be the record of Śākyamuni Buddha’s discourse with Bodhisattva Mahāmati on the island of Laṅkā. Kūkai quotes from fascicle 2 of that sūtra.

Next, Mahāmati, on the preaching by the Saṃbhogakāya and the preaching by the Dharmakāya. Because the qualities of all the dharmas [i.e., phenomenal existences] are equal and identical, the discriminating mind [of listeners] that attaches itself to the illusory substance of things is reflected in the Buddha’s mind. This is the essential aspect of illusory discrimination. This is the aspect that gives rise to the preaching of the Saṃbhogakāya. As for the preaching of the Dharma by the Dharmakāya (*bosshin seppō*), Mahāmati, it transcends all mental attributes, it is none other than [the Dharmakāya’s] noble activity of inner enlightenment (*naishō shōgyō*). Such are the aspects of the Dharmakāya’s preaching of Dharma. Mahāmati, the preaching by the Nirmāṇakāya consists of the perfections of charity, discipline, perseverance, effort, meditation, and wisdom. . . . Such are the aspects of

the Nirmāṇakāya's preaching of the Dharma. Mahāmati, the Dharmakāya's preaching of Dharma is free of attachments, transcends the duality of the subjective and the objective, and is beyond measurement. Therefore, it cannot be grasped by the śrāvakas, the pratyeka-buddhas, or the followers of non-Buddhist teachings.

(T 16:525b; KZ 1:495)

Kūkai presents this passage as proof that even in a sūtra thoroughly familiar to Nara scholarly circles—and one that is an essential part of the canon of the Hossō School, to which Tokuitsu belonged—Śākyamuni Buddha declares that the Dharmakāya preaches the Dharma. Kūkai immediately follows the above passage from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* with a series of quotations from Vajrayāna scriptures. He begins his argument with a quotation from a vajraśekhara sūtra.

It is said in the *Discernment of the Realm of Enlightenment*:

*The intrinsic Buddha [Dharmakāya] issues forth from his mind countless Buddhas and bodhisattvas, all of whom are endowed with identical quality, that is, the quality of the vajra. All of these Buddhas and bodhisattvas, every single one of them, to express their bliss in the Dharma, preached as their innate enlightenment the gate of the three mysteries.*

(T 18:288)

This passage describes the realm of the Dharmakāya [as personifying] the principle and wisdom innate and inherent in enlightenment (*jishō jiyū richi hoshin*). The Dharmakāya and his attendants described the realm of the wisdom of their inner enlightenment (*naishōchi*). Its content perfectly matches that of the earlier passage from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* that asserts that the realm of the wisdom of inmost enlightenment is beyond the reach of the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha and is revealed only by the Dharmakāya. This is a realm that is clearly separated from that of the Exoteric Teachings. (KZ 1:497)

Kūkai argues that what the *Laṅkāvatāra* called *hoshin seppō*, the “Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma,” and *naishō shōgyō*, “his noble activity of inmost enlightenment,” is in fact the Dharmakāya's three mysteries—the chanting of mantra, the gestural movements of mudrā, and the visualization of maṇḍala, the ritual acts described in various Vajrayāna texts by the Dharmakāya, acts of creating his attendant divinities, producing their maṇḍalas, and communicating with these divinities of the maṇḍala to manifest and enhance their bliss in the Dharma.<sup>66</sup> The following two passages from the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, quoted by Kūkai from fascicles 1 and 6, illustrate his point with vivid,

concrete images of Mahāvairocana creating his maṇḍala and presiding over the abhiṣeka performed for his entourage.

Permeating his presence in all the places and in all the moments in the universe of living beings, Vairocana at once expounded the Dharma of mantra path-passages<sup>67</sup> by means of all his physical, verbal, and mental activities. At that time, he also produced the images of Vajradhara, Padmapāṇi, and other deities in all the ten directions of the universe in order to have them propagate the Dharma of the speckless mantra path-passages. (T 18:1a)

When practitioners enter into the abhiṣeka of the Bhagavat's [Vairocana's] great wisdom, they see themselves abiding in the mantra passage of trisamaya (*sansanmaya*).<sup>68</sup> Having manifested himself before all living beings and having saved them by manifesting his dhāraṇī letters, he [Vairocana] proclaimed the mantra of trisamaya. The Buddha [Vairocana] said: "O Lord of Secrecy, as I observe the wheel of my mantra, the realm of my speech, it is the gateway to a purity so vast and boundless that it envelops the entire world. It is the gate through which the intrinsic nature of all the different sorts of living beings are manifested as they really are, the gateway that brings all living beings to bliss." (T 18:40b; KZ 1:502–503)

Kūkai then concludes the discussion section of *Distinguishing the Exoteric and the Esoteric* by juxtaposing to these passages from the Vajrayāna sūtras yet another passage, this one from fascicles 9 and 10 of Nāgārjuna's *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*.

There are two kinds of Buddha body. One is the body of Dharma, the other, the physical body. The body of Dharma [Dharmakāya] permeates the empty space in all ten directions. Boundless, serene, and adorned with beautiful physical marks, it issues forth immeasurable light and is endowed with countless voices. Those who listen to his Dharma also fill all space. [Kūkai's notation:] *This demonstrates that the listeners are also the manifestation of Dharmakāya, who cannot be seen by ordinary people in samsāra.* (T 25:121c)

Coruscating, the Dharmakāya Buddha constantly preaches the Dharma. However, ordinary beings cannot see his gleaming presence, nor can they hear the sermon he roars because of their sins. That is just like the blind who cannot see the rising sun, like the deaf who cannot hear the thunder shaking the earth. . . . As explained in the *Great Jewel Heap Sūtra* (T 11:53b), "The Tathāgatas possess three secrets, the mysteries of the body, speech, and mind.

There is no one in the realms of humans or gods who is aware or capable of understanding these secrets." (T 25:126b–127c; KZ 1:503–504)

Kūkai here presents another example from an essential Nara Buddhist scriptural source that asseverates—contrary to the general Mahāyāna assumption, held by Tokuitsu—that the Dharmakāya preaches the Dharma. What is more, as Kūkai does, this celebrated Mādhyamika exegesis holds that the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma consists of the three mysteries. Kūkai's strategy appears to be to alternate between exoteric and esoteric texts—from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* to the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and then to the *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*, for example—citing comparable descriptions of the Dharmakāya Buddha's preaching of the Dharma. It is a strategy for demonstrating the advantage of Vajrayāna texts over those of Mahāyāna in conveying the discourse on the Dharmakāya. At best, Kūkai suggests, the Mahāyāna scriptures can indicate *that* the Dharmakāya preaches the Dharma. However, it is the language of the Vajrayāna texts alone that can show exactly *in what way* the Dharmakāya preaches the Dharma. That is because the discourse of the Vajrayāna sūtras is a hybrid language in which the three mysteries, the language of the Dharmakāya's speech, are embedded in the textual narrative, which is written in ordinary language. In short, it is precisely at the point when the language of the exoteric stops short of designating the ultimate reality and culminates in meditative reticence on the part of the Nirmāṇakāya and Saṃbhogakāya Buddhas that the Dharmakāya's eloquent speech in the language of the three mysteries begins.

The foregoing observations on *Distinguishing the Two Teachings of the Exoteric and Esoteric* urges that the work should be reappraised. Within the circle of Shingon scholar-priests, it has been viewed as a seminal work, in which Kūkai established the fundamental doctrinal formula for rigorously separating the esoteric from the exoteric. TAKAGAMI Kakushō (1992:36–39), for example, in his introduction to Shingon doctrines, sums up the discussion in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* as follows: (1) the esoteric are the teachings preached by the Dharmakāya Buddha, whereas the exoteric are those preached by the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha; (2) the esoteric reveals the ultimate reality of the Tathāgatas' enlightenment, whereas the exoteric deals only with the process leading to that reality; (3) the esoteric training revolves around the practice of the three mysteries (Skt. *triguhya*, Jpn. *sanmitsu*) of mudrā, mantra, and maṇḍala, whereas the exoteric training progresses through the practice of the six pāramitās. Takagami's outline certainly allows students to capture Kūkai's logical argumentation in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*. However, Kūkai talks of the systematic separation of the esoteric from the exoteric only in the

introduction. He devotes the rest of the work to submitting various textual evidence for the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma. Kūkai's goal in writing *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* seems therefore to have been to demonstrate that the Dharma is preached by the Dharmakāya. In fact, in one of his other works, Kūkai refers to this text not as *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* but as *Discussion on the Dharmakāya's Preaching of the Dharma* (*Hosshin sepōshō*).<sup>69</sup> Clearly, for Kūkai, the Dharmakāya's direct revelation of the Dharma was the primordial event in separating the esoteric from the exoteric. From Kūkai's viewpoint, the distinction between the esoteric and the exoteric derives first and foremost from the thesis that the Dharmakāya is capable of preaching the Dharma.

Many experts in Kūkai studies share the view that *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* was composed in the year 815, when Kūkai composed *Letter of Propagation*, or at the earliest a few years prior to it (KATSUMATA Shunkyō 1970:37–44, 1982:247–254; TAKAGI Shingen 1990:III; TOMAMECHI Seiichi 1984:64–65). They argue that, although it is succinct, the systematic distinction between the esoteric and exoteric that Kūkai proposed in the *Letter* exactly parallels the lengthier discussion of the same subject in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*. Therefore, the 815 *Letter* must have been a précis of the undated *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*. However, this assertion overlooks an important difference between the two texts. In the *Letter of Propagation*, Kūkai presents as an apodictic reality the distinction between the exoteric and the esoteric. By contrast, in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*, he strives to legitimize his construction of the category of the esoteric (and therefore of the exoteric). He does so by means of proving that there exists a group of scriptures that, although hitherto overlooked, have preserved the Dharma as it was preached not by the Nirmāṇakāya and Sambhogakāya but immediately by the Dharmakāya himself.

The difference in the intentionality of the two texts suggests that *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* can better be understood as an expansion of the skeletal thesis introduced in the *Letter*.<sup>70</sup> That is to say, the category of the esoteric, which was a self-evident postulate for Kūkai in the *Letter of Propagation*, later became in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* a thesis that required validation. Considering that Kūkai began his discussion proper in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* by recapitulating Tokuitsu's question on the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma, it seems highly probable that his reading of Tokuitsu's *Unresolved Issues on the Shingon School* caused Kūkai to rethink his approach to propagating Esoteric Buddhism and persuaded him to treat the esoteric not as a given but as a proposition. That is to say, Kūkai's exchange with Tokuitsu was pivotal in leading Kūkai to delineate, construct, and establish the category of the esoteric.

## Troping the Lineage: The Construction of the Esoteric Nāgārjuna

The other text in which one finds Kūkai's answers to Tokuitsu's question is *Record of the Dharma Transmission of the Secret曼陀羅傳* (*Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:1–49), a hagiographical text describing the lives of the seven patriarchs whose unbroken Dharma lineage was said to have made possible the transmission of the Esoteric Teaching from India to China. On the sixth day of the ninth month of Kōnin 12 (821), Kūkai completed an abbreviated version of *Record of the Dharma Transmission*, entitled *Short History of Shingon Dharma Transmission* (*Shingon fuhōden*, KZ 1:50–68). *Record* therefore came into being in 821 at the latest. However, as indicated by MATSUNAGA Yukei (1973:53–58), by incorporating additional historiographical sources, *Short History* describes some developments in early T'ang relating to the esoteric tradition in a manner significantly different from that of *Record*. These changes must be understood as an outcome of Kūkai's rethinking of the genealogical history of Esoteric Buddhism in China,<sup>71</sup> which suggests that *Record* was composed significantly earlier than 821 and resulted from Kūkai's initial exchange with Tokuitsu.

The text of *Record of the Dharma Transmission* consists of three chapters: an introduction, a narrative history, and a concluding discussion. Kūkai presents the third, concluding chapter as his answer to Tokuitsu's eleventh question in *Unresolved Issues*.

In the first chapter (KZ 1:1–4), Kūkai defines the “Teaching of the Secret曼陀羅” (*himitsu mandarakyō*), or the “Esoteric Teaching” (*mikkyō*), as consisting of the Dharmakāya's speech and of the language of the three mysteries, which reveal the “wisdom of his inmost enlightenment” (*naishōchi*), once again employing the term suggestive of the reference to the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (T 16:561a). Kūkai's argument for the category of the Esoteric here is no different from that advanced in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*. Kūkai then introduces the reader to the succession of seven esoteric masters through whose lineage the Dharmakāya's language of preaching the Dharma is said to have been transmitted uninterrupted. Kūkai claims that this esoteric genealogy is superior to its exoteric counterpart not only because it preserves the Dharmakāya's immediate manifestation of the Dharma but because it possesses historical continuity. He points out that “the lineage that originated with Śākyamuni Buddha's transmission to Mahākāśyapa was cut off when it reached the Bhikṣu Siṁha” (KZ 1:4), the twenty-fourth patriarch, who was executed by a king opposed to Buddhism.<sup>72</sup> This interruption in the transmission was, according to Kūkai, the primary reason for the conflicting interpretations of and disputes over the Buddha's

teaching among Mahāyāna schools, and especially between the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools.

In the second and lengthiest chapter (KZ 1:4–45), Kūkai introduces the reader to the profiles of the seven patriarchs. The following sums up Kūkai's description of the first four patriarchs.

1. The Dharmakāya Tathāgata Mahāvairocana: Mahāvairocana was residing at his secret universal palace of the mind (*himitsu hokkai shinden*). Accompanied by his attendants, all of whom were none other than the Dharmakāya Tathāgata(s), Mahāvairocana preached the Dharma of the samādhi that reveals the wisdom of his inner enlightenment. He preached, and is preaching, eternally and incessantly, purely for the sake of enhancing his own bliss of the Dharma and that of his Dharmakāya entourage.

2. The Mahāsattva Vajrasattva: Vajrasattva, the divinity who presided over the ocean of attendants of Mahāvairocana in his universal palace of maṇḍala, received Mahāvairocana's abhiṣeka face-to-face. In Dharmakāya's assembly of the divinities, which was as vast as the ocean, he was chosen as heir to the Dharmakāya's Dharma, the one who would carry on this secret teaching in order to save beings of immeasurable worlds in the future.

3. The Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna: About eight hundred years after the passing of Śākyamuni Buddha, there was a great being who was called Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna. In his early years, he studied with non-Buddhist teachers. Later he held high the banner of the True Dharma to manifest the glory of the Buddha. By producing one thousand volumes of treatises, he destroyed the heretical and protected the authentic. Nāgārjuna often journeyed to the heavenly realms and frequented the Four Guardian Kings at their celestial courts; at other times, he traveled to the underwater palace of the King of the Nagas and there received thousands of scriptures. He lived for several hundred years. Eventually, he arrived at the iron tower in southern India. Having entered it, Nāgārjuna received abhiṣeka, face-to-face, from Vajrasattva. Having obtained this unexcelled Teaching of the Secret Maṇḍala, he propagated it among human beings.

4. The Teacher Nāgabodhi: The fourth patriarch, the Teacher (Skt. *ācārya*; Jpn. *ajariya*) Nāgabodhi, was a senior disciple of Nāgārjuna. He was endowed with unthinkable supernatural power. He traveled freely between the celestial and earthly realms and was renowned for his virtue in all the five regions of India. He was of tremendous longevity. According to Amoghavajra's account, Vajrasattva had preserved the Esoteric Teaching for several hundred years when he

finally found Nāgārjuna, to whom he transmitted the Dharma; and Nāgārjuna was several hundred years old when he transmitted the Dharma to Nāgabodhi; having lived in southern India for several hundred years, Nāgabodhi, in turn, handed down the Dharma of the Esoteric Teaching to his disciple Vajrabodhi. Kūkai reports that, in the year Chen-yüan 20 (804), when he was studying at Lich'üan-ssu at Ch'ang-an, he was told by his Indian teachers Prajñā and Muniśrī that Nāgabodhi was still alive and well in southern India and continuing to instruct his disciples in the Esoteric Teaching (KZ 1:5–10).

Kūkai's description of the first two patriarchs, Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva, is based exclusively on two scriptural accounts<sup>73</sup> and is extremely brief. Although Mahāvairocana's preaching of the Dharma in his universal palace of mind—the palace that is simultaneously the entire universe and the originally enlightened mind—is narrated as an event in the distant past, Kūkai also points out that Mahāvairocana expounds the Esoteric Teaching perpetually, without interruption. That is to say, Kūkai portrays the time of the Dharma transmission to Vajrasattva by Mahāvairocana in his universal palace as the primordial time of the eternal present in which past, present, and future are as yet unseparated. The time of Dharmakāya's manifestation of the Dharma is narrated by Kūkai as nonlinear, nonchronological, and ahistorical.

Kūkai discusses Nāgārjuna and Nāgabodhi at great length. He incorporates diverse hagiographic sources, accounts of missionaries from India, and records of Chinese pilgrims who traveled to India.<sup>74</sup> Although Kūkai's narrative shifts its stage to the historical plane, both Nāgārjuna and Nāgabodhi are characterized largely as superhuman—with their incredible (perhaps unbelievable, from Tokuitsu's viewpoint) longevity, their power to converse with heavenly beings, and their ability to perform miracles.

By contrast, there is nothing manifestly superhuman about Kūkai's representation of the last three patriarchs, Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, and Hui-kuo (KZ 1:10–45). He recounts their lives in detail, taking advantage of the rich repository of Chinese historiographical sources.<sup>75</sup> As a result, his narration for these three figures is far longer, occupying two-thirds of the entire text of *Record of the Dharma Transmission*.

Another salient qualitative difference in Kūkai's narrative here is that it employs the Chinese calendar, through which he dates crucial events in the biographies of the three Dharma masters. For example, “At age thirty-one he [Vajrabodhi] traveled to southern India to became a student of Nāgabodhi's. Having studied intensively the discipline of the Secret Treasury with the master for seven years, he [Vajrabodhi] was granted his master's abhiṣeka” (KZ 1:10). Vajrabodhi journeyed from the island kingdom of Simha through the southern

sea route via Java to reach the shores of southern China, and “in K'ai-yüan 8 [720], he finally reached Lo-yang and was welcomed by the Emperor Hsüan-tsung” (KZ 1:12). “In K'ai-yüan 18 [730], at the great monastery of Kuang-fu-ssu, with his disciple priest Chih-tsang as his assistant [Kūkai's notation: *This is the earlier name of the Tripitaka Master Amoghavajra*], he translated the ritual manuals of *Mañjuśrī's Five-Letter Dhāraṇī* and *Essentials of the Yoga of Avalokiteśvara*” (KZ 1:12–13).<sup>76</sup> “In K'ai-yüan 29 [741], the imperial court finally agreed to his request to return to India. However, while preparing for his return trip, he fell ill and passed away the same year at Kuang-fu-ssu in Lo-yang” (KZ 1:13).

In *Record of the Dharma Transmission*, Kūkai does not discuss his own transmission of Dharma granted from the master Hui-kuo. Instead, at the end of chapter 2, he quotes in toto the *Life of the National Teacher of Ch'ing-lung-ssu*,<sup>77</sup> the biography of Hui-kuo by his chief lay disciple, Wu-yin, which relates Hui-kuo's own words designating Kūkai as one of only two disciples who received the full-fledged abhiṣeka of the utmost secrecy from the master as his legitimate Dharma heirs.<sup>78</sup>

As a whole, Kūkai's narrative of the seven patriarchs in chapter 2 illustrates the genealogy of the Esoteric Teaching as a unique axis grafting to the mythical time of perpetual procreation (the time of Mahāvairocana's preaching of the Dharma) the historical time of passage (through which language of Mahāvairocana's preaching was transmitted from one generation to another). Kūkai delineates the lineage as extending itself in the historical process by means of abhiṣeka, which aims, in turn, to ritually reproduce the perpetual time of Mahāvairocana's universal palace in which his Dharma transmission to Vajrasattva took/takes place. The ritual of abhiṣeka is purported to be the vehicle that enables the generations of masters and disciples to evoke, reenact, and relive the eternal present of the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma. The lineage, as narrated by Kūkai, is polyphous: it extends along the stream of time to sustain the continuity of the tradition; yet its continuity is preserved precisely because the lineage also embodies the time that does not pass but accumulates within itself.

Kūkai's narrative of the Dharma genealogy can thus be understood as revolving around the ritual of abhiṣeka as the central plot demonstrating the accessibility of the Dharmakāya's language from within the historical plane. This makes immediately clear the pivotal position Nāgārjuna's episode occupies in Kūkai's narrative. The mystical iron tower in southern India that Nāgārjuna was said to have entered to receive Vajrasattva's abhiṣeka encapsulates within itself the perpetual time of Mahāvairocana's universal palace. Nāgārjuna's entry into the iron tower serves, therefore, as the root metaphor<sup>79</sup> for the intertwining of

the historical and the mythical, the polysemy simultaneously manifesting the two temporal modalities necessary to make Kūkai's plot viable. The trope of Kūkai's narrative is essentially synecdochical,<sup>80</sup> with each successive abhiṣeka reflecting within itself as parts of its identity other abhiṣekas of the past or the future in the Dharma genealogy.

The narrative structure of Kūkai's text explains why Tokuitsu's question about the lineage of the Shingon School focuses on the validity of Nāgārjuna's transmission of the Dharma in the iron tower. For both Tokuitsu and Kūkai, if Nāgārjuna's transmission of the Esoteric Teaching is legitimate, the rest of the transmissions in the Shingon genealogy are automatically authenticated, and vice versa. Kūkai must have thoroughly grasped the gravity of Tokuitsu's question. To maintain his claim that the Shingon School embodied a legitimate tradition, it was urgent for Kūkai to answer Tokuitsu satisfactorily about Nāgārjuna's role in the esoteric lineage, the topic to which Kūkai turned next.

The third chapter of his *Record of the Dharma Transmission* (KZ 1:45–49), entitled “Resolving Doubts in Questions and Answers” (*mondō ketsugi*), takes the form of a dialogue between two fictional figures: the “Student Who Is Drowning in the Trivial” (*dekihashi*) and the “Teacher Who Has Grasped the Fountainhead” (*ryōhonshi*). By borrowing the voice of the Student of the Trivial, who addresses his questions to the master, Kūkai rephrases Tokuitsu's original question, breaking it down into specific problems, which he then attempts to resolve.

*Question:* The True Teaching of the Tathāgata has been handed down by a succession of Dharma-transmitting sages (*denbō shōja*) that started with Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda. Generation after generation, this transmission has evolved just as presaged by the Buddha [Śākyamuni]. It is genuine, sure, and trustworthy. On the other hand, what you have now introduced as the Secret Buddha Vehicle (*bimitsu butsujō*) originates with Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna, who, eight hundred years after the death of the Tathāgata [Śākyamuni], entered the iron tower in southern India and received Vajrasattva's transmission. Was Nāgārjuna granted this Dharma alone, or was he attended by others who would authenticate the transmission? To avoid such confusion, it became customary at the opening of all sūtras to provide the names of those who received the Buddha's teaching in his assembly. Do you have any evidence to remove this doubt of mine?

Kūkai identifies fascicle 2 of the *Great Māyā Sūtra*<sup>81</sup> as his source for the reference to Śākyamuni Buddha's prophecy regarding the Dharma-transmitting masters who would carry the torch of his Dharma. The *Great Māyā* is a

popular Mahāyāna sūtra that relates the episode of the Buddha's reunion with his mother in the celestial realm of Trāyastriṁśa (Jpn. Tōriten). At its close, the sūtra describes Nāgārjuna as the tenth patriarch, who, when seven hundred years have passed since Śākyamuni's death, will preserve the Dharma, inheriting it from Aśvaghoṣa (T 12:1013c). Kūkai mentions this sūtra earlier in *Record of the Dharma Transmission*, in his discussion of Nāgārjuna in chapter 2, where he identifies this lineage as the one through which the Exoteric Teaching has been transmitted (KZ 1:6). The discussion of Śākyamuni's prophecy in the *Great Māyā Sūtra* was not mentioned in Tokuitsu's original question. The reason for Kūkai's addition here of the exoteric lineage becomes manifest in the answer of the Teacher of the Fountainhead, which consists of citations from two scriptural sources. First, Kūkai quotes extensively from *Determining the Meaning of the Vajraśekhara Sūtra*,<sup>82</sup> a commentary by Vajrabodhi, in which the author gives a detailed account of Nāgārjuna's entry into the iron tower.

Long after the passing of the Tathāgata [Śākyamuni], there was a great being whose name was Nāgārjuna. He was practicing for some years [the recitation of] Mahāvairocana's mantra. . . . Having thoroughly mastered the ritual worship of Mahāvairocana, Nāgārjuna reached the great iron stūpa in southern India and wished to open it. For seven days, he circumambulated the stūpa reciting the scripture. On the seventh day, he consecrated white pepper seeds and cast them against the stūpa's entrance. The stūpa's gate opened, and at once all the guardian gods, holding vajra in their hands, rushed out from within. Wrathful and alert, they prevented him from entering and inquired about his intentions. Nāgārjuna, having expressed himself sincerely, announced his great vow: "It has been a long time since the nirvāṇa of the Tathāgata [Śākyamuni]. While heretical teachings prosper, the Great Vehicle is about to perish. I have heard that within this stūpa is the Dharma-treasury preserving all the teachings of the Tathāgatas of the past, present, and future. Allow me to receive the teachings so that they may save living beings of the world!"

The vajra guardians ordered him to enter, and as he did so, the entrance gate closed. Nāgārjuna looked inside the stūpa. It was filled with incense, candle lights, wreaths of flowers, and jeweled canopies. He immediately realized that inside the tower was Mahāvairocana's universal palace. Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī and all the other great Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future abided within the stūpa. Thereupon, Nāgārjuna was granted Vajrasattva's abhiṣeka, received his empowerment [in the three mysteries], and upheld the scriptures of the secret Dharma to promulgate it to the world. (T 39:808a; KZ 1:45–46).

Immediately following this quotation, Kūkai states: “This [Nāgārjuna’s transmission in the iron tower] is what already had been foretold by the Tathāgata [Śākyamuni] in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*” (KZ 1:46). Kūkai then quotes a passage from fascicle 9 of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, in which Śākyamuni Buddha prophesies to his interlocutor, Bodhisattva Mahāmati, the arrival in the future of the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna.

The vehicle of mine, the wisdom of inner enlightenment, is beyond the reach of deluded beings. Who will preach it after my passing? Heed well, Mahāmati. There will, in the distant future, appear a great one who will uphold my Dharma. His name is Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna, a bhikṣu of a southern kingdom endowed with great virtue. Skillfully destroying the heretical views of both absolutism and nihilism, he will preach my vehicle, the unsurpassed Dharma of the great vehicle, to guide living beings. (T 16:569a; KZ 1:46–47).

That is to say, Kūkai interprets the episode of Nāgārjuna’s transmission from Vajrasattva in the iron tower related in *Determining the Meaning of the Vajraśekhara Sūtra* as the realization of Śākyamuni Buddha’s prophecy (Skt. *vyākaranā*; Jpn. *juki, kenki*) in the *Laṅkāvatāra*<sup>83</sup>—the exemplary Mahāyāna sūtra of seminal importance to Tokuitsu’s Hossō School. The lineage of the Esoteric Teaching is therefore as authentic as that of the Exoteric Teaching given in the *Great Māyā*. Furthermore, the esoteric genealogy is superior to its exoteric counterpart because, Kūkai seems to imply, the inmost secret of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment hinted at in the *Laṅkāvatāra* became known to the world only by means of Nāgārjuna’s transmission in the iron tower. To illustrate this point further, elsewhere in his *Record of the Dharma Transmission*, Kūkai adds his own notation to the same passage from the *Laṅkāvatāra*.

*The vehicle of mine, the wisdom of the inner enlightenment,*

The “vehicle of mine” here means the unsurpassed Esoteric Vehicle of all the Tathāgatas. The “wisdom of the inner enlightenment” means the fivefold wisdom, the thirty-seven divinities [of the vajradhātu maṇḍala], and the inexplicably countless manifestations of the four aspects of the Dharmakāya, as described in the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*.

*is beyond the reach of deluded beings. Who will preach it after my passing? Heed well, Mahāmati. There will, in the distant future, appear a great one who will uphold my Dharma. His name is the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna, . . .*

The Nirmāṇakāya Buddha had never revealed his “wisdom of inner enlightenment.” That is because this excludes all beings yet to have reached the highest state. Only this bodhisattva of the most advanced capacity, and no one else, received Mahāvairocana’s direct empowerment to propagate this teaching and to glorify the virtuous qualities, numerous as the sands of the Ganges, of the Tathāgata Dharmakāya.

(KZ 1:6)

Kūkai’s discussion here strives to authenticate the esoteric transmission by locating Nāgārjuna at the intersection of the two genealogies. Kūkai suggests that, as described in the *Great Māyā Sūtra* and as was widely assumed among the Nara Schools, after the time of Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna carried the torch of Śākyamuni Buddha’s teaching and gave rise to the Mādhyamika/Sanron School of the Exoteric Teaching. At the same time, as foretold in the *Laṅkāvatāra*, Nāgārjuna secretly received in the iron tower the transmission of the Dharmakāya’s Dharma. In short, Kūkai’s narrative history in *Record of the Dharma Transmission* is aimed at making manifest this hidden genealogy embodied in Nāgārjuna.

Having set forth this juxtaposition of the exoteric and esoteric genealogies, in the next round of the exchange between the Student of the Trivial and the Teacher of the Fountainhead, Kūkai addresses the heart of Tokuitsu’s inquiry.

*Question:* You have just presented textual evidence. However, in your text there is no mention of those who accompanied [Nāgārjuna] when he received the Dharma [from Vajrasattva]. Without these attendants, who would testify to the truth of the transmission; how can your source be trusted?

*Answer:* It is said that the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* was handed down to this same bodhisattva [Nāgārjuna] in Nāga’s underwater palace.<sup>84</sup> Do you not trust this sūtra either? If what you have said is correct, then we cannot trust the *Yogācārabhūmi*. According to the *Journal of the Realms West of the Great T’ang*<sup>85</sup> [by Hsüan-tsang], “when a thousand years had gone by since the Tathāgata’s passing, there was a bodhisattva whose name was Asaṅga. At night he rose to the Bodhisattva Maitreya’s heavenly palace and received there the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālambikāra*, the *Mādhyantavibhāga*, and other teachings. During the day, he expounded the subtle truth [of these texts] for the assembly of his disciples” [T 51:896b]. Another text [by Hui-chao] says: “At night Maitreya descended to Asaṅga’s quarter and expounded these sāstras.”<sup>86</sup> When Asaṅga received these teachings [from Maitreya], there was not anyone accompanying him to testify to the truth of his transmission. Yet these sāstras [of the Yogācāra/Hossō School] are circulating widely in the world as authentic texts.

(KZ 1:47)

Kūkai's logic here is straightforward. He simply points out that there are a number of canonical texts in the Mahāyāna tradition that were transmitted in a manner comparable to the way in which Nāgārjuna received the esoteric scriptures from Vajrasattva in the iron tower. Kūkai first mentions a celebrated episode related in one of Fa-tsang's (643–712) commentaries on the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, which says that when Nāgārjuna traveled to the Nāga king's underwater palace, he received there not only the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* but the *Avataṃsaka* as well. According to this legend, Nāgārjuna received those teachings in Nāga's palace alone, without any witness who would have returned to this realm to testify to the truth of his transmission there. Yet both the *Prajñā-pāramitā* and *Avataṃsaka sūtras* are accepted as legitimate scriptural texts.

Kūkai then gives Tokuitsu a taste of his own medicine by extending the same logic to yet another famous episode in the Mahāyāna tradition, Asaṅga's mystical reception from the Bodhisattva Maitreya that initiated the Yogācāra transmission. Kūkai identifies two sources for this episode: *Journal of the Lands West of the Great T'ang*, by Hsüan-tsang, the Fa-hsiang/Hossō patriarch renowned for systematically importing the writings of the Yogācāra School from India to China; and *Illumination of the Meaning of the Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, by Huichao (750–714), the third patriarch of the Chinese Yogācāra. Kūkai emphasizes that not only was Asaṅga's reception of Maitreya's transmission unwitnessed but “the Tripitaka Master Hsüan-tsang journeyed to India without attendants. He simply recorded with brush and ink what he saw and heard. Because masters of Dharma transmission are never mendacious, people have trusted what he [Hsüan-tsang] has written” (KZ 1:47). That is to say, because Hsüan-tsang's record of Maitreya's transmission to Asaṅga is recognized as authentic, similarly, the account by Vajrabodhi—another Dharma-transmission master holding the honorific title of Tripitaka<sup>87</sup>—of Vajrasattva's transmission to Nāgārjuna can and should be accepted as genuine.

Kūkai's argument in chapter 3 of the *Record of the Dharma Transmission* shows that his strategy of authenticating the Dharma lineage of the Esoteric Teaching depends to a great extent on his new characterization of Nāgārjuna. That is, Kūkai's narrative strives to reveal a dimension of Nāgārjuna's life not related in biographies hitherto available to Nara scholars. Kūkai's choice of Nāgārjuna as the pivotal figure in his genealogical narrative appears most appropriate, because Nāgārjuna is the only one of the seven esoteric patriarchs whose name was thoroughly familiar to the Nara Buddhist intelligentsia, to which Tokuitsu belonged and for which, it seems, Kūkai wrote the *Record of the Dharma Transmission*. To make his strategy work, in his portrait of Nāgārjuna in chapter 2, Kūkai employs three devices to demonstrate that the

Nāgārjuna who entered the iron tower in southern India was indeed the same Nāgārjuna revered by Nara scholar-priests as the progenitor of the Madhyamika School.

First, Kūkai adopts the new Chinese translation for the Sanskrit name Nāgārjuna, the term *lung-meng* (Jpn. *ryūmyō*), signaling his new characterization of the famed Indian master of emptiness. The name was written with the character *lung*, or “dragon,” the standard Chinese term that was used as the translation of the Sanskrit word *nāga*, and the character *meng*, or “fierce,” “victorious,” for the Sanskrit *arjuna*. Lung-meng is a translation of Nāgārjuna’s name proposed by Hsüan-tsang in fascicle 8 of his *Journal of the Realms West of the Great T’ang*,<sup>88</sup> in which he rejects as a wrong custom the use of the term *lung-shu* (Jpn. *ryūju*), the most widely accepted Chinese translation of Nāgārjuna’s name, which uses the character *shu*, or “tree,” for *arjuna*.<sup>89</sup> In fact, Nāgārjuna’s name appears as Lung-meng in *Birth of the Thirty-seven Divinities*, the esoteric scripture that describes Vajrasattva’s transmission of the Dharma to Nāgārjuna (T 18:299a). On the other hand, in *Unresolved Issues*, by Tokuitsu, who may well have read *Birth of the Thirty-seven Divinities*, and who must have known Hsüan-tsang’s position, Nāgārjuna’s name appears as *ryūju* (Ch. *lung-shū*).

In his *Record of the Dharma Transmission*, Kūkai paraphrases Hsüan-tsang’s endorsement of the term *lung-meng* in the *Journal*. However, instead of merely agreeing with Hsüan-tsang, Kūkai introduces his own esoteric source to explain why Lung-meng is a more appropriate translation of Nāgārjuna than Lung-shu. At the very opening of his portrayal of the third patriarch, Kūkai relates his master Hui-kuo’s statement that Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna was in fact the manifestation in recent history of the Tathāgata Sumegha (Ch. Miao-yün; Jpn. Myōun), or “Excellent Cloud,” of the distant past (who is also known as the Tathāgata Avalokiteśvara). Nāgārjuna is therefore endowed with Sumegha’s power of sending down the rain of the Dharma to nurture the merit of sentient beings. Just like great *nāgas* who generate thunderclouds to give the gift of rain to the world, Nāgārjuna, his cloud of compassion covering the entire earth, showers the rain of the Dharma down to urge the minds of sentient beings to sprout faith in the Dharmakāya. Nāgārjuna is also a courageous hero (i.e., *arjuna* translated as *meng*)<sup>90</sup> “who dresses himself in the armor of the Tathāgatas’ enlightenment, rides on the horse of the great effort (one of the six pāramitās), shoots the arrows of great compassion to destroy the army of Māra [the Evil One], and guides beings to the safety of the castle of the Dharma” (KZ 1:5–6).

The second device Kūkai employs in his narrative in order to construct the new identity of Nāgārjuna is his dating of Nāgārjuna’s—that is,

Lung-meng's—entry into the iron tower. In *Record of the Dharma Transmission*, as noted earlier, Kūkai identifies this event as having taken place eight hundred years after Śākyamuni Buddha's passing (KZ 1:5–6, 45). Interestingly, in the esoteric scriptural sources there is no specific mention of the date of Vajrasattva's granting of the Dharma transmission to Lung-meng at the iron tower as being eight hundred years after the Buddha. *Birth of the Thirty-seven Divinities*, for example, describes it merely as “several hundred years after the Buddha” (T 18:299a). *Determining the Meaning of the Vajrāśekhara Sūtra* refers to the date in a similar manner, but it describes the one who entered the iron tower simply as a “great virtuous one” (Ch. *ta-te*; Jpn. *daitoku*) (T 39:808a). Several Chinese biographical sources on Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra discuss the transmission from Vajrasattva to Lung-meng.<sup>91</sup> However, they too fail to provide a precise date for this seminal event in the esoteric Dharma lineage. On the other hand, there are several major exoteric sources of Chinese origin—such as Hui-ying's (fl. 600) exegesis of the *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* and Fa-tsang's exegesis on the *Dvādaśamukha*<sup>92</sup>—that specifically mention that Nāgārjuna, that is, Lung-shū, flourished about eight hundred years after Śākyamuni. It thus appears that Kūkai based his dating of Nāgārjuna's entry into the iron tower not on the Vajrayāna sources but on these exoteric sources. In doing so, Kūkai was underscoring the identity of the exoteric Lung-shū with the esoteric Lung-meng for the Nara clergy, for whom it was a common knowledge that Nāgārjuna lived eight hundred years after the Buddha. This explains why, although Tokuitsu remained doubtful about the *validity* of the transmission in the iron tower, he did not question Kūkai's *dating* of it.<sup>93</sup>

The third device Kūkai employs in his history to provide a new characterization of Nāgārjuna is the blending in his narrative of the episodes involving Lung-shū in the exoteric biographies with those involving Lung-meng in the esoteric sources. Immediately after some brief introductory remarks in which, borrowing Hui-kuo's words, he identifies Lung-meng as the manifestation of the Tathāgata Sumegha, Kūkai outlines Nāgārjuna's life, basing his account primarily on *Legend of the Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna*,<sup>94</sup> translated by Kumārajīva (344–413). According to this standard biography by an anonymous author, Nāgārjuna first studied the Hīnayāna scriptures at a stūpa in the mountains. He then received the Mahāyāna sūtras from an aged priest at another stūpa in the Himalayas. Because he had studied Mahāyāna, Nāgārjuna was able to defeat non-Buddhist teachers in polemics. However, this success gave rise to an arrogant misconception within himself that he had already thoroughly mastered Mahāyāna, and, accordingly, he abandoned his study of Buddhism. It was at that point that the Bodhisattva Mahānāga took him to the Nāga king's

underwater palace and revealed to him the most profound Mahāyāna of the prajñā-pāramitā sūtras, which convinced Nāgārjuna that he had yet to grasp the Dharma in all its profundity. As soon as he returned from the Nāga king's palace, Nāgārjuna began composing exegeses on these sūtras, which became the foundation of the Mādhyamika philosophy (T 50:184c).

Kūkai grafts the story of the esoteric Nāgārjuna directly onto this celebrated account in the conventional biography of Nāgārjuna: "Then, finally, he [Nāgārjuna] received Vajrasattva's abhiṣeka in the iron tower in southern India and there mastered recitation of the scriptures of the unexcelled Secret Māndala Teaching and propagated them in the world" (KZ 1:6). Kūkai thus fits the story of the iron tower into his narrative in such a manner that creates a particular verisimilitude. A natural transition is effected between episodes from disparate sources—between the episodes, on the one hand, of the exoteric Nāgārjuna's earlier study of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna at the Himalayan stūpas and in Nāga's ocean palace and, on the other, of the esoteric Nāgārjuna's study of Vajrayāna in another stūpa in southern India.

The same rationale underlies Kūkai's lengthy citation from fascicle 10 of Hsüan-tsang's *Journal* of yet another famous episode involving the exoteric Nāgārjuna. Following the depiction of Nāgārjuna's entry into the iron tower, Kūkai inserted the passage from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* describing Śākyamuni Buddha's prophecy of Nāgārjuna's arrival at the same time in the future. As discussed earlier, Kūkai's intention was to present Vajrasattva's granting to Nāgārjuna of abhiṣeka as the realization of Śākyamuni's premonition in the *Laṅkāvatāra*: the Bodhisattva of the future called Nāgārjuna (Lung-shu) would finally make manifest the ineffable wisdom of inmost enlightenment (*jinaishōchi*), the Dharma revealed only by the Dharmakāya, the secret kept only among Buddhas. Kūkai then introduced the story of Nāgārjuna collected by Hsüan-tsang during his legendary pilgrimage to India. The episode concerns Nāgārjuna's encounter with Āryadeva, the philosopher-priest who was said to have inherited from Nāgārjuna the tradition of Mādhyamika. Hsüan-tsang relates that there was a time when Nāgārjuna was staying at a monastery south of the capital of the kingdom of Kośala.

Out of his reverence for Nāgārjuna, the ruler of this kingdom, Sātavāhana, sent his sentries to stand guard over Nāgārjuna at the monastery. Then, from the southern island kingdom of Sirmha, Āryadeva came to Kośala to engage in a doctrinal debate with Nāgārjuna. The gatekeeper of the monastery did not permit Āryadeva to enter, but notified Nāgārjuna of his arrival. Nāgārjuna filled his begging bowl with clear water and asked his attendant to present it to Āryadeva at the gate. While remaining silent, Āryadeva placed a needle in

the bowl. The attendant did not understand this and returned to Nāgārjuna. When the attendant reported what had happened, Nāgārjuna immediately expressed his approval of Āryadeva's action. With admiration, Nāgārjuna explained to his attendant, "Water, which has neither fixed form nor color, pure and transparent, is as unfathomable as my broad learning. By throwing the needle into the water Āryadeva expressed his resolve to eventually succeed in pinpointing the gist of my realization, however unfathomable it may be."

(T 51:929a; KZ 1:7–8)

Hsüan-tsang's account continues with a detailed description of Āryadeva's exceptional talent that became manifest through his studies with Nāgārjuna, at the end of which Nāgārjuna declares to him, "I will now grant you the subtle principle of the ultimate truth, the teaching I inherited from the King of the Dharma" (T 51:929b). Kūkai then paraphrases another account of Hsüan-tsang in which a certain arhat Uttara asked the Bodhisattva Maitreya about the mystical nature of Nāgārjuna's transmission to Āryadeva. Maitreya told Uttara that their relationship was beyond Uttara's understanding, for Āryadeva was in truth one of the thousand Tathāgatas who appear in this present cosmic kalpa of Bhadra (T 51:931b). Kūkai then concludes his narrative of Nāgārjuna's biography by commenting that Maitreya's words, as related by Hsüan-tsang, are proof that Hui-kuo was correct in saying that Nāgārjuna was the avatar in the recent past of the Tathāgata Sumegha of the previous kalpa, because Āryadeva, the manifestation of the Tathāgata could only have been taught by another manifestation of a Tathāgata.

Kūkai's discovery/creation of the new character of Nāgārjuna in his genealogical narrative of the *Record of the Dharma Transmission* is indicative of his unique interpretation, or reinterpretation, of Buddhist history. Kūkai not only locates his Nāgārjuna at the junction of two lineages—the esoteric lineage of Shingon transmitted to Nāgabodhi and the exoteric lineage of Mādhyamika/Sanron handed down to Āryadeva—but, significantly, he also suggests that the Tathāgatas' secret, the wisdom of inmost enlightenment (*naishōchi*, or *jinaishōchi*), which constitutes the central thread in Shingon's genealogy, was also transmitted from Nāgārjuna to Āryadeva. Yet in the exoteric school, this secret was grasped only by the progenitors of its Dharma transmission because the doctrinal theories to which they had given birth were unable to describe the secret. Thus for Kūkai, the distinction between the esoteric and exoteric does not necessarily rest in the Dharma lineages per se, but in the difference in the effectiveness of their languages in making that secret manifest. Kūkai explains this point plainly in *Distinguishing the Two Teachings of the Exoteric and the Esoteric*.

Although the Dharma masters who transmitted the exoteric understood the deep meaning [of the Tathāgatas' secret], they succumbed to shallow, simple language to express it and were unable even to think of ways to convey its profundity in full. As generations of masters kept this secret in their minds while transmitting their teachings through their mouths, the students of later ages established various [exoteric] schools based on what they heard as their masters' speech. . . . Buddhist teaching arrived in China during the reign of the Emperor Ming [r. 58–75] of Han, and its gradual rise to prosperity began. However, until the time of the Empress Wu [r. 690–705] of Chou, all the scriptures translated, all the teachings transmitted, were the exoteric. It was only during the reigns of the Emperors Hsüan-tsung [r. 713–756] and T'ai-tsung [r. 765–780], at the time of the Tripitaka Masters Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, that the Esoteric Teaching began to flourish. It has still been only a short time since the new medicine [of the esoteric] arrived, and the old, ill habits [of the exoteric] have yet to be remedied. Although there was such evidence [of the authenticity of the esoteric transmission] as the *Laṅkāvatāra*'s passage on the Dharmakāya's preaching of Dharma or the description of the exquisite forms of the Dharmakāya in the *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*; students had been able only to conjecture, or misconstrue, according to the doctrines of their own schools, the meaning of such evidence. How regrettable that the teachers of the recent past were not able to taste the cream (*daigo*) of their own teachings! (KZ 1:476)

For Kūkai, the history of Buddhism was not necessarily a steady decline from the golden age of Śākyamuni Buddha to the eventual disappearance of the Dharma, such as is often projected in exoteric texts.<sup>95</sup> Rather, Kūkai interpreted it as an upgrowth, in a dual sense. The gradual refinement of the Exoteric Teaching enabled some exceptionally talented practitioners (such as Nāgārjuna) to discover esoteric scriptures hitherto hidden away (e.g., having been kept by Vajrasattva in his iron tower) and to begin to disseminate those scriptures in the world. In turn, the spread of the Esoteric Teaching enabled the practitioners of the exoteric schools to rediscover at the profoundest level of their traditions the secret of the Tathāgatas—the undercurrent that had been forgotten. Yet on some occasions this hidden undercurrent sprang to the surface in the exoteric scriptural texts, hinting at the Dharmakāya's preaching, the secret reserved only for Tathāgatas. This, Kūkai seems to claim, is the reason he has been able to present not only the esoteric sources but the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Nāgārjuna's *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*, and other exoteric scriptures as evidence that Dharmakāya did/does preach the Dharma.

In other words, Kūkai interpreted Buddhist history as a process in which the development of the exoteric tradition and the spread of the esoteric system complement one another. The distinction he draws between the exoteric and the esoteric cannot be understood as a mere dichotomy, a bipolar opposition, because the secret revealed by the esoteric always and already inhered in the exoteric as well. Yet Kūkai asserts that the esoteric must be separated from the exoteric in two respects. First, the esoteric is superior to the exoteric because it requires the ritual language of the esoteric, that of the three mysteries, to make accessible the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma. Second, the esoteric is distinct from the exoteric in its mode of extending the Dharma lineage, the lineage through which access to the Dharmakāya's preaching is preserved by means of the science of abhiṣeka. These appear to be the major concerns that preoccupied Kūkai in the selective response he made to Tokuitsu's eleven questions about Shingon, answers that took shape as Kūkai's two major writings: *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* (an attempt to explain not only *that* the Dharmakāya preaches the Dharma but also *how*) and the *Record of the Dharma Transmission* (an attempt to illustrate how the ritual of abhiṣeka has converted the extrahistorical temporality of the Dharmakāya's language into the historical mode and preserved it in historical processes).

The principal topics of these two texts correspond, respectively, to the levels of the *yāna* and *piṭaka*, the two essential levels at which Kūkai's taxonomy has differentiated his Shingon from the Six Nara Schools and Tendai. Around these two topics, or two conceptual poles, Kūkai has constructed his category of the Esoteric as a linguistic unfolding of the Dharmakāya's presence hitherto invisible to existing "exoteric" schools in the Japanese Buddhist community: an unfolding, first, of the procreative process of the Dharmakāya manifesting himself through (and as) the esoteric ritual language and, second, of the historical dissemination of that language as proof of the Dharmakāya not as a pure abstraction but as a salvational divinity.

For Kūkai, his exchange with Tokuitsu was doubtless a critical juncture in his effort to develop the taxonomic terminology necessary to demonstrate to Nara scholarly circles a new range of Buddhist scriptural discourse, whose contours he delineated as esoteric. It is more difficult to assess the impact of their exchange for Tokuitsu. There is no historical evidence that Tokuitsu ever responded to Kūkai's answers. Existing records suggest that, after 817, Tokuitsu became completely preoccupied with his debate with Saichō. Whether or not this can be taken as a sign of Tokuitsu's approval of Kūkai's answers (however partial they may have been), it appears certain that Tokuitsu, from his standpoint of Hossō orthodoxy, found Saichō's Tendai School far more problematic than Kūkai's Shingon.

Tokuitsu's contrasting responses to Kūkai and to Saichō may have reflected the differing relationships that the leadership of the Nara Buddhist community had developed with Saichō and with Kūkai. In 818, Saichō publicly denounced as Hīnayānistic and abandoned the precepts (*vinaya*) of the *prātimokṣa*, the institutional backbone of the Japanese Buddhist Saṅgha whose administrative privileges were monopolized by Tōdaiji and two other satellite national monasteries in the provinces.<sup>96</sup> In the same year, Saichō petitioned the court for permission to establish a precept hall on Mount Hiei, which he claimed was based exclusively on the precepts (*śīla*) of Mahāyāna.<sup>97</sup> His petition initiated a struggle with the Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs, headed by the abbot Gomyō (750–834) of the Hossō School, that was to last until Saichō's death in 822. Representing the interests of the major Buddhist temples in Nara, Gomyō blocked Saichō's request to the court.<sup>98</sup> In contrast, after his exchange with Tokuitsu, Kūkai's alliance with the Nara monastic institutions grew stronger. In 822, Kūkai built the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji, the first esoteric institution in Nara; in 824, he joined the Sōgō as a junior priest general; and finally in 827 he was promoted to senior priest general and became one of the most influential leaders of the Nara Buddhist establishment.

# CHAPTER 6

## The Discourse of Complementarity *Constructing the Esoteric, II*

As discussed in the previous chapter, Kūkai's reading of Buddhist history suggests the compatibility between the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings. His sense of history may indeed be one of the keys to understanding the cooperative relationship Kūkai was able to develop with the Nara monastic community. Kūkai distinguished Shingon as the only discipline that could fruitfully explore the language of the Dharmakāya's direct manifestation of the Dharma. However, according to Kūkai's understanding of history, the reality revealed through the study of the Dharmakāya's language, the secret kept among the Tathāgatas, was already inherent at the deepest level of exoteric schools' doctrines. Kūkai introduced Shingon not as a school whose door was open only to its own devotees but with a view that it would be a subject of serious interest to the scholar-priests of the exoteric schools. From Kūkai's viewpoint, studying Shingon would provide the members of the Nara Schools a new opportunity to retrieve the secret hidden within their own traditions. He explained what he meant in one of his letters addressed to the scholar-priests and patrons of the Nara Schools:

The Hua-yen (Kegon) School—based on [Fa-tsang's] commentary on the Daśabhūmika chapter [of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*]<sup>1</sup>—asserts that the realm of the fruit of enlightenment is indescribable. The School of the Lotus [T'ien-t'ai (Tendai)], based on [Chih-i's] treatise on śamatha andvipaśāna,<sup>2</sup> argues that secret teaching cannot be transmitted. In a treatise of the School of Emptiness [Mādhyamika (Sanron)], it is also said that the primary truth utterly transcends language. The School of Existence [Yogācāra (Hossō)], too, declares that the ultimate truth denies all sorts of speculations, silences all sorts of discussions. Thus the scriptures of the Exoteric, as wide-ranging as the sūtras of the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha as well as commentaries and treatises written on them, invariably hide the inner enlightenment [of the

Dharmakāya] and, instead, only provide medicines to treat the particular symptoms suffered by sentient beings. Although precious and profound, these scriptures are nonetheless provisional and far from the real. It is not that those sage-masters of old handed down the Dharma of the Exoteric without the knowledge of the Esoteric. They were not unaware of the Esoteric, and yet they declined to speak about it, and for good reason [i.e., to avoid misrepresenting it]. However, the teachers of our time do not understand this. Regrettably, they regard only what they know about their own schools as correct and whatever they are ignorant of as wrong.<sup>3</sup>

Kūkai's proposal that Shingon was of direct relevance to the exoteric schools appears to have been welcomed by the scholarly circles of the Nara clergy, but they seem to have had their own, practical reasons to do so. There were some areas in the canonical scriptures of the Nara Schools that were yet to be fully explored within the existing theoretical framework. In the main, these yet to be charted areas had to do with the problem of translating discussions of worship found in scriptural texts into actual ritual practices. For example, many of the sūtras popularly studied in the Nara Schools contained dhāraṇīs, the names of divinities, or names of particular meditative states achieved by these divinities that were neither explained, described, nor mentioned in the standard Mahāyāna commentaries. The exegetic texts adopted by the Nara Schools were primarily concerned with theory, remaining negligent of ritual matters. On the other hand, the Vajrayāna scriptures imported by Kūkai provided detailed descriptions of a wide spectrum of dhāraṇīs, rituals for worship of divinities, and practices of samādhis. The texts Kūkai introduced must have generated curiosity, and in some cases serious interest, among Nara scholar-priests.

Two events in Kūkai's life provide firsthand information helpful in assessing the impact upon the Nara monastic community of Kūkai's introduction of Shingon as a new type of textual discourse. The first was an exchange that took place in 813 between Kūkai and the Hossō priest Shūen (769–834) of Kōfukuji. The second was a correspondence between Kūkai and an anonymous master of the Kegon School at Tōdaiji in 817.

### On the Ritual of the *Golden Light Sūtra*

The *Golden Light*, or *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*,<sup>4</sup> was perhaps the single most important sūtra for Nara and early Heian rulers and for their patronage of Buddhism, because it contained a detailed description of the protection that would be afforded the king who upheld this scripture and because it promised security

and prosperity to a nation governed by such a king (KANAOKA Shūyū 1980:126–129).<sup>5</sup> As soon as the Sanron Master Dōji (675–744) returned from China in 718 with the new comprehensive translation of this sūtra in 703 by I-ching (635–713),<sup>6</sup> the court disseminated the copies of the new version of the sūtra to be recited daily at *kokubunji*, national monasteries located in each province. In fact, *kokubunji* were officially called *Konkōmyō shitenno gokoku no tera*, “Monasteries for the Protection of the Nation by the Four Guardian Kings of the *Golden Light Sūtra*.<sup>7</sup> In 737 Dōji was invited to Shōmu’s court to deliver a lecture on the sūtra as part of New Year’s festivities at the imperial palace.<sup>8</sup> This led to the establishment at the court of Misaie, the annual recitation of and lecture on the sūtra on the second seven-day period of the first month of the year at the Daigokuden palace. Every year a renowned scholar-priest from a major monastery in Nara would be chosen as the principal lecturer and given the opportunity to demonstrate his mastery of the sūtra text. In the evenings during this seven-day service, the participating priests would recite the goddess Sarasvatī’s dhāraṇī in the sūtra in order to cleanse the nation of its defilement of the previous year.<sup>9</sup> Because its purpose was to protect the emperor and the nation, the Misaie became the most important religious service performed by the leaders of the Nara Buddhist community.<sup>10</sup>

In the twelfth month of Kōnin 4 (813), Kūkai composed *Homage to the Secret of the Golden Light Sūtra* (*Konshōōkyō himitsu kada*, KZ 1:825–833), a collection of verses that epitomizes, fascicle by fascicle, the essentials of the sūtra. In the introduction to this poetic dedication to the sūtra, Kūkai explains that he composed it at a request of the “Vinaya Master En (*en risshi*), who has been appointed by the state to discuss this subtle scripture” (KZ 1:825). It was in that year that Emperor Saga’s court expanded the Misaie to include a discussion session (*uchirongi*) to be held at Shishinden, the emperor’s private residence hall. It became customary, at the end of the seven-day recitation, to invite the members of the Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs, to the inner palace to engage in the debate.<sup>11</sup> According to the record preserved at Kōfukuji (*Sōgō bunin*) of scholar-priests appointed to the Sōgō, among the four officers who held the rank of *risshi*, the Vinaya Master in that office, in 813 the priest Shūen (769–834) of Kōfukuji was the only one whose name had the character *en* (DBZ 65:8a). This makes it clear that the “Vinaya Master En” who asked Kūkai in 813 to compose the *Homage* was Shūen. It is also reasonable to assume as well that the Hossō scholar-priest was designated as one of the discussants for the Misaie in 814.<sup>12</sup> To prepare for the imperial discussion, Shūen appears to have asked Kūkai for possibilities for new interpretations of this popular sūtra. Shūen was a leading scholar-priest of the Hossō School, renowned for his prolific composition of commentaries on the *Lotus* and other scriptural texts

popularly studied by the Nara clergy.<sup>13</sup> It was around this time that Shūen became the Chief Administrator of Kōfukuji. He was also renowned for his work of restoring the Mount Muroo monastery, one of Kōfukuji's subtemples, east of the city of Nara, which became an important center of Shingon studies in the early Heian period.<sup>14</sup> In an undated letter to Saichō, Kūkai once suggested that they and Shūen meet to discuss how they might make common cause for the propagation of Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> Although Kūkai's alliance with Saichō was short-lived, his relationship with Shūen endured. It seems highly likely that Shūen was instrumental in supporting Kūkai's induction in 824 into the Sōgō, to which he belonged for more than a decade.<sup>16</sup>

In order to understand Shūen's early interest in Kūkai's reading of the sūtra, it is first necessary to see how the *Golden Light* was studied within Nara priestly circles. Surviving commentaries on the *Golden Light* by Myōitsu (728–798) of the Hossō School, Gangyō (d. 874) of the Sanron School, and other Nara scholars are principally concerned with theoretical analysis of the sūtra's prose lines.<sup>17</sup> Conspicuously absent from their exegeses is any attempt to illustrate aspects of the sūtra immediately relevant to scriptural recitation and other rituals prescribed in the sūtra. The result was a wide gulf between, on the one hand, the Nara priests' exegetic enterprise, and on the other, their ritual services grounded in the power of the scripture's language that was believed to manifest when recited. Proof of this gulf was the fact that so few commentaries either used or written by Nara scholar-priests discussed the sūtra's dhāraṇīs. As in the case of other Mahāyāna sūtras in the Chinese canon, the dhāraṇīs in the *Golden Light* existed as a Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit—that is, they were not actually translated into Chinese language, so that the mystical power that allegedly inhered in their original sound would be preserved. Chapter 13 of the sūtra, the “dhāraṇī of nondefilement,” offers a rare example in the sūtra of a discussion of the nature of dhāraṇī. Myōitsu's commentary quotes the chapter in toto and provides a detailed notation.

[*sūtra text*] Thereupon the Bhagavat told Śāriputra, “Now, there is a gate of Dharma whose name is the dhāraṇī of nondefilement. This is the Dharma that is to be practiced by all the bodhisattvas. This is the mother of bodhisattvas upheld by all the bodhisattvas of the past.” When he completed this speech,

This chapter is divided into six sections: (1) The Buddha's presentation of the theme [of the chapter]; (2) the question and answer on the name [of the dhāraṇī.]; (3) [Śāriputra's] request to the Buddha to expound [the dhāraṇī]; (4) [the Buddha's] presentation [of the dhāraṇī]; (5) [the Buddha's] explica-

tion of the [dhāraṇī's] excellence and exhortation to practice it; (6) Rejoicing [of the disciples] at the revelation of the Dharma.

*Śāriputra said to the Buddha, “Bhagavat, what does the dhāraṇī mean? The dhāraṇī is not bound to a particular direction or location, nor is it devoid of a particular direction or location [in the world].” When this speech was made,*

These lines begin the second, question-and-answer section. “What does [the dhāraṇī] mean” identifies the object of the inquiry. “*Not bound to a particular direction or location*” and the following lines refer to the inquiry itself. All phenomena are in essence none other than suchness. The phrase “*not bound to a particular direction or location*” thus points to detachment from existence. The phrase “*not devoid of a particular direction or location*” indicates detachment from emptiness.

*The Buddha said to Śāriputra, “Excellent, excellent, Śāriputra! You have already succeeded in generating faith in and understanding of the Mahāyāna. You champion the Mahāyāna.”*

These lines mark the beginning of the Buddha’s reply, which is divided into two parts. The first is a eulogy, and the second, the answer [to Śāriputra’s question]. Furthermore, the [Buddha’s] eulogy has two parts. The statement “*Excellent!*” is praise for [Śāriputra’s] inquiry [into the nature of dhāraṇī]. “*You have already . . . in the Mahāyāna*” is praise for [Śāriputra’s] virtue, which has three aspects. The first is [Śāriputra’s] abandonment of the Hīnayāna, resulting from his awakening to the Mahāyāna. The second is the breadth of his knowledge, which is the result of his faith in and understanding of the Mahāyāna. . . . The third is his resolve, which was generated from his championing of the Mahāyāna.

*“As you have said, the dhāraṇī is not bound to a particular direction or location. Nor is it devoid of a particular direction or location. It is neither a phenomenon nor a nonphenomenon. It belongs neither to the past, nor to the future, nor to the present. It is neither an event nor a nonevent, neither a cause nor a noncause, neither a practice nor a nonpractice. It is subject neither to the rising nor to the ceasing of things.”*

These lines are the beginning of the answer, which is divided into two sections. The first is the answer proper, which identifies the subject of the discussion that begins with the statement [below] “all the Buddhas.” This

first section is further divided into two parts. The first is a statement of the answer itself, and the second, a description of the reasoning behind the answer. The lines above are the statement of the answer itself. “*Not bound to a particular direction or location . . .*” has already been discussed. “*Neither a phenomenon . . .*” demonstrates the [dhāraṇī’s] detachment from [the duality of] the discriminated and the nondiscriminated. “*Neither a phenomenon*” means that [the dhāraṇī] is not the subject of discrimination. “*Nor a nonphenomenon*” means that [the dhāraṇī] is not inseparable from those things that are not to be discriminated. “*Belonging neither to the past, nor to the future, nor to the present*” shows [the dhāraṇī’s] permanencee.

(T 56:775a–b)

Myōitsu’s comments on the opening lines of the sūtra’s thirteenth chapter bring to the fore two basic tendencies that ingrain his exegesis throughout. First, he assiduously sorts the sūtra passages into sections, subsections, and often into smaller phrase units in order to demonstrate the structure of each chapter. His goal is to facilitate the study of the sūtra text by inexperienced readers, who will not be aided by such modern phraseological devices as punctuation, paragraph breaks, and quotation marks. Second, Myōitsu also displays exegetic gusto whenever he encounters passages immediately relevant to the doctrinal concerns of his own Hossō School or of the Sanron School, Hossō’s principal rival. Discussions in the sūtra of the nature of dhāraṇī as intrinsically nondualistic and as embodying emptiness invariably spark lengthy analyses, which, as Myōitsu himself admits, are based largely on the celebrated Yogācāra interpretation of the *Golden Light* by the eminent T’ang master Huichao (650–714).<sup>18</sup> These tendencies are in evidence when Myōitsu turns to interpretation of the sūtra’s dhāraṇīs.

[*sūtra text:*] *The Buddha told Śāriputra: “Excellent, excellent. As you have just explained,”*

This marks the beginning of the fourth section [of chapter 13], the presentation of the dhāraṇī, which is divided into three parts. The first is the [Buddha’s] acknowledgment of the request [by Śāriputra to reveal the dhāraṇī]. The second is the [Buddha’s] praise for those who practice [the dhāraṇī]. The third is the Buddha’s announcement of the dhāraṇī itself.

*“If there are bodhisattvas who have mastered this dhāraṇī, then they are no different from the Buddhas.”*

The [Buddha's] praise is further divided into three parts. First, praise goes to those who have acquired the dhāraṇī;

*"If there are beings who revere, give offerings to, and attend these bodhisattvas, then let it be known that these beings' devotion will be as meritorious as devotion to the Buddhas."*

[Second,] praise goes to those who devote themselves to the practitioners of the dhāraṇī. This is because those who have mastered the dhāraṇī are equal to the Buddhas in their merit and their grasp of reality.

*"Śāriputra, if there are other beings who, having heard this dhāraṇī, uphold it, recite it, chant it, and generate faith in and understanding of it, then because of these conditions, they will obtain the unexcelled fruit of their practice."*

[Third,] praise goes to those who study the dhāraṇī.

*Thereupon, the Buddha uttered the dhāraṇī [of nondefilement]: "Tadyathā sandhārāṇi apadhāraṇi susampratiṣṭhita supratiṣṭita vijayabala stya [teja] pratiśiñjī suroha śiñjanamati [jñānprati?] upadhanī abanāmani abhiśignī abhivyākara śubhapati sunisītā bahūm gunja [gumbh?] abhipāda svāhā."<sup>19</sup>* (T 56:775b-c)

In this fourth section of the chapter, Myōitsu continues to break the passages down into smaller units. On the other hand, because this section consists of Buddha's description of the results of chanting the dhāraṇī, there is no discussion here of immediate theoretical relevance to Hossō or Sanron doctrine. As a result, Myōitsu's discussion becomes significantly abbreviated compared to that in the previous sections. As for the dhāraṇī itself, Myōitsu offers no comments. That is, the dhāraṇī is utterly excluded from, or perhaps more accurately, escapes, Myōitsu's exegetic operation. His commentary continues:

*[sūtra text:] The Buddha said to Śāriputra, "These are the words of the dhāraṇī of nondefilement. If there are bodhisattvas who are capable of chanting it incessantly with ease in order to spread its chanting, let it be known that their righteous vows [to save beings] will not perish for an eon, a hundred eons, a thousands eons, or even a hundred thousand eons. Also, [for such a duration of time] they will be free from all sorts of harm, including those caused by swords, spears, poisons, water, fire, wild beasts, and so forth.*

These lines mark the beginning of the fifth section [of the chapter], which consists of Buddha's declaration of the excellence [of the dhāraṇī] and his urging that it be practiced, which is divided into two subsections. This is the first subsection that concerns the declaration of the excellence, which [in turn] consists of seven parts.

(T 56:775c-776a)

Here in the fifth section of chapter 13, which Myōitsu understands as relating to the Buddha's elucidation of the dhāraṇī's efficacy, he continues to concentrate his effort on sorting scriptural passages into small units. By contrast, he makes no attempt to explain the power of the dhāraṇī itself. Thus, even in the chapter of the sūtra in which the nature of the dhāraṇī itself is the subject, the reader of Myōitsu's commentary is given no hint as to why the sūtra should claim that the dhāraṇī has power.

This problem is not limited to Myōitsu's commentary, however. In his Sanron interpretation of the *Golden Light*, Gangyō, like Myōitsu, divides the sūtra chapter in question into sections and subsections and analyzes at length the philosophical implications of the dhāraṇī's nondualistic quality. Gangyō was a leading disciple of the celebrated Sanron master Gonsō, who received Kūkai's abhiṣeka at Mount Takao monastery in 816.<sup>20</sup> It appears that Gangyō, too, had a knowledge of Kūkai's Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>21</sup> However, concerning the sūtra's passages about the dhāraṇī proclaimed by the Buddha and his praise for its power, Gangyō has this to say: “‘thereupon’ and the subsequent lines are the Buddha's response proper [to Śāriputra's request to reveal the dhāraṇī]. ‘The Buddha told [Śāriputra]’ and the subsequent lines are the [Buddha's] concluding eulogy” (T 56:677a). This apparent lack of interest in explaining the dhāraṇī and its power is seen in many of the exegetic writings on scriptures the Nara Buddhist community regarded as most essential, including ones on the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Prajñā-pāramitā Heart Sūtra*.<sup>22</sup> For Nara scholar-priests, dhāraṇīs were not the object of intellectual analysis. They were expected not to fashion arguments about dhāraṇīs but to demonstrate faith in them, because dhāraṇīs exemplified the sacred power the words of scriptures had, a power that was believed to offer protection to both ruler and nation.

Kūkai's reading of the *Golden Light Sūtra* presents a striking contrast to this general pattern. His interpretation focused on the sūtra's dhāraṇīs, and its prose was of only secondary concern. *Homage to the Secret of the Golden Light Sūtra*, Kūkai's reply to the inquiry of the Hossō priest Shūen, the Vinaya Master at the Sōgō, opens with a declaration of the particular paradigm through which he interprets the sūtra:

The Tathāgatas' preaching of Dharma is endowed with the two meanings of the exoteric and the esoteric. The exoteric refers to the ordinary way of instruction. The esoteric is the message preserved in the secret treasury. The exoteric has been handed down from one generation of teachers to another; the esoteric has not yet been fully understood in our land. As I study this sūtra now, it presents itself at first glance as an exoteric teaching, but, more profoundly, the sūtra reveals its message by means of its mantras (*shingon*). Therefore, based on the interpretation of my school, I have produced the following verses to praise the sūtra.

(KZ 1:825)

Kūkai's approach consists of reading the numerous dhāraṇīs strewn throughout the sūtra's prose lines as mantras—that is, viewing them as performing a function identical to that of mantras in esoteric scriptures. In fascicle 7, chapter 13 of the sūtra, as mentioned earlier, Śākyamuni Buddha reveals to Śāriputra a dhāraṇī called “nondefilement,” which, the Buddha claims, “being the mother of all the Tathāgatas of the past, present, and future, is capable of preserving the bodhisattvas’ vow of compassion for hundreds and thousands of kalpas, while protecting them for the same length of time from the dangers of swords, spears, poisons, water, fire, and wild animals” (T 16:433a). In the next chapter, after the Buddha grants Ānanda a dhāraṇī called *cintāmaṇi* (wish-fulfilling jewel), Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāni, Brahmā, Śakra, the Four Guardian Kings,<sup>23</sup> and the Nāga kings present their own dhāraṇīs for those practitioners upholding the sūtra, so that they can guard themselves against all sorts of dangers. In chapter 16, the last chapter in fascicle 7, the goddess Sarasvatī reveals a series of dhāraṇīs aimed at providing those who recite the sūtra perfect recollection of all the sūtra’s passages and at “adorning their speech with her power of eloquence” (16:434b). Kūkai summarizes these sections in the following verse.

[Fascicle 7:] The dhāraṇī of nondefilement, the mantra of *cintāmaṇi* Avalokiteśvara’s mantra, the [mantras of] the Lord of Secrecy, Sarasvatī, etc.

Pure, pristine, and utterly free of defilement is our mind	
Fulfilling all wishes, they call it <i>cintāmaṇi</i>	2
The Lord of Secrecy, Avalokiteśvara, Brahmā, Śakra	
Vaiśravaṇa, and Nāgas—they all are none other than our bodies	4
The great Bodhisattvas are the knowers of our deep secret	
And of Sarasvatī, the master of the four kinds of eloquence. <sup>24</sup>	6
Those living beings who grasp the meaning of these lines	
Will instantly journey to and play in the garden of enlightenment	8

(KZ 1:830)

Kūkai adumbrates in the poem that the ultimate goal of reciting the various dhāraṇīs presented in fascicle 7 is neither safety nor enhanced memory, as a literal reading of the sūtra might suggest, but instead, attainment of union, *yoga*, with the Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Sarasvatī, and other divinities who reveal their dhāraṇīs to the readers of the sūtra. The first two lines, the third and fourth lines, and the fifth and sixth lines, respectively, refer to the mental, physical, and verbal aspects of enlightened beings, which together make up the three mysteries (Skt. *triguhya*; Jpn. *sanmitsu*). By reading the dhāraṇīs as the revelation of these mysteries, Kūkai urges readers to recite them as mantras, engaging in a meditative exercise that replicates the workings of the divinities' three mysteries. Readers will then experience their own minds as the wish-granting gem, their bodies as no different from those of the divinities, and their speech as Sarasvatī's legendary eloquence.

With these as his premises, Kūkai asserts that those who shift from the exoteric mode to the esoteric method of reading the sūtra's three chapters will immediately enter the realm of enlightenment, where their mental, verbal, and physical abilities will grow as powerful as those of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In other words, only by incorporating into one's analysis such concepts as the mantras for attaining *yoga* with divinities and the three mysteries unique to Vajrayāna discourse, Kūkai contends, can the efficacy of the scriptural language of Mahāyāna literature—and of dhāraṇīs in particular—be fully illustrated.

In sum, the dhāraṇī-based interpretation in Kūkai's *Homage to the Secret of the Golden Light Sūtra* is presented as a means of bridging a gap in the discourse of the Nara Buddhist Schools. The state extended its patronage to Buddhism with the expectation that the rituals performed by priests and nuns would help solidify its rule. The effectiveness of Buddhist services performed for the state in turn depended heavily on the ritualized recitation of sūtras and the dhāraṇīs they contained. Yet the Nara scholar-priests never developed a language to fully explain the reason for the efficacy of the dhāraṇīs embedded in their canonical texts. Kūkai's hermeneutical endeavor can therefore be understood as an effort to create a new science of ritual, a "ritual theory"—a type of discourse conspicuously absent from the writings of the Nara scholar-priests. It was by means of this ritual theory, based on the Esoteric Buddhist language of mantra, that Kūkai attempted to illustrate for the Nara priestly circles and for the state the relationship between diverse methods of reading, reciting, and chanting sūtras and dhāraṇīs, and the results that could be achieved with ritual services at which sūtras and dhāraṇīs were chanted.

## The Exoteric and the Esoteric Reading of the Prajñā-pāramitā

On the second day of the eighth month of Kōnin 8 (817), Kūkai received a young priest called Enzō, a messenger from a certain master of the Kegon School at Tōdaiji who had sent a letter requesting that Kūkai clarify certain passages in a sūtra called the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*<sup>25</sup> (KZ 1:747). This event affords another rare opportunity to assess the immediate impact on Nara scholarship of the Vajrayāna discourse Kūkai was introducing via the new interpretive discipline, which he called Shingon, or “Mantra.” Kūkai’s reply became the *Interpretation of the Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* (*Jissō hannyakyō tōshaku*, KZ 1:747–751). The sūtra in question is a 693 translation by Bodhiruci (572?–727)<sup>26</sup> of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*,<sup>27</sup> which first appeared in Chinese in 663 as chapter 10, fascicle 578, of the comprehensive translation by Hsüan-tsang (ca. 601–663) of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*.<sup>28</sup>

The *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* was another essential Nara Buddhist scripture. On various occasions, the government sponsored grand ceremonies for the recitation of this voluminous sūtra. In the first month of Jinki 2 (725), for example, six hundred priests gathered at the imperial court to chant the sūtra as a means of preventing natural disasters and promoting the prosperity of the state.<sup>29</sup> In the fifth month of Tenpyō 7 (763), another such ceremony was held simultaneously at the court and at the four principal monasteries in the capital: Daianji, Yakushiji, Gangōji, and Kōfukuji.<sup>30</sup> Two years later, in the fourth month of Tenpyō 9 (765), at Sanron master Dōji’s recommendation, the Daihannyae, an annual ceremony at which the entire six hundred fascicles of the sūtra were recited, was held for the first time at Daianji, with one hundred fifty priests invited from other principal Nara temples.<sup>31</sup> By Kūkai’s time, the Daihannyae was also being held at Yakushiji in the seventh month and at Tōdaiji in the ninth month of the year.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the popularity of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* as a whole, the sūtra’s chapter 10, “Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā,” which also circulated as an independent sūtra, seems to have remained rather an elusive text for Nara scholars. Like the sūtra’s other chapters, chapter 10 revolves around the idea of the intrinsic emptiness, and therefore purity, of all things. However, the chapter makes the argument in a manner unusual for a Mahāyāna sūtra by proclaiming even such things as greed, rage, and desire to be pure. Probably for this reason, the Tathātaga’s preaching is set in a location unlikely for a prajñā-pāramitā sūtra—the celestial realm of Paranirmitavaśavartina (Jpn. Take jizaiten), the highest heaven in the world of desire, the lowest of the three realms (of desire, form, and formlessness) of the triple world (Skt. *triloka*; Jpn. *sangai*).<sup>33</sup> In this pleasure realm located at the zenith of the world of desire,

in which Māra resides, the Buddha illustrates the intrinsic purity of all things by radically describing such acts of passion as lovemaking as pure stages of Bodhisattva practice.

There are other elements in chapter 10 that make the discussion there atypical of standard Mahāyāna discourse. The chapter consists of fifteen sections, in each of which the Buddha assumes the appearance of other Tathāgatas. However, many of the names of those Tathāgatas—such as “Conqueror of the Triple Universe,” “Constructor of the Ultimate Equality,” “Destroyer of All Sophistries”<sup>34</sup>—did not exist in the *prajñā-pāramitā* scriptures or in other Mahāyāna sūtras. In fact, as will be discussed later, they are the names of Buddhas who populate the Vajrayāna texts. To complicate the problem further, one cannot immediately identify the principal Buddha of the chapter (who manifests himself as other Tathāgatas), for the “appearance of the Tathāgata Śākyamuni, Who Disciplines All Evildoers” (T 7:987c) is merely one of the fifteen different transformations the Buddha undergoes. The Tathāgatas in chapter 10 also distinguish themselves by boasting of the merit accrued by those who follow their teaching, but who do so by acting in a manner that, at least in theory, is contradictory to Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy: killing all living beings with impunity (T 7:987c), attaining enlightenment instantaneously without engaging in bodhisattva practice for many eons (p. 991a), and acquiring deathless bodies (p. 991b), for example.

The contents of chapter 10, deviating as they do from ordinary Mahāyāna discourse, locate the text of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* closer to Vajrayāna literature. It also appears to be its radical character that made this scripture particularly popular. For the sovereigns of both China and Japan, whose life revolved around defending and expanding their domains, eliminating and destroying any opposition to their rule, and ensuring that there were children to continue the imperial lineage, the apparent compatibility of violence, sex, and spiritual salvation in the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* may have had a particular appeal and given them a reason to propagate it.

According to the preface to the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* chapter in the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, which was written by the priest Hsüan-tse of Hsi-ming-ssu in Ch'ang-an, who participated in Hsüan-tsang's translation project, Hsüan-tsang considered the chapter to be the gist of the entire sūtra and invested particular care in translating it (T 7:986a). Priest Chih-sheng (fl. 669–740), in fascicle 16 of his celebrated 730 *Catalog of the Buddhist Canon of the K'ai-yüan Years*, describes chapter 10 of Hsüan-tsang's translation of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* as a text that circulated widely as an autonomous scripture (T 55:651a). The same was true in Japan. For example, the state sponsored copying of chapter 10 as an independent text for circulation

at least twice, in 727 and 734.<sup>35</sup> The chapter was also frequently chosen to be studied by novices as a preparation for their ordination, bearing witness to the wide circulation it enjoyed in Nara society.<sup>36</sup>

Additional evidence of the popularity of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* is the frequency with which new Chinese translations appeared. Beginning with the translation by Hsüan-tsang, the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* was translated six times—three times before the fall of the T'ang Empire, twice during the Sung, and once again, most likely, in the early Yüan dynasty.<sup>37</sup> The second translation, the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*, carried out by Bodhiruci in 693, is the sūtra text around which Kūkai's exchange with the scholar-priest of the Kegon School at Tōdaiji developed in the fall of 807. The identity of the Kegon master of Tōdaiji who requested the explanation remains unknown, but he may well have been Dōyu (?–851), the seventh patriarch in the Kegon lineage, who in 824 received Kūkai's abhiṣeka and who eventually became recognized as one of the ten elite heirs of Kūkai's Dharma transmission. He later founded the Kaiinji monastery at Otokuni in Yamashiro province, which became a center for the integrated study of Kegon and Shingon.<sup>38</sup> As for the Kegon scholar's motive in addressing his questions to Kūkai, the following three historical conditions seem to be important.

First, the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* represents a significant textual variation on chapter 10 of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*. Hsüan-tsang's translation concludes with three dhāraṇīs aimed at cleansing the practitioners of evil karma, intensifying their memory of the Buddha's teaching, and accelerating their process of awakening (T 7:990c–991a). These dhāraṇīs do not appear in Bodhiruci's translation. Instead, in the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*, each of its fifteen sections ends with a *bija* or seed mantra, consisting of a single Sanskrit syllable.<sup>39</sup> Together with accompanying descriptions of mudrā and visualization, these single-syllable mantras serve as ritualistic devices for the deity yoga—i.e., for attaining meditative union with the various forms of Tathāgatas delineated in the text. For those Nara scholar-priests familiar only with the multisyllable dhāraṇīs typical of the Mahāyāna texts, a single-letter bija dhāraṇī must have been an utterly alien textual language that begged for clarification.

Second, there exists no exegesis, no commentary, no treatise composed in or translated into Chinese on the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*. By the time of Kūkai, Bodhiruci's translation had been available to Nara scholars for decades. The earliest existing record of the sūtra's being copied in Japan is from the third year of Tenpyō (731).<sup>40</sup> However, because there were no supporting exegetic materials, the study of the sūtra in Nara priestly circles seems to have stagnated. To make matters worse, the works of commentary on chapter 10 of the *Greater*

*Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* were limited both in number and in scope. Because the principal theoretical interest of Hsüan-tsang, the translator of the sūtra, lay in the Yogācāra School, and because the San-lun School of Chinese Mādhyamika was already in decline by the time of Hsüan-tsang's translation, the task of producing commentaries on the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* fell to his Dharma heirs who carried on the tradition of Chinese Yogācāra, or Fa-hsiang.

According to the two earliest known comprehensive catalogs of Buddhist texts circulated in China, Korea, and Japan—catalogs composed in 1090 and 1094 of Buddhist exegeses, commentaries, and treatises written in Chinese—only four commentaries on chapter 10 of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* were known to exist during the T'ang dynasty in China; all were produced by Fa-hsiang theoreticians active in the capital of Ch'ang-an in the late seventh and early eighth centuries.<sup>41</sup> Only one, the earliest of the four, has survived: *Discourse in Praise of the Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*<sup>42</sup> by K'uei-chi (632–682), Hsüan-tsang's disciple and the de facto founder of the Fa-hsiang School.

Although a few commentaries on chapter 10 of Hsüan-tsang's translation of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* were composed in Japan—again, by Japanese Hossō scholar-priests—none of them predate Kūkai's.<sup>43</sup> However, some of the commentaries of Chinese origin had been available for study in Japan. The commentary by K'uei-chi just mentioned was known to have been copied in Japan at least four times: in 740, 743, 745, and 750.<sup>44</sup> Another, one of the three works that have not survived, was reproduced in 763: *Praise to the Subtlety of the Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*, by I-chi (fl. 690–705), a scholar-priest of Korean descent who studied with Hsüan-tsang and K'uei-chi.<sup>45</sup> Because these two titles were listed in an official catalog of texts adopted by the Japanese Hossō School and were submitted to the imperial court in 914,<sup>46</sup> it can be assumed that they were accessible to Japanese scholar-priests of Kūkai's time and that they set the intellectual standard for the reading of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*.

It seems a historical irony that the scholar-priests of the Fa-hsiang/Hossō tradition, who were neither experts in the prajñā-pāramitā literature nor sensitive to the ritualism of Esoteric Buddhism, should have been the leading interpreters of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*. As far as one can judge from K'uei-chi's commentary, these Yogācāra interpretations of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* appear to have fallen short of resolving the difficulties that the text's enigmatic passages presented to the Nara clergy.

For example, K'uei-chi simply assumed that the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* was just another chapter in the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* preached by the Śākyamuni Buddha (T 33:31c–32b). This approach leads to a problem of tautology, or at least a redundancy, concerning the passage where the Buddha who preaches the teaching of the chapter takes on the “appearance of the

Tathāgata Śākyamuni, Who Disciplines All Evil Acts” (T 8:987c). With regard to this apparent contradiction, K’uei-chi states that “the term *śākyā* means being able to, and the term *muni* means extinction. It thus refers to one who is capable of disciplining all sorts of evil and quelling all sorts of agitation in the realm of samsāra. Therefore, he is referred to as the ‘Tathāgata who is capable of [actualizing] extinction.’” (T 33:50c). Whether or not K’uei-chi’s translation of the Sanskrit terms is justified,<sup>47</sup> he dares to understand the term *śākyamuni* (*Ch. shih-chia*) not as a proper noun indicating the historical Buddha but as a general noun denoting a Buddha endowed with a particular form of prowess.

K’uei-chi takes a similar approach when he describes Paranirmitavaśavartina, the celestial abode of Māra, as a seemingly unsuitable locale for the Buddha’s preaching of the *prajñā-pāramitā*. He reads the Chinese translation of Paranirmitavaśavartina, *t’ɑ-hua tzu-tsai-t’ien*, less as a particular address in the heavenly realms than as a spiritual state in which the Buddha, “having attained both the nondiscriminatory wisdom [of his enlightenment] and the postenlightenment wisdom [of expedient means], manifests freely (*tzu-tsai*) his divine work of helping others (*t’ɑ-hua*)” (T 33:37a–b). For K’uei-chi, the landscape of the Paranirmitavaśavartina depicted in the chapter is merely an allegorical representation of the Buddha’s limitless wisdom, expressed in the work of helping others.

As these examples show, in many places K’uei-chi’s reading of the text is contrived, stretched, and even manipulative. It is not surprising, therefore, that K’uei-chi’s interpretation leaves unanswered many of the difficulties the enigmatic passages in the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* posed for early Heian scholar-priests, especially for those who did not belong to the Hossō School or share K’uei-chi’s particular theoretical orientation, such as the Kegon master at Tōdaiji.

The third historical condition that sheds light on Kūkai’s exchange with the Kegon master of Tōdaiji is that it was Kūkai himself who imported the third and newest translation of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*, entitled the *Sūtra of the Infallible Reality of Samādhi of the Great Bliss of the Vajra*, by Amoghavajra (705–774).<sup>48</sup> It is often overlooked that this text was first brought to Japan in 805 by Saichō (767–822).<sup>49</sup> However, Kūkai’s transmission is distinct, because with the sūtra he imported a ritual commentary by an anonymous author, also translated by Amoghavajra. That commentary, commonly referred to in Shingon priestly circles as Rishushaku, or the *Interpretive Guide to the Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*,<sup>50</sup> is indispensable for practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism, who draw maṇḍalas of, practice meditative visualization on, and perform devotional rites to the divinities in the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*. As I have discussed elsewhere, Saichō’s persistent request to borrow

this commentary from Kūkai for copying and Kūkai's insistence that it would be necessary for Saichō first to receive advanced training in ritual-meditative practices constituted the principal reasons that Saichō's study of Mikkyō with Kūkai was short-lived and ended in 816 (Ryūichi ABÈ 1995:129–130). It may well have been this development that in 817 led the Nara scholar-priest to look to Kūkai as the authority on the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*.

Kūkai opens the *Interpretation of the Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*, his reply to the questions posed by the Kegon master of Tōdaiji, with the following remark:

I have just received the young priest Enzō, who carried to me the greetings from your reverence. How happy and grateful I am! I understand that you have requested some guidance from me on the four passages of the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, about which you have some doubts. Although I, Henjō, am devoid of such talent [to instruct you], I also find myself powerless to decline your request. I thus summarily present my esoteric interpretation for your reference. The sūtra passage to which your first question is addressed is as follows:

*If there are beings who day after day protect, recite, contemplate, and practice according to this sūtra, they will in their own lives achieve the vajra-samādhi of the equality of all things. They will also realize all [other samādhis] in the lives of the sixteen [great bodhisattvas]<sup>51</sup> in which to experience the pleasure of sporting freely in all the gates of Dharma. . . . They will attain bodies [as indestructible] as the vajra of all the Tathāgatas.* (T 8:776b; KZ 1:747)

Although the specific questions the Tōdaiji priest addressed to Kūkai have not survived, Kūkai's *Interpretation* allows the reader to identify the four particular passages on which the Tōdaiji priest had doubts. The idea of immediate attainment of Buddhahood suggested in this passage belies the general premise of Mahāyāna literature that even those who receive the Buddha's prophecy of their enlightenment will strive for countless transmigratory lives before they actually reach enlightenment. K'uei-chi comments on the corresponding passage in chapter 10 of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*:

If there are beings who incessantly meditate on the *Path [of Prajñā-pāramitā]*, then they will receive the karmic effect of their action in their own lives and unfailingly realize the principle of suchness, that is, the equality of all things. As for the “vajra samādhi,” *samādhi* means deep meditation,

and *vajra* is a metaphor for the principle of the suchness that destroys all discriminations, attachments, and delusions. (T 33:49b)

Thus, from K'uei-chi's point of view, what practitioners actually accomplish is not the enlightenment experience itself but an understanding of the *principle* of suchness, which the sūtra expresses by means of the metaphor of vajra—the suchness as vajra—the adamantine weapon that destroys all illusions. On another expression that in general does not appear Mahāyāna literature, “*lives of the sixteen great bodhisattvas*” (*shih-lu-ta p'u-sa-sheng*), K'uei-chi had this to say:

The “*sixteen great lives of bodhisattvas*” (*p'u-sa shih-lu-ta-sheng*) means sixteen eons [Skt. *kalpa*; Ch. *chieh*; Jpn. *gō*]. Having cultivated themselves in the teaching of this sūtra, [the practitioners] will leap the process of birth and death and grasp the suchness after [only] sixteen eons of their transmigratory lives. Without spending innumerable eons of their lives [in bodhisattva training], they will reach the first stage [of bodhisattvahood] in sixteen eons. (T 33:49c)

By altering the order of the Chinese characters in the original sūtra passage, K'uei-chi interprets “sixteen” not as a reference to specific bodhisattvas, as the sūtra's context seems to suggest, but as the length of cosmic time required for practitioners to reach the first of the final ten stages of bodhisattvahood. For K'uei-chi, the sūtra promotes a particular method of cultivation that accelerates the general training regimen of Mahāyāna's bodhisattva practice, rather than rejecting its validity by presenting instantaneous enlightenment as an alternative.

Kūkai's approach to the same passage in the sūtra demonstrates a drastic contrast with K'uei-chi's:

The “*vajra-samādhi of the equality of all things*” is the samādhi grasped by Vajrasattva, who embodies the great bliss of enlightenment. From the first moment in which they develop the aspiration for enlightenment, the bodhisattvas of this [Esoteric] Teaching leap beyond all the attainments of the bodhisattvas of the Exoteric Teachings, immediately enter the fivefold wisdom of the Tathāgatas, and train themselves in the secret of the three mysteries, the secret that is none other than the Dharmakāya's innate enlightenment. That is why they are capable of achieving this samādhi in their own lives. “*All things*” refers to the three mysteries, the secret activities of [all the Buddhas'] body, speech, and mind. Although there are countless

things, all these can be reduced to the three mysteries, which are of two kinds: the three mysteries of the practitioners themselves, and those of others. The three mysteries of others can be divided again into two kinds: those of the enlightened and those of the unenlightened. Yet there are no intrinsic differences in these two kinds [of the three mysteries], which are equal, non-dual, and interfused with one another. Therefore, the [samādhi manifesting this interfusion] is characterized as the “*equality of all things*.” Through their practice of yoga, practitioners realize this samādhi endowed with the power of severing [attachments] and annihilating [delusions], and with the qualities of being nonarising, nonceasing, permanent, and adamantine. This explains why the samādhi is characterized as “*vajra*.”

(KZ 1:474–748)

Kūkai proposes that many of the difficulties in the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* can be resolved by taking it out of the context of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* and placing it in the new context of Vajrayāna literature, to which the sūtra, Kūkai claims, ultimately belongs. Through this simultaneous decontextualization and recontextualization, Kūkai reads many of the enigmatic phrases in the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* as secret descriptions of particular samādhis, or meditative states, achieved by many of the deities in the vajradhātu maṇḍala, whose names appear in that scripture. In this manner, he makes the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* directly relevant to a wide range of Vajrayāna sūtras and ritual manuals that describe the maṇḍalas and the yogas of the divinities in the maṇḍala. In the example just quoted, the “vajra-samādhi” in question is identified as the samādhi called “great bliss” (Skt. *mahāsukha*; Ch. *ta-lo*; Jpn. *tairaku*), realized by Vajrasattva, the deity accompanying the Tathāgata Aksobhya in the east in the maṇḍala.<sup>52</sup> That is to say, the passages in the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* that are at first glance enigmatic to the eye of the Nara scholar-priests can be elucidated by reference to the barrage of texts in the secret treasury (*mitsuzō*).

Kūkai employs the same method to explain the “*lives of the sixteen*,” which he understands as the eternal lives of the sixteen principal bodhisattvas in the vajradhātu maṇḍala:

The “*lives of the sixteen*” refers to the sixteen great bodhisattvas [in the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala], from Vajrasattva at the beginning to Vajrasamādhi at the end, as described in the *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind*. When practitioners master Vajrasattva’s samādhi, they immediately and perfectly actualize the most excellent samādhis of all the sixteen divinities. Although the samādhis realized by Mahāvairocana are immeasurable, innumerable, and inexplicable, they all can be integrated within the samādhis of these sixteen

deities. The state in which their samādhis are mastered is called the attainment of the universally luminous “*bodies [as adamantine] as the vajra of all the Tathāgatas.*”

(KZ 1:474–748)

Kūkai now refers to the *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind*,<sup>53</sup> Amoghavajra’s translation of a concise treatise on vajraśekhara sūtras attributed to Nāgārjuna, as one such text, in which esoteric practitioners’ instantaneous realization through meditative exercise of the “*lives of the sixteen*”—or the sixteen samādhis, the enlightenment experience lived by each of the sixteen principal deities of the vajradhātu mandala<sup>54</sup>—is contrasted with the innumerable transmigratory lives of Mahāyāna practitioners and their eventual attainment of Buddhahood (T 32:573c). In Kūkai’s view, the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* manifests its full meaning only by the readers’ act of reconstructing the particular ritual context that the sūtra’s seemingly puzzling passages imply. It is this intertwining of the textual and the ritual around which Kūkai’s answer to the Kegon master’s second question revolves.

The sūtra passage to which your second question is addressed is as follows:

*Even if the practitioners [of the teaching of this sūtra] slay all the sentient beings in our triple world, in the end they will not sink into hellish realms. Why is it so? Because they have already received ordination in the precept of controlling their minds.*

(T 8776c; KZ 1:748)

This apparently shocking statement about killing all sentient beings turns up in the sixth section of the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*:

Thereupon, manifesting himself as Śākyamuni, the one who converts the most unruly beings, the Bhagavat taught all the Bodhisattvas the Dharma gate of the reality of prajñā-pāramitā, which revealed the equality of all things: “[Even] greed is free of sophistry; rage is free of sophistry; and folly is also free of sophistry. Therefore all things are free of sophistry. Because all things are free of sophistry, the prajñā-pāramitā is free of sophistry.” Having expounded this gate of Dharma, the Buddha then addressed Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi: “Vajrapāṇi, suppose there are beings who, having heard this Dharma gate of the reality of prajñā-pāramitā revealing the equality of all things, memorize it, recite it, meditate upon it, and train themselves according to it. Then, even if they kill all the sentient beings in the triple world, they will not sink into the evil realms.”

(T 8:776b–c)

Kūkai explains the passage describing the killing of all sentient beings in relation to the three poisons mentioned immediately prior to it in the sūtra:

According to my reading, the “*triple world*” means the three poisons [of greed, rage, and folly]. That is because all sentient beings experience the triple world as the realm of suffering resulting from [their intoxication with] the three poisons. When practitioners pledge to abide by the Vajrayāna precepts of the three mysteries and see through the originally nonarising nature of the three poisons, they kill the cause of the triple world. When the cause [three poisons] is no longer rising, how can there be its effect [sentient beings]? Therefore it is said: “*In the end, they will not sink into hellish realms [within the triple world]*.” Be it known that if anyone understands the meaning of the above passage literally, that person is the enemy of the Buddha. (KZ 1:748)

Kūkai identifies the “*ordination in the precept of controlling their minds*” in the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* as a reference to the Vajrayāna precept *samaya* (Jpn. *sanmaya kai*), whose ordination procedure precedes the ritual of abhiṣeka. Chapter 2 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* identifies the following four rules as the foundation of the esoteric precepts: “Not to abandon the True Dharma; not to deviate from one’s own enlightened mind; not to be reserved in sharing with others all sorts of Buddhist teachings; not to bring harm to any sentient being” (T 18:21b). Thus, in light of the esoteric precepts of samaya, “*killing all sentient beings*,” mentioned in the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*, cannot be tolerated, so the possibility of interpreting the sūtra passage in question at its face value is excluded.

Subhakarasiinīha, translator of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, elaborates on the third rule of the fourfold samaya as follows: “Do not scorn the scripture of the three vehicles [of śravaka-yāna; pratyekabuddha-yāna; and bodhisattva-yāna] because to do so violates your very Buddha nature. Also, do not question passages in the Mahāyāna sūtras whose meanings are beyond your grasp. These profound [passages] are beyond the comprehension of unenlightened beings” (T 18:943b). That is to say, the knowledge of enlightened beings, namely Buddhas, is required to evince the meaning of recondite cryptic passages in the Mahāyāna texts. For Kūkai, this can be accomplished by applying to Mahāyāna texts—or to an apparently Mahāyāna text, such as the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*—the hermeneutical operation particular to Vajrayāna literature, in which the contours of the Buddhas’ enlightened realms are described as their maṇḍalas.

The *Interpretive Guide to the Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*—an anonymous ritual commentary imported by Kūkai, mentioned earlier—explains the fivefold

freedom from sophistry—of greed, rage, folly, all phenomenal things, and *prajñā-pāramitā*—described in the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* as the samādhis of Trailokavijaya (Jpn. Gōsanze) and the four attendant bodhisattvas who form his maṇḍala (T 19:611b–621a). The *Interpretive Guide* describes Trailokavijaya, “One Who Has Conquered the Triple World,” as a wrathful manifestation of Śākyamuni Buddha, revealing his enlightenment as the act of subduing the three poisons of greed, rage, and folly. Precisely because of this, the divinity is portrayed as manifesting himself in Paranirmitavaśavartina, the highest heaven in the realm of desire, with his feet trampling Śīva, the lord of that heaven, and Umā, Śīva’s consort. In this manner, the *Interpretive Guide* explains why the Buddha’s preaching of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* is set at the stage of Paranirmitavaśavartina, the abode of Māra and thus strategically the most crucial cosmic position for Śākyamuni Buddha’s conquering of the three poisons, which are the triple world in the sūtra’s context. It also makes plain that the “Tathāgata Śākyamuni, Who Disciplines All Evildoers,” and who in the sūtra preaches the fivefold freedom from sophistry, is not merely Śākyamuni but one of his esoteric manifestations, whose wrathful form symbolizes his work of annihilating delusions.

The *Interpretive Guide* then describes for practitioners methods of visualizing Trailokavijaya’s maṇḍala and of attaining yoga with the maṇḍala’s divinities. Only within the context of these ritual practices, the *Interpretive Guide* asserts, does the meaning of “killing all sentient beings” become explicit.

“All sentient beings” in the sūtra’s passage “killing all sentient beings in the triple world” refers to the state of beings aimlessly transmigrating in the saṃsāra of the triple world. This state arises out of greed, rage, and folly. If, however, their lives correspond with the path of *prajñā-pāramitā* [as manifested by the divinities of Trailokavijaya’s maṇḍala], then the very cause of their endless transmigration in the triple world will cease. For practitioners [who cultivate themselves in the samādhis of the divinities of Trailokavijaya’s maṇḍala] to kill “all sentient beings” is only to deprive sentient beings of their three poisons. Thus, despite [their killing], they will in the end not fall into the hellish realms but will swiftly realize unsurpassed enlightenment. Concealing his secret message [in the sūtra’s words], the Tathāgata has expounded his teaching as such. (T 19:611c)

In this manner the *Interpretive Guide* equates “killing all sentient beings” with the bodhisattvas’ saving activity of removing from beings the three poisons, the raison d’être of “all sentient beings,” the deluded saṃsāric existence. It now becomes plain that Kūkai’s answer to the Kegon master regarding

this enigmatic sūtra passage, quoted earlier, is a direct borrowing from this interpretation in the *Interpretive Guide to the Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*.

Kūkai continues this discussion in his *Interpretation of the Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*.

The sūtra passage to which your third question is addressed reads:

*All things are empty because they are without their own intrinsic nature. All things are without marks because they transcend all marks. All things are free of desire because they escape all desire. All things are intrinsically pure because the prajñā-pāramitā is pure.*

(T 8:777a)

Because of the distinction between the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings, there are two separate ways to understand the passage. From the exoteric viewpoint, this refers to the excellent medicine of the threefold deliverance (Skt. *trimokṣa*; Jpn. *san gedatsu*) [of emptiness, marklessness, and freedom from desire] by which practitioners extricate themselves from all sorts of illusory discriminations. . . . From the esoteric point of view, the passage refers to the samādhi of the bodhisattva Vajratikṣṇa (known in Exoterism as Mañjuśrī). This secret meditation cannot be described in writing on paper. Practitioners must submit themselves personally to receive [their master's] instruction.

(KZ 1:748–749)

It is unclear why the Kegon master chose in particular the above passage from the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*—this time, a seemingly commonplace explication of emptiness in the prajñā-pāramitā literature. One possible reason is that this section of the sūtra demonstrates a significant departure from the corresponding section in chapter 10 of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* (T 7:988c).<sup>55</sup>

Kūkai, however, does not refer to this question of textual disparity, and instead seizes the opportunity to illustrate the difference between the exoteric and esoteric interpretations of the text. He seems to be suggesting that the exoteric reading is an endeavor to equate the content of the text with its meaning, or with the aggregate of the meanings of particular concepts presented in the text. Thus the exoteric reader's goal is to illustrate the meaning of the text with greater specificity by redescribing the concepts of the original text and replacing them with other concepts. The exoteric hermeneutics is, in other words, an intratextual and often bookish operation, an interpretation that is self-contained in the realm of the text.

In contrast, Kūkai suggests, the esoteric reading aims at actualizing the meaning of the text in the practitioner's ritual action. He bases his reading in the *Interpretive Guide to the Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*, which explains the same sūtra passage as a secret description, in the guise of a doctrinal discussion, of the image of Bodhisattva Vajratīkṣṇa (Jpn. Kongōri) and his samādhi pictorially represented in the vajradhātu maṇḍala. The *Interpretive Guide* summarily describes the methods of drawing the images of Vajratīkṣṇa and the divinities accompanying him in this maṇḍala and of reciting particular mantras for attaining meditative union with these divinities in the maṇḍala (T 19:613b-c). However, Kūkai claims, the textual explanation of the rituals alone does not guarantee that practitioners will fully master the meditative techniques for reenacting the divinities' samādhis: that requires detailed oral instructions from the masters to compensate for the incompleteness of written descriptions of the ritual and meditative actions. Esoteric hermeneutics cannot, Kūkai concludes, be reduced to the realm of the text or to textual meaning.

This distinction between exoteric and esoteric readings of the sūtra text raises yet another question: As a scriptural text, does the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* belong, after all, to Mahāyāna or to Vajrayāna? At the close of his *Interpretation*, Kūkai states:

The sūtra passage of your fourth question reads:

*Within their own present lives, [the practitioners] will be able to obtain the infallible vajra, to resolutely enter the Dharma, and to perfect the secret, adamantine bodies of all the Tathāgatas.* (T 8:777a)

This passage, too, refers to the samādhi of the one who possesses the vajra of the great bliss [Vajrasattva]. If practitioners uphold and recite this sūtra every day based on the secret meditation of the three mysteries of this [great bliss], then they will unfailingly obtain the samādhi of this divinity. Having realized this samādhi, they will then manifest the samādhi of the sixteen divinities and reach the vajra-like [undefeatable] state of the Tathāgatas. Therefore, the passage refers to the [practitioners'] obtaining of the secret adamantine bodies in their own lives. This sūtra [*Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā*] represents one of the preachings of the vajrāśekhara sūtras and constitutes the gist of the Esoteric Teaching. Every phrase, every letter contains countless meanings. Therefore, although the sūtra had been studied by pundits of exoteric scholarship, its difficulties remained unresolved. How is it possible for one to explicate them without training in Esotericism? (KZ 1:750)

Kūkai bases his argument here on the *Goal of the Eighteen Revelations of the Yoga of the Vajraśekhara Sūtras*,<sup>56</sup> a synopsis translated by Amoghavajra of eighteen vajraśekhara sūtras that elucidates these texts as the Dharmakāya's delivery of his teachings revealing the vajradhātu mandala at eighteen secret councils. According to this synopsis, the first of these councils, which took place at Akaniṣṭha, the highest heaven in the realm of form, gave rise to the *Tattvasaṃgraha Sūtra*, usually referred to as "the" *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* (T 18 #865); the fifteenth meeting at the palace of the transcendental wisdom is that of the *Guhyasamaja* (T 18 #885); and the sixth council, which met at Paranirmitavaśavartina, corresponds to the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*. For Kūkai, the *Reality of Prajñā-pāramitā* is doubtless not a prajñā-pāramitā sūtra, but a Vajrayāna variation of it, one of the vajraśekhara sūtras preached by the Dharmakāya describing by means of the vajradhātu mandalas the secrecy of the prajñā-pāramitā. That is to say, Kūkai presents a clear-cut answer to a question that K'uei-chi's commentary seems to have left unresolved: the identity of the principal Buddha who preaches the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā*. Kūkai understands that Buddha to be the Dharmakāya, who manifests himself as the seventeen Tathāgatas in the sūtra, including Śākyamuni, to reveal the prajñā-pāramitā by means of esoteric rituals.

In sum, the presence of the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* as a chapter in the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* is for Kūkai additional proof of his claim that the secret of the Tathāgatas, the reality revealed by the Dharmakāya's language of the Vajrayāna scriptures, has always been present in the deepest stratum of the exoteric tradition. Just like the various dhāraṇīs in the *Golden Light Sūtra*, the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* in the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* marks the emergence at the textual surface of this forgotten undercurrent of the exoteric tradition. According to Kūkai, the fact that the *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* can be fully elucidated only in the context of the other Vajrayāna scriptures bears witness that Shingon, as a school of interpretation specializing in the Dharmakāya's language, provides the Nara clerics with a means of better understanding the textual and ritual systems of their own schools.

### From Dhāraṇī to Mantra: A Paradigm Shift

There was yet another area of Nara Buddhist discourse that Kūkai had to address to bring to completion his construction of the Esoteric. It had to do with a genre of sūtras that purport to be the teachings of the Śākyamuni Buddha advocating worship of such esoteric divinities as Amoghapāśa, the

Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara, and the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara. As has been discussed in Chapter 4 of this study, various images of esoteric divinities were already enshrined at Tōdaiji, Yakushiji, Toshōdaiji, and other major Nara monasteries during the Nara period. In addition, elaborate rituals dedicated to those divinities, especially the repentance rites known as keka, were developed and practiced by the Nara clergy. Furthermore, diverse dhāraṇīs described in these sūtras had been popularly chanted by both the ordained and the laity. Many of these scriptures not only abound with dhāraṇīs but also prescribe mudrās, visualization of sacred images, and other esoteric ritual elements to accompany the chanting of dhāraṇīs. That is to say, the dhāraṇīs in these sūtras do not fit comfortably within the stereotype of dhāraṇīs in Mahāyāna sūtras. They are neither mnemonic aids nor charms providing protection to the practitioners reciting the sūtras; on the contrary, they are aimed at attaining meditative union, or yoga, with divinities. It appears, therefore, that these sūtras contain the esoteric ritual language of the three mysteries, which Kūkai understood as the body, speech, and mind of the Dharmakāya. Should these sūtras, then, be placed in the category of the Esoteric Teaching despite their claim that they were preached by Śākyamuni, the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha? If so, it appears that the texts defy the general rule of Kūkai's taxonomy of the esoteric and the exoteric.

Interestingly, Kūkai himself imported a large number of such sūtras. In the official catalog of scriptures adopted by the Shingon School (*Sangakuroku*) submitted to the court in 823, Kūkai included sixty-three texts of this type, which he classified as *zōbu shingonkyō*. In the context of the catalog, this phrase can be rendered either as “sūtras of miscellaneous mantras” or as “miscellaneous sūtras of the Shingon (School).”<sup>57</sup> In either case, it appears that Kūkai regarded this “miscellaneous *shingon*” class of texts as important, not only because the ritual devotions based on these scriptures were widely practiced in the Nara Buddhist community but because many of them were the canonical texts of the Shingon School, which is to say of the Esoteric Teaching. Yet as long as these texts were presented as the words of the Nirmāṇakāya, and Kūkai insisted on defining as the Esoteric Teachings those texts preached by the Dharmakāya, questions of ambiguity and inconsistency persisted in his taxonomy.

Kūkai seems to have been fully aware of this problem, and he addressed it directly in the conclusions of two of his principal compositions: *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind* and *Distinguishing the Two Teachings of the Exoteric and the Esoteric*. At the close of *Ten Abiding Stages*, Kūkai describes the problem this way:

*Question:* It has been said that the discourse of Vairocana is called the esoteric and that of Śākyamuni is called the exoteric. Yet, even in Śākyamuni's teachings, we find mantras and other elements that are addressed as esoteric. How should we categorize these aspects of [Śākyamuni's] teachings? (KZ 1:413)

Kūkai makes the same point in the conclusion of *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*.

*Question:* If, as you have discussed, the esoteric is the Dharmakāya's exposition of the inmost realm of his own wisdom of enlightenment, and the Exoteric are all the rest, why then are there sūtras delivered by Śākyamuni Buddha that should belong to the secret treasury (*himitsuzō*)? And in which treasury (*pitaka*) would you place the dhāraṇīs preached by that Buddha?

(KZ 1:504)

Kūkai's effort to remove seeming inconsistencies from his taxonomic principles in both *Ten Abiding Stages* and *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* centers around his analysis of the *Bodhi-mandala of Ekākṣara-uṣṇisacakra Sūtra*. This is another “miscellaneous shingon” class sūtra introduced earlier to Nara Japan, whose translation by Amoghavajra in 753 was imported by Kūkai himself.<sup>58</sup> Before studying the trajectory of Kūkai's interpretive strategy for this text, it is probably appropriate to place it in the larger context of his basic observations regarding mantra and its place in Nara Buddhism. Kūkai suggests that much of the confusion surrounding the categories of the exoteric and the esoteric resulted from the failure of existing Buddhist discourse to distinguish between mantra and dhāraṇī on the one hand, and their exoteric and esoteric functions on the other.

First, he turns to the problem caused by the manner in which the Sanskrit term *mantra* had been translated in the Chinese canon. It was largely through the work of Śubhakarasiṁha (637–735), Vajrabodhi (671–741), and Amoghavajra (705–774) that the term *shingon*, or *chen-yen* in Chinese, was established as the standard translation of *mantra*. Prior to that development, it had long been customary for the word to be rendered in the Chinese canon as *chou* (Jpn. *ju*), perhaps the most common word in Chinese to refer generally to magical formulas or spells. This was how it had been translated by Hsüan-tsang (602–664), Atikūta (fl. 652), Śikṣānanda (652–710), I-ching (635–713), Bodhiruci (572?–727), and other eminent T'ang translators, whose works were circulating widely in Nara Japan. In fact, according to ISHIDA Mosaku's classic study (1930:81–91), of the two hundred sūtras he identified as Esoteric Buddhist texts copied during the Nara period (710–794), all the texts, with only a few

exceptions,<sup>59</sup> employ *chou* (or *ju*, in Japanese) as the translation of *mantra*. Until Kūkai's importation in 806 of a large quantity of scriptures translated by Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, the term *shingon* therefore was generally unavailable to and remained unnoticed by Japanese students of the Chinese canon.

It is important to note, too, that because it was a general term for magical spells, *chou* in the Chinese canon designated not only mantras but dhāraṇīs as well. This explains why in the works of Nara Buddhist literature such as Keikai's *Miraculous Episodes of Good and Evil Karmic Effects in the Nation of Japan* (NKZ 6:127, 294, 349), as well as in the Sōniryō and other related legal documents (KT 23:215), the term *ju*, the Japanese reading of *chou*, was employed to indicate not only various dhāraṇīs but also Taoist formulas. On the other hand, the term *shingon* does not occur once in these sources. All this suggests that in the vocabulary of Nara Buddhist discourse there existed no concept corresponding exclusively to mantra, no discrete term that isolated mantra from other forms of Buddhist—and, often, non-Buddhist—formulaic language.

It is in this historical context that Kūkai's choice of the word *shingon* to identify his new Buddhist transmission can be understood as a twofold message to the Nara Buddhist community: as a proposal to end the age of ignorance of mantra/shingon; and as a reminder that many of what had been regarded as essential dhāraṇīs for Nara Buddhist scriptural studies and ritual practices were in fact mantra/shingon incognito, whose meaning could be grasped in full only if they were studied as mantras.

Kūkai's stand requires a clear definition of mantra and dhāraṇī. In his *Notes on the Secret Treasury*,<sup>60</sup> a collection of fragmentary remarks believed to be Kūkai's handwritten notes on Hui-kuo's oral instruction, Kūkai states:

[Question:] When dhāraṇīs are referred to in sūtras, they are described variously as *darani* [Ch. *t'o-lo-ni*], *myō* [light, Ch. *ming*], *ju* [formula, Ch. *chou*], *mitsugo* [secret words, Ch. *mi-yü*], and *shingon* [true word, Ch. *chen-yen*]. How do these terms differ?

[Answer:] The Buddhas preach dhāraṇīs by issuing forth the light of wisdom, and they reveal dhāraṇīs in the midst of that light. Thus there is no difference in the meaning between *dhāraṇī* and *myō*. The word *ju* refers to diverse magical formulas available in China before the advent of Buddhism there. These are words of supernatural power that eliminate misfortune. Similarly, those who recite dhāraṇīs manifest a divine power to eliminate misfortune. Thus dhāraṇīs are described as *ju*. The word *mitsugo* points to the secret of *dhāraṇī* that remains unknown to ordinary beings and to those practitioners

of the two vehicles of the Hīnayāna. Finally, *shingon* suggests that dhāraṇī, as the speech of the Tathāgatas, contains only truth and no falsehood. Each of these terms illustrates only a limited aspect of dhāraṇī. But for the sake of convenience, the word *shingon* is chosen for mantras.

[Question:] Is *mantra* a Chinese or a Sanskrit word?

[Answer:] It is a Sanskrit, not a Chinese word.

[Question:] How would you translate *mantra* into Chinese?

[Answer:] [Mantra] indicates words that contain within themselves numerous meanings. There is nothing comparable [to *mantra*] in Chinese. Therefore it has remained untranslated. (KZ 2:23)

Here, through Hui-kuo's words, Kūkai deems *dhāraṇī* to be a broader generic term that includes *mantra* as a unique variation. Whereas *ju* as a translation of *dhāraṇī* highlights its efficacy, for example, in eliminating misfortune, *shingon*, by contrast, connotes *dhāraṇī*'s uniqueness in signification. For this reason, according to Kūkai, *shingon*, as the term that specifically denotes the esoteric function of the *dhāraṇī*, is adopted as the translation of *mantra*. In his 834 *Interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra* (*Hokekyō shaku*, KZ 1:781–791), Kūkai extends this discussion to issues directly linked to the taxonomy of the exoteric and the esoteric:

The exoteric is to consume many words to denote one meaning. The esoteric is to unleash countless meanings from within each letter of a word. This is the secret function of *dhāraṇī*. Because of this, *dhāraṇī* is translated as *sōji*, the container of all. However, this meaning of *dhāraṇī* has been kept secret by the Dharma transmitters of the past. This is what I have now introduced as the mantra treasury (*shingonzō*).

Here Kūkai proposes what can be referred to as an economy of semantics. Dhāraṇīs are economical, thus more secretive, than the prose text in which they nest because they condense the meanings of a sūtra's prose lines into a small number of phrases. However, this cannot compare with the supereconomy achieved by the *dhāraṇī*'s most secretive function, as manifested in mantra, in which each letter begets countless meanings. That is to say, Kūkai's definitions of *mantra* and *dhāraṇī* depend, ultimately, on their signifying practice. Any *dhāraṇī* that, because of its scriptural context or its positioning within a text, not only summarizes a sūtra's contents but also possesses letters generative of countless meanings is a mantra, and therefore belongs to the esoteric.

This signifying ability of mantra letters to generate an infinitude of meanings appears to be Kūkai's explanation of the claim that, whereas ordinary

language falls silent before the Tathāgatas' secrecy, the language of mantra, and more generally the ritual language of the three mysteries, eloquently expresses it. The ultimate reality, the secret among the Buddhas, transcends the ordinary language of the scriptures. However, mantra, with its incessant semantic production, "catches up" with the velocity with which the ultimate reality escapes the grasp of ordinary language. This mode of thought makes up the core of Kūkai's argument in the conclusions of both *Ten Abiding Stages* and *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*. In the *Interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra*, Kūkai illustrates this point with a quote from fascicle 3 of the *Bodhi-mandala of Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra Sūtra*. In fact, to build his argument in both *Ten Abiding Stages* and *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*, Kūkai relies on the same passage from that sūtra, which states:

Mañjuśrī asked the Buddha: “Bhagavat, by how many names have you turned the wheel of Dharma in our world?” The Buddha said, “I have called myself Śakra, Brahmā, Maheśvara, nature, the earth, quietude, nirvāṇa, deva, asura, empty, victory, meaning, unreality, samādhi, the compassionate one, compassion, Varuṇa, Nāga, Yakṣa, Seer [Skt. *rṣi*], Trailokavijaya, light, fire, demon, being, nonbeing, discrimination, nondiscrimination, Sumeru, vajra, permanence, impermanence, mantra, great mantra, ocean, great ocean, the sun, the moon, cloud, great cloud, ruler, great ruler, priests, the arhat-harming vexation, nondifference, no nondifference, life, nonlife, mountain, great mountain, noncessation, nonarising, tathā [so be it], tathatā [so-be-itness], actuality, reality, dharmadhātu, fruit, duality, and existence. Mañjuśrī, I have constructed hundreds and thousands of five asaṃkhyā names for the sake of guiding and saving living beings. Although we Tathāgatas need no contrived effort, we turn the wheel of Dharma by means of the power of various forms of mantras.”  
(T 19:207c)

The *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra* consists of episodes unfolding the mysterious multiple identities of the Śākyamuni Buddha, or, more appropriately, the Buddha's pluralized self. It is a unique scripture in which Śākyamuni Buddha revisits his original seat of enlightenment to demonstrate to his disciples the sameness of his enlightenment experience with those of all other Buddhas. “There he [Śākyamuni] enters samādhi, when all the Tathāgatas of the universe in the past, present, and future also enter the same samādhi” (T 19:194a). The sūtra’s narrative progresses oscillating between, and eventually coalescing, the two semantic levels of the *bodhi-mandala*, the Buddha’s seat of enlightenment: first, as the eternal realm of enlightenment, the “assemblage of all the Tathāgatas

forming the great maṇḍala” (19:195c), into which the Śākyamuni Buddha occasionally returns by means of his own samādhi; and second, as the sacred site of enlightenment under the bodhi tree on the bank of the Nairaṇjanā in the kingdom of Magadha where the Buddha addresses his assembly in the sūtra.

At the opening of the sūtra, Vajrapāṇi, the Buddha’s principal interlocutor in the sūtra, requests that the Buddha make visible to his following all the virtuous qualities of the Tathāgatas’ transcendental wisdom now accumulated in the Buddha’s body. In response, Śākyamuni Buddha recites the mantra of the Buddha Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra (Jpn. Ichiji chōrinnō, the Buddha of the Single Word Whose Crown is the Wheel of Dharma), who manifests himself as the cakravartin, world-conqueror, personifying the unexcelled wisdom shared by all the Tathāgatas, their secret identity with the Dharmakāya.<sup>61</sup>

With Śākyamuni’s recitation of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra’s mantra “*Namah samanta buddhānām bhrūm*,” the world is illumined by a flash of light as blindingly intense as millions of bolts of lightening, as Śākyamuni at once transforms himself to Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra. At this shocking revelation, great bodhisattvas, devas, and others in the assembly faint. The Buddha revives them by chanting another mantra, that of the female deity Buddhalocana (Jpn. *Butsugen butsumo*), the “Buddha’s Eye,” who is understood as the fearful Buddha’s consort, personification of prajñā-pāramitā, transcendental wisdom itself (T 19:195a–b). Returning then to his original form, Śākyamuni Buddha initiates a less radical way of revealing his samādhi. The Buddha thus begins his instructions to Vajrapāṇi and other bodhisattvas on the yoga of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra, describing in detail the way to replicate his samādhi, using the ritual techniques of mudrās, mantras, and dhāraṇīs, and visualizations of the divinity’s physical characteristics.

The Buddha’s description of his pluralized self to Mañjuśrī in fascicle 3 of the sūtra, quoted earlier, is the direct outcome of this effort by the Buddha to reveal his mystical identity with Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra. Kūkai comments on this in the *Interpretation of the Lotus Sūtra*:

There are many bodhisattvas who studied widely among different sorts of teachings. Yet they differ from one another in what they actually grasped. Because of this, according to the *Mahāyāna Six Pāramitā Sūtra*<sup>62</sup> the sūtra-piṭaka was handed down to and preserved by Ānanda, the vinaya-piṭaka by Upāli, the abhidharma-piṭaka by Mahākātyāyāna, the prajñā-pāramitā piṭaka by Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and the mantra piṭaka by Vajrapāṇi. These are like the various offices of the court that are assigned different sorts of power and responsibility. . . . However, if one truly understands the secrecy of words

and letters, every one of these gates of Dharma is but the secret name of the Buddha. It is therefore said in a sūtra, . . .

Kūkai then paraphrases at length the passage in question from the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra*:

Mañjuśrī asked the Buddha: “Bhagavat, by how many names have you turned the wheel of Dharma in our world?” The Buddha said: “I have called myself empty, being, suchness, dharmatā, permanence, impermanence, deva, demon, mantra, and great mantra. In such a way, by means of hundreds and thousands of *kotis* of names, I have benefited living beings.” When the meaning of this [statement] is fully grasped, how can there be discord between different schools? (KZ 1:782)

Kūkai here suggests that the Buddha’s act of devising different kinds of teachings and entrusting them to specific disciples of his as separate treasures, or piṭaka, of the Dharma is now presented in a symbolic manner in the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra*. All the concepts through which he has described the Dharma—emptiness, suchness, permanence, and so forth—as well as all the characters in the sūtra through whose mouths the explication of the Dharma has been delivered—devas, nāgas, and even demons—are but the Buddha’s hidden names. That is because these “names” elucidate every side of the Buddha’s inherent identity, embodying the Dharma or endowed with the body of the Dharma, the Dharmakāya.

Without exception, mantras too are the Buddha’s secret names. In *Ten Abiding Stages* Kūkai put it this way: “In the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra* it is said, ‘I am mantra, I am great mantra.’ The first mantra referred to here means the mantras expounded by the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha, and the great mantra refers to the mantras preached by the Dharmakāya Buddha” (KZ 1:413–414). Thus, for Kūkai, once they are recognized as Śākyamuni Buddha’s hidden names, which unveil his multiple identities, the dhāraṇīs in the Mahāyāna sūtras can be understood as mantras. In this sense, these mantras are no different from the mantras of the esoteric scriptures. Yet, in one area, Śākyamuni Buddha’s mantras are surpassed by the mantras of the Vajrayāna texts, which reveal a more profound secret: the Dharmakāya is not an abstraction and is capable of preaching the Dharma.

In *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*, Kūkai presents the passage in question from the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra* as an illustration of the following statement in fascicle 38 of Nāgārjuna’s *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*:

There are two kinds [of reality] in the Buddha Dharma: the worldly truth and the ultimate truth. According to the worldly truth, the Buddha preaches that there are living beings, and according to the ultimate truth, he says that there are no such things as sentient beings. There is also another set of two kinds [of beings]: those who know the aspect of words and letters, and those who do not. It is just like in an army that uses a cryptogram: some officers know the cipher and others do not. . . . To those who do not know the aspects of words and letters, the Buddha states that there are no such things as living beings. To those who know, he says there are living beings. (T 25:336b)

Kūkai comments:

As for the secret coding regarding the aspects of words and letters, much has been discussed in the teaching of Shingon (*shingonkyō*). It is thus said in the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra*: “Mañjuśrī asked the Buddha, ‘Bhagavat, by how many names have you turned the wheel of Dharma in our world?’ The Buddha said, ‘I have called myself Śakra, Brahmā, Maheśvara, nature, the earth, quietude, nirvāṇa, deva, asura, empty, victory, meaning, unreality, samādhi, the compassionate one, compassion, Varuṇa, Nāga, Yakṣa, ṛṣi, Trailokavijaya, light, fire, demon, being, nonbeing, discrimination, nondiscrimination, Sumeru, vajra, permanence, impermanence, mantra, great mantra, ocean, great ocean, the sun, the moon, cloud, great cloud, ruler, great ruler, priests, the arhat-harming vexation, nondifference, no nondifference, life, nonlife, mountain, great mountain, noncessation, nonarising, tathā, tathatā, actuality, reality, dharmadhātu, fruit, duality, and existence. Mañjuśrī, I have constructed hundreds and thousands of five asarīkhyā names for the sake of guiding and saving living beings. Although we Tathāgatas need no contrived effort, we turn the wheel of Dharma by means of the power of various forms of mantra.’” (KZ 1:488)

Kūkai is now presenting the passage from the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra* as a model made with prosaic language that illustrates the semantic function of mantra and, in particular, the working of the Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra mantra recited by the Buddha himself earlier in the sūtra. In this context, the Buddha’s revelation to Mañjuśrī of his secret name, Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra, or the “Buddha of the Single Word Whose Crown is the Wheel of the Dharma,” entails a new understanding of the name as a heavily encoded signal and, at the same time, a way of deciphering it. From the single term *Buddha* issues forth countless names, all of which bear witness to myriad ways in which the Buddha elucidates the Dharma—or myriad ways in which the Dharma manifests itself

as everything, to be identified as the secret name of the Buddha, testimony to his omnipresence as the Dharmakāya.

Kūkai's juxtaposition of this passage with Nāgārjuna's *Discourse on the Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* highlights the fact that inherent in Śākyamuni Buddha's pluralized self, which permeates the world, is a deconstruction in a dual sense of the quotidian concept of "living beings." His omnipresence as the Dharmakāya effaces the distinction between "living beings" and nonliving beings, as well as the division of living beings into the unenlightened and the enlightened. Thus, the Buddha's name here is a cipher or a mantra that simultaneously verifies the contrasting statements in question in Nāgārjuna's *Discourse* that "there are living beings" and that "there are no such things as living beings." It marks the limits of the signifying capacity of ordinary language, yet it does not merely point beyond to the ultimate reality. The term *Buddha* as a mantra produces countless names from within and duplicates in language the reality of the Dharmakāya and his omnipresence. Just as the Dharmakāya is "one is all," the Buddha's name is now one and all.

Through his reading of the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra*, Kūkai strives to disentangle the apparent contradiction in his taxonomy that he discussed in the conclusion of *Ten Abiding Stages* and *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*: Do the sūtras—the sūtras Kūkai has categorized under the heading of "miscellaneous mantra class," i.e., sūtras in which Śākyamuni Buddha preaches mantras—belong to the esoteric or the exoteric? Kūkai's answer appears to be, to both. They are exoteric because all these scriptures were delivered by the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha Śākyamuni; they are esoteric because the Buddha in the sūtras describes the worship of esoteric divinities, such as Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra, by means of the ritual language of the three mysteries, the language of the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma.

Kūkai presents this paradox not as irresolution but rather as yet more additional evidence for his claim that Śākyamuni Buddha was already aware of the content of the Esoteric Teaching preached by the Dharmakāya and hinted at this secret in various places in his Exoteric Teaching. The logic of Kūkai's argument here remains consistent with his discussion of the *Golden Light* and the *Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā*. That is, the esoteric has always been present as a hidden undercurrent in the exoteric tradition. This explains, from Kūkai's point of view, why, even prior to Kūkai's systematic importation, various elements of the Esoteric Teaching were already ingrained, however imperceptibly, in the everyday activities of the Nara clerics.

To the Nara monastic community, especially to its scholarly circles, Kūkai thus introduced his Shingon as a new type of discourse capable of elucidating mantra, mudrā, and other esoteric elements within their daily practices, the

elements that had escaped the language of the doctrinal Nara Schools, the dominant discourse of Kūkai's day. Shingon was presented as of complementary utility, as a new conceptual and linguistic tool for closing the gap in Nara Buddhist discourse between theory and practice—the gap in which the esoteric elements of Nara Buddhism were situated. The scriptures of the “miscellaneous shingon class” and the worship of esoteric divinities prescribed therein, Kūkai emphasized, are the most vivid examples of this historical situation. Kūkai resorted in particular to the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra*, one of these “miscellaneous mantra class” sūtras, because that sūtra was uniquely capable of illustrating the linguistic function of mantra by means of prosaic language, and therefore because it demonstrated Shingon's utility to Nara Buddhists in the most accessible manner.

This quality of Shingon as complementary to existing Buddhist discourse was probably the most practical reason for the swift spread of Esoteric Buddhism in the Nara Buddhist community in the early Heian period. That is to say, Kūkai's discussion of the sūtras of the “miscellaneous shingon class” is crucial to an understanding of why Esoteric Buddhism was accepted by the Nara Buddhists. The type of sūtras included by Kūkai in the canon of the Shingon School vividly demonstrated that the new transmission of Shingon was of direct relevance to the intellectual activities of the Nara Buddhist community. It was these sūtras that provided the ground for mediation between the Exoteric and the Esoteric and between what was already familiar and what was utterly novel to the Nara clergy about Kūkai's Shingon. It appears that this mediation is the reason that they turned to the study of Kūkai's Shingon. To fully grasp the hidden logic behind mantras, mudrās, and other esoteric elements already embedded in their religious practices, the Nara clerics needed to study the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the *Vajrasekhara Sūtra*, and their ritual systems of abhiṣeka, in which the esoteric language theories of the three mysteries were elucidated.

Modern Japanese scholars, especially the sectarian scholars of the Shingon School, have repeatedly claimed that Kūkai's goal in composing *Ten Abiding Stages* and *Distinguishing the Two Teachings* was to rigorously establish the superiority of his Shingon over the Six Nara Schools and Tendai (KATSUMATA Shunkyō 1970:33–52; TAKAGAMI Kakushō 1992:30–61; NASU Seiryū 1982:288–325). Kūkai certainly posited his Esoteric Teaching as superior to the Exoteric Teaching of the existing schools. However, it is also possible to read his assertion of superiority as a discourse of complementarity. That is, Kūkai asserted that Esotericism was superior not only because it introduced new types of scriptures and ritual systems but because these texts and rituals would provide the Nara clerics with a theoretical foundation to authenticate their belief in the efficacy of existing Buddhist ritual services in early Heian Japan.

With their modern, rationalizing agenda, sectarian scholars have frequently asserted that Kūkai introduced mantra as a pure religious language exclusively for the purpose of attaining enlightenment (*junmitsu*) and contrasted that purpose with the use of dhāraṇī by the Nara clergy, which they claimed was essentially magical, shamanistic, and superstitious (*zōmitsu*). Contrary to such a simplistic interpretation, the discussion in this chapter has made clear that Kūkai's introduction of the new ritual language redefined as mantra the dhāraṇī that had been used by the Nara clerics. In other words, Kūkai understood both mantra and dhāraṇī as representing the same practical linguistic technology effective both for attaining enlightenment and for influencing the course of events in society and nature. (Kūkai's theory on the technological qualities of mantra and dhāraṇī is discussed further in chapter 8.)

In his analysis of the *Bodhi-mandala Sūtra*, Kūkai elaborated this theory of new ritual language as mantra's supereconomy of signification. To espouse this idea of mantra, or shingon in Japanese, was not to deny the legitimacy of the dhāraṇīs and rituals built around them practiced by the Nara clergy. On the contrary, Kūkai's theory was an attempt to give an *explication* to the power of dhāraṇī, a hitherto unquestioned postulate in Nara Buddhist discourse. For Kūkai, a Buddhist theory of ritual language had to be capable of explaining the reason for the efficacy of dhāraṇī: dhāraṇī's efficaciousness (for intensifying one's memory, healing, or preventing calamities, etc.) resulted from its semantic potential to unveil the Tathāgatas' secrecy as the Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma. It is in this context that the word *shingon* became an appropriate term by which Kūkai could distinguish his own transmission from other forms of Buddhism in early Heian society. Kūkai's Shingon was symbolic of the introduction of a new theory of ritual language to the Japanese Buddhist discourse to mark an epistemic shift: from the age of unquestioned acceptance of the dhāraṇī's efficaciousness to that of discovering and experimenting with the semiological knowledge of how to unleash the power of signification hidden in the letters of mantra and dhāraṇī.

## PART III

### *Writing and Polity*

*The path is writing and writing is a body and a body is bodies (the grove of trees). Just as meaning appears beyond writing, as though it were the destination, the end of the road (an end that ceases to be an end the moment we arrive there, a meaning that vanishes the moment we state it), so the body first appears to our eye as a perfect totality, and yet it too proves to be intangible: the body is always somewhere beyond the body. . . . The body that we embrace is a river of metamorphoses, a continual division, a flowing of vision, a quartered body whose pieces scatter, disperse, come back together again with the intensity of a flash of lightning. . . . Every body is a language that vanishes at the moment of absolute plenitude; on reaching the state of incandescence, every language reveals itself to be an unintelligible body. The word is a disincarnation of the world in search of its meaning; and an incarnation: a destruction of meaning, a return to the body. Poetry is corporeal; the reverse of names.* —Octavio Paz

## CHAPTER 7

### Semiology of the Dharma; or, *The Somaticity of the Text*

In one of his introductory essays on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, Kūkai explains that the sūtra presents itself for reading in three “editions.”

As for the text of this sūtra [*Mahāvairocana Sūtra*], there are three kinds. The first is the [the vast, boundless] text that exists spontaneously and permanently, namely, the mandala of the Dharma of all the Buddhas. The second is the broader text that circulated in the world, that is, the sūtra of ten thousand verses transmitted by Nāgārjuna. The third is the abbreviated text of over three thousand verses in seven fascicles. However abbreviated it may be, it embraces in its brevity comprehensive, broader texts. That is because its each and every word contains countless meanings, and every single letter, even every single stroke or dot, encapsulates within itself innumerable truths.<sup>1</sup>

According to Kūkai, the original and complete text of the sūtra is the whole of the universe, which the Buddhas of the past, present, and future held, are holding, and will hold as the ultimate scripture illuminating the principle of the emptiness of all things. This is *dharma mandala* (Jpn. *hōmandara*), the mandala consisting of all things of the world as its letters. It is the secret, ultimate “scripture” revealed by Mahāvairocana in his cosmic palace of the eternal present to his interlocutor Vajrasattva. The second text is the one that Vajrasattva transmitted to Nāgārjuna in the iron stūpa in southern India. It is therefore an abridged translation into human language of the original sūtra of the cosmic scale, a translation that is still an impossibly voluminous text, which Kūkai says circulated widely in India. The third is a further abbreviation of Nāgārjuna’s text that was transmitted to East Asia in seven fascicles and translated into Chinese by Śubhakarasiṁha.

On the other hand, Kūkai describes these three editions of the sūtra as representing a process not merely of abridgment but of condensation. Although the sūtra text Kūkai brought back from China in 806 was only a miniature of the original sūtra, he says that in every character the seven-fascicle sūtra encompasses countless meanings. That is to say, the three editions of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* are not independent of one another. They form, instead, three mutually inclusive levels of the same sūtra: the abbreviated text is already a part of the original cosmic sūtra; the cosmic sūtra's contents are encapsulated in the abbreviated sūtra's characters. In many other places in his writings, Kūkai uses the same paradigm to explain the relationship between the text and the world for the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* and other esoteric Buddhist sūtras that he claims were transmitted, like the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, through the Dharma lineage of Mahāvairocana, Vajrasattva, and Nāgārjuna.<sup>2</sup> In this manner Kūkai presents the esoteric Buddhist texts as books that reflect within themselves everything in the world. Although the idea of the universe as itself a sacred scripture or scriptural text embracing the entire universe is not unique to Esoteric Buddhism (Luis GOMEZ 1995:107), Kūkai appears to be singular in having created uniquely Buddhist theories of text, writing, and signs based on such an idea.<sup>3</sup>

One may compare Kūkai's idea of the universal text with the Western concept of *summa mundi*, which in its classical sense is an imposing, complete tome—an encyclopedia of the Age of Enlightenment, for example—that claims the comprehensiveness of its contents as the mark of universality.<sup>4</sup> Kūkai also appears to have trust in language's ability to reach totality. However, as is discussed below, Kūkai's text strives for totality not in its representation. His model of the text is not encyclopedic, for it is neither self-contained nor completed. On the contrary, Kūkai approaches the text as a yet-to-be-bound—or, perhaps more appropriately, never-to-be-bound—constantly re-worked manuscript. For Kūkai, the text is not a book but a writing that remains open-ended. It is endlessly related to other texts, and only by means of its openness does it reach totality. In other words, the world is made of texts and only of text—not of their representational function but of their materiality. Kūkai blurs the boundary between the inside and the outside of the text(s), for the text's inside and outside are the writings of different editions of the same scriptural text. In order to be applied to Kūkai's model of the text, the term *summa mundi* cannot merely be a genitive compound—the “text of the world”—but must serve more prominently as an appositional compound: the “text(s) as the world” *and* the “world as the text(s).”

This area of Kūkai's theoretical endeavor had no immediate counterpart in the doctrines of the Nara Schools. Some seminal texts on the Buddhist theory

of language, especially of later Indian Mādhyamika and Yogācāra traditions, had been known to the Nara scholarly circles.<sup>5</sup> However, these texts were primarily concerned with logic, not with practical functions of language in pedagogical, ritual, and literary environments. The discussion in the next chapter suggests that Nara scholar-priests' reticence on such matters as writing, texts, and ritual language resulted from the Confucian political ideology of the ritsuryō state that exercised control over textual production and ritual performance in late Nara and early Heian society. In this regard, Kūkai's endeavor can be understood as his subtle strategy to level a challenge to the monopoly of Confucianism as legitimator of the state's control over intellectual production, so as to transform the relationship between the state and the Saṅgha in the latter's favor. The discussion that follows here attempts to outline Kūkai's construction of particularly Esoteric Buddhist theories of text, writing, and signs, the theories through which he attempted to effect such a change.

Of Kūkai's principal works, *Voice, Letter, Reality* (*Shōji jisōgi*, KZ 1:521–534)<sup>6</sup> presents most systematically his theory of language. It is held within the Shingon School that Kūkai composed *Transforming One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment* (*Sokushin jōbutsugi*, KZ 1:506–520), *Voice, Letter, Reality*, and *On the Sanskrit Letter Hūm* (*Unjigi*, KZ 1:535–553) in rapid succession, aiming the three works, respectively, at illustrating the “body, speech, mind,” the three mysteries of Esoteric Buddhist divinities. Although the exact date of composition has not been established for any of the three works, modern students of Kūkai generally agree that they were composed in the brief period that corresponds roughly to the years 821 to 824, between the close of Kōnin years (810–823) and the very beginning of Tenchō years (823–834).<sup>7</sup> As KATSUMATA Shunkyō (1970:148–152) has pointed out, it was during this brief period that Kūkai began to employ the concept of the six great elements (*rakudai*), the concept essential for *Transforming One's Body*. Because, as I will show, the text of *Voice, Letter, Reality* often refers to that of *Transforming One's Body*, and the discussion in *On the Sanskrit Letter Hūm* presupposes that *Voice, Letter, Reality*, modern studies generally support the tradition's claim that these works were produced in succession to form a series.

The dating by modern scholars appears to be acceptable for this study, but for a different reason: in these works Kūkai was no longer concerned with delineating the category of the esoteric, or with constructing the complementary relationship between the esoteric and exoteric scriptures, as he did in his early works. In the three works in question, Kūkai no longer refers to exoteric scriptures as frequently as he had in the earlier writings. Rather, Kūkai relied essentially on esoteric scriptures to justify the efficacy of esoteric religious practices. His priority seems to have shifted from legitimizing the esoteric to

further illustrating it as an already legitimized category. This change in Kūkai's approach to illustrating the esoteric through his writings seems to reflect the historical condition in which, as symbolized by his erection of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Todaiji in 822, Kūkai won the general acceptance by the Nara clergy of Esoteric Buddhism by the end of the Kōnin years. It then became necessary for him to provide the Nara clerics with the theoretical foundation for their practice of Esoteric Buddhism.

## Of Voice, Letter, and Reality

Kūkai's construction of the interpenetrating relationship between the text and the world, discussed above, calls for an expansion of the concept of language, for not only spoken words or written characters but all sorts of things and events in the world are, for Kūkai, signs of the cosmic text. Kūkai explains this point in his celebrated verse at the opening of *Voice, Letter, Reality*.

Vibrating in each other's echoes are the five great elements  
 That give rise to languages unique to each of the ten realms  
 All in the six sense-fields are letters, the letters  
 Of the Dharmakāya, which is reality

(KZ 1:524)

Kūkai's *Voice, Letter, Reality* unfolds as an illustration of this abstruse poem. An interpretation of the entire verse will be attempted later. For now, however, the key to understanding Kūkai's reading of the world as a text—or, more appropriately, as *the* ur-text—is line 3, to whose explication Kūkai devotes most of his work. There, in his analysis of the function of the sign, Kūkai locates the letter at the focal point of the interaction between voice, letter, and reality. Throughout the work Kūkai repeatedly argues, “The letter is nothing but differentiation (Jpn. *shabetsu*; Skt. *viśeṣa*)” (KZ 1:528, 530, 531, 534). That is, at the heart of signification is differentiation; the sign's function becomes most manifest in the letter, for the letter possesses a lasting material foundation in which its difference from other signs is inscribed, fixed, and remembered. For Kūkai, therefore, even voices are letters, patterns inscribed in the air.

Language derives from voice. Voice distinguishes itself in terms of long and short, high and low, and straight and bent. These are called patterns (*mon*). Those which manifest particular patterns are letters (*jī*), which never fail to give rise to names (*myō*). The name is always the name-letter (*myōji*), for sign is above all pattern. Therefore, pattern is nothing but letter, and pattern and letter are inseparable.

(KZ 1:525)

That is, any object that differentiates itself with its unique pattern from anything else—including voice, a primary material of linguistic communication—is a letter. All sensory percepts of the six sense fields (Jpn. *rokujin*; Skt. *sad-visaya*)—sight, sound, scent, taste, touch, and concepts, with the mind serving as the sixth “sense organ”—are therefore letters. Kūkai indicates that the sensory percepts of sight, for example, take the forms of color (*ken*), shape (*gyō*), and movement (*hyō*), and the combination of the three, so that each percept will be distinguished from others.

All the percepts of sight, expressing themselves in color, shape, and movement, arise from the working of [the sensory organ of] the eye [Jpn. *gan*; Skt. *caksus*], and become the objects of the eye. [Simultaneously,] they arise from the working of sight-consciousness [Jpn. *ganshiki*; Skt. *caksur-vijñāna*], become the object of sight-consciousness, and interact with sight-consciousness. [Simultaneously, again,] they arise from the working of mind-consciousness [Jpn. *ishiki*; Skt. *mano-vijñāna*], become the object of mind-consciousness, and interact with mind-consciousness. *This [process] is called “differentiation.” All things differentiated are characters (monji), marks of individualized patterns.* Each differentiated percept manifests its own pattern (*mon*), and each differentiated pattern gives rise to names. They [percepts] are nothing but letters. Color, shape, movement are, therefore, the three categories of the letters of sight. (KZ 1:528, italics added)

Kūkai thus presents his perspective on signs, in which differentiation is the heart of language’s signifying practices; in which the letter, or, more generally, writing, is the primary topos of differentiation; and in which differentiation of the letter makes possible articulation of the world by names—that is, the sign’s work of dividing the world in the primordial state of a nebulous whole into discrete parts and categories, which in turn give rise to cosmic order. That is, the rise of signs from differentiation is coterminous with the formation of a cosmos—the procreative process that I shall refer to as “semiogenetic.”<sup>8</sup> With this paradigm of language as differentiation, Kūkai translates the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness into a semiological theory, which he develops along two distinct strategic paths, each of which constructs the other as its inverse mirror image.

The first is Kūkai’s deconstruction of sensory objects as but signs, objects that manifest themselves as if they were “things.” For Kūkai, as is clear from the passage just quoted, being is antedated by language, and not vice versa, for it is language’s ability to articulate that generates discrete objects. Language productive of things, in turn, is grounded in differentiating movement, that is,

the very lack of identity, essence, or immediacy. The apparent presence of a so-called thing itself is therefore preceded by and derives from differentiation, a relative positioning that identifies a thing vis-à-vis other things, which also are but signs. Things are never self-present, for they have no ontological grounding, except for their infinitely regressive reference to other things in their mutually referential network. That is, precisely because they are signs, things are of dependent co-origination (Jpn. *engishō*; Skt. *pratītya-samutpāda*), for they are “empty” of essence and do not originate with any transcendental prime mover.

The second strategic path is Kūkai’s method of reading and reconstructing a text—the text in the narrow sense, i.e., writing in a human language—as the very field at which the doctrine of emptiness actualizes itself. Kūkai argues that the letter *A*, the first syllable in the Sanskrit alphabet, is the mother of all letters, words, and languages. For Kūkai, the letter *A* is the seed mantra of the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana because, since it serves as a negative prefix, the letter embodies the principle of all things as “originally nonarising” (Jpn. *honpushō*; Skt. *ādyanutpāda*). Kūkai suggests that the letter *A* as negation, “what it is not,” represents the very movements of differentiation, dissimulation, and articulation that are the primordial conditions for the act of writing and the production of text. This second semiological strategy is studied in detail in the second half of this chapter.

MORIMOTO Kazuo (1976:126–145; 1984:485–494), an expert in contemporary continental philosophy at Tokyo University, has pointed out a similarity that he has observed between Kūkai’s understanding of differentiation and Jacques Derrida’s deconstructionism, especially Derrida’s notion of *differance*. Although Morimoto’s finding appears important against the backdrop of many ongoing comparative philosophical studies that investigate the relevance of Derrida’s postmodernist theory to the Buddhist theory of emptiness, Morimoto’s scope for comparison is seriously limited.<sup>9</sup> However striking it may appear from time to time, students of Kūkai’s philosophy must not be blinded by the similarity between Kūkai and Derrida, for it may well have resulted from mere coincidence, as in the case of a biological isomorphism across utterly unrelated species. In addition, there also exist notable “differences” between Derrida and Kūkai, which seem to be more significant than their similarity. As I demonstrate in the next section, unlike the Derridian *differance*, Kūkai’s deconstructive strategy is a path by which he constructs and reconstructs a concrete model of the cosmos, the model that he presents as a Buddhist alternative to that of the Confucian state ideology. Discussions in the following sections are aimed not at preparing a ground for comparative philosophy but at illustrating Kūkai’s complex language theory as simply as possible, so as to

develop an assessment of the historical impact on the early Heian *ritsuryō* state of Kūkai's invention of the Esoteric Buddhist model of the universe based upon his language theory, an assessment that is presented in the next chapter.

## Syntax of the World-Text

The foregoing brief overview of Kūkai's general approach to language and text leads to an entry point into Kūkai's enigmatic poem in *Voice, Letter, Reality*, the entry through which the poem unfolds itself as an exposure of the Dharmakāya as writing, as the world-text itself.

Vibrating in each other's echoes are the five great elements	1
That give rise to languages unique to each of the ten realms	2
All in the six sense-fields are letters, the letters	3
Of the Dharmakāya, which is the reality	4

(KZ 1:524)

Kūkai identifies the five great elements referred to in line 1 as earth, water, fire, wind, and space, which, according to Exoteric Buddhism, are the fundamental material constituents of the universe. However, according to Esoteric Buddhism, Kūkai asserts, the five great elements are also the somatic components of the Dharmakāya. In *Transforming One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment* (*Sokushin jōbutsugi*) (KZ 1:509–513), to whose esoteric interpretation of the five elements Kūkai urges readers to turn their attention in *Voice, Letter, Reality* (KZ 1:525), each of the five elements expresses the five essential aspects of emptiness: originally nonarising (earth), transcending designations (water), freedom from taint (fire), being devoid of primary cause (wind), and being formless as space (space).

In *Transforming One's Body*, Kūkai explains further that the five elements incessantly interfuse with one another to generate all the things of the three realms (*sanshu seken*)—material existence, living beings, and enlightened ones—that form the totality of the world (KZ 1:509). The constant interplay of the five great elements is all the movements of the world, which make all existences impermanent. Yet, despite such movements, individual things in the world maintain their identities, if only momentarily, and the world does not descend into chaos. Kūkai explains this by introducing consciousness—the sixth great element (*shikidai*), the Dharmakāya's mind that is the very awareness of emptiness—which is inherent in all the five elements. “The six elements are the creative force (*nōshō*)” (KZ 1:510). For Kūkai, the six great

elements are the Dharmakāya's body and mind, which, precisely because of their inseparability, are in a constant state of harmonious interfusion, which Kūkai describes as the Dharmakāya Buddha's eternal state of meditation: "Freely interfusing with one another, the six great elements maintain the [Dharmakāya's] timeless yoga" (KZ 1:507).

By contrast, in *Voice*, *Letter*, *Reality*, Kūkai offers a new description of this picture of cosmogony as a semiogenetic process. Throughout this work, Kūkai speaks only of the five elements. In lieu of the sixth element, Kūkai highlights the vibrant movements (*kyō*) of the five elements as the force that maintains harmony between them. It is this primeval pulsation that makes it possible for the five elements to collide and fuse, thus generating all sorts of voices in the world.

No sooner does the inner breath of living beings vibrate the air of the external world than there arises voice (*shō*). Voice always results from vibration; voice invariably has as its basis vibration.<sup>10</sup> When voice does not cease in vain and expresses the name of a thing, it is called letter (*ji*). The names thus revealed unfailingly evoke objects, which are so-called reality. That each voice, letter, and reality divides itself into myriad parts is called meaning (*gi*). (KZ 1:522)

Kūkai here provides an overall view of the relationship that he sees between voice, letter, and reality. Voice metamorphoses from mere vibration to sign by means of letter, that is, by making itself into a consistent, perceptible pattern (*mon*) inscribed on a material foundation that stands for things other than itself, things that then present themselves as reality. Voice has first to be writing before it ceases to be a meaningless cry and becomes speech. Only after writing, and then speech, does there arise reality, the object of signs. Furthermore, the meaning of these objects derives not from themselves but from the process through which voice, letter, and reality, respectively, differentiate themselves into innumerable signifiers (*nōsen*) and signifieds (*shōsen*)—that is, through the linguistic articulation of the world into parts. It is the differences between signs that produce meaning. Then, before it even becomes writing or speech, voice in its most primordial form, the vibrant interplay of the five great elements, is differentiation (*shabetsu*): the very differentiating movement toward articulation, the first possibility of writing, and then speech.

For Kūkai, then, differentiation is semiotic articulation. Through differentiation, the boundless, amorphous, timeless presence of the Dharmakāya—the perpetually oscillating five great elements, the five forces of emptiness—turns itself into discrete objects in historical processes. It is, then, through articulation that the illegible Dharmakāya (as postulated in exoteric disciplines) transforms

itself into the legible world-text. The Dharmakāya can then be located nowhere but in the text, both *in* the letters and *between* the text's letters, where the letters manifest themselves as the traces of difference.

As discussed earlier, however, Kūkai understands the actualization of articulation as dependent on the working of sensory organs, the biological function that differs from one species to another. "The same water is seen by hungry ghosts as a pond of blazing fire and by heaven dwellers as an emerald lake. The dark night for human beings is the bright day for night birds."<sup>11</sup> This is where Kūkai introduces line 2 of his verse; ("Vibrating in each other's echoes are the five great elements [1] / That give rise to languages unique to each of the ten realms [2]"). In accordance with Buddhist cosmology, Kūkai identifies the ten realms as the realms of (1) Buddhas, (2) bodhisattvas, (3) pratyeka-buddhas, (4) śrāvakas, (5) heaven dwellers, (6) human beings, (7) asuras, (8) animals, (9) hungry ghosts, and (10) hell dwellers. The differences in the manner in which they recognize things surrounding them make these ten "species" experience the same universe as ten different biological environments, which are also ten separate linguistic spheres.

Kūkai then introduces his two readings of the "writings of the ten kinds (*jusshu monji*) of the ten realms" (KZ 1:525). The first is a vertical reading, in which the ten realms are viewed as levels of progressively more profound languages. In this reading, only the language of the realm of the Buddhas, which is identified as mantra, is real, and the nine others are illusory. Mantra is "true word" (*shingon*), "because it alone can designate infallibly the reality of objects as they truly are" (KZ 1:525). On the other hand, if one adopts the horizontal reading of the text, all the languages of the ten realms are mantras, because

All sorts of names (signs) originate from the Dharmakāya. They all issue forth from it (him) and become the languages circulating in the world. The language that is aware of this truth is called the true word (*shingon*) and other languages that are not conscious of their source are called illusory words (*mōgo*).  
(KZ 1:526)

The horizontal reading of the world-text reveals that all the ten languages are nothing but mantra (mantra in the broad sense); however, only the language that knows this secret, the language into which this secret is built as a part of its grammar, the language that makes this horizontal reading possible, can function as mantra (mantra in the narrow sense). "As if the same medicine can be used as cure or poison, the same language [emanating from the Dharmakāya] either guides one to enlightenment or deceives one into delusion" (KZ 1:526).

In lines 3 and 4 (“All in the six sense-fields are letters, the letters / Of the Dharmakāya, which is reality”), Kūkai points to the reason for the possibility of the horizontal reading of the world-text, the reading that reveals all languages to be mantra. As discussed earlier, line 3 is where Kūkai presents his general theory of language—that all objects of the senses are letters, that all linguistic signs are first and foremost letters, and that what produces letters is differentiation. To further illustrate the implications of line 3, Kūkai takes up the objects of sight as an example from among the six sense fields (sight, sound, scent, taste, touch, and feeling) and explains in yet another verse why optical objects are the letters of the world-text. Kūkai precedes this second verse with an introductory remark: “All the six sense fields are letters. First, how do the letters of sight perform their work of differentiation?”

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| Defined by the objects of sight             |     |
| [the letters] of color, shape, and movement | i   |
| Are both sentient and inanimate beings      |     |
| both life forms and their environments      | ii  |
| As [the Dharmakāya’s] spontaneous play      |     |
| and as their consequences, [these letters]  | iii |
| Can either trick one into delusion          |     |
| or guide others to enlightenment            | iv  |

(KZ 1:527)

In lines i and ii, Kūkai reminds the reader that all the languages of the ten realms of the universe are already inscribed in the world-text. Not only objects described by these languages but sentient beings who speak them are aggregates of the same signs that constitute the writing of the world-text—signs that refer only to other signs, signs whose identities derive only from the way in which they are different from other signs. That is to say, although the ten realms may be separated vertically from one another by their languages, horizontally, their languages are written in the same alphabet and thus belong to the same system. Kūkai explains this mutually referential relationship that obtains in everything that exists, or in the written signs of the world-text, from a slightly different angle: “Because sentient and inanimate forms of existence are shaped by the letters of color, form, and movement, sentient existence does not always remain sentient and material existence, not always nonsentient. They are mutually dependent and interchangeable” (KZ 1:531). Kūkai then quotes passages from chapters 6 and 7 of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* concerning the permeation of the body of the cosmic Buddha Vairocana, the Buddha whom Kūkai identifies as the Dharmakāya.

The body of [Vairocana] Buddha is inconceivable. In his body are all sorts of lands of sentient beings. Even in a single pore are countless vast oceans.

(T 10:32a)

Even in a single pore are inconceivably many lands, countless as particles of dust, inhabited by all sorts of living beings. In each of these numerous lands, there resides Vairocana Buddha, who expounds the excellent teaching amidst a great assembly of disciples. In every particle of dust in these lands, one also differentiates countless lands, some small, others large. In every particle of dust of these lands, too, one finds Vairocana Buddha. (T 10:36b)

For Kūkai, this is the manner in which the differentiation of the signs of the world-text articulates the universe into multifarious things, both sentient and non-sentient. In this vision of the universe, a speck of dust in a certain realm, a seemingly simple sign in the world-text, is at once equal to countless Buddhas and their lands. A pore on a Buddha's body in another realm, another sign of the text, is a vast cosmic space encompassing countless galactic systems. As a result, the signs of the world-text are always polyvalent. This mythopoetic vision of polysemy in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* suggests that each sign reflects within itself other signs against whose difference the original sign's identity is established, thereby forming an infinitely referential network of signs that forms the totality of the world-text.

In lines iii and iv of the second verse quoted from *Voice, Letter, Reality*, Kūkai indicates that this polysemy of the world-text creates, simultaneously, hope and difficulty for the salvation of sentient beings—difficulty, because the ambiguity and indeterminateness of the signs make the world-text cryptic, if not illegible, and encourage it to be misread. The most obvious misreading, Kūkai emphasizes, is the reduction of the polyvalence of signs into the single, most obvious meaning (for example, “pore” as merely a physical part, “speck of dust” as merely a dust particle), which leads to the reification of objects.

For the fool, letters as such [the letters of optical objects, i.e., of color, shape, and movement] are the very objects of attachment, desire, and passion. Having generated greed, rage, folly, and all sorts of other delusions, they cause beings to commit the ten evil acts or five cardinal sins. (KZ 1:531)<sup>12</sup>

That is, from Kūkai's viewpoint, those who read the world-text only literally and linearly are bound to fail, for all the objects of desire reified by such a reading are in fact signs, which precisely because of their polysemic and thus polyphonous nature, are devoid of essence (*mujishō*). They are of dependent co-origination

(*engishishō*), and thus unattainable (*mushotoku*). The polyvalence of the sign can not be rooted in self-identity, which is always singular, but derives only from differentiation, the simultaneous difference of a sign from multifarious signs.<sup>13</sup> Being polyvalent, a sign originates only in the in-betweenness of difference, in the lack of origin, or the originally nonarising (*honpushō*) of emptiness. The factuality of objects, which derives from a deluded reader's fetish, is therefore always illusory and ephemeral.

On the other hand, Kūkai suggests that on the opposite side of this same polysemy of the world-text that makes for difficulty in reading is hope for enlightenment.

What does the Dharmakāya mean? It means the originally nonarising [nature] of all things. The originally nonarising, that is reality itself. (KZ 1:526)

All sorts of names (signs) originate with the Dharmakāya. They all issue forth from it (him) and become the languages circulating in the world. (KZ 1:526)

For Kūkai, the Dharmakāya is the origin of all signs that arise from difference because the Dharmakāya is the originally nonarising, the very lack of origin. Although the Dharmakāya remains invisible, it is never separated from the signs of the world-text: it permeates signs as their (non)origin in the space between signs—as in-betweenness of signs, as their differentiation, the difference from which their identities arise. Kūkai thus indicates in the third line of his verse two ways of reading the letters of the world-text as the vector pointing to the permeation of the Dharmakāya in the world-text. First, the signs can be interpreted as pointing to the spontaneous play of the Dharmakāya (*hōni*). This is the most abstract level of the manifestation of the Dharmakāya, its “self-nature body” (Skt. *svabhāva-kāya*; Jpn. *jishōshin*), the level at which it can be conceptualized in Kūkai's writing only as the interplay of the five elements, the five vibrant forces of emptiness. This movement of the five elements cannot be described except as play, for it has no other purpose than playfully producing differences through interfusion. In other words, Kūkai is proposing to read the world-text not of the letters themselves but of their interstices, where the self-nature body's spontaneous play manifests its very movement of differentiation, the processes of articulation productive of signs. In this reading, which Kūkai identifies as the “horizontal” reading of the world-text, all letters are equal in their act of making themselves the entry points into the Dharmakāya's spontaneous play.

According to the horizontal approach, all sentient beings as well as all things of their living environments are equal. . . . Horizontally, all sentient beings

are endowed with the originally enlightened Dharmakāya (*hongaku hōshin*), his self-nature, and are equal to all Buddhas. All their bodies as well as their habitats are the manifestations of the Dharmakāya's spontaneous play.

(KZ 1:533)

Second, Kūkai indicates that the signs of the world-text itself can be understood as the manifestation of the Dharmakāya, for they are nothing but the “consequence” (*zuien*) of the Dharmakāya's spontaneous play of differentiation. By means of this process of articulation, the Dharmakāya that hitherto remained abstract, in the primordial state before naming, becomes known by many names (signs) of its anthropomorphic forms, i.e., as all sorts of Buddhas in blissfully adorned bodies (Skt. *sambhogakāya*; Jpn. *hōshin*) and bodies corresponding to human form (Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*; Jpn. *ōshin*). Elsewhere Kūkai explains the Dharmakāya's transformation of itself/himself from the nameless to the named:

Without origin, without conditions, it [the Dharmakāya] is vast, limitless, and formless, just like empty space. This is called the Dharmakāya's great body. The Dharma of the Dharmakāya is naturally such. However, if only its great body were manifested, sentient beings would not give rise to faith, would not practice worship, for they would not see clearly the Buddha's face and body. For this reason, provisionally, the Dharmakāya manifests its small bodies [of anthropomorphic form] to illuminate sentient beings' minds, to plant faith in their minds, and to rouse their resolve to realize enlightenment.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the Dharmakāya assumes the emanation body (Skt. *nisyandakāya*; Jpn. *tōrushin*), a manifestation as all sorts of living beings and their environments. In this manner, it produces all the letters of the world-text as the traces of its spontaneous movement, the letters whose aggregate constitutes the threefold world (*sanshu seken*) of enlightened ones, sentient beings, and their habitats. This, for Kūkai, is the vertical reading of the world-text, the reading of its letters as the traces of the Dharmakāya's differentiating movement. In line with the discussions on Buddhas' bodies in both the *Mahāvairocana* and *Vajraśekhara* sources, Kūkai calls the letters in the vertical reading the “seals of the Dharmakāya's wisdom of differentiation” (*shabetsu chiin*).<sup>15</sup> However, precisely because they are “seals,” which are traces, they stand for the Dharmakāya's play in its absence, are signs of presence/absence, of the emptiness of essence, whose meaning derives only from other signs. In this sense, according to the vertical reading, too, the letters are not distinct from the Dharmakāya,

for they, as traces, are “originally nonarising”—which is exactly how Kūkai understands the Dharmakāya.

In short, the creative force of the world-text and the created letters within the text are but two aspects of the same Dharmakāya. At the close of *Voice, Letter, Reality* is this passage:

The creative force (*nōshō*) is the five great elements of five forms; creation (*shoshō*) is the threefold world. This threefold world is divided into countless differences. All these infinite differences are the letters, the letters of both [the Dharmakāya’s] spontaneous play and its consequences. (KZ 1:534)

Kūkai’s notions of “spontaneous play” and “its consequences” are the two directions in which the movement of differentiation manifests the originally nonarising Dharmakāya in the world-text, and also *as* the world-text. The Dharmakāya is never the transcendental signified, or the Truth outside the world-text, for the text is made up only of differentiating relations that have neither origin nor end. It has no outside. The text’s differentiating processes, the “spontaneous play,” are generative of the text’s signs, “its consequences,” and are therefore anterior to any name. The “spontaneous play” of the Dharmakāya appears to be Kūkai’s temporary designation of this yet-to-be-named differentiating movement of the text, the process without origin. To realize truth is, then, to play this play of differentiating processes and become immersed in it.<sup>16</sup> It is the world as the play of writing, which for Kūkai is “striding playfully of great emptiness,”<sup>17</sup> the play on which he once wrote:

Soaring mountains are brushes, vast oceans, ink  
 Heaven and the earth are the box preserving the sūtra; yet  
 Contained in every stroke of its letters are all in the universe  
 From cover to cover, all pages of the sūtra are brimming  
 With the six sensory objects, in all their manifestations.<sup>18</sup>

It is the book (game) whose encasement never succeeds in enclosing within itself the cosmic play (writing), or the universe as writing (play).

### On the Science of Writing

Kūkai’s discussion of all sensory objects as letters of the world-text provides a frame of reference for understanding his analysis of what text is in the narrow sense, i.e., writings of human language. In *Voice, Letter, Reality*, Kūkai puts it this way:

All sorts of differentiations of optical objects are letters. For example, the letter *A* and other characters written in the five basic colors [yellow, white, red, blue, black] are letters of optical objects. Various kinds of sentient and nonsentient beings, painted images, as well as gorgeous patterns woven in brocade are also the letters of optical objects. All these differentiations among the objects of sight are called letters of optical objects. (KZ 1:530–531)

It appears that Kūkai understands the question of human language as a local variation within his general theory of language, in which signs are above all letters, letters that are nothing but differentiation. On the other hand, in *Voice, Letter, Reality* (KZ 1:526) and in many other places, Kūkai asserts that all letters derive from the letter *A*. In his introduction to the Sanskrit phonetic system, for example, Kūkai states that the letter *A*, the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, transforms itself into twelve essential vowels and semivowels, which then join themselves with thirty-five consonants to produce 408 basic letters.<sup>19</sup> This seems to contradict Kūkai's fundamental principle that letters have no origin except their mutual differences.

Kūkai's answer to this problem seems to rest in his recognition that the letter *A* is simultaneously the most basic syllable of the Sanskrit alphabet and the "indicator," especially as a prefix, "of absence (*mu*), refusal (*fu*), and negation (*hi*)."<sup>20</sup> In *On the Sanskrit Letter Hūm (Unjigi)*, paraphrasing Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 39:65c), Kūkai presents his solution to this apparent contradiction.

The gate of the letter *A* teaches that all things are originally nonarising. All sorts of languages in the threefold world depend on names (signs), and names derive from letters. The letter *A*, as written in Siddham [a Sanskrit script system popularized in East Asia], is the mother of all letters. Therefore the truth of the gate of the letter *A* pervades all things.

What is the reason for this? All things consist of an agglomeration of diverse causes and conditions. Every one of these causes and conditions consists, in turn, of countless causes and conditions. The chain of causes and conditions extends endlessly without arriving at the origin. In this manner, one recognizes the originally nonarising nature of all things. There is no origin of all things except for their own originally nonarising quality.

Whenever people hear a language spoken, they hear the sound *A* [underlying all syllables]. In the same manner, whenever people see all sorts of things, they see there the originally nonarising. Those who see things as originally nonarising will realize their minds as they really are. Knowing one's mind as it really is—that is the realization of the all-embracing wisdom [Skt.

*sarva-jñāna*; Jpn. *issai chichi*]. This is the reason that Mahāvairocana made this single letter his seed mantra. (KZ 1:537–538)

Kūkai's reasoning here appears straightforward. For him, all things of the world are already letters of the world-text. Because they are the system of differentiation, the letters/things are of dependent co-origination and therefore without origin. Because the letters of human language are already a part of the letters of the world-text, they are also grounded in their mutual differences. If letters in this narrow sense have any origin, it cannot be anything but the dependent co-origination, which is originally nonarising. This is what Kūkai seems to suggest as the letter *A*. It is the origin of all the alphabet's letters, yet it stands at their origin only as a mark of absence—that is, the negation of unconditioned identity, immediacy, and permanence. The letter *A* is the origin of no origin. It is, quintessentially, the originally nonarising. In other words, the letter *A* is the origin of all letters because it stands for the very movement of differentiation, which is the absence, refusal, and negation of any self-presence of things, including that of their origin.

Kūkai says in many places in his writings that “the letter *A* means the originally nonarising” (e.g., KZ 1:404, 469, 508, 537, 730). However, Kūkai's reference to the “meaning” (*gi*) of the letter *A* is not intended to suggest that the letter *A* is a kind of cryptogram for a secret doctrine—an interpretation pursued by many sectarian scholar-priests (KATSUMATA Shunkyō 1970:116; TAKAGAMI Kakushō 1992:109–110). In the context of his discussions of speech, writing, and sign, Kūkai most often employs the term *meaning* (*gi*) in a particular way, i.e., to signify a value produced by a certain syllable or letter as it participates in the process of linguistic articulation. As he puts it in the passage from *Voice, Letter, Reality* discussed earlier: “Voice [*shō*] always results from vibration; voice invariably has vibration as its basis. When voice does not cease in vain and expresses the name of a thing, it is called letter [*ji*]. The names thus revealed unfailingly evoke objects, which are so-called reality [*jissō*]. That voice, letter, and reality divide themselves into myriad parts is called meaning (*gi*)” (KZ 1:522). That is, when Kūkai describes the “meaning” of the letter *A* as the originally nonarising, he is referring to the letter *A* standing for the originally nonarising play of differentiation that makes possible the signs' articulation of the world into myriad parts. For Kūkai, the letter *A* at once produces and permeates all letters: it is simultaneously the “spontaneous play” and “its result,” the two aspects of the Dharmakāya as it is manifested in the text of human language. “The Dharmakāya resides in empty space. The Dharmakāya is empty space, for it is the unattainability of cause. It [the

Dharmakāya] is the absence of the origin. . . . Because of this, the Dharmakāya is the source of all scriptural writings.”<sup>21</sup>

Based on Amoghavajra’s translation of a manual on the Sanskrit phonetic system,<sup>22</sup> Kūkai in his *Essential Characters of the Sanskrit Siddham Script and Their Interpretations* (*Bonji shisstan jimo narabi ni shakugī*) identifies the “meaning” of the twelve essential vowels and thirty-five principal consonants (KZ 2:724–728).

## VOWELS (MATA)

A	originally nonarising ( <i>bonpushō</i> )
Ā	quietude ( <i>jakujō</i> )
I	senses ( <i>kon</i> )
Ī	disaster ( <i>saika</i> )
U	metaphor ( <i>biyu</i> )
Ū	loss ( <i>songen</i> )
E	pursuit ( <i>gu</i> )
Ai	freedom ( <i>jizai</i> )
O	rushing stream ( <i>baru</i> )
Au	manifestation ( <i>keshō</i> )
Ām	boundary ( <i>hensai</i> )
Aḥ	release ( <i>onri</i> )

## GUTTURALS (KŌSHŌ)

## MEANING

Ka	action ( <i>sayō</i> )
Kha	space ( <i>tōkokū</i> )
Ga	departure ( <i>gyō</i> )
Gha	whole ( <i>ichigō</i> )
Ṅa	part ( <i>shibun</i> )

## PALATALS (GAKUSHŌ)

## MEANING

Ca	change ( <i>senpen</i> )
Cha	reflection ( <i>eizō</i> )
Ja	life ( <i>shō</i> )
Jha	enemy ( <i>senteki</i> )
Ṅa	wisdom ( <i>chi</i> )

## CEREBRATES (ZETSUSHŌ)

## MEANING

Ta	arrogance ( <i>man</i> )
Tha	longevity ( <i>chōyō</i> )

Da	vengeance ( <i>ontai</i> )
Dha	clinging ( <i>shuji</i> )
Na	argument ( <i>shōron</i> )
<b>DENTALS (SHISHŌ)</b>	
Ta	suchness ( <i>nyo'nyo</i> )
Tha	abiding ( <i>jūsho</i> )
Da	giving ( <i>se</i> )
Dha	universe ( <i>hokkai</i> )
Na	name ( <i>myō</i> )
<b>LABIALS (SHINSHŌ)</b>	
Pa	primary truth ( <i>daiichigitai</i> )
Pha	foam ( <i>shūmatsu</i> )
Ba	bond ( <i>baku</i> )
Bha	existence ( <i>yū</i> )
Ma	self ( <i>goga</i> )
<b>SEMIVOWELS AND SPIRANTS (HENKŌSHŌ)</b>	
Ya	vehicle ( <i>jō</i> )
Ra	taint ( <i>jinsen</i> )
La	aspect ( <i>sō</i> )
Va	speech ( <i>gonzetsu</i> )
Śa	peacefulness ( <i>bonshōjaku</i> )
Ṣa	bluntness ( <i>seidon</i> )
Sa	truth ( <i>tai</i> )
Ha	cause ( <i>in</i> )
Kṣa	exhaustion ( <i>jin</i> )

For each of these letters, Kūkai adds his notes, which invariably begin “the unattainability of all things as . . .” (*issai shōhō fukatoku*), to indicate his interpretation of their *meanings*. The notation for the letter *Ka*, for example, is “the unattainability of all things as action,” the letter *Na*, “the unattainability of all things as name,” the letter *Ba*, “the unattainability of all things as bond,” the letter *Va*, likewise, “the unattainability of all things as speech.” That is, because all things are of dependent co-origination they cannot be reduced to any singular essence or identity. Kūkai’s use of the term *meaning* (*gi*) here is exactly the same as the way he understands the “meaning” for the letter

*A*, which he interprets as the very movement of the originally nonarising for producing signs. That is to say, these basic syllables are not ciphers of doctrinal concepts. Instead, they are for Kūkai indicators of the forty-seven different manners through which the originally nonarising expresses itself as differentiation (*shabetsu*) for constructing the identity of signs and enabling signs' articulation of the world into myriad things.

This is the reasoning that leads Kūkai to understand the letter *A* as the source of all other letters, the source whose manifestation of itself, first as twelve vowels, and then as thirty-five consonants, will give rise to all the Sanskrit letters.<sup>23</sup> The established convention in the Sanskrit language in which the basic forms of all consonants are written with the letter *A* as their imparible part (SK 1:13–18) makes it graphically apparent that the letter *A*, as the force of differentiation, inheres in all letters.<sup>24</sup>

In short, the “meaning” of each letter in Kūkai’s table, shown above, has nothing to do with the definitions of words that appear in a dictionary. It is instead the characterization in writing of a different shade of the force of the originally nonarising—the letter *A* that hides itself in each letter’s graphic form. For Kūkai, letters are signifying potentials whose differentiating power, combined and interfused, generates countless signs of the text. They may be described as “differentials” in the mathematical sense, the points that encompass within themselves infinite numbers of values, or meanings, as possibilities for their production of signs.<sup>25</sup>

In fact, Kūkai’s *On the Sanskrit Letter Hūm* is his attempt to demonstrate the unlimited semantic potential of the countless meanings that issue forth from the letter *Hūm*. Kūkai first breaks down the letter into its four phonemic constituents—the letters *A*, *Ha*, *Ū*, and *Ma*—which represent four aspects of emptiness as the unattainability of the essence in all things as, respectively, origin, cause, loss, and self. He then states that these four letters together encapsulate within themselves all Buddhist writings in four areas: the principle of emptiness as the lack of origin; the teaching of dependent co-origination as the lack of cause; the practice of emptiness as the lack of suffering from loss; and the realization of emptiness as selflessness (KZ 1:548).

## Mantra as Textile Production

Elsewhere Kūkai resorts to the analogy between text and texture to illustrate his view that letters are the locus of infinite semantic production.<sup>26</sup>

The word *sūtra* means stringing or weaving. The [Dharmakāya’s] secret voice, the woof, and mind, the warp, weave themselves into the brocade

depicting the assembly as vast as an ocean of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Although brocades vary from one another in hundreds of patterns, they are all called brocades. In the same manner, Buddhas in the *sūtra* appear in myriad different ways. Yet they all are called Buddhas. . . . They distinguish themselves one from another by expressing their own colors and forms. Yet however divergent they may be, all these woven patterns are seals of the wisdom of differentiation (*shabetsu chiin*) of the same Lord Mahāvairocana. It is thus said in a *sūtra*, “I am the universe, I am the possessor of the vajra body, I am the devas, nāgas, and the six other guardian gods of the Dharma.”<sup>27</sup> In this manner, various aspects of the Dharmakāya interfuse with one another. That is just like silken threads of diverse shades lavishly meshed and yet forming a tightly knit brocade with a perfectly coordinated design. This is the meaning of the word *sūtra*.<sup>28</sup>

Kūkai here makes plain that the pattern of a brocade, the words and sentences of a scripture describing Buddhas and bodhisattvas, consists of the weaving of the voice and mind of the Dharmakāya hidden in a *sūtra* text’s texture—that is, the vibrations of the five great elements, the variegating woof, and the sixth great element, which sustains the harmony among the five oscillating elements, the warp that keep the woof together. Although Kūkai does not refer to letters directly, his textural analogy suggests that letters are the stitches of the brocade, the very interlacing of the Dharmakāya’s secret voice and mind. That is, letters are inherently linked with one another, for their individual identities emerge as knots within a network called language. By means of this interlacing, both the voice and mind, which hitherto were, respectively, amorphous, unnamed streams of vibrant movements, and consciousness, divide themselves into distinct parts producing the unique design of each individual brocade (*sūtra*). In this sense, letters are differentials, points of infinity, every one of which reflects within itself all other letters on the plexus, as well as words and sentences—multifarious patterns on the threads—generated by the very interlacing of the threads.

The Dharmakāya in this manner disseminates itself throughout the text as the latent force of differentiation that is productive of signs. Letters that constitute texts are the very expression of the Dharmakāya’s textual/textural permeation, for they are the transformation of the letter *A* of the originally nonarising—that is, the Dharmakāya. In this sense, all the words of scriptural texts—and, by extension, any other texts written with the same letters—are mantras, for they are the very manifestations of the Dharmakāya, which Kūkai describes as the Dharmakāya’s “seals of the wisdom of differentiation,” the traces, the simultaneous presence and absence of the differentiating movement.

Yet letters, as the marks of the Dharmakāya pervading the text, ordinarily go unnoticed. Just as observers of a brocade perceive woven patterns and not individual stitches, readers of sūtra texts read only words, which are the essential units for their semantic recognition. The knowledge of reading letters remains hidden from readers' awareness. It is this problem on which Kūkai offers his analysis of mantra, mantra in the narrow sense, i.e., a secret formula described in Esoteric Buddhist scriptures. In the last chapter of *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind* (*Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*), Kūkai states:

"O Lord of Secrecy, do you know how Tathāgatas practice their path of mantra? They do so by giving their empowerment [Skt. *adhisthāna*; Jpn. *kaji*] to the letters of worldly writings."<sup>29</sup> Because the letters of worldly languages are already capable of expressing what reality is, Tathāgatas empower [some of] them and present them as mantras. If one takes the position that the letters of worldly languages are external to the nature of the Dharma, that is nothing but the false view of a delusory mind. (KZ 1:410)

Kūkai emphasizes that when they take the form of writing, mantras are not intrinsically distinct from ordinary language. "Although Tathāgatas empower mantras with all sorts of merit they had accumulated in their countless eons of bodhisattva lives," Kūkai points out, "the infinite merit inherent in every one of the letters of worldly language is already equal to that of mantras" (KZ 1:411). Kūkai indicates, however, that mantra is different from worldly language in its working. *Ten Abiding Stages* continues:

*Question:* Even children of the laity [in India] study and memorize the essential alphabet letters of Siddham. Is there any distinction between these letters and the letters of mantra?

*Answer:* Although the Siddham alphabet table for secular education is identical with the table of mantras, people of the world are unaware that each letter of the alphabet is already complete in its graphic form, while possessing infinite meanings of reality. . . . People of the world do not know that each letter is replete with reality, that is, the words of reality (*shingon*), mantras. Words spoken without this knowledge are the words of delusion, which lead beings to the suffering of the three evil transmigratory realms [of animals, hungry ghosts, and hell dwellers]. When they become aware of this knowledge of reality [of their alphabet letters], they annihilate all their evil karma and attain the all-embracing wisdom. This occurs just as one's medical knowledge can transform a dangerous poison into the most beneficial cure.

(KZ 1:412)

In *Voice, Letter, Reality*, Kūkai explains the uniqueness of mantra by means of his interpretation of a verse from fascicle 2 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 18:9c), where the nature of mantra is discussed.

*The mantras of the Perfectly Enlightened Ones  
Are the generative processes of signs  
Like the teaching of Indra's jewel net  
They consummate all sorts of meanings*

The words *Perfectly Enlightened Ones* (Skt. *anuttara-samyak-sambuddha*; Jpn. *tōshōgaku*) on the first line mean the mystery of the body of Dharmakāya. The Dharmakāya's mystery of body manifested equally [as individual Buddhas and bodhisattvas, i.e., “Perfectly Enlightened Ones”] is beyond measure. As has been discussed in *Transforming One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment*, this mystery of body is reality (*jissō*) [unveiled by mantras]. The term *mantra* means voice, the Dharmakāya's mystery of speech. The term *signs* (*gonmyō*) means letters (*ji*). That is, voice turns into signs through letters. This is the relationship between voice, letter, and reality as presented in the above verse. . . . For example, whenever people open their mouths and emit their voices, the sound *A* is heard, the sound of the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. Yet the sound *A* can serve as an indicator for the Dharmakāya. This is the letter of the sound *A*. What does the Dharmakāya mean? It means the originally nonarising of all things. This is the reality of the letter *A*.

(KZ 1:523–524)

Kūkai grounds his argument here in his general theory of language, in which the primordial, protolinguistic cry of voice turns into signs by assuming specific patterns, patterns that according to Kūkai's definition are letters. The term for sign, *gonmyō*, in the passage above, literally means “names uttered.” Only then, when naked voice turns into names uttered, are objects of signs, the signified, *articulated*, and only then do they assume the place of things to be represented by signs. Mantra is identified with this primordial voice that turns into letters and then into signs. Therefore mantra is indicative of “the generative process of signs” (*gonmyō jōritsu sō*).

Kūkai points out that anyone who utters or writes words participates in this semiogenetic process by reaffirming the legitimacy of phonic and graphic patterns of signs and their use in a language system. Yet this is the very process forgotten in the conventional use of language—the forgetfulness that constitutes the vulgar understanding of signs as labels attached to self-present

things of the world, the oblivion that leads to the delusive experience of the world as *samsāra*.

Whenever people hear a language spoken, they hear the sound *A* [underlying all syllables]. In the same manner, whenever people see all sorts of things, they see there the originally nonarising. . . . Yet ordinary people of the world fail to see this as the source of all things. They delusively substantiate their own existence and entrust themselves to the current of the ocean of *samsāra* without having the means of escaping it. They are just like an ignorant painter who by himself paints with all sorts of colors a picture of dreadful demons. When the picture is completed, he observes his own work, is horrified, faints, and falls to the ground. Like this painter, sentient beings paint the threefold world with all sorts of things, all of which are originally nonarising, then bury themselves therein, and develop their rampantly selfish minds, which receive all sorts of suffering.

(KZ 1:538)

Kūkai seems to suggest that mantra in the narrow sense is a linguistic device provided by Buddhas and bodhisattvas as an antidote to the symptom he describes here. It is a wedge driven into the vicious cycle of semiological amnesia and the reification of the signified. For mantra is not merely illustrative of the semiogenetic process; it is the “generative process of signs.” This is the reason that, in the earlier passage, Kūkai interprets mantra as voice that turns itself into signs by first partaking of letters. In other words, mantra is a particular sign that, through its frequent incomprehensibility, induces a paradigm shift. To return to Kūkai’s analogy of text and texture, it is a shift of perspective from seeing (reading) only the designs of a brocade (signs, phrases, sentences) to observing the stitches (letters) that constitute the brocade’s designs. It is a shift of attention from the brocade’s surface patterns to its thickness, where the interlacing of threads, the process that generates stitches (letters) on the surface of the brocade (text), unfolds itself.

This shift in the orientation of reading the text from its surface to its depth lays bare the materiality of signs hidden in the seeming transparency of their representation of objects. Design patterns on the surface cannot be formed without material layers of intertwined threads, which in turn have resulted from the physical work of sewing and weaving. In the same manner, Kūkai suggests, signs are never separated from their material foundations—air, paper, ink, stone, and so forth—which in turn have imprinted in their materiality the somaticity of labor—vocalization, scribing, chiseling. Before they even become representations, signs are already material and somatic. For Kūkai, this means that all signs consist of the five great elements—the essential constituents of all

sorts of things of the world, both sentient and nonsentient—the elements that make up the Dharmakāya's body of emptiness. In short, the goal of mantra may be described as a *de*-semiotization: by means of illustrating the material foundation and physical labor inherent in constructing signs, mantra strips signs of their seeming transparency and exposes as illusory and fictional the apparent self-presence of signs' objects. In other words, mantra deprives the subject of its linguistic grounding, from which arises the fiction of the subject as the privileged user of language, as well as the subject's delusive attachments to objects, objects constructed by its own use of signs.

In *Transforming One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment*, Kūkai demonstrates this point further with the example of Mahāvairocana's five-letter mantra: *A Vi Ra Hūm Kham*. Quoting a verse on this mantra from fascicle 5, chapter 16, of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, he identifies the syllables of the mantra with the five great elements:

I [Mahāvairocana] am none other than all-embracing wisdom  
Manifesting myself freely in all places I permeate myself  
In all sentient and nonsentient beings  
The letter *A* is the primary ground for all lives [i.e., earth]  
The letter *Vi* is water; the letter *Ra*, fire; the letter *Hūm*, wind  
And the letter *Kham* is no different from space.” (T 18:38b-c)

With this quotation, which is illustrative of Mahāvairocana's cosmic permeation as the five great elements that constitute the Dharmakāya's body, Kūkai points out that because of the illegibility and incomprehensibility of the mantra in the conventional use of language, its letters bring their materiality to the fore. The five syllables are equated with the five elements not because the letters are signs or representations of the five elements; rather, the sounds of the five syllables, the movements of the atmosphere when the five syllables are pronounced, resonate respectively with the vibrant movements of each of the five great elements. That is, whenever voiced, the five-letter mantra emulates in its sounds the primordial colliding of the five great elements. The polyphonous yet amorphous echoes of the vibrations of the interfusing five elements are separated into the five distinct scales and tones intrinsic to the five elements and then fixed when they are given visual forms with Siddham letters. The five-letter mantra demonstrates through its explicit materiality the very semiogenetic process through which the primordial voice takes the forms of letters for their production of signs.

Kūkai also argues that the materiality of signs as such cannot be separated from somaticity, because the materiality of the five-syllable mantra is

the somaticity of the Dharmakāya. He illustrates this with his interpretation of Mahāvairocana's poetic proclamation (Skt. *udāna*; Jpn. *udana*) of his cosmic awakening in fascicle 2, chapter 2, of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 18:9b).

<i>I have awakened myself</i>	
<i>to the originally nonarising</i>	a
<i>Leaped far beyond</i>	
<i>the path of languages</i>	b
<i>And attained deliverance</i>	
<i>from all sufferings</i>	c
<i>Extricating myself from the chain</i>	
<i>of causes and conditions</i>	d
<i>I have understood the emptiness</i>	
<i>that is just like empty space</i>	e

The [Dharmakāya's] seed syllable mantra is “*A Vi Ra Hūm Kham*.” That all things are the originally nonarising [line a] is the meaning of the letter *A*, the great element of earth. The transcendence from the path of languages [line b] is the meaning of the letter *Va*, the great element of water. The purity free of all taints and sufferings [line c] is the meaning of the letter *Ra*, the great element of fire. The unattainability of cause [line d] is the meaning of the letter *Ha*, the great element of wind. The nondistinguishability with empty space [line e] is the meaning of the letter *Kha*, the great element of space. “I have awakened myself” [at the beginning of the verse] is the great element of consciousness, the wisdom of enlightenment. (KZ 1:508)

Kūkai interprets the sūtra's verse as a “translation” of the mantra *A Vi Ra Hūm Kham*. (Composite syllables such as *Vi* [*Va + I*] and *Hūm* [*Ha + Ū + Ma*] are reduced to their basic consonant forms as in *Va* and *Ha*.) Here each letter of the mantra is identified with one of the five aspects of Mahāvairocana's realization that he proclaims to the sentient beings of the world for their salvation. Here, the five syllables of the vibrant five great elements are Mahāvairocana's utterance of his enlightenment, the life breath of the Dharmakāya, who, according to Kūkai, permanently abides in his playful cosmic meditation, enjoying the bliss of the Dharma (KZ 1:507). The five-syllable mantra therefore encapsulates in its materiality the Dharmakāya's physical work of controlled breathing that characterizes his eternal meditation.

In this manner Kūkai seems to suggest that the five-syllable mantra is a meta-mantra that demonstrates the Dharmakāya's work of disseminating his life breath, the vibration of the five great elements, in the materiality of every alphabet letter, in the hidden depth of the text. That is because the Dharmakāya's

breath, the vibrant movement of the five forces of emptiness, as it manifests its work of differentiation (*shabetsu*), is marked most explicitly in the letters' materiality. All the Siddham letters are invariable in their power of expressing this somaticity of the Dharmakāya (i.e., in the powers distinguished as the "meaning," as they have been provided in the table of the forty-seven essential letters), and all mantras written with these letters have the power to reveal the materiality of signs. However, the five-syllable mantra is unique, for according to Kūkai, it unleashes the power of emptiness already impregnated in each letter as a primeval episode of the Dharmakāya's cosmic meditation in which he created all sorts of mantras, letters, and signs from out of his life breath.

## Letters, Life Breath, and the Cosmic Palace

Kūkai's interpretation of the five-syllable mantra appears to have been inspired by a prevalent poetic image in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* wherein the universe is portrayed as the Dharmakāya's cosmic palace (*hokkaigū*), the royal residence of Mahāvairocana, the King of Dharma, and his consort, the Queen of Wisdom (Skt. *vidyā-rājñī*; Jpn. *myōhi*). These are the Dharmakāya's male and female aspects, respectively, samādhi and mantra. In this imagery, Mahāvairocana's samādhi is symbolic of the five great elements, his physical constituents inter-fused in perfect harmony. The mantra recited, which is now indistinguishable from the cosmic Buddha's samādhi, is the sound of the vibrations of the five elements. It is the manifestation of prajñā, the wisdom of emptiness, the mother of all Buddhas. In their palace, the King of Dharma and his Queen are surrounded by countless Buddhas and bodhisattvas, their retinue, whose vast assembly transforms the universe into their *mandala*. All the divinities in the *mandala*, both male and female, are equipped with these masculine and feminine aspects, whose union—the consummation of their meditative practice—is generative of other Buddhas and bodhisattvas so as to sustain the lineage of the family of the Tathāgatas (T 18:22b, 23a, 24b, 31b).

For example, in fascicle 5, chapter 11, of the sūtra (entitled "Secret *Mandala*," T 18:30c–36a), to which Kūkai turns next in *Transforming One's Body*, Mahāvairocana enters a samādhi called the "Glorification of the Universe by the Equality of the Tathāgatas" (Nyorai byōdō shōgon zanmai). Mahāvairocana expresses his bliss of samādhi by uttering the single-letter mantra *A*, which issues from all his "voice organs"—not only from his mouth but from all his pores. The sūtra then describes how Mahāvairocana produced all forms of signs and languages from this single syllable *A*.<sup>30</sup>

In order to fulfill his original vow to save all sentient beings, he [Mahāvairocana] practiced [the recitation of] this mantra. Immersed in the samādhi, from all his voice organs he uttered the mantra in sounds analogous to all the voices of all living beings. With this utterance, new karmas rose and ripened in sentient beings in accordance with their original nature [i.e., the originally enlightened mind]. As the fruition of these karmas, all sorts of letters of diverse colors and shapes, all sorts of speech, and concepts corresponding [to these signs] manifested themselves. By means of these letters, forms of speech, and concepts, he expounded the Dharma for the sake of all sentient beings and caused them to rejoice.

(T 18:31a)

This appears to be the sūtra's mythopoetic depiction of what Kūkai has referred to as the generative process of signs (*gonmyō jōritsu sō*), at which the primordial, protosemantic voice transforms itself into signs via letters, which are differentiation. The sūtra continues:

No sooner had [Mahāvairocana delivered his teaching of the Dharma] than he came to issue from his pores all his transformation bodies [of Buddhas and bodhisattvas], immeasurable as empty space. Amidst this boundless world, he pronounced the single syllable [*A*] indicative of his permeation in the universe, a syllable heard by his audience as a verse, the "Procreation of Tathāgatas."

(T 18:31a)

Here the sūtra underscores that the Dharmakāya's generation of signs from the letter *A* and his invention of the discourse on the Dharma by means of signs are coincidental with the manifestations of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the universe. That is, Buddhas and bodhisattvas, too, are signs issued forth from the letter *A*, the originally nonarising, the force of differentiation—which is none other than the Dharmakāya. This explains why, in *Transforming One's Body*, Kūkai presents the verse "Procreation of Tathāgatas" as yet another translation of the five-syllable mantra *A Vi Ra Hūm Khaṁ*.

Taking forms analogous to living beings  
 I skillfully manifest the Dharmaness  
 Of all phenomenal existence  
 Thus established, one after another  
 Are all the world-saving Buddhas, śrāvakas  
 Pratyeka-buddhas, heroic bodhisattvas,  
 All human teachers, then finally the world  
 Of all sentient and nonsentient beings

All things generate and regenerate themselves thus  
 Eternally arising, abiding, decaying, and ceasing

(T 18:31a; KZ 1:509–510)

In this verse, Kūkai's two theories of language converge: that all things of the world are the letters of the world as scripture; and that all letters of ordinary language are the signs of mantras. The two approaches become interfused in the verse's motif of the letter *A* coterminously creating words and things—because, for Kūkai, both words and things are above all letters, that which is differentiated by the endless and beginningless differentiation of the letter *A*, the originally nonarising. A sūtra for reading is thus always a sūtra within the sūtra, the world-text. The differentiation within the text is also its outside, for the letter *A* of differentiation, the primeval life breath of the Dharmakāya, is both inside and outside the Dharmakāya's body. As a result, reading a line of a sūtra text is always reading another part of the world-text enveloping it, which relates itself to countless other texts within. For Kūkai, therefore, reading is never linear. It is always polysemic.

Kūkai's reading of the five-syllable mantra in *Transforming One's Body*, in which he has “translated” the mantra into the three verses from the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, is aimed at illustrating this polysemy by demonstrating that all these different translations are correct. As such, the meaning of the mantra does not change from one translation to another, but only expands, pulverizes itself, and deposits itself in the mantra's letters. The letters *A Vi Ra Hūm Kham* of the mantra are simultaneously the five great elements (earth, water, fire, wind, and space); the five forces of emptiness (the originally nonarising, the transcendence of language, purity, causelessness, formlessness); the Dharmakāya's breath; the Queen of Wisdom; etc. Yet each of the five letters is just another of the letters in the alphabet table used not only in mantras and in Buddhist discourse but also in non-Buddhist, or nonreligious writings. Thus each time the five letters are written, read, or recited, they disseminate through their materiality their inherently polysemic signifying potential. Furthermore, all other letters of the alphabet are equipped equally with this overabundant semantic force, because they are all transformations of the letter *A*.

In short, for Kūkai, a text is always a field of production, in which each letter's materiality discloses *labor*, some somatic force that has shaped the letter as difference from other letters. Kūkai's goal in analyzing mantra is to demonstrate the superabundant meaning already inherent in each letter of the text, or any text, even before the letters turn into signs of the text—that is, to demonstrate the pluralized value of a particular letter as the difference between it and all other letters in the web of language.<sup>31</sup> For Kūkai, the letter is the

primary metaphor of life, the seed mantra that germinates the tree of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the life breath sustaining the Dharmakāya's meditation, the seed to be conceived in the womb of Tathāgatas, and the originally enlightened mind. "Every single word, every single name, their every single generative process [of signs] is endowed with an infinite number of meanings. Buddhas and bodhisattvas may produce their manifestations, as countless as the dust of stars in a nebula, and have all of them explain in the worlds of past, present, and future the meanings of every single letter. Yet they cannot exhaust the infinite number of meanings [inherent in the letters]."<sup>32</sup> The *practice* of reading the text is aimed not at presenting a comprehensive list of all the possible meanings of the text's letters, but instead at playing with the letters and participating in their inexhaustible signifying production.

The rule of this play or game is, most typically, the meditative recitation of mantra. In one of his commentaries on the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, Kūkai writes: "The sūtra text is the brocade manifesting exquisite patterns of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, which are greatly admired by sentient beings. It is woven with [the Dharmakāya's] mantra, the woof, secret mudrā, the warp, and samādhi, the shuttle."<sup>33</sup> The meditative practice of mantra—which accompanies the forming of their bodies into the meditative postures of mudrā—is for the reader-practitioners their play emulating the Dharmakāya's weaving of his cosmic text, the semiogenetic weaving through which voice turns into letters to form the exquisite patterns of the brocade. The locus of this textile production is the Dharmakāya's cosmic palace. The practitioners' recitation of mantra is their entry into the Dharmakāya's royal palace, where they receive their new birth from the union between samādhi and mantra of the divinities in the mandala, and where they establish themselves as heirs in the family of the Tathāgatas.

At this play of mimesis, the practitioners' cultivation of samādhi through their recitation of mantra, the materiality of mantra becomes the very somaticity of the practitioners. The letters are now the physical constituents of the practitioners. That is, the practitioners realize that they, too, are signs of scripture, which constitute the "body of the text." Embodying in their recitation the breath of the mantra's letters, the practitioners become the movement of differentiation itself, the originally nonarising, which simultaneously generates their own identities and those of other things as signs of the world-text. Being different manifestations of the letter *A*, all letters that make up their names, their identities, distribute themselves throughout the text. They are many parts of the text simultaneously; they are the text itself. Kūkai speaks of this as the "meaning" of the letter *Ma*, the unattainability of self except as permeating emptiness: "I am the universe. I am the Dharmakāya. I am Mahāvairocana,

I am Vajrasattva. I am all Buddhas. I am all bodhisattvas. I am pratyeka-buddhas. I am śrāvakas. I am Maheśvara. I am Brahmā. I am Indra. I am also devas, nāgas, yakṣas, rākṣasas . . . and all sentient and nonsentient beings.”<sup>34</sup> However, Kūkai cautions that this identity has nothing to do with the identity in the sense of synthesis, or grand synthesis. As he repeatedly states, “All sorts of letters are differentiations” (KZ 1:530). That is, for Kūkai, there is no identity among diverse signs of the text, except that they all are differentiating from one another, manifesting emptiness ingrained in the text, whether it is book, a royal palace, or the universe.<sup>35</sup>

# CHAPTER 8

## Of Mantra and Palace

### *Textualizing the Emperor, Calamity, and the Cosmos*

In the introduction to the *Collected Poems of Soaring Clouds* (*Ryōunshū*), an imperial anthology of Chinese poems compiled under the aegis of Emperor Saga in about 815, the editor and eminent statesman Ono no Minemori (778–830) explained the importance of studying poetry for courtiers, paraphrasing the celebrated saying by Emperor Wen of Wei (r. 220–227): “Writing is the great work of managing the state, the ever-thriving enterprise. As time passes by, people will age and perish. However, fame and honor attained from excellence in their writing will remain” (GR 8:449a). The year 827 saw the compilation of another imperial anthology, *Collected Poems for Managing the State* (*Keikōkushū*), whose title was inspired by Minemori’s words. In the introduction to the new collection, Yoshimine no Yasuyo (785–830) and the other principal editors of the anthology wrote: “The task of writing is to unveil the meaning of all that transpires between heaven and the earth, to clearly distinguish ranks among people, and to understand the nature and principles underlying all things in the world” (GR 8:490a).

Minemori and Yasuyo, both of whom were acquainted with Kūkai at court through their mutual interest in Chinese literature, belonged to a new breed of officials rigorously trained at the Confucian State College who understood writing as a practical technology, mastery of which was necessary for the ruling class to establish and maintain the order of society. In their view, which represented the intellectual mainstream of the late Nara and early Heian periods, even the composition of poems was justified because of the belief that courtiers’ knowledge of rhetoric and poetics would lead to the refinement of their writing as a means of governance. That is, in accordance with its Confucian political orthodoxy, the Nara and early Heian ritsuryō regime expected its ministers and bureaucrats to qualify themselves above all as literati. Modern scholars have characterized this literary pragmatism of the early Heian courtiers as *keikoku shisō*, “statecraftism” (IKEDA

Genta 1977:159–163). It became particularly manifest as a ruling ideology in the policy of Emperor Kōnin (r. 770–781) both to strengthen Confucian education for training court officials at the State College (Daigaku) and to implement rigorously the *ritsuryō* laws.<sup>1</sup>

Emperor Kanmu (r. 781–806) continued in more radical manner Kōnin's policy for solidifying the power of the central government, which contributed to his decision to transfer the capital from Nara to Kyoto in 794. In the same year, the emperor removed the exemption for the sons of elite aristocratic clans from the state examination in Confucian disciplines prior to their appointments to governmental posts. In 802, he increased the number of the State College students majoring in law.<sup>2</sup> The combination of the strict interpretation of the *ritsuryō* and the intensified Confucian education necessitated compilations of massive legal exegetic texts, which were carried out under the aegis of Emperor Saga (YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1995:51–55). At the same time, one of the curricula of the State College, the study of textual production (*kidendō*), especially expertise in rhetoric and narrative construction, became recognized as the privileged ladder for bureaucratic promotion (MOMO Hiroyuki 1993:207, 243).

Replete with “statecraftism,” the Chinese poems collected in the anthologies of the late Nara and early Heian periods were identified generically as *ōseishi* (Ch. *yīng-chih-shih*), “poems responding to the emperor’s calling,” and their purpose was to bring praise to the emperor’s virtuous reign by describing the cultural sophistication of the imperial palace, the affluence of the capital city, and the peace and prosperity of the provinces under the emperor’s rule. The court officials’ pragmatic approach to poetry directly reflected their Confucian education at the State College. Section 9, chapter 17, of the *Analects*, for example, conveys these words of Confucius: “My young friends, why do you not study the *Book of Poetry*? Poems stimulate your emotions, broaden your observation, expand your fellowship, and express your grievances. They help you in your immediate service to your parents and in your more remote service to your rulers. They widen your acquaintance with the names of birds, animals, and plants.”<sup>3</sup>

For these court poets, even poems on natural beauty served the same purpose, for such auspicious things as harmonious seasonal change, the bounty of nature’s gifts, the calm and quiet of mountains and forests—recurring topics of *ōseishi*—were regarded as heaven’s blessing on the righteous rule of the emperor (FUJIWARA Masami 1988:72). For the Nara and early Heian court literati, poetic writing was also a political technology, which enabled them to capture natural beauty and transform it into an offering to the emperor that would enhance his authority. In this sense, their literary craft assisted the emperor in his rule, for writing itself became symbolic of culture’s taming

of nature. This idea is exemplified in the following poem by Yoshimine no Yasuyo on the scenic surroundings of his villa, included in his own compilation of *Collected Poems for Managing the State*.

A day of rest; to remove my idle thoughts  
 I open the *Odes of Ch'u* in the spring breeze  
 The quietude under the eaves keeps away the birds' songs  
 No traces at my closed gate of interrupting visitors  
 The first bamboo shoots glow in the forest's shade  
 The willows play with the winds, silken threads flying away  
 In the utter calm, I lie down and reach for my pillow  
 When I hear a camellia flower falling on the garden ground<sup>4</sup>

A son of Emperor Kanmu, Yoshimine no Yasuyo was a leading literati in Emperor Saga's court. He was the compiler, with regent Fujiwara no Fuyutsugu (775–826), of the *Continued History of Japan* (*Nihon kōki*), an imperial historiography completed in 819.

To Yasuyo and other court literati who took pride in this pragmatic approach to writing, Kūkai—who was also a former student at the State College—seems to have been something of a mystery. On the one hand, they respected Kūkai's talent as a writer and calligrapher. His skill at Chinese writing was public knowledge at court. Emperors, ministers, ambassadors, and eminent priests frequently requested that Kūkai draft their edicts, public speeches, official missives, or liturgical prayers.<sup>5</sup> In 819 Emperor Saga appointed Kūkai to a post in the Ministry of Secretarial Affairs (Nakatsukasashō). The emperor's purpose was, it seems, to charge him with the task of improving the writing skills of the scholar-officials in the ministry,<sup>6</sup> for it was around this time that Kūkai composed *Secret City of the Mirror of Writing* (*Bunkyō bifuron*), a voluminous work on the poetic regulations and rhetorical techniques of classical Chinese.<sup>7</sup> Yasuyo himself chose seven Chinese poems by Kūkai to be included in *Collected Poems for Managing the State*, an exceptionally large number for an individual poet—Kūkai's were outnumbered only by the poems of Emperor Saga and Shigeno no Sadanushi (785–852), the imperial tutor of Chinese classics and an authority in Confucian studies (ICHIKAWA Mototarō 1969:78).<sup>8</sup>

Despite his involvement in and responsibility for literary activities in the imperial palace, Kūkai regularly abandoned his duties at court for his meditative retreats at Mount Takao and Mount Kōya. Once he began a retreat in the forests of these mountains, Kūkai insisted, under his oath to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas he had to complete it without any interruption; thus he declined all requests to participate in social functions—whether the funeral

of the Minister of the Right, an important religious ceremony at a major Nara temple, or a visit to a prominent patron who had fallen seriously ill.<sup>9</sup> On the twenty-seventh day of the sixth month of Kōnin 7 (816), for example, Emperor Saga had his messenger deliver to Kūkai at Mount Takao a blank *byōbu* screen decked with brocade fringes, on which he desired to have a poem and calligraphy. However, Kūkai did not respond to the emperor for almost two months, until the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the day of a full moon, when his meditative retreat was completed. In the letter he wrote to the emperor on that day, Kūkai offered his apology: "I had immersed myself in the visualization of emptiness during the day and in the breath-counting concentration at night. I thus found no time for sharpening my sword of brushes or sporting in the pond of ink."<sup>10</sup> Kūkai's behavior, suggestive of lack of respect, or even disloyalty, to the throne, seems to have invited criticism from his fellow courtiers. The following poem sent to Kūkai by Yoshimine no Yasuyo sounds an unmistakably vilifying note:

What pleasure do you find in the mountains?  
 You even became oblivious of returning to our world  
 A secret scripture and a robe of a hundred shreds  
 All your belongings there, soaked in the rain clouds  
 The harsh sun will soon turn them to dust blown in the wind  
 For what do you vainly starve yourself to death?  
 No teacher in any discipline would ever approve you<sup>11</sup>

Kūkai replies:

A priest living a solitary life of poverty  
 I have no family, no nation, no homeland  
 No one's child, no one's subject, that is who I am  
 Water scooped from the moonlit valley stream  
     sustains my life  
 A breath of evening mist returning from the peaks  
     refreshes my spirit  
 Creepers and blades of glass are my robe  
     pine leaves and cedar bark, my bedding  
 For my night's sleep heavenly gods kindly draw across dusk  
     its indigo blue draping  
 The dragon kings devotedly spread forth white clouds  
     their white curtain

At times mountain birds visit me to sing their songs  
joined by monkeys dancing on branches  
an entertainment far superior to our own  
Smiling, the cherry blossom in spring  
and the wild chrysanthemums in fall keep me company  
The moonbeams before dawn and the breeze at daybreak  
wash away dust from my mind<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Yasuyo, Kūkai highlights nature in its naked, wild aspect. Yet he also seems to suggest that because of its unadulterated quality, nature cultivates his mind. For Kūkai, it is nature's taming of the mind, rather than culture's control over nature, that provides inspiration for his poetic compositions. His poetic enterprise was grounded more securely in the wilds than in the imperial palace. Elsewhere, Kūkai presented the following reminder to Yasuyo.

Haven't you seen? Haven't you seen the crimson flowers of the peach and pear trees in the imperial garden in the capital? They vie with one another in their fragrance and beauty. Spring rains bring them to bloom, yet winds soon carry them away. Wafting upward into the sky and then drifting down, they light on the garden. Courtesans rush to snatch them for their own adornment. Spring birds also rush for them and carry them once again into the sky.

Haven't you seen? Haven't you seen the spring water of Shinsen'en Park in the royal palace? Once it wells up from the deep, it begins to flow down a stream. Endlessly flowing away, the water appears always the same. Yet in no one place is water, continually flowing, the same. Changing itself into myriad forms, it is never the same and returns to the unfathomable depths.

Haven't you seen? Haven't you seen the countless people who lived in the world? The ancient sage-kings, infamous rulers, loyal ministers, and usurpers . . . none of them enjoyed a life of myriad springs. All of them, lofty and humble alike, died. Dying, dying, and dying, they all returned to ashes.<sup>13</sup>

Kūkai takes as his inspiration several of the early Heian court poets' favorite topics, the spring blossoms and the pristine stream in the imperial palace garden of Shinsen'en, which was said never to have dried up, even during the severest drought. Shinsen'en, with its inexhaustible spring water and constant seasonal change, provided many court poets with a dual metaphor for nature's bounty, perfectly framed by the palace architecture and the health and longevity of the emperor who secures the order in his realm. However, in this passage Kūkai

has converted the royal icon of Shinsen’en into a sign for the ephemeral nature of all cultural constructs. Kūkai seems to be saying that for him peace is to be found not in the royal palace, which was the center of cultural activity, but rather in his hermitage in the deepest recesses of the mountains. Kūkai unreservedly asserts that for him, writing is not a practical utility to be used in managing the state. As is discussed later in this chapter, Kūkai did understand writing as a technology; however, it was for him not a tool for statecraft but a sacred technology necessary for creating and maintaining cosmic order.

This difference may be the reason that Kūkai became the object of Yasuyo’s criticism; Many eminent Nara priests engaged in religious exercises in mountain forests, including Gomyō (750–834), Shūen (769–833) and other elite Nara clerics who served the court, as did Kūaki, as officials at the Sōgō, or Office of Priestly Affairs (SONODA Kōyū 1957). Yet these others, in their practices of writing and reading texts, seem not to have challenged the *ritsuryō* political establishment with regard to what the orthodox model of the text had to be. That is, the central point at issue in Kūkai’s debate with Yasuyo was not Kūkai’s occasional disappearance into the mountains but his view that text, writing, and signs were linguistic manifestations of the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness. Naturally, Kūkai dissimulated significantly with Yasuyo and other court literati when he positioned writing in relation to the imperial palace and forests, between culture and nature. Kūkai introduced to the early Heian court a unique theory of writing, literary craft, and the text, which posed a threat to the conventional mode of literary production employed by the court scholar-officials, whose intellectual outlook was notably Confucian. Kūkai’s theory also seems to have addressed the failure of the Nara Buddhist establishment until that time to develop a particularly Buddhist theory of writing that could compete with those of Confucian officials for hegemony in the production of the political, religious, and aesthetic discourse of the Nara and early Heian society.

### Rectification of Names and the *Ritsuryō* State

For the literati-officials in the Nara and early Heian *ritsuryō* state, compiling imperial histories was one of their most essential tasks, for it legitimized the reigns of emperors and their succession that maintained the Yamato dynasty. The Emperor Kanmu, for example, is described in one of the imperial histories as follows:

When virtue drives the movement of heavens, the gods and spirits manifest auspicious signs on earth. When peoples’ behavior corresponds to [this

activity of virtue], then the gods and spirits make propitious the movements of the sun, the moon, and stars. His Majesty Emperor [Kanmu] has founded his reign on the example of the [ancient] sage rulers. Having thus acquired a penetrative vision into the affairs of the gods, he extends his rule. His merit has been accumulated for years and his virtue illuminates all corners of the universe.<sup>14</sup>

This is exactly the type of reasoning through which Kanmu justified the campaign to expand his territories in the northern frontiers and the transfer of the capital from Nara to Kyoto, aimed at centralizing his power. When approached as Confucian historical narratives, the imperial historiographies of the Nara and Heian courts highlight auspicious natural signs that correspond to the righteous rule of the emperors—the episodic patterns are reiterated stubbornly until they virtually become self-parodies. For example, the *Continued History of Japan* reports that in 785, as if to praise Emperor Kanmu's decision to abandon the capital city of Nara, crimson sparrows symbolic of good fortune alighted in the imperial garden (KT 2:507). Also legion are the anecdotes of ominous signs foreshadowing malevolent court intrigues or treason against the state. These offenses first were met with just punishments meted out by the emperors; in the end the emperors mercifully pardoned many of those punished. In this manner the official historical narratives of the *ritsuryō* state justify the emperor's power as that of the Son of Heaven (Ch. *t'ien-tzu*; Jpn. *tenshi*), the ideal Confucian ruler. In short, in the imperial historiographies, the emperors always succeed, by means of their virtue, in restoring the harmonious equilibrium between the cultural and the natural and the appropriate correspondence between names and things.

The historian FUJIWARA Masami (1988:68–79) points out that Han Confucian cosmology was particularly instrumental in providing the *ritsuryō* political discourse with an ideological underpinning. Fujiwara refers to the most important annual ceremony of the Nara and Heian court, the celebration of the New Year, which, as in Chinese dynastic history, always began with the announcement by the emperor of new appointments of his vassals, followed by a royal banquet for his courtiers. The ritual appointments and banquet are symbolic of the exercise of the emperor's power of naming and of the display of his largesse in distributing his virtue throughout the world (p. 79). The *Written History of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*), the *Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihongi*), the *Latter History of Japan* (*Nihon kōki*), and other imperial histories all begin their annual chronologies with descriptions of the New Year rituals of the appointment and banquet to demonstrate the centrality of the Japanese emperor in crafting and sustaining social order in the context of Confucian cosmology.

At the heart of the construction of the emperor as the Son of Heaven in the *ritsuryō* discourse was the Confucian notion of *cheng-ming*, or *seimei* in Japanese, “rectification of names.” In section 11, chapter 12 of the *Analects*, Confucius explains the idea as follows: “Duke Ching of Ch’i asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, “Let the ruler *be* a ruler, the minister *be* a minister, the father *be* a father, and the son *be* a son.” The duke said, “Excellent! Indeed when the ruler is not a ruler, the minister not a minister, the father not a father, and the son not a son, although I may have all the grain, shall I ever get to eat it?”<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere in the *Analects* (section 3, chapter 13), one of Confucius’s disciples, Tzu-lu, informs his master that the King of Wei is expecting Confucius to join his administration and asks the master what measure he will take first. Confucius replies: “It will certainly concern the rectification of names.” Tzu-lu, however, fails to grasp the weight of the master’s point and disagrees with him. With uncharacteristic impatience, Confucius censures his disciple and provides elucidation: “If names are not rectified, then language will not be in accord with truth. If language is not in accord with truth, then things cannot be accomplished. If things cannot be accomplished, then ceremonies and music will not flourish. If ceremonies and music do not flourish, then punishment will not be just. If punishments are not just, then the people will not know how to move hand or foot.”<sup>16</sup>

These words of Confucius can be taken as a manifesto of his particular faith in language, the faith that words in their etymological formation capture accurately the nature of things. Therefore, despite misuse and abuse of language, which, when repeated and multiplied, leads to social decline, words can serve as norms for reestablishing social order, if their appropriate usages are preserved. The “ceremonies and music” transmitted from the golden past were considered the principal cultural apparatus for such a preservation capable of reconstructing the social order. Confucius took as his source of inspiration the administrative and social institutions of the early Chou feudal state, wherein, he believed, things of the world had corresponded correctly with their names. With the reconstruction of the Chou system of rites, or, “ceremonies and music,” which typically demonstrated to the king and his subjects what appropriate behavior should be, the order of words of the ideal past could be transferred to the order among people in society in the present. The rectification of names, then, does not necessarily mean changing names but rather refers to correcting and readjusting one’s behavior, relying on names as the standard. Kung-chuan HSIAO (1979:519) has explained this as a particularly conservative strand in Confucius’ thought: “The starting point of Confucius’s political thought was to ‘follow the Chou,’ and his concrete proposal for carrying it out was the rectification of names. Explained in modern terms, what

he called the rectification of names meant readjusting the powers and duties of ruler and minister, superior and inferior, according to the institutions of the Chou feudal world's most flourishing period." However, this conservatism does not necessarily translate into rigidity or inflexibility but into power and rule. Objecting to Hsiao's approach, David HALL and Roger AMES (1987:268–275) have proposed translating *cheng-ming* not as "rectification of names" but as "ordering names," to punctuate the "performative force" of this Confucian concept, which they argue has as much to do with words' ability to convey their meanings from the ideal past as with their creative use "to realize new worlds appropriate to emerging circumstances" (p. 273). To demonstrate the power of "ordering names," which parallels ritual action, Hall and Ames quote the following statement by Confucius in *Tso's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*:

Ritual vessels and names (titles) alone cannot be loaned to others—they are what the ruler controls. Names are used to generate credibility, credibility is used to protect the ritual vessels, ritual vessels are used to embody ritual actions, ritual actions are used to enact significance (*yi*), significance is used to produce benefit, and benefit is used to bring peace to the people. These are the important measures for effecting sociopolitical order. To loan them to others is to give them control of the sociopolitical order. And when sociopolitical order is lost, that the state will follow is an inexorable fact.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, with an emphasis on their performative force, "both name and ritual action can be viewed as formal structures used to capture and transmit meaning [Ch. *yi*; Jpn. *gi*]. To use the name or perform the ritual action meaningfully entails drawing an analogy between past and present circumstances to evoke this vested significance" (p. 273). This appears to be the reason, as the compilers of the imperial poetic anthologies of the early Heian court argued, that the art of employing words—rhetoric and poetics in particular—has a direct bearing on statetraff.

The central stage for this collaboration between name and ritual is the emperor's palace. In his study of the Former Han imperial court, the cultural historian of ancient China ŌMURA Mikio (1994:57–61), an expert on early Chinese cultural history, has argued that the ruling ideology of the Han empire can be described as a general economy of virtue (Ch. *te*; Jpn. *toku*). In this economy, all sorts of products—agricultural, industrial, cultural, and intellectual—were sent to the capital city, where the emperor designated himself the central axis of the universe. Even those goods collected as taxes were understood as offerings in praise of the emperor's virtuous rule. The

cream of these products were then stored as treasure in the imperial palace, and thus became the personal property of the emperor, both physically and symbolically (pp. 158–159).

The productive energy thus accumulated in the emperor's body was then transformed into virtue, the basic currency of the system, by means of his performance of daily, monthly, and annual rituals at the palace. Ōmuro points out that the architectural design of the emperor's residence hall of *ming-t'ang* (Jpn. *meidō*)—the Han reconstruction of the Chou imperial temple for the worship of heaven—with its interior decoration, furniture arrangement, and the robes worn by the emperor within, enabled the emperor in his ritual acts to simulate the seasonal change of nature (p. 191), emphasizing the emperor's role as the Son of Heaven, the pivot between nature and society. Because the emperor was directly linked to heaven, his ritual action was able to isolate the intrinsic goodness inherent in the harmonious change of nature. Ōmuro points to the statement by the Former Han Confucian philosopher Han-yin: “The emperor's virtue captures within itself the goodness of heaven and the earth, equals the brightness of the sun and the moon, harmonizes the four seasons, and oversees the movement of yin and yang. Neither summer's heat nor winter's chill affects it. Nor can time diminish it.”<sup>18</sup> Ōmuro comments, “[The emperor's ritual] activities are synchronized with the movements of heaven and the earth, the sun and the moon, the four seasons, yin and yang. Yet as the embodiment of a virtue that is far more refined than the movements of nature themselves, the emperor stands at the central axis of the universe and issues forth from there the cosmic life force of virtue” (p. 162).

The emperor in turn redistributed this virtue to his subjects throughout the realm as benevolent rule. The subjects then converted the emperor's virtue into filial piety (Ch. *hsiao*; Jpn. *kō*) for families and loyalty (Ch. *chung*; Jpn. *chū*) to the state to secure prosperity and harmonious order among themselves. This is the realization of the rectification of names—i.e., “Let the ruler *be* a ruler, the minister *be* a minister, the father *be* a father, and the son *be* a son.” The harmony and prosperity thus established were to yield surplus goods for submission to the emperor and thereby to initiate another cycle in the general economy of virtue. The resultant prosperity and harmony between society and nature would maintain the appropriate correspondence between names and things of the world from the ideal past as preserved in the Confucian classics of the five scriptures (Ch. *wu-ching*; Jpn. *gokyō*)—the *Book of Poetry*, *Book of History*, *Book of Change*, *Book of Rite*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the scriptural texts whose compilation was attributed to Confucius. These classics are generically referred to as *ching-shu* (Jpn. *kyōsho*), “books of temporal (literally, vertical) thread,” with emphasis on their textual intentionality of

preserving the rectifying names of the past in order to generate and regenerate order in the present. In other words, these are the transmitters of the sacred table of the perfect correspondence between things and words. They were consequently the most valuable of the treasures possessed by the emperor; and the Confucian scholars and scholar officials, whose work it was to preserve these classics and elucidate their meaning, occupied positions of great prestige among the emperor's subjects.

### Ritsuryō Buddhism and the Discourse of Calamities

The *Classified Records of the National History* (*Ruiju kokushi*), compiled in 892 by Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), reports the edict Emperor Kanmu issued in 795 decreeing the founding of a monastery in a remote forest in Ōmi province.

Among the followers of the true teaching [of Buddhism], the king is responsible for bringing it to prosperity. Although the teachings of the Dharma are countless, their essentials are transmitted by priests and nuns. As emperor, I extend my rule to the four realms [of Tao, heaven, the earth, and the kingly domain] and nurture millions of lives. Following the example of the [Confucian] sage-kings in guiding my subjects with virtue and ordering the world through rites, I am desirous of spreading the [Buddhist] way of subtle, unsurpassed enlightenment.

I therefore cleared a site in a scenic forest in the mountains, donated land, trees, and other property to erect a monastery, which is named Bonshakuji. I have appointed as the resident priests ten meditation masters renowned for their untainted discipline and selected three administrators from among them to head the monastery. As for the sustenance of the monastery, I have donated one hundred *chō* of paddy fields in Ōmi, two fiefs respectively of fifty farming households in Shimotsuke and Echizen provinces. My wish is to propagate the Dharma in our land as swiftly as breakaway horses and to make it a time to transform hills and valleys into shrines and temples for worship so that this auspicious work and merit of founding the monastery will be shared by all beings.

(KT 6:256)

Kanmu's promulgation plainly indicates that the late Nara and early Heian ritsuryō state legitimized Buddhist worship only insofar as it did not contradict Confucian cosmology, at the heart of which was the emperor's rule by virtue. Kanmu here explains his foundation of a Buddhist institution as part of his

effort to rule the nation according to the principle of the emanation of his virtue, which takes the form of the redistribution of the properties of the state. For the erection of the monastery Kanmu donated not only his land but also the labor of carpenters and craftsmen for building the temple structures and producing Buddhist images, as well as farmlands and their yields. At Bonshakuji, Kanmu designated ten senior priests to officiate at services for the peace and prosperity of the nation based on Buddhist sūtras copied under the aegis of the imperial house and circulated among state-sponsored monasteries and nunneries, where similar religious services had been performed.

In the edict quoted above, Kanmu presented the erection of Bonshakuji as an establishment in the wilds of a new ritual center where his virtue in patronizing the monastery was to be converted by the priests through their exemplary ritual acts into a display of loyalty to the emperor and to the state. In this manner, the nameless mountains and forests in the wilderness were transformed into the landscape of a religiocultural showcase for the rectification of names. In other words, the ritual at Bonshakuji was expected to make visible the benevolent reign of the emperor over land and people as the ideal relationship formed between ruler, subjects, and the nation's natural resources.

Although the ritual performed at the state-sponsored monasteries and nunneries was not Confucian, the priests and nuns at these Buddhist institutions performed rites whose symbolic function was to distribute the emperor's virtue. These services were therefore the local counterparts of the rituals at the imperial palace presided over by the emperor and his courtiers. In other words, within its *ritsuryō* legal structure the state had every reason to treat the clergy as an extension of its bureaucratic system.<sup>19</sup> In this regard, the Buddhist sūtras on the basis of which the rituals at state monasteries were performed also served as counterparts to, or auxiliary extensions of, the Confucian classics that were essential for the rituals the emperor performed at the imperial palace. It was not accidental, then, that the term *sūtra* was translated into Chinese as *ching* (Jpn. *kyō*), “vertical (or temporal) thread,” the same word used to denote Confucian classics, reflecting the effort by the Chinese imperial state that sponsored Buddhism to Sinicize the Buddhist scriptures. Not surprisingly, the ruling class of the *ritsuryō* regime viewed the Buddhist books as *ching*, the Buddhist version of the “temporal thread” preserving the names impregnated with rectifying power given by sages of ancient India. The following description by ŌMURA Mikio (1986:54–55) of the correspondence between the world and the sacred text according to the Confucian cosmology also applies to the place given to the Buddhist scriptures in *ritsuryō* society.

The emperor deserves to be seated steadfast at the center of the universe, because he personifies virtue most completely and purely, as illustrated in the *summae mundi* of all humanity—that is, the classic books (*ching/kyō*) of *Poetry*, *History*, *Rites*, *Change*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the scriptures that abound with exemplary visions of the acts of ancient sages and sage rulers, as well as the correct meaning of their acts. The emperor therefore is the source of law, of the nation, for the rise or fall of the world depends on his being.

According to Hsün-tzu, the virtue of the *summae mundi* embodied in the emperor defies such spatial limitations as geographic distance or political or military spheres of interest and permeates the whole universe. It is also eternal, transcending all sorts of historical changes. His virtue is thus the absolute fountainhead of meaning or meaningfulness that makes the world a cosmos. The virtue emanating from the emperor's body flows over from his seat at the summit of the world and travels downward through the conical hierarchy of things to reach the bottom-periphery. It then reverses its movement and returns to the center-summit, completing its circulatory system transforming the world into a realm of harmony and vigor.

In the official *ritsuryō* discourse of the Nara and early Heian periods, the practice of Buddhism was legitimized as a means of complementing the state's Confucian ideological control—that is, the Buddhist practices of *sūtra* recitation and other rituals were instrumental in distributing and invigorating the flow of virtue in this Confucian model of the universe (KAWANE Yoshiyasu 1988:288). Buddhist *sūtras*, the other sets of *ching*, or *kyō*, the “temporal thread” of scriptural literature popularized in Nara and Heian Japan, were accepted as supplementary corpora of the *ritsuryō* canon. They provided the textual foundation for the ritual services performed at state monasteries and nunneries, which served as strategic relay stations for the circulatory system of virtue in the organic cosmos of which the Japanese emperor was the center.

However, the social order depicted in *ritsuryō* writings (the emperor's edicts, court poetry, imperial history, for example)—which were grounded in the Confucian model of the classical texts, especially with respect to the principle of the rectification of names—seems to have had one weak link. Despite the idealized description of the social and natural order in *ritsuryō* discourse, in actuality Nara and early Heian society was continually shaken by drought, famines, epidemics, and other disasters, whose recurrence was not in keeping with the principle of a harmonious universe grounded in the emperor's virtue. These disasters were believed to be caused by *kijin* (“demonic spirits,” a generic term for ghosts, monsters, goblins, and other nonhuman

existences of ominous nature, particularly those deceased souls who hold vengeance against the living) that frequently invaded the cosmic order. For example, the imperial history of the *Sequel to the Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihon kōki*) quotes the following edict of Emperor Ninmei, dated the third day of the fourth month of Jōwa 2 (835): “I, the emperor, have been informed that an epidemic has recently spread throughout many provinces. Those suffering from the illness are legion. Such an epidemic is caused by demonic spirits (*kijin*), and therefore must be dealt with through Buddhist services” (KT 3:38).

Probably the most dreaded threat to the *ritsuryō* state was illness on the part of the emperor, the embodiment of virtue, who in theory had to be beyond the reach of any evil spirits causing disease. The same imperial historiography reports that in 850 Emperor Ninmei fell ill. As if to parallel the weakening of the emperor as the source of universal goodness, there were recurrent earthquakes in and near the capital, which led to looting, riots, arson, and other disturbances. Then, an epidemic broke out. In response, the court ordered the major national monasteries to recite *sūtras*, declaring that “pacifying the nation and repelling disease depend on the power of the Buddhas.”<sup>20</sup> These examples show that despite the Confucian outlook exhibited in its official documents, the *ritsuryō* state relied on Buddhism to control contingencies. From this point of view, the imperial historiographies composed with Confucian motifs can be read as a discourse on an endless series of disasters that had to be contained with Buddhist services. The following are just a few examples of such emergencies and the remedies pursued by the court as recorded in the *Continued History of Japan*.

720 (third month) Earthquake. By imperial edict, 320 novices were ordained.

725 (ninth month) There were drought, storms, and other unfavorable weather in the provinces. Three thousand novices were ordained.

726 (sixth month) The Grand Emperor Genshō fell ill. The court ordered national monasteries and nunneries to copy the *Lotus Sūtra*.

728 (twelfth month) To ensure peace for the nation, 640 copies of the *Golden Light Sūtra* were produced for distribution throughout the provinces.

740 (ninth month) The rebellion of Fujiwara no Hirotugu. The court ordered the copying of the *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* at the major monasteries and nunneries.

745 (fifth month) There were earthquakes, and volcanoes erupted. The court ordered major Buddhist institutions to recite *sūtras*.

745 (ninth month) Emperor Shōmu fell ill. Thirty-eight hundred novices were ordained.

772 (eleventh month) There were winter storms and flooding. A repentance rite dedicated to the goddess Laksñī was held at court.

774 (second month) An epidemic spread to many provinces. The court ordered priests of the major Buddhist temples to recite the *Greater Prajñā-pāramita Sūtra*.

778 (third month) The crown prince fell ill. Thirty novices were ordained.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, not only the recitation of sūtras and the performance of rites of repentance but also the ordination of more priests and nuns to carry out these responsibilities were considered to be acts generating merit. This seems to explain the extremely large number of priests and nuns ordained during national crises, when it was necessary to create merit of cosmic proportions.

There appear to be two reasons for the *ritsuryō* state's heavy reliance on Buddhism for crisis management. First, the Confucian principle of the rectification of names was ineffective against such problems. It excluded from its own rationalist discourse the evil spirits that were believed to have caused disasters for the state, for they were antithetical to the very principle established by the ancient sage-kings for their acts of naming. That is, as NAKAI Shinkō (1989b:166) has pointed out, demonic spirits, live and deceased alike, "resided in the realm of the unnamed, whose true identity remained unknown for beings in this realm." Their presence made itself felt as fear, passion, and pain, which manifested themselves as particular somatic symptoms, rather than as concepts to be grasped with the intellect (William LAFLEUR 1989). For the Nara and Heian court literati, nature, which was often a source of poetic inspiration, was also an object of abhorrence. Nature was the abode of the unnamed, whose invasion of society was destructive to the order grounded upon the principle of the rectification of names. The following words of the *Analects* (section 20, chapter 6) sum up the Confucian attitude: "Fan Ch'ih asked about wisdom. Confucius said, 'Devote yourself earnestly to the duties due to men and respect spiritual beings [Ch. *kuei-shen*; Jpn. *kijin*; literally, demonic spirits], but keep them at a distance.'"<sup>22</sup>

This is not to say that Confucian tradition failed to develop a theory that would explain the disasters that struck society. On the contrary, it developed a wide range of discussions in a class of texts known as *wei-shu* (Jpn. *isho*), "books of spatial (literally, horizontal) thread." In contrast to *ching-shu*, "books of temporal thread," which are essentially philosophical in tone, *wei-shu* literature abounds in anecdotes, parables, allegories, and metaphors, many of which aim at revealing the meaning of various symptoms of disorder in the universe. In

China, since the time of the Former Han, especially Tung Chung-shu's (ca. 179–104 B.C.) integration of philosophical and allegorical writings in an effort to establish Confucianism as the state ideology, the wei-shu texts had acquired the status of intellectual orthodoxy (KAJI Nobuyuki 1983:18). However, wei-shu literature's prognosis of cosmic disorders often found the emperor, the source of universal virtue, and his moral failure responsible for disasters. It thus pointed to the loss by the imperial house of heaven's mandate, which in turn justified a revolt against the emperor and dynastic change. For that reason, as MATSUMOTO Takuya (1990:160–161) has pointed out, the Japanese *ritsuryō* state—whose *raison d'être* was the maintenance of a single imperial lineage, alleged to have originated with the primordial gods of Japanese myth—was extremely cautious and selective in adopting the wei-shu texts as its orthodoxy. Matsumoto summarizes his argument as follows:

Although the Japanese imperial regime incorporated the [Confucian] theory on disasters, that did not lead—as did the Chinese experience—to assigning blame to the emperor, finding a scapegoat among his advisors, or causing strife among rival factions in the court that attempted to saddle their enemies with responsibility for disasters. The Japanese examples show that, as yet another demonstration of his virtue, the emperor frequently accepted responsibility voluntarily only to absorb the sins of his subjects, which, it was insinuated, were the real cause of disasters. At the same time, with regard to the reason for the failure to prevent disasters, the emperor often placed the blame on the ineffectiveness or failure of ritual services for spirits, rather than on the moral failure of misgovernment by the ruling class. Only then did the emperor order the entire nation to pray to Buddhist and Shintō divinities in order to halt disasters. In this manner, the authorities took the issue of disasters out of the arena of court politics into the field of religious ritual.

(p. 159)

Matsumoto's discussion leads to the second reason for the *ritsuryō* state's dependence on Buddhism in crises. In contrast to the indifference displayed by the Confucian classics adopted by the Japanese rulers, Buddhist scriptures developed a specialized vocabulary to address the subjects of spirits, the afterlife, and the different forms of nonhuman existence. As a result, the Buddhists' approach to national disasters was not so much prognostic, as in the Confucian wei-shu literature, but rather diagnostic. That is, rather than speculating on the meaning of disasters and accusing those whose presumed moral bankruptcy invited the disasters, Buddhist services were efforts to isolate

particular spirits as the cause and to pacify them in order to reduce or end the suffering they caused.

For example, around 788, according to the *Continued History of Japan*, Emperor Kanmu was struck by a series of family misfortunes; he lost his queen, his mother, and other close relations. In 792, his son, the crown prince Ade, became seriously ill. A divination revealed that this and all the other misfortunes were the vengeance being wreaked by the former crown prince Sawara (750–785), Kanmu's younger brother, who had been wrongly implicated in a coup against the emperor. In 785, Sawara was to be exiled to Awaji province on the island of Shikoku, but on his way there committed suicide.<sup>23</sup> In 797, Emperor Kanmu sent two priests to Sawara's grave in Awaji to perform a service conveying his apology to Sawara's soul. In 800, Kanmu posthumously enthroned Sawara as Emperor Sudō; in 805 he erected a temple in Awaji for Sudō's sake and sponsored in Nara a project in which all the Buddhist sūtras were to be copied. Those novices who participated in the copying were given imperial permission to be ordained. While the project was in progress, Kanmu moved Sawara's remains from his grave in Awaji to a newly built imperial mausoleum in Yashima in Nara province and ordered every provincial governor to erect a shrine for the worship of Sudō.<sup>24</sup> These events show that until his death in 806, Kanmu strove both to rehabilitate Sawara's honor and to remove his vindictiveness, so that his soul could be transformed into an ancestral spirit of the imperial house, that is, a Shintō god who would protect the emperors and their imperial lineage.

Kanmu's treatment of Prince Sawara's soul suggests that Buddhism performed crisis management for the ritsuryō state by serving as a religiocultural filter, neutralizing the intrusion of the unnamed into the moral cosmos of the ritsuryō regime, in which all things had to be properly named in order for there to be harmony. The Buddhist textual-ritual system of practice converted demons, spirits, and deceased souls into Shintō gods. Through the principle of the rectification of names, it converted the unnamed—the antithesis to the Confucian order—into the most exemplary “named” of the ritsuryō state, the guardian divinities of the emperor's rule.

However, the success of Buddhism in this regard under the ritsuryō regime also meant its defeat. Buddhist institutions legitimized their role in ritsuryō society by serving as an indispensable link that maintained the Confucian model of cosmic order. This appears to be the reason that the Nara clergy never developed their own theoretical discourse on text, ritual, and language that could have been presented as an alternative to that of Confucianism. Instead, they secured power by subsuming the texts of Buddhist sūtras within

the Confucian textual model. Buddhist sūtras, *kyō* (Ch. *ching*), thus became a cultural dimorphism of the Confucian classics, *kyō* (Ch. *ching*), the “temporal thread” which preserved a lexicon of names rectified from the ancient past.

This meant that the state treated Buddhist scriptures, too, as a treasury of rectifying names—or of names with rectifying power. Buddhist scriptures differed from their Confucian counterparts only in the things to which they were applied: not things of this world, to be managed according to the Confucian principle of virtue, but things that fell out of such an ethical world into the dark sea of *samsāra*, a realm charted not by moral laws but by the law of karma. In this regard, the *ritsuryō* Buddhist motto of *chingo kokka*, “protection of the nation,” was simply a defense of the Confucian theory of the rectification of names, which underlay the *ritsuryō* state’s ruling ideology and its defense against epidemics, famines, earthquakes, rebellions, and other disasters that would erode from outside the logical consistency of the social order built around the emperor’s virtue.

As the natural outcome of such an ideological legitimization, the state also treated Buddhist priests and nuns—those who preserved, studied, and recited sūtras for ritual occasions—as quasi bureaucrats. In their work of managing *kyō*, or classics, they were as important to the state as Confucian officials, because the *kyō* had direct and practical applications for the statecraft. As a part of the *ritsuryō*, the *Sōniryō* (Rules for Priests and Nuns) was strict in establishing eligibility for ordination as well as controlling the daily lives of priests and nuns. However, it also granted the clergy various privileges comparable to those of government officials, beginning with exemption from taxation and lenient application of punitive rules (SATŌ Hiroo 1989:50–51; SHIMODE Sekiyo 1994:28–39).

The Confucian model of the text and cosmic order also explains the *ritsuryō* state’s sensitivity regarding mantra and dhāraṇī. Because they were considered the language for communicating with demons, evil spirits, and deceased souls—the unnamed, the antithesis to the rectification of names—their use had to be banned under the *Sōniryō*, with the exception of chanting at state temples for the collective welfare of the nation and to heal the sick (articles 1, 2, and 5, NST 3:216–217). Those who dared to chant mantra and dhāraṇī on other occasions did not qualify as officially ordained clergy, and the suppression of those privately ordained priests and nuns who violated the state’s monopoly over the sacred texts and their linguistic technology was a perennial problem for the *ritsuryō* authorities in their efforts at maintaining social order.

## Refiguration of the Emperor: A Reinterpretation of Kūkai's *Ten Abiding Stages*

In the summer of Tenchō 4 (827), there was an extensive drought in the capital area. On the first day of the fifth month, Emperor Junna (r. 823–833) summoned one hundred eminent priests to the imperial palace and had them perform rites at Daigokuden, the principal administrative hall of the court, and at Seiryōden, the emperor's private residence hall, in order to bring rain. The emperor's opening address at the ritual service, which revolved around the recitation of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, was composed by Kūkai, who then was the junior priest general at the Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs.<sup>25</sup> The *Classified Records of National History* (*Ruiju kokushi*), compiled in 892, contains the report that on the twenty-sixth day of the same month, the emperor asked Kūkai to perform an Esoteric Buddhist ritual concurrently with the recitation of the sūtra and that rainfall soon followed and lasted for several hours until three inches of water covered the earth (KT 6:151). Emperor Junna, through the words of Kūkai, stated his intent in the opening address:

On the first day of the midsummer [fifth] month of Tenchō 4, I, the Son of Heaven, the father of the nation, the ruler of the isles of Japan, have purified myself with the severest austerities in order to repent the sin of my people. In the palace halls of Daigokuden and Seiryōden, I bow low, offer incense and flowers, and beseech the three jewels [of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha] to grant us rainfall. I have heard that the mind of Buddha consists of benevolence and compassion, which aim at giving joy to sentient beings and removing their suffering[, respectively].

Kūkai resorts to the Confucian notion that the emperor sets the moral standard for his nation. However, Kūkai's emperor appears most exemplary in his practice of Buddhist worship. Junna's address then reports that although numerous signs of approaching rain have been observed, such as low dark clouds and thick mountain mists, rain has not materialized and his nation is now at the brink of starvation. Junna asks whether such natural signs reflect the failure of his administration; that is, that appropriate policies were adopted and yet his subjects failed to implement them properly. He continues:

Even if there were sins on the part of my subjects, I alone am the one to assume the blame, for I am responsible for spreading humaneness to hundreds and thousands of people. According to a sūtra, when a king does

not understand the meaning of the name *raja* [king], then he would cause needless deaths for the people of his nation.

When the three relations [between ruler and subjects, parents and children, husbands and wives] are in disarray and the five permanent virtues [humaneness, righteousness, decorum, wisdom, and trust] are in decline, a nation is devastated by drought, flooding, and famine. On the other hand, when the same nation practices the ten good deeds and cultivates the five precepts, it will enjoy nature's bounty, peace, and prosperity.

I am now resolved to rectify myself in accordance with the teaching of the sūtra in order to provide proper guidance for my nation. . . . For this reason I have invited one hundred priests to my palace, to have them continuously recite the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, and make their recitation an offering to the most powerful ones among the celestial gods who protect the Dharma. I therefore beseech you, Emperor of the Dharma [*hattei*, a reference to the Dharmakāya], to lead your army of Dharma guardian gods and spirits. With your sword of wisdom, destroy the evil karma of sentient beings. With your cakra of divine power, crush all the ills of our nation.

(KZ 3:467–468)

Kūkai's reference in Junna's edict to the teaching of the sūtra that "when a king does not understand the meaning of the name *raja*, then he would cause needless deaths for the people of his nation" seems to echo the celebrated words of Confucius on the rectification of names quoted earlier: "If names are not rectified, then language will not be in accord with truth. If language is not in accord with truth, then things cannot be accomplished. If things cannot be accomplished, then ceremonies and music will not flourish. If ceremonies and music do not flourish, then punishment will not be just. If punishments are not just, then the people will not know how to move hand or foot."<sup>26</sup> FUJIWARA Masami (1988:80), for example, has interpreted this resemblance as evidence that Kūkai compromised with the Confucian orthodoxy of the *ritsuryō* state. Because the term *sūtra* in Junna's address is written as *kyō* (Ch. *ching*), which is also the generic term for Confucian classics, such an interpretation supports the thesis that under the *ritsuryō* regime Buddhist scriptures were treated as supplementary to Confucian classics, whose objective was to complement the construction of the social order in accordance with the Confucian discourse of the rectification of names. That is to say, from Fujiwara's viewpoint, Kūkai succeeded in propagating Esoteric Buddhism in early Heian society because he conformed to the existing ideological structure of the *ritsuryō* state, in which Buddhism occupied only a peripheral place.

However, a careful rereading of Emperor Junna's statement suggests that such an interpretation contains serious contradictions. Curiously enough, the term for "king" in the statement Kūkai composed for Junna is *raja*, the Japanese transliteration of the Sanskrit word for king, *rājan*. Had Kūkai's intentions been simply to demonstrate that Buddhist scriptures conformed with the Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names, then he would have achieved his goal by writing the word with the Chinese character *ō* (Ch. *wang*). The source for Kūkai's reference is the *Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī of the Protection of a Nation*,<sup>27</sup> an Esoteric Buddhist scripture translated in 803 by Kūkai's teacher Prajñā (734–810) and Muniśrī (fl. 793–806) in Ch'ang-an and brought to Japan in 806 by Kūkai himself. Chapter 10, fascicle 10, of the sūtra depicts a dialogue between Śākyamuni Buddha and Ajātaśatru, king of Magadha, notorious for usurping the kingdom from his father. Ajātaśatru asks the Buddha to relieve his nation from recurring calamities, and the Buddha agrees to teach the king the discipline of mantra as the means of protecting his kingdom from misfortune. Yet because of the king's lack of faith in the doctrine of karma and dependent co-origination, because of his association with evil men who are enemies of the Dharma, the Buddha cautions Ajātaśatru, "You do not even understand what the name king stands for. How much less, then, would you understand other names that constitute mantras?" The Buddha continues:

The word *king*, *rājan*, consists of the letters *ra* and *ja*. The letter *ra* [of *rajas*, defilement] is the voice of suffering crying for salvation, the voice of sentient beings who cannot find any refuge from their suffering. Thus every time the word *king* is uttered, be compassionate to them and resolve to be their leader, their protection from suffering and their comfort from sorrow. The letter *ja* [of *jaya*, victory] has such meanings as victory, excellence, nobility, freedom, and courageousness. It also stands for the victory of wisdom (*prajñā*), which destroys the delusive arrogance of all sentient beings. (T 19:572a)

The power of a king derives from the combination of two opposing potentialities, the most abject and most sublime (Gilles DELEUZE and Félix GUATTARI 1992:209), whose power, when expressed positively, is even comparable to the Buddhas' compassion and wisdom. The Buddha thus makes Ajātaśatru realize that even the word *king*, when interpreted in light of the Esoteric Buddhist theory of language, transforms itself into the mantra for protecting the nation. The Buddha's teaching to Ajātaśatru therefore serves as an example of Kūkai's assertion that every single letter of the alphabet is already saturated with numerous meanings and that all signs consisting of the alphabetic syllables are already mantras.

In short, despite its apparent similarity with the Confucian notion of the rectification of names, Kūkai's use of the term *raja* does not mean that he was compromising with Confucian orthodoxy. On the contrary, it exemplifies his strategy of infiltrating the Buddhist theory of language and text into normative *ritsuryō* discourse. The seemingly conformist rhetoric in Kūkai's writings was in fact a device to make Confucian concepts the primary channel for disseminating his new discourse. Kūkai does not aim at destroying the existing discourse on emperorship simply because of its dominantly Confucian content; rather, he attempts to refigure its trope in such a way that Confucian ideology no longer occupies a privileged, hegemonic position. For Kūkai, the king who knows the meaning of the word *king* cannot simply be explained as the Confucian Son of Heaven whose reign is grounded in the principle of the rectification of names. He is first and foremost a Buddhist monarch who, endowed with wisdom and compassion, knows the secret of reading every word as a mantra and thereby unleashing the power that inheres in each name and using that power for his peaceful rule over the realm.

In 830, only a few years after promulgating the decree drafted by Kūkai, Emperor Junna requested that representatives of the Six Nara Schools and the Tendai and Shingon Schools each submit an explanation of their teachings.<sup>28</sup> Kūkai's response to the imperial behest took the form of *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind According to the Secret Mandalas* (*Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*, KZ 1:125–415). Existing modern studies on Kūkai have made this work famous as his magnum opus and have argued that therein he presented the Esoteric Buddhist system of “doctrinal judgment” (Ch. *p'an-chiao*; Jpn. *hangyō*), aimed at establishing the superiority of the Shingon School over other major Buddhist schools. TAKAGAMI Kakushō (1992:42–60), for example, as an outline of Kūkai's work offers the following scheme, in which the ten stages correspond to the ten fascicles of the tome.

### I. Pre-Buddhist Stages

Fascicle 1. The stage of uncontrolled desire driven by the urge for food and sex.

Fascicle 2. The stage of ethical actions, corresponding to Confucianism and to the Buddhist teaching of the precepts for the laity.

Fascicle 3. The stage of primitive worship of gods and celestial beings, corresponding to religious Taoism and to various non-Buddhist Indian religious and philosophical systems.

### II. Buddhist Stages

#### A. Hīnayāna

Fascicle 4. The stage of śrāvakas.

Fascicle 5. The stage of *pratyeka-buddhas*.

B. *Mahāyāna*

Fascicle 6. The stage of the *Yogācāra* (*Hossō*) School.

Fascicle 7. The stage of the *Mādhyamika* (*Sanron*) School.

Fascicle 8. The stage of the *T'ien-t'ai* (*Tendai*) School.

Fascicle 9. The stage of the *Hua-yen* (*Kegon*) School.

C. *Vajrayāna* or *Mantrayāna*

Fascicle 10. The stage of the *Shingon* School.

For Miyasaka and other sectarian scholars, Kūkai's work was a declaration that all Buddhist schools and other non-Buddhist philosophical and religious systems known to the early Heian intelligentsia were, in fact, stages of spiritual ascent whose summit, the stage of enlightenment, was occupied by the *Shingon* School. However, such a reading of *Ten Abiding Stages* does not necessarily illustrate the *historical* impact of the work, which was neither the only nor the first place in which Kūkai announced his famous hierarchical schema. Already in 822, in the liturgical text he composed to be recited at his abhiṣeka at Tōdaiji, Nara, to induct into the Esoteric Buddhist clergy the abdicated emperor Heizei, Kūkai illustrated how all the Nara Schools and the *Tendai* School, representing Exoteric Buddhism, could be subsumed under the authority of the esoteric *Shingon* School; and in his celebrated commentary on the *Prajñā-pāramitā Heart Sūtra*, which may have been composed as early as 818, Kūkai classified Buddhist schools as *Hinayāna*, *Mahāyāna*, and *Vajrayāna* (Esotericism), in a manner identical to that in *Ten Abiding Stages*.<sup>29</sup>

Aside from its schematic structure—in which the work's uniqueness rests only in the inclusion of Confucianism, Taoism, and some Hindu systems as the rudimentary pre-Buddhist stages of spiritual development—the most strikingly inventive aspect of *Ten Abiding Stages* is the trope by which Kūkai depicted each stage as a “palace” (*kyū* or *gū*). As he explains in the work's introduction, “the term *palace* means the abode that shelters beings from dangers and sufferings” (KZ 1:401). Thus Kūkai underscores the sense of “abiding” (*jū*) in his use of the concept of stage, so that it refers not only to processes of spiritual growth, but also in a physical sense to places, abodes, or habitats in the Buddhist cosmology. For example, “both the ‘palace’ for human beings and that for celestial beings are realms of great comfort and pleasure compared with the three preceding transmigratory paths of hell dwellers, hungry ghosts, and animals. Yet neither of these escape from the world-ending fire,” which symbolizes the suffering of *samsāra*. Therefore, Kūkai continues, “the Buddha, the compassionate father, devised various vehicles [of Buddhist teaching] to guide beings into the realization of all-embracing

wisdom” (KZ 1:127). Kūkai elaborated this point further in his lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra* at Tōdaiji in 834: “All these schools are palaces of the King of Dharma, palaces that together form the entire universe.”<sup>30</sup> That is, the ten stages, when combined, are the grand cosmic palace (*hokkaigū*, or *hokkai shinden*)—the universe as the palace of the King of Dharma—with the tenth and highest stage at the center, “the inmost secret palace of the King of Mind, the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana” (KZ 1:129), and the other stages, the outer palaces, surrounding the inner palace. In this sense, *Ten Abiding Stages* represents Kūkai’s effort to construct an Esoteric Buddhist model of the universe in the format of writing, in which the text of *Ten Abiding Stages* itself replicates the order of the universe, thereby turning its own textuality into a metaphor for one of the essential themes of Kūkai’s theory of language, the nonduality of text and world.<sup>31</sup>

Kūkai’s liberal use of the idea of the palace throughout *Ten Abiding Stages* brings to the fore the relevance of kingship to Tathāgatahood—that is, the relationship between political authority and Buddhism. In light of the fact that he composed the work for Emperor Junna’s perusal, his palatial trope was essential to Kūkai’s writing, for it enabled him to broach the subject of rulership and integrate that subject into his discussion proper. In fact, in fascicle 2, which he titles the “Palace of Human Beings” (*ningū*), one of the lengthiest fascicles in the work, Kūkai developed a detailed discussion of ideal rulership. With apparently blasphemous overtones, Kūkai arranged his work in such a manner that Emperor Junna, in his reading of *Ten Abiding Stages*, would have to locate himself and his royal palace, a “palace of human beings,” in the second-lowest stage in Kūkai’s Esoteric Buddhist cosmology. However, Kūkai seems to have compensated for his derogatory positioning of the royal palace by granting the ruler a pivotal role in maintaining cosmic order. In *Ten Abiding Stages*, the ruler’s palace symbolizes the perfection of morality, serving as the watershed between the state of the basest human existence in the first stage and the state of pious devotion in the third stage. As I discuss later in this section, Kūkai argued that the ruler’s ethical actions, through which he supports the Buddhist clergy’s religious life, are essential for maintaining the order of society. This is because only through the ruler’s righteous patronage of the clergy’s textual and ritual studies can the entire universe be revealed and made legible as the cosmic scripture, which not only maps out and keeps open the path for the nation to communicate with divinities residing in their “palaces” in the higher echelons of the universe but also shows that all things in the universe are already the sacred words of the cosmic scripture that manifests ultimate reality.

These considerations, when taken together, illustrate that Kūkai’s principal intent in writing *Ten Abiding Stages* was not so much to put forth doctrinal

judgment as to present Emperor Junna with a Buddhist alternative to the Confucian model of rulership, social order, and cosmology—an alternative Kūkai claimed was far superior in generating a righteous ruler and a peaceful nation. According to this reading, the discussion of the ideal Buddhist king and his palace in fascicle 2 provides the focal point of the entire text of *Ten Abiding Stages*; it is the core of his trope from which issues the rationale for characterizing other stages, too, as “palaces.”

One of Kūkai’s central arguments in fascicle 2 is that what ultimately destines someone to be enthroned as king of a nation is not a royal lineage to which he happened to have belonged but his moral acts and merit accrued in both his present and past lives. Kūkai illustrates this point by quoting the following passage from the *Sūtra of the Virtuous King*—a popular sūtra in East Asia, suspected to be of apocryphal Chinese origin, whose worship, together with that of the *Golden Light Sūtra*, was endorsed by the Japanese imperial house.<sup>32</sup>

To attain freedom from suffering in the bitter sea of saṃsāra, living beings rely on the ten good deeds to cultivate themselves in the bodhisattva practice. Even those whose mastery [of the ten goods deeds] is yet imperfect attain the lives of ordinary kings. Those who have accomplished excellent mastery [of the ten good deeds] will attain the lives of universal monarchs [Skt. *cakravartin*; Jpn. *tenrin shōō*.] (T 8:827b; KZ 1:189)

Kūkai underscores the observance of basic Buddhist precepts such as the five precepts (Skt. *pañca-śīla*; Jpn. *gokai*)—the prohibitions against murder, theft, lying, improper sexual acts, and intoxication—and the ten good deeds (Skt. *daśa-kuśala-karmapatha*; Jpn. *jūzen gōdō*)—the prohibitions against murder, theft, improper sexual relations, lying, duplicity, slandering, flattery, greediness, wrathfulness, and folly—as the essential condition for a king to qualify himself as a righteous ruler. Yet ordinary kings, whose expertise, unlike that of the clergy, is not in religious cultivation, are prone to occasional moral failures. This is where Kūkai recognizes the merit of Confucian classics—by means of his liberal quotes from Confucius’s *Analects*, the *Book of History*, *Tso’s Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*, and others<sup>33</sup>—that describe methods by which a king can establish himself as an exemplar of moral virtue. In this regard, Kūkai follows the example set by Chinese Buddhist apologetic literature and argues for compatibility between Buddhist precepts and Confucian moral principles.<sup>34</sup>

Kūkai does not necessarily invalidate the Confucian characterization of the Japanese emperor as the Son of Heaven (Ch. *t’ien-tzu*; Jpn. *tenshi*). However, for Kūkai, such a divine status of the emperor is not congenital, bound to the ruler’s blood lineage, but rather a natural outcome of good moral acts in his

previous existences. Hence Kūkai's explanation that emperors cannot always be trusted as apotheoses of moral virtue who enjoy a particular affinity with heaven, as theorized in Confucian classics. With their cultivation of the Dharma still incomplete, emperors can become morally degenerate, lose their mandate of heaven (Ch. *t'ien-ming*; Jpn. *tenmei*), and cause all sorts of disasters in their domains. That is, Confucian theories of virtue, of the righteous ruler, and of cosmic order sustained by the ruler's virtuous rule are true only insofar as they accord with the Buddhist theory of karma.

Kūkai refers to these ordinary kings whose moral cultivation remains imperfect as *zokusannō* (Ch. *su-san-wang*), literally, “a scattered millet grain king,” a king whose domain is as trifling as a scattered grain of millet, a derogatory term borrowed from the *Virtuous King Sūtra* (T 8:827b). In contrast, Kūkai describes those extraordinary kings who have completed their moral cultivation in accordance with Buddhist precepts, those rulers who no longer need to be assisted by Confucian ethical philosophy, as *cakravartin* (Ch. *chuan-lun sheng-wang*; Jpn. *tenrin shōō*), the legendary universal monarchs of Buddhist literature, who, unlike scattered millet grain kings, reign over entire cosmic continents by means of their rule of the Dharma. Kūkai refers to fascicle 17 of the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā Śāstra*,<sup>35</sup> attributed to Nāgārjuna, which states that cakravartins are those bodhisattvas abiding in the second stage (the freedom from all defilement) in the last ten of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice, spiritually advanced beings who through their transmigratory lives will eventually emerge as Tathāgatas (T 26:121b–122a; KZ 1:214).

When a virtuous king, born in the class of warriors (*ksatrya*), receives the abhiṣeka [of enthronement], fifteen days later he is to receive the Buddhist precepts. Having finished his ablution and upheld the precepts, the king ascends to his elevated palace tower accompanied by his advisors and ministers. If there appears suddenly in the sky in the east [the weapon of] a jeweled gold *cakra* [wheel], then, the king must be recognized as the universal monarch of the gold cakra. . . .<sup>36</sup>

Just like Buddhas, no two cakravartins appear in the world simultaneously. No cakravartins resort to violence. They effortlessly conquer their enemy kings with virtue, assure these kings' rules in their domains, and guide them into the practice of the ten good precepts. Because of these deeds, when cakravartins die, they attain their next birth in celestial realms.

Kūkai underscores that cakravartins unify the world and realize peace by means of their turning the weapons known as cakra. However, their cakras are not the lethal disks held by some Hindu celestial gods but those of the Dharma. In this

manner Kūkai ascertains the claim of the tradition that all Buddhas were born as crown princes, that they were destined to be either cakravartins or world saviors, and that cakravartins represent the unutilized, secondary potential of Buddhas. In other words, cakravartins are the secular counterpart of Tathāgatas and thus share some of their attributes—for example, that no two cakravartins appear simultaneously in the world and that cakravartins are endowed with the thirty-two auspicious physical marks of Tathāgatas. Another important feature of cakravartins that Kūkai calls attention to is that they possess the seven imperial regalia, corresponding to the seven legs of enlightenment,<sup>37</sup> which collectively are one of the emblems of Tathāgatas. The seven regalia consist of the jeweled cakra; the mighty white elephant; the blue flying horse; the “jewel queen” (*gyokujo*), who is the paragon of wisdom, virtue, and beauty; the world-illuminating gem; the ministers capable of discovering hidden treasure in the monarchs’ domain; and the loyal generals, who are geniuses of military strategies. Surrounded by these treasures, cakravartins rule the universe from their royal palaces, which are built at the most auspicious location in the world by celestial architects descended from their heavenly abodes to glorify the monarchs with their skills.<sup>38</sup>

Ordinarily in Buddhist commentaries, the world-conquering weapon, cakra, is considered the most essential of the seven regalia of the universal monarchs (John STRONG 1983:46). However, Kūkai highlights the importance of the gem, which he interprets as *cintāmani*, the wish-granting jewel, an iconographic symbol of the power of mantra described in chapter 14 of the *Golden Light Sūtra* (T 16:433b–434b), which protects kings from every sort of calamity.<sup>39</sup> With another reference to the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā Śāstra*, Kūkai points to the four wish-granted merits (Ch. *ssu ju-i-te*; Jpn. *shinyoitoku*) of cakravartins symbolized by the gem. “The first virtue [of cakravartins] is their exquisite and dignified physical appearance, unexcelled in the four cosmic continents. Second, they are free of illness and pain. Third, they possess profound compassion toward sentient beings. Fourth, they are blessed with health and longevity” (T 26:122a–b; KZ 1:217). With yet another lengthy quote from the śāstra, Kūkai suggests that these four personal merits of cakravartins, which are comparable to the wish-granting jewel, reproduce themselves as peace and prosperity and guard the nation against calamities, wars, epidemics, and famines.

Kūkai’s argument in fascicle 2 of *Ten Abiding Stages* makes plain that the Japanese emperor, who continued to rely on Confucian classics to cultivate himself and who possessed no regalia symbolizing his authority comparable to that of the legendary cakravartin, had to be categorized as a “scattered millet grain king.”<sup>40</sup> At the same time, however, Kūkai provides a method

by which the Japanese emperor can improve himself so that the reality of his rule will be brought closer to the ideal reign by cakravartins. This method is related to Kūkai's use of the concept of abhiṣeka in the text of *Ten Abiding Stages*. Kūkai repeatedly points out that erecting a mandala altar, receiving abhiṣeka there, and having the clergy perform *homa* (Jpn. *goma*) and other esoteric rituals to benefit his nation constitute the most meritorious acts for a king, testimony to his love of goodness and righteousness (KZ 1:200, 206). He asserts that the ultimate goal of all cakravartins, as exemplary lay Buddhist practitioners, is to eventually leave behind their splendid palaces, to subject themselves again and again to the strenuous training of bodhisattvahood throughout their transmigratory lives, and finally to reach the realm of perfect enlightenment, described by Kūkai as the ultimate palace in the tenth stage of his ten-stage schema.

The supreme vajra palace of the secret mandala is the residence of the King of Mind, the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana. There may be beings who received birth in the race of cakravartins, who are brave and resolved to save sentient beings, who do not desire the pleasures of royal palaces [of the human realm]. Then, Mahāvairocana grants these beings his divinely swift vehicle [of the Esoteric Teaching], immediately gives recognition to them as his heirs by means of the ritual of abhiṣeka, and bequeaths to them the inexhaustible treasure of his palace. (KZ 1:129)

That is, although the Japanese emperor cannot immediately be transformed into a cakravartin, by receiving abhiṣeka, the initiation into Esoteric Buddhism, the emperor is granted a rare insight into the inner landscape of the ultimate palace, the final goal of all cakravartins. Through the ritual of abhiṣeka, the concept of cakravartin becomes a symbol indicating the mystic affinity between kingship and Tathāgatahood. Because the ritual of abhiṣeka in the secular sense refers to a ceremony of royal coronation, a bodhisattva, a “prince of Dharma,” receives the abhiṣeka to establish himself or herself as an heir to the Tathāgata on the throne. For example, the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*—which describes the final ten stages of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattvas’ spiritual development—portrays the final three stages prior to the bodhisattvas’ realization of Buddhahood with the simile of the birth of a prince destined to become a cakravartin, the universal monarch (the eighth stage), his appointment to viceroyship (the ninth stage), and his enthronement (the tenth stage).<sup>41</sup>

Throughout *Ten Abiding Stages*, this image of the symbolic overlapping between royal coronation and the attainment of enlightenment is employed

repeatedly, providing an important motif for Kūkai's palatial trope. In fascicle 6, for example, Kūkai paraphrases a discussion in fascicle 39 of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*:

When a bodhisattva, a child of the Tathāgata, enters the stage of receiving abhiṣeka, all the samādhis he has mastered in [his previous lives of bodhisattva practice of] billions of eons will manifest themselves at once to become his final samādhi—which is called the Reception of the Abhiṣeka of the All-Embracing Wisdom. When the bodhisattva realizes this samādhi, a great jeweled lotus suddenly appears. With its countless flower petals as vast as the universe, the lotus grows out of all the merit accumulated [by the bodhisattva's religious practices]. Constantly gleaming with the reflections of its jeweled petals, the lotus emits lights that reach all the corners of the universe. This is a flower that cannot be found even in all sorts of celestial palaces. . . .

Thereupon the bodhisattva seats himself on this throne of the lotus, and all his major and minor physical features become comparable to those of the Buddhas. The countless bodhisattvas of his entourage seat themselves on the flower petals and surround him. . . .

At that time, having realized that the bodhisattva has entered the stage of receiving abhiṣeka in such and such a realm of the universe, all the Tathāgatas of the universe at once emit beams of purity. This is the miraculous power of the [Tathāgata's wisdom] benefiting all beings. Having illuminated all the corners of the universe, these beams all arrive at that bodhisattva's assembly. Having surrounded and glorified the bodhisattva's seat, all the beams of Buddha's wisdom enter the bodhisattva's body from the summit of his head. Thereupon the bodhisattva reaches the state in which all [the ritual procedures of] his abhiṣeka are complete. Endowed with the ten powers of Tathāgatas, he joins the rank of Buddhas. Now both his body and his lotus throne permeate the universe. (T 10 #279: 205b–206a; KZ 1:324–325)

Kūkai explains that by reaching the inmost palace of enlightenment, the practitioner realizes the secret preserved there: that the entire universe itself is the most glorious palace of all. Tathāgatas, perfectly enlightened ones, are those for whom everything in the universe manifests itself as an actualization of the Dharma, dependent co-origination, emptiness. That is, all things are what Buddhas and their Dharma embody, and therefore are extensions of their "bodies." However, also because all things are themselves the very marks of the Dharma, Kūkai understands all things of the universe, both sentient and nonsentient existences, as letters of sacred text, and the universe as the ultimate scripture. For Kūkai, therefore, the morphologies of body, palace, and text lead

to the same conclusion: the universe itself, as it is, is the Dharmakāya's body made up of the sacred letters, the body of the text manifesting itself as the realm of the ultimate reality, his palace (KZ 1:400–401).<sup>42</sup>

When [practitioners] thoroughly understand the secret of these letters, the hidden treasury of the glory [of the Tathāgatas' palace] unfolds itself to them. The prisons of hell and the celestial palaces; the Buddha nature and the rotten seed of enlightenment; delusion and awakening; saṃsāra and nirvāṇa; dualism and nondualism. . . . To those who have realized the secret letters of mantra, all these [things of the universe] are just different signs for the originally enlightened mind [of all sentient beings]. How is it possible, then, for them to designate some as true and others as false? (KZ 1:128)

By receiving abhiṣeka, a king is initiated into Esoteric Buddhist training, at the heart of which is a study of mantra, the language that fabricates the texture of the cosmic text. The king then sees both inside and outside the imperial palace as belonging to the Dharmakāya's palace/text governed by the same law of karma. From Kūkai's viewpoint, the Confucian classics, the intellectual treasure of the rituryō state, are the texts already written/woven in the Dharmakāya's cosmic text. That is, the Confucian theory of the rectification of names can function because both the rectifying names in Confucian texts and the things to be rectified outside the texts are but signs of the same cosmic text of the Dharmakāya. This, for Kūkai, is why the emperor can sustain the harmonious order of the world by presenting himself and his court as paragons of moral virtue. Still, in Kūkai's model the emperor does not occupy the same privileged position, in terms of the control of scriptural texts and the manipulation of sacred language, as that assigned to the ruler in Confucian literature. The emperor himself cannot perform the ritual of abhiṣeka, through which the universe unfolds itself to the emperor as the most sacred text. It is Buddhist clerics who are ultimately responsible for the preservation and management of the sacred language necessary for the maintenance of cosmic order. The clergy, which is identified in Kūkai's cosmology with "palaces" higher than the emperor's palace, is no longer an inferior analog of the government bureaucracy loyally serving the emperor, as depicted in rituryō literature.

## Mantra and the New Science of Calamities

The extent of Kūkai's departure from existing rituryō discourse became explicit in the explanation he offered for the onset of calamities. In *Jeweled Key*

*to the Secret Treasury* (*Hizō hōyaku*, KZ 1:417–473), Kūkai’s own abbreviation of *Ten Abiding Stages*, he states that calamities have three causes: changes in the cosmic cycle, punishments by celestial gods, and repercussions of sentient beings’ evil karma. The simultaneous manifestation of hundreds of suns that consume the world, the surging of all the oceans until they swallow the continents, and other cosmic disasters are beyond the control of human beings. Heaven-sent punishments, on the other hand, occur when the unrighteous behavior of rulers enrages the celestial gods. The moral degeneration of rulers also invites “the births in [their] realms in an inopportune time of sentient beings with much evil karma from their previous lives, which collectively invites disasters” (KZ 1:442). Kūkai therefore makes kings directly accountable for these second and third kinds of calamities.

In the corresponding section of *Ten Abiding Stages*, Kūkai relies on the *Golden Light Sūtra* and argues that when a king abides by the ten good deeds, “he will be surrounded by guardian gods of the Dharma. With their protection, his kingdom will be as secure and prosperous as those of cakravartins. There, winds and rains rightly follow the seasons’ change, and harvests are bountiful. Free from calamities, the nation will enjoy peace” (KZ 1:193). On the other hand, when a king violates the ten good deeds, “because of his lack of faith in the Dharma, devas, nāgas, and other guardian gods of Dharma will abandon him. Also, because he does not practice the Dharma, all kinds of evil beings will approach him.”<sup>43</sup> Kūkai then quotes from the sūtra to present a list of signs portending the arrival of demonic spirits that cause all sorts of misfortunes to his kingdom:

It is said in the sūtra, “Violent rains and vicious winds assault the land, seasonal change is disorderly, crops fail, and the nation constantly suffers from famine.”

It is also said, “The most important ministers of the state fall ill, lose their sanity, and die mysteriously, and their family fortunes decline.”

There are recurrent riots and rebellions and people die in vain. Also, there are frequent outbreaks of epidemics.

It is also said, “People of the land lack vigor and courage, become physically weak, and cannot complete whatever work they do.”

(T 16:443a–b; KZ 1:192–193)

These symptoms of social ills—events similar to those repeatedly described in the imperial histories—must have seemed ominously familiar to the ruling class of the tumultuous early Heian period. Kūkai adds, “When these signs are manifest, people realize that their lands have already been invaded by demonic

spirits. Even rāksasas, man-devouring devils, are often seen” (KZ 1:193). He then turns his discussion to the methods described in the *Golden Light Sūtra* of dispelling demonic spirits and calling back the guardian gods. Of these, Kūkai particularly recommends, as the first measure for restoring order, that the ruler generate greater love for righteousness.

What kind of king is renowned for his love of righteous acts? A righteous ruler believes in the law of karma that determines fortune and misfortune for both humans and celestial beings. He therefore knows humility, controls his emotions, and abstains from wrongdoing in his body, speech, and mind. He regularly practices charity and cultivates himself in austerities. Furthermore he establishes maṇḍalas, receives abhiṣekas, and makes offerings to divinities through homa, the fire oblations. In this manner he develops the four boundless minds [Skt. *catur-apramāṇa*; Jpn. *shimuryōshin*; the minds of benevolence, compassion, joy, and nonattachment]. Such a king is renowned for his love of righteous acts.<sup>44</sup>

Kūkai’s rhetoric underscoring the ruler’s righteousness is congruous with the Confucian theory of rulership. Yet the actual method Kūkai advocates for repelling demonic spirits is not the rituryō rituals based on the rectification of names but, rather, the esoteric rituals of maṇḍala, abhiṣeka, and homa, all of which revolve around the recitation of mantra. Here again, Kūkai’s aim appears to be to supplant Confucianism with Esoteric Buddhism as the linguistic foundation of the religious and political discourse essential for maintaining social order. In *Jeweled Key to the Secret Treasury*, Kūkai illustrates this point further by creating a fictional debate between a Buddhist priest and a Confucian official. Against the Buddhist priest’s claim that “the recitation of a single name of a Buddha dissipates countless sins, the utterance of a single letter of a mantra generates infinite merit,” the Confucian official retorts:

If reciting a sūtra and prostrating oneself to a Buddhist image create merit, we [Confucians], too, read the Five Classics and the Three Histories<sup>45</sup> and bow before the images of Duke Chou and Confucius. Also, the letters in which the [scriptures of] Confucian Five Classics and Buddhist Three Treasures are written are identical [i.e., Chinese characters]. How, then, can the recitation of these texts be different in the merit they generate?

The Buddhist teacher responds:

What you have said may seem correct. Yet a deep understanding [of Confucian and Buddhist texts] makes the differences clear. Let me explain this

to you with an example. The edict of the emperor and the correspondence among the emperor's subjects are written with identical letters. Yet their functions and effects are significantly different. The emperor's order, followed by the entire nation, distinguishes between those who are rewarded and punished, and makes all his subjects happy or fearful. Such are the teachings of the Tathāgatas. They are upheld by all bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, devas, nāgas, and others of the eight guardian gods,<sup>46</sup> and by all other spirits. Non-Buddhist books are just like the writings of subjects, and Buddhist scriptures are like the edicts of the emperor. . . . Therefore there has never been an example of the chanting of the Five Classics destroying sins or the recitation of the Three Histories putting an end to calamities. (KZ 1:438)

Kūkai seems to be suggesting that Confucian texts are intended primarily to be read or studied. Confucian language is therefore the language of denotation. Buddhist texts, on the other hand, are first for chanting and only secondarily for academic study. Buddhist language is the language of connotation, of influence, effect, and power. Whereas the application of Confucian language is limited to the human domain, that of Buddhist language extends to the realms of spirits and divinities. The most powerful forms of Buddhist language, for Kūkai, are mantras and dhāraṇīs. In *Ten Abiding Stages*, he explains this Buddhist version of language action theory with a medical metaphor.

The Great Sage [Buddha] thoroughly explained the method of healing illness of the mind. His teaching is divided into five [textual] categories: āgama (Hīnayāna sūtras); vinaya (monastic rules); abhidharma (philosophical analysis); prajñā-pāramitā (Mahāyāna sūtras); and dhāraṇī. These five categories are just like the five kinds of dairy products: milk, yogurt, fresh butter, cultured butter, and cream. . . . Just as cream is the cure for all sorts of diseases, dhāraṇī is the panacea that dissipates the heaviest sins and uproots delusions [from one's mind]. (KZ 1:126)

That is, the first four categories of Buddhist texts, those of Exoteric Teaching, are materials to produce the final category, that of Esoteric Teaching. Although the constituents of the cure are already contained in the first four categories, they become effective when they are extracted to become the panacea of cream, or dhāraṇī. Elsewhere Kūkai compares the first four categories of the Exoteric Teaching to medical texts that present the methods of compounding medicine and the Esoteric Teaching of dhāraṇī to the medicine thus produced.<sup>47</sup>

In fascicle 3 of *Ten Abiding Stages*, Kūkai explains why mantra and dhāraṇī work as medicine, that is, as cures for demonic spirits and thus as a means

of restoring the cosmic order. Kūkai points out that chapter 4, fascicle 2, of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, entitled the “Universal Treasury of Mantras” (T 18:14a–17b), contains the mantras not only for Buddhas and bodhisattvas and guardian gods of the Dharma, but even for demons, demonesses, and evil spirits. Kūkai states: “If one truly understands what mantras are, teachings prepared for gods, humans, animals, as well as demons are vehicles of Esoteric Buddhism. Thus it is said, ‘I am devas, nāgas, demons, and other spirits.’<sup>48</sup> ‘I here is the Tathāgata Mahāvirocana’ (KZ 1:250). Kūkai suggests that this is the reason that the *Golden Light Sūtra* also contains a large number of mantras of demons and demonesses, who, when converted by the recitation of mantras, turn into powerful tutelary spirits. On chapter 20 of the sūtra (T 16:444c–447a) in which such mantras are discussed, Kūkai comments: “When beheld by the eye of enlightenment, the miraculously swift Yakṣas, the dark spirits, will reveal their secret identity. The reality of Hārītis, child-eating demonesses, is nothing but emptiness. Do not become attached to names and forms of things that are but accidental. Forget names and forms and see their reality. You will then immediately arrive at nirvāṇa.”<sup>49</sup>

In this fashion Kūkai reiterates his assertion that all sentient and nonsentient existences are manifestations of the Dharmakāya’s cosmic body. Evil spirits, certainly, are no exception to this rule. That is, like Buddhas and bodhisattvas, demonic spirits are sacred letters of the Dharmakāya’s cosmic text. Kūkai then cites a mantra from chapter 4 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the general mantra for gods and spirits (*seten tō fumyō shinshingon*).

*Lokāloka-karāya sarva-deva-nāga-yakṣa-gandharvāsura-garuda kimnara-mahorag'ādhi-hṛdayāny ākarsaya vicitra-gati svāhā.* (T 18:15c; KZ 1250)<sup>50</sup>  
 [To you who do worldly and otherworldly things. Draw into yourself the minds of all the devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kirinnaras, mahoragas, and other (spirits). O, you, the diversified practice, Svāhā!]

Kūkai provides two levels of explanation for this mantra. First, relying on Śubhakarasiṁha’s commentary on the sūtra (T 39:686a), Kūkai characterizes the mantra as praise for religious practice (Skt. *gatī*; Jpn. *gyō*); specifically, of chanting mantras dedicated to the many of gods and spirits, which would deliver to supplicants both worldly and otherworldly results. “The phrase ‘diversified practice’ means the manifestation [through mantra chanting] of the excellent forms of diverse gods and spirits to whom the supplicants devote themselves” (KZ 1:251).

But Kūkai also asserts that there is yet another, secret interpretation, according to which the mantra is a eulogy not for the supplicants’ mantra chanting but for the Dharmakāya’s practice of making manifest his cosmic body

(*hokkaishin*) as the cosmic text, the maṇḍala consisting of letters (*hōmandara*). In agreement with Śubhakarasiṁha's commentary, Kūkai takes the first word of the mantra *lokāloka* as a compound consisting of *loka* (world) and *aloka* (nonworld), which, respectively, stand for saṁsāra and nirvāṇa. However, unlike Śubhakarasiṁha who takes the word as a coordinative compound (Skt. *dvandva*; Jpn. *ringon*)—i.e., saṁsāra and nirvāṇa—Kūkai interprets the compound appositionally (Skt. *tatpurusa*; Jpn. *eshu*), that is, to mean saṁsāra as nirvāṇa. For Kūkai, saṁsāra equals nirvāṇa precisely because of the letter *A* that connects *loka* and *aloka* into a compound, the letter *A* that is, in Kūkai's semiological system, the manifestation in the realm of writing of the originally nonarising, which in turn is the Dharmakāya.<sup>51</sup> The mantra is therefore a reminder of the nonduality of saṁsāra as nirvāṇa in that it reveals that all gods and spirits, both benign and evil, are the manifestation of emptiness, the originally nonarising, the Dharmakāya.

All things of the world, manifesting themselves in all sorts of color, shape, and modes, are the manifestation of the Dharma, of dependent co-origination. Once practitioners enter the samādhi of the letter *A*, all these things are [realized as] the letters [of mantra], which show their distinctive forms as the very emptiness free of forms. These are the letters that constitute the cosmic body of the Dharmakāya, which is his maṇḍala. If there are beings who thoroughly realize this, then there is no difference between mantras that spell the names of gods and spirits and other mantras that do the same for Mahāvairocana's name.

(KZ 1:251–252)

Elsewhere Kūkai illustrates the same point with a simile of a foolish painter and his painted demons.

Whenever people see all sorts of things, they see there the originally nonarising. . . . Therefore Mahāvairocana designated the single letter *A* as his mantra. Yet ordinary people of the world fail to see this [the originally nonarising] as the source of all things. Deluded, they substantiate their own existence and entrust themselves to the current of the ocean of saṁsāra without having the means to escape it. They are just like an ignorant painter who paints with all sorts of colors a picture of dreadful demons. When the picture is completed, he observes his own work, is horrified, faints, and collapses. Like this painter, sentient beings paint the threefold world with all sorts of things all of which are originally nonarising, then bury themselves therein, and develop rampantly selfish minds that receive all sorts of sufferings.<sup>52</sup>

(KZ 1:538)

That is, the belief in demonic spirits causing epidemics, natural disasters, and all other kinds of calamities—the belief that reifies and concretizes their presence as the embodiment of vice—constitutes for Kūkai the act of misreading the letters of the cosmic texts. Precisely because demonic spirits, once reified, are misconstrued words of the cosmic text, they present the most serious danger to sentient beings, whose gravest tragedy for Kūkai is their loss of the ability to decipher the cosmic text, a loss that makes reality the suffering of *samsāra*.

The recitation of mantras corrects such errors in reading the cosmic text because mantras contain within themselves, along with the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the *proper* names of man-eating demons, child-devouring demonesses, and other horrifying spirits—that is, the proper usage of these terms in both their denotation and connotation. Mantras reveal that these evil spirits are just other names of the Dharmakāya in the cosmic scripture. The reason for this is twofold. Kūkai argues first that demonic spirits are the shadows of sentient beings' evil deeds. Just as the images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas manifest themselves as reflections of practitioners' righteous acts, evil spirits are the "signs" indicating that the law of karma is constantly at work. Secondly, because these signs are shadows and reflections, they are also the signs of emptiness, dependent co-origination, and the originally nonarising. That is, their names, when "proper"-ly read, are tantamount to the signs of mantra consisting of the letter *A* and all other alphabet letters, which are already the manifestation of the Dharmakāya as graphic symbols. "The letter *A* and every single other mantra letter are the secret names of the Dharmakāya Buddha, secret names possessed even by devas, nāgas, demonic spirits, and others, because all names issue forth from the Dharmakāya.<sup>53</sup>

As noted earlier, demonic spirits causing all sorts of disasters—especially *goryō*, the vengeful deceased spirits of those defeated in court political rivalries—presented an insoluble problem for the Confucian orthodoxy of the *ritsuryō* state. These evil spirits defied the principle of the rectification of names, through which ancient sage kings made an effort recorded in the Confucian classics, and through which the emperors of the present, as the vicars of the sage kings, have striven to construct the order of the world by the proper naming of things. Yet the doctrine of "let the ruler *be* a ruler, the minister *be* a minister, the father *be* a father, the son *be* a son" would not work for demons, monsters, and ghosts. Evil spirits, when or if "rectified" according to their names, would dutifully introduce chaos into the cosmic order constructed around the emperor's palace. Therefore *goryōs* had first to be expelled from the Confucian cosmos as the unnamed, and then to be converted by Buddhist rituals into benign gods and reintroduced into society as harmless entities, such as the ancestral gods of the imperial house.

Kūkai's model certainly supports the motif of the conversion of demonic spirits. Yet Kūkai's theory does not require for their conversion a change of names. Evil spirits are neutralized when it is realized that their names are already mantras, sacred signs of the cosmic text. That is, instead of being reduced to docile, harmless spirits, the goryōs, even as they are feared for their power to cause calamities, can now be worshiped as mighty tutelary gods, precisely because they retain their same formidable power, which can now be applied to halt calamities and to remove needless fear of demonic spirits from people's minds. In other words, there is no such thing as the unnamed, for everything in the world is first and foremost the sacred letter of the cosmic text, the cosmos as scripture, the text that has no outside. This means that Kūkai worked not only to legitimize the addition of esoteric rituals to the body of services performed for the state but also to provide a new Buddhist explanation for the efficacy of the existing official services provided by the Nara clergy for contingency control, services based on the recitation of sūtras that contained numerous mantras and dhāraṇīs.

The *True Record of the Reigns of the Three Emperors* (*Nihon sandai jitsuroku*), an imperial history compiled in 901, reports that, in the earlier months of Jōgan 5 (863), about three decades after Kūkai's death, there was an outbreak of an epidemic in the capital and adjoining provinces (KT 4:112–113). On the twentieth day of the fifth month, at Emperor Seiwa's command and with the dignitaries of the court participating, there was held at the Shinsen'en imperial garden *goryōe*, a ceremony for placating goryōs, which were believed to be responsible for the epidemic. The service referred specifically to Prince Sawara (or Emperor Sudō, posthumously), who haunted Emperor Kanmu, and to five other courtiers who had all been victims of factional power struggles in the imperial palace as the cause of the epidemic. To calm the spirits, eminent clerics led by the priest Etatsu (796–878) of Yakushiji in Nara recited the *Golden Light Sūtra* and the *Prajñā-pāramitā Heart Sūtra*. Then Etatsu, at that time a Vinaya Master in the Sōgō, lectured on the two sūtras, and an entertainment was presented by imperial dancers and musicians. The ordinary folk of the capital were permitted to enter the imperial garden and took part in the effort to entertain and appease the vengeful spirits. The narrator of the *True Record* describes the aim of the ceremony for the vengeful spirits:

What we mean here by vengeful spirits are [the deceased souls of] Emperor Sudō, Prince Iyo, Lady Fujiwara [Kisshi, the mother of Iyo], the Special Imperial Inspector [Jpn. *kanzatsushi*, referring to Fujiwara no Nakanari], Tachibana no Hayanari, Bun'ya no Miyatamaro, and others, all of whom were involved in scandals and punished. Recently, there have been repeated violent

outbreaks of a disease that has claimed many lives. It has been rumored that this must be the work of some vengeful spirits [of high court officials], for the disease always begins in the capital and spreads to neighboring provinces. Therefore, this service for these vengeful spirits is established so that from now on it will be observed regularly in summer and in autumn, during which, for the sake of the spirits, Buddhist divinities are to be worshiped, sūtras recited, and songs and dances performed.<sup>54</sup>

This ceremony held at Shinsen'en Park in 863 under imperial auspices was a landmark in the rise of the worship of goryō as *goryōshin*, that is, Shintō gods capable of controlling disasters, despite their vengeful nature (KAWANE Yoshiyasu 1984:9–12; Ichirō HORI 1968:112). It appears that Emperor Kanmu's effort to appease Prince Sawara by elevating him posthumously to the emperor's throne failed to free the prince from the state of a vengeful spirit and make him an ancestral divinity of the imperial house. Together with the deceased souls of the five courtiers identified in the *True Record*, however, precisely because the prince continued to be held accountable for unleashing epidemics, he was now believed to have been particularly effective in halting and removing epidemics as well.

Although the intense fear of goryōs is an ancient Japanese tradition, the cult of worshiping them as they were, with all their dangerous powers, was a new development that began in the early Heian period. Throughout the late Heian and early Kamakura periods the worship of Prince Sawara—an object of abomination during the reign of Emperor Kanmu—as a powerful tutelary divinity important in combating disease spread over many provinces, and the number of Shintō shrines dedicated to Sawara increased. At these shrines, the goryōs gradually became identified with local tutelary gods and integrated with Susanoo, Amaterasu, Ninigi, and other classic Shintō divinities—the principal gods of the shrines—who were now understood as “temporary manifestation” (*gongen*) of Buddhist divinities described in manḍalas (USHIYAMA Yoshiyuki 1984). That is, Esoteric Buddhist ritual and language was essential for the goryō worship. They provided a major path through which localized and socially diversified worship of kami, including goryōs, became vertically integrated to make a systematic religious practice, for which modern scholars created a conceptual category called Shintō, independent of Buddhism.

Because of this change in the attitude toward goryōs in the early Heian period, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the rise of goryō worship was caused by the integration within the mainstream religious and political discourse of

Esoteric Buddhist theories on calamity, especially of Kūkai's understanding of the nature of demonic spirits. In the model of maintaining cosmic order he envisioned, the role of the clergy is to maintain the linguistic technology of mantra, for that makes possible the unfolding of the universe as the ultimate scripture in which all names are already consummate and need no rectification, the unfolding through which order in both nature and society is maintained. This is also what Kūkai describes as the unfolding of the secret palace of the Dharmakāya. Through the practices of esoteric rituals—of maṇḍalas, abhiṣeka, homa, etc.—the clergy demonstrates to the emperor the ideal model of the royal palace. The clergy is no longer a quasi bureaucracy, assisting the emperor's rectification of names. On the contrary, the emperor's hosting of Esoteric Buddhist rituals at his court legitimizes his rule because it is aimed at transforming the imperial palace into a replica of the Dharmakāya's cosmic palace. The Esoteric Buddhist scriptures describing all sorts of mantras and their rituals provide the emperor with the blueprint of the cosmic palace, the Dharmakāya's palace composed of iconographic and ritual symbols. The Exoteric Buddhist texts that explain the philosophy of dependent co-origination serve as the essential theoretical underpinning for the Esoteric Buddhist rituals at the palace. Together, the esoteric and exoteric scriptures of Buddhism form the most valuable intellectual treasure of the emperor's palace.

Unlike the emperor in the Confucian cosmology, who enjoys a monopoly over the power of rectifying names, the emperor in Kūkai's model is not central to the exercise of mantra as a political technology. Instead, it is the symbolism of cakravartins—perfectly virtuous kings, the counterpart of Tathāgatas in the worldly realm—that sets the standard for the emperor's rule. This is where the Confucian classics serve their purpose, as a means to further the moral cultivation of the emperor. However, his reliance on Confucianism is now interpreted as testimony to imperfection in his virtue. In short, the model of the royal palace envisaged by Kūkai reverses the hierarchical prioritization in rituryō discourse between the emperor and clergy on the one hand, and the Confucian classics and Buddhist scriptures on the other. Kūkai's writings on the royal palace represent an attempt at a thorough refiguration of early Heian discourse on emperorship, a refiguration intended to replace Confucianism with Buddhism as the state's hegemonic political ideology. In the final years of his life, through his activities centered around the imperial court, Kūkai seems to have striven to realize the vision laid out in his *Ten Abiding Stages* by inventing a new court ritual aimed at assigning the attributes of the cakravartin directly to the emperor.

## The Mishuhō and the Ritual Reconstruction of the Imperial Palace

One of the greatest honors for the members of the early Heian Buddhist clergy was to receive the emperor's invitation to his palace and to preside over the Misaie, the grand New Year's ritual consisting of a seven-day lecture on and recitation of the *Golden Light Sūtra*. As part of the New Year's festivities at the imperial palace, and following the celebrations hosted by the emperor on the first seven days of the year, the *Golden Light* service was observed between the eighth and the fourteenth days of the first month. The purpose of these services was to pray for the peace and prosperity of the nation in the new year, to safeguard the nation from calamities and epidemics, to obtain a bountiful harvest, and to secure the health and longevity of the emperor—all of which the *Golden Light Sūtra* promises to deliver to those nations that devote themselves to worship of the sūtra.<sup>55</sup>

*Ritual Compendium by the House of Ōe* (*Gōke shidai*), an authoritative manual on the annual rites held at the imperial palace, compiled by the court scholar Ōe no Masafusa (1041–1111), describes in detail the procedure to be followed in the seven-day service.<sup>56</sup> According to Masafusa, it was held at Daigokuden, the central edifice at the imperial palace, where the emperor's daily administrative duties as well as the principal ceremonies—such as the enthronement of a new emperor—were carried out. The essential rituals of the Misaie consisted of the recitation by the priests of the sūtra during the day and a repentance rite dedicated to Lakṣmī (Jpn. Kichijōten), a female divinity central to the sūtra, in the evening. In addition to these practices, on the first and last days of the service, from dawn to dusk, an extended series of devotional rituals were held with the participation of the crown prince, regents, ministers, and other nobles of the court. Court officials were employed to assist priests in their preparation of rituals and their execution of detailed procedures. On the days of the Misaie, in the presence of these dignitaries, priests presented lectures on the sūtra and then led discussions on the lectures.

The emperor himself participated in the service on the concluding day,<sup>57</sup> when he would hold a banquet for the lay participants of the court and bestow alms on the priests—an act signifying his patronage of the three jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha. The emperor would also authorize new ordinands to be assigned annually to each school, an act corresponding to his New Year's announcement of new appointments of officials and ministers at his court.<sup>58</sup> These two ritual functions indicate that the Misaie was integrated into Confucian court rituals, which revolved around the emperor's distribution of his virtue throughout the realm in the form of largesse and the act of rectifying names. From this it is clear that the court recognized the New Year's service on

the *Golden Light* as the most significant of the Buddhist ceremonies observed at the imperial palace, and one that yielded great honor to the participating priests. In fact, the experience of serving as the principal lecturer (*kōji*) of the *Golden Light Sūtra* at the Misaie eventually became one of the basic prerequisites for elite scholar-priests seeking appointment at the Sōgō.<sup>59</sup>

It is not clear exactly when the Misaie began. The earliest date on which there is a suggestion that the *Golden Light* was recited as part of the New Year's celebration at court is the first year of Jingo Keiun (768); it appears in the *Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihongi*) (KT 2:339). However, not until the reign of Emperor Kōnin (770–780), a period for which there are a sufficient number of historical sources, do we find unequivocal indications that the Misaie was firmly established as an annual ceremony at the imperial palace (YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1995:166–170). In his detailed study of the ritual manuals of the Heian court, KURABAYASHI Masatsugu (1980:35–37) has suggested that many of the most important procedures followed in the Misaie came into being after Emperor Kanmu relocated the imperial palace from Nara to Kyoto in 794. In fact, the Misaie continued to grow in complexity and sophistication throughout the early and mid-Heian periods.

On the last day of the Misaie service in 813, for example, Emperor Saga invited the eleven senior priests who had officiated at the service to Seiryōden, his private residence hall, to further discuss issues relating to the *Golden Light Sūtra*.<sup>60</sup> This set a precedent for the inclusion of a debate at the emperor's inner palace (*uchirongi*) as an extension of the service. The list of the discussants invited to Emperor Junna's quarters on the fourteenth day of the first month of Tenchō 9 (831) included the senior priest general (*daisōzu*) Kūkai, the supreme priest (*sōjō*) Gomyō, the junior priests general (*shōsōzu*) Shūen and Buan, and the vinaya master (*risshi*) Myōfuku—in other words, those high-ranked priests who belonged to the then nine-member Sōgō.<sup>61</sup> The *Abbreviated History of Japan* (*Nihon ryakki*), composed during the reign of Emperor Goichijō (r. 1016–1036) to compensate for the lapses and gaps in official imperial histories, includes the information that on the fourteenth day of the first month of Tenchō 10 (832), at the conclusion of the New Year's lecture, the priest-officials of the Sōgō again assembled at the emperor's residence hall, Seiryōden, for the debate and were rewarded by Junna with a gift of imperial robes.<sup>62</sup> During his tenure at the Sōgō—which extended from 824 to 835—Kūkai must have been a frequent participant in the Misaie.

Another important addition to the ritual of the Misaie was instituted in 835 by Kūkai, who was by that time privy to the details about Buddhist rituals at the imperial palace. On the nineteenth day of the twelfth month of Jōwa 1 (834), only a few months before his death on Mount Kōya in the spring of the

following year, Kūkai sent a memorandum to the new emperor, Ninmei (r. 833–850),<sup>63</sup> requesting permission to create, as part of the New Year's festivities at court, an Esoteric Buddhist ritual counterpart to the recitation and lecture on the *Golden Light Sūtra* at the existing Misaie. In his memorial Kūkai argued that, to assure the efficacy of the sūtra in protecting the nation, it is necessary to add the esoteric ritual worship of the divinities described in the sūtra, who would bestow merit on the practitioners.

As for the annual lecture on the *Golden Light Sūtra* proffered [to Your Majesty], the sūtra's prose lines have been recited and their contents have been analyzed. However, there has not yet been an occasion on which the images of the divinities [in the sūtra] were painted and altars built for their worship in the appropriate manner as suggested [in the sūtra]. [As a result,] the nation has merely heard of the sūtra's meaning—which is said to be as sweet as amrita or cream—and yet has been deprived of the pleasure of tasting it.

I beseech you[, Your Majesty,] to allow me to select fourteen senior priests well versed in [esoteric] rituals, together with fourteen junior priests to assist them. Grant me your permission to designate a separate area [in the court] to be decorated for the enshrinement of a multitude of divinities and to prepare rows of offerings. Let us make it the custom to have the chosen priests chant at that location every year, in the precise manner prescribed in the sūtra, the mantras for the seven days during which the lecture on the sūtra is to be delivered. Only then will the two teachings of the exoteric and esoteric join together to manifest the Tathāgatas' original vow [to save living beings].

(KZ 3:518–519)

Only ten days after he had submitted his memorial, on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month of Jōwa 1 (834), Ninmei's court hastily granted Kūkai's request.<sup>64</sup> On the eighth day of the first month of the following year, the court provided Kūkai with the office of Kageyushichō (the agency in charge of overseeing the transfer of senior personnel in provincial governments) as a temporary facility in which to perform the seven-day esoteric service.<sup>65</sup> To stage this esoteric ritual extension of the Misaie the following new year, when its creator had already passed away, the court designated an area immediately north of Daigokuden, at the center of the imperial palace compound, for the construction of the Shingon'in, the Mantra Chapel,<sup>66</sup> that the new annual service could be observed. There at the heart of the palace, Kūkai's senior disciples Shinzei (800–860), Shinshō (797–873), and Shinga (801–879) continued the new ritual tradition.<sup>67</sup> The erection of the chapel is significant not only for

Esoteric Buddhism but for the history of Japanese Buddhism in general and for the change in religiosity of the imperial palace. It was the first permanent fixture constructed in the palace exclusively for the performance of Buddhist rituals.

Popularly known as Goshichinichi mishuhō, the “Imperial Rite of the Second Seven Days of the New Year,” or simply the Mishuhō, this esoteric service grew into perhaps the most extravagant ritual performed at the palace, exemplifying the sophistication of Heian court culture. Sei Shōnagon, the celebrated female writer active in the court of Emperor Ichijō (r. 986–1011), described the Mishuhō as first among the “most splendid things” (*kirakirashiki mono*) that took place at the palace.<sup>68</sup> Along with the Misaie, the Mishuhō was observed long after the decline of the imperial court in the mid-Kamakura period, until the fourteenth century, when the split of the imperial lineage into two competing factions reduced the number and scale of the ritual activities at the palace.<sup>69</sup> Although the Misaie itself was never revived, cooperation between the abbot Gien (1558–1626) of Daigoji and Emperor Gomizunoo (r. 1611–1629) led to the reinstitution of the Mishuhō at the imperial palace in 1623, shortly after Japan was reunified under the Tokugawa shogunate. The policy of the Meiji state to separate Shintō from Buddhism, or to create “Shintō” as if it were a historical entity completely separable from Buddhism, which made it necessary to efface any Buddhist element from the symbolization of the emperor, ended the observance of the Mishuhō at court, but since 1883 it has been performed at Tōji.<sup>70</sup>

The earliest surviving record describing the actual procedure followed in the Mishuhō appears to be *Origin and Practice of the Mishuhō* (*Goshichinichi mishuhō yuishō sahō*, ZG 25B2:106a–110a), an undated diary by an anonymous author, which recounts the ceremony performed in 921 by the abbot Kangen of Tōji (853–925). The earliest dated record of the Mishuhō is *Diary of the Mishuhō at the Imperial Mantra Chapel in the Second Year of Eichi* (*Eichi ni'nen shingon'in mishuhōki*, ZG 25B:110b–168b), written in 1142 by an anonymous attendant to Kanjin (1084–1153), an abbot of Tōji, who officiated at the service that year.

These sources and other records suggest that the Mishuhō, an elaborate ritual consisting of hundreds of ritual sequences, quickly grew into a major court ritual and continued to develop further complexity in the late Heian and early Kamakura periods. To study the Mishuhō’s early history is difficult because none of the ritual manuals that Kūkai and his immediate disciples may well have composed to illustrate the procedures followed in the service in its original form have survived. However, even these later sources are capable of demonstrating the Mishuhō’s essential structure—not so much the details of individual ritual actions, but the ways in which they were strung together to

form an integrated ritual service—pointing to the original form, or at least the original ritual intentionality, of the grand esoteric service at the imperial court. The intricate ritual procedures described in these sources can be divided into two large systems of offering (Skt. *pūja*; Jpn. *kuyōbō*) and empowerment (Skt. *adhistāna*; Jpn. *kaji*), which in turn can be broken down further into the following subsystems:

### OFFERINGS

1. The ritual of offering to Mahāvairocana and his mandala (*daidanku*)
2. The homa aimed at preventing calamities (*sokusai goma*)
3. The homa aimed at increasing fortune (*zōyaku goma*)
4. The ritual offering to the five wrathful divinities (*godaisonku*)
5. The ritual offering to the twelve gods (*jūnitenkū*)
6. The ritual offering to Gaṇapati (*shōtenku*)
7. The ritual offering to Shintō gods (*jinku*) (ZG 25B:108b–109a, 135b)

### EMPOWERMENTS

1. The empowerment of scented water (*kōzui kaji*)
2. The empowerment of the emperor's robe (*gyoi kaji*)
3. The empowerment of the emperor's body (*gyokutai kaji*) (136b–137b)

All seven rituals of offering were performed three times a day, for seven days—except for the sixth and seventh rituals. The offering to Gaṇapati was made twice every day for seven days; the offerings to Shintō gods were made only three times in the course of the Mishuhō, on the first, fourth, and last day. The first ritual is the most important, and is performed only by the presiding Mishuhō master, that is, the abbot of Tōji.<sup>71</sup> The responsibility for performing the other six rituals were distributed among his fourteen assistant ritual masters (ZG 25B:108b, 136a–b).

According to the architectural layout in the *Diary of the Second Year of Eichi* (ZG 25B:130–135), the Imperial Mantra Chapel was a rectangular hall facing north, with its longest sides on the north and south. At the center of the chapel was yet another rectangular inner chamber surrounded by a corridor-shaped outer chamber. Hanging on the eastern and western walls of the inner chamber were the garbha mandala of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the vajradhātu mandala of the *Vajrasékhara Sūtra*, respectively. In front of them, the two great ritual altars (*daidan*) for performing the offering to Mahāvairocana were placed symmetrically at the eastern and western corners of the inner chamber.

The abbot of Tōji made his meditative offering to Mahāvairocana and his mandala at one of these two great altars, alternating between them every year. For the adornment of the great altar, the abbot authorized the use of treasured ritual instruments from Tōji. The most valuable, enshrined at the center of the great altar, was a miniature stūpa containing grains of Śākyamuni Buddha's relic, which Kūkai had inherited from his master Hui-kuo (ZG 25B:106b, 132b; KZ 1:97). This arrangement was probably linked to chapter 26, fascicle 10, of the *Golden Light Sūtra*, which encourages worship of the relic (T 16:450c–454b).

The ritual altar for the worship of the five wrathful divinities (*godai myōō*)—Acara (Fudō), Trairokavijaya (Gōsanze), Kunḍalī (Gundari), Vajirayakṣa (Kon-gōyasha), and Yamāntaka (Daiitoku)—was located against the northern wall of the inner chamber, its placement suggesting that the ritual's significance was second only to that of Mahāvairocana and his mandala. The two homa altars were placed at the northwestern corner of the outer chamber. Facing them at the northeastern corner of the outer chamber was the altar for the offering to Gaṇapati (Kangiten), a god of fertility.<sup>72</sup> The images of the twelve gods in charge of maintaining orderly seasonal change<sup>73</sup> were displayed on the eastern wall of the outer chamber. Adjacent to the chapel hall in the northwest was a small shrine where offerings to the Shintō gods were made.

The principal divinity to whom all the ritual systems of the Mishuhō are dedicated is not Mahāvairocana but Ratnasambhava (Hōshō), the “One Arisen from the Jewel,” one of the four attendant Buddhas of Mahāvairocana in the south in the vajra and garbha mandalas, whose samaya, or, symbolic representation, is *cintāmaṇi*, the wish-granting gem (MJ appendix 3:32 #3; 33 #11). Both the *Origin and Practice of the Mishuhō* and the *Diary of the Second Year of Eichi* indicate that the offering to the mandala over which the abbot of Tōji officiated was addressed simultaneously to three objects: the Tathāgata Ratnasambhava; the relic of Śākyamuni Buddha at the center of the great altar; and the cintāmaṇi on Mount Muroo (ZG 25B:108a, 132a).

Both sources refer to the legend that, in Ch'ang-an, Hui-kuo entrusted to Kūkai a cintāmaṇi, a ritual symbol passed down for generations through the lineage of Indian Esoteric Buddhist masters, which Kūkai buried in the mountains of Muroo southeast of Nara when he restored an ancient monastery there and made it a center for Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>74</sup> It is claimed that the ritual offering by the abbot of Tōji had to be carried out together with his practice of the meditation on the identity of Ratnasambhava, the principal divinity of the Mishuhō, the cintāmaṇi of Muroo, and the Buddha's relic on the great altar. That is because, “on the one hand, the relic is the symbol of the Dharmakāya . . . and, on the other, the cintāmaṇi is the natural body of all the Tathāgatas” (ZG 25B: 132a–b). HASUMI Kanzen (1920:23), a modern Shingon

master who presided over the Mishuhō in 1933, explains the official position of the Shingon School on the worship of the relic by way of dual symbolism: Śākyamuni Buddha's physical body was subject to the law of emptiness, of impermanence, and therefore his true body is made up of Dharma, that is, Dharmakāya. On the other hand, Hasumi continues, the cintāmaṇi, which Kūkai interprets in his exegesis of the *Golden Light Sūtra* as the originally enlightened mind of all sentient beings,<sup>75</sup> is productive of all the Buddhas, the spontaneous body of Tathāgatas—that is, again, the Dharmakāya (p. 24). “With this triple identity of Ratnasāmbhava, the relic, and the cintāmaṇi, the abbot [of Tōji] visualizes for his ritual offering to the mandala that all the divinities of the mandala are making their entry to the gem-producing samādhi of the Buddha Ratnasāmbhava” (ZG 25B:106b, 132a).

The oneness of the cintāmaṇi, the relic, and Ratnasāmbhava underscored in these documents is suggestive of Kūkai's original design for the Mishuhō. In the *Introduction to the Golden Light Sūtra* (*Saishōokyō kaidai*, KZ 1:820–824), Kūkai asserts that “the sūtra is the unfolding of the samādhi of the Tathāgata Ratnasāmbhava and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the Jewel Family (Skt. Ratna-kula; Jpn. Hōbu), led by Ratnasāmbhava” (KZ 1:823). The sūtra revolves around the discussion between Śākyamuni Buddha and the two bodhisattvas Ākāśagarbha (Kokūzō) and Ratnadhvaja (Hōtō). Basing his interpretation on the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, Kūkai points out that these are two of the four attendant bodhisattvas to Ratnasāmbhava in the vajradhātu maṇḍala, whose symbolic representations are, respectively, a jeweled sword coupled with a cintāmaṇi and a banner whose pole is decked with a cintāmaṇi at its top.<sup>76</sup> Kūkai therefore reads the sūtra as Śākyamuni Buddha's illustration, by means of his conversations with the two bodhisattvas of the mandala, of Ratnasāmbhava's spiritual attainment symbolized by the wish-granting gem. “This sūtra is the secret jewel of all the Buddhas because . . . the terms *golden light* (Skt. *suvarṇa-prabhāśa*; Jpn. *konshō*) of the title [of the sūtra] derive from cintāmaṇi, the wisdom of enlightenment that grants all wishes” (KZ 1:821).

This characterization by Kūkai of the *Golden Light Sūtra* appears to be the theoretical underpinning for his construction of the Mishuhō, the esoteric counterpart of the *Golden Light Sūtra* recitation and lecture at the Misaie. That is, the sūtra itself is the cintāmaṇi of all the Buddhas. Whereas Misaie explicates what the sūtra is and what it teaches, the purpose of the Mishuhō is to demonstrate the power of the sūtra as the cintāmaṇi. This motif seems to dominate other ritual sequences of the Mishuhō. The abbot Shinkei (fl. 1249) of Shitennōji, for example, explains the five wrathful divinities worshiped at the central altar of the inner chamber of the chapel as the manifestation of the cintāmaṇi's work of eliminating all sorts of misfortune.<sup>77</sup> According to Shinkei,

the cintāmaṇi consists of the fivefold wisdom of enlightenment<sup>78</sup> personified by Mahāvairocana and his four attendant Buddhas at the center of the maṇḍala. Just like the cintāmaṇi held high at a cakravartin’s palace, whose light keeps the universal monarch’s realm free of calamities, the cintāmaṇi worshiped at the Mishuhō manifests the power of the five Buddhas conquering all evil spirits in the form of the five wrathful divinities. This seems to explain why the *Diary of the Second Year of Eichi* describes the two homa rituals for preventing calamities and increasing fortune as being dedicated, respectively, to Acara, who presides over the five wrathful divinities, and to the Buddha’s relic on the great altar, which, it is repeatedly emphasized, is identical with the cintāmaṇi (ZG 25B:133a–b). In short, the two ritual procedures of homa represent the act of praying for the cintāmaṇi to manifest its power as the five wrathful divinities who protect the nation from disasters.

Very little is said about the offerings to the twelve gods and Gaṇapati. However, as mentioned earlier, the twelve gods preside over both benign and evil spirits in all the directions of the universe as part of their work of maintaining cosmic order.<sup>79</sup> The offering to the twelve gods can thus be understood as a ritual act of prayer for a coordinated effort, by relying on the power of the cintāmaṇi and the five wrathful divinities, to control vicious spirits and prevent disasters. By extension, the worship of the fertility god Gaṇapati can be interpreted as a prayer for nature to be bountiful as a result of the orderly, auspicious movement of natural events, and for the emperor to have many children so as to perpetuate the imperial lineage.

While these ritual offerings were maintained throughout the seven-day term of the Mishuhō, on the fourth day (which was always the twelfth day of the first month) the participating priests took up the other ritual component of the Mishuhō, the ritual system aimed at empowering the emperor. Before the dawn of the twelfth day of the month, fresh spring water from the imperial garden of Shinsen’en was collected in a container and mixed with herbs and particles of gems and precious metals to make a scented water (*kōzui*) (ZG 25B:134a–b).<sup>80</sup> At the conclusion of the daily ritual practices for the final three days of the Mishuhō, the abbot of Tōji, accompanied by his attendant ritual masters, chanted the mantras of eight divinities in the following order, so that the merit accrued could be transferred to the water: Buddhalocana (Butsugen), Mahāvairocana (Dainichi), Bhaisajyaguru (Yakushi), Samantabhadra (Fugen), Avalokiteśvara (Kannon), Acara (Fudō), Lakṣmī (Kichijō); and Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra (Ichiji chōrin) (ZG 25B:135b–136a). (No traditional ritual commentary provides explanations on the symbolism of, or reason for, the selection of the eight divinities. Their significance within the ritual context of the Mishuhō will be considered shortly.)

When the chanting of the mantras was completed, the abbot of Tōji sprinkled the scented water on the emperor's robe—which was placed on a table for the empowerment ritual (*kaji zukue*), immediately to the south of the abbot's great altar—and recited the following verse:

We sincerely express our vow:  
 May this empowerment of the scented water  
 Manifest its great divine power  
 Protect His Majesty, our cakravartin (*shōō*)  
 Remove all misfortune from his throne  
 Guard his life, guard his health  
 Make his boundless wishes of compassion  
 Realize themselves completely  
 Make his palace safe and secure  
 Have the people of the palace enjoy peace  
 Under heaven, everywhere in the universe  
 May all beings equally share this merit! (ZG 25B:135a)

On the last day of the Misaie, when all the rituals at the Mantra Chapel had been completed, the abbot of Tōji, leading the other ritual masters, brought the vase of scented water and the emperor's robe to Seiryōden, the emperor's private quarters. There they were greeted by the Misaie priests, who were waiting to enter into the debate on the sūtra at the inner palace (*uchirongi*). When the emperor emerged, dressed in the robe delivered from the chapel, the abbot of Tōji sprinkled the scented water directly on him. The priests of the Nara Schools who had officiated the Misaie, as well as the princes and ministers who had participated in the Misaie and had now returned from Daigokuden, attended the emperor and became the beneficiaries of this act of blessing. At the completion of the ritual, the participating priests began their debate on the *Golden Light Sūtra* (ZG 25B:137a–138a). In this manner, the threefold ritual of empowerment of the water (*kōzui kaji*), the emperor's robe (*gyoi kaji*), and the emperor's body (*gyokutai kaji*) was completed.

The *Diary of the Second Year of Eichi* includes a letter signed by the abbot Kanjin, who officiated at the Mishuhō that year (1142), reporting to the court the consummation of all Mishuhō's ritual procedures. In closing, Kanjin wrote, "We have practiced all the rites listed above so that His Majesty will attain the security, health, and longevity of the highest cakravartins [*kinrin shōō*]. We also dedicate our service to the success of this year's harvest and to the great peace to be enjoyed by all beings under heaven." (ZG 25B:136a). Kanjin's statement makes clear the intentionality of the two ritual systems of the Mishuhō. The

rituals of offering were aimed at making visible the power of the cintāmaṇi, which was the symbolic representation not only of the Buddha Ratnasarībhava but also of the *Golden Light Sūtra*, the sūtra of the Misaie that was recited and lectured upon at the imperial palace concurrently with the Mishuhō. And the ritual of empowerment was an attempt to collect the power of the cintāmaṇi in the scented water and bestow it upon the emperor.

The emperor, now ritually endowed with that power, was worthy to be addressed as a cakravartin, for the cintāmaṇi is one of the seven royal regalia of cakravartins, the wish-granting jewel whose symbolism for universal monarchs' rules of Dharma was given particular emphasis by Kūkai in his discussion of rulership in *Ten Abiding Stages*. The chanting of mantras of the eight divinities named above played a pivotal role in the transfer of merit between the ritual system of offering and that of empowerment—merit that was finally deposited in the emperor's body. Here again, the ritual culminates in the chanting of the mantra of the Buddha Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra (literally, the Buddha of the Single Word Whose Crown is the Wheel of Dharma), who is equipped with the seven regalia and is identified in scriptures as the manifestation of Śākyamuni Buddha in the form of a cakravartin in order to save the world.<sup>81</sup>

This seems to explain the order of the eight divinities selected for chanting mantras at the Misaie. The first divinity, Buddhalocana (literally, the Eye of the Buddhas), is a female bodhisattva characterized in Mahāyāna literature as the mother of all the Buddhas, the personification of prajñā-pāramitā.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, in *Notes on the Secret Treasury* (*Hizōki*), Kūkai identifies Buddhalocana as the consort of the Buddha Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra (KZ 2:40). Kūkai bases that identity on several esoteric sūtras on the worship of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra that describe Buddhalocana as Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra's seed mantra Bhrūm.<sup>83</sup> The Buddha's recitation of his mantra, that is, his union with Buddhalocana, is crystallized in the prajñā of all Buddhas, which in turn is symbolized by their crowns (Skt. *uṣṇīśāḥ*; Jpn. *butchō*). In other words, the scripture equates the mantra and Buddha's crown, both symbolizing the prajñā, via the Buddha's chanting of the mantra, that is, his turning of the wheel of Dharma—and it is from this that the name “Buddha of the Single Letter Mantra Whose Crown is the Wheel of Dharma” derives.

Furthermore, these scriptures interpret the royal symbolism of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra not merely as representing Śākyamuni's princely origin but also as the manifestation of Mahāvairocana, the King of Dharma (Skt. *dharma-rāja*; Jpn. *hōō*), who reigns in his universal palace. Buddhalocana in the universal palace is identified in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* as *vidyā-rājñī*, the Queen of Wisdom, Mahāvairocana's consort, who personifies prajñā as the power of mantra (T 18:6c; T 39:631c). In other words, Buddhalocana's quality as the

mother of all Buddhas in exoteric scriptures is explained in esoteric texts as deriving from the union of Mahāvairocana and Buddhalocana, who, respectively, stand for samādhi and mantra, and whose union is said to complete the practitioner's meditative exercise. In short, mantra in the sense of the feminine symbolism of prajñā reveals that Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra is a unique divinity simultaneously representing Mahāvairocana and Śākyamuni.<sup>84</sup> Kūkai himself said of the relationship between Mahāvairocana, Buddhalocana, and Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra that Mahāvairocana was the head of the Tathāgata Family (Nyorai-bu) of the divinities in the maṇḍala, Buddhalocana, the mother of the family, and Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra, its protector.<sup>85</sup> The placement of Mahāvairocana immediately after Buddhalocana is therefore suggestive of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra's dual symbolism: he represents both the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings, suggesting the compatibility envisaged by Kūkai between the Misaie and the Mishuhō.

Bhaiṣajyaguru and Samantabhadra, whose mantras were recited next, are the divinities worshiped for the roles they play in healing and providing longevity, respectively. Many of the ritual manuals describing the esoteric worship of these divinities were imported by Kūkai.<sup>86</sup> In his interpretation of the *Golden Light Sūtra*, Kūkai names Avalokiteśvara, Acara, and Lakṣmī as the divinities who reveal mantras that provide the king who upholds and propagates the sūtra with protection from calamities, steadfastness in his worship of the Dharma, and increased wealth and fortune, respectively.<sup>87</sup>

Altogether, the mantras of the eight divinities appear to have been arranged in an order that endows the emperor with many of qualities of the cakravartin—such as health, long life, freedom from disasters, moral resoluteness, wealth, and power—so that he may lead his nation to prosperity, as advocated in the *Golden Light Sūtra*. These mantras, which play a critical role in joining the two ritual systems of offering and empowerment, are indicative of the goal of the entire Mishuhō ritual service—that is, to present by means of esoteric ritual reconfiguration a new way to legitimize the emperor as the model of the cakravartin for the Japanese state. This also meant the redescription of the emperor's palace as a ritual theater in which the particularly Buddhist authorization, as well as control, of the ruler's power could be achieved. In this regard, the identity of the cintāmaṇi and the Buddha's relic in the ritual system of offering of Mishuhō may be of particular significance. It was the duty of virtuous kings to erect stūpas and preserve there grains of the Buddha's relic to give proof to the uninterrupted transmission of the Buddhist Dharma. A particularly celebrated example of this is King Aśoka's erection of eighty-four thousand pillars so as to redistribute widely the relic over his unified empire. The number of pillars were intended to match that of minute parts constituting

the Buddha's body and also that of divisions in his teaching. Aśoka's action was therefore a gesture symbolic of the cakravartin's offering of his realm to the Buddha and his Dharma (John STRONG 1983:115–117).

In sum, the Mishuhō aimed at granting the emperor the power represented by the cintāmaṇi, one of cakravartin's regalia, by ritually engendering that power through the union of Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra and Buddhalocana. It was also a ritual attempt to unleash the power of mantra as femininity to elucidate the polysemy inherent in the symbolism of Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra in two ways: Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra as simultaneously a Buddha and a cakravartin for legitimizing the emperor's authority; the same divinity as simultaneously Śākyamuni and Mahāvairocana for demonstrating the complementarity of the Esoteric and the Esoteric. The institution of a new type of annual ceremony at the court, the Mishuhō—together with the erection within the palace of the Mantra Chapel, the first structure in the palace exclusively for performing Buddhist rituals—was a token of the acceptance of Kūkai's introduction of Esoteric Buddhism by both the Nara Buddhist establishment and the Heian court. It was, in this sense, a landmark in the dissemination of Esoteric Buddhism throughout early Heian society. The establishment of the Mishuhō both actualized Kūkai's strategy of propagation and anticipated some significant new developments in the mid- and late Heian periods—developments that would make Esoteric Buddhism the dominant force in shaping the relationship between Buddhism and the state.

The historians SATŌ Hiroo (1992:84) and KURODA Toshio (1994:210) have pointed out an apparently contradictory phenomenon, namely that in the mid- and late Heian periods, when Buddhism established itself as the ideology of the state and when major monastic institutions enjoyed their greatest political autonomy and economic power, cases of interference in the court's politics by clerics declined. No longer were there priests such as Genbō (?–746) and Dōkyō (?–772), who gained the favor of Emperor Shōmu (r. 724–749) and the Empress Shōtoku (r. 764–770), respectively, served as their trusted advisors, and attained power far greater than that of the lay administrators of their courts. The entrenchment of such priests in the government in the Nara period may well have derived from the *ritsuryō* system itself, which was supposed to contain the influence of the clergy by making it the secondary bureaucracy of the state. Precisely because clerics were treated under the *ritsuryō* laws as analogous to government officials, when charismatic priests were promoted to personal attendants of the emperor, they were able to acquire enormous leverage by functioning as political advisors as well. That is, they could make themselves de facto ministers far more powerful than lay ministers, because they

possessed the means, or technologies, to bring about such ends as healing the sick, quelling rebellions, and averting natural disasters. This seems to explain the celebrated appointment in 765 of Dōkyō as grand minister (*daijō daijin*), the supreme post in the court bureaucracy, as well as the decision of Empress Shōtoku the next year to create for him the special office of King of Dharma (*hōō*),<sup>88</sup> staffed with Dōkyō's priestly protégés, for whom the titles of Dharma minister (*hōshin*) and Dharma counselor (*hōsangi*) were invented.<sup>89</sup> In this anomalous manner, Dōkyō succeeded in dominating court politics. Yet his undermining of the *ritsuryō* system without proposing an alternative principle for rule only invited chaos.

Kūkai's strategy for shaking up the *ritsuryō* authority structure seems to have taken a course opposite from Dōkyō's. In *Ten Abiding Stages of Mind*, he boldly proposed that the emperor—for whose perusal the work was originally prepared—occupied the second-lowest realm of the universe/spirituality, in contrast with the clerics of the esoteric and exoteric schools of Nara, Tendai, and Shingon, who inhabited more advanced stages. That is, in his model, priests and nuns were no longer regarded as if they were secular officials serving the emperor, as the Sōniryō had it. For the Nara Buddhist establishment, the most immediate outcome of the institution of the *Mishuhō* at court was that it paved the way for the clergy to *de*-bureaucratize themselves.

This also meant restricting the clerics' activities in the imperial palace. Because they were no longer likened to government officials, priests and nuns had no reason to involve themselves in political rivalries at court. Instead, they were expected, by their performance of exoteric and esoteric religious services, to provide a particularly Buddhist ideology through which the authority of the emperor and the court bureaucracy were to be shaped, legitimized, and controlled from outside. Kūkai once told his disciples: "The goal for us, as ordained practitioners, is the attainment of Buddhahood. Neither the palaces of cakravartins nor the celestial residence of Brahmā or Indra should interest us. How much less should we be concerned with the trifling rewards the human world may offer."<sup>90</sup> According to Kūkai, the goal for the ordained was to leave behind even the royal palace of cakravartins and to strive for the universal palace of the Dharmakāya, the realm of enlightenment, depicted in manḍalas. For the same reason, the *Mishuhō* ritual also prohibited the emperor from assuming the religious authority that would make him the head of the Saṅgha. That is, against the precedents once set by Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōken, as well as by Dōkyō, the ruler could no longer be an ordained (KISHI Toshio 1986). This seems to have necessitated that the ruler abdicate his or her throne and leave the imperial palace if he or she was to represent the authority of the Saṅgha, and that development gave rise to the system of Dharma Emperor (*hōō*), which

will be discussed in the next chapter. The restriction of the emperor's authority was symbolic of the greater autonomy the Buddhist community had attained in relation to the state. At the same time, from the point of view of the court, the debureaucratization of the clergy, which also derived from the Mishuhō's Buddhistic legitimization of the emperor's power, provided a deterrent against ecclesiastic interference in the political process, a deterrent that was probably more effective than Emperor Kanmu's transfer of the court from Nara to Kyoto in 794. In the same way, the reformulation of the relationship between secular and religious authorities that Kūkai proposed in his ritual system foreshadowed the kind of symbiosis that emerged between Buddhism and the state in medieval Japanese history: Buddhism, institutionally, never infiltrated the government, but instead completely enveloped it with opulent layers of ritual services, which justified and controlled its exercise of power.

## CHAPTER 9

### A Genealogy of Mantra *Kūkai's Legacy*

It is hoped that the major developments discussed in the foregoing chapters—Kūkai's alliance with the Nara Buddhist establishment; his construction of the categories of the exoteric and esoteric in which the two were understood as complimentary; his Buddhistic legitimation of emperorship, which challenged the Confucian ideology of the state—have moved Kūkai out of the narrow confines of conventional sectarian history and Buddhological studies. It now appears that in order to thoroughly understand the impact of Kūkai's introduction of Esoteric Buddhism, his work has to be assessed in the context of the political, social, and cultural conditions in which the Buddhist community existed in early Heian society and functioned in relation to the state. The discussion in this chapter brings this study to a close by observing the repercussions, ramifications, and implications of the manner in which Kūkai introduced Esoteric Buddhism to Japan, placing them in a long-range historical perspective. To that end some key events symbolic of the congenial relationship between Buddhism and the state that emerged in medieval society are sketched out and their relevance to Kūkai's theories of ritual language, textuality, and discursive practices particular to Esoteric Buddhism are considered.

#### The Emperor's Coronation Abhiṣeka (*sokui kanjō*)

At the coronation ceremony of Emperor Gosanjō (r. 1068–1072) in 1068, Ōe no Masafusa (1041–1111), a celebrated statesman, scholar, and poet who served the courts of three successive emperors, bore witness that after the emperor made his ascent to *takamikura*, the enthronement altar, he formed his hands into the mudrās of Mahāvairocana.<sup>1</sup> This is the first reference to the secret ritual later described as *sokui kanjō*, the coronation abhiṣeka, or *rinnō kanjō*,

the cakravartin abhiṣeka, having been performed at an emperor's coronation.<sup>2</sup> It is probably a reflection of the ritual's secret transmission that no existing document hints at how Esoteric Buddhism came to be incorporated into the coronation ceremony. However, Emperors Fushimi (r. 1289–1298) and Hanazono (r. 1308–1318) described their reception of the coronation abhiṣeka in their diaries, suggesting that during the Kamakura period (1192–1333), the esoteric rite became established as a part of the coronation ceremony.<sup>3</sup>

Modern studies on the rituals of the imperial succession have concentrated almost exclusively on Shintō services. However, as TAKAGI Hiroshi (1989:172–177) has demonstrated, prior to 1868, when Buddhism was excluded by the Meiji government from the ceremonies conducted at the imperial palace, there was a plethora of Buddhist rituals, both esoteric and exoteric—including the first Mishuhō following the imperial succession and celebrated on a particularly grand scale (*Ichidai ichido mishuhō*)—that had to be observed if new emperors were to be considered legitimate. Of these, the coronation abhiṣeka—which also continued to be performed until the enthronement of Emperor Kōmei in 1847 (p. 176)—is unique, for it is indicative of the buddhisization of the emperorship itself, as envisaged by Kūkai.

OKADA Seishi (1989:30–31) has summarized the sequence of rituals that took place at a coronation, as it had been standardized by the late Nara period, in the following eleven procedures.

1. The entry of the emperor-to-be into the Daigokuden: the crown prince is surrounded by eighteen female attendants who screen him from the sight of participants by holding a curtain up around him.
2. Concealed behind the curtain, the emperor-to-be ascends to the takamikura, the octagonal coronation platform, whose sides are covered with drapes.
3. The queen and ladies-in-waiting raise the front drapes of the takamikura, and the new emperor emerges before the audience.
4. Incense is offered by imperial scribes.
5. Princes, ministers, and officials bow before the emperor.
6. The edict of the new emperor announcing the beginning of the new reign is read.
7. Auspicious divine hymns are offered by ministers.
8. The three imperial regalia (*sanshu no jingi*), the gem (Yasakani no magatama), sword (Ama no murakumo no tsurugi), and mirror (Yata no kagami), are presented to the emperor.
9. Princes, ministers, and officials bow twice before the emperor and offer a ritual dance.

10. Military officers hail the emperor.
11. The emperor retires, again surrounded by the eighteen female attendants.

These procedures are a combination of the Chinese coronation rite aimed at establishing the emperor as the Son of Heaven (procedures 4, 5, and 10), who presides over a court bureaucracy, and the native Japanese rites legitimizing the emperor as the descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu (OKADA Seishi 1989:31–32). The coronation abhiṣeka, which was integrated within these ritual procedures, consists of two parts. First, prior to the emperor's coronation, he receives from his Esoteric Buddhist master the transmission of secret mantras and mudrās for his enthronement;<sup>4</sup> second, upon being crowned, he repeats the mudrā sequence on the takamikura.

ABE Yasurō (1989:140) has studied a ritual manual on the coronation abhiṣeka preserved in the Kongōzō archive of Kanchiin Hall at Tōji, which bears a copying date of 1272, and as such it is probably the earliest surviving document in its genre. Entitled simply *Mudrā of Coronation* (*Sokuiin*),<sup>5</sup> the manual divides the ritual procedures of the coronation abhiṣeka into five sections.

1. Granting the five mudrās of the five eyes.
  - a. The mudrā of the wisdom fist (*chiken'in*): the first eye, the human eye (*nikugen*).
  - b. The mudrā of the perfect permeation (*musho fushiin*): the second eye, the heavenly eye (*tengen*).
  - c. The mudrā of stūpa (*sotobain*): the third eye, the wisdom eye (*egen*).
  - d. The mudrā of guidance (*indōin*): the fourth eye, the Dharma eye (*hōgen*).
  - e. The mudrā of the Buddha's eye (*butsugen'in*): the fifth eye, the eye of Buddhahood (*butsugen*); the mudrā that resembles cintāmani.
2. Granting the mudrā of the wisdom fist (*chiken'in*) and two of Mahāvairocana's mantras based on the *Mahāvairocana* and *Vajraśekhara Sūtras*.
3. The mudrā of reigning over the four cosmic oceans (*shikai ryōshōin*), the mudrā of the external five-prong vajra (*gēgōkōin*).
4. Granting the precepts of the ten good deeds, which enable the emperor to ascend to his throne.
  - a. The three precepts of the body: the prohibitions against killing, stealing, and improper sexual acts.
  - b. The four precepts of speech: the prohibitions against lying, flattery, slander, and duplicity.

- c. The three precepts of mind: the prohibitions against greed, rage, and folly.
- 5. The mudrās and mantras of the four masteries.
  - a. Expedient means. Mudrā: the wisdom fist. Mantra: *Vajra dhātu vanī*.
  - b. Peace and pleasure. Mudrā: the perfect permeation. Mantra: *A Vi Ra Hūm Kham*.
  - c. Eternal life. Mudrā: the stūpa. Mantra: *Vām Hūm Trat Hrih Ah*.
  - d. Universal salvation. Mudrā: the guidance. Mantra: *A Ā Aṁ Ah Āḥ*.

This ritual sequence makes the intentionality of the coronation abhiṣeka clear: to ritually transform the emperor into a cakravartin, the ideal virtuous ruler *and* the exemplary lay Buddhist patron of the Saṅgha. As such, the coronation abhiṣeka demonstrates a congruence in its motif with the Mishuhō. To begin with, according to Mahāyāna scriptures, particularly the Prajña-pāramitā sūtras, the five eyes consist of (1) the perfect physical eyesight attainable by human beings; (2) the unlimited vision into the distance of celestial beings; (3) the eye of emptiness attained by Hīnayāna practitioners; (4) the eye of compassion of bodhisattvas; and (5) the eye of the Buddhas, which is the aggregate of all the four preceding eyes.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, in the esoteric literature, the five eyes are the five powers of the female bodhisattva Buddhalocana, the Eye of the Buddhas, which manifest themselves as her five mudrās.<sup>7</sup>

The first two sections of the coronation abhiṣeka can thus be understood as a juxtaposition of Buddhalocana and Mahāvairocana. This is the same combination of divinities that plays such an important part in the concluding section of the Mishuhō, one based on their secret identities: Buddhalocana is the consort of Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra; and the royal symbolism of Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra derives from his identity with Mahāvairocana, the King of Dharma, who reigns in his universal palace. In other words, as in the case of the Mishuhō, the transition in the coronation abhiṣeka from Buddhalocana to Mahāvairocana can only be explained by means of Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra, the Buddha who manifests himself as a cakravartin. This seems to explain why immediately prior to the mudrā of Mahāvairocana in the second section, the ritual sequence in the first section culminates in the mudrā of the eye of the Buddha. This mudrā takes the form of cintāmaṇi, one of the seven regalia of the cakravartin and one whose symbolism for the Japanese emperor is particularly emphasized in Kūkai's Mishuhō.

In short, the combination of the mudrās of Buddhalocana and Mahāvairocana in the first two sections secretly imparts the quality of cakravartin to the emperor. Based on this characterization, in the third section the em-

peror replicates the abhiṣeka—the coronation ceremony—of the cakravartin at which the crown prince is sprinkled with water collected from the four cosmic oceans, as a token of his universal sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> The fourth section pertains to the essential moral qualifications of the cakravartin, which Kūkai discussed in detail in *Ten Abiding Stages* (KZ 1:188–189), in his discussion of the *Sūtra of the Virtuous King*.<sup>9</sup> That is, the perfect mastery of the ten good deeds alone makes it possible for a king to rule as a universal monarch. Finally, the fifth section describes the power of a ruler as a cakravartin, a ruler who is now capable of employing skillful means to maintain his virtuous rule, who sustains the peace and prosperity of his realm, who enjoys long life, and who strives to guide all beings to salvation. To mark these accomplishments, the first four mudrās of the first section, which together constitute the eye of the Buddha, are repeated at the close of the coronation abhiṣeka.<sup>10</sup>

The number of documents relating to the coronation abhiṣeka increased greatly from the mid-Kamakura period on, when it became customary for the Esoteric Buddhist master to give instruction in the mudrās of the coronation abhiṣeka not directly to the emperor but through the emperor's regent, so the secret was also transmitted from one generation to another in the houses of regents.<sup>11</sup> It appears that the ritual procedure for the coronation abhiṣeka became standardized by the mid-Kamakura period, at the latest.<sup>12</sup>

It is not clear at what stage of the enthronement the emperor performed the coronation abhiṣeka. However, it appears that the royal abhiṣeka had a strong affinity with the ritual in which the three Japanese imperial regalia, the gem, sword, and mirror, were bestowed on the emperor. For example, the celebrated Tendai abbot Jien (1155–1225), a younger brother of regent Kujō Kanezane (1149–1207), performed various esoteric rituals at the imperial palace as an attendant priest (*gōjisō*) of Emperors Gotoba (r. 1183–1198), Tsuchimikado (r. 1198–1210), and Junoku (r. 1210–1221). In 1203 Jien had a dream about the regalia, in which the crescent-moon-shaped gem turned into a sheath to encase the sword. Inspired by this vision, the following year he wrote his interpretation of the coronation abhiṣeka and showed it to Gotoba.

The divine gem, one of the treasures of the king of our land, is the jewel queen [of cakravartin], who in turn is the essence of Her Majesty. Since the gem is the pure, immaculate jewel [cintāmaṇi], there is no fault in His Majesty's union with Her Majesty, the jewel queen. . . .

The divine gem is none other than Buddhalocana, who manifests herself as the jewel queen (*gyokujo*) [of the cakravartin]. On the other hand, the emperor, our cakravartin, is Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra. The divine sword is

therefore the sword of the cakravartin. His union with Buddhalocana . . . that is, the oneness of the sword and the gem [i.e., the sheath], is the greatest accomplishment under heaven. Therefore, the law of Buddhas (*buppō*) and the law of kings (*ōbō*) complete one another, so as to bring order to the nation and benefit to its people. They are indeed the treasure of the king. This union gave birth to the divine mirror of Naishidokoro [the hall in which the mirror was enshrined in the palace], which is none other than the Son of Heaven, the embodiment of the sun goddess Amaterasu, for she is the manifestation [in the land of Japan] of Mahāvairocana. . . .

This is why, the ruler of our world, when he ascends to [the enthronement altar] takamikura, forms [with his hands] the mudrā of the vajra fist (*chiken'in*) to emulate Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra, a manifestation of Mahāvairocana.<sup>13</sup>

In his attempt to characterize the Japanese emperor as a cakravartin, Jien emphasizes here the role of Buddhalocana and Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra, as well as Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra's association with Mahāvairocana, logic strikingly similar to that by which the ritual components of the Mishuhō were put together. Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra's dual symbolism of Tathāgata and king, Buddhalocana's femininity and the wisdom of enlightenment, and the union between these two divinities that was to engender power for the emperor—all these central motifs observed in the ritual of Mishuhō constitute the logic of Jien's dream. That is to say, despite some differences in the manner in which canon and doctrine were formulated by the Tendai and Shingon Schools of his time, and some differences in their ritual practices,<sup>14</sup> Jien, in describing, symbolically constructing, and legitimizing the emperorship, employs a vocabulary identical to Kūkai's. Yet, reflecting the fact that in late Heian society, Esoteric Buddhism was integrated firmly within the political and religious mainstream, Jien seems to have gone much further than did Kūkai in the effort to buddhistize the emperorship.

The meaning of the three regalia in Japanese mythology is not always clear. In general, it is said that the gem is associated with the moon, the mirror is symbolic of the sun, and the sword demonstrates the charismatic power of imperial ancestors. The sun goddess Amaterasu was said to have given all the three to the god Ninigi as he descended from the celestial realm on the earth.<sup>15</sup> Jien, on the other hand, attempts to ground the meaning of three regalia—testimony to the imperial clan's descent from the sun goddess Amaterasu, according to Japanese mythology—on Buddhist symbolism, as shown in the following table.

## IMPERIAL

REGALIA	HOUSE	IDEAL RULERSHIP	DIVINITIES
gem	empress	cakravartin's queen	Buddhalocana
sword	emperor	cakravartin	Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra
mirror	crown prince	Son of Heaven	Amaterasu (Mahāvairocana)

Jien seems to interpret the image in his dream of the crescent-moon-shaped gem sheathing the sword as the harnessing of the power of the sword, which is also violence. The gem is identified with the empress; with a cakravartin's queen, or the jewel queen of perfect virtue; and with Buddhalocana, mother of all Buddhas, who is symbolic of the Dharma. The sword, on the other hand, stands for the ruler's power to be controlled by the Dharma. That is, the gem of the Dharma, rather than the sword, plays the active role in shaping the character of the emperor as cakravartin, the sovereign who rules the universe with his virtue. The cakravartin's rule by the Dharma serves, in turn, as a metaphor for the conquest of the world by the Buddhas by means of their turning of the wheel of the Dharma, an act personified by the Buddha Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra. The emperor's union with the empress is symbolic of the envelopment of the ruler's power within the Buddhist Dharma.

Jien also interprets his dream as an image of procreation. The same union of the emperor and the empress not only constructs the Buddhistic characterization of the emperor on the symbolic plane but is also productive of their offspring—most typically, the crown prince, through whom the imperial lineage is sustained. According to Shintō rites, the crown prince becomes a full-fledged emperor, the Son of Heaven, not at the time of enthronement but through the performance of the Daishōe, a grand ceremony held in the first autumn of his reign, in which in private he shares the new harvest of rice with Amaterasu and receives her spirit—thereby establishing the identity between the emperor and Amaterasu (KAWADE Kiyohiko 1973:17–18, 330; OKADA Seishi 1989:16–20). This explains why the mirror is central to Shintō worship. Symbolizing the sun goddess's power of illumination bestowed upon the emperor, the original was enshrined at the grand shrine of Ise and the reproduction in the imperial palace's inner sanctuary, the Naishidokoro.

By contrast, Jien indicates that the mirror of Amaterasu derived from the union between the sword and the gem. This explanation suggests that the identity of the crown prince with Amaterasu has already been established, secretly, prior to his coronation. The symbolism of the sword and the sheath at

the highest level, the union between Buddhalocana and Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra evokes the latter's hidden identity as Mahāvairocana, the Buddha of "Great Permeating Radiance" who, according to Jien, manifested himself in the nation of Japan as the sun goddess. That is, both Amaterasu and the crown prince arose from the same union on different symbolic planes, the former through the oneness of Buddhalocana and Ekākṣara-uṣṇīśacakra,<sup>16</sup> the latter through the oneness of the emperor and the empress. No sooner does the crown prince receive the regalia at his coronation than his bond with Amaterasu is cemented, authenticating him as the emperor in a dual sense: as the direct descendant of the sun goddess, endowed with the authority to officiate at Shintō rites, and consequently, as the Son of Heaven, who is also the virtuous ruler in the Confucian sense who presides over the court bureaucracy. In short, according to Jien, the qualities of the Japanese emperor as both the supreme Shintō priest and the Confucian sovereign are constructed by means of the Buddhist symbolization of the imperial regalia, rather than through the observance of the Daishōe.

Jien notes in the same source that he later submitted his diary describing his dream of the regalia to the abdicated emperor Gotoba for his perusal. Gotoba read it in the presence of Jien, and, delighted, awarded him a copy of the first fascicle of the *Written History of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*) in which the mythologies of the three imperial regalia are described.<sup>17</sup> Gotoba's acknowledgment of Jien's interpretation of the regalia and coronation is indicative of the extent to which Buddhism dominated discourse on emperor and emperorship in the late Heian and early Kamakura periods. That is, the power of the emperor, or the law of kings (*ōbō*), symbolized by the sword could only be legitimized by encasing it in its sheath, the gem that stands for the law of the Dharma (*buppō*).

In clear contrast to the dominantly Confucian depiction of the emperorship in the late Nara and early Heian periods, in Jien's Buddhistic construction the emperor no longer held the privileged position—the pivot of the rectification of names—in the simultaneous creation of the hegemonic discourse of society and the political, social, and cosmic order. Rather, the emperor was yet another sign generated from the intertwining of diverse symbols of royalty in the Buddhist scriptures—cakravartin, cintāmaṇi, abhiṣeka, to name a few—symbols that in turn created as their differences other qualities of the emperor in accord with Shintō and Confucian discourse. This semiotic refiguration never effaced the symbolism of emperor as supreme Shintō priest and Son of Heaven. However, they were now prefigured by and enveloped within the Buddhist system of signification—that is, the Esoteric Buddhist language theory, which excelled in the production of polyvalent signs.

In a clear illustration of the polysemic nature of the emperor's symbolism, in the first year of their reigns following their coronations (to which the esoteric ritual of the *sokui kanjō*, or coronation abhiṣeka, was integral) new emperors established their authority by hosting several annual ceremonies on a grand scale. Of these, as ABE Yasurō (1989:122) has pointed out, two were particularly significant. One was the lecture on the *Sūtra of the Virtuous King* in the fourth month, in which the sūtra was recited and lectured upon simultaneously at court and at the principal monasteries in the provinces (Ichidai ichido ninnōe).<sup>18</sup> The other was the Mishuhō in the first month, at the conclusion of which the grains of the Buddha's relic preserved at Tōji—symbolizing the cintāmani, one of the cakravartin's regalia—were distributed to major Shintō shrines (Ichidai ichido busshari).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, only through such exemplary acts of patronizing Buddhist Dharma—that is, by hosting Buddhist ceremonies that likened them to the cakravartin, who was, according to scriptures, not merely the universal monarch but the ideal Buddhist lay practitioner, who humbled himself in his service to the Saṅgha—could new emperors present themselves to be paragons of virtuous rule and the supreme priests of Shintō worship.

## Growth of the Extra-ritsuryō Esoteric Monasteries

A great majority of historians of the Japanese medieval period have explained the decline of the *ritsuryō* state from the point of view of materialist history: the rapid increase in the number of private manors (*shōen*) in the possession of powerful aristocratic clans beginning in the late ninth century weakened the land taxation system essential to the *ritsuryō* state and by the late tenth century caused the total collapse of the *ritsuryō* regime (ABE Takeshi 1960:3–25; MURAI Yasuhiko 1965; SAKAMOTO Shōzō 1985; YOSHIDA Takashi 1983). By and large, the Saṅgha emerged as a beneficiary of such a change, which gave it an opportunity to attain greater political and economic autonomy. On the other hand, as the examples of the notably Buddhistic characterization of the Japanese emperor strongly suggest, the spread of Esoteric Buddhism seems to have directly contributed and accelerated, rather than been induced by, the process of the disintegration of the *ritsuryō* system, especially in the area of *ritsuryō* laws aimed at controlling the Saṅgha. This seems true not only in the area of ideology but in that of monastic institutions as well.

In 851, the Shingon priest Shinga (801–879), one of the youngest of Kūkai's disciples and a chaplain (*gojisō*) at the court of Emperor Ninmei, founded Kashōji in Fukakusa in the southeastern outskirts of the capital. Officially, the

purpose of the new monastery was to facilitate Emperor Montoku's prayers commemorating his father, the abdicated emperor Ninmei, who had passed away the previous year. The court granted Kashōji the privileged status of *yogonji*, temple of imperial prayer. However, Shinga's monastery was supported not through state funds but through private estates donated by Fujiwara no Yoshifusa (804–872), then minister of the right (*udaijin*) at the Grand Ministry, the second-highest court post. Yoshifusa was a brother of Ninmei's wife and father to Meishi, Montoku's royal consort. According to the *True Record of the Reigns of the Three Emperors* (*Nihon sandai jitsuroku*), an official national history compiled in 901, Shinga was particularly renowned for his beautiful chanting of mantra and “at the time of the birth of the Grand Emperor Seiwa [850], attended the queen [Meishi] and prayed for a safe delivery [of Seiwa]. Thereupon, with the cooperation of the grand minister [Yoshifusa], he [Shinga] erected his monastery [Kashōji].”<sup>20</sup> Thus, in reality, Kashōji was established to celebrate the birth of Crown Prince Korehito, who succeeded Montoku to the throne at age nine and reigned as Emperor Seiwa (r. 858–876)—an event the late Heian historiography *Great Mirror* (*Ōkagami*) described as “extremely auspicious” for the rise of Yoshifusa and his descendants in the Hokuke branch of the Fujiwara clan.<sup>21</sup>

With his new status as father-in-law of the reigning emperor, Yoshifusa set a precedent for subsequent heads of the Hokuke branch by appointing himself regent in order to ensure control over affairs of state. Immediately following Seiwa's enthronement in 858, the court granted Shinga's monastery the right to acquire, every year on Seiwa's birthday, three ordinands who would devote themselves to the study of the phonetics and grammar of Buddhist texts in Sanskrit (*shōmyōgō*), which were essential to the chanting of mantra in esoteric ritual services.<sup>22</sup> It is possible to interpret this as a measure Yoshifusa had taken to safeguard the health of the emperor, upon which the power of his regency rested.

Kashōji served as the forerunner of a large number of grand Esoteric Buddhist monasteries erected throughout the mid- and late Heian periods through the direct patronage of the imperial house and prominent clans. The list of these temples includes Daikakuji, founded in 876 by the Shingon priest Kōjaku, a son of Emperor Junna, and by Kōjaku's mother Empress Shōshi; Gangyōji, established in 877 by the Tendai priest Henjō (816–890), Emperor Kanmu's grandson; Ninnaji, founded in 888 by Emperor Uda (r. 887–897); Kajūji (also known as Kanshūji), erected in 905 by the Empress Inshi, wife of Emperor Uda and mother of Emperor Daigo; Hosshōji, the monastic complex completed in 925 and previously the Fujiwara regent Tadahira's (880–949) private chapel; and En'yūji, constructed by Emperor En'yū on his abdication

and concomitant ordination in 983; and Myōkōin on Mount Hiei, erected in 990 by the Tendai abbot (*tendai zasu*) Jinzen (943–990), a son of the Fujiwara regent Morosuke (908–960).<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the major monasteries and nunneries founded by the state in the Nara and early Heian period under the *ritsuryō* system, these Esoteric Buddhist monasteries enjoyed freedom from government supervision.<sup>24</sup> The *ritsuryō* temples were required to produce annually a *shizai rukichō*, a detailed report to the Office of Priestly Affairs (Sōgō), in the Ministry of Aristocracy (Jibushō), on their assets, including images of divinities, ritual instruments, temple buildings, and landholdings acquired through donations.<sup>25</sup> Based on this report, the state provided the temples with the funds needed to sustain normal operations, carry out ceremonies, make repairs, and meet other contingencies. The approval of the Sōgō was required for the appointment of abbots and other top administrators.

By contrast, the Esoteric Buddhist monasteries of the mid- and late Heian periods, which did not depend on the patronage of the state, received the court's permission to be exempted from these *ritsuryō* obligations.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, each of these monasteries was entitled to receive an allotment of annual ordinands (*nembundoshō*), which during the Nara and early Heian periods was normally awarded to schools (*shū*) rather than individual monasteries or nunneries.<sup>27</sup> Some of these temples even earned the right periodically to have one of their resident priests appointed as a provincial lecturer (*shokoku kōdokushi*).<sup>28</sup> This arrangement made possible a rapid increase in the mid-Heian period of the number of priests who studied Esotericism and the spread of Esoteric Buddhism to the provinces. These examples suggest that Esoteric Buddhist monasteries of the Shingon and Tendai Schools accumulated their institutional strength primarily by eroding the *ritsuryō* principles, on which the state relied heavily to check the power of the major temples established in the Nara and early Heian periods.

However, these Shingon and Tendai temples were not alone in working to expand their power by evading state control. In 848, under the aegis of Empress Dowager Fujiwara Junshi, the Tōdaiji priest Eun (798–869) of the Hossō School erected Anshōji in Yamashina to the northeast of the capital, a vast Esoteric Buddhist monastic complex that grew into a prominent center for ritual studies within the Shingon School.<sup>29</sup> In 874, Shōbō (832–909) of the Sanron School, another Tōdaiji scholar-priest, founded Daigoji in Fushimi in the southeast of Kyoto, another important center for the ritual studies of the Shingon School. His esoteric ritual services to secure the safe birth of the imperial princes earned Shōbō the devotion of Emperors Uda and Daigo.<sup>30</sup> In 875, Shōbō instituted Tōnan'in in Tōdaiji, a temple dedicated to the combined

study of Sanron philosophy and Esoteric Buddhism. Tōnan'in soon grew into an elite institution within Tōdaiji, and the chief administrator (*bettō*) of Tōdaiji was frequently selected from among the successive head priests of Tōnan'in. This arrangement encouraged appointment of priests of noble descent to the head of Tōnan'in (HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:337–339). From the time of Sakei (985–1047), that is, from the seventh head priest on, the leadership of Tōnan'in was reserved for priests of high birth, often the sons of leading courtiers and imperial princes.<sup>31</sup>

The priest Jōshō (906–983) of Kōfukuji, the stronghold of Hossō studies in Nara, was a son of the minister of the left Fujiwara no Morotada (d. 969). In addition to having mastered Hossō doctrine, Jōshō studied Esotericism under the Shingon master Kangū (884–972), Dharma heir of Kongōgaku, or the abdicated emperor Uda (r. 887–897). In 964, Jōshō was awarded by Kangū with the abbotship of Daikakuji, a Shingon monastery founded in 876 in the northwestern corner of Kyoto by the Empress Shōshi. In 970 Jōshō became the eighteenth chief administrator (*bettō*) of Kōfukuji. In 981 he founded Ichijōin, a subtemple at Kōfukuji that became a center for the integrated study of Shingon and Hossō. Jōshō made it a rule that only descendants of the Fujiwara clan could be appointed head of Ichijōin and that only the head priest of Ichijōin could become abbot of Daikakuji.<sup>32</sup> These arrangements gave rise to the system of *monzeki*, in which appointment to the abbotship of a particular monastery was limited to noble descendants of its patron clan who became Dharma heirs to the monastery's founding priest (HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:529–551; USHIYAMA Yoshiyuki 1990:238–299). In this manner, the patron family of the monastery was able to maintain its control over the domains it donated to the monastery, which were no longer subject to taxation by the state. This frequently resulted in a substantial increase in the monastery's economic prosperity.

These examples show the initiative taken in the early and mid-Heian periods by the major monasteries of Nara, on the one hand, to rigorously integrate Esoteric Buddhism into their training regimen and, on the other, to develop their ties with the principal aristocratic clans in Kyoto. Previously the quintessential *ritsuryō* institutions, these Nara national temples colluded in subverting the *ritsuryō* laws in order to sustain and expand their influence—efforts that proved as successful as those of the Shingon and Tendai monasteries in and around Kyoto. Not only the Shingon and Tendai temples, but the major Nara institutions, too, collaborated in forming and sustaining the institutional foundation of the new religious establishment that emerged in the mid- and late Heian period.

## Landscape of the Medieval Shingon School

It seems ironic that the extra-ritsuryō monasteries attained autonomy by removing themselves from the supervision of the Sōgō, the very institution that had worked to gain greater independence for the Saṅgha under the ritesuryō system. Their secession paralyzed the function of the Sōgō as a government agency. By the mid-tenth century, the court seems to have abandoned its effort to enforce the Sōniryō, or Rules for Priests and Nuns, part of the ritesuryō that had provided the Sōgō with the power to assume collective leadership of the Saṅgha, (USHIYAMA Yoshiyuki: 1990:185–218). Although the Sōniryō itself was not abolished, from then on the Sōgō changed from an administrative apparatus to a system of honorific ranks. As the only objective standard for comparing the status of eminent priests across the Six Nara Schools, Shingon, and Tendai, the appointment to the Sōgō became a coveted prize, pursued by the major monastic institutions, which, having gained independence from the state, became increasingly competitive with one another, not only in the religious field, but also politically and economically (TAIRA Masayuki 1992:84).

In the age of the powerful Buddhist monastic institutions in which the ritesuryō no longer exercised hegemonic control over the Saṅgha, Buddhist schools, or shū, were no longer study groups organized separately at major temples. On the other hand, the Shingonshū, or the Shingon School, which became a dominant medieval religious establishment, bore little resemblance to the Shingon Sect of the early modern and modern periods, complete with its centralized organization and exclusive structure. Ninnaji, for example, acquired two annual ordinands, each of whom were assigned to undertake esoteric studies in the Shingon School and exoteric studies in the Tendai School.<sup>33</sup> Daigoji divided its two annual ordinands between the Shingon and Sanron Schools.<sup>34</sup> Kajūji similarly allotted its two annual ordinands to the Shingon and Sanron Schools.<sup>35</sup> An edict from the Grand Ministry dated 859 describes the study program of the three annual ordinands acquired by Anshōji, founded in 848 by the Hossō priest Eun of Tōdaiji, under the auspices of the Empress Dowager Junshi, as follows: “The heart of all Buddhist schools, the secret of the Tathāgatas, is the teaching of Shingon, which all students of Buddhism must study. The ordinands of this monastery therefore establish Shingon as their school of study. At the same time, they are required to select one from among the seven other schools to demonstrate their competence in combined studies.”<sup>36</sup>

All these monasteries developed into prominent centers for Esoteric Buddhist studies, and especially ritual studies of the Shingon School. However, their structure for acquiring annual ordinands indicates that the study of exoteric

disciplines was also important there and that many of resident priests at these institutions belonged to the Sanron, Hossō, and other exoteric schools. This system suggests that schools became important disciplinary associations for establishing the identity of priests, traversing the boundaries of otherwise autonomous extra-ritsuryō monasteries. At the same time, as the example of the annual ordinands at Anshōji illustrates, it was not unusual for individual priests to have attained mastery of both esoteric and exoteric disciplines. In fact, it became customary in the mid- and late Heian periods for many scholar-priests of the Six Schools in the Nara monasteries to travel to these Esoteric Buddhist centers in the vicinity of Kyoto for their Shingon studies.<sup>37</sup> The reverse was also true for priests of Shingon Buddhism at major Kyoto monasteries who studied exoteric disciplines at Tōdaiji, Kōfukuji, and other Nara monasteries.<sup>38</sup> A document issued by the Grand Ministry to the Shingon monastery Daigoji in 1131 sanctioning the appointments to the three top administrative posts (*sangō*) lists the following appointees.

Abbot (*jōza*):

Great Dharma Master Chūga (age 60) of the Sanron School, Tōdaiji.

Chief Administrator (*jishū*):

Great Dharma Master Keikan (age 49, Dharma career: 40 years) of the Shingon School, Tōdaiji.

Chief Inspector (*tsuina*):

Great Dharma Master Junkaku (age 44, Dharma career: 31 years) of the Sanron School, Tōdaiji.<sup>39</sup>

All three priests listed were originally residents of Tōdaiji and had specialized there in the study of the Sanron and Shingon Schools. Although they may have long been senior leaders of Daigoji at the time of their appointment to the posts mentioned here, when registering their new posts at the authorities they retained their original affiliation with Tōdaiji. An earlier 910 Grand Ministry document identifies ten top administrators of Daigoji, out of which seven were registered as Tōdaiji priests.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, according to a record of the appointments of principal administrators of Tōdaiji compiled around 1448, many of the successive abbots at Tōdaiji belonged to—or more precisely, had a membership in—the Shingon School. This, however, did not mean that their expertise was limited to the Shingon studies. On the contrary, the abbotship seems to have been granted to priests who excelled in the combined mastery of the esoteric and exoteric disciplines.<sup>41</sup> Although schools were important for establishing the identity of priests, the relationship among schools, individual priests, and their resident temples remained rather fluid.

In 1307, the court of Emperor Go'nijō (r. 1301–1308) announced it would grant to the Shingon priest Yakushin (827–906), one of the patriarchs of Ninnaji, the title of Great Master (*daishi*), a great honor not only for Ninnaji but for the entire Shingon School. However, the following year, because of objections from Tendai priests at Mount Hiei, the court abandoned this plan, infuriating the priests of the Shingon community.<sup>42</sup> Tōdaiji was the first to protest the court's decision, and its council unanimously denounced Mount Hiei's interference as "defaming the entire Shingon School."<sup>43</sup> Based on the council's resolution, Abbot (*bettō*) Shōchū of Tōdaiji issued missives to Ninnaji, Daigoji, Kajūji, Tōji, Kongōbuji (Mount Kōya), and other monasteries requesting that they join in boycotting all official lectures and ritual services performed for the state until the court reversed its decision on Yakushin's posthumous honor.<sup>44</sup> In the following year, having been appointed also to the abbotship (*chōja*) of Tōji, Shōchū enforced a blockade at the national monastery in the capital, which prohibited Shingon priests from conducting any religious services for the state there. Tōji's blockade was not lifted until 1312.<sup>45</sup>

Interestingly, in the letters Tōdaiji sent to Ninnaji, Daigoji, and other monasteries in 1307, it referred to itself as the "original seat of the Shingon School" (*shingonshū honjo*) and to the letters' addressees as its branch temples (*matsuji*).<sup>46</sup> The reply to this letter from Ninnaji acquiesced to—or perhaps intentionally overlooked—Tōdaiji's claim, in the interest of maintaining a united front against Mount Hiei and the pressure it was placing on the court.<sup>47</sup> Although the replies from other temples have not survived, they seem to have been in the same vein. However, the protracted boycott of national lectures and ceremonies and the blockade of Tōji proved to be costly for the priests of these temples. For them, the court's public invitation (*kushō*) to preside over these national events, many of them at Tōji, was a major boost to a career and might well lead to an appointment to the Sōgō. In 1312 Daigoji petitioned the administrative office (*in no chō*) of the cloistered emperor Fushimi to end the blockade of Tōji by Tōdaiji, rejecting Tōdaiji's claim that Daigoji and Tōji were its branch temples. In the tenth month of the same year, Fushimi, siding with Daigoji, decreed the lifting of the blockade of Tōji and announced the punishment of the Tōdaiji priests responsible.<sup>48</sup> In the following year, Tōdaiji appealed to the cloistered emperor's office to reinvestigate Daigoji's petition, and a prolonged debate began between Tōdaiji and Daigoji.

Surviving records of the documents presented by Tōdaiji to the cloistered emperor's office, which arbitrated the dispute, show that Tōdaiji developed its argument for its religious suzerainty over the Shingon School around three foci. The first was a mythological claim that the foundation of Tōdaiji was divinely inspired by a dream Emperor Shōmu had, in which the supreme Shintō

divinity Amaterasu revealed her identity with the Buddha Mahāvairocana, the central divinity in Esoteric Buddhism. However, because Esoteric Buddhism had not reached Japanese soil by Shōmu's time, the Buddha manifested himself as Vairocana of the Kegon School, the principal deity enshrined at Tōdaiji. The enshrinement of the Buddha Vairocana at Tōdaiji therefore symbolized the oneness of Esoteric Buddhism and Exoteric Buddhism (and also Shintō) and portended that both the esoteric and exoteric doctrines would thrive at Tōdaiji under the protection of Shintō gods, the ancestral divinities of the imperial house.<sup>49</sup>

The second focus is the historical claim that Kūkai first resolved to travel to China to pursue Esoteric Buddhism while praying before the image of Vairocana at Tōdaiji, his Dharma journey to China thus divinely motivated by Vairocana Buddha. This is why, on his return, Kūkai chose Tōdaiji as the site to erect the Abhiṣeka Hall, the official institution for the propagation of Esoteric Buddhism and production of the Dharma lineages of Shingon masters. He did not build another Abhiṣeka Hall either at Tōji or Mount Kōya. Tōdaiji was therefore recognized as the “original seat of the Shingon School,” and Kūkai’s importation of Esoteric Buddhism was the realization of the divine vision of Mahāvairocana revealed to Emperor Shōmu in his dream. Consequently, although Tōdaiji is renowned for promoting the integrated study of the eight schools, its priests have always held Shingon as the foremost among them.<sup>50</sup>

The third is a technical argument that although Kūkai was originally registered as a resident priest at Daianji, the decree of the Grand Ministry approving his erection of Tōdaiji’s Abhiṣeka Hall transferred his registry to Tōdaiji. Because Tōdaiji was the original monastery of the Shingon School and Kūkai was a Tōdaiji priest, all the temples and monasteries erected by Kūkai’s disciples and Dharma descendants to promote the Shingon studies are considered branch temples of the “Shingon School of Tōdaiji” (Tōdaiji shingonshū; i.e., Shingon Buddhism as it was practiced at Tōdaiji). This is the reason that most of the twenty-four resident masters of Tōji initially appointed by the Sōgō in 836 were Tōdaiji priests. As for Daigoji, its status as a branch monastery of Tōdaiji should be obvious, as it was founded by the Tōdaiji priest Shōbō, who had established Tōnan’in at Tōdaiji for the combined study of the Sanron and Shingon disciplines.<sup>51</sup>

The surviving documents supporting Daigoji’s claim are fragmentary. However, the counterargument seems to have developed along two lines. First, Daigoji claimed that Shōbō received the Dharma transmission of the Shingon School from Myōshō of Tōji and that of the Sanron School from Gangyō and Enshū of Gangōji. Therefore, although Shōbō founded both the Tōdaiji sub-temple Tōnan’in and Daigoji, as for Shōbō’s Dharma lineage, there existed no

main temple (*honji*)—branch temple (*matsuji*) relationship between Tōdaiji and Daigoji. Second, regarding the alleged Shingon School of Tōdaiji, Tōji and Daigoji were to be recognized as the original seats (*honjo*). Daigoji asserted that a great number of Tōdaiji priests of the Shingon School pursued the study of Esotericism at Shingon monasteries in Kyoto, especially Daigoji, and that many of the administrators at Daigoji had been officially registered as resident priests of Tōdaiji. The Daigoji documents also point to the fact that from the time of the appointment of the Tōji master Ningai (951–1046) to the abbotship of Tōdaiji, many of the abbots of Tōji (who were not resident priests of Tōdaiji) were also automatically appointed to the abbotship of Tōdaiji.<sup>52</sup>

The dispute between Tōdaiji and Daigoji was finally resolved in 1319 by an edict issued by the office of the abdicated emperor Gouda, who retained his power through the system of Dharma Emperor (*hōō*), the institution that will be discussed shortly. The edict read: “The two temples [Tōdaiji and Tōji] were erected by the imperial vows of Emperors Shōmu and Kanmu to propagate both the Esoteric and Exoteric Teachings. Priests of both temples are well versed in the two disciplines, and there has been no precedent of the two temples fighting with one another. Therefore no such distinction as original temple and branch temple exists between the two.”<sup>53</sup> The confrontation between Tōdaiji, Daigoji, and Tōji suggests that as late as the early fourteenth century, there was little evidence to suggest any sectarian institutional developments within the Shingon School. Rather, the school appeared to be a nebulous, even amorphous, decentralized association whose members were joined by a common claim that their Dharma lineages, however widely branched out, all issued from Kūkai. True, a number of major “Shingon monasteries” did emerge. However, priests who resided at these monasteries did not necessarily study Shingon exclusively, and none of these powerful temples was formidable enough to make the others its branch temples. As NAGAMURA Makoto (1988:11) has pointed out, the “main temple–branch temple relationship in medieval Buddhism is extremely variant, and, lacking any firmly established authoritative structure for promoting dominance of obedience, is substantially different from the headquarters temple—satellite temple relationship in early modern and modern Buddhism.” According to Nagamura, the main-branch relationship in medieval Buddhism concerned for the most part the relationship between only two temples and was highly flexible, depending as it did on the particular criterion by which the balance of power was determined. These included economic relations, the exchange of students in esoteric and exoteric studies, prestige, ties with the ruling class, and historical authenticity. The bond among major Shingon monasteries appears to have been a tapestry made up of these diverse intertwining relations. This was the background against which

Tōdaiji attempted to impose its superiority over, on the one hand, Daigoji, and on the other, Tōji. The outcome of the Tōdaiji dispute proved that not Tōji, nor Daigoji, nor Ninnaji, nor Mount Kōya, nor Tōdaiji was powerful enough by itself to establish hegemony over other monasteries, a standstill that proscribed the germination of a centralized institutional structure and sectarianization.

The foregoing observations on the rise of the medieval Shingon School have identified several direct links between the dissemination of Esoteric Buddhism and the collapse of the *ritsuryō* structure controlling the Saṅgha. It urges students of Kūkai and early Japanese Buddhist history to reevaluate the significance of his introduction of Esoteric Buddhism not in the context of the alleged foundation of the Shingon Sect, but rather in relation to the broader historical issue of the development of the extra-*ritsuryō* alliance of the Saṅgha and the state, in which Esoteric Buddhism seems to have played a decisive role. The alleged institution by Kūkai of the Shingon Sect according to sectarian scholarship appears to have little or no “institutional” reality in medieval Japanese Buddhist history, even during those periods in which the influence of the Shingon School in the Buddhist community reached its apex. The Shingon School of the medieval periods drew its strength from the principal monasteries in both Kyoto *and* Nara. Kūkai’s uniqueness seems to derive from the particularly nonsectarian manner in which he organized his nascent Shingon School, which enabled the school to transcend the boundary between the ancient Buddhist establishment of Nara and the new Buddhist community centered on Kyoto. It is this nonsectarian trait of the prototypical Shingon School that in turn seems to have encouraged the emergence of the new type of Buddhist orthodoxy, an amalgamation of the esoteric and exoteric schools.

### Institution of the Dharma Emperor (*hōō*)

Since the mid-Heian period, there had begun to arise several important extra-*ritsuryō* institutions that made possible the symbiotic alliance between the state and the Saṅgha, which in turn legitimized the allied schools of the esoteric and exoteric disciplines as the religious orthodoxy of the state. Probably the most salient example among these is the system of *hōō*, the Dharma Emperor, which also served as a restraint on the emperor’s religious authority. In the tenth month of Shōtai 2 (899), under the guidance of the Shingon master Yakushin (827–906), the abdicated emperor Uda (r. 877–897, 867–931) took the tonsure at Ninnaji—a monastic complex in the northwest of Kyoto that he had founded in 878—and the following month received the full precept ordination into the

priesthood at Tōdaiji in Nara. In the twelfth month of Engi 1 (901) at Tōji in Kyoto, Yakushin granted the abdicated emperor the abhiṣeka of Dharma transmission (*denbō kanjō*), bestowing on him the title of Esoteric Buddhist master (*ajari*), with the Dharma name Kongōgaku (Awakening of Vajra).<sup>54</sup> In 919, with the cooperation of the abbot Kangen (853–925) of Tōji, Kongōgaku, renowned for his worship of and dedication to Kūkai, endorsed the court of Emperor Daigo (r. 897–930) to give Kūkai the posthumous title *daishi*, great master. In 921, the court announced that Kūkai had been given the title Kōbō Daishi (Great Master of Spreading the Dharma).<sup>55</sup>

Following his ordination, Kongōgaku renounced the title of grand emperor (*daijō tennō*)—the title given to abdicated sovereigns who retained his lay status—and instead designated himself hōō, Dharma Emperor.<sup>56</sup> Although there were a few previous cases of abdicated emperors who adopted the tonsure, Emperor Uda established the precedent of the tradition in which the successive abdicated emperors received abhiṣeka—their “coronation” as monarchs in the realm of the Dharma—and assumed the title of Dharma Emperor, a tradition that continued until the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868.<sup>57</sup> From that time on, an abdicated emperor received ordinations in both the exoteric and esoteric disciplines, thereby qualifying himself as a master of Esoteric Buddhism, and cloistered himself in a monastery as its abbot. Furthermore, the Dharma Emperor established at the monastery his private administrative office, through which he presided as the head of the entire Saṅgha and managed its affairs its relation to the state. Dharma Emperor became not merely a title of a cloistered emperor but more important a unique institution that was utterly external to the Sōniryō, a division of the ritsuryō regulating the clergy’s activities, or other laws of the ritsuryō.<sup>58</sup>

As in the case of Uda, it was not unusual for emperors of the mid- and late Heian periods to provide for their ecclesiastic retirement by lavishing their wealth on the building of grand monasteries containing gigantic images of Buddhas, numerous prayer halls, soaring stūpas, ponds, and gardens. Particularly celebrated for their grandeur are Emperor En’yū’s En’yūji, established in 983, Emperor Gosanjō’s Enshūji (1070), both located next to Ninnaji; and Emperor Shirakawa’s Hōshōji (1077), Emperor Horikawa’s Sonshōji (1102), and Emperor Toba’s Saishōji (1118), all erected at Shirakawa, east of the capital, Kyoto. The resident priests at these monasteries were selected evenly from the Nara, Shingon, and Tendai Schools, most typically from the four monasteries of Kōfukuji, Tōji, Enryakuji, and Onjōji.<sup>59</sup>

The Dharma Emperors residing at such vast temple structures became symbolic of the symbiotic relationship among Buddhism, the state, and Shintō worship, a relationship made possible by Buddhist ideology. In 1122, for example,

in his opening address of a devotional ritual performed at Iwashimizu Shrine, a major Buddhist-Shintō complex in Kyoto, Dharma Emperor Shirakawa (r. 1072–1086, 1053–1129) announced: “Tathāgatas entrusted the law of kings (*ōbō*) to sovereigns so that they may lead their nations to prosperity. Therefore the law of the Buddhas (*buppō*) can only be propagated through the patronage of the kingly law.”<sup>60</sup> In 1128, Shirakawa donated to the same shrine newly copied texts of the entire Buddhist canon, 5,312 fascicles in all. At the beginning of an Esoteric Buddhist service held at the shrine to glorify the Dharma Emperor’s offering, he declared:

It is the law of the Buddhas that enhances the power of [Shintō] gods. It is also the Buddhas’ law that protects the reigns of the emperors. Therefore while I, a disciple of the Buddhas, was occupying the royal throne, I generated a vow, selected a splendid site east of the capital, and erected the grand monastery of Hōshōji. Enshrined in the Golden Hall there are the gold-hued [image of] Mahāvairocana, three *jō* [approximately thirty-two feet] high, surrounded by the two-*jō* Buddhas of the four directions of the garbha maṇḍala. . . . Enshrined in the Lecture Hall are the gold-hued Śākyamuni Buddha, three *jō* tall, accompanied by Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī. In the tenth month of every year, I invite priests of all schools to this monastery to hold lectures on the sūtras of the great vehicle of the five divisions.<sup>61</sup>

The juxtaposition of Mahāvairocana and Śākyamuni as objects of worship at Shirakawa’s monastery is indicative of the complementary function of the esoteric and exoteric disciplines in their legitimization of the imperial authority. According to KURODA Toshio (1975:464), Shirakawa’s pronouncement reflects the idea that “the ultimate goal of the kingly law—that is, the principle for the emperor’s rule of the nation—was to propagate the Buddhas’ law, the Dharma, and that the emperor’s authority was justified as a means of making manifest the divine will of the Buddhas.” Although Buddhism and the state depended on one another, they formed an oblique relationship in which the Buddhas’ law validated the kingly law.

Paradoxically, the emperor—the Son of Heaven, according to Confucian political discourse, as well as the head priest at Shintō rites held at the imperial palace—was able to assume the higher religious authority by means of abdication. That is because his ordination into the clergy upon abdication granted the emperor the power to legitimize, or not to legitimize, the rule of his successor at the imperial palace. The Dharma Emperor’s propagation of the Dharma of both the exoteric and esoteric disciplines—through the erection and management of grand monasteries; patronizing the copying and

circulation of sūtras; and sponsoring lectures, ritual services, and festivals—can be considered a demonstration that his authority was greater than that of the emperor.

Because he was vested with this unique privilege, the Dharma Emperor emerged in the second half of the Heian period as the virtual leader of the Saṅgha. TAIRA Masayuki (1992:96) has identified three areas in which the Dharma Emperor monopolized power as the unifying force within the Buddhist community: it was he who (1) authorized the succession of the abbacy at major monasteries, (2) mediated conflicts between monastic establishments, and (3) managed Buddhist services for the state. In theory, these were powers reserved for the Sōgō, whose duty it was to maintain order within the Saṅgha by enforcing the Sōniryō. By the middle of the Heian period, the Sōgō had lost its function of administering the Sōniryō (USHIYAMA Yoshiyuki 1990:184–185). The Sōgō continued to be an important institution, however, because appointments to its ranks meant prestige; as a result, the powerful monasteries of the Nara, Shingon, and Tendai Schools vied with one another for the honor (TANAKA Fumihide 1983:9–10). Reflecting the increased competition, the number of priests appointed to the Sōgō increased dramatically—from twelve in 885 to twenty-four in 988 to fifty-two in 1118.<sup>62</sup> By the late Heian period, it became the norm for a priest to be made an official in the Sōgō before being named to a top administrative position at his monastery (HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:372–380). Despite the increase in appointees to the Sōgō, in this age the Sōgō had been stripped of its leadership, the Sōniryō had been eviscerated, and the administrative office of the Dharma Emperor, whose authority was by definition above the ritsuryō, assumed functions originally assigned to the Sōgō.

## Esotericism, Orthodoxy, and the Relic

Perhaps the most salient example of the authority of Dharma Emperors in shaping Buddhism as the religious orthodoxy of the state was their role in standardizing the procedure for the appointment of priests to the Sōgō. The appointment system created in the early Heian period—when the ritsuryō rules were more strictly enforced—was tailored to favor elite scholar priests of the Nara Buddhist establishment. Under this system, priests of all disciplines were required to master the doctrines of the Six Nara Schools and to complete the principal lectureships (*kōshi*) at the annual ceremonies of the Yuimae, Misaie, and Saishōe, as the prerequisites for their nomination as Vinaya Masters (*risshi*) at the Sōgō. The power to appoint (*kushō*) principal lecturers lay with the emperor (HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:367–371). Those priests specializing in the

Esotericism of the Shingon or Tendai disciplines therefore had to either study the doctrines of the Six Nara Schools and compete with Nara experts for appointments or have the state grant them exceptions.<sup>63</sup>

Six Nara Schools: Yuimae (Lecture on the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*) at Kōfukuji

Misai at the imperial palace

Saishōe (Lecture on the *Golden Light Sūtra*) at Yakushiji, Nara

(established 859)

In the latter half of the Heian period, however, Dharma Emperors established additional services over which priests with expertise in the disciplines of the Shingon and Tendai Schools might preside and thereby become eligible for appointment to the Sōgō. Such services included the following:

Joint studies of the Six Nara Schools and Tendai Exotericism

Kyūchū Saishōkō (Lecture on the *Golden Light* in the fifth month) at the Imperial Palace (est. 1002)

Sentō Saishōkō (Lecture on the *Golden Light* in the seventh month) at the Dharma Emperors' residence halls (est. 1113)

Hokke hakkō (Eight-day lecture on the *Lotus*) at Hōshōji (est. 1131)

Tendai Exotericism

Daijōe (Lecture on the five divisions of Mahāyāna sūtras) at Hōshōji (est. 1078)

Hokkee (Lecture on the *Lotus Sūtra*) at Ensōji (est. 1073)

Saishōe at Enshūji (est. 1082)

Shingon Esotericism

Abhiṣeka at Tōji (1104)

Abhiṣeka at Kannon'in Hall, Ninnaji (est. 1140)

Tendai Esotericism

Abhiṣeka at Sonshōji (est. 1104)

Abhiṣeka at Saishōji (est. 1122)

All these services were official ceremonies of the state; that is, they were hosted by the emperor and run by the court. These new services provided institutional support for the idea that rites performed to ensure the emperor long life, to avert natural disasters, and to promote a bountiful harvest could be conducted not only by priests of the Six Nara Schools, but also by those versed in the exoteric and esoteric disciplines of the Shingon and Tendai Schools. They also served as forums in which the representatives of the schools could exchange views and encourage study.<sup>64</sup> The creation of these services by the

Dharma Emperors signaled the transfer from reigning emperors to the Dharma Emperors of the power to appoint the principal lecturers or the officiating ritual masters at the services for the state (ENDŌ Motoo 1994:34–35; TANAKA Fumihide 1988:165; TAIRA Masayuki 1992:470). Thus the Dharma Emperor had come to embody the authority that acknowledged the “Eight Schools” of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines (*kenmitsu hashū*) of Nara, Shingon, and Tendai as the orthodoxy of the state.<sup>65</sup> He now represented the religious establishment, which was grounded in the idea that the exoteric and esoteric disciplines were to complement one another in the services they rendered to the state.

This consensus on the complementarity of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines underpinned the relatively loose alliance of major monastic institutions that began to emerge in the mid-Heian period as the new structure of the Buddhist establishment, a development coterminous with the formation of the system of Dharma emperorship. As can be seen from the polemic involving Tōdaiji, Daigoji, and Tōji, discussed earlier, this structure of the religious establishment, which KURODA Toshio (1975:413–415) has designated *kenmitsu taisei*, “exoteric-esoteric establishment,” consisted not of schools (especially in the sense of the sectarian organizations of the early modern period) but of relatively autonomous monastic institutions that acknowledged the Eight Schools as the authentic disciplines of Buddhism. The religious authority of the Dharma Emperor, who stood at the summit of the exoteric-esoteric establishment, was crucial to sustaining such unity, for these powerful monasteries often found that their political as well as economic interests conflicted with one another (TAIRA Masayuki 1992:95–97).

In this sense, the system of official annual services for priestly promotion that developed around the authority of the Dharma Emperor in the late Heian and early Kamakura periods can be seen as the institutional embodiment of the compatibility of the esoteric and the exoteric disciplines, or the conceptual groundwork that made the emergence of the exoteric-esoteric establishment possible. The state-sponsored lectures in exoteric disciplines delineated the essential Buddhist theories—the ideological backbone for the ideal rule of a virtuous sovereign—whereas the esoteric ritual services demonstrated the methods through which such principles could be actualized. This explains why the exoteric annual services—the two services at the imperial palace (Misaie, Kyūchū Saishōkō), one at the Dharma Emperor’s residence hall (Sentō Saishōkō), one at Yakushiji, Nara (Saishōe), and a fifth at Ensōji (Saishōe)—consisted principally of lectures on the *Golden Light Sūtra*, the scripture that portrayed the ideals of the sovereign in the image of the cakravartin. On the other hand, the esoteric services consisted of abhiṣeka, the ordination

that Buddhism had made of the royal coronation, which was symbolic of the Buddhist refiguration of the emperor's authority.

In short, the development of these official annual services of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines can be considered an expansion of the combined performance of the Mishuhō and Misaie, the exoteric and esoteric services on the *Golden Light Sūtra* celebrated simultaneously at the imperial palace in the second week of every new year. These two services remained central for all the state-sponsored Buddhist ceremonies, for they provided an opportunity for the priests of all the Eight Schools of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines to be represented at the palace.

As discussed earlier, on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, following the completion of the two services, the participants in the Mishuhō and Misaie met at the emperor's residence hall. There the abbot of Tōji, who had officiated at the Mishuhō, sprinkled sacred water over the emperor to transfer the merit of the cakravartin to him. The abbot also gave blessings to the princes and ministers attending the emperor and to the priests who were to initiate *uchirongi*, an additional discussion on the sutra in the emperor's private quarters. This discussion was presided over by *tsugai sō*, the moderator priest, a responsibility assigned to the abbot of Kōfukuji (*kōfukuji bettō*).<sup>66</sup> It appears that from the mid-Heian period onward, there was inserted between the consecration by the abbot of Tōji and the discussion led by the Abbot of Kōfukuji a short ceremony called *hasshūsō*, the "Announcement of the Eight Schools," at which the secretary-priest (*igishi*) of the Sōgō recited the list of the names of the priests who were to take part in the discussion. For example, the following list was submitted to Emperor Goreizei (1025–1068) on the fourteenth day of the first month of Tenki 3 (1055).

Names of the priests engaging in the imperial debate, submitted to His

Majesty by the Sōgō

Kegon School

Chōhan, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission (*dentō daihōshii*)

Ikai, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Sanron School

Raien, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Jinne, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Hossō School

Inhan, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Genshō, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Ritsu School

Kenshō, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Jōjitsu School

Keii, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Kusha School

Ryōzen, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Gyōgen, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Shingon School

Seichō, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Kenju, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Tendai School

Shūsan, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission

Eigō, Great Dharma Master of Dharma Transmission<sup>67</sup>

The list concludes with the date and the signatures of the priests in the Sōgō, who ascertained the names of priests representing the Eight Schools for the debate. As KAMIKAWA Michio (1991:50) has suggested, despite its brevity and simplicity, the hasshūsō ceremony must have been of extreme importance, for it provided an official occasion to acknowledge in the emperor's presence the schools that represented the orthodoxy of the state. The names of the representatives of the Eight Schools were announced to the emperor immediately following the esoteric ritual, which, as mentioned, portrayed him as a cakravartin. To the emperor, who was now recognized as the ideal Buddhist ruler and the model patron of the Saṅgha, the chosen priests of the Eight Schools unfolded the exoteric theories underlining the peace and prosperity of a nation ruled by such a sovereign.

Yet another significant addition to the combined service of the Misaie-Mishuhō concerned the relic. The most sacred ritual item in the Mishuhō was grains of the relic of Buddha preserved at Tōji, one of which was gold hued, one of the eighty grains Kūkai inherited from Hui-kuo at Ch'ing-lung-ssu in Ch'ang-an in 805. As discussed in the previous chapter, the relic grains, identified in the Mishuhō as cintāmaṇi (the wish-granting jewel, one of the cakravartin's regalia) and with the Buddha Ratnasarībhava, were essential to bestowing the quality of the cakravartin on the emperor. It was widely claimed that these relic grains increased and decreased in number, reflecting the rise and fall of the nation's fortunes.<sup>68</sup> Therefore the ritual of counting and recording the exact number of the grains of the relic (*kankei*) at the completion of the Mishuhō was most important for the state. The earliest surviving record of the exact number of grains of the relic dates from the fifteenth day of the first month of Tenreki 4 (950), when the abbot Kangū (884–972) of Tōji performed

the counting ritual at the Mantra Chapel and reported to the emperor the number of grains contained in the two crystal containers to be, respectively, 4,259 and 535.<sup>69</sup> These two containers were sealed by the abbot and preserved at the archive (*kyōzō*) of Tōji. Whenever the number of grains increased, the abbot of Tōji distributed (*bushō*) a small number to the emperor, members of the imperial house, and dignitaries of the court who were present at the ritual of counting the grains. The earliest example of the distribution of the relic grains dates from 1062. From then on, fortunately and conveniently for both the clergy and the emperor, the grains of the relic continued to replenish themselves, and the ritual of distribution became integral to the Mishuhō, performed at the Mantra Chapel in order to mark the successful conclusion of the seven-day service.<sup>70</sup>

In turn, it was the emperor who had the power to authorize the abbot of Tōji to break the seals on the two containers and count and distribute the grains. It was also the emperor's responsibility to select from among the most distinguished representatives of the aristocracy, clergy, and military, who were instrumental in managing the affairs of the state, those who would attend the ritual counting and distribution. The dignitaries who received the grains of the relic in turn redistributed them to the Sangha as precious donations, which were often used to found new monastic institutions or to raise funds for extensive repairs of great monasteries.<sup>71</sup> Naturally, the ritual accrued a significant political implication in which those invited received not only great honor but the official recognition of their power and influence from the emperor. As HASHIMOTO Hatsuko (1986:209) has observed,

The seating order in which the dignitaries were ranked for the ritual of distribution directly reflected the power structure of the regime. This explains why the emperor's letters of authorization (*bushōjō*) [to the abbot of Tōji to engage in counting and distribution] were written on the highest quality paper, and why, in size and format, they were identical to the state edicts issued by the emperor or the Grand Ministry.

Viewed as a whole, these concluding rituals of the Misai and Mishuhō demonstrate the mutual reliance of the emperor and the clergy. The Sangha legitimized the emperor's authority by characterizing him as the ideal Buddhist ruler, the cakravartin, while the emperor affirmed the authenticity of the Eight Schools of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines as the religious orthodoxy of the state. Yet the most crucial link between the emperor and the clergy—as in the cases of the consecration of the emperor and the distribution of the relic—took the form of esoteric rituals. This state of affairs suggests that the structure of the

symbiosis between emperor and clergy, grounded in their mutual understanding that the complementary integration of the exoteric and esoteric systems formed the Buddhist orthodoxy, was in fact constructed in the language of Esoteric Buddhism. However, Esoteric Buddhism in medieval society was not the overarching ideological principle integrating within itself all Buddhist and other religious traditions, as presumed by KURODA Toshio (1975:428–432). If Esoteric Buddhism were the hegemonic ideology, as Kuroda suggested, it would have to have esotericized all medieval religious traditions, or subsumed Exoteric Buddhist and Shintō practices within itself as supplementary or nonessential elements of its teaching. On the contrary, Esoteric Buddhism served as the metalanguage that continued to support Exoteric Buddhism, both in its doctrinal studies and its practice of lectures and sūtra chanting, as a crucial part of the Buddhistic symbolization of the emperor and his Shintō ritual functions, bearing witness to the continued influence in medieval society of Kūkai's initial formulation of Esoteric Buddhist discourse. The mediating function Esoteric Buddhist language served also suggests that the political and religious establishment of medieval society, which Kuroda described as the exoteric-esoteric regime, emerged not from the Tendai hongaku philosophy, as he postulated, but instead from the manner in which Kūkai and the Nara monastic establishment forged their alliance. (See the postscript for a further critical reappraisal of Kuroda's theory.)

### Conclusion: Kūkai and Writing—Toward the Kūkai of Extra-sectarian History

The foregoing review of the emperor's coronation abhiṣeka, the institutionalization of the Dharma Emperor, and the establishment as the state orthodoxy the Eight Schools of exoteric and esoteric disciplines makes it possible to see Kūkai's institution of the Mishuhō in the imperial palace in 835 as a watershed in the displacement of Confucianism by Buddhism as the state's dominant ideology. The establishment of the Mishuhō was by no means a triumph of the Shingon Sect, a victory over other Buddhist sects in the race to win imperial favor, as is often suggested by sectarian studies. Neither the Shingon School nor the Six Nara Schools of 835 existed as sectarian organizations that would have vied with one another institutionally. On the contrary, founded as a companion to the Misaie of the Six Nara Schools, the Mishuhō can be considered as the first step by which Buddhism developed a new discourse effective enough to describe and construct in its own language rulership and social order. In other words, the Mishuhō represented a challenge to the “statecraftist” state

of the late Nara and early Heian period, to its Confucian ideology, and to its use of the *ritsuryō* to contain the influence of the Saṅgha within itself. What emerged from Kūkai's prototypical *Mishuhō* is a genealogy of Esoteric Buddhist symbols, such as mantra, abhiṣeka, cintāmaṇi, and the relic, which were crucial in legitimizing Japanese emperorship and constructing medieval social order around it.

Certainly, this is not to suggest that with the institution of the *Mishuhō*, all the subsequent historical developments in the relationship between the state and Buddhism were foreordained, nor that Kūkai was aware of all the ramifications of introducing Esoteric Buddhism to Japan. The *Mishuhō* itself seems to have gone through some significant historical changes, to which the arrival from China of additional Esoteric Buddhist transmissions following Kūkai's, in both the *Shingon* and *Tendai* Schools, must have contributed. However, unless it is understood that the *Mishuhō* was originally inseminated as an esoteric extension of the *Misaie* in the ritual system of the imperial palace, it is difficult to explain how the general contours of the relationship between the state and Buddhism developed in the medieval period, as this development was grounded in an ideology that held that the law of kingship and that of the Dharma were one. Such an ideology developed in turn along a juxtaposition, on the one hand, of the Esoteric Buddhist characterization of the emperor, and, on the other, of the complementarity of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines. Kūkai's theories of language and ritual, which made it possible to graft the esoteric *Mishuhō* on to the exoteric *Misaie*, were therefore instrumental in setting the course for events that transformed the landscape of Japanese Buddhist history in the mid- and late Heian periods.

This positioning of Kūkai in relation to the development of the extra-*ritsuryō* Buddhist establishment seems to justify the basic approach of this study. It has sought to disengage Kūkai from the narrative structure of modern sectarian history of the *Shingon* School, in which Kūkai has always been portrayed as an exemplary Heian Buddhist, the founder of the *Shingon Sect*. It has also striven to recontextualize Kūkai in the historical conditions of the early Heian intellectual community, guided by three hypotheses.

First, Kūkai introduced Esoteric Buddhism to Japan at the apogee of the *ritsuryō* state, when the ancient Japanese regime solidified its power by the promotion of Confucianism as the ideological orthodoxy of the state and through the strict imposition of *ritsuryō* rules. This timing of events meant that the *ritsuryō* system significantly preconditioned Kūkai's activities at every stage of his life—for example, when he was a student of Confucian disciplines at the State College; when he was an official representative of Japan on a diplomatic mission to China, studying Buddhism for the sake of his nation

and, at the end of his career, when he was a high-ranking priest-official in the court bureaucracy's Sōgō. At the same time, Kūkai seems to have maintained throughout his career an opposition to the manner in which Buddhism was integrated within the *ritsuryō* system. His transformation from a cadre of the Confucian intelligentsia to an illegal, privately ordained Buddhist mendicant; his introduction of a new type of Buddhism from China, an introduction that refused to conform to the structure of Buddhist schools that had been allowed to exist in Japan; and his bold attempt to reduce the religious authority of the emperor to a level below that of the clergy—all these acts are expressive of the critical stance at the heart of his writings, a stance resisting the suppressive authority structure of the *ritsuryō* system.

Second, within the context of *ritsuryō* society, it was Kūkai's success in building an alliance with the Nara Buddhist establishment—rather than founding his own "sect"—that made possible the swift dissemination of Esoteric Buddhism in the early Heian Buddhist community. The late Nara and early Heian courts maintained their policy of restraining monastic institutions' political and economic influence in order to prevent the infiltration of the court bureaucracy by Buddhism, a policy symbolized by Emperor Kanmu's transfer of the court from Nara to Kyoto in 794 and the simultaneous prohibition against the relocation of monasteries and nunneries from Nara to the new capital. As a result, long after the transfer was made the center of activity for the Buddhist community remained in Nara. Although on the defensive, the Buddhist establishment at Nara was searching for new alternatives to rebuild its ties with the court in Kyoto when Kūkai returned to Japan in 806 with his transmission of Esoteric Buddhism. Despite its apparent heretical tendencies, the Nara Buddhist leaders recognized that it had the potential to alter their relationship with the court to their advantage. Nara's consequent acceptance of Kūkai resulted in the erection in 822 of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji, the first architectural structure constructed for the purpose of performing Esoteric Buddhist ordinations, and in the induction of Kūkai to the Sōgō in 824, a privileged appointment hitherto limited to eminent priests of the Nara monasteries.

The centrality of Kūkai's relations with the Nara establishment for his propagation of Esoteric Buddhism necessitates a reassessment of the intentionality with which Kūkai engaged in his prolific textual production. The Nara Buddhist intelligentsia did not adopt Esotericism overnight. It was rather a protracted, often arduous process in which Kūkai was required not only to legitimize his new form of Buddhism but to demonstrate its merit for the established Buddhist schools. In contrast with his immediate disciples, who had already embraced Esotericism and to whom he was able to transmit his teaching orally, it was his potential allies within the Nara clergy with whom

Kūkai had greater reason to communicate in writing—the medium available in the public domain. In other words, many of Kūkai's major works that are recognized today as the essential canon of the Shingon School may well have been written principally not for the circle of Kūkai's private disciples, but, instead, for scholar-priests in the Nara Buddhist order, whose collaboration was of the highest priority if his dissemination of Esoteric Buddhism was to succeed.

This observation leads to the third hypothesis of this study: insofar as the historical recontextualization of Kūkai is concerned, the significance of his writing is not that he formulated a set of doctrines or ritual secrets essential for the foundation of an exclusive order, but rather that he constructed an Esoteric Buddhist discourse consisting of new language theory and ritual system. Because Kūkai's general theory of language is based on the working of Buddhist ritual language, it provided the Nara Buddhists with the linguistic tool they needed to present Buddhism as an alternative discourse to that of the Confucian *ritsuryō* system. The Nara Schools, which developed within the *ritsuryō* system, lacked their own conceptual apparatus to explain what language is, how signs form relationships with objects, and how discourse constructs the order of society. Kūkai's theory not only filled this vacuum in the knowledge of the Nara Schools, but provided them with the ritual system in which to demonstrate to the state the Buddhist model of how to linguistically construct the order of society. With the introduction of Esotericism by Kūkai, the early Heian Buddhist community began to develop its own discourse to explain, in a manner different from that of the orthodox Confucian model, such matters as how the emperor should rule the nation, why calamities strike societies, and how a nation's peace can be restored.

In short, Kūkai's critical stance against *ritsuryō* authority, his alliance with Nara, and his reintroduction of Buddhism as an alternative language for creating social and political discourse constituted the principal strands for the production of his texts, strands that imparted to Kūkai's writing a particular historical texture. The sectarian reading of Kūkai's texts—a set of doctrinal claims, such as the absolute superiority of the esoteric over the exoteric, the instantaneity of enlightenment, and the use of mantra and *dhāraṇī* purely for spiritual progress—has pictured Kūkai's Buddhism as utterly distinct from that of the Nara monasteries and from their ritual services performed for the state and the emperor, and as a result seems to have fallen short of grasping the major impact Kūkai's innovative textual production had on the technology of writing and discourse formation in early Heian society.

This conclusion makes it possible to rethink the meaning of medieval legends that assert that it was Kūkai who invented the native Japanese syllabary—

that is, to approach the legends as indicative of the influence his introduction of mantra, its orthography, and the mantra-based language theory exercised on the development of the Japanese writing system. Early Heian Japan was on the eve of the birth of the native kana phonetic script. To compose in Japanese at that time required the appropriation of Chinese characters for their tonal values: the hieroglyphic Chinese characters were used as if they were a phonetic alphabet, by bleaching them of their semantic values. The Chinese characters used in this way were referred to as *man'yōgana*, a term derived from the text in which they were typically employed: *Collected Waka of Myriad Generations* (*Man'yōshū*), compiled circa 759. The orthography of a purely phonetic system of kana eventually developed, as the Chinese characters were further abbreviated and simplified in order to avoid the diseconomy of inscribing complex hieroglyphic letters that were now employed solely as tonal signs.

However, the process of transition from the orthography of the *man'yōgana* to the native kana syllabary seems to have been seriously hindered by the political climate in late Nara and early Heian society, where the state was consolidating its power by advocating things Chinese as the norm, such as the Confucian ideology, the *ritsuryō* legal system, and the production of writings in Chinese language. In his edict of 812, which made it mandatory that all imperial princes and sons of aristocratic clans aspiring to government appointment first receive a Confucian education at the State College, Emperor Saga declared: “There is no better means of preparing oneself for governing the state or managing a clan than the cultivation of [the art of] writing. In order to enable oneself to achieve excellence in one’s service to the nation or promote the honor of one’s family, there is nothing better than learning.”<sup>72</sup> What he meant by “writing” was, of course, writing in Chinese, the language in which official documents of state were composed. For example, Saga held numerous celebrations at his court to encourage poetic compositions by his courtiers.<sup>73</sup> However, these were all Chinese poems (*kanshi*), and particularly those extolling the emperor and his virtuous rule (*ōseishi*), entailing mastery of a rhetorical technique said to be of practical use for court officials. Saga’s words just quoted faithfully echo the Confucian philosophy of the rectification of names—“Let the ruler *be* a ruler, the minister *be* a minister, the father *be* a father, and the son *be* a son”<sup>74</sup>—which held that maintaining a precise correspondence between signs and their objects is the foundation of society. This seems to explain why, in order to both centralize his power and to maintain social order, Saga also avidly promoted the compilation of legal exegeses that encouraged the implementation of the *ritsuryō* codes as literally as possible. As KAJI Nobuyuki (1984:498) has demonstrated, as a semantic

theory the rectification of names is grounded in the hieroglyphism of the Chinese script system. “Chinese characters consist of a rich material imagery. That is, the writing system presupposes that *things* exist first to be replicated and represented in language, which results in the formation of the Chinese characters. . . . By things, I mean here things in the broadest sense, including both material objects and events.”

Each Chinese character contains within itself the *raison d'être* for a particular object, or the principle that underlies the appropriate relationship between that object and other events in the world, which in turn is the meaning of the character expressed through, or as, its graphic pattern. The use of Chinese characters merely as phonetic letters, stripping them of their meanings, as exercised in *man'yōgana*, was therefore to deprive the hieroglyphic characters of their inherent and necessary identities with external objects. The application was therefore potentially detrimental to the Confucian state ideology grounded on the principle of the rectification of names and also to the state's policy of literally enforcing the *ritsuryō*. It is possible to speculate that the governing philosophy of the *ritsuryō* state in the late Nara and early Heian periods suppressed the development of a Japanese phonetic script. It is for this reason, it seems, that this period is described by historians of Japanese literature as the “dark age of literature composed in Japanese” (*kokufū ankoku jidai*) (OKADA Mareo: 1984:293). Still, it was also the golden age of literature composed in Chinese, an age as mentioned before of *keikoku shisō*, “statecraftism,” in which writing was appreciated above all for its practical contribution to the management of the state. Under the statecraftist regime, texts written in Japanese were thought to have no immediate use in the running of the government and were pushed away into the margins of cultural activity, where Japanese was employed for purely private purposes, such as writing memos, letters, and diaries (KONISHI Jin'ichi 1993:49).<sup>75</sup>

It is therefore by no means coincidental that the decline of statecraftism in the mid- and late Heian periods took place at the same time as the popularization of the kana syllabary and the dramatic growth of poetic and fictional works composed in kana. Under the aegis of Emperor Daigo (r. 885–930), the first state-sponsored anthology of Japanese poems (*chokusen wakashū*), the *Collected Waka of the Old and New* (*Kokin wakashū*), was compiled in 905.<sup>76</sup> The work marked the beginning of a new epoch, in which Japanese poetry was officially acknowledged as a literary genre as legitimate as that of Chinese poetry (KONISHI Jin'ichi 1993:50). It was also the age that witnessed the flourishing of *monogatari*, the genre of fictional narratives composed in kana, as represented by the *Tale of Ise* (*Ise monogatari*) and the *Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*).<sup>77</sup>

It appears then that the growth in the popularity of writing in Japanese was linked to the disintegration of the *ritsuryō* state. Although modern scholarship on the Japanese language has mapped out the process by which the kana syllables came to be widely used, it has yet to identify what prompted this important development that began at the end of the early Heian period. For the native kana scripts to be acknowledged by society and the state as a legitimate method of writing, two conditions had to be met. First, a mechanism had to be established that made possible the transition from the Chinese man'yōgana scripts to a Japanese script system. The native scripts developed as abbreviated versions of the more complex Chinese characters used for the man'yōgana. However, in the man'yōgana, there were a significant number of Chinese characters whose tones could have been, and were, appropriated for each of the forty-eight Japanese syllables. To complicate the situation further, more than one system for pronouncing Chinese characters was adopted in ancient Japan, reflecting the dialectic variations of and the diachronic changes in spoken Chinese. This meant that before a Japanese script could become functional, there had to be established a standard for selecting and adapting Chinese characters so that they would most closely approximate the sound of the native syllabary. Second, a theoretical basis had to be developed for legitimizing writing in the native phonetic script rather than with Chinese hieroglyphic characters. This second area has largely escaped the attention of contemporary scholarship. Kūkai seems to have been deeply involved in both developments.<sup>78</sup>

One of the milestones for the growth of the kana syllabary is the *Iroha* poem. Prior to the introduction of Western phonetics in the modern era, the most common standardization of the Japanese kana syllabary was the *Iroha*, in which the forty-seven syllables of classical Japanese are arranged in a waka poem of alternating seven- and five-syllable lines. As Christopher SEELEY (1991:106) has pointed out, the *Iroha*, which originally was one of several mnemonic devices invented for the syllabary, proved to be most effective in popularizing the use of kana. “In an age when a number of different *kana* were often employed to represent one and the same syllable, there was a clear need for an inventory of this type. Orthographic awareness in relation to *kana* was promoted in part, then, by the *Iroha*” (p. 107).

Throughout the medieval period it was widely held that the *Iroha* poem, together with its kana syllabary, was invented by Kūkai. The earliest written assertions to this effect appear in the works of Ōe no Masafusa (1041–1111), Fujiwara no Mototoshi (?–1142), and Tachibana no Tadakane (fl. 1144–1181), leading literati of the late Heian court.<sup>79</sup> The earliest surviving commentary on the *Iroha* poem is by Kakuban (1095–1143),<sup>80</sup> the late Heian Shingon scholar-

priest of Mount Kōya renowned for his pioneering work in creating a systematic interpretation of Kūkai's doctrinal works.<sup>81</sup> Kakuban argued that the poem was an expression in the plainest terms possible of the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence. His interpretation suggests the origin of the syllabary in Buddhist academies.

I Ro Ha Ni Ho He To  
 Chi Ri Nu Ru Wo  
 Wa Ka Yo Ta Re So  
 Tsu Ne Na Ra Mu  
 U Yi No O Ku Ya Ma  
 Ke Fu Ko E Te  
 A Sa Ki Yu Me Mi Shi  
 Ye Hi Mo Se Su<sup>82</sup>

Although its scent still lingers on  
 the form of a flower has scattered away  
 For whom will the glory  
 of this world remain unchanged?  
 Arriving today at the yonder side  
 of the deep mountains of evanescent existence  
 We shall never allow ourselves to drift away  
 intoxicated, in the world of shallow dreams

Belief in Kūkai's authorship of the Iroha poem went unchallenged until the late Tokugawa period, when the Kokugaku scholars Tamura Harumi (1746–1811) and Kurokawa Harumura (1799–1866) asserted, with their nationalistic, anti-Buddhist tone, that there was no textual evidence of the circulation of the Iroha poem prior to the reigns of Emperors Hanayama (r. 984–986) and Ichijō (r. 986–1016).<sup>83</sup> Modern Japanese language scholars are generally skeptical about the notion of Kūkai's having created the Iroha poem and the kana syllabary. OKADA Mareo (1984:272–284) has summarized the arguments against the proposition as follows. First, waka poems in alternating seven- and five-syllable lines, typically known as *imayō*, seem to have come into existence in the mid-Heian period. Second, in the ancient usage of Japanese, at least until the time of Emperor Hanayama in the late tenth century, there was a clear distinction between *E* and *Ye*, which makes the number of the kana alphabet symbols forty-eight, instead of the forty-seven included in the Iroha poem. Third, in the earliest surviving kana chart of the Iroha syllabary—a manuscript copy of a concordance of the Chinese characters for the *Golden Light Sūtra*

(*Konkōmyō saishōōkyō ongi*), which carries a copying date of 1079—the Iroha syllables are written with the Chinese characters in man'yōgana, rather than with the native characters. Therefore, the Iroha poem and the kana script may well have had separate origins. On the other hand, as Okada himself has pointed out, other scholars, though fewer in number, have found sources containing textual and linguistic evidence that counters these arguments and supports the claim that Kūkai was the author (pp. 274 ff, 288 ff).

The fact that modern scholars have not resolved this question, however, should not prohibit students of Kūkai and his language theory from investigating the *reason* for the rise of the legend of Kūkai as creator of the kana syllabary, a belief that for generations governed the way the Japanese viewed their writing system.

Ordinarily, man'yōgana is thought of as a unique Japanese invention. This, however, may not necessarily be true. Buddhist scriptures in the Chinese canon abound with terms, both philosophical concepts and proper nouns, that are transliterations of Sanskrit words—*pan-jo* (Jpn. hannya) for *prajñā*, *p'u-t'i* (Jpn. bodai) for *bodhi*, Shih-chia-wen (Jpn. Shakamon) for Śākyamuni, Wei-mo-ch'i (Jpn. Yuimakitsu) for Vimalakīrti, to name a few. Just as occurred in man'yōgana, these are instances in which Chinese characters have been appropriated for their phonetic values. The most extensive demonstration of phoneticism in the Chinese canon is, of course, provided by dhāraṇīs and mantras, which, by definition, were never translated but only transliterated into Chinese. Dhāraṇīs and mantras in the Chinese canon may well have inspired the Japanese invention of man'yōgana, for they constitute a rich depository of Chinese characters stripped of their semantic values. In fact, as TSUKISHIMA Hiroshi (1981:38) has indicated, of the 152 man'yōgana characters employed in the *Record of Primordial Affairs* (*Kojiki*), an exemplary man'yōgana text on Japanese mythology compiled in 712, at least 19 perfectly match the Chinese characters used for dhāraṇīs in the translation in 703 by I-ching of the *Golden Light Sūtra* (T 16 #665).

Nonetheless, throughout the Nara period, dhāraṇīs circulated almost exclusively in Chinese transliterations, and knowledge of the exact correspondence between the original Sanskrit scripts and their Chinese counterpart was not available (NUMAMOTO Katsuaki 1986:155). This seriously limited the possibility of using dhāraṇī as a tool for the further phoneticization of Chinese characters. Against this historical background, in 806 Kūkai brought to Japan a large number of scriptural texts written in the Sanskrit Siddham script, together with textbooks in Chinese on the Sanskrit script system, phonetic and grammatical rules, and concordances of Sanskrit syllables and their Chinese transliterations.<sup>84</sup> Drawing on these works, Kūkai composed his own textbook on the

Sanskrit syllabary, in which he identifies the fifty-nine essential Siddham letters with the Chinese characters used to transliterate them.<sup>85</sup> Kūkai is also renowned for his composition of the first dictionary of Chinese characters, in which he often provides the pronunciation of characters by means of notations written in man'yōgana.<sup>86</sup> Knowledge of the phonetic rules of Sanskrit and those of Chinese therefore merged in many of Kūkai's writings. In his commentary on a scripture concerning the worship of the Buddha Ekāksara-uṣṇīśacakra, he employs man'yōgana characters to indicate the pronunciation of Sanskrit terms more accurately than the Chinese transliterations in the sutra allowed.<sup>87</sup> For example, *sha-men* (Jpn. *shamon*), a transliteration of the word śramaṇa, mendicant, is rendered by Kūkai through man'yōgana as *shi-ra-ma-na*. In this manner, it became possible to designate through two additional methods the tonal values of Sanskrit terms: directly by use of the Siddham script; or indirectly with man'yōgana. This innovation appears to have been crucial for the justification of writing in Japanese rather than in Chinese. Kūkai's invention demonstrated that Sanskrit words could often be transliterated with greater ease into Japanese than into Chinese and that Chinese characters could be appropriated more effectively as phonetic letters in the polysyllabic, phonetically oriented environment of Japanese language than in the monosyllabic, strongly hieroglyphic environment of Chinese language.

Between Kūkai's return from China in 806 and the decision by the Japanese court in 894 to end its mission to the T'ang court due to the decline of the Chinese dynasty, there were six Japanese priests of the Shingon and Tendai Schools who traveled to China to study Esoteric Buddhism. Their names and dates of study are as follows: Jōgyō, 838 to 839; Engyō, 838 to 839; Ennin, 838 to 847; Eun, 842 to 847; Enchin, 853 to 858; Shūei, 862 to 865. In *Secret Interpretations of the Works of the Eight Priests* (*Hakke hishaku*), the scholar-priest Annen (841?–915?) of the Tendai School wrote that these Esoteric Buddhist teachers brought back to Japan a total of 170 scriptures in Sanskrit and 37 Sanskrit textbooks (T 55 #2177:1113c–1132c). These priests followed Kūkai's lead in increasing the Japanese intelligentsia's knowledge of the Sanskrit language, syllabary, and phonetic and grammatical rules.

As NUMAMOTO Katsuaki (1986:156–160) has demonstrated, these developments gave rise to the system of adding diacritical marks (*shōten*) to the Chinese characters in dhāraṇī to indicate the subtle differences in the original Sanskrit sounds that were often blurred in Chinese transliteration. For example, a copy of a ritual manual on the worship of the Cintāmaṇi Avalokiteśvara—a text imported first by Ennin,<sup>88</sup> which was copied in 889 and preserved at Ishiyamadera, a major center for the study of Esoteric Buddhism in the province of Ōmi—carries six types of diacritical signs indicating the following distinctions: (1) soft

as opposed to hard consonants; (2) semivowels added to other consonants and syllables (e.g., *r* for *dharma* and *y* for *dhyāna*); (3) *visarga*, namely, the spirant sign at an ending for nouns and verbs (e.g., *namah*, *buddhah*); (4) double consonants, as in *śuddha*; (5) aspirated consonants (*kha*, *cha*, *jha*, *tha*, *da*, etc.); and (6) the distinction between *r* and *l*, which were often confused in Chinese transliterations. These diacritical marks indicate a completion of the technological innovation in writing that took place in early Heian society, in which Chinese characters were deprived of their seemingly sanctified status as the orthography for the hegemonic Chinese language. They were now systematically modified and transformed into purely phonetic symbols. That is, with Sanskrit phonetics as a point of reference, a criterion was established for standardizing the use of a wide spectrum of Chinese characters in the kana script.<sup>89</sup>

This new development in the treatment of Chinese characters suggests the emergence of a new theory of writing that both challenged the Confucian notion of the rectification of names and favored writing with phonetic letters over writing with hieroglyphic characters. In *Notes on the Secret Treasury*, Kūkai compares Sanskrit script and Chinese script.

[*Question:*] Between Sanskrit script (*bonji*) and Chinese script (*kanji*), which is true, which is false?

[*Answer:*] Sanskrit script originated in the ever-present principle [i.e., of emptiness, the originally nonarising], and Chinese script arose from delusions (*mōzō*). Therefore, Sanskrit script is true and Chinese script is false.

[*Question:*] Sanskrit script may have arisen from the ever-present principle. However, the same script is used by heretical schools in India. These are false teachings. On the other hand, Chinese script may have originated in delusions, but it is used in Buddhist scriptures, which represent the true teaching. How is it possible, then, to identify Sanskrit script as true and Chinese script as false?

[*Answer:*] Sanskrit script is formed from the originally pure, untainted principle. Its use by heretics does not affect this inherent quality. After all, a piece of rubbish floating on the sea does not alter the purity of the water. By contrast, although Chinese script is used by both non-Buddhists and Buddhists, its essentially delusive quality, which can only produce further delusions, remains unchanged. Therefore with regard to these two scripts, there is a clear distinction between the true and the false. (KZ 2:26)

Kūkai's valorization of Sanskrit script over Chinese script derives from his theory of the origin of Sanskrit. In his textbook on the Sanskrit syllabary

and phonetic system, he asserts that Sanskrit is a naturally formed language, rejecting popular assertions by Sanskrit grammarians that it was created by Brahmā, Śiva, or Nārāyaṇa. Basing his argument on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 18:10a), Kūkai suggests that Sanskrit is not even a creation of the Tathāgatas, for it is ever present, regardless of the presence or absence in the world of a Buddha or his teaching.<sup>90</sup> In fascicle 10 of *Ten Abiding Stages*, Kūkai repeats his claim that Sanskrit has primacy over the Tathāgatas, as all Sanskrit syllables are, first and foremost, seed mantras, the source of all mantras and Buddhist teachings (KZ 1:408–410). According to Kūkai, all Sanskrit syllables originate in the syllable *A*, which as a negative prefix is a semiotic manifestation of the originally nonarising (Skt. *ādyānutpāda*; Jpn. *honpushō*). All other syllables posit themselves as differences from the syllable *A*, the origin of no origin, making the Sanskrit syllabary a semiotic network of emptiness (KZ 2:729–730).<sup>91</sup>

Kūkai also asserts that language is, above all, letters, “which are none other than differentiation” (Skt. *vīśesa*; Jpn. *shabetsu*), which is diametrically opposed to identity, essence, and constancy.<sup>92</sup> A thing is recognized as distinct not because of its substance but because of the difference in its pattern from other things. Therefore, even voices are letters, in the sense that they are patterns inscribed in the air. The syllable *A* of the originally nonarising is always the letter *A* first, and the Sanskrit syllabary arising from it manifests itself most effectively as a network of differentiation, the originally nonarising, or emptiness when it is presented as a script system (rather than as a phonic system). To read and write Sanskrit letters is to experience the force of emptiness that inheres in them, the force that reminds one of the impermanent, illusory, and evanescent nature of objects. For ordinary beings yet to be awakened, the objects of the world appear autonomous, stable, and real only because of the signifying practices of language that give rise to them by articulating them and assign a particular meaning to each of them.

By contrast, the origin of the Chinese script is understood by Kūkai as congeneric with Fu-i’s invention of the hexagram, that is, the ancient sages’ expedient to provide people with the means of communication by inventing a system of signs that appears to replicate in letters the order of the things of the world.<sup>93</sup> The hieroglyphism of Chinese script is productive of an illusion in which external objects appear to exist independently from language, having a substance of their own. From Kūkai’s point of view, this illusion is the semiological precondition of the Chinese ideographic scripts and for the theory of the rectification of names, which holds that what language does is to put or change labels on external objects and the manner of labeling either improve or degenerate the order of things in society and nature. Therefore

“the essentially delusive quality of the Chinese script is productive of more delusions.”<sup>94</sup>

Kūkai’s theory of signs and writing contained the force that was to legitimize phonetic orthography, which in turn was subversive of the statecraftist authorities and their linguistic foundation in the Confucian theory of the rectification of names. The movement to legitimize the act of writing in man’yōgana and, further, to create the Japanese kana script was homologous with Kūkai’s project of challenging the hegemony of *ritsuryō* discourse. To write in man’yōgana or kana meant to deprive Chinese script of its hieroglyphism and remove what Kūkai suggested were its delusive tendencies by means of reformulating the relationship between signs and their objects, bringing that relationship closer to that present in Sanskrit script, the script in which mantras are written. It may be recalled that in his language theory, Kūkai frequently interpreted mantra through the lens of feminine symbols—*vidyā-rājñī* (Queen of Wisdom), the mother of all Buddhas; the female warrior bodhisattva *Prajñā*; and *Buddhalocana*, the eye of the Buddhas, to name a few. In this sense, the semiological affinity between mantra and kana may have been linked to the role kana script played in legitimizing women’s share in the technology of writing and in giving rise to the great tradition of feminine literature, developments that coincided with the decline of the age of statecraftism in the mid-Heian period.

The Iroha poem, as an alphabetical table, has customarily been rendered not in alternating lines of 7 and 5 syllables but in seven lines in which the first six lines contained 7 syllables, and the last line, 5 syllables.

I Ro Ha Ni Ho He To  
 Chi Ri Nu Ru Wo Wa Ka  
 Yo Ta Re So Tsu Ne Na  
 Ra Mu U Yi No O Ku  
 Ya Ma Ke Fu Ko E Te  
 A Sa Ki Yu Me Mi Shi  
 Ye Hi Mo Se Su

KOMATSU Hideo (1979:51–63), who studied earliest examples of the Iroha chart in a commentary on the *Golden Light Sūtra* of which the earliest copy dates from 1079, discovered that this arrangement of the forty-seven syllables derived from the necessity of vocalization for chanting the poem as part of a Buddhist liturgy. The last syllables of each line, when read vertically in the preceding table (or horizontally in the vertical form in which classical Japanese is written), unveils another, hidden sentence in the Iroha poem: *toka nakute shisu*,<sup>95</sup> “died without sin.”

Although its scent still lingers on  
 the form of a flower has scattered away  
 For whom will the glory  
 of this world remain unchanged?  
 Arriving today at the yonder side  
 of the deep mountains of evanescent existence  
 We shall never allow ourselves to drift away  
 intoxicated, in the world of shallow dreams

Thus those who studied the Iroha read the poem in the polyphonic resonance of *toka nakute shisu*. With this paragrammatic secret engraved within, the Iroha poem appears to be a subtle eulogy for Kūkai, who involved himself so deeply in the life of the early Heian imperial palace and audaciously attempted to tame the power of emperorship with the reins of the Dharma, yet kept himself untainted by court politics and retired to the recesses of Mount Kōya to die in peace. Such indeed was the image of Kūkai that gave rise to the numerous medieval legends in which he was transformed into the most popular saint of medieval Japan, legends in which his death was believed to be his eternal samādhi on Mount Kōya, where he awaits the arrival of the Buddha of the future Maitreya.

In this regard, in his/her/their propagation of writing in Japanese, the anonymous author(s) of the Iroha poem succeeded in encapsulating in the poem's uniqueness the gist of Kūkai's approach to language—the approach through which he aimed at transposing the religious philosophy of Buddhist emptiness into general theories of writing, text, and ritual practice. The Iroha poem is at once an alphabetical chart of the phonetic kana script, a Japanese poem written in kana, and a liturgical verse or popular song plainly expressing the Buddhist theory of the originally nonarising, which rejects as illusory the self-presence of things external to language. Analogous in all respects to mantra—phoneticism, polysemy, and the primacy of language over the factuality of objects—the Iroha poem seems to have crystallized within its forty-seven kana letters a challenge that led to the fall of the system of dominance in ancient Japanese society, a system grounded in the hieroglyphism of Chinese language, the Confucian political ideology, and the enforcement of the *ritsuryō* according to that ideology.

## Postscript

*An “age” does not pre-exist the statement which expresses it, nor the visibilities which fill it. These are the two essential aspects; on the one hand each stratum or historical formation implies a distribution of the visible and the articulable which acts upon itself; on the other, from one stratum to the next there is a variation in the distribution, because the visibility itself changes in style, while the statements themselves change their system.*

—Gilles Deleuze

The particular manner in which Kūkai constructed Japanese Esoteric Buddhist discourse, as has been examined in the foregoing chapters, makes the conclusion of this study immediately relevant to two ongoing debates among historians of Japanese Buddhism. One has to do with a growing skepticism about the typical textbook depiction of Japanese history, which is in turn largely grounded in sectarian historical narratives developed in the early modern and modern periods. The other concerns a controversy surrounding Kuroda Toshio’s *kenmitsu* theory, a manifestly revisionist reading of Japanese Buddhist history, which significantly contributed to debunking the limitations and biases inherent in sectarian narratives.

### Problems with the Category of Heian Buddhism

#### *Heian Buddhism: A Typology or Periodization?*

In an authoritative multivolume introduction to Japanese Buddhism edited by historian Iyenaga Saburō, SONODA Kōyū (1967:175), an expert in early Japanese Buddhist history, has delineated Heian Buddhism as follows:

In the ninth month of the thirteenth year of Enryaku [794], Emperor Kanmu abandoned the construction of a new capital at Nagaoka and moved the capital to Uda in the county of Kuzuno in Yamashiro Province, which became Heiankyō [Kyoto]. The transfer of the capital [from Nara] to Heiankyō was aimed at breaking free from the obstacles [in Nara] that suffocated the *ritsuryō* political system and at reconstructing the powerful, centralized administrative apparatus revolving around the emperor. It also presented an opportunity to rescue Buddhism from the stagnation that had continued since the Tenpyō years [729–749] and to urge the appearance of new forms of Buddhism for the Heian period. As expected, in the final years of Emperor Kanmu's reign, two new religious leaders, Saichō and Kūkai, emerged. Both of them journeyed to China, imported to Japan, respectively, the Tendai and Shingon Schools, and purified and regenerated the Buddhist community. We call these two schools Heian Buddhism, as distinguished from Nara Buddhism, which comprised the Six Schools of Nara.

The Heian Buddhism as cogently defined by Sonoda is built around three foci. First, it consists of the Tendai and Shingon Schools, which are represented most typically by Saichō and Kūkai, the founders of the two new schools. Second, Heian Buddhism of the Tendai and Shingon Schools is posited as a reform waged against the corruption of the Six Schools (Sanron, Hossō, Kegon, Jōjitsu, Kusha, and Ritsu) of Nara Buddhism, which often interfered in the court politics of the ancient capital of Nara. Sonoda states: “The degeneration and secularization of Nara Buddhism and the stringent policy of controlling Buddhism imposed by the courts of Emperors Kōnin (r. 770–781) and Kanmu (r. 781–806) set the historical conditions for the formation of Heian Buddhism” (p. 175–176). That is to say, the schools of Nara Buddhism were “the primary cause that suffocated the *ritsuryō* political system” (p. 175), the system of government whose strict implementation—at least, ideally—was the ideological backbone of the Nara regime. By contrast, the Tendai and Shingon Schools are associated by Sonoda with Emperor Kanmu's policy of separating religion and politics, a policy symbolized by his transfer of the court to the new capital in Kyoto, which prohibited the “degenerate” monastic institutions in Nara from relocating there.

According to Sonoda, therefore, as soon as the capital was moved away from Nara in 794, Nara Buddhism was replaced by Saichō's Tendai and Kūkai's Shingon, the new standard of Buddhism in the Heian period, which pushed the Nara Schools to the backstage of history and made them things of the past. This is the argument that constitutes the third focus of Sonoda's definition, on which the first and second foci are in fact based. That is, Heian Buddhism

is not merely a classification for a particular type of Japanese Buddhism but a category representing a historical period. Sonoda's argument appears to be that the typological change in the Buddhist establishment (i.e., the new dominance established by Shingon and Tendai) directly corresponds to, or is perhaps even the natural outcome of, the change in political authority. In other words, Japanese Buddhist history can be divided into separate periods by means of the periodization used in political history. Thus Heian Buddhism, comprising the Tendai and Shingon Schools, was, according to Sonoda, a form of Buddhism that flourished under the aegis of the Heian court and maintained its dominance during the historical period of Heian, which began with Kanmu's transfer of the capital to Kyoto in 794 and ended when Minamoto no Yoritomo established the Kamakura shogunate in 1192. By the same logic, with the displacement of the aristocratic regime by the warrior class in 1192, Heian Buddhism became *passé*, became the "Old Buddhism" (*kyū bukkyō*), and was replaced by the reform movement, the "New Buddhism" (*shin bukkyō*), of the Jōdo, Zen, and Nichiren Schools (pp. 241–256). In this manner, Sonoda's paradigm also confines the age of Esoteric Buddhism to the four centuries of the Heian period: by and large, Esoteric Buddhism lost its relevance to Japanese Buddhist history upon the collapse of the Heian aristocratic regime in 1192.

In introductory texts on Japanese Buddhist history, both in Japanese and English, this view has remained the standard interpretation of the way Buddhism developed in the Heian period.<sup>1</sup> It is hoped that the observations this study has presented on key historical events within the Buddhist monastic community in the early Heian period and their consequences have problematized the conventional wisdom in understanding the Buddhism of Heian society. These observations suggest that the three focal points of Sonoda's argument, which provided the foundation for validating Heian Buddhism as a typological and periodizing category, have no obvious foundation in historical facts but rather are, as will be examined later, untested assumptions underlying the modern construction of Japanese Buddhist history carried out by Meiji and post-Meiji Buddhological scholars.

First, as discussed in detail in the first section of chapter 1, the Buddhism of early Heian society consisted not solely, or even primarily, of Shingon and Tendai. Although the court maintained its policy of strictly checking the clergy's interference in state politics, it nevertheless continued its patronage of the major monasteries in Nara and promoted their religious activities. As a result, the Nara clergy enjoyed prosperity far greater than they had experienced in the late Nara period, in terms of both their scholarly activities and the ritual functions they performed for the state. Indeed, the development of

“Nara Buddhism” reached its apex in the early Heian period. On the other hand, the new monasteries of the Shingon and Tendai Schools founded by Kūkai and Saichō at Tōji, Mount Takao, Mount Hiei, and Mount Kōya occupied only a marginal place in the Buddhist community, as they remained dwarfed by the powerful monastic institutions of Nara, both politically and economically. The Shingon and Tendai Schools did establish themselves as the religious mainstream in the mid- and late Heian periods, thanks to greater integration of Esoteric Buddhist rituals within the core of ceremonies at the imperial palace. By then, however, Tōdaiji, Kōfukuji, and many other Nara monasteries had already incorporated Shingon Buddhism within their own training regimen, which had previously comprised the study of the Six Schools; and they succeeded in exercising far greater power than they did in earlier periods by producing eminent experts in performing esoteric rituals for the state from within the ranks of their own scholar-priests.

Second, as has been studied in the second and third sections of chapter 9, the manner in which the Shingon and Tendai Schools grew into hegemonic religious institutions suggests that these schools did not represent a reform of Nara Buddhism, which Sonoda described as disruptive of the *ritsuryō* state. These two schools gained power not because they gave their cooperation to the state in preserving Emperor Kanmu’s policy of centralizing the power of the state and upholding the *ritsuryō* system. On the contrary, priests of the two schools were instrumental in establishing a new type of monasteries that were exempted from the controls and restrictions imposed by the *ritsuryō*. They accomplished this often by recruiting novices from powerful aristocratic clans, preferentially promoting them through the ecclesiastic ranks because of merit the influence of their family would bring to monasteries, and performing esoteric rituals for the sake of promoting the prosperity of these clans. In return, the monasteries received political protection and the donation of private manors from the aristocratic clans. In this way, they succeeded in creating a system of patronage that completely bypassed the official legal channels of the state, which not only reflected the general historical change in which the emperor lost his actual political power and the Fujiwara clan dominated court politics but also contributed to the disintegration of the *ritsuryō* system.

Third, throughout the four centuries of the Heian period, Japanese Buddhism as a religious institution not only grew dramatically in size but went through a radical structural change. Probably the most salient sign of such a change was Buddhism’s replacement of Confucianism as the ideology of the state. The early Heian period, in which the *Saṅgha* functioned largely within the framework of the dominantly Confucian *ritsuryō* state, meant an utterly different historical environment for Buddhism from those of the mid- and

late Heian periods, in which the Sangha led by the Dharma Emperor (*hōō*) played the pivotal role in legitimizing the authority of the Japanese emperor and in constructing the social order through its Buddhistic discourse. As for periodizing Japanese Buddhist history, the division between the early Heian period of the *ritsuryō* state and the mid- and late Heian periods of the extra-*ritsuryō* establishment appears far more significant than Kanmu's transfer of the capital in 794, which Sonoda and other textbook authors have chosen as the landmark for their creation of the division between Nara Buddhism and Heian Buddhism.

In short, the Buddhism of the four centuries of the Heian period cannot be reduced to a uniform category, as has repeatedly been done by modern Buddhological historians by using the term *Heian Buddhism*. It was rather an aggregate of diverse, often mutually contradictory factors in which continuity and contrast with the Buddhism of the Nara period were simultaneously manifest. As a concept, Heian Buddhism is bankrupt both as a classification of a particular form of Buddhism and as a periodization that designates a historical age in which such a form of Buddhism prospered.

This new paradigm demands a reassessment of the historical significance of Kūkai and of Saichō. It seems obvious now that neither Kūkai nor Saichō can be singled out as representative of the Buddhism of the Heian period, Heian culture, or Heian society, in its entirety. To begin with, Saichō and Kūkai already had begun their Buddhist careers before the close of the Nara period.<sup>2</sup> They should therefore be properly designated late Nara-early Heian Buddhists, rather than Heian Buddhists, and certainly not exemplary Heian Buddhists. Nor does it make much sense to understand these teachers, who lived in the age of transition between the Nara and Heian periods, as two founding fathers of Heian Buddhism whose importance for history was matched, or even homologous, just because of their alleged works of establishing the Shingon and Tendai "sects." One must not forget that Shingon and Tendai came into being in significantly different ways and that neither represented the religious mainstream within the *Saṅgha* of their day. True, the importance of Kūkai and Saichō hinges largely on their introduction of new forms of Buddhism; however, the strategies they adopted to propagate their own schools were diametrically opposed. Saichō eventually chose isolationism, divorcing Tendai from the institutional framework of the Buddhist establishment of Nara and searching for constituencies for his new order. Kūkai, on the contrary, worked to integrate Shingon within the Buddhist establishment in order to make it possible for him to represent the *Saṅgha* and negotiate for it a greater influence in its dealings with the state. It is in light of the sharply contrasting manner through which they introduced their schools and of the historical repercussions

of these initial developments that the importance of Kūkai and Saichō has to be reassessed.

### *Heian Buddhism and Kamakura Buddhism: A Comparison*

If, as discussed, the modern textbook construct of Heian Buddhism cannot describe properly the historical conditions under which Kūkai's career developed, what alternative context should be provided to illustrate Kūkai and his success in constructing Esoteric Buddhism as a legitimate category in Japanese Buddhist history? To solve this problem, it is helpful to review the development of scholarship on Kamakura Buddhism, an academic field far more developed than that of Heian Buddhism. In his reevaluation of medieval Japanese Buddhism, SATŌ Hiroo (1991) has summarized the evolution of the study of Kamakura Buddhism in the postwar period as taking place in the following three stages.

First, until the mid-1960s, historians of Japanese Buddhism understood Kamakura Buddhism as consisting of the Buddhist schools founded during the Kamakura period (1192–1333) by reformers, such as Hōnen (1133–1212), Shinran (1173–1262), Eisai (1141–1215), Dōgen (1200–1253), and Nichiren (1222–1282), who were said to have founded, respectively, the Jōdo and Jōdo shin Schools of Pure Land Buddhism, the Rinzai and Sōtō Schools of Zen, and the Nichiren School. According to this still widely espoused interpretation, particularly common in introductory texts on the subject, the New Buddhism (*shin bukkyō*) of the Kamakura period represented by these schools is rigorously separated from the Old Buddhism (*kyū bukkyō*), or the Buddhism of antiquity, which consisted of the eight classical schools, namely, the six exoteric schools of Nara (Sanron, Hossō, Kegon, Ritsu, Jōjitsu, and Kusha) and the two schools of Heian (Tendai and Shingon), which introduced Esoteric Buddhism to Japan. In this manner, the new Buddhist Schools of Kamakura are identified as the mainstream Buddhism of medieval Japan.

Needless to say, this approach to Kamakura Buddhism is congeneric to that of textbook Heian Buddhism. As demonstrated most plainly by the 1957 *Study of the History of Kamakura Buddhism* (*Kamakura bukkyōshi no kenkyū*) by AKAMATSU Toshihide and the 1962 essay “Formation of the Medieval Religions” (Chūsei shūkyō no seiritsu) by FUJII Manabu (1962:203–210), it is an interpretation that treats the shift of political authority from the Heian court to the shogunate in Kamakura in 1192 as a critical watershed in Buddhist history, the sociopolitical transformation that, according to these authors, caused the decline of the Old Buddhism and the rise to eminence of the New Buddhism. They also have sought to explain the rise of New Buddhist schools in medieval Japan in comparison with the Reformation in medieval Europe,

pointing to the new schools' attitude of exclusion toward Buddhist practices other than their own, their populist proselytizing strategy, and their manifestly sectarian institutions. Some scholars have even referred to the character of New Buddhism as monotheistic (*ishshinkyōteki*).<sup>3</sup> For Akamatsu, Fujii, and other scholars who have taken this stand, Kamakura Buddhism began at the moment at which Hōnen, Eisai, Shinran, and other types of early Kamakura teachers founded their schools. The study of these founders' lives and thoughts accordingly becomes the central task for understanding Kamakura Buddhism as a whole.

The late 1960s witnessed the rise of the second approach to the study of Kamakura Buddhism, as scholars urged that the contours of Kamakura Buddhism be redrawn because the reform movements were not limited in New Buddhism but in fact widespread in Old Buddhism. In his pioneering research on the old schools during the Kamakura period, ISHIDA Yoshito (1967:292–353) argued that the renaissance in the studies of doctrine and precepts in the Nara Schools, Tendai, and Shingon cannot be understood as a reaction to the rise of the new schools but, rather, as internal developments within the old schools, developments that had begun the late Heian period. IMAI Masaharu (1975:24–27) and ŌSUMI Kazuo (1975:230–232), though working independently, developed a similar, effective method as they refined Ishida's argument further. They divided the Kamakura period into several historical stages and demonstrated that at each stage, the representatives of both New and Old Buddhism strove to formulate their thoughts as a means of resolving identical sociohistorical issues. It was through these effort that reformers within Old Buddhism, such as Jōkei (1155–1213), Kōben (also known as Myōe, 1273–1232), and Eizon (1201–1290), became as important as Hōnen, Shinran, or Dōgen. Following this lead, TAKAGI Yutaka's 1982 *Study of Kamakura Buddhist History* (*Kamakura bukyōshi kenkyū*), a comprehensive review of principal Kamakura-period Buddhist figures, their philosophies, and their social and political implications, attached an equal weight to the descriptions of progressive movements in both New and Old Buddhism. Takagi's work made it clear that Kamakura Buddhism could no longer be viewed as consisting solely of New Buddhism.<sup>4</sup>

However, perhaps the most radical reevaluation of Kamakura Buddhism began in the third stage of study, with KURODA Toshio's 1975 *State and Religion in Medieval Japan* (*Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō*). Kuroda represents a breed of medieval historians whose primary interests rest not on Buddhist doctrines but on monastic institutions, and especially their economic foundations—scholars such as Ishimoda Tadashi, Abe Takeshi, and Amino Yoshihiko, to name a few. The innovation of Kuroda's seminal study lies in his critical

redrawing of the categories of medieval Japanese Buddhist schools, a redrawing he accomplished by applying information widely available to institutional historians. He contended that the most prominent monasteries of the Kamakura period all belonged to Old Buddhism, and those monasteries continued to be the wealthiest landholders, while their political thought continued to supply the ruling ideology for the shogunate in Kamakura, whose military rule was legitimized by the emperor and his court. Old Buddhism must therefore be considered as the religious mainstream of the Kamakura period.

Kuroda's argument seriously challenged the validity of the very idea of Kamakura New Buddhism, both as a paradigm and as a historical entity. According to Kuroda, despite the change in regime from Heian court to Kamakura shogunate, the schools of Old Buddhism remained throughout the Kamakura period the religious orthodoxy endorsed by the state. Kuroda also underscored in his work the fact that the religious establishment of Old Buddhism had come into existence by the mid-Heian period and continued its dominance until the Muromachi period (1333–1600). The disintegration of the Ashikaga shogunate subsequently brought on the age of the warring states (Sengoku jidai), and in the ensuing social upheaval the institutional foundation of the monastic centers of the Old Buddhist establishment was destroyed. Thus, clearly, Old Buddhism, consisting of the amalgamation of the six exoteric schools of Nara Buddhism and the esoteric schools of Shingon and Tendai, was not at all passé in the Kamakura period. Kuroda proposed the new term *kenmitsu bukkyō*, “Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism,” for this dominant form of religion, and another neologism, *kenmitsu taisei*, “exoteric-esoteric establishment,” for the institutional structure through which *kenmitsu bukkyō* maintained its hegemony politically, economically, and socially.

Kuroda selected the term *kenmitsu* to point out that at the core of what was referred to as Old Buddhism were the monasteries that all recognized as orthodoxy the combined study of both exoteric and esoteric disciplines. Although the terms *kenmitsu bukkyō* (Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism), *kenmitsu shugi* (Exoteric-Esotericism), and *kenmitsu taisei* (exoteric-esoteric regime) are Kuroda's own creations,<sup>5</sup> the term *kenmitsu* (exoteric-esoteric) itself figures prominently in primary sources. Citing such usages from medieval documents as *kenmitsu shōji* (monasteries of Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism), *kenmitsu sōshū* (combined study and practice of exoteric-esoteric disciplines), and *kenmitsu gakushō* (the scholar-priests of exoteric-esoteric schools), Kuroda emphasized that the “term *kenmitsu* was a concept that existed as a historical fact” (1994:291). In other words, the idea that Exoteric Teaching (*kengyō*) and Esoteric Teaching (*mikkyō*) together constituted the religious orthodoxy of the age was already prevalent in medieval Buddhist discourse and did not originate

with Kuroda (1994:291, 311–312). Thus he redefined medieval Japanese religious history as the periods during which the exoteric-esoteric establishment held hegemony. In an essay written in 1977, Kuroda summarized his point as follows:

To believe that the rise of the New Buddhism in the Kamakura period dramatically changed the Japanese religious scene and caused the demise of the Old Buddhism is merely an illusion produced by the one-dimensional, naively simplistic views disseminated by school textbooks. Anyone who has delved into medieval historical documents is aware that the existing sources on medieval religions concern almost exclusively the temples and shrines of the exoteric-esoteric system, which were issued by the court, the shogunate, or by these religious institutions. This makes it clear how trivial and limited was the influence of “New Buddhism” and how vast and ubiquitous was that of the “Old Buddhism.” The dominance of Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism was a reality due to not only the sheer number of temples, and branch temples, priests and nuns, and temple domains, but also because of the influence of Buddhism on chronicles, historiographies, poems, and other literary texts, in the annual festivals of the common people, and in other aspects of medieval culture. . . . The natural outcome of these observations is that Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism was closely linked to the authority of the state and had been a part of its system of rule. A knowledge of Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism is necessary to understand the structure of the medieval Japanese state and the political ideologies of the court and the shogunate. (1977:177–178)

Initially, the arguments of Kuroda, who began his career as an institutional historian specializing in medieval land ownership, were received rather poorly by historians of Buddhism and Japanese religion. However, in recent years medievalists have shown a growing interest in Kuroda’s theory of an exoteric-esoteric regime, a development that has made him perhaps the most influential thinker in leading the reevaluation of Kamakura Buddhism. The most obvious reason for his theory’s attractiveness is that it immediately made the principal issues within Kamakura Buddhism relevant to other fields of Kamakura history—political economy, gender and class distinctions, literature and art, and science and technology, to name a few.

Kuroda’s treatment of Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism as the dominant form of medieval Japanese religion also provided a new perspective from which to approach developments in Kamakura Buddhism that formed a continuum with those in the Buddhism of the Heian, Muromachi, and Tokugawa periods—a historical long view that challenged the hitherto normative method of study

followed by Buddhist historians who treated Heian Buddhism, Kamakura Buddhism, and Tokugawa Buddhism as if they were separate, autonomous units. Following the publication of Kuroda's works, FUJII Manabu (1975:154), originally a proponent of the textbook versions of Kamakura Buddhism, for example, revised his thinking and wrote: "The inception of the Nichiren School, the Jōdo shin School, and other [schools of Kamakura New Buddhism] as church organizations cannot be traced back earlier than the Sengoku [i.e., Muromachi, 1336–1600] period. They thus would be considered more appropriately as products of 'Sengoku Buddhism.'"

In this manner, Kuroda's thesis stirred new interest in the study of the Old Buddhist schools in the Kamakura period—not only of their reformers but of their stereotypical, mundane character, training regimen, ritual services, monastic management, economic foundations, and so forth—and urged an extensive reevaluation of the significance in history of the founders of Kamakura New Buddhism, as well as of their relationship to the old schools. In 1988, the CHŪSEI Jiinshi Kenkyūkai, (Association for the Study of Medieval Monastic History), a study group consisting of scholars who found in Kuroda their source of inspiration, published a two-volume anthology of studies by twenty-five of its members. Recent monograph publications building on Kuroda's research include SATŌ Hiroo's (1987) survey of Buddhism's involvement in medieval Japanese statecraft, which, among other things, illustrated the religious role of emperors of the late Heian period and of the Kamakura shogun in maintaining the exoteric-esoteric regime; TAIRA Masayuki's (1992) rethinking of the founders of the Kamakura Pure Land schools, which departed from past studies in considering them not in the context of sectarian genealogical history but as leaders who, standing at the margins of society, rebelled against the religious orthodoxy at its center; and OISHIO Chihiro's (1995) rewriting of the history of the Nara Buddhist schools, which demonstrated that the regenerative processes taking place within these schools spanned the early Heian to late Muromachi periods, therefore transcending the divisions of history conventionally employed by Japanese Buddhologists. These works have secured the acceptance of Japanese medievalists for Kuroda's concept of the exoteric-esoteric regime.<sup>6</sup>

This is not to say that Kuroda's theory is without flaws, as will be discussed later in relation to the general strategy I believe should be taken in reevaluating Kūkai. However, of all the alternative theories formulated and applied to Japanese Buddhist history, Kuroda's appears to have provided the most effective conceptual apparatus currently available for identifying the shortcomings of the modern approach to the Buddhism of the Heian period, especially the introduction and development of Esoteric Buddhism during that period.

### *Reading History Backward: Tokugawa and Meiji Sectarianism*

The foregoing review has made plain that scholarship on Kamakura Buddhism evolved as a process through which it gradually extricated itself from the textbook paradigm, which has identified the schools of Kamakura New Buddhism as the religious orthodoxy of medieval Japanese society. By contrast, the field of Heian Buddhism is still dominated by studies of Kūkai, Saichō, and the Shingon and Tendai Schools, the great majority of which have been produced by sectarian scholars of the present-day Shingon and Tendai sects. Thus, the field remains bound by the textbook paradigm in which knowledge of Heian New Buddhism and its founders is considered to be sufficient in explaining the essential nature of the Buddhism of the Heian period. Studies on the Nara Schools during the Heian period are not only limited in number but have been carried out largely on the basis of the same paradigm. Worse, these studies frequently base themselves on historical documents on the Nara Schools produced and preserved in the Tendai and Shingon traditions. The result is a rather uncritical treatment of the subject as representing Heian Old Buddhism, that is, as—or more appropriately perhaps, *as if* it were—an obsolescent form of the religion, which was superseded by the New Buddhism of the Shingon and Tendai Schools.

TAIRA Masayuki (1992:13–20) points out that the categories of New Buddhism and Old Buddhism, which have now entrenched themselves in modern Buddhological discourse, originate in fact in “sectarian history” (*shūhashi*)—a type of historical discourse developed by those Buddhist schools that grew into full-fledged sectarian organizations during the Tokugawa period (1600–1868). The narrative of sectarian history consists principally of hagiographies of sect founders and patriarchs, Dharma lineages of subschools within sects, and the foundation and growth of sect headquarter monasteries and their branch temples. Taira, however, maintains that sectarian history provides only a perverted view of Kamakura Buddhist history, because it arbitrarily highlights historical events crucial to schools that *happened* to have succeeded in establishing themselves as major sects under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate. That is, the distinction between Kamakura New Buddhism and Old Buddhism was not grounded in the historical conditions of the Kamakura period but resulted from the manner in which schools-turned-sects of the Tokugawa period created their own history to legitimize their social status. Taira explains:

We all know Shinran as the founder of the Jōdo shin School. But on what grounds is he the founder of the Shin School? As his statement “I do not have even a single disciple” indicates, it is well known that Shinran himself

did not intend to create a church organization. True, he did use the terms *Shin School* (*shinshū*) and *Jōdo shin School* (*jōdo shinshū*). However, such words also occurred in the writings of the Chinzei branch of the *Jōdo* School, the Seizan branch, and the *Ji* School to refer to themselves. There are even cases in which the word *shinshū* was used by the *Shingon*, *Hossō*, *Kegon*, and *Zen* Schools to describe themselves. Thus, in Shinran's day, the word *Shin School* was used by both New Buddhism and Old Buddhism to refer to the "true teaching" or "true Buddha Dharma." . . .

The same is true for Nichiren, who identified his goal as the restoration of the *Tendai* School. In that sense, he must obviously be counted as one of the reformers of Old Buddhism. However, Nichiren is included in New Buddhism because those who regarded him as the progenitor of their tradition succeeded in forming an independent sect [from the *Tendai Sect*] during the Tokugawa period. (p. 19)

Taira's point can be applied to other major figures of Kamakura Buddhism. For example, as illustrated by IMAI Masaharu (1975) the Buddhism of Ippen (1239–1289) is a composite of *Tendai* philosophy, Pure Land Buddhism, and Esoteric Buddhism. However, under the Tokugawa regime, precisely because the school of his followers, the *Ji* School, was integrated into the *Jōdo* Sect, Ippen has been viewed as a representative of the New Buddhism (ŌSUMI Kazuo 1975). On the other hand, the *Hossō* reformer Jōkei (1155–1213) vehemently rejected the traditional *Yogācāra* stand and upheld the theory of the original enlightenment of all beings. Furthermore, just as Shinran did, Jōkei proclaimed that being evil could give rise to a genuine faith in salvation among practitioners.<sup>7</sup> Should he not, then, be grouped among the New Buddhists? In short, once these Kamakura Buddhists are viewed as what they were and not through the lens of the sectarian developments of later ages, especially the Tokugawa period, the classifications of New and Old Buddhism do not hold up.<sup>8</sup>

Modern Japanese Buddhology, heir to the Western positivist bibliographical-historical tradition, purged legends and myths from sectarian history. As Taira's analysis has revealed, however, the distinction between New Buddhism and Old Buddhism that underlies the current academic view of Kamakura Buddhism is a result of modern Buddhology's rather uncritical adaptation of the particular reading of Japanese Buddhist history given in sectarian historical narratives.

Taira's critique is applicable not only to Kamakura Buddhism but to other areas of Japanese Buddhist history as well. KURODA Toshio (1994:294–295) points out in his reply to the opponents of his theory of the exoteric-esoteric regime that all the major pioneering works of modern Buddhology on Japanese

Buddhist history—beginning with Murakami Seisen's 1889 *Essays on Japanese Buddhist History* (*Nihon bukkyōshikō*), Shimaji Daitō's 1932 *History of Japanese Buddhist Doctrines* (*Nihon bukkyō kyōgakushi*), Tsuji Zennosuke's 1944–1955 *History of Japanese Buddhism* (*Nihon Bukkyōshi*) in ten volumes, and Ui Hakuju's 1951 *Survey of Japanese Buddhist History* (*Nihon bukkyō gaishi*)—adhere to a rather simple skeletal structure in their narratives that can be schematized as follows.

### Pre-Nara Development

Prince Shōtoku (573–621) and the introduction of Buddhism to Japan

### Nara Period (710–794)

Six Nara Schools (Sanron, Hossō, Kegon, Jōjitsu, Kusha, and Ritsu)

### Heian Period (794–1192)

Tendai School and the Shingon School

### Kamakura Period (1192–1336)

Kamakura New Buddhism: Jōdo School, Jōdo shin School, Ji School, Rinzai School, Sōtō School, Nichiren School

Restoration of the Old Buddhism

### Muramachi Period (1333–1600)

Persecution of Buddhist schools by Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and other warlords

Religious rebellions and the decline of doctrinal studies

### Tokugawa Period (1600–1868)

Institutionalization of Buddhist schools under the *jidan* system

Restoration and standardization of sectarian doctrines

The narrative structure as such gives the reader the impression that the major sects of Buddhism, which had all been established by the end of the Kamakura period, survived the turmoil of the Muromachi period and were “recognized and preserved by the Tokugawa shogunate, which placed them under the supervision of its Magistrate of Shrines and Temples (*jisha bugyō*).” However, Kuroda continues, such a reading is only an illusion because, in reality, “only those schools that pledged allegiance to the authority of the shogunate received the official sanction of the state, and all other schools and religions were prohibited and persecuted as heresies” (1994:321). To illustrate the shogunate’s control over Buddhism, Kuroda describes the temple-patron system (*jidan seido*), in which, as a means of proving that their faith was not Christianity, a religion banned by the shogunate, all households in the nation were forced to register as patrons of local temples that, in turn, had to belong to one of the recognized schools. This made it impossible for priests and nuns

to practice, as medieval clerics often did, the combined study (*kengaku*) of different Buddhist schools. The temples within each school were ranked and organized in hierarchical order that started with the headquarters monastery (*bonzan*), which managed the school's main temples (*honji*); proceeded next to the secondary temples (*naka honji*); followed with the branch temples (*matsuji*); and continued on down. In this manner, the Buddhist schools (*shū*) sanctioned by the state were transformed into centralized sects (*shūha*). With the growth of such sectarian organizations, the shogunate encouraged each school to engage in doctrinal studies that would standardize its teaching, that is, to establish interpretations acceptable to the state as orthodoxy and eliminate others within the schools as heretical.<sup>9</sup>

As a part of the effort to legitimize such a new order of Buddhist orthodoxy, these schools developed their own sectarian histories in a particular manner that made it possible for them to blur the fact that they had become sects only in the recent past.

Throughout Japanese Buddhist history, the idea for *shū* (school) continued to change from one historical age to another. There is a significant difference between the term *shū* as it is used to refer to the ancient Six Nara Schools, medieval Shingon and Tendai Schools, and Kamakura New Buddhism. Our current use of *shū* to mean sects dates only from the Tokugawa period. This is the idea that enabled each sect to go back through history to *set its fountainhead* in antiquity or in medieval times by isolating particular Dharma lineages [from among diverse lineages of successive masters and disciples from diverse schools]. (KURODA Toshio 1977:184–185, emphasis in original)

In other words, sectarian histories project into the past claims of orthodoxy grounded in the sects' alliance with the shogunate. For example, although biographies of Kūkai began to emerge shortly following his death in 835, these early hagiographies describe him as just one of many eminent priests of antiquity. As MATSUO Kenji (1988b:290–291) has pointed out, biographies written with the clear intention of describing the establishment of the Shingon School as Kūkai's original goal appeared only in the thirteenth century, principally in reaction to the biographies of Hōnen, Shinran, Nichiren and other "founders" of the new schools of the Kamakura period. Yet the Shingon School of the time was a loose affiliation of monasteries, in which Shingon was one of several disciplines practiced. The Shingon Schools at these monasteries were connected through diverse master-disciple lineages, some based on doctrinal studies, others on ritual training, and yet others on the transmission of meditative

secrets. The resultant primary-branch relationship between monasteries had no hierarchical structure and was fluid, to say the least.

This image of the medieval Shingon School was already lost in the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Mount Kōya* (*Kōya shunjū hennen shūroku*), a comprehensive historiography compiled in 1694 by the priest Kaiei (1642–1727), who at that time was Inspector (*kengyō*) of Mount Kōya. He prepared the historiography when the direct intervention of the Tokugawa shogunate ended a perennial factional strife on the mountain, discord that had resulted from rivalry between conservative scholar-priests (*gakuryō*) and meditation practitioners (*gyōnin*), the latter of whom tended to advocate the mixed practice of Esotericism and Pure Land Buddhism. The shogunate's mediation settled the rivalry in favor of the scholar-priests, the faction to which Kaiei belonged. Kaiei presented a picture in which Kūkai during his study in China (804–406) was already intent upon establishing Mount Kōya as the headquarters monastery of the Shingon School and, together with its branch monasteries, preserved the pure lineage of the Shingon School. Kaiei's history directly reflects the policy of the shogunate, which, beginning in 1604, issued a number of restrictive laws (*hatto*) relating to the principal monasteries of the Shingon School to transform it into a centralized sectarian institution under the direct supervision of the state (TAMAMURO Fumio 1987:10–17; MATSUNAGA Yūkei 1969:258–259). In 1611, another law designated as Shingon's headquarters the five monasteries of Mount Kōya, Ninnaji, Jingoji, Tōji, and Daigoji and ordered other monasteries to subordinate themselves to one of these, thereby prohibiting themselves from engaging in the study of or propagation of any schools other than Shingon.<sup>10</sup>

The example of Kaiei's historiography helps explain why modern scholarship's standard textbook discourse on Japanese Buddhist history—which Kuroda describes as a “bundle of sectarian histories”—tends to create illusions masking the sects' recent origin: that the founders of schools (*shūso*) themselves established, or aimed at instituting, sectarian organizations and that from the time of their beginning in ancient or medieval periods, these major Tokugawa schools had been the mainstream of Japanese Buddhism and always existed as sects, replete with exclusive memberships, centralized bureaucracies, and fixed doctrines. By contrast, those events in antiquity and medieval periods not immediately relevant to the early modern major sects are marginalized in or omitted from modern scholarly discourse, as is most vulgarly demonstrated in textbooks.

Only in the context of such deception does another illusory reading of Japanese Buddhist history become possible: when at each historical stage “new” (i.e., *better*) sects were formed—such as Saichō’s “Tendai Sect” and Kūkai’s “Shingon Sect” in the early Heian period, or Shinran’s “Jōdo shin Sect”

or Nichiren's "Nichiren Sect" during the Kamakura period—these forces of New Buddhism quickly made obsolete the schools from the previous historical periods, namely, Old Buddhism, in order to justify themselves in their sectarian narrative history as the dominant form of Buddhism of their day.

Why, then, did Japanese Buddhologists, who have espoused positivist historical scholarship, carry out their modern construction of Japanese Buddhist history on the basis of early modern sectarian histories, whose narrative abounds with mythical, supernatural episodes? Kuroda argues that it was because the introduction of modern Western scholarship to Japan was contemporaneous with the growth of the Meiji state, which attempted to implement its nationalist, imperialist agenda grounded in its religio-political ideology of state Shintō (*kokka shintō*), the mandatory worship of Shintō gods, which in turn made it possible to absolutize the authority of the Meiji emperor, elevating him to a living god, or *kami*.

Although the Meiji state destroyed many institutions created under the Tokugawa regime, it preserved the Tokugawa shogunate's policy toward the Saṅgha, which had already tamed Buddhism in the form of the state-sanctioned sects under the Tokugawa Neo-Confucian ruling ideology (KURODA 1994:322). This "divide-and-rule" policy toward the Buddhism of the Tokugawa regime, and the resulting sectarian reading of Buddhist history, was "inherited and preserved as it was by the ruling class and intelligentsia of the Meiji state, which reconstructed Japanese history in accordance with the ruling ideology of the Meiji emperor system" (KURODA Toshio 1977:197–198).

To complete their taming of Buddhism under state Shintō, the Meiji rulers banned all forms of Buddhist practices that permitted the mixed worship of Shintō gods and Buddhist divinities (James KATELAAR 1990:45, 130–131). Meiji intellectuals, in this case, the historians of modern Buddhology, followed suit. Under a heavy influence of dominantly Protestant Western study of religion, and employing their objectivist-positivist method, they first carefully weeded out from their primary sources all mythological events—in which the syncretism of Shintō and Buddhist practices manifests itself most prominently. Next, they stitched together historical narratives developed separately within each sect, now freed of their mythologies, to create a modern Japanese Buddhist history for the Meiji state. Finally, this new historical discourse on Japanese Buddhism, often in vulgar, simplified form, was distributed to the school system for consumption in classrooms. Thus was born the standard textbook version of Japanese Buddhist history.

The Meiji state's incentive given to the intelligentsia to absorb modern Western disciplines contributed to distort further the picture of Buddhist history. The cultural differences between the West and Asia, which corresponded with

the origins of, on the one hand, the academic discipline of Buddhology and, on the other, its objects of study, further complicated the distortion, giving rise to a problem Edward SAID (1978:40–41) has described as “Orientalism.”<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, modern Japanese Orientology, of which Japanese Buddhology was a part and which has grown to be most dominant in modern scholarship on the Buddhism of East Asian nations in general, did not escape from this Orientalist trap. As KOYASU Norikuni (1996:65–67) has pointed out, Naitō Konan (1866–1934), the pioneer of modern Japanese Sinology, introduced his 1914 *Discourse on China* (*Shinaron*) with the following words: “This book is to study China, for the sake of the Chinese, in place of the Chinese.”<sup>12</sup> Naitō’s words inevitably convey his sense of sympathy for the Chinese people who had not yet developed modern discipline for studying themselves, the sense of pity that is at once an expression of superiority and will for intellectual dominance. Japanese Orientology’s formative development was congeneric with the rise of the Meiji regime, whose policy of modernization and Westernization led to the regime’s militarist, imperialist expansion to the adjacent nations of Asia.

In short, for Japan’s modernization, knowledge of the originally foreign, “Oriental” religion of Buddhism was to be “corrected” (to use Said’s expression) according to the “Western” disciplines to which Japanese Buddhological scholars were now integral (Robert SHARF 1995:109–112; James KATELAAR 1990:206–207). The idea of Japanese Buddhism they constructed persuaded their audience that Shintō and Buddhism should never have been intermixed, or were in reality always separate, inasmuch as they only became mixed because of syncretic “mythologies” now revealed to be false. It also attempted to demonstrate that those sanctioned sects that agreed to cede control over the worship of Shintō gods represent the orthodox Buddhist tradition because their history can be properly described without recourse to myth. And those that did not or could not do so, such as the Shugen School (Shugenshū), which was dedicated to mountain asceticism for the worship of particularly syncretized divinities, and one of the legitimate sects under the Tokugawa shogunate, had to be prohibited (Allan GRAPARD 1984).

The artificial separation of Buddhism and Shintō in Japanese history also meant the authorities’ encouragement of sectarian studies aimed at legitimizing the sects’ status quo in Meiji society (KURODA Toshio 1994:294–297). Modern studies adopted by sectarian scholars, which redescribed their heritage with accurate chronological histories free of mythological claims, made it possible for them to present their doctrines as philosophies. However, these modern sectarian studies produced another modern myth that their recently constructed doctrines sanctioned by the Tokugawa and Meiji regimes had been originally formulated by the founders of the schools. Once established, Japanese

Buddhology pushed to its margins many subjects essential for the understanding of ancient and medieval Japanese Buddhist history—the cohabitation of Shintō and Buddhist priests in major religious institutions, the combined study of exoteric and esoteric doctrines commonly practiced by scholar-priests, and a plethora of Buddhist rituals at the imperial palace necessary for legitimizing the emperor's authority, to name only a few.

Interestingly, these modern myths that upheld that the mainstream of Japanese Buddhist history comprised the traditions represented by the state-sanctioned Buddhist sects, outlived the Meiji state. Despite the death of state Shintō with the collapse of the Japanese militarist empire in 1945, the Meiji construct of Japanese Buddhist history has continued to shape postwar historical research and its textbook discourse. This is because its two primary objects of legitimization, the emperor system, though eviscerated of power, and the sectarianism underlying Japanese Buddhism, though one no longer sanctioned by the state, survived the war. As the present-day Japanese Buddhist community remains dominated by the sects with their institutional origin in the Tokugawa and Meiji periods, the sects continue to be the beneficiaries of a discourse that privileges their positions in history. The seemingly innocuous textbook version of Japanese Buddhist history developed in postwar Japan is, then, a product of these modern myths, which have not ceased serving their function of preserving the vision of the past of Japanese Buddhism advocated by the now long-defunct Tokugawa and Meiji ruling ideologies.

## Kūkai and the Limitations of Kuroda's Kenmitsu Theory

Once removed from the confines of sectarian historical narrative, as has been attempted in this study, Kūkai's introduction of Esoteric Buddhism, his creation of the taxonomy of the exoteric and the esoteric, and his relationship with the Nara Buddhist establishment all appear directly relevant to the current debate among Japanese historians surrounding Kuroda Toshio's thesis of kenmitsu taisei, or the exoteric-esoteric establishment. Kuroda's new reading of medieval Buddhist history has become perhaps the single most influential perspective among younger generations of not only historians of Buddhism but medieval scholars in general in Japan. However, Kuroda has also attracted some serious criticism, which has exposed certain deficiencies, misconceptions, and inconsistencies in his theory. A brief review of the arguments Kuroda and his critics have advanced, opposing views that nevertheless both help to define issues central to the understanding of Kūkai and his texts, is in order.

Kuroda's thesis of kenmitsu taisei, which aims at illustrating the normative institutional structure of Japanese Buddhism prior to the formation of Tokugawa and Meiji sectarian Buddhism, gravitates around three foci. The first is the integration of Buddhist schools under the canopy of Esoteric Buddhism. This integration within the Saṅgha, which Kuroda says began to develop in the mid-ninth century and was completed by the end of the tenth, became the foundation of the exoteric-esoteric establishment (1994:64). The Eight Schools of the so-called Old Buddhism (the Six Nara Schools, Tendai, and Shingon), according to KURODA (1975:442–443),

did not exist in a mutually exclusive, conflictive relationship, as they are often understood today. Rather, sharing a common ground, these schools formed an associative order in which they were only loosely competitive with one another. In this order, the [eight] schools were in accord in recognizing the superiority of Esoteric Buddhism with regard to theoretical sophistication and efficacy in performing magico-placatory (*chinkon jujutsuteki*) services [for effecting peace by appeasing evil spirits]. Upon this common ground, each school expressed its own features and differences from other schools.

In other words, there was a general accord among the Eight Schools in the medieval period that the studies of Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism complemented one another—that is, esoteric ritual had to be grounded in exoteric doctrines, and exoteric doctrines could be actualized as experience by means of esoteric rituals. In the monastic centers of both exoteric and esoteric schools, the combined study of the two disciplines was promoted. Furthermore, the state recognized as orthodoxy the agglomerated study of the Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings, which culminated in the religious services for protecting the nation (*chingo kokka*) that were conducted by the priests of both persuasions.

Kuroda also indicates that the integration of Esoteric Buddhism reached beyond the Buddhist community to embrace the worship of native Japanese gods (*kami*). The incorporation of Shintō gods into Buddhism is confirmed in sources dating from the mid-Nara period. As illustrated by SHIROYAMA Shunsuke (1986:258–260) and NAKAI Shinkō (1991:417–423), it began as *shinjin ridatsu* (the gods' desire to be released from their godly existence, regarded as part of the realm of suffering of samsāra), revelations from the native gods to shamans and shamanesses that just like humans, they too were suffering in samsāra and pleading to be saved by Buddhist divinities. The late Nara period witnessed an increase in another form of revelation in which the gods manifested themselves as *gohō zenshin*, virtuous spirits who pledged they would be protectors of the Buddhist Dharma (SHIROYAMA Shunsuke 1986:261; NAKAI

Shinkō 1991:414). Kuroda notes, however, that the introduction in the early Heian period of Esoteric Buddhism accelerated this process, giving rise to the idea of *honji suijaku*, Shintō gods as the local manifestation in the land of Japan of Buddhist divinities. As in the case of those Hindu gods incorporated into Esoteric Buddhist mandalas, Shintō gods became a part of the Japanese Buddhist pantheon.

The integration of Buddhist schools and other religions in the ninth and tenth centuries evolved around Esoteric Buddhism as the ultimate doctrine. Both the encouragement of a combined course of study at more than one Buddhist school and the integration of Shintō and Buddhism proceeded on the premise of the superiority of Esoteric Buddhism. Whether it took the form of *shinjin ridatsu* or *gohō zenshin*, the integration of Shintō and Buddhism always resulted in the subjugation of Shintō gods by Buddhist divinities. . . . The religious history of the early Heian period can therefore be seen as a process in which all Buddhist schools and other religions were permeated by Esoteric Buddhism to form an integrated structure. (KURODA Toshio 1994:64)

The second focal point of Kuroda's discussion is the growth and establishment of the exoteric-esoteric institutions as feudal powers, which was the direct result of the integration of exoteric and esoteric schools. The aristocracy recognized the efficacy of esoteric rituals not only in the official services for the peace of the nation but for private purposes, such as ensuring the prosperity of a particular clan. This led to direct patronage by prominent branches of the imperial family and noble clans of monastic centers of Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism, which accordingly accumulated vast domains and acquired exemptions from a range of state controls. The monasteries in turn encouraged the entry into the clergy of the sons of their patron clans, who maintained a secular influence within the monastic community and achieved swift promotion through the ecclesiastic ranks.<sup>13</sup> Under their leadership, the monastic institutions functioned in a manner analogous to secular feudal powers, overseeing agricultural production and distribution within their vast domains, organizing lower-ranked priests into militia forces, and deploying them to protect the interests of the monasteries (KURODA Toshio 1980:29–34). An identical development took place in Shintō shrines, many of which now formed Buddhist-Shintō institutional complexes (Allan GRAPARD 1992:9–12). The rise of the exoteric-esoteric institutions as feudal powers makes plain what Kuroda means by asserting that exoteric-esotericism (*kenmitsu shugi*) was not simply a system of belief developed within the Sangha that integrated medieval religious communities, but a particular structure of authority, power, and rule—which

Kuroda refers to as kenmitsu taisei, the exoteric-esoteric establishment, or regime.

As a regime, Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism developed a unique ideology to legitimize its power and justify the rule of the state that recognized it as the religious orthodoxy of the nation. The analysis of this ideology, the “oneness of kingly law and Buddhist law” (*buppō ōbō ichinyō*), and its formation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which was consummated with the creation of the exoteric-esoteric regime as a ruling system, constitutes the third focus of Kuroda’s thesis.

Ordinarily, this ideology is understood as the mutual dependence of the ruler and Buddhism. The Saṅgha, who performed rites for the peace of the nation, prospered by receiving the patronage of the ruler, while the ruler’s power was justified and secured by the role he played as cakravartin (*tenrin shōō*), the ideal image of the ruler in Buddhist scriptures, who reigns over the universe by advocating the Dharma.<sup>14</sup> As stated in a celebrated passage in the petition from the residents of the Tōdaiji estate in Mino province to the administrators of Tōdaiji, dated 1053,

The kingly law and the Buddhist law are predestined for each other. They are just like the two wheels of a cart or the two wings of a bird. If one of them is harmed it becomes impossible for either to advance or ascend. Without the Buddhist law, there would be no kingly law; without the kingly law, no Buddhist law. Thus, precisely because of the rise of the Buddhist law, the king’s law will also prosper.<sup>15</sup>

To clarify the extent to which rulers and Buddhism in medieval Japan were dependent on each other, however, Kuroda adds another dimension to the interpretation of this ideology—the role the emperor played as the head priest in the worship of native Japanese gods, as exemplified in the Shintō court rituals, from many of which Buddhists were excluded even at the apogee of medieval Buddhism’s ideological hegemony.<sup>16</sup> With citations from historical documents such as those that follow, KURODA (1994:95–97) emphasizes the trinity of the emperor, Shintō gods, and Buddhism:

The emperor rules in order to increase the power of the gods. The virtue of the gods becomes manifest through the virtue of the emperor. Gods are not themselves sublime. They become sublime through the reverence of people. In the same manner, the Buddhas’ teachings do not disseminate themselves. They are propagated only through the work of people.

Emperor Toba’s vow at Iwashimizu shrine (1113).<sup>17</sup>

It is the Buddhist law that guarantees the authority of gods. It is also the Buddhist law that protects the rule of the emperor.

Cloistered Emperor Shirakawa  
on copying the entire Buddhist canon (1128).<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, both the Buddhist law and the law of the nation have prospered only because of the support of our gods.

Proclamation by Emperor Shijō (1235)<sup>19</sup>

With his emphasis on the mutual dependence of the emperor, Shintō gods, and Buddhism, Kuroda explains the disappearance at the beginning of the medieval period of the contradiction between the emperor's functions as the primary patron of the Buddhist community and his functions as the supreme Shintō priest. Kuroda's argument makes immediately relevant the union of the kingly law and the Buddhist law with the incorporation of Shintō gods into the Buddhist pantheon (*bonji suijaku*). The mutual dependence of the state and Buddhism was legitimized by the Esoteric Buddhist theory integrating non-Buddhist gods within the Buddhist mandala, in which Shintō gods were not merely the guardian spirits of the Dharma (*gohō zenshin*) but the provisional manifestations (*gongen*) of Buddhas and bodhisattvas for the Japanese nation (1975:466; 1980:45–48).

These developments led to legitimization at another level, the ideological justification that made it possible for the monastic institutions to grow as feudal powers: now that local Shintō gods worshiped by the residents of a monastic domain became the manifestations of a particular Buddha or Buddhas, often the principal divinities enshrined at the monastery that owned the domain. As indicated by SATŌ Hiroo (1992:74–76), this relationship gave rise to the argument that in fact the feudal domain of the monastery belongs to a Buddha or to Buddha's Dharma (*shakusonryō*, *buppōryō*), providing the domain with “extraterritoriality” (*funyū*), shielding it from the state's police power. The ideology of the exoteric-esoteric regime thus achieved vertical integration for major monasteries to solidify their power structure: at the top, the justification of the rule of the emperor, the chief priest of Shintō, by Buddhist law; in the middle, the integration of Shintō shrines into the institutional framework of Buddhist monasteries; and, at the bottom, the transformation of local Shintō gods into diverse Buddhist divinities (KURODA Toshio 1994:81–85).

Kuroda presents the formation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries of the idea of the “oneness of kingly law and Buddhist law”—which he identifies as *kenmitsu shugi*, exoteric-esotericism, the legitimating ideology of the exoteric-esoteric establishment—as the final stage in the consolidation of the

exoteric-esoteric regime, whose dominance as the religious orthodoxy continued until the end of the medieval age in the sixteenth century.

The mutual dependence of secular and religious authority—authorities that maintained their strength as allied feudal powers and, through their strength, imposed their legitimacy upon society—entrenched itself as the unchallenged order of the state. As a result, this [constructed] legitimacy, when it was consolidated as the traditional establishment, metamorphosed into orthodoxy. . . . With its traditionalism wrought in the crucible of history, with its universality integrating all religions, and with its authority complementing that of the state, exoteric-esotericism grew into the religious orthodoxy, or orthodox religion, throughout medieval Japan. The formation of the exoteric-esoteric regime marked the end of a historical stage at which the emperor was still possessed of his self-evident numen justifying his despotic rule over the ancient state and opened a new stage that was unmistakably medieval.

(1994:99)

By taking this approach to understand the arrival of medieval society, Kuroda draws a clear distinction between the medieval Buddhist ideology of *ōbō ichi'nyo*, or the “oneness of kingly law and Buddhist law,” and its ancient counterpart, *chingo kokka*, the “protection of the nation.” For Kuroda, the difference between *ōbō ichi'nyo* and *chingo kokka* serves as a criterion for illustrating the change in the relationship between Buddhism and the state that in his view made the transition from antiquity to the medieval period in Japanese history.

The theory of the mutual reliance of kingly law and Buddhist law is often carelessly confused with the ancient idea of “protection of the nation” and understood as a product of ancient society. However, are they indeed identical? True, the expression *chingo kokka* appeared in the discussion of the relationship between kingly law and Buddhist law in documents of the twelfth century as well as of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. True, also, that the theory of the mutual reliance of kingly law and Buddhist law inheres in the meaning of “protection of the nation.” . . . However, the weight of its assertion (*chingo kokka*) was on the utility of Buddhism for serving the state, a utility that would enable the Saṅgha to assert the value and *raison d'être* of the Buddhist religion. Instead of having a complementary relationship, Buddhism subjugated itself to and served the state, as can be seen in the manner in which the grand national monasteries functioned within ancient society. . . . By contrast, in the theory of the mutual reliance of kingly law

and Buddhist law of the twelfth century, the two are equal, just like the two wheels of a cart or the two wings of a bird. (1977:177)

Kuroda's argument seems to imply that the idea of the mutual reliance of kingly law and Buddhist law was put forward by the Saṅgha as a means of legitimizing the state's rule. That is, through the rhetoric of equality, the Buddhist community exerted its power over the state by providing the justification for its authority. In other words, the medieval period distinguishes itself from the ancient period in the ideological hegemony Buddhism achieved over the state.

In this manner, Kuroda has carved out an extensive span of Japanese history—roughly from the tenth to the fifteenth century—as the medieval age in religious history, the period during which the exoteric-esoteric institutions maintained their status as the source of religious orthodoxy, boasted of their economic and political influence as the leading feudal powers, and, finally, provided the state with its ruling ideology. This thorough rereading of medieval Japanese history enabled Kuroda to fault the distinction previously drawn by most scholars between Kamakura New Buddhism and Old Buddhism, a distinction that has long been the norm for studying medieval Japanese Buddhism, and replace it with the distinction between heresy and orthodoxy.

According to the conventional explanation, the exoteric-esoteric schools have been viewed as “ancient,” and therefore “Old Buddhism,” while the reform movements have been understood as “medieval” and thus “New Buddhism.” That is, these two forms of Buddhism have been aligned in the historical time scale as if they were successive stages of development. However, there is no truth to such an interpretation. In reality, the two are juxtaposed, one with the other—not in an equal, parallel relationship but in an oblique relationship, in which various historical and social contradictions within the hegemonic orthodoxy gave rise to discordant, dissenting movements that came to make up the heterodoxy. True, the heterodoxy of “New Buddhism” was a radical expression of several facets of medieval intellectual development. However, there is no instance during the medieval period in which the heretical schools of new Buddhism replaced Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism and assumed the hegemony. (1994:292)

Kuroda dispels the taxonomic confusion inherent in the concepts of Old Buddhism and New Buddhism: they are not “before and after” but “side by side.” Against the backdrop of Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism’s dominance, Kuroda argues that the alleged founders of Kamakura New Buddhism and

their schools existed, economically, politically, and ideologically, at the periphery of society. Kamakura New Schools and their founders by no means set the standard for medieval Japanese Buddhism. On the contrary, they positioned themselves as dissension from the center. For Kuroda, the importance of Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren rests not in their sanctified status as the founders of particular sects but in representing the schism and critique of the center, a dissension that provides rare insight into the nature of the hegemonic regime.

It is often overlooked that the progressive movements of Kamakura [New] Buddhism at all their historical stages developed through confrontation with Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism. Shinran, Dōgen, Nichiren and other new leaders all advanced their movements not in isolation from Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism but amidst a religious order that Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism dominated. In sectarian history, naturally, the thoughts of Shinran and Dōgen are explained in relation to their masters, Hōnen and Eisai, and then in the genealogical context of their Pure Land and Zen predecessors in Japan and China. However, in reality, their religions did not develop in such lineage successions. . . . The activities of Shinran, Dōgen, Nichiren, Ippen, and all these progressive leaders were conditioned by their relationship to Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism. That is, all of them began their careers with the traditional study of Buddhism within Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism, raised doubts about it, and, struggling with the words, phrases and logic of the scriptures of the orthodoxy, took their stand against it. (1994:114)

Kuroda argues here that the sphere of influence of Esoteric Buddhism was limited neither to the Heian historical period nor to the social class of the Heian aristocracy. According to Kuroda, throughout the medieval period, Esoteric Buddhism was disseminated through the institution of the exoteric-esoteric establishment that was accessible to the masses, which included farmers and servants of temple domains worshiping their local Shintō-Buddhist divinities, who sanctified the domains, and warrior-monks who relied on the authorities of these divinities to protect their domains.<sup>20</sup> This also makes it inappropriate to simply tie the Old Buddhism to aristocracy and the New Buddhism to the masses (1994:175–182, 185–196). In support of Kuroda, TAIRA Masayuki (1992:86) has argued that “the increasing speed with which Buddhism and Buddhist activities took hold among ordinary folk from the mid-Heian period on means neither that popular Buddhism was becoming independent movements nor that the foundation was being established for the Kamakura New Buddhism.” On the contrary, according to Taira, these developments were

witness to the “further penetration of the ideology of the Old Buddhism, or, Exoteric-Esoteric Buddhism, into the consciousness of ordinary people” (pp. 86–87). Old Buddhism may well have grown degenerate by the late Heian period. However, contrary to the arguments advanced by proponents of the idea of New Buddhism, it is no longer possible simply to identify the alleged degeneration of Old Buddhism as the cradle that prepared Kamakura New Buddhism to take root among ordinary folk.

Despite its achievements in radically redrawing the contours of medieval Japanese Buddhism, Kuroda’s thesis of the exoteric-esoteric establishment suffers from some critical flaws. To begin with, as SUEKI Fumihiko (1994c:2) has pointed out, Kuroda has never provided exacting definitions of his use of the terms *exoteric* (*ken*) and *esoteric* (*mitsu*), except to say in overly simplistic manner that the esoteric was represented by the Tendai and Shingon Schools, and the exoteric, by the Six Nara Schools (KURODA Toshio 1994:291). At the heart of Kuroda’s model of the exoteric-esoteric establishment is the compatibility, both theoretical and institutional, between the exoteric and esoteric disciplines. Yet the ambiguity in his use of these terms seems to have prevented him from explicating how the seemingly diametrically opposed concepts were made compatible.

The strength of Kuroda’s thesis derives in great part from his ability to expose a basic error made in many studies on Japanese Buddhist history: treating the idea of *shū*, or school, as referring to centralized sectarian organizations created during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods as if it were a historical parameter. Kuroda’s approach has enabled students of Japanese Buddhism to observe the historical metamorphosis of the concept of *shū* in which the modern *shū*, or sects, are clearly contrasted with the ancient *shū*, which were study groups established at major monasteries in the capital, and with the medieval *shū*, which were decentralized intermonastic associations for doctrinal and ritual studies. On the other hand, in his writings Kuroda treats the Exoteric Teaching (*kengyō*) and Esoteric Teaching (*mikkyō*) as if they were categories transcending historical changes. Yet prior to Kūkai, there is no evidence that either of the two categories or methods of distinguishing between them in a systematic manner were available to Japanese Buddhists.<sup>21</sup> In reaction to Kūkai’s theorization, the early Heian scholar-priests of Tendai Esotericism, such as Ennin, Enchin, and Annen, formulated their own theories with respect to the distinction between the exoteric and the esoteric.<sup>22</sup> That is, in the early phase of Japanese Buddhist history, the classification of the exoteric and esoteric had to be constructed, and there were advanced more than one theory for understanding the relationship between the two categories, prior to their standardization in the Shingon and Tendai Schools. Because of his insensitivity to these developments, Kuroda’s

discussion provides no clue to understanding the origin and growth of the particular theories, or the institutions that encouraged the developments of these theories, that paved the way for the emergence of the exoteric-esoteric establishment.

Another serious, closely related problem in Kuroda's thesis concerns his assertion that Esoteric Buddhism served as the overarching doctrinal principle that integrated all Buddhist schools and Shintō as well, within the exoteric-esoteric establishment (KURODA Toshio 1975:428–432). To illustrate his point, Kuroda resorts to the Tendai doctrine of original enlightenment (*tendai hongaku shishō*)—a nondualist philosophy, which held that all beings are inherently enlightened, a radicalism that rendered religious practice for the sake of attaining enlightenment for the most part unnecessary. Kuroda's argument seems to have two inconsistencies.

First, as Jacqueline STONE (1995:19) has put it: "Though it was strongly influenced by esotericism, Tendai *hongaku* doctrine was developed under the rubric of 'exoteric teachings' (*kengyō*) and associated specifically with the *Lotus Sūtra*." In addition, the principal theories of Tendai *hongaku* thought emerged in the late Heian and Kamakura periods. In other words, the *hongaku* doctrine was developed in the Tendai School as an exoteric discipline that incorporated within itself the influence of Esoteric Buddhism, which was already the dominant form of religion in medieval Japan. The Tendai *hongaku* doctrine may be an exemplar of what Kuroda refers to as the exoteric-esoteric amalgamation. However, it does not constitute an esoteric theory capable of integrating the esoteric and the exoteric or promote the formation of the exoteric-esoteric establishment.

Second, the Tendai *hongaku* doctrine was a development within the Tendai School, whereas Kuroda's theory relates to the integration across diverse schools of both exoteric and esoteric disciplines. As discussed earlier, the Esoteric Buddhism adopted by Nara monasteries was exclusively from the Shingon School, and the influence of Tendai Esotericism on the Six Nara Schools remained negligible throughout the medieval period (HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:287 ff.). In her study of the development of the Buddhism of the Nara Schools in the medieval period, OISHIO Chihiro (1995:6) has schematically illustrated this point.

If I may draw on the concepts and schemas used in the textbooks, Kamakura New Buddhism branched out from the Tendai School, not from the Shingon School. On the other hand, all the progressive movements in the Nara Buddhist Schools during the Kamakura period were based on the Shingon School. In other words, the "Kamakura New Buddhism" produced

by the Shingon School was a regeneration of the Buddhism of Nara. This necessitates a further study of the development of the Shingon School in the Buddhism of Nara during the Heian period.

The Nara monastic establishment's adoption of the Esotericism exclusively of the Shingon School was largely due to the fact that during the critical phase in the early Heian period in which Nara monasteries began to absorb Esoteric Buddhism, their relations with the Tendai School were particularly inimical. Their opposition to Tendai was the consequence of Saichō's establishment of the *Mahāyāna* precept platform on Mount Hiei, which competed directly with the authority of the traditional precept platform at Tōdaiji and led to the subsequent secession of the Tendai School from the institutional structure of the Sōgō, Office of Priestly Affairs, the administrative apparatus dominated by eminent priests of the Nara Schools. By contrast, the Nara monasteries formed an alliance with Kūkai, and they continued to accelerate their adoption of Shingon Esotericism through their coalition with Kūkai's disciples, probably to contain the influence of the Tendai School.<sup>23</sup> It seems, therefore, that the center of gravity of the theoretical amalgamation of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines was in the interaction between the Nara Schools and the Shingon School, instead of in the doctrinal developments that were taking place within the Tendai School.

In his effort to redefine Kamakura New Buddhism, MATSUO Kenji (1995:44–45) has expressed his dissatisfaction with the distinction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy with which Kuroda has replaced the conventional distinction between Old Buddhism and New Buddhism. Although Matsuo finds merit in Kuroda's definition of Old Buddhism as the religious orthodoxy of medieval Japan, he rejects Kuroda's concept of the exoteric-esoteric establishment, which Matsuo argues makes no clear distinction between religious orthodoxy (*seitō*) and political establishment (*taisei*). Matsuo explains his point with a reference to Saichō's Tendai School.

It is not always the case that a school with a progressive, heterodox doctrine is repressed by the secular authorities. For instance, Saichō's effort to establish the precept ordination platform on Mount Hiei [for the institutional independence of his Tendai School] was extremely progressive and heterodoxical by the standard of his day. However, it [Tendai] was recognized by the emperor as an orthodoxy. . . . In other words, if a certain school chose to coexist symbiotically with the secular authorities, it does not necessarily mean that that school was devoid of progressive, heterodox characteristics.

(pp. 44–45)

Matsuo's point makes clear that the Tendai School was exceptional for what Kuroda has described as the kenmitsu taisei in that it first received the recognition as orthodox by the rituryō state and that only after the official recognition, it developed the compatible system of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines within the single school. In order to understand the original formation of the kenmitsu taisei, the theory of integration across esoteric and exoteric schools, which provided the ruling ideology for the medieval Japanese state, one has to first look at the growth of the alliance between the Shingon School and the Nara Schools, which appears to be responsible for initiating the shift of the power balance between the state and the Saṅgha in the latter's favor.

Once the focus for understanding the origin of the kenmitsu system is moved away from the developments within the Tendai School to the interaction between the Shingon and the Nara Schools, another important issue that escaped Kuroda's observations emerges. This has to do with a different approach required for each of the major Nara Schools to integrate Shingon Esotericism into its discipline. It appears that the Sanron School had the most natural fit with Shingon, due to the integration—both among sūtras and their commentaries—that had already been achieved between the Prajñā-pāramitā texts, which were the canonical foundation of the school, on the one hand, and, on the other, the esoteric scriptures of Shingon. As in the case of the *Path of the Reality* (*Prajñā-pāramitā naya*) and their ritual commentaries, there were a significant number of scriptures that could be classified as either prajñā-pāramitā texts or esoteric texts. Kūkai took advantage of this affinity esoteric scriptures had with prajñā-pāramitā literature to demonstrate that Esoteric Buddhism was already an integral part of the Buddhism of Nara (as discussed in the second section of chapter 6).<sup>24</sup> The importance of this affinity for Kūkai helps explain why among those figures who took the lead in the Nara monastic community's absorption of Esotericism in the early Heian period many were renowned for their joint mastery of Sanron and Shingon—among them Enmyō (d. 851), Dōshō (798–875), and Shōbō (832–909). Shōbō, for example, founded both Tōnan'in (at Tōdaiji) and Daigoji, which provided institutional footholds for furthering the Sanron-Mikkyō integration throughout the medieval period.

In contrast, scholars in the Hossō School needed more homework before they were able to achieve the kenmitsu integration comparable to that accomplished in the Sanron School. This was due in large part to a strong emphasis in the Hossō doctrine on gradualism regarding the process of enlightenment. The priest Shinkō (934–1004) of Kōfukuji appears to have played a critical role in the early phase of the Hossō-Shingon synthesis. Later in his life, he was the abbot of Kojimadera and made the monastery a center for the combined study of Hossō and Shingon. Although he was recognized as a prominent

Shingon master, Shinkō was unique in that he insisted that the garbha and vajradhātu traditions were transmitted through separate lineages of progenitors and in that he understood Mikkyō as a means for the mastery of Hossō. For Shinkō, the instantaneous enlightenment in Esotericism was only an entry point for bodhisattvas of the Hossō School to launch their work of saving others. In other words, the three eons of gradual enlightenment for Hossō bodhisattvas were not inferior to Mikkyō's instantaneous enlightenment, as it was described in Kūkai's writings, but rather constituted a more advanced religious practice. However, to give proof to Hossō's superiority, Esotericism became an indispensable part of its religious training.<sup>25</sup> Shinkō appears to be one of the important forerunners of innovative thinkers of the Hossō School during the Kamakura period, as represented by Jōkei (1155–1213), who abandoned the traditional Hossō doctrine and embraced the principle of original enlightenment of all beings.

It is evident from this comparison of the Sanron and Hossō Schools that Esoteric Buddhism was not the overarching doctrinal principle that uniformly imposed its integration within each exoteric school, as suggested by Kuroda. On the contrary, it served as a common ground, or metalanguage, for the schools to achieve their alliance, because all these schools understood that the esoteric and exoteric disciplines were mutually complementary and that either an esoteric or the exoteric school needed the other for fully realizing its potential, as their relationship was originally formulated by Kūkai. This explains why, as Kuroda has rightly pointed out, the alliance between the Eight Schools remained loose and flexible, and yet resilient. That is to say, the conceptual foundation of what Kuroda Toshio has referred to as the medieval exoteric-esoteric establishment was first developed in Kūkai's writings, in which the term *kenmitsu* was invented and employed liberally and through which the alliance between Shingon and the Nara School was brought about. In this regard, Kūkai's founding in 823 of the Abhiṣeka Hall at Tōdaiji and in 836 of the Mantra Chapel at the imperial palace can be understood as institutional protoplasts of the mutual reliance between the state and the Saṅgha—the state gave patronage to the amalgamated practice of the exoteric and esoteric disciplines, which in turn legitimized the emperor's rule—that made possible for Buddhism's rise to the hegemonic ideology in medieval society.

## Glossary

Abi	阿毘	Awada	粟田
abitatsumazō	阿毗達磨藏	baishi	唄師
agegoe	上声	baku	縛
Aizu	会津	baru	瀑流
ajari	阿闍梨	betsuju bosatsusō	別受菩薩僧
ajariya	阿闍梨耶	Bestusanronshū	別三論衆
aji kaku	阿字閣	bettō	別當
akai	閼伽井	biku	比丘
akaki	閼伽器	bikuni	比丘尼
Ama no iwato	天岩戶	binaya	毗奈耶
Ama no		binayazō	毗奈耶藏
murakumo		bodai	菩提
no tsurugi	天叢雲劍	bodaishin	菩提心
Amaterasu	天照	bonji	梵字
Amida	阿彌陀	Bonshakuji	梵釈寺
Angyō	安行	bonsō bettō	凡僧別當
Ankan	安寛	bosatsu	菩薩
Anne	安慧	bosatsu kai	菩薩戒
Annen	安然	bosatsujō	菩薩乘
Anryū	安隆	bosatsu sanju jōkai	菩薩三聚淨戒
Anshōji	安祥寺	bosatsusō	菩薩僧
Ashuku	阿闍	Buan	豐安
ashura	阿修羅	Bun'ya no	
Asuka	飛鳥	Miyatamaro	文室宮田麻呂
asōgi	阿僧祇	Bunpo	文保
Atsuzanc	敦実	buppō	佛法
Ato no Ōtari	阿刀大足	buppō ōbō ichinyo	佛法王法一如
Awa	阿波	buppōryō	佛法領

bushō	奉請	Ch'ing-lung-ssu	青龍寺
bushōjō	奉請狀	ching	See kyō (scripture).
butchō	佛頂	chingo kokka	鎮護國家
B(b)utsugen	佛眼	ching-shu	See kyōsho.
Butsugen butsumo	佛眼佛母	Ching-ying-ssu	淨影寺
butsugen'in	佛眼印	Chin-kang sa-tou	
butsujō	佛乘		See Kongō satta.
Butsuryūji	佛隆寺	chin-kang fa-chieh-kung	
byakushi katsuma	白四羯磨		See kongō hokkaigū.
byōbu	屏風	chin-kang-chiai	See kongōkai.
byōdōshōchi	平等性智	Chin-ko-ssu	金閣寺
Ch'ang-an	長安	chinkon	
Chang			jujutsuteki
Wen-Ch'eng	張文成		鎮魂呪術的
cheng-shih	See Jōjitsu.	Chio-ch'ao	覺超
Ch'en Hsiu	沈休	Chishu	智首
chen-ming	See seimei.	Chishō	治承
chen-yen	See shingon.	chiu-wen-ch'ih-fa	See gumonjihō.
chen-yen-tsung	See S(s)hingonshū.	Chi-tsang	吉藏
Chen-yüan	貞元	Chōe	長惠
Ch'e-yin	車胤	Chōgen	重源
chi	智	Chōhan	長範
chia-ch'ih	See kaji.	Chōkai	長海
chiai	See kai.	chokusen wakashū	勅撰和歌集
chieh-yüan kuan-ting		Chōshin	澄心
See kechien kanjō.		Chou (dynasty and	
Chien-chen		family name)	周
(Ganjin)	鑑真	chou (magical formula)	See ju.
chih	See chi.	chōyō	長養
Chih-chin-kang	See S(s)hukongō.	chū	忠
Chih-chou	智周	ch'uan-chiao kuan-ting	
Chih-kuang	智廣		See denkyō kanjō.
ch'ih-ming-ts'ang	See jimyōzō.	ch'uan-fa a-tu-li-wei	
Chih-sheng	智昇		See denbō ajarii.
Chih-tsang	智藏	chuan-lun-sheng-wang	
Chikai	智戒		See tenrin shōō.
Chikei	智偈	Chūfun	忠芬
chiken'in	智拳印	Chūga	忠賀
Chikō	智光	chūgoku	中国
Chi-ming	志明	Chūkei	中繼
		Ch'ung-fu-ssu	崇福寺

chun-hua	See chūka.	daranizō	陀羅尼藏
chung	See chū.	dattan	達陀
chun-kou	See chūgoku.	Dazaifu	太宰府
chü-she	See Kusha.	dekihashi	溺派子
Chūzenji	中禪寺	denbō ajarii	伝法阿闍梨位
Daianji	大安寺	denbō kanjō	伝法灌頂
daidan	大壇	denbō shōja	伝法聖者
daidanku	大壇供	denkyō kanjō	伝教灌頂
Daidō	大同	dentō daihōshii	伝燈大法師位
daidōshi	大導師	dochō	度牒
Daie	題惠	Dōji (Sanron	
daienkyōchi	大円鏡智	master)	道慈
Daigaku	大学	dōji (page)	童子
daigakutō	大学頭	Dōjō	道場
daigeki	大外記	dokushi	読師
D(d)aigo	醍醐	Dōsen	道詮
Daigoji	醍醐寺	Dōshō	道昌
daiichigitai	第一義諦	Dōsōkyaku	道僧格
Daiitoku	大威德	Dōyū	道雄
daiji	大寺	Echizen	越前
Daijin	大慈院	egen	慧眼
daijō daijin	太政大臣	Eichū	永忠
Daijōe	大乘会	Eichō	永超
daijō kai	大乘戒	Eigō (in the <i>Goshichishō</i> )	永豪
Daijōkan	太政官	Eigō (in the <i>Ryōiki</i> )	永興
daijō kanpu	太政官符	Eizon	叡尊
daijōkyō	大乘經	eizō	影像
daijōritsu	大乘律	Ekō	慧光
daijō shinju	大乘神呪	Emishi	蝦夷
daijō tennō	太上天皇	Enchin	円珍
daikanjin	大勸進	Enchō	円澄
daimandara	大曼荼羅	Engi	延喜
dainagon	大納言	engishō	緣起生
Dainichi	大日	Engyō	円行
daishi	大師	Enichinji	慧日寺
Daishōe	大嘗會	Enjōji	円成寺
daisōjō	大僧正	Enma	閻魔
daisōzu	大僧都	Enmyō	円明
daitoku	大德		
darani	陀羅尼		

Ennin	円仁	furoku	付錄
Enryaku	延暦	Fushimi	伏見
Ensai	円載	Gagakuryō	雅樂廩
Enshū	円宗	Gakei	雅慶
Enshūji	円宗寺	gakuhō kanjō	学法灌頂
En'yūji	円融寺	gakuryō	学侶
En'yūzō	円融藏	Gakuryō	学令
Enzō	円藏	gakutō	学頭
eshu	依主	gan	眼
Etatsu	慧達	Gangōji	元興寺
Etō	惠等	Gangyō	願曉
Eun	惠運	Gangyōji	元慶寺
Fa-chin (Hōshin)	法進	ganshiki	眼識
Fa-hsian	See Hossō.	gasei	雅製
Fa-lin	法琳	gashi	雅詞
fu (poetry)	賦	gegokoin	外五鉛印
fu (refusal)	不	gehō	外法
Fu-chou	福州	Genbaryō	玄蕃廩
Fudō	不動	Genbō	玄坊
F(f)ugen	普賢	Genna	元和
fugen shinden	普賢心殿	Gennin	玄仁
Fu-i	傅弈	Genshō	源昭
Fujiidera	藤井寺	genze riyaku	現世利益
Fujiwara	藤原	gi	義
Fujiwara no		Gien	義演
Fuyutsugu	藤原冬嗣	giki	儀軌
— Kadonomaro	葛野麻呂	gimuge	義無礙
— Morosuke	師輔	Gishin	義真
— Morotada	師尹	Gōbō	呆宝
— Nakanari	仲成	gobu manda	五部曼荼羅
— Tadahira	忠平	gobutsu gomyō	五佛御名
— Yoshifusa	良房	godaisonku	五大尊供
— Tanetsugu	種繼	goga	吾我
— Teika	定家	goganji	御願寺
Fukakusa	深草	gogyaku	五逆
fukushi	See kentō fukushi.	go hō zenshin	護法善神
F(f)ukū kenjaku	不空龕索	goi	五位
funi	不二	gojisō	護持僧
funi makaen	不二摩訶衍	Gojūonzu	五十音圖
funyū	不入	gojō (vehicles)	五乘

gojō (virtue)	五常	Gyōgen	行源
gokai	五悔	gyōja	行者
gokoku	護國	Gyōki	行基
gokoku kyōten	護國經典	gyoi kaji	御衣加持
gokyō	五經	gyokujo	玉女
goma	護摩	gyokutai kaji	御体加持
gomitsu	語密	gyōnin	行人
Gomizunoo	後水尾	Gyōshin	行信
Gomyō	護命	Hachiman	八幡
gon	權	naihō	内法
gon bettō	權別當	hakase	博士
gongen	權現	Han	漢
gonmyō	言名	Hanayama	花山
gonmyō jōritsu sō	言名成立相	Hanazono	花園
Gonsō	勤操	hangan	判官
gonzetsu	言說	hangyō	判教
goon	吳音	Han-kung	含光
Gōrin	果隣	hannya	般若
Gōrinji	剛琳寺	hannyazō	般若藏
goryō	御靈	Han-yin	
goryōe	御靈會	(Han thinker)	韓嬰
goryōshin	御靈神	han-yin (phonetic system)	
Gosanjō	後三条	See kan'on.	
Gōsanze	降三世	Han'yō	範曜
Goshichinichi		Hasedera	長谷寺
mishuhō	後七日御修法	hashiri	走
gotai'nin	五体人	hassai kai	八齋戒
Gotoba	後鳥羽	hasshūsō	八宗奏
Gouda	後宇多	Hata no kimi	
goya	後夜	Toyotari	秦公豊足
gozō	五藏	hattei	法帝
gu	求	hatto	法度
gū	宮	Heian bukkyō	平安佛教
Gufukuji	弘福寺	Heiankyō	平安京
gumonjihō	求聞持法	Heibi	平備
Gundari	軍荼利	Heiso	平祚
gyō (practice)	行	Heizei	平城
gyō (shape)	形	heizei kyūto	平城旧都
Gyōbushō	刑部省	Heng-an	恒安
Gyōga	行賀	henge kannon	变化觀音

henju	辺主	hōmuge	法無碍
Henjō	遍照	hōni	法爾
Henjō Kongō	遍照金剛	honji	本寺
henmon	变文	honji hosshin	本地法身
hensai	辺際	honji suijaku	本地垂迹
Hi no Obito	日雄人	honpushō	本不生
hi	非	honshōjakу	本性寂
Hida	飛驒	honzan	本山
Hiei	比叡	honzon	本尊
himitsu butsujō	秘密佛乘	hōō (Dharma)	
himitsu hōzō	秘密宝藏	Emperor)	法皇
himitsujō	秘密乘	hōō (King of	
himitsu		Dharma)	法王
mandarakyō	秘密曼荼羅教	Ho-pei	河北
himitsu shingonzō	秘密真言藏	Horikawa	堀川
himitsuzō	秘密藏	Hōrinji	法琳寺
hiraku	平句	Hōryūji	法隆寺
Hizen	肥前	hōshin (Dharma	
Hitachi	常陸	ministers)	法臣
hiyu	譬喻	hōshin	
hizō	秘藏	(sambhogakāya)	報身
Hōbu	宝部	Hōshō	宝生
Hōei	法榮	Hōshōjī	法勝寺
hōgen	法眼	hosshi	法師
hōgō	宝号	hosshindō	法親王
Hōjitsu	奉実	hosshin seppō	法身說法
Hōki	宝龜	Hosshōjī	法性寺
hokkai	法界	hosshō	法性
hokkaigū	法界宮	Hosshōshū	法性衆
hokkaishin	法界身	Hossō	法相
hokkaishinden	法界心殿	Hōtō	宝幢
hokkai taishōchi	法界体性智	hotsugan	發願
Hokke hakkō	法華八講	Hōzō	法藏
Hokkee	法華會	hsiao See kō.	
Hokkeji	法華寺	Hsien-tsung	憲宗
hokku	發句	hsin Seen shin.	
Hokuke	北家	Hsüan-ch'ao	玄超
hōmandara	法曼荼羅	Hsüan-tsang	玄奘
hōmu	法務	Hsüan-tse	玄則

Hsüan-tsung	玄宗	Inhan	院範
hsüeh-fa kuan-ting		inke	院家
See gakuhō kanjō.		Inshi	胤子
Hua-yen	See Kegon.	in no chō	院序
Hui-ch'ao	惠沼	Ippen	一遍
Hui-jih	慧日	Iroha	色葉
Hui-kuo	惠果	Ishikawa no	
Hui-lang	慧朗	Michimasu	石川道益
Hui-lin	慧琳	ishiki	意識
Hui-yüan	慧遠	Ishikori todome	石凝姥
hyō	表	Ishiyamadera	石山寺
hyōhaku	表白	isho	緯書
i See gi.		issai chichi	一切智智
ianjin	異安心	Issai mukeronhō	一切無戲論法
I-chi	義寂	Issai nōzen	
ich'ieh-chih-chih	See issai chichi.	konryūshō	一切能善建立
Ichidai ichido	一代一度	byōdōhō	性平等法
busshari	佛舍利	issai shohō	一切諸法
Ichidai ichido	一代一度	fukatoku	不可得
mishuhō	御修法	isshinkyōteki	一神教的
Ichidai ichido	一代一度	I-t'ien	義天
ninnōe	仁王会	Ito	伊刀
ichigō	一合	Iwashimizu	石清水
I-chih	義智	I-yüan	義円
Ichiji chōrinnō	一字頂輪王	Iyo	伊予
Ichijō (emperor)	一条	Izumi	和泉
ichijō (ekayana)	一乘	jakujō	寂靜
Ichijōin	一乘院	jen See jin (humaneness)	
I-ching	義淨	ji	字
igishi	威儀師	Jian-an	劍南
I-hsing	一行	Jibushō	治部省
Ikai	維懷	jidan seido	寺壇制度
iki	位記	Jien	慈円
i-kuei See giki.		jijuyō jōdo	自受用淨土
imayō	今様	Jikokuten	持國天
I-ming	義明	Jikun	慈訓
in (cause)	因	Jimuge	辭無礙
in (mudrā)	印	jimyōzō	持明藏
indōin	引導印	jin (humaneness)	仁

jin (exhaustion)	盡	jūaku	十惡
jinaishōchi	自內証智	Juchō	壽寵
jinenchishū	自然智宗	jujutsuteki	See chinkon jujutsuteki.
Jingo Keiun	神護景雲	jukai	受戒
Jingoji	神護寺	juki	授記
jinjō	晨朝	Ju-li	如理
Jinki	神龜	Junkaku	順覺
jinku	神供	junmitsu	純密
Jinne	深惠	Junna	淳和
jinsen	塵染	Junnin	淳仁
jintsujō	神通乘	Juntoku	順德
Jinzen	尋禪	Jūdaiji	十大寺
jisha bugyō	寺社奉行	jūgishi	從儀師
jishu	寺主	jūichimen no keka	十一面悔過
jishō jiyū richi hosshin	自性自用理智 法身	jūnitenku	十二天供
jishōshin	自性身	jūsho	住処
jissō	実相	jusshu monji	十種文字
Jitchū	実忠	jūzen gōdō	十善業道
Jitsue	実慧	kaeshigoe	返声
Jitō	持統	Kaga	加賀
jizai	自在	Kageyushichō	勘解由使庁
Jizō	地藏	Kai (province)	甲斐
jō (feet)	丈	kai (moral principle)	戒
jō (official rank)	判官	kaichō	戒牒
jō (vehicle)	乘	kaidan	戒壇
jobon	序品	Kaidan'in	戒壇院
Jōdo-in	淨土院	Kaiei	懷英
Jōdoshū	淨土宗	Kaiinji	海印寺
jōgakujī	定額寺	kaiji gonyū	開示悟入
J(j)yōgyō	淨行	Kaimyō	戒明
Jōjitsu	成実	K'ai-yüan	開元
Jōkei	貞慶	kaji	加持
Jōken	淨憲	kaji zukue	加持机
Jōnen kannon'in	常念觀音院	Kajūji (Kanshūji)	勸修寺
jōshosachi	成所作智	Kakuban	覺鑊
Jōshō	定昭	Kakuchō	覺超
Jōtō	常騰	Kamakura	鎌倉
Jōwa	承和	Kamei kotsuju	仮名乞兒
ju	呪	kami (divinities)	神

kami (official rank)	長官	keikoku jidai	經國時代
kana	仮名	keka	悔過
kanbun	漢文	ken (both the	
kanbyō zenji	看病禪師	exoteric and	
Kanchō	寛朝	color)	顯
Kangen	觀賢	kendatsuba	乾闔婆
Kangiten	歡喜天	kengaku	兼學
Kangū	寛空	kengyō (exteric	
kanji	漢字	teaching)	顯教
Kanjin	寛信	kengyō (inspector)	檢校
kanjō	灌頂	Kenjakuin	羈索院
Kanjōdō	灌頂堂	Kenju	兼寿
kanjō dōjō	灌頂道場	Kenkei	賢憬
kankei	勘計	kenki	縣記
Kankyō	鑒教	kenmitsu bukkyō	顯密佛教
Kanmu	桓武	—gakushō	学匠
Kannon	觀音	—hasshū	八宗
Kannon'in	觀音院	—shoji	諸寺
Kannonji	觀音寺	—shugi	主義
kan'on	漢音	—sōshū	双修
kanshi	漢詩	—taiseiron	体制論
kansō	官僧	Kenne	堅慧
kanzatsushi	觀察使	Kenshō	憲昭
Kao-tsung	高宗	kentō fukushi	遣唐副使
karoda	迦嚶茶	kentō hangan	遣唐判官
Kasagi	笠置	kentō taishi	遣唐大使
Kase	賀世	keshin metsuchi	灰身滅智
Kashōji	嘉祥寺	keshō	化生
katsuma ajari	羯磨阿闍梨	Ketatsu	華達
katsuma mandara	羯磨曼茶羅	ketsujō nijō	决定二乘
katsuma shin	羯磨身	Kichijō	吉祥
Kawachi	河内	Kichijōten	吉祥天
kechien kanjō	結緣灌頂	kidendō	紀伝道
Kegon	華嚴	Kii	紀井
Keiun	慶雲	kijin	鬼神
Keii	慶意	Kimō	龜毛
Keijin	景深	kinnara	緊那羅
Keikai	景戒	kinoto-hitsuji	乙未
Keikan	慶寬	kinrin shōō	金輪聖王
keikoku shisō	經國思想	Kisshi	吉子

Kissuizō	吉水藏	Kongōin	金剛院
kō	孝	Kongōji	金剛寺
Kobe	滙倍	kongōjō	金剛乘
Kōben	高弁	kongōjōkyō	金剛乘教
Kōbō Daishi	弘法大師	kongōkai	金剛界
Kōchi	廣智	kongōkai mandara	金剛界曼荼羅
Kōda Rohan	幸田露伴	Kongōken	金剛拳
kōdokushi	See shokoku kōdokushi.	Kongōki	金剛喜
Kōfukuji	興福寺	Kongōkō	金剛光
Ko Hung	葛洪	Kongōri	金剛利
Kōjaku	恒寂	Kongō satta	金剛薩埵
Kojimadera	子島寺	Kongōshō	金剛笑
Kōken	孝謙	Kongōtō	金剛幢
kokka shintō	国家神道	Kongōyasha	金剛夜叉
kokubun'niiji	国分尼寺	Kongōzō	金剛藏
kokubunji	国分寺	Kongōō	金剛王
kokuchō	告牒	Konjū	金鷲
kokudaiji	国大寺	Konkōmyō	
kokufū ankoku		shitennō	金光明四天王
jidai	国風暗黒時代	gokoku no tera	護國寺
kokuga	国衙	Kōnin (Emperor)	光仁
Kokugaku	国学	Kōnin (years)	弘仁
kokugun	国郡	Kōnin (Tōji)	
kokushi	国師	priest)	廣仁
Kokūzō	虚空藏	konshō	金勝
Kōmokuten	廣目天	Korehitō	惟仁
Kōmyō	光明	Koretoki	維時
kon	根	Koryō	户令
Kongōai	金剛愛	Kōryūji	廣隆寺
kongōchōshūkyō	金剛頂宗經	kōshi	講師
Kongōgaku	金剛覺	Kōshu	康守
Kongōge	金剛牙	Kōya	高野
Kongōgo (-bhāsa)	金剛語	Kōzanji	高山寺
Kongōgo (-rakṣa)	金剛護	Kōzen	興然
Kongōgō	金剛業	kōzui kajī	香水加持
Kongōhō		Kōzuke	上野
(-dharma)	金剛法	Kuang-fu-ssu	薦福寺
Kongōhō (-ratna)	金剛宝	Kuan-ting-yüan	灌頂院
kongō kokkaigū	金剛法界宮	kugen	公驗
kongō ichijō	金剛一乘	K'uei-chi	窺基

kuie-shen	See kijin.	mappō	未法
Kujō Kanezane	九条兼実	Masami	正躬
Kūkai	空海	matsuji	末寺
kumonjo	公文所	meidō	明堂
kuni no ōtera	See kokudaiji.	meihō hakase	明法博士
Kuo-ch'ing-ssu	国清寺	meihōdō	明法道
Kurokawa		Meiji	明治
Harumura	黒川春村	meikeidō	明經道
Kusha	俱舍	Meishi	明子
kushi	苦使	Miao-yün	See Myoun.
kushō	公請	mi-chiao	See mikkyo.
Kusuko	藥子	mikkyō	密教
Kuwahara	桑原	Ming	明
kuyō	供養	ming	See myō (mantra).
kuyōbō	供養法	Ming-chou	明州
Kyobu	虛亡	ming-fei	See myōhi.
kyō (scripture)	經	Mino	美濃
kyō (vibration)	響	mint-t'ang	See meidō.
kyōju ajari	教授阿闍梨	Miroku	爾勒
Kyōkō	教興	Misagi no tsukasa	諸陵司
kyōsho	經書	Misaie	御齊会
kyōsō hanjaku	教相判釁	Mishuhō	御修法
kyōzō	經藏	misogi	禊
kyū See gū		Miteshiro no	
kyū bukkyō	旧佛教	Azumabito	御手代東人
Kyūchū saishōkō	宮中最勝講	mitsu	密
li See rai.		mitsugo	密語
Li-ch'üan-ssu	醴泉寺	mitsuzō	密藏
Liao	梁	mi-yü	See mitsugo.
Liu-hsia Hui	柳下惠	mōgo	妄語
Lo-yang	洛陽	mon	文
Lu	魯	mondō ketsugi	問答決疑
lü See R(r)itsu.		monji	文字
lü-ling See R(r)itsuryō.		monjōdō	文章道
Lung-meng See R(r)yūmyō.		Monmu	文武
Lung-shu See R(r)yūju.		monogatari	物語
magoraka	摩睺羅伽	Montoku	文德
man	慢	monzeki	門跡
man'yōgana	万葉仮名	Motogangōji	本元興寺
mandokoro	政所	mōzō	妄想

mu	無	nichimotsu	日没
mujishō	無自性	Nigatsudō	二月堂
mujūsho nehan	無住所涅槃	nihyaku gojukkai	二百五十戒
Muromachi	室町	nikugen	肉眼
Muroo	室生	nin	忍
Muroto	室戶	Ningai	仁海
Muryōjuin	無量寿院	ningū	人宮
musho fushiin	無所不至印	Ninmei	仁明
mushotoku	無所得	Ninnaji	仁和寺
Mutsu	陸奥	Nishidera	西寺
myō (mantra)	明	Niwamaro	庭麻呂
myō (name)	名	nōsen	能詮
Myōe	明惠	nōshō	能証
myōhi	明妃	Noto	能登
Myōitsu	明一	nyogigo	如義語
myōji	名字	nyohō nenju	如法念誦
myōkanzatsuchi	妙觀察智	nyo'nyo	如如
Myōken	妙見	Nyorai byōdō	如來平等
Myōkōin	妙香院	shōgon zanmai	莊嚴三昧
myōō	明王	Nyoraibu	如來部
Myōshō	明匠	ō	王
Myōun	妙雲	ōbō	王法
Nagaoka	長岡	Ōe no Chikamichi	大江親通
Nagate	永手	Ōe no Masafusa	大江匡房
Nagaya	長屋	Okada no Ushikai	岡田牛養
naihō	内法	Ōmi	近江
naijin	内陣	Ōmi no Mifune	淡海三船
Naishidokoro	内待所	Omizutori	御水取
naishō	内証	on'indō	音韻道
naishōchi	内証智	Onjōji	園城寺
naishō shōgyō	内証聖行	Ono no Minemori	小野岑守
Naitō Konan	内藤湖南	Ono no Shigeno	小野滋野
naka honji	中本寺	onri	遠離
Nakatsukashō	中務省	ontai	怨對
Namukanji	南無觀寺	Onyū	遠敷
Naniwa	難波	ōomi zenji	大臣禪師
Nan-shan	南山	ōseishi	応制詩
Nanto rokushū	南都六宗	ōshin	応身
Nara	奈良	Otokuni	乙訓
nenbundosha	年分度者	Otokunidera	乙訓寺

Ōtomo no		ryōhonshi	了本師
Tsuguto	大伴繼人	Ryōsen	靈仙
Ōtsu	大津	Ryōshō	良勝
Owari	尾張	Ryōzen	良禪
Paekche (Kudara)	百濟	ru	流
p'an-chiao	See hangyō.	rutsūbun	流通分
Pan-hong	弁弘	R(r)yūju	龍樹
pan-jo	See hannya.	R(r)yūmyō	龍猛
Pao-shou-ssu	保寿寺	sabenkan	左弁宮
Pe-huai	渤海	sadaijin	左大臣
Pien-chao Chin-kang		sadō	左道
See Henjō Kongō.		Saeki	佐伯
pien-wen	See henmon.	Saeki no	
pu-erh mo-ho-yen		Imaemishi	佐伯今毛人
See funi makaen.		Saga	嵯峨
p'u-sa shih-lu-ta-		sagō	作業
sheng	菩薩十六大生	Saichō	最澄
p'u-t'i	See bodai.	Saidaiji	西大寺
p'u-t'i-hsin	See bodaishin.	Saei	歲榮
P'u-yang	樸陽	Saigyō	西行
rai	礼	Saiji	西寺
raidō	礼堂	saijōjō	最上乘
Raien	頬円	saijōjō mitsuzōkyō	最上乘密藏經
Raishin	頬信	saika	災禍
raja	羅惹	Saikei	濟慶
rakuzetsu muge	樂說無礙	Saimei	齊明
rei	See rai.	Saisen	濟暹
rengyōshū	練行衆	saishi	祭祀
ringon	隣近	Saishōe	最勝会
rinnō kanjō	輪王灌頂	Saishōji	最勝寺
risshī	律師	sanbun kakyō	三分科經
Risshū	律衆	sanbō	三寶
R(r)itsu	律	sandō	算道
R(r)itsuryō	律令	sangai	三界
ritsuryō kokka	律令國家	san gedatsu	三解脱
ritsuzō	律藏	sangi	參議
rokudai	六大	sangō	三綱
rokuchi	錄事	sanjō	三乘
rokujin	六塵	sanki	三歸
ryōbu shintō	兩部神道	san-lao-shu	See sanrō no sho.

San-lun	See Sanron	shinshingon	心真言
sanmaya	三昧耶	Settsu	攝津
sanmaya kai	三昧耶戒	shabetsu	差別
sanmaya mandara	三昧耶曼荼羅	shabetsu chiin	差別智印
san-mi	See sanmitsu.	shaissaikyōsho	写一切經所
sanmitsu	三密	shajōmon	遮情門
sanmitsu kyōmon	三密教門	Shakamon	釈迦文
san-mo-yeh	See sanmaya.	Shaka muni	釈迦牟尼
sanne	三会	shakusonryō	釈尊領
Sanron	三論	shakuten	釈龕
Sanronshū (group)	三論衆	Shakyōsho	写經所
Sanronshū (school)	三論宗	sha-men	See shamon.
sanrō no sho	散勞書	shami	沙爾
sansanmaya	三三昧耶	shamini	沙爾尼
sanshu seken	三種世門	shamon	沙門
sanshu no jingi	三種神器	shen-i shen-i-ti	See shōgi shōgitai.
Sanuki	讃岐	Shiban	師蠻
Sanuki no Naganao	讃岐永直	shibi chūdai	紫微中台
Sanzen'in	三千院	shibun	支分
Sawara	早良	Shichi diaji	七大寺
Sayadera	狭屋寺	shichi kakushi	七覺支
se	施	shido	私度
Sehei	施平	shidosō	私度僧
Seichō	清朝	Shigeno no	
seidon	性鈍	Sadanushi	滋野貞主
Seihan	清範	Shih-chia mou-ni	See Shaka muni
seimei	正名	Shih-chia-wen	See Shakamon.
seishi	正史	shih-lu-ta p'u-sa-	
Sei Shōnagon	清少納言	sheng	十六大菩薩生
seitō	正統	shijūkin	四重禁
Seiwa	清和	Shijūkuin	四十九院
Sengoku jidai	戦国時代	shikai ryōshōin	四海領掌印
Senju kannon	千手觀音	Shikibushō	式部省
senmyō	宣命	shikidai	識大
senpen	遷变	shikō	試考
senteki	戦敵	Shimotsuke	下野
Sentō saishōkō	仙洞最勝講	shimuryōshin	四無量心
seten tō fumyō	世天等普明	shin	信
		shin bukkyō	新佛教
		shinbutsu shūgō	神佛習合

Shin'en	真円	shodō	書道
Shin'yakushiji	新薬師寺	shōen	莊園
Shinga	真雅	shōgakutō	小学頭
shingon	真言	shōgeki	小外記
shingon daranizō	真言陀羅尼藏	shōgi shōgitai	勝義勝義諦
shingon hizō	真言秘藏	shōjō kai	小乘戒
Shingon'in	真言院	shōjō ritsu	小乘律
shingonjō	真言乘	shōkai fukasetsu	性海不可說
shingonjōkyō	真言乘教	shokoku	
shingonkyō	真言教	kōdokushi	諸國講誦師
S(s)hingonshū	真言宗	shōmon gusoku	
shingonshū honjo	真言宗本所	kai	声聞具足戒
shingonzō	真言藏	Shōmu	聖武
shinjin ridatsu	神身離脱	shōmyō	声明
Shinkei	真慶	shōmyōgō	声明業
Shinkō	真興	shōnagon	小納言
shinmitsu (body)	身密	shōō See tenrin shōō.	
shinmitsu (mind)	心密	Shōren'in	青蓮院
Shinnyo	真如	Shōrinji	聖林寺
Shinsen'en	神泉苑	shōron	詮論
shinshin shūgō	神神習合	shōronshū	攝論衆
Shinshō	真紹	shosen	所詮
shinshū	真宗	shōsetsu	小說
Shinteki	真迪	Shōshi (queen)	正子
shinyoitoku	四如意德	shōshi (witness)	証師
Shinzei	真濟	shoshō	所証
Shinzō	真藏	shōshūbun	正宗分
shira	尸羅	shōsō	小僧
shi-ra-ma-na	志良摩奈	Shōsōin	正倉院
Shirakawa	白河	shōsōzu	小僧都
shishōsetsu	私小說	Shōtai	昌泰
Shitennōji	四天王寺	shōten	声点
Shitsuga kōshi	蛭牙公子	shōtenku	聖天供
Shittan	悉曇	Shōtoku (empress)	稱德
shiyōbon	四要品	Shōtoku (prince)	聖德
shizai rukichō	資財流記帳	shoya	初夜
shō (life)	生	shū	宗
shō (voice)	声	Shubin	守敏
Shōbō	聖宝	Shuchō	守寵
Shōchū	聖忠	Shüei	宗叡

Shūen	修円	Su-tsung	肅宗
shōen	莊園	su-san-wang	
Shugenshū	修驗宗	See zokusannō.	
shugyō nyūisō	修行入位僧	Sudō	崇道
shūha	宗派	Sufukuji	崇福寺
shūhashi	宗派史	Sugawara no	
shuji	種子	Kiyokimi	菅原清公
shūji	執持	Sugawara no	
shukan	首卷	Michizane	菅原道真
shunie	修二会	Sui	隋
S(s)hukongō	執金剛	suке	次官
shūmatsu	聚沫	Sun-ching	孫敬
Shunjō	春禎	Sun-k'ang	孫康
Shun-tsung	順宗	Susanoo	須佐之男
Shūsan	修筭	Tachibanadera	橘寺
Shūshō	宗性	Tachibana no	
shūso	宗祖	Hayanari	橘逸勢
Shūtetsu	修哲	Tachibana no	
Silla (Shiragi)	新羅	Tadakane	橘忠兼
sō	相	Tado	多度
Sōgi	宗祇	Ta-hsing-shan-ssu	大興善寺
Sōgishi	喪儀司	Ta-hua tzu-tsai-t'ien	
Sōgō	僧綱	See Take jizaiten.	
sōgyō hachiman	僧形八幡	tai	諦
sōi	僧位	taihi taizōshō	大悲胎藏生
sōji	總持	T'ai-po	泰伯
sojikisha	鹿食者	Taira no	
sōjizō	總持藏	Shingehira	平重衡
sōjō	僧正	tairaku	大樂
sokui kanjō	即位灌頂	Tairyū	大瀧
sokusai goma	息災護摩	taisei	体制
sokushin jōbutsu	即身成佛	t'ai-tsang	See taizō.
songen	損減	T'ai-tsung	代宗
Sōniryō	僧尼令	taizō	胎藏
Sonshōji	尊勝寺	taizō mandara	胎藏曼荼羅
sotaranzō	蘇多覽藏	taizōshūkyō	胎藏宗經
sotobain	卒塔婆印	tajuyō jōdo	他受用淨土
ssu-ju-i-te	See shinyoitoku.	Takamagahara	高天原
Ssu-t'o (Shitaku)	思託	takamikura	高御座
Su-ch'in	蘇秦	Takaoka	高岳

Takashina no		Tenreki	天曆
Tōnari	高階遠成	tenrin shōō	転輪聖王
Take jizaiten	他化自在天	tenshi	天子
Ta-kuang-chih	大廣智	t'ien-ming	See tenmei.
ta-lo See tairaku.		T'ien-pao	天寶
tamamo		T'ien-t'ai	See Tendai.
yorutokoro		t'ien-tzu	See tenshi.
no shima	玉藻所歸之島	to	徒
Tamonten	多聞天	tō	頭
Tamura Harumi	田村春海	Toba	鳥羽
T'an-chen	曇貞	Tōdaiji	東大寺
T'ang	唐	Tōdaiji shingonshū	東大寺真言宗
Tanoura	田浦	Tōji	東寺
T'an-sheng	談勝	tōji chōja	東寺長者
tao	道	tōji ichi no chōja	東寺一長者
Tao-an	道安	tōji ni no chōja	東寺二長者
Tao-cheng	道証	Tokaku	兎角
Tao-hsüan	道宣	tōkokū	等虛空
Tao-seng-kuo	See Dōsōkyaku.	toku	德
Tao-shih	道世	tōkū	等空
Tao-sui	道邃	tokuchi	德治
Taruho	垂穗	tokudo	得度
ta-te See daitoku.		Tokuitsu	德一
te See toku.		t'o-lo-ni	See darani.
Te-tsung	德宗	Tomi no Naona	登美真名
tei risshi	樞律師	Tomo no Yoshio	伴善男
Ten'an	天安	Ton'a	頓阿
Tenbun	天文	Tōnan'in	東南院
Tenchi	天智	tōrushin	等流身
Tenchō	天長	Tosa	土佐
Tendai	天台	Toshi	當嗜
tendai hongaku		tōshōgaku	等正覺
shisō	天台本覺思想	Tōsōritsu	闡訟律
tendai zasu	天台座主	Tōtōmi	遠江
tengen	天眼	Ts'ao Chih	曹建
Tenki	天喜	Tsuchimikado	土御門
tenmei	天命	tsugai sō	番僧
Tenpyō	天平	tsuina	都維那
Tenpyō Shōhō	天平勝寶	Tsukuba	筑波
Tenpyō Hōji	天平宝字	Tsukushi	筑紫

Tsung-mi	宗密	Yakushin	益信
tsūjī	通事	Yamada no Ōba	山田大庭
tsūju bosatsusō	通受菩薩僧	Yamashiro	山背
Tushima	対馬	Yamato	大和
Tung Chung-shu	董仲舒	Yasakani no	
ubai	優婆夷	magatama	八尺瓊曲玉
ubasoku	優婆塞	yasha	夜叉
ubasoku kōshinge	優婆塞貢進解	Yata no kagami	八咫鏡
ubenkan	右弁官	ying-chih-shih	See ōseishi.
uchirongi	内論議	yin	See in (mudrā).
Uda	宇多	Yōrō	養老
udaijin	右大臣	Yoshimine o	
udana	憂陀那	Yasuyo	良岑安世
Umazake no		Yoshino	吉野
Kiyonari	味酒淨成	yoshō hi o kakusu	
Undō	雲童	no ura	預樟蘂日之浦
Uzumasa	太秦	Yotsujī no	
wajō	和上	Yoshinari	四辻善成
waka	和歌	yū	有
wakamizu	若水	Yüan-chao	円照
Wakasa	若狭	Yüan-chiao	元皎
Wakasai	若狭井	Yüan-ho	元和
Wake no Mazuna	和氣真綱	Yüan-t'se	円測
wang	See ō.	yü-ch'ieh	See yuga.
Wei-mo-ch'i	See Yuimakitsu.	Yüeh-chou	越州
Wei-shang	惟上	yuga	瑜伽
wei-shu	See isho.	yuigō	遺告
Wu	武	Yuimae	維摩會
wu-ch'ang	See gojō.	Yuimakitsu	維摩詰
wu-ching	See gokyō.	Yuishikishū	維識衆
Wu-t'ai-shan	五台山	Yung-chen	永貞
Wu-tsung	武宗	Zengai	善愷
Wu-yin (Hui-kuo's disciple)	吳懨	Zengi	善議
wu-yin (phonetic system) See goon.		zenji	禪師
yahan	夜半	Zenju	善珠
Yakushi	藥師	zō	藏
Yakushiji	藥師寺	zō tōji bettō	造東寺別當
		zōbu	雜部
		zōbu shingonkyō	雜部真言經

Zōjōten	増上天	zōmitsu	雜密
zoku bettō	俗別當	Zōshun	藏俊
zokusankoku	粟散國	zōyaku goma	增益護摩
zokusannō	粟散王	zuien	隨縁
Zokutōritsu	賊盜律	zuitaigo	隨他語
zōmandara	雜曼荼羅		

## Abbreviations

- BD *Dictionary of Words and Phrases as Used in Buddhist Dhārani*. Ed. Robert Heinemann. Tokyo, 1985.
- CJS *Chōan juin shiryō shūsei*. Ed. Ono Katsutoshi. Kyoto, 1988.
- DBZ *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*. 151 vols. Ed. Bussho kankōkai. Tokyo, 1912–1921.
- DK *Dainihon komonjo*. Hennen monjo, vols. 1–25~; iyewake, vols. 1–85~. Ed. Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo. Tokyo, 1901~.
- DS *Dainihon shiryō*. Vols. 1–215~. Ed. Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo. Tokyo, 1901~.
- DZ *Dengyō daishi zenshū*. 5 vols. Ed. Tendaishū eizan gakuin. Hieizan, 1925–1926.
- GR *Gunsho ruijū*. 29 vols. Ed. Zoku gunsho ruijū kankōkai. Tokyo, 1959–1960.
- HI *Heian ibun*. Komonjohen. 9 vols. Ed. Takeuchi Rizō. Tokyo, 1963.
- KCZ *Kōbō daishi chosaku zenshū*. 3 vols. Ed. Katsumata Shunkyō. Tokyo, 1968–1970.
- KDS *Kōbō daishi denki shūran*. 1 vol. Ed. Miura Akio. Kōyasan, 1934.
- KDZ *Kōbō daishiden zenshū*. 10 vols. Ed. Hase Hōshū. Kyoto, 1934–1936.
- KGZ *Kōgyō daishi zenshū*. 2 vols. Ed. Nakano Tatsue. Tokyo, 1935.
- KI *Kamakura ibun*. Vols. 1–42~. Ed. Takeuchi Rizō. Tokyo, 1971~.
- KIK *Kokuyaku issaikyō*. 115 vols. Ed. Iwano Shin'yū. Tokyo, 1929–1977.
- KSZ *Kōbō daishi shodeshi zenshū*. 3 vols. Ed. Hase Hōshū. Kyoto, 1942.
- KT *Shintei zōho kokushi taikei*. 66 vols. Ed. Kokushi taikei henshūkai. Tokyo, 1964–1967.
- KTM *Kōzanji kyōzō tenseki monjo mokuroku*. 5 vols. Ed. Kōzanji tenseki monjo sōgō chōsadan. Tokyo, 1973–1982.
- KZ *Kōbō daishi zenshū*. 6 vols. Ed. Hase Hōshū. Tokyo, 1909–1911, 1966.

- KZF *Kii zoku fudoki*. 5 vols. Ed. Wakayamaken shinshoku torishimari dokoro. Kyoto, 1910–1911.
- M *Manji zokuzōkyō* (Daihinon kōtei zōkyō). 36 vols. Ed. Zōkyō shoin. Kyoto, 1902–1905.
- MJ *Mikkyō jiten*. 1 vol. Ed. Sawa Ryūken et al. Kyoto, 1975.
- ND *Nihon daizōkyō*. 49 vols. Ed. Matsumoto Bunzaburō and Nakano Tatsue. Tokyo, 1914–1921.
- NI *Nara ibun*. 3 vols. Ed. Takeuchi Rizō. Tokyo, 1962.
- NKT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*. 102 vols. Ed. Iwanami shoten. Tokyo, 1968–1978.
- NKZ *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*. 60 vols. Ed. Shōgakukan. Tokyo, 1970–1976.
- NS *Ninnaji shiryō*. Vols. 1–2~. Ed. Nara kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyūkai. Tokyo, 1964~.
- NST *Nihon shisō taikei*. 67 vols. Ed. Iwanami shoten. Tokyo, 1970–1982.
- NZ *Daihinon zokuzōkyō*. 750 vols. in 150 cases. Ed. Maeda Eun. Kyoto, 1905–1912.
- SJ *Shingon jiten*. 1 vol. Ed. Hatta Sachio. Tokyo: 1985.
- SJS *Senjūshō*. 1 vol. Ed. Nishio Kōichi. Tokyo, 1970.
- SK *The Siddhānta Kaumudi of Bhāskarī Dīkṣita*. 2 vols. Ed. Śrīśa Chandra Vasu. Delhi, 1906.
- SNB *Shiryō nihon bukkyōshi*. 2 vols. Ed. Futaba Kenkō. Kyoto, 1986.
- SS *Sanbōe shūsei*. 1 vol. Ed. Koizumi Hiroshi and Takahashi Nobuyuki. Tokyo, 1980.
- SZ *Shingonshū zensho*. 44 vols. Ed. Shingonshū zensho kankōkai. Kōyasan, 1933–1939.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. 85 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaikyoku, et al. Tokyo, 1914–1922.
- TJ *Wakokubon shōshi tōjō*. 4 vols. Ed. Nagasawa Kikuya. Tokyo, 1970.
- TZ *Tendai zasuki*. 1 vol. Ed. Shibuya Jigai. Tokyo, 1973.
- ZG *Zoku gunsho ruijū*. 34 vols. Ed. Zoku gunsho ruijū kankōkai. Tokyo, 1957–1959.
- ZKS *Shintei zōho kojitsu sōsho*. 89 vols. Ed. Meiji tosho shuppan. Tokyo, 1952–1955.
- ZZG *Zokuzoku gunsho ruijū*. 16 vols. Ed. Kokusho kankōkai. Tokyo, 1969–1978.

## Notes

### Introduction

1. Throughout this volume, my use of the term *shintō* does not imply that there existed in Japan from its antiquity an autonomous form of religion called Shintō—the idea that has been repeatedly advocated by many modern Shintō scholars. I used the term to refer generically to the indigenous practice of the worship of kami, which was highly diversified in terms of social stratification and local variety, which consisted of a seemingly arbitrary mixture of such elements as ancestor worship, shamanism, and animism, and which, prior to early modern and modern periods, did not have a consistent universal doctrine, a body of canonical texts, or a centralized ecclesiastic organization totally independent of those of Buddhism. Therefore the medieval Shintō-Buddhist amalgamation (or *shinbutsu shūgō* as modern Japanese scholars refer to it) should not be understood as a marriage of two discrete religions. Rather, it was a process through which Buddhism, especially Esoteric Buddhism, provided a channel for diverse forms of kami worship—of tutelary gods in provincial villages, of ancestors of powerful aristocratic clans, and of the primordial Goddess Amaterasu in the imperial palace, etc.—to be vertically integrated into a system of religious authority and rule. Some Japanese scholars (e.g., KAMATA Tōji 1995:110) described this process as the “integration among Shintō gods” (*shinshin shūgō*, as opposed to *shinbutsu shūgō*). However, it is also important to note that the Shintō-Buddhist integration did not result in the complete buddhization of kami worship: it gave rise to certain areas of Shintō worship, both spaces and times (such as the inner sanctuaries of the shrines at Ise and Kamō and the periods during which major Shintō services were observed at the imperial palace), which strictly refused the entry of Buddhist priests and even prohibited any Buddhist terms to be uttered within or during them. That is, the Shintō-Buddhist amalgamation also provided kami worshipers

with an opportunity to develop an awareness of Shintō as a religion, or at least a religious practice, separate from Buddhism (SATŌ Masato 1995). For the practice of Shintō rituals (*saishi*) within the *ritsuryō* system, see OKADA Seishi 1991 and YANO Ken'ichi 1991.

2. My understanding of the medieval period differs from that of traditional Japanese Buddhologists, who have uncritically adopted the periodization of Japanese political history and identified it with the Kamakura (1192–1333) and Muromachi (1333–1600) periods—periods that they have assumed, were dominated by the Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren sects. I have relied on the works of a newer generation of scholars who view the medieval period as the age in which Buddhist discourse held a hegemonic position in justifying political rule, landholdings, and production of academic texts and artwork. See, for example, William LAFLEUR's (1983:9–13, 26ff) study of the centrality of Buddhist cosmology in medieval Japanese literature, Allan GRAPARD's (1992:8–13) characterization of medieval religious institutions as “combinatory” ones in which Buddhism enabled the assimilation of diverse religious traditions. Also see KURODA Toshio's (1975:428–436) thesis that the Six Nara Schools, the Shingon School, and the Tendai School (“Old Buddhism”) formed an alliance based on their shared interest in Esoteric Buddhism and maintained their dominance, both political and economic, throughout the medieval period. According to these studies, the medieval period had already begun in the mid-Heian period (the tenth century) and continued until the mid-Muromachi period (the fifteenth century). Kūkai can thus be located at the critical phase of historical transition that prepared the birth of the medieval social order.

3. A large number of the sacred texts of medieval Shintō—in particular, those of Ryōbu Shintō, a prominent medieval school based at the grand shrine of Ise, such as *Tenchi reikiki* and *Ryōgū gyōmon jinshaku*—are attributed to Kūkai. Many other legends claim that Kūkai was the first to make sculptures of Shintō gods in human form. A legend preserved at Otokunidera, Nagaoka, relates an episode in which the Shintō god Hachiman, out of appreciation to Kūkai for carving a sculpture of him, provided Kūkai with a sculptural self-portrait in which he represented himself as Kūkai—that is, a legend explaining the origin of a Shintō god manifesting himself as a Buddhist priest (*sōgyō hachiman*).

4. This is the case not only for Buddhology but also for modern Hindu studies, where more works focused on mantra are available. Yet absolutely no agreement has been reached regarding what mantra is; its definition ranges from utter nonsense (Frits STAAL 1989:280–293) to metasemantic language action (Ellison FINDLY 1989:27).

5. Because of their seeming senselessness, accompanied by their claim to supernatural “magical” effects, dhāraṇī and mantra have been largely ignored by the post-Enlightenment, rationalist academic disciplines, to which modern Buddhology is integral. On the other hand, within many Buddhist traditions they have held a privileged position, having been preserved as the very source of the sacred, which is said to be suprarational and supratemporal. In other words, dhāraṇī and mantra as they are understood by the traditions are beyond conceptualization and have no history. Therefore they are the very antithesis to the essential approach of modern Buddhology, which, having been forged within the framework of nineteenth-century Western intellectual traditions, developed along and has shown a tendency to be bifurcated into two distinct paths: bibliographical-historical research and doctrinal-philosophical inquiry. It appears that one of the difficulties for modern Buddhologists of the study of dhāraṇī and mantra derives from their insistence on defining them—that is, their goal of rationalizing linguistic phenomena that have a tendency to defy their modern rationalist thinking. In this study, I am least concerned with producing definitions. My essential approach is first to observe the general pattern in which dhāraṇī, mantra, and diverse ideas and concepts related to them were distributed throughout the religious, political, and cultural discourse of the late Nara and early Heian society; and then to see how Kūkai’s work of introducing Esoteric Buddhism contributed to changing that general pattern of distribution. It is in this regard that I discuss how Kūkai defined mantra and distinguished it from dhāraṇī. That is, my primary focus is to illustrate the actual use of the ritual languages of dhāraṇī and mantra—how they were chanted, where and by whom they were studied, how the authorities treated those who resorted to these languages, etc.—in one historical condition (pre-Kūkai) and to identify what exactly (among the many things Kūkai accomplished) contributed to the change in the use of mantra and dhāraṇī in another historical condition (post-Kūkai). I hope to suggest that a study of mantra or dhāraṇī can be, on the one hand, a force of mediation between the seemingly polarized historical and doctrinal methods in modern Buddhology and, on the other, a force to create an effective integration between conventional Buddhological studies and such other disciplines as literary criticism, linguistic philosophy, and political and cultural studies.

6. I am here employing the concept of mediation in reference to a distinctively intertextual quality of Kūkai’s writings. For intertextuality as mediation, see Julia KRISTEVA 1980:66.

7. As already demonstrated by William LAFLEUR (1983:107–115), Buddhist scriptural texts are often richly figured with rhetorical and tropological strategies.

Drawing from examples in medieval Japanese literary texts, LaFleur has suggested that by studying the process through which such figurative aspects of Buddhist canonical works were absorbed in individual society, one can illustrate the manner in which indigenous Buddhist literature developed in Asian nations (pp. ix–xii).

## 1. Kūkai and (Very) Early Heian Society: A Prolegomenon

1. Historical sources provide conflicting information regarding the date of Kūkai's birth. However, the most reliable historical document is a letter sent by Saichō to Kūkai dated the twenty-fifth day of the eleventh month of Kōnin 4 (813), in which Saichō expresses his intention to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Kūkai's birth by sending him a poem (DZ 5:466–467; KZ 5:375). The original handwritten letter is preserved in the Nara National Museum. For a systematic study of primary sources relating to Kūkai's date of birth, see UYEAMA Shunpei 1991:43–61. Also see TAKAGI Shingen 1990:5–33.

2. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 33, KT 2:416. For the precedent of the similar edict issued by the imperial court, see *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 21, KT 2:254. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations in this volume from non-English texts represent my translations.

3. *Fusō ryakkyi*, fscl. 2, KT 12:96; *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 17, KT 2:202, 203.

4. *Shoku nihongi*, fscls. 23, 26, KT 2:287–288, 315.

5. *Shoku nihongi*, fscls. 26, 27, 30, KT 2:324, 332–333, 368–371.

6. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 25, KT 2:306–307.

7. See, for example, fascicle 8 of the *Golden Light Sūtra*, T 6:442a–444a.

8. One exception to this general rule is Emperor Heizei (r. 806–809), whose principal constituency seems to have been the Nara clergy and those aristocrats who were opposing Kanmu's transfer of the capital away from Nara. After his abbreviated reign of three years, Heizei retired to Nara and attempted a coup aimed at returning the capital to Nara. Heizei's failed coup forced him to take the tonsure and spend the rest of his life as priest confined in his residence in Nara. In 822, Heizei received Kūkai's abhiṣeka and became an Esoteric Buddhist practitioner.

9. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 36, KT 2:456.

10. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 10, KT 2:135.

11. See for example, the edict of the seventeenth day of the seventh month of Jinki 2 (725). *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 9, KT 2:103.

12. For an overview of the Shintō rituals conducted by the emperor at the imperial palace, see KAWADE Kiyohiko 1978:199–407. For an analysis of the

numinous quality attributed to the Japanese emperor that legitimated his role as the supreme priest at Shintō rituals, see KOBAYASHI Toshio 1994:223–287.

13. See, for example, KUROSAKI Teruto's (1992:57–68) study of the analogous structure shared by the Shintō service Daijōe and the Buddhist service Misaike, both aimed at intensifying the emperor's power as a ruler.

14. For a historical overview of the development of the Chinese legal system and the *lù-líng* codes compiled and promulgated in the Sui and the T'ang dynasties, see HORI Toshikazu 1982. Also see INOUE Mitsusada 1982:75–91.

15. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 1, KT 25:1–3.

16. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 3, KT 3:12–13.

17. The Daijōkan consisted of three ministerial posts (*kami*)—grand minister (*daijō daijin*), minister of the left (*sadaijin*), and minister of the right (*udaijin*)—which were served by one vice ministerial office (*supe*) of *dainagon*, three secretarial offices (*jō*), *shōnagon*, *sabenkan*, and *ubenkan*, and two offices of scribes, *daigeki* and *shōgegi*. The eight ministries under the jurisdiction of the Daijōkan consisted of four ministries of the left—Nakatsukashō (Imperial Documents), Shikibushō (Rites), Jibushō (Aristocracy), and Minbushō (Commoners)—and four ministries of the right—Hyōbushō (Military Affairs), Gyōbushō (Law), Ōkurashō (Finance), and Kunaishō (Imperial Palace).

18. The educational system at the Daigaku and Kokugaku are described in the Gakuryō, chapter 11 of the *Yorō ritsuryō*, NST 3:262–268.

19. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 2, KT 2:11.

20. “Kōnin kyakushiki jo,” *Ruiji sandaikyaku*, fscl. 1, KT 25:2–3.

21. Beyond the lightest punishment of forced labor, the *ritsuryō* distinguished penalties in five categories in twenty grades: (1) whips (ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty whips); (2) sticks (sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, one hundred sticks); (3) imprisonment (one, one and a half, two, two and a half, three years); (4) exile (to lands close to, distant from, and most distant from the capital); and (5) capital punishment (hanging or beheading).

22. For the significance of the Tao-seng-kuo in the T'ang legal system, see FUTABA Kenkō 1994. For comparison of the Tao-seng-kuo and the Sōniryō, see NAKAI Shinkō 1994.

23. The *ritsuryō* divided government officers into ten ranks. Elite aristocrats occupying offices in the higher echelon of the court bureaucracy were customarily given the fifth rank (*goi*) or higher. Jibushō was in charge of supervising familial successions, marriages, celebrations, funerals, awards, and other matters relating to those who held the fifth rank or higher, namely aristocratic officers. Under the jurisdiction of Jibushō were four agencies: the Gagakuryō (Agency of the Court Orchestra), which appointed and trained court musicians, dancers and singers; the Genbaryō (Agency of Buddhists and Foreigners), which was in

charge of welcoming foreign diplomatic missions, supervising foreign visitors and residents in the capital, and overseeing Buddhist temples and Buddhist priests and nuns in the capital; the Misagi no tsukasa (Agency of Imperial Mausoleums); and the Sōgishi (Agency of Funerary Rites). See fascicle 2, Shokuinryō, of the *Ritsuryō*, NST 3:168–170.

24. *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:1–18.
25. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 31; *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:123; KT 2:392; NI 1:430.
26. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 9, KT 2:93–94.
27. *Sandai jitsuroku*. 2/16 Jōgan 6, KT 4:131.
28. See articles 3, 5, 13, 20 of the Sōniryō, NST 3:216, 217, 219, 220.
29. See the decrees of the Daijōkan to Enjōji (7/25 Kanpyō 1) and Kajūji (9/21 Engi 5) in fascicle 2 of the *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, KT 25:62, 104–105. Also, see the decrees to Kashōji (2/5 Gankei 2) and Gangyōji (2/7 Gankei 2) in *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, KT 4:421. For an interpretation of these sources, see NAKAI Shinkō 1991:206–210. For the rise of the bettō system, see NAGAMURA Makoto 1986.
30. See “Daianji garan engi narabi ni ruki shizaichō,” “Hōryūji engi narabi ni shizaichō,” and “Saidaiji shizai rukichō,” NI 1:382a–b, 394a, 429b–430b.
31. See the decree of 1/11 Enryaku 23, *Nihon kiryaku*, fscl. 12, KT 3:29. Also see the decree of 3/25 Enryaku 15, *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:115–116.
32. Daijō kanpu, 12/25 Enryaku 24, *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:125–126; Daijō kanpu, 3/20 Kōnin 3 (Masani shokuku kōshi ni kokubun niji o kengyō seshimuru koto), *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:110–111.
33. For discussions on the relationship between the Office of Priestly Affairs and Provincial Masters, see INOUE Kaoru 1966:316–344; USHIYAMA Yoshiyuki 1990:153–183, esp. 163–170; NAKAI Shinkō 1991:82–86; TAIRA Masayuki 1992:87–94.
34. *Ritsuryō*, fscl. 7, NST 3:219–220.
35. *Sōgō bunin*, fscls. 1–2, DBZ 65:1–21.
36. Based on literal reading of the Sōniryō descriptions, earlier studies by Japanese scholars often understood Sōgō merely as a government agency whose jurisdiction was limited to the capital. For a summary of research carried out by scholars who hold this position, see FUTABA Kenkō 1984:172–184. However, more recently, studies of the *Ryō no gige*, *Ryō no shūge*, and other authoritative exegeses of the ritsuryō literature by the experts in ancient Japanese law have shown that the Sōgō's primary function was to administer *naihō*, the law within Buddhism, that is, the vinaya. In this regard their authority was not limited to the geographical confines of the capital. Added to this function was the Sōgō's role to exert further control over the Buddhist community at the capital by

means of *gehō*, the external law of Sōniryō. This explains why the Sōgō was often at odds with the imperial court over implementing strict policies toward the Buddhist community. See NAOBAYASHI Futai 1994 and INŌ Hideaki 1994. For the regulations specifying the Sōgō's jurisdiction within the government, see articles 3, 8, and 13 of the Sōniryō and article 12 of the Kūjikiryō, NST 3:262, 264, 265–266, 379–380. Also see NAKAI Shinkō 1994:83–86.

37. For laicization without a reduction in punishment, see article 1 of the Sōniryō, NST 3:216; for the penalty for killing resulting from physical fight, see article 5 of the Tōshōritsu, NST 3:120.

38. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 23, KT 2:275–276.

39. It appears that Gyōshin was a prominent Hossō priest. According to a document of Daianji dated 747, he was the senior priest general of the Office of Priestly Affairs (NI 1:382a). On the other hand, the *Sōgō bunin* list his name as one of the vinaya masters of the same office, whose tenure extended from 738 to 749 (DBZ 65:3a–c).

40. For the general punishment against imprecation resulting in the death of the imprecated, see article 17 of the Zokutōritsu (NST 3:97); for the amendment of that law to require capital punishment for imprecations that constituted political treason by those who served the court, including officially ordained priests and nuns, see the decree of 4/2 Tenpyō 1, *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 10, KT 2:116–117.

41. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 19, KT 2:222–223.

42. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 21, KT 3:116.

43. Article 27, Koryō, NST 3:234. Because the ancient Japanese marriage customs assumed premarital relations, the punishment for an extramarital relation between an unmarried couple, based on the Chinese law imbued with Confucian ideology, seems never to have been exercised. See NST 3:563–564 (sec. 27c).

44. For other examples of priests who violated the rule of celibacy receiving especially severe punishments see YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1986:57.

45. *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 186, KT 6:301.

46. Daijō kanpu, 7/10 Kōnin 3, *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:139.

47. A case in point is an incident involving priest Zengai of Hōryūji, who in 846 brought a lawsuit before the Grand Ministry against Tomi no Naona, a courtier and one of Hōryūji's principal patrons, who had allegedly appropriated Hōryūji's public resources and profited from their sale. The counsel of the Grand Ministry led by the vice ministers (*sangi*) Prince Masami and Wake no Mazuna found Naona guilty of embezzlement and sentenced him to exile in an extremely remote land. However, Tomo no Yoshio, another officer at the Grand Ministry, objected to Prince Masami's ruling, asserting

that the case constituted a mistrial. Yoshio argued that the Rules for Priests and Nuns strictly prohibited priests or nuns from bringing lawsuits against government agencies, including the direct petitions to the Grand Ministry (article 8, NST 3:218). The only exceptions to this rule were those petitions processed at the Office of Priestly Affairs, in which cases priests and nuns were required to appear as plaintiffs by temporarily dressing themselves in white—symbolizing lay status—to avoid conflict with the above-mentioned Sōniryō law and with vinaya rules prohibiting the ordained from pressing charges against others through official legal procedures (article 17; NST 3:221). Sanuki no Naganao (?–862) and four other legal scholars (*meihō hakase*) summoned by the court to investigate the alleged mistrial of Prince Masami's council produced recommendations in favor of Yoshio. Accordingly, Prince Masami, Wake no Mazuna, and other officers in the council were expelled from their Grand Ministry posts, and, on retrial, Zengai was found guilty of violating the Rules for Priests and Nuns and punished with forty lashes. *Montoku tennō jitsuroku*, fscls. 4, 5, KT 3:43–44, 53–54; *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 16, KT 3:191–193. For the political implications of the Zengai incident, especially with regard to the strife between the Fujiwara clan and anti-Fujiwara factions in the early Heian court, see SONODA Kōyū 1981:133–160.

48. For the history of the seven great temples and Toshōdaiji in Nara, see ŌTA Hirotarō 1979. Gufukuji (also known as Kawaharadera) in the ancient capital of Asuka, Shitennōji in Naniwa, and Kōryūji at Uzumasa were among the other monasteries with the title of *daiji* located outside the city of Nara. For the formation of the system of great temples, see NAKAI Shinkō 1991:135–169.

49. See, for example, Shinsho HANAYAMA 1960:19; Dale SAUNDERS 1964:105; Daigen and Alicia MATSUNAGA 1974:26.

50. Hōryūji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō, NI 1:347a. Note that in this and many other documents dating from the early and mid-Nara period, the Chinese character used to indicate schools is *chung* (Jpn. *shū*), which means “group” or “gathering,” and not *tsung* (Jpn. *shū*), the most standard character employed in later documents to indicate schools. Betsu sanronshū, the study group for “separate transmission Mādhyamika” was by far the largest study group at Hōryūji in 747, followed by Yuishikishū, the Yogācāra study group, Sanronshū, the Mādhyamika study group, and Risshū, the Vinaya study group. As discussed by INOUE Mitsusada (1982:276–280), “separate transmission Mādhyamika” was a school primarily concerned with the study of later Indian Mādhyamika philosophy, especially of Bhāvaviveka's *Torch of the Prajñā-pāramitā* (*Prajñā-pradīpa-mūlamadhyamaka-vṛtti*. [Ch. *Pan-jo teng-lun*; Jpn. *Hannya tōron*], T 30 #1566) and related texts, which became available in Chinese in the mid-seventh century.

51. Daianji garan engi narabini ruki shizaichō, NI 1:369b. The name of the Yogācāra School at Daianji is given as *shōronshū*, instead of the standard Yuishikishū (Consciousness-only) or Hossōshū (Nature of Dharma); it refers to the school grounded on the later Indian Yogācāra systematically imported to China by Hsüan-tsang (596–664). (Although the standard Japanese term for Yogācāra is *hossō*, the “aspects of dharma,” the school is referred to in Nara documents most frequently as *hossō*, the “nature of dharma.”) Shōronshū, literally, means the study group for the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (Ch. *She tach'eng-lun*; Jpn. *Shō daijōron*), T 31 #1593, suggesting that the Yogācāra studies at Daianji emphasized the earlier transmission of Indian Yogācāra to China, especially that of Paramārtha (499–569), who translated into Chinese Asaṅga's seminal Yogācāra text (INOUE Mitsusada 1982:274–276).

Very little is known about Shutarashū, or the Sūtra School, which was the recipient of the largest stipend at Daianji. ISHIDA Mosaku (1930:67) considers it to be another name of the Yogācāra School, whereas TAMURA Enchō (1969:113–133) regards it as a school devoted to the study of prajñā-pāramitā sūtras. INOUE Mitsusada (1982:280–282) has speculated that it was the Jōjitsu (Satyasiddhi) School whose doctrine was closely linked to the Sautrāntika School. Recently, SHINKAWA Tokio (1994:251–252) suggested that the Sūtra School, whose presence was ascertained also at Gangōji and Tōdaiji, was not a doctrinal school but consisted of experts on the ritual recitation and liturgical use of scriptures essential for the Six Schools.

52. Masani shohon o kou mokuroku, DK 12:17; Kegonshū fuse hōjōmon an, DK 11:557; Shasho fuse kanjōchō, DK 12:42; Kushashū shasho fuse kanjōchō, DK 12:42; Tōji daishutarashū narabini risshū fuse hōjōmon an, DK 11:569.

53. Sō chikei shūshohon o koi tatematsuru no kei, DK 13:36.

54. Zushi e zō narabi ni gashi mokuroku, DK 12:247.

55. The Tōdaiji documents that Futaba drew on to determine the size of the membership of the three schools at Tōdaiji can be found at DK 11:569; DK 12:147; and DK 12:42.

56. In its 747 report, Daianji lists the number of its resident practitioners at 887—of whom 473 were fully ordained priests and the rest were advanced novices—supported by the income from the temple's fief domains in thirteen provinces with a total of one thousand farming households (Daianji garan engi narabi ni ruki shizaichō, NI 1:378a–b). By contrast, Tōdaiji was provided with domains of five thousand farming households in twenty provinces (Tōdaiji hōko shobun chokusho. HI 2:46ob.). These figures suggest that the number of priests who belonged to the study groups at Daianji and other great temples was significantly smaller than that at Tōdaiji.

57. See FUTABA Kenkō 1984:289. The only exception to this rule is Gufukuji,

a daiji located at the ancient capital of Asuka, which, unlike other daiji at Asuka, was not transferred to the new capital of Nara in 710. INOUE Mitsusada (1982:283) has reported a document from Gufukuji preserved at the Nezu Museum in Tokyo dated the eleventh day of the fifth month of Enryaku 13, confirming the existence of Betsu sanronshū and Shutarashū.

58. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, 6/14 Enryaku 17, KT 25:124–125.

59. KUSHIDA Ryōkō (1981:312), for example, speculates that the Emperor Saga's court's entrusting of Tōji to Kūkai was a means for the state to defray the burden of the costly national project initiated by Kanmu.

60. Emperor Saga entrusted the construction of Saiji to the Sanron priest Shubin of Daianji in 823. Later, Shubin's master Gonsō was appointed administrator of Saiji. In 824, the Ritsu priest Chōe (d. 826) became supervisor of construction and the Sanron priest Saiei (d. 837) became chief administrator. *Honchō kōsōden*, fscls. 5, 46, DBZ 63:45c, 282b; *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:8a–c, 17a–b.

61. Daijō kanpu, 10/10 Kōnin 14, *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:55–56.

62. *Nihon kiryaku* 2, fscl. 14, 4/28 Tenchō 1, KT 10:319.

63. *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 6, KT 3:66.

64. *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 10, KT 3:124.

65. Ch. *Chin-kuang-ming tsui-sheng-wang-ching*; Jpn. *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō*, T 16 #665.

66. *Wei-mo-ch'i so-shuo-ching* (Jpn. *Yuimakitsu shosetsukyō*), T 14 #475.

67. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, 1/12 Enryaku 21, KT 25:55.

68. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, 1/22 Enryaku 23, KT 25:50.

69. *Jen-wan pan-jo-ching-su* (Jpn. *Ninnō hannyakyō sho*), T 33 #1707.

70. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, 4/25 Enryaku 25, KT 25:50.

71. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, 10/3 Tenchō 9, KT 25:50.

72. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, 9/14 Tenchō 7, KT 25:50.

73. The Four Guardian Kings are legendary protectors of the Dharma residing in their heavenly realm of Cāturmahārājakāyika in the Sumeru. As the four generals serving Indra, they protect the four directions of the world: Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Jpn. Jikokuten) in the east, Virūḍhaka (Zojōten) in the south, Virūpakāṣṭa (Kōmokuten) in the west, and Vaiśravaṇa (Tamonten) in the north. The worship of the four kings is described in chapter 12, fascicle 7 of the sūtra. T 16:427b–432c.

74. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 14, KT 2:164.

75. "Gokoku o shugyō suru wa sōni no michi nari," *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 22, KT 2:264.

76. *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, fscl. 2, 1/8 Jōgan 1, KT 4:15.

77. *Nihon shoki*, SNB 1:34.

78. *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 187, 1/26 Enryaku 22, KT 6:237.

79. *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 187, 1/26 Enryaku 25, KT 6:238. For Saichō's recommendation, see *Kenkanron engi*, DZ 1:292–293; NST 4:187–188, 359.

80. *Tendai hokkeshū nenbun tokudo gakushō meichō*, DZ 1:250–253; NST 4:187–188, 359.

81. In this regard, I am in support of the critique by YOSHIDA Kazuhiko (1995: 192–193) of the sectarian approach to the study of early Heian Buddhism:

It is insufficient, even inappropriate, to delineate the prototype of Japanese Buddhism that came into being in the early Heian period by reducing it to Saichō and Kūkai. We should look at it as the development of a religious authority of a broader range that cannot be represented merely by Saichō and Kūkai. Although Saichō and Kūkai are doubtless of critical historical importance, . . . it is impossible to understand—only by means of their thoughts, their activities, or their Tendai and Shingon Schools—Japanese Buddhism that emerged [in the early Heian period] as a classic Japanese culture or as classic religious establishment. The power of Tōdaiji and other ancient temples predating the Tendai and Shingon Schools remained enormous. Precisely because of the institutional conglomeration with these ancient Buddhist forces, the Tendai and Shingon Schools were able to form themselves into the dominant authority structure of the religious mainstream.

82. Jitsue's letter was given, first, to his fellow Shingon priest Shinzei (800–860), who attempted to travel to China in the fifth month of Jōwa 3 (853), only shortly after their master's death in the third month. Shinzei's ship encountered a severe storm near the island of Tsushima and was destroyed. In the fifth month of Jōwa (858), another colleague of Jitsue's, Engyō, was chosen to be included in the Japanese mission to the T'ang court headed by Ambassador Fujiwara no Tsunetsugu. Engyō succeeded in reaching the Ch'ing-lung monastery in the first month of next year and delivered Jitsue's letter to his hosts there. See two documents produced by Jitsue, one in 835, the other in 838, requesting the court to add first Shinzei and Engyō to the Japanese embassies to the T'ang court. *Tsuikai bunsō* #4, 6, KZ 5:390, 396. Tsunetsugu's emissary also included Ennin (794–864) and Ensai (?–877) of Mount Hiei and Jōgyō (?–866) of Hōrinjji, another disciple of Kūkai's, all of whom rose to eminence as masters of Esoteric Buddhism upon their return to Japan. *Shoku nihon kōki*, KT 3:51–52, 55, 77; *Reigenji shōrai mokuroku*, KSZ 3:147–161.

83. *Tsuikai bunsō* #5, KZ 5:391–392.

84. See fascicle 3, *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, KZ 3:426, 430, 435, 437, 438–444. Among them, one letter from Kūkai to Saga relates directly to Kūkai's

Buddhism—the letter dated in 810 in which Kūkai asks for the emperor's permission to perform at his resident temple of Takaosanji the esoteric rituals for the promotion of the peace of the nation, KZ 3:435–436.

85. *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:523; “Daijōkanpu kii kokushi,” KZ 5:426–428.

86. *Kōya daishi gokōen*, fscl. 1, KDZ 1:252b–253a; *Daishi gyōkeki*, KDZ 2:67b. Also see *Heizei tennō kanjōmon*. KZ 2:150–174.

87. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 15, KT 3:175, 213–214. For the construction of *kokubunji* and *kokubun'niji*, see *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:107–111.

88. Perhaps the most reliable source for Saga's consignment of Tōji to Kūkai appears to be Kūkai's 835 letter to Emperor Ninmei's court quoted in *Shoku nihon kōki* (fscl. 4) and in *Ruiju kokushi* (fscl. 180), KT 3:35; KT 6:260. Also see two of Daijōkan's documents dated the tenth day of the tenth month of Kōnin 14 (823) and the sixth day of the sixth month of Tenchō 1 (824), both empowering Kūkai to manage Tōji. KZ 5:435–436.

89. Daijō kanpu, Jibushō, *Ruiju sandai kyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:55–56.

90. *Kōbōdaishi gyōkeki*, fscl. 3, KDS: 510; *Tōyōki*, fscl. 1. ZZG 12:2b.

91. For the ritual procedure followed in granting the samaya precepts, see chapter 2, fascicle 1, of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 18:5c–6b. Also see Kūkai's *Himitsu sanmaya bukkaigi*, KZ 2:140–149.

92. *Ta-p'i-lu-che-na ch'eng-fo sheng-pien chia-ch'ih-ching* (Jpn. *Daibirushana jōbutsu jinpen kajikyō*), T 18 #848; *Chin-kang-ting i-ch'ieh ju-lai chen-shih-she ta-ch'eng hsien-cheng ta-chiao-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō issai nyorai shinjitsushō daijō genshō daikyōōkyō*), T 18 #865.

93. For the pictorial arrangement of divinities in the two manḍalas, see MJ, appendix 3, 32–33. Also see SJ 292, 295. It is also noted that there are three levels of abhiṣeka. The introductory abhiṣeka (*kechien kanjō*) is aimed at generating karmic affinity between recipients and the divinities in the manḍala, thereby establishing recipients as practitioners of Esoteric Buddhism. The intermediate abhiṣeka (*gakuhō kanjō*) enables a recipient to master ritual practices through which to attain the meditative union, or yoga, with one or more of the divinities in the manḍala. Finally, the most advanced abhiṣeka (*denkyō kanjō*) is to empower the recipient as a master of Esoteric Buddhism responsible for preserving the tradition for future generations.

94. *Kenkairon engi*, DZ 1:279; *Dengyō daishi shōrai eshūroku*, DZ 4:23–36.

95. The earliest surviving letter from Saichō to Kūkai is dated the twenty-fourth day of the eighth month of Daidō 1 (809). DZ 5:450–451. However, the contents of the letter suggest that their interaction had already begun by that date.

96. Discussed in detail in Ryūichi ABÉ 1995. Also see Paul GRONER 1984:77–87.

97. *Kanjō rekimyō*, KZ 3:620–627. There is a discrepancy on the list between the number of students originally registered for initiation (145) and the number who actually received initiation (191).

98. The process of the disintegration of their relationship, which ceased in 816, is discussed in Ryūichi ABÉ 1995:127–133.

99. *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 10, KZ 3:542. There exists no record that shows how many priests accompanied Gonsō in receiving Kūkai's abhiṣeka. However, perhaps among them was the Daianji priest Hōjitsu (737–820), who in 812 served as one of the precept masters at the ordination of Saichō's disciple Kōjō. *Denjutsu isshin kaimon*, DZ 1:531. According to the *Genkō shakusho*, Hōjitsu received abhiṣeka at age eighty, that is, in the year 816. Subsequently, Hōjitsu was said to have devoted himself to the study of Esotericism but expressed regret that his encounter with Esotericism came much too late in his life. DBZ 62:79.

100. Ch. *Chin-kuang-ming-tsui-sheng-wang-ching*; Jpn. *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō*, T 16 #665.

101. *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 2, KT 31:51–52.

102. *Kōya daishi gokōden*, KZD 1:252b–253a; *Genkō shakusho*, fscls. 2, 3, KT 31:53, 65; *Kōbō daishi deshifu*, fscls. 2, 3, KZD 10:83b, 96b, 104b, 116b.

103. *Kōbō daishi deshifu*, fscl. 2, KZD 10:62a–98a.

104. *Kōbō daishi deshifu*, fscls. 1, 2, KZD 10:99a–100a.

105. *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 7, KZ 3:476–477.

106. After Saichō's death in 822, Kūkai resumed his training in Esoteric Buddhism of Enchō (772–837) and many other disciples of Saichō's, who received Kūkai's 812 abhiṣeka in Takaosanji. See Enchō's 831 letter to Kūkai in *Rankei ionshū*, KZ 5:383–385. Also see Ryūichi ABÉ 1995:119 n22.

107. It remains unknown exactly how many people received this letter, but in *Kōya zappitsushū*, another collection of the letters of Kūkai, ten cover letters attached to it show that Kūkai sent the letter at least to the eastern provinces of Mutsu, Hitachi, Shimotsuke, and Kai, and to the southern province of Tsukishi in Kyūshū.

The actual letter consisted of three parts: the cover letters Kūkai prepared separately for individual recipients; the letter proper, requesting cooperation in copying and circulating scriptures; and the list of Esoteric Buddhist scriptures Kūkai had selected from the texts he imported from China. That list did not survive, and exactly what texts selected scriptures comprised remains unknown. Based on the *Seireishū binmō* by Unshō (1614–1693), modern Shin-

gon scholars claim that the 35 fascicles of scriptures were the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (7 fascicles); *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* (3); *Abbreviated Vajraśekhara Sūtra* (4); *Mahāvairocana Sūtra Commentary* (20); and the *Treatise on the Enlightened Mind* (1). SZ 42:310. However, this cannot be accurate because the version of Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* imported by Kūkai was the ten-fascicle version, not the twenty-fascicle version widely circulated from in the mid-Heian period.

108. *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:526–529. Kōchi was a teacher of Ennin and Anne before they went to Mount Hiei to join the Tendai School. For Kōchi see *Genkō shakusho*, fscls. 2, 3, KT 31:53, 60.

109. Dating based on the analysis of Tokuitsu's profile in the *Nanto kōsōden* (DBZ 64:108a) by TAKAHASHI Tomio (1986:49–51).

110. For Kūkai's address to Kōchi, see *Kōya zappitsushū*, KZ 3:565–566. Kūkai's cover letter to Kyōkō did not survive. However, there exists in the archive of Kōzanji a copy of the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* that carries a colophon signed by Kyōkō stating: "On the fifth month of Kōnin 6 [815], in response to Master Kai [Kūkai]'s request, I have copied out these Esoteric Buddhist sūtras in 36 fascicles" (KTM 1:12).

111. The Chinese translation of the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*, T 22 #1428.

112. *Tōdaiji yōroku*, facs. 4, 9, ZZG 11:64a–67a, 179a–180b.

113. *Genkō shakusho*, fscls. 1, 27, KT 31–32, 405. For a review of major studies by Japanese historians of the two precept platforms at Kannonji and Yakushiji and for the most recent study of these two institutions, see MATSUO Kenji 1988a:75–115.

114. The term *daijō ritsu* does appear from time to time in the writing of modern Japanese scholars, pointing to the extent of the confusion created by the vagueness of the Chinese translations. See for example ISHIDA Mosaku 1930, furoku 53.

115. The bodhisattva precepts are discussed in detail in fascicles 18 and 24 of the sixty-volume edition (T 9 #278) of the *Avatamsaka*, in Vasubandhu's commentary on the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* (T 26 #1522), and in several variant translations of the *Yogacāra-bhūmi* (T 24 ##1499, 1501, 1503; T 30 #1583), and the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (Ch. *Fan-wan-ching p'i-lu-che-na-fo-shuo p'u-sa hsinti chieh-p'in*), T 24 #1484, which is of apocryphal origin in China. See, for example, T 9:513b, 548c, 550b–551a; T 26:145c, T 24:1107–1110. For an overview of the development of the principal scriptural sources of the bodhisattva precepts, see IKEDA Rosan 1993:441–468; and MIZUNO Kōgen 1993:485–504.

116. For a study of the Nan-shan precept school founded by Tao-hsüan (596–667), to which Chien-chen belonged, as a Mahāyāna movement, see MIZUNO Kōgen 1993:504–510.

117. *Tōdaiji jukai hōki*, T 74 #2349.

118. *Tō daiwajō tōseiden*, NI 2:906a–b.

119. *Denjutsu isshinkai mon*, fscl. 1, DZ 1:528–529.

120. That is, the three most essential pledges of the bodhisattvas precepts—to uphold all the rules (*śīla* for the laity, and both *śīla* and *vinaya* for the ordained); to do all good acts; and to do all acts of helping others. Discussed in detail in the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* (T 9:513b) and the *Yogācāra-bhūmi* (T 24:1104 ff).

121. *Denjutsu isshinkai mon*, fscl. 1, DZ 1:532; *Eizan daishiden*, KZ 5 bekkan:2, 32–33.

122. *Kuan-p'u-hsien p'u-sa hsing-fa-ching* (Jpn. *Kanfugen bosatsu gyōbōkyō*), T 9 #277.

123. *Tendai hokkeshū nenbundosha eshō kōdai shiki (shijō shiki)*, DZ 1:17–18.

124. *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:8c–9a.

125. *Denjutsu isshin kaimon*, fscl. 2, DZ 1:570–571.

126. Gomyō's letter, dated the nineteenth day of the fifth month of Kōnin 10 (819) is quoted in toto in Saichō's *Kenkairon*, fscl. 1, DZ 1:33–35. There was yet another, lengthier letter of protest sent by the Sōgō to the court. That letter, however, survived only as quotations in *Kenkairon*. In *Kenkairon*, Saichō breaks the letter into short passages, single sentences, and phrases and presents his extensive refutation of the Sōgō's arguments to each of the fragments. Thus it is not clear whether the entirety of the Sōgō's letter was represented in Saichō's work or whether the original order of the Sōgō's arguments is preserved there. However, even in the version that appears in *Kenkairon*, the use of "Mahāyāna precepts" and "Hinayāna precepts" in the Sōgō's letter seems to be restricted to the occasion at which the letter refers to Saichō's use of those terms in his original petition. DZ 1:13–48.

127. *Kenkairon engi*, DZ 1:288.

128. Many sectarian scholars of the Tendai School have asserted that Saichō was a "pure-hearted" idealist who attempted to reform the corrupt conventions of Nara Buddhism. On the other hand, scholars outside the Tendai Sect have often pointed out that Saichō's attempt to secede from the Nara ordination system was motivated by other practical aims, such as halting the stream of defectors from among his new disciples to the Nara Schools. They also have described Saichō's skill in manipulating his political ties with influential court nobles, which finally enabled him to overcome the opposition from Nara. See, for example, NAKAO Shunbaku 1987:238–256.

129. *Kenkairon engi*, DZ 1:266.

130. *Meihō shishōron*. The text is referred to in Saichō's *Kenkairon* as one of the documents from Nara denouncing Saichō's *Shijōshiki*, DZ 1:266. It was

originally quoted in toto in the second fascicle of the *Kenkairon*, which did not survive.

131. *Eizan daishi den*, DZ 5 bekkan: 41–42.

132. The development of the Tendai School as a powerful religious institution from the mid-Heian period onward was coterminous with the decline of the system of *zoku bettō* and the school's reconciliation with the Sōgō. See TAIRA Masayuki 1992:95.

133. A document issued on the eleventh day of the second month of Kōnin 13 (822) by the Daijōkan (Grand Ministry) states: “Minister of the Right (*udaijin*) [Fujiwara Fuyutsugu, 775–826] proclaims to the Jibushō (Ministry of Aristocracy): This is to report the imperial order . . . to consign Dharma Master Kūkai to institute for the prosperity of our nation a hall of abhiṣeka (*kanjō dōjō*) and permit him during the months of the summer retreat and the three months of penance [the first, fifth, and ninth months] to perform the rite [of initiation] to make calamities in our land to cease and to increase happiness of our people.” *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:67. Also see *Tōdaiji yōroku*, fscl. 4, ZZG 11:69a–b.

134. *Tōdaiji zokuyōroku*, ZZG 11:287a–b.

135. The three refuges (Jpn. *sanki*) are the practitioners' pledge to devote themselves to the three jewels (Skt. *tri-ratna*; Jpn. *sanbō*), the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha. The five precepts (Skt. *pañca-śila*; Jpn. *gokai*) are the prohibitions against killing, stealing, improper sexual conduct, lying, and intoxication. These two are essential sets of precepts for lay Buddhist practitioners. The eight precepts (Skt. *aṣṭāṅga-samanvāgatopavāsa*; Jpn. *hassakai*) are another set of precepts for the lay practitioners to observe for one day on occasions of penance. The eight are designed so that the laity are to observe, in addition to the five precepts, three essential monastic rules for the ordained: (1) the prohibitions against decorating one's body and hair and against song and dance, (2) the prohibition against resting and sleeping on raised bedding, (3) the restriction of meals to only twice a day, in the morning and before noon.

136. Lay male practitioners (Skt. *upāsaka*; Jpn. *ubasoku*), lay female practitioners (Skt. *upāsikā*; Jpn. *ubai*), priests (Skt. *bhikṣu*; Jpn. *biku*), and nuns (Skt. *bhiksuni*; Jpn. *bikuni*).

137. *Tuikai* (*Kōnin yuikai*), KZ 2:861.

138. *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh-chung fa-a-nou-to-lo san-miao-san-p'u-t'i-hsin-lun* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yugachū hotsu anokutara sanmyaku sanbodaishinron*), T 32 #1665.

139. Murder, theft, improper sexual acts, lying, slander, flattery, duplicity, greed, rage, and folly.

140. *Heizei tennō kanjōmon*, KZ 2:170–171.

141. *Shingonshū shogaku kyōritsuron mokuroku*, KZ 1:120–121. For Kūkai's emphasis on the vinaya of the Sarvasvāstivāda tradition, see TAKAGI Shingen 1982b.
142. *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:9a–b; *Tōji chōja bunin*, GR 4:622a–b.
143. See the discussion in the first half of this chapter.
144. *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:9a.
145. For the biographies of Chōe (d. 826), Shūtetsu (d. 831), and Sehei (d. 832), see *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:8a–9c, 17c. Also see *Honchō kōsōden*, fscl. 5, DBZ 63:46b. The Sanron master Gonsō of Daianji, who received Kūkai's abhiṣeka in 812, has been discussed earlier. The Hosshō master Shūen of Kōfukuji will be discussed in chapter 5. The abbot of Tōshōdaiji Buan is discussed in the following.
146. *Ritsuen sōbōden*, fscl. 10, DBZ 64:208a; *Tōshōdaiji ge*, DBZ 64:151b; *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 13, KT 31:196; *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:9b–10b.
147. *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 4, KT 3:38. Also see an official document issued by Jibushō to exempt Kūkai from taxation. HI 8 #3252. The same document is quoted in *Kōyadaishi gokōden*, KDZ 1:242.
148. The list of the appointees in the *Sōgō bunin* throughout the Nara and early Heian periods contains a few names of priests whose monasteries of residence cannot be ascertained from other historical sources. However, there is no positive evidence for the possibility that, prior to Kūkai, there was an example of the Sōgō appointment involving a priest who was neither a resident of the Nara monasteries nor the member of one of the Nara Schools.
149. *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:9a–b.
150. *Tōji chōja bunin*, GR 4:622b; *Kōbō daishi gyōkeki*, KDZ 2:116a–b.
151. "Kanmu kōtei no ontame ni daijō gyosho no kinji no hokke o kōzuru dasshin," *Henjō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 6, KZ 3:464–465.
152. "Tenchō kōtei ko nakatsukasa kyō shinno no tameni den oyobi dōjō no shigu o sutete tachibanadera ni iruru ganmon," *Henjō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 6, KZ 3:466–467.
153. "Kyūchū shingon'in no shōgatsu no mishuhō no sōjō." *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:518–519. The memorial included in the *Seireishū*, that is, the one copied and edited by the priest Saisen (1025–1115) of Ninnaji, gives its date as the day of kinoto-hitsuji in the eleventh month of Jōwa 1. However, there was no *kinoto-hitsuji* in the eleventh month of that year. On the other hand, the same memorial reproduced in fascicle 3 of the national history of *Shoku nihon kōki* (KT 3:32) gives a date for *kinoto-hitsuji* in the twelfth month of the same year that corresponds to the nineteenth day of the month.

154. “Kyūchū shingon’in no shōgatsu no mishuhō no sōjō,” *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:518–519.

155. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:67; KDS:778.

156. *Tōji chōja bunin*, GR 4:623a. There exists no contemporaneous record that describes the actual ritual content of Kūkai’s New Year service of Mishuhō. The administrative office accommodated for the performance of the first Mishuhō was Kageyushichō, the agency responsible for overseeing the transfer of senior personnel at provincial governments. For the earliest detailed records of the ritual procedures of the Imperial Rite, which date from late tenth and early eleventh century, see *Goshichishō* and *Goshichinichi mishuhō burui*, ZG 25B, 63a–105b; 110–127a.

157. For the location in the imperial palace of Shingon’in and a detailed floor plan indicating the layout of ritual altars and other instruments in the chapel’s interior, see *Eiji ni’nen shingon’in mishuhōki*, ZG 25B, 128a–143a.

158. *Tōji chōja bunin*, GR 4:623a–627b.

159. *Nihon sandai jutsuroku*, fscl. 7, 7/27 Jōgan 5, KT 4:114; *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 182, KT 6:281. Cf. ISHIDA Mizumaro 1986:286.

160. “Sōgō chō tōjibettō sangō, 4/5 Jōwa 4,” *Tōbōki*, fscl. 7, ZZG 12:141b–142b.

161. *Tōbōki*, fscl. 7, ZZG 12:141b–142b. For the rise of Tōji as a principal monastic institution, which only began in the late Heian period, see KAMIKAWA Michio 1985.

162. “Kanjin shite buttō o tsukuri tatematsuru chishiki no sho.” *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 8, KZ 3:516.

163. “Daijō kanpu jibushō, 10/10 Kōnin 14,” KZ 5:435.

164. See, for example, KUSHIDA Ryōkō 1981:319; and WATANABE Shōkō and MIYASAKA Yūshō 1967:159.

165. *Sōgō chō tōjibettō sangō*, 4/5 Jōwa 4, *Tōbōki*, fscl. 7, ZZG 12:141b–142b. The names of the fifteen priests are listed as follows:

Master of Dharma Juchō (age 57; Dharma career, 32 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Dharma Chikai (age 38; Dharma career, 18 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Dharma Shinzō (age 35; Dharma career, 15 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Dharma Shinkō (age 62; Dharma career, 12 years) of Kōfukuji  
 Master of Dharma Shinshū (age 32; Dharma career, 12 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Practice Eun (age 30; Dharma career, 20 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Practice Shunjō (age 40; Dharma career, 19 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Practice Jōgyō (age 40; Dharma career, 10 years) of Gangōji  
 Master of Practice Etō (age 30; Dharma career, 8 years) of Tōdaiji

Master of Practice Ankan (age 29; Dharma career, 8 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Training Shinteki (age 35; Dharma career, 11 years) of Tōdaiji  
 Master of Training Gennin (age 32; Dharma career, 13 years) of Gangōji  
 Master of Training Kōnin (age 39; Dharma career, 10 years) of Hōryūji  
 Master of Training Anryū (age 32; Dharma career, 25 years) of Tōdaiji

166. See, for example, Shinga's 878 list of Kūkai's twenty-one leading disciples, submitted to the court, which is discussed immediately below.

167. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:67; *Tōdaiji yōroku*, fscl. 4, ZZG 11:69a–b.

168. There are two indications of Saichō's original intention to establish his school within the existing institutional framework (instead of pursuing separation from it). The first is his *Lotus Sūtra* lecture on Mount Takao in 802. Under the aegis of Kanmu and his ministers, Saichō underscored to the Nara scholar-priests invited to the lecture the importance of the addition to the existing schools of his Tendai as the superior doctrine that would resolve the ongoing rivalry between the Nara Schools, especially between Sanron and Hossō (TAKAGI Shingen 1990:75–97; Paul GRONER 1984:34–37). The second is Saichō's proposal to establish a new system of allocating the annual ordinands to Tendai and the five Nara schools, which was adopted by Kanmu's court in 805. The new system required the ordinands of all the schools to first receive the precept ordination given at Kaidan'in in Nara (SONE Masato 1984:685; Paul GRONER 1984:68–70). These two factors seem to explain why one of the severest criticisms of Saichō's bodhisattva precepts system leveled by the Sōgō was that Saichō was contradicting his own earlier stand and also the system instituted by Emperor Kanmu, who particularly favored Saichō. See *Kenkairon*, fscl. 3, DZ 1:150.

169. *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron* and *Hizō hōyaku*, KZ 1:125–415; 417–473.

170. *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*, KZ 1:125–415.

171. *Heizei tennō kanjōmon*, KZ 2:164–165.

172. See, for example, *Kan'ensho* (KZ 3:526–529), *Benkenmitsu nikyōron* (KZ 1:474–505), and the introduction to the *Hizōhōyaku* (KZ 1:417–420).

173. See, for example, *Makinoo kuketsu* (T 78 #2465) and *Takao kuketsu* (T 78 #2466), which are records of Kūkai's oral instruction given to his disciples handwritten by Jitsue and Shinzei, respectively. For Kūkai's explanation on the importance of *menju* over *hitsuju*, see *Issaikyō kaidai* (KZ 1:851–853). I have discussed Kūkai's confrontation with Saichō regarding *menju* and *hitsuju* in Ryuichi ABÉ, 1995:121–130. Also see Kūkai's letter to Saichō, "Eizan no chō hosshi rishushakukyō o motomuru ni tōsuru sho," *Henjō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 10, KZ 3:549–552.

174. The first volume of the *Kōbō daishi zenshū*, which contains those of Kūkai's theoretical writings whose authenticity have been verified, includes fourteen treatises on exoteric scriptures and the same number on esoteric scriptures. Kūkai's commentaries on exoteric texts include the exegesis on the *Heart Sūtra* (*Hannya shingyō hiken*); the summary discussion of the *Interpretation of the Mahāyāna*, an extensive Chinese commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*, T 32 #1668 (*Shaku makaenron shiji*); two commentaries on the Prajñā-pāramitā naya chapter of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, T 8 #240 (*Shinjitsukyō mongu* and *Jissō hannyakyō tōshaku*); an introduction to the *Sūtra of the Virtuous King*, T 8 #246 (*Ninnōkyō kaidai*); three introductions to the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Hokekyō kaidai*); two interpretations of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Hokekyō shaku* and *Hokekyō mitsugō*); an introduction to the *Brahmājāla Sūtra* (*Bonmōkyō kaidai*); two commentaries on the *Golden Light Sūtra* (*Saichōōkyō kaidai* and *Konshōōkyō himitsu kada*), and an introduction to the *Vajracchedikā Sūtra*, T 8 #235 (*Kongō hannya haramitakyō kaidai*).

175. *Konshōōkyō himitsu kada*, KZ 1:825–835.

176. *Jissōhannyakyō tōshaku*, KZ 1:747–751.

177. *Bonmōkyō kaidai*, KZ 1:809–819.

178. *Hokekyō kaidai* (“Koko ni daijōkyō o kaiji su”), KZ 1:762–764.

## 2. Kūkai's Dissent: Of Mendicancy and Fiction

1. *Shoku nihongi*, fscls. 37, 38, KT 2:492–493, 495, 503.

2. Because it was located by a major canal system leading to the bay of Naniwa (Ōsaka), Nagaoka was susceptible to flooding. In 792, for example, the western half of the city was completely inundated.

3. *Shoku nihongi*, fscls. 37, 38, KT 2:512.

4. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 40, KT 2:535–538.

5. *Ibid.*, 547–548.

6. *Ibid.*, 553.

7. *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 15, KT 23:447–448.

8. *Ibid.*, 448.

9. Because of the uncertainty as to the exact date at which Nagaoka was abandoned, it is not clear to which capital, Nagaoka or Nara, Kūkai went to begin his student life. However, experts in Kūkai's biography agree that Kūkai most likely went to Nara. Kūkai's original aim in studying at the capital was to enter the state college (Daigaku). When Kanmu hastily moved his court to Nagaoka, the new capital was still under construction, and it is doubtful that the college had already been relocated there. Kūkai's autobiographical

writings also suggest that, while staying at the capital, he was in close contact with Buddhist priests and nuns and had access to a large collection of Buddhist texts, which could have been readily available only from the archives of major temples in Nara. See WATANABE Shōkō and MIYASAKA Yūshō 1967:32.

10. *Bunkyō bifuron*, KZ 3:2.
11. *Kūkai sōzuden*, KZ shukan: 33.
12. KZ shukan: 33–37. Although the biography was said to have been composed by Kūkai's disciple Shinzei (800–860), the corruption of the text both in its style and grammar suggests otherwise, as Saisen, a renowned late Heian scholar-priest of Ninnaji, indicated in his *Gonyūjō kanketsushō*. On the twenty-second day of the tenth month of Ten'an 1 (857), at Shinzei's recommendation, the imperial court posthumously granted Kūkai the title of *daisōjō* (archbishop). Because the text does not mention this event, and because the text's references to Kūkai were not influenced by it, historians generally agree that *Kūkai sōzuden* was composed prior to 857. The chronology of events in the text is generally regarded as reliable, because it largely agrees with the “Daisōzu dentō daihōshii kūkai,” the earliest record of Kūkai with an established date of composition included in the national history *Shoku nihon kōki* (fscl. 4, KT 3:38), compiled in 869. For a study of the *Kūkai sōzuden* as a historical source, see SHINPO Ryūshō 1984.
13. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 32, KT 2:421.
14. *Shoku nihongi*, fscls. 39, 40. KT 2:520, 533. For the relationship between Tanetsugu's assassination and the decline of Imaemishi, see TAKAGI Shingen 1990:7.
15. *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, fscl. 5, KT 4:82. Also see *Ōtomo keizu*, KDS:10.
16. Gakuryō, *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 15, KT 23:443–445, 453–454.
17. Ibid., 445. However, there is evidence that exceptions to this rule were made quite often in order to accommodate the entrance of able students and sons of politically influential families. See TAKAGI Shingen 1990:8–9.
18. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 40, KT 2:557.
19. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 33, KT 2:422–423. For *shakuten*, see the Gakuryō. *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 15, KT 23:445. For a detailed study of the Japanese adoption of the ritual of *shakuten*, see TOGAWA Motoru 1995.
20. For the administrative structure of *daigaku*, see the Gakuryō. *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 15, KT 23:443–462. For a detailed study of *daigaku* in Kūkai's time, see MOMO Hiroyuki 1993:191–219. Also see TAKAGI Shingen 1990:5–19; and SHIZUKA Jien 1983:116–119.
21. Gakuryō, *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 15, KT 23:447.
22. Ibid., 443–454.
23. *Sangō shiike*, KZ 3:324. Kūkai is referring to four legendary figures in

Chinese history celebrated for their devotion to learning: Sun-k'ang in the *Meng-ch'iu*, Ch'e-yin in the *Chin-shu*, Sun-ching in the *Hsien-hsien-chuan*, and Su-ch'in in the *Chan-kuo-t'se*.

24. KZ shukan: 33.

25. See the concluding poem in *Sangō shiiki*. Also see Kūkai's poem in *Rōko shiiki*, KZ 3:355–356, 320.

26. KZ 3:324–356. The original text of *Sangō shiiki*, which he composed at age twenty-four, was entitled *Rōko shiiki*, *Demonstrating the Goal to Those Who Are Blind and Deaf to the Truth*. Years later, most likely after his return to China, Kūkai wrote a new introduction and closing verse to the work and gave it the new title, by which the work is now known. For the revision of *Rōko shiiki*, see Yoshito HAKEDA 1972:16–17. Also see KAJI Nobuyuki 1978.

27. T 20:602c. Paraphrased.

28. KZ 3:324.

29. T 20:601a–603a.

30. The gumonjihō was said to have been transmitted from the Indian tripiṭaka master Śubhakarasiṁha (637–735) to the Japanese Hossō priest Dōji (675–756), one of Zengi's masters. The Esoteric Buddhist text describing the meditation on the bodhisattva is *Hsü-k'ung-ts'ang p'u-sa neng-man chu-yüan tsui-sheng-hsin t'o-lo-ni chiu-wen-ch'ih-fa* (Jpn. *Kokuzō bosatsu nōman shogan saishōshin darani gumonjihō*), T 20 #1145. For the relationship between Kūkai and Gonsō regarding this meditation, see, for example, *Goyūigō*, KZ 2:782.

31. *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 15, KT 23:458, 459–460.

32. HAKEDA Yoshito (1975:42) has explained Kūkai's metamorphosis in this way:

The text of gumonjihō, as Kūkai practiced it, proclaims that its benefit of improving one's memory and intelligence is a skillful means to attract one's attention on Buddhist teaching. It reflects an Indian way of thinking prevalent in the Mahāyāna scriptures, which promise merit and salvation to those who recite, copy, and uphold the sūtras. . . . Its true aim is to guide the practitioner to the depth of experiencing the three-mystery yoga (*sanmitsu yuga*) that is, forming one's hands into Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha's mudrā, reciting his mantra with one's mouth, and having one's mind abide in the bodhisattva's samādhi. The esoteric yoga's goal is the attainment of Buddha wisdom. It aims at restructuring the basis of one's personality, that is, the purifying of one's karma by illuminating the dark region of one's unconscious with the light of wisdom.

33. *Sangō shiiki*, KZ 3:324.

34. KZ shukan: 33.

35. The scholars whose works are cited by Futaba include Hori Ichirō and Nakamura Myōzō, who understand ubasoku as *shidosō*, anti-authoritarian, self-ordained priests; Sakuma Ryū and Nemoto Seiji, who view ubasoku as Buddhist novices who trained themselves in monasteries; and Matsumoto Nobumichi, who emphasizes the shamanistic function of ubasoku in healing illness and performing rites of ancestor worship. See FUTABA Kenkō 1984:371 nn. 1–5.

36. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 11, KT 2:134–135.

37. Keikai's introduction to the third and last fascicle of *Ryōiki* bears the date of the sixth year of Enryaku (787). See *Nihon ryōiki*, fscl. 3, NKZ 6:260.

38. *Nihon ryōiki*, NKZ 6:65.

39. Ibid.

40. *Ritsuryō*, fscl. 3, NST 3:22. Also see *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 7, KT 23:249–250.

41. *Sōniryō*. *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 8, KT 23:249–250.

42. Keikai's *Miraculous Episodes* provides a vivid example of this phenomenon, a story involving a certain Niwamaro, son of a noble family in the capital, which points to a rising tension between the *shidosō* and the state.

There lived in the county of Kaga in the province of Echizen an officer whose responsibility it was to capture drifters. He would pursue them, forcing them into hard labor and using them as a source of wealth. At that time there was a man named Ono no Ason Niwamaro, a registered resident of the capital. He became an ubasoku and lived his life constantly chanting the dhāraṇī of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara [Jpn. Senju kannon]. Niwamaro wandered into the mountains of Kaga and remained there to practice austerities. Around noon on the twenty-seventh day of the third month of Jingo Keiun [769], the official, who happened to be in the village of Mimakawa in Kaga county, came across this practitioner and said, “From which province are you?” Niwamaro answered, “I am a religious practitioner and not a householder.” Enraged, the official vilified the practitioner: “No, you are just a drifter. Why do you not pay the tax?” The officer arrested Niwamaro, whipped him and forced him into the corvée. Yet Niwamaro did not accede to the officer and, making reference to a parable, said, “I heard that even a dark-colored flea in one’s hair becomes light-colored when it goes down to live in one’s white robe. Holding a dhāraṇī scroll upon my head and carrying sūtras on my back [i.e., dressed in the priest’s gear], I am already exempted from worldly duties and punishments. On what grounds do you chastise me, humiliate me, an upholder of the Mahāyāna sūtra? There will soon be retribution for your evil action.” *Nihon ryōiki*, episode 14, fscl. 3, NKZ 6:295–296.

43. For Gyōki's biography, see *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 17, KT 2:196–197. Also see *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 14, KT 31:206–207. For modern scholarship on Gyōki, see YOSHIDA Yasuo 1987, 1988; NEMOTO Seiji 1991; NAKAI Shinkō 1989a; FUTABA Kenkō 1984:236–278; INOUE Mitsusada 1982:335–411. For the locations of the forty-nine temples built by Gyōki, see YOSHIDA Yasuo 1987:318–321.

44. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 7 KT 2:68.

45. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 17 KT 2:196–197.

46. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 11, KT 2:126.

47. Sōniryō, *Ryō no shūge*, fscls. 7, 8, KT 23:217, 219, 220.

48. For example, the *Continued History of Japan* (*Shoku nihongi*) reports, “On the sixteenth day of the tenth month of Tenpyō 13 (741), a bridge was constructed over the River [Kizu] to the east of Mount Kase. The work began in the seventh month and was completed this month. *Ubasoku* in the provinces in the vicinity of the capital gathered to assist in the work of construction, and upon the completion of the bridge, 750 of them received permission to receive ordination.” *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 14, KT 2:166. For the construction of the bridge and its relationship to ubasoku, see YOSHIDA Yasuo 1987:240.

49. See Shōmu’s edict inviting ordinary people to participate in erecting the statue. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 15, KT 2:175–176.

50. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 16, KT 2:182.

51. For example, An ubasoku named Konjū practiced austerities in the mountains east of the capital of Nara. In response to his devotion, the image of Vajradhara (Jpn. Shukongō), his tutelary deity, emitted a light, which reached the palace of Emperor Shōmu. Konjū was lauded by the emperor and inducted into the priesthood. Later the emperor erected Tōdaiji at the site of Konjū’s practice (episode 21, fascicle 2). In another episode, Tokai, an ubai famed for her beautiful chanting of the *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, was summoned by Yama (Jpn. Enma), the guardian king of the gate of hell, who wished to listen to her recitation. In order to accept Yama’s invitation, Tokai died and came back to life three days later (episode 19, fascicle 2). In yet another example, Fujiwara Ieyori, son of the prominent statesman Nagate (714–771), became ill. He invited ascetics, zenji and ubasoku, to his residence and asked them to heal his illness by reciting dhāraṇīs. When one of the ascetics pledged to exchange his life with that of Ieyori, the spirit of the deceased Nagate possessed the ascetic and revealed the cause of his son’s illness (episode 36, fascicle 3).

52. *Nihon ryōiki*, episode 31, fscl. 1, NKZ 6:128.

53. It appears that Kanmu intended to apply to the selection of candidates for Buddhist ordination the strict standard adopted for selecting candidates for the State College. In 793 he decreed that only those who had mastered

the recitation of texts in the *han* pronunciation (*kan'on*), the standard dialect of Chang-an and its vicinity, which had been adopted at the State College, could become candidates for ordination. This seems to have posed a significant difficulty for many candidates who, according to the tradition in the Nara temples, studied scriptures using the *wu* pronunciation (*goon*), the dialect of the southern Chinese provinces. Kanmu's edict of the fourth month of Enryaku 17 (798) imposed the further restriction that the ordinands had to be age thirty-five or over. In addition, a new system of testing candidates was developed, modeled on the examination system of the State College (*shikō*). Only candidates who were able to answer at least five out of ten questions on the sūtras in which they had specialized qualified for ordination. *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 187, KT 6:313–314. The restriction on the age of candidates was lifted three years later. However, the examination administered in connection with the ordination remained in effect.

54. *Ruijuu kokushi*, fscl. 186, KT 6:300.

55. Ibid.

56. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 8, KT 3:21.

57. *Ruijuu kokushi*, fscl. 79, KT 5:424. Also see TAKAGI Shingen 1990:15.

58. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 8, KT 3:22.

59. *Seireishū*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:523–524.

60. *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 4, KT 3:38. For a detailed study of the date of Kūkai's ordination, see TAKAGI Shingen 1990:20–33.

61. Those later works include the *Transforming One's Body Into the Realm of Enlightenment* (*Sokushin jōbutsugi*), *Voice, Letter, Reality* (*Shōji jissōgi*), and *On the Sanskrit Letter Hūm* (*Unjigi*).

62. Kūkai originally named his work *Rōko shiiki* (*Demonstrating the Goal for Those Blind and Deaf to the Truth*). Years later, after his return from China in 804, having prepared a new introduction to the text, he made a few minor alterations and, using a revised version of the concluding poem, changed its title to *Sangō shiiki*. Therefore, although the introduction was dated 797, it was actually written later. See Yoshito HAKEDA 1972:16–17; 1975:44–49; and KAJI Nobuyuki 1978:82–88.

63. According to Katsumata Shunkyō's annotation (KCZ 3:2–27), there are twenty-one Confucian texts to which Kūkai makes reference in fascicle 1 of the *Sangō shiiki* including *Li-chi* (*Raiki*), *Shih-ching* (a.k.a. *Moa-shih*; Jpn. *Shikyō*, *Mōshi*), *Shu-ching* (a.k.a. *Shang-shu*; Jpn. *Shokyō*, *Shōsho*), *Lun-yü* (*Rongo*), *K'ung-tzu chia-yü* (*Kōshi kego*), *Yen-tzu chia-hsün* (*Ganshi kakun*), and *Hsiao-tzu-chuan* (*Kōshiden*). Katsumata also identifies eleven Chinese historiographical texts Kūkai cites in the same fascicle. Principal historiographical works include *Shih-chi* (*Shiki*), *Han-shu* (*Kanjo*), *Wu-han-shu* (*Gokanjo*), and

*Tsin-shu* (*Shinjo*). For the influence of Confucian texts on Kūkai's writing, see SHIZUKA Jien 1985.

64. As in the *Chüang-tzu*, the text consists of inner and outer sections. The inner chapters discuss various techniques of medicine, physical training, and alchemy for attaining immortality. The outer chapters study ethical and political application of Taoist religious ideals. For the *Pao-p'oh-tzu*'s presentation of immortality as its central religious concept and its influence in the Nara and Heian Japan, see MURAKAMI Yoshimi 1956. For translation into English of the text, see Jay SAILY 1978 and James WARE 1966.

65. Katsumata's annotation identifies six other Taoist texts to which Kūkai refers to in fascicle 2: *Shen-hsien-chuan* (*Shinsenden*), *Li-hsien-chuan* (*Ressenden*), *Yang-hsin yao-chi* (*Yōjō yōshū*), *Yang-hsin-lun* (*Yōjōron*), *Shen-i-ching* (*Jin'ikyō*), and *Pieh-kuo tung-ming-chi* (*Bekkoku dōmeiki*). KCZ 3:28–39.

66. *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 7, KT 23:214–215.

67. Nagaya, grandson of Emperor Tenmu, was a leading statesman in Emperor Shōmu's court. In the second month of Tenpyō 1 (729), Nagaya was calumniated by his political foes as a patron practitioner of Taoist alchemy whose intention it was to topple Shōmu from throne, and he was forced to commit suicide (*Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 10, KT 2:115–116). As SHINKAWA Tokio (1986:304–305) has pointed out, the existing historical documents do not suggest any immediate link between Nagaya's religious interest in Taoism and his possible plot against the Emperor. What the incident does illustrate is the heterodox quality the *ritsuryō* authority attributed to Taoism in order to prevent it from asserting influence upon political decision-making.

68. As in the examples here, Kūkai often gives his notations in *man'yōgana*. *Rōko shiiki*, KZ 3:310. Kūkai's birthplace is identified in the national history of the *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 4, KT 3:38. For the homologous relationship between Kūkai's personal life and that of Kamei narrated in *Sangō shiiki*, see KATSUMATA Shunkyō 1984:280–282.

69. A quote from the *Li-chi* (*Book of Rite*), fascicle of *tsi-i*.

70. As described in the *wu t'ai-po shih chia* fascicle of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shih-chi*, Prince Wu T'ai-po of Chou realized that his father, when abdicating his throne, favored T'ai-po's younger brother as his successor. To avoid political strife in the Chou court T'ai-po abandoned his princely rank and lived among a barbarous tribe in the South.

71. The reference is to one of Śākyamuni Buddha's jātaka episodes, in which he was Prince Mahāsattva, a son of King Mahāratha. One day the king and his sons went out to a forest and encountered a starving mother tiger and her dying cubs. Out of compassion, Mahāsattva offered his own body to save the hungry tigers. See the *Golden Light Sūtra*. T 16:451b–452c.

72. Examples of the practice of transferring one's merit (Skt. *parināma*; Jpn. *ekō*) to the deceased. See *Yü-lan-pen-ching* (Jpn. *urabonkyō*), T 16:779b and *Kuan-ting-ching* (Jpn. *kanjōkyō*), T 21:530c–531c. The first sūtra describing Maudgalyāyana's filial act of saving his mother from the suffering of a hungry ghost has provided a textual foundation to the popular ancestral *Yü-lan-p'en* festival (Jpn. *urabon*) in East Asia. See Stephen TEISER 1988.

73. According to KAWAGUCHI Hisao (1978:269), the prominent Meiji novelist Kōda Rohan was the first modern student of Kūkai who understood *Sangō shiiki*'s literary value as a fiction. For a study of *Sangō shiiki* as a forerunner of Heian fictional literature, see KAWAGUCHI Hisao 1982:414–415.

74. Chapter 9 of the *Mahāyāna-sangraha* (Jpn. *Shō daijōron*) gives the three meanings of pāramitā as traversal to the shore of nirvāṇa:

(1) When the practitioner finishes his training, exhaustively, without any remaining goals, that is called the traversal to the shore. That is because the unordained and the practitioners of Hīnayāna may practice the same, but they will never complete their training [of the six pāramitās]. (2) Just as the ultimate goal of all streams is the ocean, the ultimate goal of the six pāramitās is entrance into Suchness (*tathatā*). Therefore the bodhisattva's entry into Suchness is the traversal to the shore. . . . (3) Because the bodhisattva's [pāramitā] practice delivers an unparalleled reward, it is call the traversal to the shore. The bodhisattva's pāramitā practice is simultaneously endowed with these three meanings.

T 31 #1595:216b–c.

75. There exist two formulations of *daśa-bhūmika* in Mahāyāna literature. According to the tradition of the Prajñā-pāramitā sūtras, the ten stages consists of (1) *śukla-vidarśanā-bhūmi* (Jpn. *kenneji*); (2) *gotra-bhūmi* (*shōji*); (3) *astamaka-bhūmi* (*bachininji*); (4) *dharśana-bhūmi* (*kenji*); (5) *tanū-bhūmi* (*hakuji*); (6) *vītarāga-bhūmi* (*riyokuji*); (7) *kṛtāvī-bhūmi* (*isakuji*); (8) *pratyekabuddha-bhūmi* (*byakushi butsuji*); (9) *bodhisattva-bhūmi* (*bosatsuji*); (10) *buddha-bhūmi* (*butsuji*). The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* gives the following names of the ten stages: (1) *pramuditā-bhūmi* (Jpn. *kangiji*); (2) *vimalā-bhūmi* (*rikuji*); (3) *prabhākari-bhūmi* (*myōji*); (4) *arcīmatī-bhūmi* (*enji*); (5) *sudurjayā-bhūmi* (*nanshōji*); (6) *abhimukhī-bhūmi* (*genzenji*); (7) *dūrangama-bhūmi* (*ongyōji*); (8) *acalā-bhūmi* (*fudōji*); (9) *sadhumatī-bhūmi* (*zenneji*); (10) *dharmameghā-bhūmi* (*hōunji*).

76. *Ta-chih-tu-lun* (Jpn. *Daichidoron*), T 25 #1509:86c–87a.

77. Because in this episode the Nāga princess first becomes a male and then manifests herself as a Buddha, it is often argued that the story supports the sexist interpretation that only males are capable of attaining Buddhahood. However,

a careful reading of the text shows that even before her transformation, the princess's enlightenment was already ascertained by Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and her change of gender first to a male and then to a Tathāgata was her expedient means for making visible her enlightenment to those Hīnayānists of biased view who did not believe in women's ability to attain enlightenment. As Rita GROSS (1993:71) has pointed out, "the sex change is a mockery of slow-witted conservatives, who believe in some essence of gender that defines and limits women, not an improvement to the main character. She already is clearly superior to all the males present except for the reigning Buddha."

78. The distinction between the exoteric and esoteric in Kūkai's own writing will be discussed in detail in chapters 5 and 6. For Kūkai's own explanation of the distinction, see KZ 1:127, 129, 411–412, 474, 506. For a summary of the discussion as understood in the traditional scholarship within the Shingon School, see Yoshito HAKEDA 1972:61–66; TAKAGAMI Kakushō 1992:34–41; KATSUMATA Shunkyō 1982.

79. See, for example, the discussion by Matsunaga Yūkei, Gorai Shigeru, and Yoritomi Honkō on the gumonjihō's influence on Kūkai's thought in UHEYAMA Shunpei 1984:121–171. Also see UHEYAMA Shunpei 1981:38.

80. For the text of *Pan-cheng-lun* (Jpn. *Benshōron*), see T 52 #2110. Also see FUKUI Kōjun's annotation in KIK 97:67–333. For Fa-lin's biography, see *T'ang hu-fa sha-men fa-lin pieh-ch'uan* (Jpn. *Tō gohō shamon hōrin betsuden*), T 50 #2051.

81. KZ 3:287–323. According to the colophon of the original manuscript preserved at Mount Kōya, the manuscript is Kūkai's own handwriting, and it had long been preserved in the archive of Ninnaji in Kyoto. It was donated to Mount Kōya in the third month of Tenbun 5 (1537). The colophon also states that the manuscript was annotated in Genna 4 (1615) by a group of Mount Kōya priests led by the abbot Chōkai of Muryōjuin.

82. HAKEDA Yoshitō (1975:44–49) has argued that Kūkai's introduction to *Sangō shiiki* reflects both his mature thinking and style, and accordingly should be considered one of his later compositions. KAJI Nobuyuki, (1978:82–88), on the other hand, has suggested that Kūkai's revision reflects the change in the political climate in the mid-T'ang, in which, in contrast to the fierce ideological rivalry between Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism of the early-T'ang period, the harmonious integration of the three teachings encouraged by the T'ang court had come to characterize the academic mainstream. Kaji argues that Kūkai, who studied the relationship between the three teachings in *Pan-cheng-lun* and other early-T'ang texts, witnessed this shift during his stay in Ch'ang-an and incorporated the new knowledge in his revision of *Rōko shiiki*.

83. Ts'ao Chien (192–233) was the third son of Ts'ao Ts'ao, the founder of the kingdom of Wei. He is said to have mastered classical literature by the age of ten. He is renowned for an episode in which, in response to his elder brother's request, he composed a poem while walking seven steps. Ch'en Hsiu (441–513) was a prominent scholar-poet in the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, who is renowned for his study of phonetics. He served the courts of the Southern kingdoms of Sung, Ts'i, and Liang.

84. For the text of *Yu-hsien-k'u*, its detailed annotation, and its influence on Japanese literature, see KURANAKA Susumu 1979. The text's Japanese commentaries are important sources for the study of Nara Japanese phonetics. According to Kawaguchi Hisao, the style of *Yu-hsien-k'u* is closely related to *pien-wen* (Jpn. *henmon*), a genre of popular Chinese Buddhist literature that developed as a variation of the sūtra format. Kawaguchi believes that Kūkai's alternating use of prose and poetry in fascicle 3 of the *Sangō shiki* was inspired by the similar style of *Yu-hsien-k'u*. For the influence of *Yu-hsien-k'u* on Kūkai's earlier writing, see KAWAGUCHI Hisao 1991:59–106.

85. *Lun-yü*, fscl. 15, sec. 13; fscl. 18, secs. 2, 8.

86. This explains why the powerful aristocratic clans, such as the Fujiwara, worked hard to establish their private colleges to challenge the intellectual monopoly of the state. As INOGUCHI Atsushi (1984:99) has demonstrated, the *kanbun* texts of the Nara and early Heian periods were read in the original Chinese pronunciation (which may have been significantly Japanized), and the dialectical variation of Chinese was a major source of confusion. Earlier in the Nara period, *wu-yin* (Jpn. *goon*), the southern Chinese dialect, which was introduced early and became a standard pronunciation for Buddhist studies, was gradually replaced by *han-yin* (Jpn. *kan'on*), the standard dialect of Ch'ang-an and its vicinity. Emperor Kanmu, in his edict of Enryaku 11 and 12 (792, 793), prohibited the students of the state college and the Buddhist ordinands from reading the texts with *wu-yin*. See *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 187, KT 6:313.

87. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 8, KT 2:74–75.

88. T 55 #2183; DBZ 65:1–22.

89. In Eichō's catalog, the titles preserved in temples, monasteries, and nunneries other than Kōfukuji are marked with notations that indicate owners.

90. The concept of *gokoku* is discussed in the first section of chapter 1. For the centrality of the concept of *gokoku* to the Nara Buddhist establishment in the ritsuryō political framework, see SONE Masato 1984.

91. *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun shu-chi* (Jpn. *Jōyuishikiron jutsuki*), T 43 #1830, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun chang-chung shu-yao* (Jpn. *Jōyuishikiron shōchū sūyō*), T 43 #1831, *Ta-ch'eng pai-fa ming-men lun-chieh* (Jpn. *Daijō hyakubō myōmon rōnge*), T 44 #1836, and *Ta-ch'eng fa-yüan i-lin-chang* (Jpn. *Daijō hōen girin-*

*shō*), T 45 #1861, by K'uei-chi (632–682); and *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun liao-i-teng* (Jpn. *Jōyūishikiron ryōgitō*), T 43 #1832, by Hui-chao (d. 714).

92. The preface signed by a certain Hidefusa, dated the fourteenth day of the fourth month of Bunpo 3 (1319) that appears in the Keian 5 wood block edition of the *Yu-hsien-k'u*. The preface is printed in IMAMURA Yoshio 1990:291–292.

93. The tension between Confucian doctrine and fictional writing became a major issue once again during the Tokugawa period, in which the state adopted Neo-Confucianism as its ideological orthodoxy. In her study of the origin of the modern Japanese concept of *shōsetsu*, or fiction, Tomi SUZUKI (1996:17) writes,

In the Tokugawa period, the word *shōsetsu* was similarly interchangeable with the term *haishi* (vulgar, unorthodox history) as opposed to *seishi* (official, orthodox history). . . . The *shōsetsu*, which were referred to as “defective or dubious historical writings,” were thought to be inferior yet more entertaining than “official historical writings,” and their authors were content to call them “playthings,” or “amusements” (*nagusamimono* or *gesaku*). Under the pretense of being “playthings,” *shōsetsu* in fact could deviate from the official histories (*seishi*) and satirize orthodox social values. They were so potentially subversive that beginning in the late eighteenth century successive governments frequently banned them. When the *shōsetsu* attempted to justify itself, however, it always did so by claiming a close relationship to *seishi*, the “official histories.” Even when the *shōsetsu* differentiated itself from the “official histories,” it did so by claiming to be a more effective vehicle for popularizing and transmitting Confucian moral values than the “official histories” themselves.

94. For the nonrhetorical function of Kūkai's citations in his doctrinal texts and their idiosyncrasies, see MATSUNAGA Yūkei 1982.

95. In his introduction to the *Bunkyō bifuron*, reminiscing about his earlier training in the Chinese classics with Ōtari, Kūkai wrote, “In particular, I devoted myself to the study of poetry and rhetoric.” KZ 3:2.

96. KZ 3:1–206. The *Bunkyō bifuron*'s date is unknown. However, Kūkai composed a synopsis of it entitled *Bunpitsu ganshinshō* in 820. Therefore most scholars believe that Kūkai composed the former several years prior to 820. Avid students of Kūkai's rhetorical text include such renowned poets as Fujiwara no Teika and Matsuo Bashō. For a detailed study of the *Bunkyō bifuron*, see KONISHI Jin'ichi 1948–1952.

97. See, for example, fascicle 1, episodes 1, 5, 25; fascicle 2, episodes, 3, 15; fascicle 3, episodes 16, 38.

98. Recent developments in historiographical research have revealed that many biographical texts traditionally regarded within the Shingon School as Kūkai's own writings are in fact later forgeries. Most typical of these are a group of texts known as *yuigō*, Kūkai's bequests to his disciples (KZ 2:781–860). Even some leading Shingon scholar-priests of the modern era, such as Hase Hōshū and Gonda Raifu, have raised questions about their authenticity. Most traditional accounts of Kūkai's activity in the period 797–804—including his precept ordination and his visit to famous pilgrimage sites—derive from these sources. Although they are not totally devoid of historical fact, their chronology of events has proven erratic. For a detailed bibliographical study of these spurious sources, see UHEYAMA Shunpei 1981:43–187.

99. "Shion no ontame ni nibu no daimandara o zō suru ganmon," *Seireishū*, fscl. 7, KZ 3:476.

100. The three vehicles are the teachings for the śrāvakas, the pratyeka-buddhas, and bodhisattvas. The five vehicles add to these three categories the teachings for human beings and devas. The twelve divisions are classifications of scriptural languages according to their figurative distinctions: *sūtra* (prosaic lines), *geya* (summary verses), *vyākaraṇa* (pronouncements), *gāthā* (poems), *udāna* (the Buddha's poetic utterances), *nidāna* (episodes explaining a descent of a particular event or person), *avadāna* (parables), *itivṛttaka* (stories of events that took place in the Buddha's disciples' former lives), *jātaka* (episodes of the Buddha's former transmigratory lives), *vaipulya* (philosophical discussions), *adbhutadharma* (episodes of miraculous manifestations), and *upadeā* (debates).

101. See, for example, *Yuigō shodeshi tō*, KZ 2:822. According to popular medieval legends, Śubhakarasiṁha, who accompanied Dōji on his return to Japan, hid a copy of his translation of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* at the stūpa at Kumedera and returned to China. See *Kōbō daishi nenpu*, fscl. 2, KDZ 5:37a.

102. *Shōsōin monjo*, DK 7:75; DK 9:77; DK 10:476; DK 12:445. The earliest date of copying the sūtra falls shortly after the return in 735 of the Sanron priest Genbō, who brought back from China a new set of the entire Buddhist scriptures collected in accordance with the classification in Chih-sheng's *K'ai-yüang* catalog. Therefore it is believed that the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* was first imported by Genbō in 735.

103. See SAKAI Shinten 1962:3–14. The discussion of chapter 1 of the sūtra is condensed in the following exchange between Vajrapāṇi and Mahāvairocana.

Vajrapāṇi: "Bhagavat, what are the cause, the root and the ultimate of this [omniscient] wisdom?" . . .

Mahāvairocana: “The Enlightened Mind (*bodhi-citta*) is its cause, compassion (*karuṇā*) is its root and skillful expedient (*upāya*) its ultimate. O, Lord of Secrecy [Vajrapāṇi], enlightenment is nothing but realizing your mind as it truly is. There is nothing for you to obtain in realizing the genuine, unsurpassable enlightenment (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*). That is because enlightenment is none other than the state of empty space, which cannot be intellectually analyzed, nor can it be revealed. Why? Because enlightenment knows no form. Lord of Secrecy, all the dharma are formless, formless as empty space.”<sup>104</sup>

Thereupon Vajrapāṇi asked the Buddha, “Who, then, is capable of pursuing the omniscient wisdom? Who attains the enlightenment of Tathāgatas? Who makes the omniscient wisdom visible?”

The Buddha said, “O, Lord of Secrecy, it is your mind that pursues omniscient wisdom; it is also your mind in which enlightenment is pursued. Why is it so? Because, the original nature of your mind is pure, limpid, and pristine. You obtain that mind neither within nor without. Nor can it be found in between.

(T 18:1b–c)

104. Because the five chapters of fascicle 7 exist only in the Chinese translation of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, it is believed that the entirety of fascicle 7 was originally a separate meditation manual associated with the sūtra, which was later incorporated into it. The sūtra exists only in Chinese and Tibetan. For the correspondence of chapters in the Chinese and Tibetan translations, see ONOZUKA Kichō 1984.

105. See, for instance, TAKAGI Shingen 1990:20–33; and UHEYAMA Shunpei 1981:156–187. Both Takagi and Ueyama identified as the only texts that could be relied upon to determine the date of Kūkai’s ordination the national history of 869 *Shoku nihon kōki* and a small group of extant ordination certificates, and they rejected the traditional view of the Shingon School that Kūkai took the tonsure at age twenty.

106. Sōniryō *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 7, KT 23:206.

107. “Daijō kanpu jibushō,” KDS:1097. Also see, *Kōya daishi gokōden*, fscl. 1, KDZ 1:242.

108. *Fusō ryakki*, fscl. 12, KT 12:116.

109. *Kōya daishi gokōden*, fscl. 1, KDZ 1:242.

110. *Nihon kiriyaku*, vol. 1, fscl. 13, KT 10:314.

111. For the same reason, Shinzei (800–860) and Shinzen (804–891), Kūkai’s senior disciples, who unsuccessfully attempted to travel to China in 836, were not allowed to participate in the diplomatic journey of the following year. See Jitsue’s petition to the court in the *Tsuikai Bunsō*. KZ 5:396.

112. *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:31.

113. In his 806 obituary of his master, Wu-yin, one of Hui-kuo's lay disciples, says that Kūkai was able to converse with Hui-kuo both in Chinese and Sanskrit. *Hui-kuo a-tu-li hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Keika ajari gyōjō*), KZ 1:43.

114. For example, because of his inability to speak Chinese, Saichō, who departed for China in the same 804 mission, was allowed to bring with him his disciple Gishin as a translator. *Eizan daishiden*, DZ 5: furoku 13. In the tenth month of 804, when their ship arrived at the port city of Fu-chou, Kūkai composed the Ambassador Kadonomaro's letter addressed to the magistrate of Fu-chou and negotiated with the authorities for permission to land. *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 5, KZ 3:454–456. Kūkai also composed another diplomatic missive for the ambassador during their stay in Ch'ang-an. *Seireishū*, fscl. 5, KZ 3:463.

Two years later, in 806, in response to the enthronement of the new T'ang emperor Hsien-tsung, Kanmu's court sent an ad hoc mission led by the ambassador Takashina no Tōnari. *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 99, KT 6:1. It was Tōnari's ship that made possible Kūkai's safe return to Japan. The Heian court did not send its next envoy to China until 836, the year after Kūkai's death. Had Kūkai failed to depart in 804, he might have arrived in China in 806, when his master Hui-kuo had already passed away, and he might well have had to wait another thirty years for a ship back to Japan. For a study of the Japanese embassies to China in the eighth and early ninth centuries, see TŌNO Haruyuki 1990.

115. One should not exclude the possibility that prior to his departure to China Kūkai had studied other esoteric sūtras. For example, he may have been interested in the *Abbreviated Vajrasékhara Sūtra* (T 18 #866), which also purports to be the teaching of Mahāvairocana. However, this does not necessarily mean that Kūkai recognized those sūtras as belonging to a class of their own, distinct from Mahāyāna. For example, in his letter dated the tenth month of Chen-yüan (803) requesting permission from the magistrate of Fu-chou to travel to Ch'ang-an, Kūkai merely states that his aim was to study Buddhism. There is no hint in his letter that Kūkai was then associating his goal of studying the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* with Mikkyō as a particular category of Buddhism. *Seireishū*, fscl. 5, KZ 3:456–457.

### 3. Journey to China: Outside Ritsuryō Discourse

1. The earliest recorded mention of Kūkai as the inventor of the kana syllabary is in the *Gōdanshō* by Ōe no Masafusa (1041–1111), quoted in fascicle

12 of the 1367 *Kakaishō* by Yotsuji no Yoshinari, a voluminous exegesis in the *Tale of Genji*. Other earlier sources for Kūkai and his alleged invention of the kana include *Irohashaku* by Kakuban (1095–1143), *Etsumokushō* by Fujiwara no Mototoshi (?–1142), and *Iroha jiruishō* by Tachibana no Tadakane (fl. 1144–1181). For a study and discussion of Kūkai and the kana syllabary, see MORIYAMA Shōshin 1933:706–753; MATSUOKA Seigō 1984:241–252.

2. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:87–91. The textbooks on Sanskrit phonetics and syllabary imported by Kūkai were *Hsi-t'an tzu-chi* (Jpn. *Shittan jiki*), *Hsi-t'an shih* (Jpn. *Shittan shaku*), *Fan-tsu hsi-t'an-ch'ao* (Jpn. *Bonji shittanshō*), and *Yü-ch'ieh chin-kang-ting-ching shih-tsui-mu-p'in* (Jpn. *Yuga kongōchōgyō shaku jimobon*). Of these, the first and the last texts are included in the Taishō daizōkyō collection, T 54 #2132; T 18 #880.

3. Following Kūkai's China journey, there were six Japanese priests in the early Heian period who traveled to China to study Esoteric Buddhism. Their names and years of study were Jōgyō, 838–839; Engyō, 838–839; Ennin, 838–847; Eun, 842–847; Enchin, 853–858; and Shūei, 862–865. The decline of the T'ang empire and the decision in 894 by the Japanese court to end its diplomatic missions to China appear to be primary reasons that the flow of Japanese pilgrims to China to study Esoteric Buddhism diminished. In his *Hakke bishaku*, scholar-priest Annen (841?–915?) of the Tendai School recorded that the total of 170 scriptures in Sanskrit and 37 Sanskrit textbooks were imported by these Esoteric Buddhist teachers. T 55 #2177:1113c–1132c.

4. *Shingonshū shogaku kyōritsuron mokuroku*, KZ 1:117–120.

5. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:41–42.

6. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 13, KT 3:45–46; *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 5, KT 3:52. After Michimasu's death, the mission of the second ship was led by Secretary (*hangan*) Sugawara no Kiyokimi (d. 832). It departed Ming-chou on the first day of the ninth month and arrived at Ch'ang-an on the fifteenth day of the eleventh month of the same year. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:41–42.

7. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:42.

8. *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 5, KZ 3:454–456.

9. Citing his inability to speak in Chinese, Saichō requested the permission of Emperor Kanmu's court to have his unordained disciple Gishin accompany him to China as his interpreter. *Kenkairon engi*, DZ 1:267–268. Also see Saichō's *Tendaishū miketsu*, which indicates that Saichō relied on his written Chinese for his studies with the T'ien-t'ai masters. DZ 5:43–47.

10. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:42. This certainly was not unusual. The diplomatic protocol of China and its neighboring nations required the host nation to pay the cost of a mission's travel from the port of entry to the capital, and it was therefore unlikely that an entire party was ever permitted

to accompany the ambassador. In the case of the Japanese mission to the T'ang court in 778, Ambassador Ono no Shigeno selected from among those on the first and third ships that arrived in Yang-chou eighty-five officers and students to accompany him to Ch'ang-an. However, only forty-three received the Chinese authorities' permission to enter the capital. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 35, 10/23 and 11/13 Hōki 9, KT 2:443-445.

11. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:42.
12. "Fukushū no kanzatsushi ni ataete nikkyō suru no kei," *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 5, KZ 3:456.
13. *Ntō gubō junreiki*, fscl. 1, ZZG 12:181b-182b.
14. *Nohon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:42.
15. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:69, 98.
16. Tō taishi no bokkai no ōji ni atauru ga tame no sho, *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 5, KZ 3:463.
17. *Kōya zappitsushū*, fscl. 2, KZ 3:596-597.
18. *Sung kao-seng-ch'uan* (Jpn. *Sō kōsōden*), fscl. 5, T 50:732c-733c.
19. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:69, 98. For an outline of the foundation and history of the Hsi-ming monastery, see *Liang-ching hsing-chih* (Jpn. *Ryōkyō shinki*), fscl. 3, CJS:227b-228a.
20. *Ta-t'ang ta-tz'u-en-ssu san-ts'ang fa-shih-ch'uan* (Jpn. *Daitō daijionji sanzō bosshiden*), fscl. 10, T 50:275b-276a.
21. "Hongoku no shi to tomoni kaeran to kou kei," *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 5, KZ 3:77.
22. *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu* (Jpn. *Kaigen shakkyōroku*), T 55:560b-c; *Sung kao-seng-ch'uan* (Jpn. *Sō kōsōden*), fscl. 5, T 50:725b-c, 727b.
23. *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu*, T 55:567a. Also see DK 7:178, 212.
24. The text translated was *Hsü-k'ung-ts'ang p'u-sa neng-man chu-yüan tsui-sheng-hsin t'o-lo-ni chiu-wen-ch'ih-fa* (Jpn. *Kokūzō bosatsu nōman shogan saishōshin darani gumonjihō*), T 20 #1145. For information on the date of the translation, see *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu*, T 55:572c.
25. See *Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu* (Jpn. *Jōgan shinjō shakkyō mokuroku*), T 55:773b-c. The stūra mentioned above is *Ta-ch'eng li-ch'u liu-polo-mi-to-ching* (Jpn. *Daijō rishu rokuaramitsukyō*), T 8 #261.
26. This point will be explored in detail in chapter 5.
27. Jpn. *Daitō naitenroku*, T 55 #2149. For the number of scriptures collected at the Hsi-ming-ssu library, see T 55:337c.
28. Jpn. *Shokyō yōshū*, T 54 #2123; Jpn. *Hōen jurin*, T 53 #2122.
29. Jpn. *Jōgan shinjō shakkyō mokuroku*, T 55 #2157.
30. Jpn. *Fukū sanzō hyōseishū*, T 52 #2120.
31. *Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu*, T 55:774a.

32. Described in the *Sung kao-seng-ch'uan*, fscl. 5, T 50:805b.
33. Jpn. *Issaikyō ongi*, T 53 #2128.
34. *Sung kao-seng-ch'uan*, fscl. 5, T 50:738a–b.
35. Ibid., 738b.
36. Kūkai made this point clear by listing separately in his *Shōrai mokuroku* (*Catalog of Imported Items*) thirteen texts translated by Amoghavajra that are not included in Yüan-chao's *Chen-yüan Catalog*. See *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:81.
37. *Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu*, T 55:772a–773b, 879a–881a.
38. *Pu-k'ung san-ts'ang piao-shih-chi*, T 52:852b–c, 857b–c.
39. *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, fscl. 1, KZ 1:9–10.
40. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:98–99.
41. *Hui-kuo a-tu-li hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Keika ajari gyōjō*). Quoted in toto in *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:42–45.
42. Chih-kuang gives the name of his teacher not as Prajñā but as Prajñā-bodhi (Pan-jo p'u-t'i). See T 54:1186a. However, this appears to refer to Prajñā for several reasons. First, Prajñā's biographies point out that he took up residence on Mount Wu-tai during the period when Chih-kuang was active. Second, it is unlikely that an Indian priest would have a name consisting of a single word. Typically, an Indian priest's name is a compound of two terms, such as Śubhakara-sirīha, the Lion of Pure Acts, or, Jñāna-garbha, the Womb of Consciousness. It is also unnatural for a priest to have a name consisting only of a word with feminine ending, as is the case with Prajñā. The name Pan-jo, as Prajñā was known in China, therefore appears to be only a part of his original Indian name.
43. A colophon attached to a manuscript of *Ta-ch'eng pen-sheng hsin-ti kuan-ching* (Jpn. *Daijō honshō shinchi kangyō*), T 3 #159, preserved in Ishiyamadera. Printed in HORIIKE Shunpō 1982:281–282.
44. *Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu*, fscl. 17, T 55:891c.
45. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:98–99.
46. *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:41.
47. Unless otherwise indicated, the biographical information on Hui-kuo in this section is based on *Ta-t'ang ch'ing-lung-ssu san-chao kung-feng ta-te hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Daitō shōryūji sanchō kubu daitoku gyōjō*), T 50 #2057, composed in 826 by an anonymous author. This work, the most comprehensive biography of Hui-kuo, imported to Japan by priest Engyō in 839, is predicated by two shorter biographical texts: *Hui-kuo a-tu-li hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Keika ajari gyōjō*), quoted in toto in *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:42–45, composed on the third day of the first month of Yüan-ho 1 by Hui-kuo's disciple Wu-yin; and the epitaph of Hui-kuo composed by Kūkai no later than the seventeenth

day of the first month of the same year, when Hui-kuo's funeral was conducted by his disciples (*Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 2, KZ 3:420–425).

48. It remains unclear who taught Hui-kuo the garbha maṇḍala tradition. According to the *Ta-t'ang ch'ing-lung-ssu san-chao kung-feng ta-te hsing-chuang*, Hui-kuo was trained by Hsüan-ch'ao of Pao-shou-ssu, a disciple of Śubhakarasiṁha (T 50:295a). However, the earlier sources by Wu-yin and Kūkai do not mention Hsüan-ch'ao's name. Kūkai, on the other hand, suggests that Hui-kuo studied both the Mahāvairocana and Vajraśekhara traditions with Amoghavajra. Although Amoghavajra is generally renowned for his expertise in the Vajraśekhara tradition, his translations also include ritual manuals on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (*Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu*, fscl. 17, T 55:773a). It therefore appears not impossible that Hui-kuo studied both of the traditions with Amoghavajra. Perhaps more important, that was Kūkai's understanding about Hui-kuo's Dharma lineage. See *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, KZ 3:422–423; *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:83; *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōdan*, KZ 1:39.

49. *Pu-k'ung san-ts'ang piao-shih-chi*, fscl. 3, T 52:844a–b.

50. *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, fscl. 2, KZ 1:40.

51. *Hui-kuo a-tu-li hsing-chuang*, KZ 1:44.

52. *Sung-kao-seng-ch'uan*, fscl. 1, T 50:713b, 714a. Also see *Pu-k'ung san-ts'ang piao-shiuh-chi*, fscl. 6, T 52:860b.

53. *Ta-t'ang ch'ing-lung-ssu san-chao kung-feng ta-te hsing-chuang*, T 50:295b–296a.

54. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:98–99.

55. The fivefold wisdom is originally described not in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* but in the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*. However, it is mentioned in several places in Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. See *Ta-p'i-lu-che-na cheng-fo ching-su* (Jpn. *Daibirushana jōbutsu kyōshō*), T 39:627a, 634a, 635a, 644b.

56. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:98–99.

57. *Chin-kang-ting i-ch'ieh ju-lai chen-shih-she ta-ch'eng hsien-cheng ta-chiao-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō issai nyorai shinjitsushō daijō genshō daikyōōkyō*), T 18:218a–219a. Also see *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh-chung liao-chu nien-shung-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yugachū ryakushutsu nenjukyō*), T 18:250c–252a.

58. For the iconographic structure of the two maṇḍalas, see Pierre RAMBACH 1979:44–55, 90. For identification of the individual divinities in the maṇḍalas, see MJ, appendix, pp. 32–46, and SJ: 292–301.

59. *Ta-p'i-lu-che-na cheng-fo ching-su*, fscl. 3, ch. 3, T 39:613a–c.

60. KZ 2:1–74. There have traditionally been two theories within the Shingon School regarding the origin of *Hizōki*. According to the first, the work

should be regarded as the record of Amoghavajra's instruction to Hui-kuo. According to the second, it is a record made by Kūkai of instruction received from Hui-kuo. The first interpretation is based on the identity of one of the ritual procedures for giving offerings to hungry ghosts (*preta*) in the *Hizōki* with the content of a colophon attached to a ritual manual imported by Ennin, which relates Amoghavajra's instructions on performing the same ritual. However, because Hui-kuo studied with Amoghavajra, such an identity does not necessarily suggest that he is the author of the *Hizōki*. On the other hand, the *Hizōki* contains many elements that emphasize the unity of the garbha and vajradhātu mandalas and highlight the distinction between the exoteric and esoteric. These elements, absent in Amoghavajra's other writings, are the hallmark of Kūkai's texts. For these reasons, as discussed in detail in KATSUMATA Shunkyō's philological study (1981:186–210), I have treated *Hizōki* as a record of Hui-kuo's instruction to Kūkai.

61. *Henjō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 2, KZ 3:420–425.
62. Kūkai describes eight items that originally belonged to Vajrabodhi and were then entrusted first to Amoghavajra and then to Hui-kuo, and five items that belonged originally to Hui-kuo and were given to Kūkai. The first eight items Hui-kuo passed on to Kūkai were eighty grains of Śākyamuni Buddha's relics in a stūpa-shaped container, images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas carved inside a sandalwood case, two mandalas on white silk screens, a vajra decked with five kinds of gems, two pieces of a bronze begging bowl, an ivory folding chair, and a white conch shell. Among the personal belongings of Hui-kuo that he gave Kūkai were a ritual robe, two ritual vessels made of lapis lazuli, a ritual vessel made of amber, a ritual vessel made of a white gemstone, and a pair of ritual chopsticks made of lapis lazuli. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:94–96.
63. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:98–99.
64. *Hsin t'ang-shu* (Jpn. *Shin tōjō*), fscl. 220, TJ 4:453b.
65. *Kōbō daishi gyōjō shūki*, KDZ 1:162b; *Kōbō daishi gyoden*, fscl. 1, KDZ 1:199b.
66. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:70.
67. “Moromorono uen no shū o susumete himitsu no hōzō o utsushi tatematsuru beki mon.” Also known as *Kan'en sho. Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:528.
68. *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:4.
69. *Sokushin jōbutsugi*, KZ 1:513.
70. *Hizōki*, KZ 2:40–41.
71. This visualization exercise is preceded by the seven-day preparatory ritual during which the master constructs the altar upon which the pattern of the mandala is to be drawn and painted. On the evening of the seventh day,

the practitioner receives from the master the Esoteric Buddhist precepts of samaya (Jpn. *sanmaya kai*). The visualization of Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva begins on the day immediately following the ritual of the samaya precepts. See fascicle 5 of Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 39:629c–630a.

72. The eleven verses, in Vasantilakā, are described, translated, and explained by Śubhakarasiṁha in fascicle 8 of his *Commentary*, T 39:667a–669c. However, for the actual liturgical recitation, the Shingon tradition has adopted only three out of eleven verses, which are based on a slightly different Sanskrit version in *Bonji kikkeisan*, one of the texts Kūkai received from Hui-kuo (*Shōrai mokurokuo*, KZ 1:88). This may be suggestive of the manner in which the Sanskrit hymns had been treated in the abhiṣeka Kūkai received from Hui-kuo. The three verses adopted describe, respectively, the scenes of the Buddha's conception in the womb of his mother, the Queen Māyā, his birth as the crown prince in the castle of Kapilavastu, and his conquering of Mārā under the bodhi tree at his enlightenment. The three appear to have been selected to emphasize the parallelism between Śākyamuni's life and the ritual procedures of students' entry into the maṇḍala of the "womb," their emergence from it, and their establishment as enlightened beings.

*Tad maṅgalam tuśita-deva-mimāna-garbhāt / Asid ihāvatarato jagato hitāya / Sendraih surair anugatasya tathāgatasya / Tad maṅgalam bhavatu śāntikaram tavādya //*

[The auspiciousness of the Tathāgata when he left his inner palace in the Tuśita Heaven, receiving the reverences of Indra and other gods, to light on the earth—that auspiciousness is to be yours now.]

*Tad maṅgalam kapilavastuni rājadhbāne / Garbhād vinihsrtavataḥ snāpitasya devair / Śodhadānair amṛta-vāribhir āśu-vrddhyai / Yad maṅgalam bhavatu śāntikaram tavādya //*

[The auspiciousness of the birth in the royal palace of Kapilavastu (of that child), who received amrita for his newborn ablution from the gods, who blessed him for his swift growth—that auspiciousness is to be yours now.]

*Tad maṅgalam sakala-dosa-vināśa-hetor / Vajrāsane sthitavataḥ pravaram babhūva / Māram vidhṛtya śatru-vināśāvasāne / Yad maṅgalam bhavatu śāntikaram tavādya //*

[The auspiciousness of the most excellent one who sat on his seat of vajra to remove all sorts of sins that arose when he conquered Mārā by annihilating all his enemies—that auspiciousness is to be yours now.]

73. The first mode of invocation consists of two kinds of visualization: the first is visualization of divinities' physical forms, and the second is the same meditative exercise aimed at visualizing the mudrās of individual divinities, which are symbolic of their original, individualized vows of saving beings through particular expedient means. The sūtra also describes an abbreviated manner of carrying out the third mode of invocation, that is, relying on the gestural imitation by practitioners with their hands of the mudrās of individual divinities.

#### 4. (No) Traces of Esoteric Buddhism: Dhāraṇī and the Nara Buddhist Literature

1. For Dōji's study with Śubhakarasiṁha, see *Genkō shakusho*, fscl 2, KT 31:46. Also see ISHIMURA Kiei 1987: 348–354.

2. For Śubhakarasiṁha's activity in China, see *Shan-wu-wei san-ts'ang hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Zenmuni sanzō gyōjō*), T 50:290. The text he translated immediately following his arrival in China was *Hsü-k'ung-ts'ang p'u-sa neng-man chu-yüan tsui-sheng-hsin t'o-lo-ni chiu-wen-ch'ih-fa* (Jpn. *Kokūzō bosatsu nōman shogan saishōshin darani gumonjihō*), T 20 #1145.

3. For the growing popularity of *gumonjihō* in the mid- and late Nara period and its relationship to the formation of Jinenchishū (the school of natural wisdom) at Hisosanji in Yoshino, see SONODA Kōyū 1957. For Kūkai's practice of the *gumonjihō*, see *Sangō shiiki*, KZ 3:324.

4. *Genkō shakusho*, KT 31:320.

5. For Genbō's biography, see *Genkō shakusho*, KT 31:233.

6. *Fo-ting tsun-sheng t'o-lo-ni-ching* (Jpn. *Butchō sonshō daranikyō*), T 19 #967. For the popularity of this sūtra and other esoteric texts used to promote healing, See YOSHIDA Yasuo 1988:155–186.

7. *Shōsōin monjo*, 5/4 Tenpyō 11, NI 2:615.

8. *Ch'ien-shou ch'ien-yen kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa kuang-ta yüan-man wu-ai tai-pe-i-hsin t'o-lo-ni-ching* (Jpn. *Senju sengen kanzeon bosatsu kōdai enman muge daijihishin daranikyō*), T 20 #1060. For Genbō's copying of the sūtra, see *Shōsōin monjo*, 7/15 Tenpyō 13, DK 7:542–554.

9. *Shōsōin monjo*, DK 7:75; 9:77; 10:476; 12:445. Also see Ishida Mosaku's *Narachō genzai issaikyō mokuroku* in ISHIDA Mosaku 1930:80.

10. See HORIKE Shunpō 1960:625–636; SONODA Kōyū 1957:45–60; MISAKI Ryōshū 1968:55–73. For a list of Mikkyō sūtras copied during the Nara period, see ISHIDA Mosaku 1930:81–91. Also see MATSUNAGA Yūkei 1969:155–164.

11. See OSABE Kazuo 1982:182–210. Also see MATSUNAGA Yūkei 1973:19, 34. For its application to India, see TOGANOO Shōun 1933:16–17; KIMURA Ichiki 1965.

12. MISAKI Ryōshū (1988:146–147) states that although terms similar to *zōmitsu* such as *zōbu* (miscellaneous class) and *zōmandara* (miscellaneous maṇḍala) appeared in Kūkai's and Saicho's writings, they do not have the sense of *zōmitsu* as opposing *jummitsu*. The earliest known use of the term *jummitsu* can be found in Ekō's *Mikki monben* and *Mikki monben keiteki*. See MISAKI Ryōshū 1988:147.

13. *Chin-kang-ting i-ch'ieh ju-lai chen-shih-she ta-ch'eng hsien-cheng ta-chiao-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō issai nyorai shinjitsushō daijō genshō daikyōōkyō*), T 18 #865.

14. *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh-chung liao-chu nein-shung-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yugachū ryakushutsu nenjukyō*), T 18 #866. For a detailed study of the copying of these sūtras in the Nara period, see ISHIDA Mosaku 1930:14–148.

15. *Prajñā-pāramitā naya śatapañchātikā*, also known as *Adhyardhaśatikā prajñā-pāramitā*. For the copying of the sūtra during the Nara period, see *Shōsoin monjo*, DK 3:602, 610; 7:21, 25; 9:65, 68. Popularly known in Japan as *Rishukyō* and originally a chapter in the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* (fascicle 578 in Hsüan-tang's translation of the 600-fascicle version), it was first translated as an independent text into Chinese by Bodhiruci as *Shih-hsiang pan-jo-po-lo-mi-ching* (Jpn. *Jissō hannya haramitsukyō*), T8 #240, and then by Vajrabodhi as *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh li-chü pan-jo-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yuga rishu hannyakyō*), T 8 #241. Kūkai brought to Japan yet another translation by Amoghavajra, entitled *Ta-lo chin-kang pu-k'ung chen-shih san-ma-ya-ching* (Jpn. *Tairaku kongō fukū shinjitsu sanmayakyō*), T 8 #243.

16. The full title of the catalog is *Shingonshū shogaku kyōritsuron mokuroku*, “Catalog of the Sūtras, Śāstra, and Vinaya Texts for the Shingon School,” KZ 1:105–124.

17. *Tōdaiji yōroku*, fscl. 1, ZZG 11:4b–5a.

18. For the origin and development of *shakyōsho*, See ISHIDA Mosaku 1930: 186–201. Also see INOUE Kaoru 1966:345–480.

19. Inoue argues that Kōmyō, as an imperial patron of Buddhism, modeled her activity after that of Empress Wu (624–705) of T'ang (Chou), and that Kōmyō made efforts to rival Wu's sūtra translation project by promoting the copying of circulation of scriptural texts. INOUE Kaoru 1966:263–275.

20. *Shōsoin monjo*, DK 7:786. The *shakyōsho* of the court and the *shaissaikyōsho* of Tōdaiji were the leading Nara institutions promoting the sūtra-copying project. For the locations and activities of these and other sūtra-copying offices active during the Nara period, see ISHIDA Mosaku 1930:187–254.

21. *Shōsōin monjo*, DK 14:73–419.
22. *K'ai-yüan shih-chiau lu* (Jpn. *Kaigen shakkyō roku*), T 55 #2154. In the 760 project, of the 2,173 fascicles of Mahāyāna sūtras listed in the *K'ai-yüang shih-chiau lu*, 2,135 were actually reproduced. It is thought that the discrepancy is due to the fact that not all of the sūtras had been imported to Japan. For a detailed analysis of the copying project, see YAMAMOTO Sachio 1988.
23. *Shōsōin monjo*, DK 2:157.
24. See, for example, Shosha fuse kanjōchō, dated 751, and *Hōsha daijō kyōritsu ron mokuroku*, dated 772. *Shōsōin monjo*, DK 12:61–90; 21:1–56.
25. ISHIDA Mosak (1930:81–91) puts the number of Mikkyō texts copied during the Nara period at two hundred. Because this number includes the sūtras that are circulated under different titles, his estimate does not necessarily contradict Matsungaga's.
26. *Ta-pao-chi-ching* (Jpn. *Daihōshakukyō*; Skt. *Mahāratnakūṭa dharma-paryāya śatahatasrikā grantha*), T 11 #310
27. *Ta-fang-teng ta-chi-ching* (Jpn. *Daihōtō daijukkyō*; Skt. *Mahāsaṃnipāta sūtra*), T 13 #387.
28. *Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu* (Jpn. *Jōgan shinjō shakkyō mokuroku*), T 55 # 2157.
29. *Pu-k'ung san-ts'ang piao-shih-chi* (Jpn. *Fukū sanzō hyōseishū*), T 52 #2120.
30. See ISHIDA Mosaku 1930: 155–157.
31. For a thorough study of the images of typically Mikkyō deities produced throughout the Nara period, see SAWA Ryūken 1961:64–104.
32. Author Keikai in his introduction to fascicle 3 of the *Nihon ryōiki* gives the date of composition as Enryaku 6 (787). However, the volume included events that took place in the thirteenth year of the reign of Emperor Saga (810–823). It therefore appears that the compilation of the volume continued until about 822. NKZ 6:7, 260, 378.
33. Preserved in *Shōsōin monjo*, DK 1:447, 583; 2:314–317, 319, 321, 323–324, 331, 333; 8:134–136, 138, 149, 153, 161–162, 164; 24:42–43, 47, 297–305; 25:83, 89, 166. HORIIKE Shunpō 1960: 627–633.
34. Sōniryō, *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 7, KT 23:206. For a detailed analysis of the Nara ordination system, see NAKAI Shinkō 1986.
35. YOSHIDA Yasuo (1988:156–157) lists the twelve most popular sūtras (in descending order, Esoteric texts with asterisk): (1) *Konkōmyō saishōōkō*; (2) *Myōhō rengekyō*; (3) *Yakushi rurikōnyorai hongan kudokukyō\**; (4) *Senju sengen kōdai enman muge daijibishin daranikyō\**; (5) *Hannya haramita shingyō*; (6) *Daitsū hōkōkyō*; (7) *Rishukyō\**; (8) *Bucchō sonshō daranikyō*; (9) *Kanzeonkyō\**; (10) *Jūichimen shinju shingyō\**; (11) *Daihan nehangyō*; (12) *Fukū kenjaku shinju shingyō\**.

36. *Ch'ien-shou ch'ien-yen kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa kuang-ta yüan-man wu-ai tai-pei-hsin t'o-lo-ni-ching* (Jpn. *Senju sengen kanzeon bosatsu kōdai enman muge daijibishin daranikyō*), T 20 #1060. *Fo-ting tsun-sheng t'o-lo-ni-ching* (Jpn. *Butchō sonshō daranikyō*), T 19 #967. *Shih-i-mien shen-chou hsing-ching* (Jpn. *Jūichimen shinju shingyō*), T 20 #1071. *Pu-k'ung chüan-so shen-chou hsin-ching* (Jpn. *Fukū kenjaku shinju shingyō*), T 20 #1094.

37. Italic added. Sōniryō, *Ritsuryō*, fscl. 3, NST 3:216; *Ryō no shūge*, fscl. 7, KT 23:215.

38. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 19, KT 2:225. For a study of the significance of *kanbyō zenji* for Nara court politics, see FUNAGASAKI Masataka 1985:158–177.

39. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 19, KT 2:225.

40. Stories in which dhāraṇī chanting is mentioned (stories about dhāraṇī as medication identified with asterisk): fascicle 1, episodes 28, 31\*; fascicle 2, episodes 8, 15, 16; fascicle 3, episodes 2\*, 14, 32, 34\*, 36\*, 38. Additional episodes on healing: fascicle 2, episodes 5 (releasing animals), 24 (the *Diamond Sūtra*), 41 (herbal medicine); fascicle 3, episodes 9 (the *Lotus Sūtra*), 11 (Bhaiṣajyaguru), 12 (Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara), and 21 (the *Diamond Sūtra*).

41. *Nihon ryōiki*, fscl. 3, NKZ 6:265.

42. In another of the *Miraculous Episodes*, dated the fifth year of Tenpyō Hōji (761), a certain Kose no Asame, a woman in the village of Hanyū in Kusano county of Kii province, suddenly developed a tumor on her neck, which soon grew to the size of a melon and caused her unbearable pain. Convinced that her strange illness resulted from wrongdoing in previous lives, Asame took the tonsure, received the Buddhist precepts, and assumed a nun's robe. Taking up residence in a chapel outside the village, she spent her days reciting the *Prajñā-pāramitā Heart Sūtra*. Fifteen years later, Chūsen, a priest of Nara, came to the village and took up residence in the same chapel. Taking pity on Asame's sufferings, Chūsen vowed to recite Mahāyāna sūtras constantly until the symptoms of her illness disappeared. "By the time another fourteen years had passed, [Chūsen] had completed reciting the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra* 2,500 times, the *Diamond Sūtra* 1,000 times and the *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* 250 times. In addition, at all other times, he incessantly chanted the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara dhāraṇī. . . . On the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh month of Enryaku 6 [787], Asame's tumor spontaneously opened and vanished, in accordance with [Chūsen's] pledge." *Nihon ryōiki*, fscl. 3, KBZ 6:350

43. For the origin and significance of keka during the Nara period, see HORIIKE Shunpō 1979:60–61. Also see HORIIKE Shunpō 1985.

44. A temple that has not survived, formerly located at Kuwahara in the Ito region of Kii province, which corresponds to the present-day city of Katsuragi, Wakayama prefecture.

45. Ryōiki, episode 11, fscl. 2, NKZ 6:176–177.
46. See NAKAMURA Hajime 1985; also see MISAKI Ryōshū 1968:60. For the influence of *misogi*, a native Japanese purificatory rite, on keka, see GORAI Shigeru 1985.
47. T 9:58b–59b. For the intrinsic affinity between chapters 25 and 26 of the *Lotus*, see SUGURO Shinjō 1993:325–390.
48. An analysis of the difference in the functions of exoteric and esoteric dhāraṇīs is presented later in this section.
49. DK 1:447, 583; 8:153; 24:300–302.
50. *Nihon ryōiki*, KBZ 6:296, 350.
51. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:70; *Hizōhōyaku*, KZ 1:440, 472; *Benkenmitsu nikyōron*, KZ 1:474.
52. *Shih-i-mien shen-chou-hsin-ching*. Translation by Hsüan-tsang (602–664), T 20 #1071:152a–154c.
53. Sanbōe, fscl. 3, SS: 266.
54. Tōdaiji gonbettō Jitcū nijūkyū ka jō, in *Tōdaiji yōroku*, fscl. 7, ZZG 11:133a–137a. For an annotated text, see Yamagishi Tsuneto 1980:21–23.
55. See FUKUYAMA Toshio 1947 and HORIIKE Shunpō 1985:40–41. Cf. YAMAGISHI Tsuneto 1980:28–29, where he disagrees with Fukushima and Horiike and, based on his observations on the opposing political constituents on which Kōmyō and Jitchū based themselves, rejects the link between the *shibi chūdai* and Nigatsudō.
56. GANGŌJI BUNKAZAI KENKYŪJO 1979b:5–493.
57. For the historical evolution of the shunie, see SATŌ Michiko 1985:213–214.
58. For an ethnological study of the shunie, see GORAI Shigeru 1985:203–211. Also see SHIBATA Minoru 1979:45–49.
59. Original manuscript at Tōdaiji. For the reproduction and the illustration of the text, see MORIYA Kōsai, SATŌ Michiko, and HORIIKE Shunpō 1985:260–261.
60. For a detailed description of the liturgical and ritual sequence of each component of the shunie, see SATŌ Michiko 1975, 1977, 1980, 1982.
61. The shunie at the Nigatsudō is currently practiced for fifteen days beginning on the first day of March, in accordance with the solar calendar. For ten days before the actual service begins, the renyōshū isolate themselves in a hall called Bekkabō and engage in a series of preparatory training procedures.
62. For the liturgical text, see SATŌ Michiko 1977:158–167.
63. Here, and also at the beginning of the third section, *Namu* is chanted by the *daidōshi*, the head priest of the renyōshū, who assumes the role of the lead chanter. For all other hōgō chanting, the role of the lead chanter is assigned to a younger priest.

64. For the liturgical text, see SATŌ Michiko 1977:218–225.

65. *Nanto shichidaiji junreiki*, fscl. 1, ZZG 11:555a–b. Also see MORIYA Kōsai, SATŌ Michiko, HORIIKE Shunpō 1985:267–268.

66. Currently, the dhāraṇī recitation is performed only by the *wajō*, the precept master in the *rengyōshū*, who recites, instead of the lengthy root dhāraṇī, a short mantra of the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara, which reads *Om maka kyaronikya sowaka* (Skt. *Om mahā karuṇika svāhā*). However, this mantra does not appear in the *Eleven-Faced Avalokiteóvara Dhāraṇī Sūtra*. For the omission of the nyohō nenju from the shoya session, see SATŌ Michiko 1985:214–215. For the root dhāraṇī, see T 18 #901:813b–c; 20 #1069:140c, 142a–b; 20 #1071:153a.

67. SATŌ Michiko 1977:249. This liturgical section is called *gobutsu gomyō*, the names of the five Buddhas. The liturgy actually does not mention any of the five wisdom Buddhas and the reason for its title remains unknown.

68. The primordial phase of discursive formation consisting of diverse enunciative premises, as well as associative relations based on these premises, that form themselves into what can be referred to as (pre)knowledge, which in turn gives rise to the constellation of knowledge particular to a specific historical age. Michel FOUCAULT (1972a:191), for example, has referred to this inmost level of discourse by the term *episteme*:

By episteme, we mean. . . . the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems; the way in which, in each of these discursive formations, the transitions to epistemologization, scientificity, and formalization are situated and operate. . . . The episteme is not a form of knowledge (*connaissance*) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities.

69. For discourse, selectivity, and exclusion, see, for example, Michel FOUCAULT (1972b:216)

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality. In a society such as our own we all know the rules of exclusion. The most obvious and

familiar of these concerns what is prohibited. . . . We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything. We have three types of prohibition, covering objects, ritual with its surrounding circumstances, the privileged or exclusive right to speak of a particular subject; these prohibitions interrelate, reinforce and complement each other, forming a complex web, continually subject to modification.

70. For the crucial role played by taxonomy for producing not only discourse systems but also social order, see, for example, Bruce LINCOLN (1989:7–8):

Taxonomies are regarded—and announce themselves—as systems of classifying the phenomenal world, systems through which otherwise indiscriminate data can be organized in a form wherein they become knowable. Knowers do not and cannot stand apart from the known, however, because they are objects as well as subjects of knowledge; consequently, they themselves come to be categorized within their own taxonomic systems. Taxonomy is thus not only an epistemological instrument (a means for organizing information), but it is also (as it comes to organize the organizers) an instrument for the construction of society.

71. *Chin-kang shou-ming t'o-lo-ni-ching* (Jpn. *Kongō jumyō daranikyō*), T 20 #1134; *Chin-kang-ting-yu-ch'ieh-chung liao-chu nien-sung-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yugachū rakushutsu nenjukyō*), T 18 #866; *Pu-k'ung chüan-so shen-pien chen-yen-ching* (Jpn. *Fukū kenjaku jinpen shingonkyō*) (fscl. 6 only), T 20 #1092; and *Chu-fo hsing-t'o-lo-ni-ching* (Jpn. *Shobutsu shin daranikyō*), T 20 #1095.

72. *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:1–5; *Shingon fuhōden*, KZ 1:50–53; *Benkenmits nikyōron*, KZ 1:474–476.

73. See chapter 3, note 62, for details.

74. *Hsü chen-yüan shib-chiao-lu* (Jpn. *Zoku jōgen shakkyōroku*), T 55 #2158.

75. For the gradual decline and the legacy of the Esoteric Buddhism in medieval China, see TOGANOO Shōun 1933:122–144.

76. For countertaxonomy, discourse, and the power to construct and reconstruct social order, see, for example, Bruce LINCOLN (1989:8): “To the extent that taxonomies are socially determined, hegemonic taxonomies will tend to reproduce the same hierarchic system of which they are themselves the product. Within any society, nonetheless, there exist countertaxonomic discourses as well (inversions and others): Alternative models whereby members

of subordinate strata and others marginalized under the existing social order are able to agitate for the deconstruction of that order and the reconstruction of society on a novel pattern.”

### 5. Category and History: Constructing the Esoteric, I

1. *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 16, KT 31:233–234; *Honchō kōsōden*, fscl. 4, DBZ 63:43c–44a. For other stories about Gyōga and his life, see *Senjūshō*, fscl. 1, SJS: 50–55.

2. Myōitsu, who composed *Hokke ryakushō* (T 56 #2188), one of the few surviving commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra* from the Nara period, may have been well versed in the T’ien-t’ai philosophy. For Myōitsu’s scholarship, see *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 2, KT 31:49–50. Also see INOUE Mitsusada 1982:234, 254.

3. The earliest example of Buddhist hagiographical writing in Japan. The *Enryaku sōroku* was lost as an independent text, but some of its contents are preserved in fascicle 3 of *Nihon kōsōden yōmonshō*, compiled in the years 1249–1251 by priest Shūshō of Tōdaiji (KT 31:78–92).

4. Kaimyō’s exact dates are unknown. According to fascicle 4 of *Honchō kōsōden*, Kaimyō passed away during the Enryaku years (782–806). DK 63:44b.

5. Ssu-t’o gives the name of the sūtra as *Daibutchōkyō*, which is as an abbreviation commonly used for the full title of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* (*Daibutchōnyorai mitchin shūshō ryōgi shobosatsu mangyō shuryōgongyō*; T 19 #945). However, as ISHIDA Mosaku (1930:85) has indicated, the sūtra had already been introduced to Japan prior to Kaimyō’s time. In the archive of Shōsōin, there is a record of the copies that were made of the sūtra in the sixth year of Tenpyō (734) (DK 7:25). It is thus not clear exactly what Buddhoṣṇīṣa sūtra Kaimyō had imported.

6. Mifune’s letter to Kaimyō is preserved in toto in fascicle 8 of *Hōsakushō*, compiled by priest Gōbō (1306–1362) of Tōji (T 77:820c–821a). For Mifune’s letter and its criticism of Kaimyō, also see fascicle 2, section 4, of *Yuishikiron dōgakushō*, T 66 #2263.

7. *Shih mo-ho-yen-lun* (Jpn. *Shaku makaenron*), T 32 #1668.

8. *Ta-ch’eng ch’i-hsin-lun* (Jpn. *Daijō kishinron*), T 31 #1666.

9. *K’ai-yüan shih-chiau lu*, T 55 #2154. For the authority this catalog had with regard to the Nara Buddhist community’s collection of Buddhist scriptures, which was patronized by the imperial house, see YAMAMOTO Sachio 1988. Interestingly, however, no record suggests that the authenticity of *Shih mo-ho-yen-lun* was ever questioned in China, and such celebrated figures as Hui-yüan of Ching-ying-ssu (523–592), K’uei-chi (632–682), and Tsung-mi (780–841) all recognized its authority. See NASU Seiryū 1982:4–5.

10. Dating based on TAKAHASHI Tomio's (1986:49–51) analysis of Tokuitsu's profile in the *Nanto kōsōden* (DBZ 64:108a).
11. *Shugo kokkaishō*, fscl. 1, sec. 2, DZ 2:278. Saichō here refers to the priest who rejected the authenticity of the *Shaku makaenron* merely as “*owari daisōzu*.” However, according to *Sōgō bunin*, in the years between Kaimyō and Saichō, Kenkei was the only priest from the province of Owari who rose to the rank of *daisōzu* (DBZ 65:5b–6c).
12. *Nihon ryōiki*, fscl. 3, episode 19, NKZ 6:309.
13. In his *Shōrai mokuroku* (KZ 1:69–102), Kūkai lists the following texts on the worship of Buddhoṣṇīṣa: *P'u-t'i-ch'uang so-shuo i-tsü ting-lun-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Bodaijō shosetsu ichiji chōrinnōkyō*), T 19 #950; *I-tzu ting-lun-wan yü-ch'ieh-ching* (Jpn. *Ichiji chōrinnō yugakyō*), T 19 #955; *I-tzu ting-lun-wan nien-sun i-kuei* (Jpn. *Ichiji chōrinnō nenju giki*), T 19 #954a; and *Chin-lun-wang fu-ting yao-liao-nien-sung-fa* (Jpn. *Konrinnō butchō yōryakunenjubō*), T 19 #948.
14. *Shingonshū shogaku kyōritsuron mokuroku*, KZ 1:105–122.
15. For the centrality of this text in Kūkai's theoretical system of Esoteric Buddhism, see ODA Jishū 1982 and KATSUMATA Shunkyō 1981:81–108.
16. See, for example, the obituary of Hui-kuo written by Kūkai at the master's death, “Keika wajō hibun,” *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 2, KZ 3:420, 423, 424, 425. Also see *Hui-kuo a-tu-li hsing-chuang*, Hui-kuo's biography composed by his lay disciple Wu-yin, quoted in toto in Kūkai's *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:44.
17. See *Pu-k'ung-san-ts'ang piao-shih-chi*, T 52:829b, 832c, 838c, 845c, 847a, 858b.
18. See, for example, *Ta-p'i-lu-che-na ch'eng-fo-ching-su*, Śubhakarasimha's commentary on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 39:609c, 612b, 615c, 616c, 620c, 633c, 644b, 651c, 681a, 696a, 709b, 725c, 729c, 733c, 746c, 751b, 769c, 787b.
19. The title given by Kūkai himself to this letter is “Moromoro no uen no shū o sususmete himitsu no hōzō o utsushi tatematsurubeki mon.” *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:526–529.
20. The date that has been attributed to this text is based on the similarity between its contents and *Kan'en-shō*, the *Letter of Propagation* written in 815. KATSUMATA Shunkyō 1981:22–25. However, as will be discussed below, because of the relationship between the *Nikyōron* and the priest Tokuitsu's letter to Kūkai, the former must have been composed at least a few years after 815. See SUEKI Fumihiko 1994b:90–96. Cf. TOMAMECHI Seiichi 1984:72.
21. The date is based on the composition of *Shingon fuhōden*, an abbreviated version of this text.

22. The date is based on the composition of *Hizō hōyaku*, an abbreviated version of this text.
23. To locate the terms listed in the table, I have relied on the index to Kūkai's works published in 1968 by MIKKYŌ BUNKA KENKYŪJO (ed. Nakano Gishō, et al.), as a supplementary volume to the original KZ.
24. See, for instance, *Ihon sokushingi* (a) and *Sangō jūjōgi*, KZ 4:1, 6, 8, 280, 282.
25. *Shingonshū miketsumon*, T 77:862c–865b.
26. There are a total of seven government documents issued to Kūkai that contain the term *shingonshū*. The first two—issued respectively on the tenth day of the tenth month of Kōnin 14 and the second day of the twelfth month of Kōnin 14 (823)—concern Emperor Saga's granting to Kūkai of Tōji as a new center of Esoteric Buddhist studies and ritual service. The third—issued on the eighth day of the fourth month of Tenchō 2 (825)—empowered Kūkai to perform a rite to promote the prosperity of the nation based on an esoteric scripture. The fourth—issued on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month of Jōwa 1 (834)—permitted Kūkai to perform an esoteric service at the imperial palace. The fifth—issued on the sixth day of the first month of Jōwa 2 (835)—concerns the government's stipends to support the activity of resident priests at Tōji. The sixth and seventh—issued on the twenty-second and twenty-third days of the first month of Jōwa 2 (835)—granted Kūkai's school the allotment of three annual ordinands. See documents 11, 12, 17, 23, 24, 25, and 26 in *Kanpu hennen zasshū*, KZ 5:435–449.
27. *Daijō kanpu*, 1/21 Jōwa 2 (835), KZ 5:444–447.
28. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 17, KT 3:84. For the importance of this incident in early Heian political history, see TAKINAMI Sadako 1991:258–324.
29. *Honchō rekidai hōkō geki*, KDS:481.
30. *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 16, KT 31:234.
31. For the historical significance of the failure of Kusuko's coup attempt, especially as a watershed between the Nara-style court politics and that of the Heian court and as a landmark for the rise of the Hokuke branch of the Fujiwara clan, see HASHIMOTO Yoshihiko 1984.
32. *Tōdaiji gusho*, a collection of documents prepared by Tōdaiji at its polemic with Daigoji and Tōji as a proof of its claim that Tōdaiji, with Kūkai's establishment of Abhiṣeka Hall there, was indeed the headquarters temple of the Shingon School (ZG 27B:8b–9b). For a detailed study of this document, see NAGAMURA Makoto 1988:5–28.
33. *Liao-shu chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh fen-pieh sheng-wei hsiu-cheng fa-men* (Jpn. *Ryakujutsu kongōchō yuga funbetsu shōi shūshō hōmon*), T 18 #870.

34. Note the significant difference in understanding of the *ekayāna* in the Hua-yen and T'ien-t'ai traditions. In the former the *ekayāna*, that which integrates the vehicles of the *triyāna* and *pañcayāna*, is intrinsically separate from those that are integrated (Ch. *pieh-chao i-sheng*; Jpn. *bekkyō ichijō*); whereas the latter sees that each vehicle of the *triyāna* and *pañcayāna* is equal to the *ekayāna* (Ch. *t'ung-chao i-sheng*; Jpn. *dōkyō ichijō*). See YOSHIZU Yoshihide 1991:421–489.

35. Ch. *Ta-ch'eng li-ch'ü liu-po-lo-mi-to-cheng* (Jpn. *Daijō rishū rokuhara-mitsukyō*), T 8: #261. The sūtra has not survived as a part of the Sanskrit canon.

36. This must be a mistake made either by Kūkai or by whoever copied the document. Enryaku 24 (805), the year in which Kūkai was ordained by Hui-kuo into Esoteric Buddhism, corresponds to Chen-yüan 21.

37. *Heizei tennō kanjōmon*, KZ 2:157.

38. See, for instance, *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 6, KZ 3:467; *Hizōhō-yaku*, fscl. 3, KZ 1:464. In the first example, Kūkai lists the names of priests who, as representatives of four different schools including *shingon*, attended a ritual hosted by Emperor Junna. Kūkai's use of the term in the second example will be discussed below.

39. This method of textual analysis appears to be of Chinese origin. The San-lun theoretician Chi-tsang (549–623), for example, says: “Originally, there was no division into chapters and sections in the Buddhas’ discourses. It was Dharma Master Tao-an (312–385) who first devised the method of partitioning [the scriptural text] into three sections” (fascicle 1, *Jen-wang-paŋ-jo-ching-su*, T 33 #1705). As Chi-tsang shows here, it is widely held that Tao-an was the inventor of this method. However, the actual practice of implementing this method for textual study seems to have begun later, after the arrival of Kumārajīva in Lo-yang in 401, at the earliest. For examples of commentaries based on this system, see Hui-yüan’s *Wu-liang-shou-ching i-su* (Jpn. *Muryōjukyō gishō*), T 37 #1745; Chih-i’s *Miao-fa lien-hua-ching wen-chü* (Jpn. *Myōhō rengekyō mongu*), T 34 #1718; and Chi-tsang’s *Sheng-man pao-k'u* (Jpn. *Shōman hōkutsu*), T 37 #1744. For the examples of the adoption of this method of textual analysis by Japanese scholar-priests, see *Hokke ryakushō* (T 56 #2188) and *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō chūshaku* (T 57 #2197) by the priest Myōitsu (728–798) of Tōdaiji; and *Gokokushō* (DBZ 1 #1) by the priest Kakuchō of Mount Hiei (960–1034).

40. *Kōngō hanna haramitakyō kaidai*, KZ 1:836–848.

41. As Stanley WEINSTEIN (1987a:262–264) has pointed out, the mention of Esoteric Buddhism as an independent school in Chinese Buddhist literature first appears only in the two T'ien-t'ai historiographies of the Sung dynasty, the 1237 *Chih-men-cheng-t'ung* (Jpn. *Shakumon shōtō*), NZ 2b.3.5, and the 1269 *Fo-tsu-t'ung-chi* (Jpn. *Busso tōki*), T 49 #2053. In both these works,

Esoteric Buddhism is referred to as *mi-chiao* (Esoteric Teaching), or, more specifically, as *yü-ch'ieh-mi-chiao* (Esoteric Teaching of Yoga). However, as evidence of the existence of Esoteric Buddhism in Chinese history as a full-fledged school, Weinstein finds this classification in the two historiographies as rather "dubious." "The *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* lists three patriarchs, but two of these, Vajrabodhi (671–741) and Amoghavajra (705–774), are simply translators of Esoteric (i.e., Vajrayāna) texts. The third, Hui-liang, who was a disciple of Amoghavajra, had already become a totally obscure figure by the time the *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* was compiled. Virtually nothing is known about him, nor do any of his writings survive. Although a large number of Vajrayāna texts were translated into Chinese and many esoteric practices eventually incorporated into Chinese Buddhist ritual, no attempt was made in China to develop a comprehensive system of Esoteric Buddhism, as had been done in Japan" (p. 263). It is also important to note that the genealogy of the Esoteric Teaching identified in the two Sung historiographies does not include the lineage of Śubhakarasiṁha and I-hsing, who transmitted the tradition of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the garbha maṇḍala. As a result it only indicates a partial picture of the genealogical background of the esoteric tradition that later prospered on Japanese soil.

42. *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:526–529.

43. As will be discussed below, Tokuitsu's response to Kūkai's request identifies at least three titles, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 18 #848) in seven fascicles, Śubhakarasiṁha's *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 39 #1796) in twenty fascicles, and *Discourse on the Enlightened Mind* (T 32 #1665) in a single fascicle.

44. *Kōya zappitsushū*, fscl. 1, KZ 3:565–566.

45. *Gonkō shakusho*, fscl. 4, KT 31:73; *Nanto kōsōden*, DBZ 64:108a.

46. *Gonkō shakusho*, fscl. 4, KT 31:73; *Honchō kōsōden*, fscl. 5, DBZ 63:49a.

47. *Shugo kokkaishō*, fscl. 3b, DZ 2:615.

48. For a survey of some thirty temples in northeastern Japan that claim to have been founded by Tokuitsu, see SHIOIRI Ryōchū 1986:23–29.

49. *Kōbō daishi gyōjō shūki*, KDZ 1:173b–174a; *Gonkō shakusho*, fscl. 4, KT 31:73; *Nanto kōsōden*, DBZ 64:108a.

50. Dating based on Encho's *Sōshō kechimyaku* and Ennin's account of his accompaniment of Saichō to the eastern provinces related in *Jikaku daishiden*. For a detailed discussion of the dating of Saichō's pilgrimage to the eastern provinces, see SONODA Kōyū 1952 and Paul GRONER 1984:90 n. 10. Also see TAMURA Kōyū 1975.

51. *Tōiki dentō mokuroku*, DBZ 95:5c, 14c, 19c.

52. *Chūshin hossōshū shōshō*, DBZ 95:127a, 128c, 129b, 131a.

53. For a bibliographical survey of Tokuitsu's writings, see TAMURA Kōyū

1973:781–803. For a study of Tokuitsu’s works in the context of Tokuitsu’s debate with Saichō, see TAMURA Kōyū 1980. Another work by Tokuitsu entitled *Shikanron*, an elucidation from the Hossō viewpoint of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, is quoted in toto in Saichō’s *Shugo kokkaishō*, fscl. 3c, DZ 2:310–347.

54. The edition of *Shingonshū miketsumon* collected in the Taishō daizōkyō volume has another lengthy passage that follows the apparently concluding remark I have translated above. As TOMAMECHI Seiichi (1986:310–315) has demonstrated, the discussion in this lengthy passage presupposes the knowledge of both Kūkai’s reply to Tokuitsu’s questions and Saichō’s debate with Tokuitsu. Furthermore, it misrepresents Tokuitsu’s original question to Kūkai. Therefore it must be regarded as an addendum provided to the original text by a later anonymous editor.

55. The catalog that originally accompanied the *Letter of Propagation* did not survive. Thus, the actual content of the thirty-five scriptures sent by Kūkai cannot be determined, except for the titles Tokuitsu mentions in his letter to Kūkai.

56. The five Buddhas are Akṣobhya (east), Ratnasambhava (south), Amītabha (west), Amoghasiddhi (north), and Mahāvairocana (center). They represent, respectively, the wisdoms of action (*jōshosachi*), of observation (*myōkanzatsuchi*), of equality (*byōdōshōchi*), of the great mirror (*daienkyōchi*), and of the essence of the realm of the Dharma (*hokkai taishōchi*).

57. This passage in chapter 3 of the *Lotus* is generally referred to in the traditional Japanese priestly community as the theoretical problem of the *kaiji gonyū*, “opening, demonstrating, realizing, and entering.” The standard Tendai interpretation of this passage can be found in fascicle 4a of Chih-i’s *Fa-hua-hsüan-i*, T 33 #1716.

58. *Miao-fa lien-fua-ching yu-po-t’i-she* (Jpn. *Myōhō rengekyō upadaisha*). Commonly known as *Fa-hua-lun* (Jpn. *Hokkeron*), T 26 #1519.

59. *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch’ieh-chungfa-a-nou-to-lo san-miao-san-p’u-t’i-hsin-lun* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yugachū hotsuanokutara sanmyaku sanbodaishinron*), T 32 #1665.

60. *Yü-ch’ieh chin-kang-ting-ching shih-tzu-mu-p’in* (Jpn. *Yuga kongōchōgyō shaku jimbōn*), T 18 #880. Kūkai discusses the nature of Sanskrit language in his commentary on this text, composed in 814 to be presented to Emperor Saga, entitled *Bonji sittan jimo narabi ni shakugi*, KZ 2:719–720. The assertion that Sanskrit is a natural language can also be found in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 18:9b–12b, 41c–42a.

61. *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch’ieh san-shih-ch’i-tsun ch’u-sheng-i* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yuga sanjū shichison shusshōgi*), T 18 #872:299a–b.

62. Here my historical reconstruction of the order of events surrounding the

exchange between Tokuitsu and Kūkai differs from that of TOMAMECHI Seiichi (1984, 1986), who has argued that the content of Kūkai's *Letter of Propagation* was plain enough to be grasped by Tokuitsu and, therefore, that Tokuitsu's *Unresolved Issues* cannot be understood as his reply to Kūkai's *Letter*. Also see SUEKI Fumihiko (1994b:93) for his refutation of Tomamechi's interpretation.

63. This is Kūkai's paraphrase of a passage in fascicle 4 of the *Shih-mo-ho-yen-lun* (Jpn. *Saku makaenron*), T 32:623c.

64. *Pan-jō teng-lun shih* (Skt. *Prajñā-pāramitā-mūla-madhyamaka-vṛtti*; Jpn. *Hannya tōron shaku*), T 30 #1566; *Ta-chih-tu-lun* (Jpn. *Daichidoron*), T 25 #1509; *Ta-ch'eng fa-yüan i-lin-chang* (Jpn. *Daijō hōen girinshō*), T 45 #1861; *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Jpn. *Maka shikan*), T 46 #1911; *Hua-yen wu-chiao-chang* (Jpn. *Kegon gokyōshō*), T 45 #1866.

65. *Shih mo-ho-yen-lun* (Jpn. *Shaku makaenron*), T 32 #1668.

66. Kūkai's discussion here recapitulates the point he has raised in the introduction of *Distinguishing the Two Teachings*: "For the sake of expressing his own bliss of the Dharma, the Buddha in his intrinsic Dharmakāya form expounded the [teaching] gate of the three mysteries to his entourage, which was also his own manifestation. This gate of the three mysteries is the revelation of the realm of the wisdom of the Tathāgatas' inner enlightenment (*nyorai naishōchi*)" (KZ 1:474).

67. Skt. *mantra-pada*. Mantra is simultaneously a phrase and the path to—or, literally, the practitioners' “leg” to progress toward—enlightenment. For a discussion of mantra as both a phrase to be recited and a path for progress, see fascicle 1 of Śubhakarasiṁha's commentary on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 39:583a.

68. Trisamaya is the equality of the three positions regarding enlightenment, i.e., of the enlightened ones, the practitioners, and sentient beings. In the abhiṣeka of the garbha maṇḍala described in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, this equality of the three viewpoints is realized by reciting the mantra of the trisamaya: “*Namah samanta-buddhānām asame trisame samaye svāhā*” (T 18:12c–13a).

69. As will be noted below, Kūkai's reference to the *Nikyōron* as *Hosshin seppōshō* occurs at the conclusion of *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, suggesting a close association between the two works. See KZ 1:49.

70. So SUEKI Fumihiko (1994b:93), too, has recently speculated, but by different reasoning from mine.

71. The most obvious addition made in *Short History* is the patriarchal lineage of Śubhakarasiṁha and I-hsing, the translators of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. However, Kūkai grants them only a secondary place in the esoteric lineage. For Kūkai, they preserved only the tradition of the *Mahāvairocana*

*Sūtra*, whereas other patriarchs mentioned in *Short History* were said to have upheld the transmission in a single lineage of both the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*. See KZ 1:62–65; also see MATSUNAGA Yūkei 1973:56–58; 1978:4.

72. The story of the lineage of the masters who carried on the teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha until it reached the Bhikṣu Simha appears in the *Fu-fa-tsang yin-yüan-chuan* (Jpn. *Fuhōzō innenden*), T 50 #2058:297–322, a historiography purporting to be a Chinese translation of a Sanskrit work and widely regarded in China as the standard for understanding the lineage history in India. Chih-sheng's *K'ai-yüan Catalog*, for example, endorses it as an authentic text of Indian origin by citing three separate occasions on which the text was translated into Chinese (T 55:525c, 539c, 721a). However, modern historians and bibliographers generally agree that it is of Chinese origin. For an explanation of the significance of *Fu-fa-tsang yin-yüan-chuan* in relation to other major Buddhist historiographical texts in China describing transmissive lineage, especially about the disagreement between T'ien-t'ai and Ch'an about the interpretation of the lineage presented in this text, see Philip YAMPOLSKY 1967:6.

73. *Chin-kang-ting i-ch'ieh ju-lai chen-shih-she ta-ch'eng hsien-cheng ta-chiao-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō issai nyorai shinjitsushō daijō genshō daikyō-ōkyō*), T 18 #865; *Liao-shu chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh fen-peih shen-wie hsiu-cheng fa-men* (Jpn. *Ryakujutsu kongōchō yuga funbetsu shōi shūshō hōmon*), T 18 #870.

74. In addition to scriptural accounts to be discussed below, Kūkai's sources for Nāgārjuna include *Fu-fa-tsang yin-yüan-chuan* (Jpn. *Fuhōzō innenden*), T 50 #2058, *Lung-shu p'u-sa ch'uan* (Jpn. *Ryūju bosatus den*), T 50 #2047; and *Ta-t'ang hsi-yü-chi* (Jpn. *Daitō saikiki*), T 51 #2087. The principal sources for Nāgabodhi's profile include *Ta-t'ang ku-san-ts'ang hsüan-tsang fa-shih hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Daitō kosanzō genjō hossbi gyōjō*), T 50 #2052, *Ta-pien-cheng san-ts'ang p'iao-chih-chi* (Jpn. *Daibenshō sanzō hyōseishū*), T 52 #2120, and *Chen-yüan-hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu* (Jpn. *Jōgen shinjō shakkyō mokuroku*), T 55 #2157.

75. *Hsü ku-chih i-ching t'u-chi* (Jpn. *Zoku kokon yakkyō zuki*), T 55 #2152; *Ta-t'ang chen-yüan hsü-k'ai-yüan shih-chiao mu-lu* (Jpn. *Daitō jōgen zoku kaigen shakkyō mokuroku*), T 55 #2159; *Ta-t'angku-san-ts'ang hsüan-tsang fa-shih hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Daitō kosanzō genjō hossbi gyōjō*), T 50 #2052; *Ta-pien-cheng san-ts'ang p'iao-chih-chi* (Jpn. *Daibenshō sanzō hyōseishū*), T 52 #2120; *Chen-yüan-hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu* (Jpn. *Jōgen shinjō shakkyō mokuroku*), T 55 #2157; *Ta-t'ang ch'ing-lung-ssu tung-t'a-in kuan-ting kuo-shih hui-kuo a-tu-li hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Daitō shōryūji tōtōin kanjō kukushi keika ajari gyōjō*), quoted in

toto in *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:43–45. For studies of Kūkai's use of Chinese historiographies, see MATSUNAGA Yūkei 1982 and KŌDA Yūn 1985.

76. *Chin-kuan-ting-ching man-chu-shih-li p'u-sa wu-tsu hsin-t'o-lo-ni-p'in* (Jpn. *Kongōchōgyō monjushiri bosatsu goji shindaranibon*), T 20 #1173; *Kuan-tzu-tsai ju-i-lun p'u-sa yü-ch'ieh fa-yao* (Jpn. *Kanjizai nyoirin bosatsu yuga hōyō*), T 20 #1087.

77. *Ta-t'ang ch'ing-lung-ssu tung-t'a-in kuan-ting kuo-shih hui-kuo a-tu-li hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Daitō shōryūji tōtōin kanjō kokushi keika ajari gyōjō*), quoted in toto in *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*, KZ 1:43–45.

78. Wu-yin quotes Hui-kuo's words identifying the six disciples who would carry on the torch of his Dharma. Of them only I-ming and Kūkai received the transmission in the traditions of both the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (garbha maṇḍala) and the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* (vajradhātu maṇḍala).

The great teachings of the two maṇḍalas of the vajradhātu and the garbha are the secret treasury of all the Buddhas, the direct path to attaining Buddhahood in one's own life. May the Dharma pervade the whole universe and give salvation to living beings. I have granted mastership in the garbha maṇḍala to Pan-hong of Java and Hui-li of Silla. I have entrusted the great teaching of the vajradhātu maṇḍala to Wei-shang of Jian-nan [southern Szechwan] and Yi-yuan of Ho-pei. To imperial chaplain I-ming, I have conferred the great teachings of the two maṇḍalas. Today I have among my disciples the Japanese priest Kūkai. To him who came to seek the sacred teaching, I have granted the most secret maṇḍala rituals and the mudrās of the two maṇḍalas.

KZ 1:44.

The identical passage describing Hui-kuo's transmission of the Dharma to his six disciples appears in *Ta-t'ang ch'ing-lung-ssu san-chao-kung-feng ta-te hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Daitō shōryūji sanchō kubu daitoku gyōjō*), T 50 #2057, another biography of Hui-kuo, composed by an anonymous author in 826.

79. Concept originally developed by Stephen PEPPER (1942:91–92). I am using the term here in light of Paul RICOEUR's (1977:242–247) interpretation of it as the central nexus of “metaphorical network” essential to the construction of a narrative. “The referential function of metaphor should be carried by a metaphorical network rather than by a isolated metaphorical statement” (p. 244).

80. Synecdoche is a type of metaphor in which the part stands for the whole, or that which metaphors and that which is being metaphored form a part-whole relationship. Kenneth BURKE (1969:503–517) has identified it as one of the four

master tropes required to construct a narrative. For an interpretation of Burke's theory of trope and narrative, see Hayden WHITE 1973:31–38.

81. *Mo-ho mo-ya-ching* (Jpn. *Maka mayakyō*), T 12 #383. The earliest date recorded for the copying of this sūtra in Japan in 736 (DK 12:127).

82. *Chin-kang-ting-ching i-chüeh* (Jpn. *Kongōchōgyō giketsu*), T 39 #1798.

83. In his study of Nāgārjuna's biography, TERAMOTO Enga (1925:30–79) pointed out that the name of the bodhisattva referred to in the Buddha's prophecy in the Sanskrit text of the *Laṅkāvatāra* is not Nāgārjuna but Nāgāhvaya (literally, the One Who is Addressed as Nāga). Based on this, Teramoto argued that, to legitimize his transmission, Kūkai intentionally distorted the fact that Buddha's prediction in the *Laṅkāvatāra* was not given to Nāgārjuna (pp. 201–206). However, Teramoto seems to have overlooked the fact that, in order for his thesis to be justified, Kūkai would have had to know that the bodhisattva's name in the Sanskrit text of the *Laṅkāvatāra* was not Nāgārjuna but Nāgāhvaya. Considering that translators of Buddhist texts in China did poorly in the preservation of Sanskrit texts and texts in other Indian Central Asian languages from which Chinese translations were produced, it seems unlikely that Kūkai knew the difference between the two names in the Sanskrit texts. In the Chinese canon, not only Bodhiruci's translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra* but Śikṣānanda's translation, too, identify the bodhisattva's name as Lung-shu, the standard rendering of Nāgārjuna's name in Chinese (T 16:627b). This suggests that among the Indian translators who were active in T'ang China there was general understanding that the name Nāgāhvaya was one of the ways to refer to Nāgārjuna. In this regard it is also important to note that, as MATSUNAGA Yūkei (1982:206–208) has suggested, there exist several scriptural and historiographical texts of the Tibetan tradition—such as chapter 35 of the *Mañjuśrī-mūlatantra* and the history of the *Deb ther sñon po*—that identify Nāgāhvaya as a name for Nāgārjuna. Also see Rāhula SĀMKRTYĀYĀNA 1934:18.

84. A legend described in Fa-tsang's *Hua-yen-ching t'an-hsüan-chi* (Jpn. *Kegongyō tangenki*), T 35 #1733:122b.

85. *Ta-t'ang his-yü-chi* (Jpn. *Daitō saiikiki*), T 51:896b.

86. A quote from Hui-chao's *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun liao-i-teng* (Jpn. *Jōyuishi-kiron ryōgitō*), T 43 #1832:659c.

87. See fscl. 14, *Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu* (Jpn. *Jōgen shinjō shakkyō mokuroku*), T 55:876b–878a.

88. *Ta-t'ang his-yü-chi*, T 51 #2087:912c.

89. One of the meanings of the term *arjuna* is the name of a tree whose trunk has a light color. This derived from a more common meaning of *arjuna* that translates as “white,” “bright.”

90. As Fa-tsang has pointed out in his *Shih-erb-men-lun tsung-chih-i-chi* (Jpn. *Jūnimonron shūchigiki*, T 42 #1826), this obviously is an interpretation inspired by the name of the protagonist in the *Bhagavat-gītā*.

91. *Ta-t'ang ta-kuang-chih san-tsang ho-shang ying-tsan* (Jpn. *Daitō taikōchi sanzō wajō eisan*), T 52:847a; *Ching-kang-chih san-tsang hsing-chi* (Jpn. *Kongōchi sanzō gyōki*), T 55:875a–876b; *Ta-t'ang tung-ching ta-kuan-f'u-ssu ku-ching-kuand san-tsang ta-ming* (*Daitō tōkyō dai kubukuji kokongō sanjō tō mei*), T 55:876b–877a; *Ta-t'ang ku-ta-te ta-hsing-shan-ssu san-tsang ho-shang chih pei* (Jpn. *Daitō kodaitoku taikōzenji sanzō wajō shibi*), T 52:848b; *Ta-t'ang ta-kuang-chih san-tsang ho-shang ying tsan* (Jpn. *Daitō taikōchi sanzō wajō eisan*), T 52:847a; *T'ang ta-hsing-shan-ssu ku-ta-te ta-pien-cheng kuang-chih san-tsang ho-shang pien ming* (*Tō taikōzenji kodaitoku daibenshō kōchi sanzō himei*), T 52:860a. All these sources, except for the last one listed in this note, are collected in *Ta-pien-cheng san-ts'ang p'iao-chih-chi* (Jpn. *Daibenshō sanzō hyōseishū*), T 52 #2120 and in *Chen-yüan hsin-ting shih-chiao mu-lu* (Jpn. *Jōgan shinjō shakkyō mokuroku*), T 55 #2157. *Ta-t'ang ku-ta-te ta-pien-cheng kuang-chih p'u-k'ung san-tsang hsing-chuang* (Jpn. *Daitō kodaitoku daibenshō kōchi fukū sanzō gyōjō*), T 50 #2056.

92. *Ta-chih-tu-lun-su* (Jpn. *Daichidoronsho*), NZ 1.74.3, 1.87.3; *Shih-erb-men-lun tsung-chih-i-chi* (Jpn. *Jūnimonron shūchigiki*), T 42 #1826.

93. This still leaves unresolved another question. If the scriptural texts sent by Kūkai to Tokuitsu did not contain a mention of Nāgārjuna's date as eight hundred years after Śākyamuni, from what source did Tokuitsu gain the information that determined the date of Nāgārjuna's entry into the iron tower as such? As SUEKI Fumihiko (1994b:97–98) has recently suggested, Kūkai may have sent to Tokuitsu an earlier edition of the *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden*. It is probable that as his response to Tokuitsu's questions, Kūkai added to this "ur-text" of the *Fuhōden* the third chapter to settle the ambiguities surrounding the of the iron tower.

94. *Lung-shu p'u-sa ch'uan* (Jpn. *Ryūju bosatus den*), T 50 #2047.

95. For example, both *Fu-fa-tsangyin-yüan-ch'uan* (Jpn. *Fuhōzō innenden*), T 50 #2058, and *Mo-ho mo-ya-ching* (Jpn. *Maka mayakyō*), T 12 #383, the two texts Kūkai cites in his *Fuhōden* for the genealogy of the exoteric transmission, end with the projection that the Buddha's Dharma will disappear at some point in the future.

96. *Dengyō daishiden*, DZ 5 furoku:32–33.

97. *Rokujōshiki*, DZ 1:11–13.

98. *Denjutsu isshin kaimon*, DZ 1:566–572. For a summary of Saichō's confrontation with Gomyō and the Sōgō, see Paul GRONER 1984:146–158.

## 6. The Discourse of Complementarity: Constructing the Esoteric, II

1. *Hua-yen wu-chiao-chang* (Jpn. *Kegon gokyōshō*), T 45:477a.
2. *Mo-ho chih-kuan* (Jpn. *Maka shikan*), T 46:26c.
3. “Moromoro no uen no shū o sususmete himitsu no hōzō o utsushi tatematsurubeki mon,” *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:527.
4. Ch. *Chin-kuang-ming tsui-sheng-wang-chin*; Jpn. *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō*, T 16 #665:427b–430b.
5. In his edict of 734, Emperor Shōmu (r. 724–749) made the ability to recite this scripture and the *Lotus Sūtra* from memory the basic requirement for novices wishing to be ordained. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 12, KT 2:135.
6. T 16 #665. Prior to this translation, the sūtra had been translated twice: first during the rule of the Northern Laio (T 16 #663), and the second time during the rule of the Sui (T 16 #664).
7. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 12, KT 2:163–164.
8. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 12, KT 2:147–148.
9. *Engi shiki*, fscl. 21, KT 26:532–533.
10. For the centrality of the sūtra to the relationship between the Nara state and the Buddhist community, see INOUE Mitsusada 1982:254–264. For a detailed study of the Misaie’s ritual, see KURABAYASHI Masatsugu 1980. For the importance of this service for the ritsuryō regime, see YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1995:150–202. For an outline of the *Golden Light Sūtra* and its relationship to the ritual of the Misaie, see M. W. de VISSER 1935:471–488.
11. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 22, KT 3:121.
12. Within the circle of Shingon scholar-priests, it is believed that the one who asked Kūkai for his poetic commentary on the sūtra was Shin’en, one of Kūkai’s disciples, whose dates are unknown. This is merely based on an unascertained legend that claims that Shin’en was known by the sobriquet *tei risshi*, “Vinaya Master of Tamarisk.” However, Shin’en’s name cannot be found in the *Sōgō bunin*, and there exists no evidence that he actually held the post of *risshi* in the Sōgō. Furthermore, the character *tei* was used in early Heian documents to refer to the Mount Muroo monastery, where Shūen took residence (*Shoshū shōshoroku*, DBZ 95:6c; HORIIKE Shunpō 1979:22), suggesting that Shūen’s name was confused with that of Shin’en in later sources within the Shingon School. It also seems highly unlikely that as early as 813 a disciple of Kūkai’s would have attained an appointment to the Sōgō office or would have been elected as a Misaie lecturer, an honor that would have exceeded any accorded to his master. For a sketchy biography of Shin’en, see *Kōbō daishi deshifu*, fscl. 4, KDZ 10:129a–130a.

13. For Shūen's writings, see *Tōiki dentō mokuroku* and *Shoshū shōshoroku*, DBZ 95:6a ff, 78c; also see INOUE Mitsusada 1982:234 ff.
14. *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:8c; also see HORIIKE Shunpō 1979:21–27.
15. *Shūi zasshū*, KZ 3:643
16. *Sōgō bunin*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:9a–b.
17. See, for example, *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō chūshaku*, by Myōitsu (T 57 #2197), *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō gensū*, by Gangyō (T 57 #2196), *Chū konkōmyō saishōōkyōsho*, by Jōtō (ND 4), and *Saishōōkyō usoku*, by Heibi (T 57 #2198). Additionally, *Tōiki dentō mokuroku*, a catalog of the collections at Kōfukuji library compiled in 1094 by priest Eichō, lists the following no longer extant titles of exegeses on the *Golden Light*: *Saishō sōkōsho gesetsuki*, by Gomyō; *Saishōōkyō yūshinketsu*, by Zenju; and *Saishōōkyō daiki*, also by Zenju. DBZ 95:9b–10a.
18. *Chin-kuang-ming tsui-sheng-wang-ching-shu* (Jpn. *Konkōmyō saishōōkyōsho*), T 39 #1788. For Myōitsu's indebtedness to Hui-chao's commentary, see the acknowledgment at the opening of Myōitsu's commentary, T 56: 717c–718a.
19. Transliteration of Chinese into Sanskrit based on the annotation provided by the editors of *Taishō daizōkyō*, T 16:433.
20. *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 10, KZ 3:542.
21. In his *Saishōōkyō gensū* (T 57 #2196), Gangyō occasionally cites the two principal Esoteric scriptures Kūkai imported: the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra* and the *Susiddhikara Sūtra*.
22. See, for example, the *Hokke ryakushō* (T 56 #2188), by Myōitsu, the *Ninnōgokukuyōsho* (DBZ 1 #1), by Gyōshin (fl. 729–748), and the *Maka hanna haramita shingyō jutsugi* (DBZ 1 #7), by Chikō.
23. The four kings residing in their heavenly realm of Cāturmahārājākāyika in the Sumeru. As the four generals serving Indra, they protect the four directions of the world. Dhṛtarāṣṭra (Jikokuten) in the east, Virūḍhaka (Zōjōten) in the south, Virūpakāṣya (Kōmokuten) in the west, and Vaiśravaṇa (Tamonten) in the north.
24. The eloquence in the Dharma (Skt. *dharma-pratisamīvit*; Jpn. *hōmuge*), the eloquence in the meaning of the Dharma (Skt. *artha-pratisamīvit*; Jpn. *gimuge*), the eloquence in local dialects (Skr. *nirukti-pratisamīvit*; Jpn. *jimuge*), and the eloquence in preaching (Skt. *pratibhāna-prasamīvit*; Jpn. *rakuzetsu muge*).
25. *Shih-hsiang pan-jo po-lo-mi-ching* (Jpn. *Jissō hannya haramitsukyō*), T 8 #240.
26. For the date of translation, see *Wu-chou k'an-ting chung-ching mu-lu*

(Jpn. *Bushū kanjō shūkyō mokuroku*), fscl. 2, T 55 #2153:382b. Also see *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu*, T 55:569b. For Bodhiruci's biography, also see the *K'ai-yüan Catalog*, T 55:570a–571a.

27. *Prajñā-pāramitā-naya-satapañcasatikā*; also known as *Adhyardhaśatikā prajñā-pāramitā*. Generally known in East Asia as *Pan-jo po-lo-mi-to li-ch'ü-ching* (Jpn. *Hannya haramita rishukyō*), or, simply, *Li-ch'ü-ching* (Jpn. *Rishukyō*).

28. *Ta-pan-jo po-lo-mi-to-ching li-ch'ü-fen* (Jpn. *Daihannya haramitakyō rishubun*), T 7:986a–991b. For the date of Hsüang-tsang's translation of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, which took from 660 to 663, see fascicle 8 of the *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu*, T 55:555b.

29. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 9, KT 2:102.

30. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 12, KT 2:138.

31. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 12, KT 2:142.

32. *Engishiki*, fscl. 21, KT 26:533–534.

33. The episodes collected in other chapters of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* take place in renowned preaching sites in northwestern India—such as the Vulture Peak (Grdhhrukūta; chs. 1–6, 15) and the Bamboo Forest Park (Venuvana-kalandakanivāpa; ch. 16) in Rājagṛha or the Jetavana Park (Jetavana Anāthapiṇḍadasyārāma; chs. 7–9, 11–14) in Śravastī. In general, Paranirmittavaśavartina, which is also known as the abode of Māra, the Evil One, who attempted to prevent the Buddha from attaining enlightenment, is an unlikely place for the Mahāyāna scriptures to be preached. An important exception to this rule is the Daśabhūmika and other related chapters of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. For the significance of Paranirmittavaśavartina for the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and for the Hua-yen theory, see Itō Zuei 1983:61–8.

34. *Trailoka-vijaya* (Jpn. *Sangai shōshū*), T 7:988a; Sarvadharmaśamatā-pratiṣṭhita (Jpn. *Issai nōzen konryūshō byōdōhō*), T 7:989c; Sarvadharma-prapañca (Jpn. *Issai mukeronhō*), T 7:988b.

35. DK 1:382; DK 7:21. Also see *Narachō genzai issaikyōsho mokuroku* in ISHIDA Mosaku 1930:29.

36. In the Shōsōin archive at Tōdaiji, there survive 104 letters of recommendation written between 732 and 773 by priests and nuns requesting their novice disciples' ordination into the ranks of the clergy. Out of these, 38 letters list the titles of scriptures the candidates for ordination had studied. The *Path of Prajñā-pāramitā* is mentioned in 14 of them. *Shōsōin monjo*, NI 2:508b–534b.

37. For the third translation during the T'ang, see the discussion that follows in the text. The three translations that appeared after the T'ang dynasty are *Pien-chao pan-jo po-lo-mi-ching* (Jpn. *Henjō hannya haramitsukyō*), T 8 #242, translated in 980; *Tsui-shang ken-pen ta-lo-chin-kang pu-k'ung san-meи ta-*

*chiao-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Saijō konpon tairaku kongō fukū sanmai daikyōkyō*), T 8 #786, translated in 1001 or earlier; and *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh li-chü pan-jo-ching* (Jpn. *Kongōchō yuga rishu hannyakyō*), T 8 #241. This last text claims to be a translation by Vajrabodhi (671–741), the esoteric master who brought the tradition of the vajraśekhara sūtras to China. In fact, this translation presents the *Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā* as one of the vajraśekhara sūtras. However, the title of the text can be found nowhere in the official catalogs of the Buddhist canon compiled during the T'ang and the Sung and is listed only in *Chih-yüan fa-pao-k'an-t'ung-tsung-lu* (Jpn. *Shigen hōbō kandō sōroku*, M 35:5–6), another extensive catalog compiled in 1287 under the auspices of the first emperor of the Yüan. Accordingly, it is believed that this translation was carried out under the sponsorship of the Yüan imperial house. See TOGANOO Shōun 1930:28–29.

38. For Dōyū's biography, see *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 2, KT 31:53. For a prestigious place reserved for Dōyū within Shingon tradition, see *Kōbō daishi deshifu*, fscl. 2, KDZ 10:96b–98a.

39. According to fascicle 11 of Chih-sheng's *Kai-yüan Catalog*, the textual variation between the *Reality of the Prajñā-pāramitā* and chapter 10 of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā* derived from the two distinct Sanskrit texts from which the two translations were produced. See *Kai-yüan shih-chiao-lu*, T 55:584a.

40. DK 1:443. Also see *Narachō genzai issaikyō mokuroku*, in ISHIDA Mosaku 1930:85.

41. Based on the 1090 *Hsin-pien chu-tsун-chiao-ts'angtsung-lu* (T 55 #2184), by I-t'ien (d. 1101) and the 1094 *Toiki dentō mokuroku* (T 55 #2183), by Eichō (1014–?), which are the earliest examples of catalogs exclusively of Buddhist works composed originally in Chinese and circulated in China, Korea, and Japan. I-t'ien's catalog (T 55:1171a) lists, under the heading of the exegetic works on the *Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā*, three commentaries composed in China and four more works composed in Korea. The three commentaries of Chinese origin are *Ta-pan-jo po-lo-mi-to-ching pan-jo-li-chu-fen shu-tsan* (Jpn. *Daibannya haramitakyō hannya rishubun jutsusan*), T 33 #1695, and K'uei-chi (632–682); *Pan-jo li-ch'ü-fen ching-su* (Jpn. *Hannya rishubun kyōsho*), by Tao-cheng (fl. 692); and *Pan-joli-ch'ü-fen-chingyu-tsang* (Jpn. *Hannya rishubunkyō yūsan*), by I-chi (fl. 690–705). Tao-cheng and I-chi were scholar-priests from Silla who journeyed to Ch'ang-an for their study of the Fa-hsiang theories. For their biographies, see *San-kuo-i-shih* (Jpn. *Sangoku iji*), DZK 2b.23.3. In addition to these three words, Eichō's catalog (T 55:1148a) lists yet another T'ang commentary on the *Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā*: *Li-ch'ü-fen-su* (Jpn. *Rishubun sho*), by Ju-li, another Fa-hsiang scholar, a disciple of Chih-chou

(678–733), who is generally recognized as the third patriarch of the Fa-hsiang lineage. Only K'uei-chi's commentary has survived.

42. *Ta-pan-jo po-lo-mi-to-ching pan-jo li-chu-fen shu-tsan*. See the previous note.

43. Eichō's 1094 *Tōiki dentō mokuroku* (T 55:1148a) lists the following three commentaries composed in Japan: *Daihannyakyō rishubun shō*, by Heibi; *Daihannyakyō rishubun chū*, by Seihan (d. 999); and *Daihannyakyō rishubun hiseki*, by Hōzō (d. 970). None of these works has survived. Heibi's date is unknown. However, fascicle 5 of *Honchō kōsōden* (DBZ 63 #472)—the most comprehensive hagiographical record of Japanese Buddhist priest, composed in 1702 by Shiban (1626–1710)—gives a brief profile of Heibi under the heading of another Hossō priest, Shuchō (786–841), suggesting that Heibi was Shuchō's disciple.

44. DK 7:488; DK 8:388; DK 2:443; DK 11:12.

45. *Pan-jo li-ch'u-fen-ching yu-tsang* (Jpn. *Hannya rishubunkyō yūsan*). For the date of copying in Japan of this commentary, see DK 16:401.

46. The catalog was *Hossōshū shōsho*, composed by the priest Heiso in response to the request of Emperor Daigo. T 55:1138b.

47. It is true that *śak* is the root form of a Sanskrit verb that means “to be able to,” whose future passive participle is *śakya* (but not *śākya*). However, the term *śakya* on Sanskrit literature is generally understood as a proper noun—designating a particular clan to which the Gautama Buddha belonged—which is in turn a patronymic form of *śaka*, the name of a fair-skinend race, rather than a derivative of *śak*. As for *muni*, it is a term indicating a seer, an ascetic, a mendicant, a hermit, and other types of religious practitioners. It is not known from which source K'uei-chi chose *extinction* as his translation for this term. For *śakya* and *muni*, see Arthur A. MACDONELL 1954:231, 305, 311.

48. *Ta-lo chin-kang pu-k'ung chen-shih san-ma-ya-ching* (Jpn. *Tairaku kongō fukū shinjitsu sanmayahkyō*), T 8 #243.

49. One of the thirty-eight Esoteric Buddhist texts Saichō collected in Yüeh-chou prior to his return voyage to Japan; see *Dengyō daishi shōrai esshūroku*, DZ 4:371–382.

50. *Ta-lo chin-kang p'u-k'ung chen-shih san-me-i-ya-ching pan-jo-po-lo-mi-to li-ch'u-shih* (Jpn. *Tairaku kongō fukū shinjitsu sanmayahkyō hannya haramita rishushaku*), T 19 #1003. The text is popularly known as *Hanna rishushaku*, or *Rishushakukyō*.

51. For the “lives of the sixteen great bodhisattvas,” see chapter 10 of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā*, T 7:987b.

52. For a detailed discussion of Vajrasattva and his samādhi, see fascicle 1 of the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, T 18:208b–209a.

53. Ch. *Chin-kang-ting yü-ch'ieh-chung fa-a-nou-to-lo san-miao san-p'u-t'i-hsin-lun*; Jpn. *Kongōchō yugachū hotsuanokutara sanmyaku sanbodaishinron*, T 32 #1665.

54. The sixteen bodhisattvas are the attendants of the Buddhas of the four directions, i.e., Akṣobhya in the east, Ratnasāmbhava in the south, Amitābha in the west, and Amoghasiddhi in the north. Akṣobhya's attendants are Vajrasattva (Jpn. *Kongōsatta*), Vajrarājas (Kongōō), Vajrarāga (Kongōai), and Vajrasādhu (Kongōki). Ratnasāmbhava's attendants are Vajraratna (Kongōhō), Vajrateja (Kongōkō), Vajraketu (Kongōtō), and Vajrahāsa (Kongōshō). Amitābha's attendants are Vajradharma (Kongōhō), Vajratīkṣṇa (Kongōri), Vajrahetu (Kongōin), and Vajrabhāsa (Kongōgo). Amoghisiddhi's attendants are Vajrakarma (Kongōgō), Vajrarakṣa (Kongōgo), Vajrayakṣa (Kongōge), and Vajrasandhi (Kongōken). For the scriptural description of the sixteen bodhisattvas, see the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, T 18:208b–213c. For the location of these divinities in the maṇḍala, see MJ, appendix 3, pp. 33, 39.

55. The text of the *Path of the Prajñā-pāramitā* in chapter 10 of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* is identical with the passage quoted from the *Reality of the Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* with respect to its description of emptiness as transcending intrinsic nature, forms, and desires. However, following these three items, chapter 10 describes eight additional qualities of emptiness—transcendence of permanence, of self-identity, of linguistic designations, etc.—before it discusses the intrinsic pureness of the prajñā-pāramitā.

56. *Chin-kang-ting-ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei* (Jpn. *Kōngōchōgyō yuga jūhatte shiiki*), T 18 #869.

57. For the scriptures Kūkai imported, see *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:72–87. For the titles included in Kūkai's official catalog, see *Shingonshū shogaku kyōritsuron mokuroku*, KZ 1:101–107.

58. *P'u-t'i-ch'uang so-shuo i-tsü ting-lun-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Bodaijō shosetsu ichiji chōrinnōkyō*), T 19 #950. For the date of Amoghavajra's translation of this text, see fascicle 9 of the *K'ai-yüan Catalog*, T 55:569c. For the entry of this title in Kūkai's catalog of importation, see *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:73. The earlier translation of this sūtra by Bodhiruci, *I-tsü fo-ting lun-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Ichiji butchō rinnōkyō*), T 19 #951, was copied in Japan as early as 748 (DK 10:325).

59. In addition to the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, already introduced to Nara Japan, *Pu-k'ung chüan-so shen-pien chen-yen-ching* (Jpn. *Fukū kenjaku jinben shingonkyō*), translated by Bodhiruci, also translates the mantra as *chen-yen*, or *shingon*. The earliest record of this sūtra copied in Japan dates from the year 753. See DK 12:411.

60. *Hizōki*, KZ 2:1–73.

61. Reflecting this secret identity, Ekāksara-uṣṇīṣacakra is represented either

as Śākyamuni or as Mahāvairocana in the Buddhist iconographic tradition of East Asia. See Hisatoyo ISHIDA 1987:52–54.

62. *Ta-ch'eng li-ch'u liu-po-lo-mi-to-ching* (Jpn. *Daijō rishu rokuharamitsukyō*), T 8 #261:868b.

## 7. Semiology of the Dharma; or, The Somaticity of the Text

1. *Dainichikyō kaidai* (“*hokkai jōshin*”), KZ 1:634.

2. As Kūkai puts it in *Kyōokyō kaidai*, an introductory essay on the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*, “Both this sūtra and the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* are the root of the Tathāgata’s secret that Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna received in the iron stūpa in southern India” (KZ 1:719). Elsewhere he states that the *Prajñā-pāramitā-naya Sūtra*, the sixth of the eighteen vajraśekhara class sūtras, was likewise transmitted from Vajrasattva to Nāgārjuna in the iron stūpa. See *Rishukyō kaidai*, KZ 1:728–729.

3. It is unknown whether Kūkai’s paradigm of the entire universe as the primordial sūtra is his original formulation or an idea passed on to him by Hui-kuo. There are several passages in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* that are suggestive of this idea. Fascicle 51 of the eighty-fascicle sūtra relates the words of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra to the effect that when any particle of dust in the universe is crashed into finer particles, it produces from within a chapter of the text of the *Avataṃsaka* (T 10:272c–273a). Luis GOMEZ (1995:107–108) has presented a translation of the Sanskrit version of the sūtra passage corresponding to this section, demonstrating that the idea of the universe as a scriptural text can also be found in Buddhist literature in Indian languages. As Gomez has pointed out, “the idea is developed with a metaphor that has interesting connotations for our understanding of what a religious text or image is, and what it means to interpret, render, or imagine religious truths. The whole universe is represented on a text or a canvas, but this representation is itself contained in every particle of dust in the universe. With this tantalizing image the text can lead us to reflect on the relationship between text and interpretation, or between representation and reality.”

Inspired by such imagery, the Hua-yen theorizer Fa-tsang categorizes the text of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* into six levels: the permanent text, the vast text, the advanced text, the intermediate text, the rudimentary text, and the abbreviated text. He identifies the permanent text with the whole universe, as does Kūkai. See *Hua-yen t'an-hsüan-chi* (Jpn. *Kegon tangenki*), T 35:122a–b. Also see TAMAKI Kōshirō 1983:170–172.

4. Michel FOUCAULT (1970:85–86), for example, speaks of this as follows: “In so far as language can represent all representations it is with good reason the element of the universal. There must exist within it at least the possibility of a language that will gather into itself, between its words, the totality of the world, and, inversely, the world, as the totality of what is representable, must be able to become, in its totality, an Encyclopaedia.”

5. For example, the *Prajñāpradīpa-mūlamadhyamaka-vṛtti* (Jpn. *Hannya tōron shaku*), T 30 #1566, and *Nyāyapravēśaka* (Jpn. *Inmyō nisshō riron*), T 44 ##1628–1629, had already been copied in 738 and 735, respectively. However, there is no record of Japanese works from the Nara period dealing with these texts.

6. Yoshito HAKEDA (1972:234) has translated the title of this work as *Meanings of Sound, Word, Reality*. Hakeda seems to have intended to reflect in his translation the wide range of Kūkai’s usage of *shō* and *ji*, which literally mean “voice” and “letter,” respectively. For example, Kūkai uses *shō* to refer to the roaring of thunder, the howling of the wind, or any natural sound. On the other hand, for the current discussion it is important to maintain Kūkai’s distinction between the phonic and graphic aspects of signs, as demonstrated in his original title in classical Chinese. I have therefore chosen a literal translation of Kūkai’s title and avoided using the term *word* as Hakeda did in his translation, which blurs the distinction between the phonic and the graphic.

7. See Katsumata Shunkyō (KCZ 1:577–578); HATTA Sachio 1994:117.

8. For the simultaneity of sign production and the procreation of cosmic and social order as well as the subject that situates itself in that order, see Julia KRISTEVA 1969:9; IZUTSU Toshihiko 1983:238; 1985:245.

9. Robert MAGLIOLA (1984:87–129) and David LOY (1988:248–260), for example, have compared Derrida’s deconstructive critique of the Western metaphysical tradition based on a dichotomous opposition of values to Nāgārjuna’s refutation of dualism in the theory of the middle path. Harold COWARD (1990:125–146) has approached Nāgārjuna via Derrida by placing Nāgārjuna in the general context of Buddhist theories of language. On the other hand, the existing studies seem to have paid insufficient attention to the fact that Derrida’s poststructuralist approach to language is grounded in his analysis of *gramme*. That is, to make the comparison more effective, Derrida’s theory should be compared to Buddhist traditions that developed philosophy that not only separate the graphic and phonic aspects of language but make writing a central topic of their theoretical inquiry—especially Esoteric Buddhist traditions, of which Nāgārjuna is also an indispensable part (Robert THURMAN 1984:22, 76). From this perspective, Morimoto’s study presents itself to be

seriously limited in scope, for he fails to see Kūkai's prioritization of writing over speech, which results from the two distinct semiological strategies in Kūkai's writings mentioned earlier. In my discussion in this chapter, I indicate my finding of some parallelism between Kūkai and Derrida in the notes, as counterpoint to my analysis of Kūkai's language theory in the main text. I offer this approach with the caveat that, although a direct comparison between Buddhism and Derrida of the kind attempted by Morimoto, Loy, Coward, and others may inspire further studies of either or both, the similarity between Derridian grammatology and Kūkai's mantra-based semiology may be a mere coincidence (of course, coincidences are not necessarily without meaning).

10. The traditional reading of this line in the Shingon School makes the causal relationship between voice (*shō*) and vibration (*kyō*) the reverse of my interpretation here. This is obviously contrary to what Kūkai asserted in his first sentence, and, as Yoshito HAKEDA noted (1972:236 n8), it has created exegetic difficulties for Shingon scholars. It appears to me that the problem derived from a rather simple mistake in transliterating the original Chinese text into classical Japanese, which, according to the tradition, reads "*kyō wa kanarazu shō ni yoru. shō wa sunawachi kyō no motonari.*" I have changed the transliteration to read as follows: "*kyō wa kanarazu shō no yue nari. shō wa sunawachi kyō, sono moto nari.*"

#### 11. *Benkenmitsu nikyōron*, KZ 1:476.

12. The ten evil acts (*jūaku*) are killing, stealing, committing improper sexual acts, lying, flattery, slander, duplicity, greediness, wrath, and folly. The five cardinal sins (*gogyaku*) are killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing arhats, causing a Buddha's body to bleed, and destroying the harmony of the Sangha.

#### 13. Cf. Jacques DERRIDA 1974:85–86.

#### 14. *Issaikyō kaidai*, KZ 1:850.

15. *Dainichikyō kaidai* ("*hokkaijōshin*"), KZ 1:639. The term *in* (Ch. *yin*), for "seal," is a translation of the Sanskrit *mudrā*, that is, the Dharmakāya's physical acts manifesting his work of saving beings. The Sanskrit term in its original usage also has the meaning of "seal." For the scriptural foundation of Kūkai's definition of *shabetsu chiin*, see fascicle 1 of Śubhakarasiṁha's commentary on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 39:58ob) and the *Discernment of the State of Enlightenment* (T 18:291a–b), a commentary on the *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*. For the relationship between Kūkai's notion of *shabetsu chiin* and the four categories of the Dharmakāya's manifestation (i.e., *svabhāva-kāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *nirmāṇa-kāya*, and *nisyanda-kāya*), see KATŌ Seiichi 1989:252–254.

16. Kūkai's reasoning here can be compared with what Derrida has described as to "think of writing as a game," the game of the absence of the transcendental

signified, which is “not a *play in the world* . . . but the *game of the world*.” Jacques DERRIDA 1974:50, original italic. Curiously, this paradigm of Kūkai’s seems to be a cognate of that of Derrida, who understands his *differance* as play and signs as its effect. On *differance* Derrida states: “There is no name for it at all, not even the name of essence or of Being, not even that of “*differance*,” which is not a name, which is not a pure nominal unity, and unceasingly dislocates itself in a chain of differing and deferring substitutions. . . . This unnamable is not an ineffable Being which no name could approach: God, for example. This unnamable is the play which makes possible nominal effects, the relatively unitary and atomic structures that are called names, the chains of substitutions of names in which, for example, the nominal effect *differance* is itself *enmeshed*, carried off, reinscribed, just as a false entry or a false exit is still part of the game, a function of the system” (DERRIDA 1982:26–27, original italic). One must note, however, that Kūkai’s term *differentiation* (*shabetsu*) is interchangeable with *dharmakāya* (*hōshin*). As for Derrida, for Kūkai, if there is anything that is truth, or reality, it can only be located in play. However, unlike Derrida’s play, which is the endless process of *differance* multiplying itself without creating anything else, Kūkai’s play is the Dharmakāya’s cosmic speech that proliferates its own intentionality of saving beings. From Kūkai’s viewpoint, one fails to read a sense of nihilistic cynicism in Derridian play.

17. A passage from fascicle 3 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 18:21a), quoted in Kūkai’s *Sokushin jōbutsugi*, KZ 1:506.

18. “Yama ni asonde sen o shitou no shi,” *Henjō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 1, KZ 3:402.

19. *Bonji shittan jimo narabi ni shakugi*, KZ 2:729.

20. Ibid., 724.

21. *Hizōki*, KZ 2:21–22.

22. *Yü-chieh chin-kang-ting-ching shih-tzu-mu-t’ing* (Jpn. *Yuga kongōchōgyō jimobon*), T 18 #880.

23. For a scriptural discussion of the letter *A* as the source of all letters, see fascicle 5, chapter 16, of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 18:38b.

24. In this sense, Kūkai’s letter *A* seems to resemble Derrida’s letter *a* in the spelling of the term *differance*. Cf. DERRIDA 1982:5–6. “What am I to do in order to speak of the *a* of *differance*? It goes without saying that it cannot be exposed. One can expose only that which at a certain moment can become present, manifest, that which can be shown, presented as something present, a being-present in its truth, in the truth of a present or the presence of the present.” For Derrida, the letter *a* becomes the most effective mark exposing the fictionality of the self-presence of things represented by signs, because the signs, as writing, are traces: “Always differing and deferring the trace is never

as it is in the presentation of itself. It erases itself in presenting itself, muffles itself in resonating, like the *a* writing itself, inscribing its pyramid in *differance*” (Derrida 1982:23). For Kūkai, too, the letter *A* is the presence of absence, the presentation of the originally nonarising, the deferred presence via other signs, which inscribes itself unostensibly in all other letters for the production of their “meanings,” that is, their power to express the movement of differentiation, or emptiness. In this sense, Kūkai’s letter *A* embodies the Dharmakāya’s “preaching” of the Dharma, his compassionate act of saving beings, the act that is to be ritually emulated by the practitioners through their training in the three mysteries. Unlike Derrida’s deconstruction for deconstruction’s sake, the one attempted by Kūkai seems always to return to the construction of specific ritual actions capable of demonstrating the empty as the form.

25. Cf. Julia Kristeva’s notions of *signifying differential* and *palagram*, the two semioanalytic concepts that Kristeva introduced to illustrate the polysemic signifying practices of poetic text (Kristeva 1969:293, 298).

26. Cf. Roland BARTHES 1975:64. “Text means *Tissue*; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue—this texture—the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web.” Original italic.

27. Paraphrasing of a discussion in fascicle 20 of Śubhakarasiṁha’s *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 39:788c.

28. *Dainichikyō kaidai* (“*hokkai jōshin*”), KZ 1:639.

29. A quote from fascicle 2 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 18:10a.

30. For two other places in the sūtra where the letter *A* is discussed as the source of all languages, see T 18:22b–c, 38b.

31. Interestingly, Jacques Derrida also speaks of the overpowering signifying force inherent in each letter, which he calls “animality,” the force against Reason, which strives to keep language as its faithful servant for conveying controlled meanings. In his characteristically pessimistic tone, Derrida discusses the spacing between printed letters as symbolic of *differance*. For Derrida, this absence, the interstice from which the letters’ animality expresses itself, points at the impossibility of the metaphysical, or “ontotheological,” projects of philosophy based on the presence and self-presence of things. Yet, placed in the context of Kūkai’s discussion of the polysemy of writing, Derrida’s argument seems almost comically optimistic.

Absence is the permission given to letters to spell themselves out and to signify, but it is also, in language’s twisting of itself, *what* letters say: they say

freedom and a granted emptiness, that which is formed by being enclosed in letters' net.

Absence, finally as the breath of the letter, for the letter *lives*. “The name must germinate, otherwise it is false,” says André Breton. Signifying absence or separation, the letter *lives* as aphorism. . . .

The animality of the letter certainly appears, at first, as *one* metaphor among others. But, above all, it is metaphor *itself*, the origin of language as metaphor in which Being and Nothing, the conditions of metaphor, the beyond-metaphor of metaphor, never say themselves. Metaphor, or the animality of the letter, is the primary and infinite equivocality of the signifier as Life. . . . This overpowerfulness as the life of the signifier is produced within the anxiety and the wandering of the language always richer than knowledge, the language always capable of the movement which takes it further than peaceful and sedentary certitude. (Derrida 1978:72–73, original italic)

Kūkai seems to be fully aware of what Derrida refers to as the animality of the letter, which threatens, with its saturating semantic richness, the certitude of language as a communicative tool. However, for Kūkai, this animality is itself the key to the materiality and somaticity of language, through which ordinary language transforms itself into mantra.

32. *Shōji jissōgi*, KZ 1:523.

33. *Kyōōkyō kaidai*, KZ 1:721.

34. *Unjigī*, KZ 1:547.

35. “The prisons of hell and the celestial palaces; the Buddha nature and the rotten seed of enlightenment; delusion and awakening; samsāra and nirvāna; dualism and nondualism. . . . For those who have realized the secret letters of mantra, all these are just different signs for the originally enlightened mind [of all sentient beings]. Yet, by applying this same medicine, those who attach themselves to falsity of identity will endanger their lives, and those who understand the rightness of differentiation will attain eternal life” (*Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*, fscl. 1, KZ 1:128–129).

## 8. Of Mantra and Palace: Textualizing the Emperor, Calamity, and the Cosmos

1. According to IKEDA Genta (1977:201–202), the period of “statecraftism” began under the reign of Emperor Kōnin (r. 770–781) of the late Nara period, reached its apogee during the reign of Emperor Saga (r. 809–823), and rapidly declined during that of Emperor Ninmei (r. 833–850). This seems to support

my thesis, developed in this chapter, that the Esoteric Buddhist theory of language and ritual developed by Kūkai was antithetical to statecraftism and was instrumental in causing the decline of Confucian ideology that served as the underpinning of the statecraftist regime.

2. *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 107, KT 6:61. For the growth of the Confucian educational system at the Daigaku in the early Heian period, see MOMO Hiroyuki 1993:205–210.

3. Translation by Wing-tsit Chan in CHAN 1963:47. Translation partially modified.

4. *Keikokushū*, fscl. 11, GR 8:518a.

5. See, for example, *Henjō hakki seireishū*, fscls. 5, 6, 9, KZ 3:454, 462, 463, 466, 467, 519, 522, 523.

6. *Kōya zappitsushū*, fscl. 1, KZ 3:588.

7. See Kūkai's introduction to *Bunpitsu ganshinshō* composed in the summer of Kōnin 11 (820), KZ 3:207.

8. It may have been the fact that in his youth Kūkai received the Confucian education at the State College, unusual for a Buddhist priest of the Nara or early Heian period, that made him a writer whom court officials approached as a model.

9. See, for example, Kūkai's letters in *Kōya zappitsushū*, KZ 3:582, 590, 594, 602.

10. *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 3, KZ 3:426.

11. *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 1, KZ 3:408.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 407.

14. *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 74, KT 5:372.

15. Translation by Wing-tsit Chan in CHAN 1963:39. Italic by the translator.

16. Translation by Wing-tsit Chan in CHAN 1963:40.

17. *Ch'un-ch'iu tso chuan*, fscl. 211. Translations by Hall and Ames in David HALL and Roger AMES 1987:273.

18. *Han-shib-wei-chuan*, fscl. 6, quoted in ŌMURA Mikio 1994:162.

19. Discussed in detail in the first section of chapter 1 of this book.

20. *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 20, KT 3:234.

21. KT 2:79, 104, 105, 114, 158, 182, 184, 407, 413, 441–442.

22. Translation by Wing-tsit Chan in CHAN 1963:30. Italic added.

23. *Shoku nihongi*, fscl. 38, KT 2:513–514.

24. *Nihon kiryaku*, fscl. 13, KT 10:266, 275; *Ruiju kokushi*, fscls. 25, 36, KT 5:155, 246; *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 12, KT 3:38–39.

25. “Tenchō kōtei daigokuden ni oite hyakusō o kusshte amagoi suru ganmon,” *Henjō kongō hakki seireishū*, fscl. 6, KZ 3:467–469.

26. Translation by Wing-tsit Chan in CHAN 1963:40.
27. *Shou-hu kou-chieh-chu t'o-lo-ni-ching* (Jpn. *Shugo kokkaishu daranikyō*), T 19 #997. It is unknown from what language the text was translated into Chinese. No Sanskrit or Tibetan text with this title exists today.
28. *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 2, KT 31:53. Also see SUEKI Fumihiko 1993:229–239.
29. For the Esoteric Buddhist ordination of Heizei, see *Heizei tennō kan-jōmon* (KZ 2:160–163); for Kūkai's commentary on the *Heart Sūtra*, see *Hannya shingyō hiken* (KZ 1:558–561). Also see my discussion in the first section of chapter 5.
30. *Hokekyō shaku*, KZ 1:782.
31. As discussed in the second section of chapter 7.
32. *Jen-wan pan-jo-ching* (Jpn. *Ninnō hannyakyō*), T 8 #245. For the effort by the Nara and Heian courts to promote the sūtra and for the canonicity of the sūtra for the public services performed by the Nara clergy, see FUTABA Kenkō 1984:232–233, 292.
33. Kūkai's other quotes of Confucian classics include *Lun-yü chi-chieh* (Jpn. *Rongo shūgi*), *Lun-yü i-shu* (Jpn. *Rongo gisho*), and *Shang-shu cheng-i* (Jpn. *Shōshō seigi*).
34. For example, paraphrasing the *Pan-cheng-lun* (Jpn. *Benshōron*, T 52 #2110), by the T'ang theorizer Fa-lin (572–640), Kūkai asserts that the items of the Buddhist five precepts are tantamount to humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trust (Ch. *jen, i, li, chih, hsin*; Jpn. *jin, gi, rei, chi, shin*), the ethical principles of the Confucian virtue of the “five permanents” (Ch. *wu-ch'ang*; Jpn. *gojō*). “The five precepts correspond to the five permanents of the non-Buddhist teaching. Abstaining from killing out of pity for sentient beings is called humaneness. Avoiding damage to others by abstaining from improper sexual acts is called righteousness. Keeping one's mind free from intoxication is called propriety. Living a life of purity and contentment and not stealing from others is called wisdom. Finally, preventing oneself from stating untruth is called trust. These are the five essential virtues from which people should never deviate, even for a moment. Thus, sage kings rule their nations based on these rules, and gentlemen also establish themselves by abiding by these principles. Because they constantly promote these five, they are called the “five permanents” (T 52:493b; KZ 1:183). Also see Fukui Kōjun's annotation in KIK 97:67–333.
35. *Shih-chu p'i-p'o-sha-lun* (Jpn. *Jūjū bibasharon*), T 26 #1521.
36. Kūkai notes that Buddhist literature on kingship distinguishes four classes of cakravartins—the universal monarchs of gold, silver, copper, and iron—because of the difference in the profundity of their grasp of the Dharma. The monarchs of gold rule all the four cosmic continents of Buddhist cosmology.

ogy. Those of silver rule over three of the four continents, those of copper, two, and those of iron, only one. For the classification of cakravartins, see John STRONG 1983:49–56.

37. Skt. *sapta-bodhyaṅga*; Jpn. *shichi kakushi*. The seven legs consists of (1) the ability to correctly distinguish the true from the false; (2) the courageous effort to pursue the Dharma; (3) joy in abiding in the Dharma; (4) the attainment of physical comfort through training; (5) nonattachment to external objects; (6) the mastery of meditation; and (7) the perfect unity of meditation and wisdom.

38. Kūkai's description of the attributes of cakravartins is largely based on fascicle 2 of the *Ch'i-shih yen-pen-ching* (Jpn. *Kise inponkyō*), T 1 #24:317a–319a. For a study of the symbolism of these attributes of cakravartins and their relationship to the Tathāgatas, see John STRONG 1983:45–72; Frank REYNOLDS 1972:6–30; and Paul MUS 1935:91.

39. See Kūkai's explanation of cintāmaṇi in the *Hizōki*, KZ 2:3, 45. Also see fascicle 7 of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 18:45b.

40. SUEKI Fumihiko (1993:110–112) has pointed out that the idea that the islands of Japan were a peripheral kingdom, *zokusankoku*, a “scattered millet grain nation,” became widely accepted in intellectual writings from the mid-Heian period. Sueki has argued that overcoming such a geographical inferiority complex was a major issue for many political thinkers of the Kamakura period, who invented a new kind of discourse for advocating their nationalistic and ethnocentric agenda of integrating Shintō and Buddhism for the defication of the Japanese emperors. Kūkai's public characterization in his *Ten Abiding Stages* of the Japanese emperor as *zokusannō* may have been one of the sources for the antiethnocentrist force in Japanese Buddhist discourse that became an object of criticism in the Kamakura period.

41. *P'u-sa pen-yen-ching* (Jpn. *Bosatsu hongōkyō*), T 10 #281:450a–c. For the metaphor of royal coronation and the completion of the bodhisattvas' ten stages, see Edward THOMAS 1933:202–203; and ARAMAKI Noritoshi 1983:99–101.

42. Kūkai states that body, palace, and text represent the three media through which the Dharmakāya is expressed as mandala: mahā-mandala (*dai-mandara*), consisting of (the pictorial representation of) the physical presence of Buddhas; samaya mandala (*sanmaya mandara*), made up of the symbolism of ritual instruments, the treasures of the palace; and the dharma mandala (*hōmandara*), composed of letters. The universe, where all these qualities meet, is identified as the karma mandala (*katsuma mandara*), the mandala of the Dharmakāya's action of saving beings.

43. A discussion in fascicle 6 of the *Golden Light Sūtra* paraphrased by Kūkai (T 16:430a; KZ 1:191–192).
44. A discussion in *Wang-fa cheng-lun-ching* (Jpn. *Ōbō seironkyō*) paraphrased by Kūkai (T 14 #524–798b; KZ 1:205–206).
45. The *Three Histories* (*San-shib*; Jpn. *Sanshi*) consist of *Shib-chi* (Jpn. *Shiki*), *Han-shu* (Jpn. *Kansho*), and *Hou-han-shu* (Jpn. *Gokansho*).
46. Yakṣas (*yasha*), gandharvas (*kendatsuba*), asuras (*ashura*), garudas (*karoda*), kinnaras (*kinnara*), and mahoragas (*magoraka*).
47. “Kyūchū shingon’in no shōgatsu no mishuhō no sōjō,” *Zoku henjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:518–519.
48. A quote from fascicle 20 of Śubhakarasiṁha’s *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 39:788c.
49. *Konshōmyōkyō himitsu kada*, KZ 1:830.
50. For the transliteration of this mantra, originally written in Chinese characters in the sūtra, into the roman alphabet, I have relied on Hatta Sachio (SJ:120). Hatta’s interpretation differs slightly from the conventional manner in which the mantra is understood in the modern Shingon School. Cf. YOSHIDA Ekō 1960:456.
51. The relationship between writing, the originally nonarising (emptiness), and the Dharmakāya is discussed in the third section of the previous chapter.
52. *Unjigi*, KZ 1:538.
53. *Shōji jissōgi*, KZ 1:526.
54. *Sandai jitsuroku*, fscl. 7, KT 4:113. Prince Iyo, one of Kanmu’s sons, was arrested in 806 for an attempted coup against Emperor Heizei. In the same year, the prince was confined to Kawaharadera in Asuka, and there committed suicide. His mother also killed herself upon the prince’s death. Fujiwara no Nakanari (?–810), a trusted advisor to Emperor Heizei, schemed to reenthrone Heizei immediately following his abdication in 810, fought against the court of Emperor Saga, and was defeated. Tachibana no Hayanari (?–842) was implicated in the attempted coup in 844 by Prince Tsunesada and died of illness on his way to exile in Tōtōmi province. Bun’ya no Miyatamaro is unidentified. He may be related to Bun’ya no Akitsu, advisor to Prince Tsunesada, who was punished with Hayanari.
55. For a detailed study of the ritual procedure of the Misaie and an analysis of its purpose, see KURABAYASHI Masatsugu 1980. Also see YOSHIDA Kazuhiko 1995:150–202.
56. *Gōke shidai*, fscl. 3, ZKS 36:71a–78b.
57. Ibid., 73a ff.
58. Ibid., 73b.

59. Other prerequisites included the principal lecturership at Saishōe at Yakushiji and Yuimae at Kōfukuji. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:58–59; *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, fscl. 2, KT 4:115.

60. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 22, KT 3:121.

61. *Nihon kiryaku* 1, fscl. 14, KT 10:333; *Ruiju kokushi*, fscl. 177, KT 6:209; *Kōbōdaishi gokoden*, KDZ 1:261b. Since 819, the number of officials in the Sōgō had been set at eight: one *sōjō*, one *daisōzu*, two *shōsōzu*, and four *rishi*. Beginning in 823 the ninth member, occupying the new post of *gonrisshi*, Assistant Vinaya Master, was added. See *Sōgō bunin*, DBZ 65:9a, 17b.

62. *Nihon kiryaku* 1, fscl. 14, KT 10:334.

63. “Kyūchū shingon’in no shōgatsu no mishuhō no sōjō,” *Zoku benjō hakki seireishū hoketsushō*, fscl. 9, KZ 3:518–519. The memorial included in the *Seireishū*, which is the one copied and edited by the priest Saisei (1025–1115) of Ninnaji, gives its date as the *kinoto-hitsuji* in the eleventh month of Jōwa 1. However, there was no *kinoto-hitsuji* in the eleventh month of that year. On the other hand, the same memorial in Kūkai’s hand, reproduced in fascicle 3 of *Shoku nihon kōki* (KT 3:32), has the date of *kinoto-hitsuji* in the twelfth month of the same year, which corresponds to the nineteenth day of the month.

64. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:67; KDS:778.

65. *Tōji chōja bunin*, GR 4:623a. There exists no contemporaneous record describing the actual ritual content of Kūkai’s New Year’s service, which was later known as Goshichinichi mishuhō, the Imperial Rite of the Second Seven Days of the New Year. For the earliest records and details of the ritual procedures followed in the Imperial Rite beginning in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, see *Goshichishō* and *Goshichinichi mishuhō burui*, ZG 25B:63a–105b; 110a–127a.

66. For the location of Shingon’in in the imperial palace and a detailed floor plan indicating the layout of ritual altars and other facilities in the chapel’s interior, see *Eiji ni’nen shingon’in mishuhōki*, ZG 25B:128a–143a.

67. *Tōji chōja bunin*, GR 4:623a–627b.

68. *Makura no sōshi* #295, NKT 19:309.

69. See the document of Tōji dated from the first year of Jōchi (1361), collected in *Tōji monjo*, DK Tōji monjo 1:340. The priest Kōsai of Tōji, who was to serve as the presiding master for the Mishuhō, deplores the cancellation of Misaie that year.

70. For the origin, growth, and decline of the Mishuhō, see HASUMI Kanzen 1920, HASE Hōshū 1924, and TAKAMI Kankyo 1975.

71. From the late Heian period onward, the abbot of Tōji, or, *tōji chōya*, was referred to as *tōji ichi no chōya*, the First Abbot of Tōji, who was supported by *tōji ni no chōji* (the Second Abbot), *san no chōji* (the Third Abbot), and,

eventually, *yon no chōji* (the Fourth Abbot). At times of illness or when the First Abbot was otherwise indisposed, the assisting abbots performed the Mishuhō. See KAMIKAWA Michio 1985.

72. Also known as Nandikeśvara or Gaṇeṣa, the elephant-faced divinity, known to be a son of Śiva and Umā. For the ritual worship of Gaṇapati, see *Ta-shen-t'en huan-hsi shuang-hsen p'i-na-yeh-chia-fa* (Jpn. *Daishōten kangi sōshin binayakahō*), T 21 #1266.

73. The twelve gods consist of the gods of the ten directions—Indra (east), Agni (southeast), Yama (south), Rākṣasa (southwest), Varuṇa (west), Vāyu (northwest), Vaiśvarāṇa (north), Īśana (northeast), Brahmā (above), and Pṛthivī (below)—plus Āditya, the sun, and Candra, the moon. Agni (fire), Varuṇa (water), Vāyu (wind), and Pṛthivī (earth) are also the gods of the four great elements. Each of these twelve gods presides over various other gods and spirits, including vicious spirits believed to be the cause of calamities. Yama, for example, is said to preside over all the many spirits that spread epidemics; Rākṣasa heads all the bloodthirsty demons; Varuṇa leads nāgas causing rains and floods; and Īśana presides over vengeful spirits. For the scriptural sources for the worship of the twelve gods, see *Kung-yang shih-erh ta-wei-te-t'ien pao-en-p'in* (Jpn. *Kuyō jūni daiitokuten hōonbō*), T 21 #129, and *Shih-erh-t'ien-kung i-kuei* (Jpn. *Jūnitengu giki*), T 21 #1298.

74. For the legend of Kūkai's cintāmaṇi and the restoration of the Mount Muroo temple, see the biography of the Hossō priest Kenne, who was said to have assisted Kūkai in his esotericization of the mountain temple. *Kōbō daishi deshifu*, fscl. 3, KDZ 10:104a–107a.

75. *Saishōōkyō himitsu kada*, KZ 1:830.

76. The Esoteric Buddhist names of these bodhisattvas in the vajradhātu maṇḍala are Vajraratna (Kongōhō) and Vajraketu (Kongōtō). Vajraketu is also understood as Kṣitigarbha. Kūkai identifies Ratnadhvaja with Vajrakuta, suggesting that Ratnadhvaja is another name for Kṣitigarbha (KZ 1:823). For a description of these two bodhisattvas, see fascicle 1 of the *Vajrāśekhara Sūtra*, T 18:209c–211ob. For the location of these divinities in the maṇḍala, see MJ, appendix 3:33 #12, #14.

77. *Goyūgō shichiko bikuketsu*, Shinkei's ritual manual preserved at Kajūji, quoted in TAKAMI Kankyo 1975:15–16.

78. The wisdoms of the original nature of the universe (*hokkai taishōchi*), of the great mirror (*daienkyōchi*), of equality (*byōdōshōchi*), of observation (*myōkanzatchi*), and of action (*jōshosachi*).

79. See notes 75 and 76.

80. For the actual ingredients used to make the scented water, see *Yōwa ni'nen goshichi'nichi mishuhōki*, ZG 25B:15ob.

81. The iconographic features of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra include the seven royal regalia of a cakravartin, namely, the cakra, the mighty elephant, the flying horse, the undefeatable general, the sagacious minister, the virtuous queen, and the cintāmaṇi. See the *Mandarashū* by Kōzen (1121–1203), T zuzō 4 #3018. For the symbolism of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra as the manifestation of Śākyamuni’s true identity, see *P’u-t’i-ch’uang so-shuo i-tsü-ting lun-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Bodaijō shosetsu ichiji chōrinnōkyō*), T 19 #950. Also see *I-tsü fo-ting lun-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Ichiji butchō rinnōkyō*), T 19 #951.

82. See, for example, chapter 48, fascicle 14, of the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*: “Buddhas always see through the most profound prajñā-pāramitā with their Buddha Eye. . . . That is because the deepest prajñā-pāramitā is capable of producing all Buddhas and endows all Buddhas with their all-embracing wisdom” (T 8:323a–b).

83. See, for example, *P’u-t’i-ch’uang so-shuo i-tsü ting-lun-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Bodaijō shosetsu ichiji chōrinnōkyō*), T 19 #950, and *I-tsü fo-ting lun-wang-ching* (Jpn. *Ichiji butchō rinnōkyō*), T 19 #951, especially T 19:195b–c, 227a–b. For the worship of Buddhhalocana in Japan as the consort of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra and its scriptural sources, see MISAKI Ryōshū 1988:524 ff.

84. Among the scriptural sources brought to Japan by Kūkai that discuss the dual identity of the Buddha is *Chin-kang-ting i-tsü-ting-lung-wang yü-ch’ieh i-ch’ieh-shih-ch’u nien-sang ch’eng-fu-i-kuei* (Jpn. *Kongōchō ichiji chōrinō yuga issai jisho nenju jōbutsu gigi*), T 19 #957. See *Shōrai mokuroku* and *Sangakuroku*, KZ 1:76, 107. Kūkai’s discussion of the dual identity of Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra is considered in the fourth section of chapter 6.

85. See *Gobu darani mondō ge san shūhiron*, KZ 2:91.

86. The Esoteric worship of Bhaisajyaguru is described in *Yao-shih ju-lai kuan-hsing i-kuei-fa* (Jpn. *Yakushi nyorai kangyō gikibō*), T 19 #923, and in *Yao-shih ju-lai nien-sung i-kuei* (Jpn. *Yakushi nyorai nenju giki*), T 19 #924. The worship of Samantabhadra as a divinity of longevity is described in *Chin-kang shou-ming t’o-lo-ni ching-fa* (Jpn. *Kongō jumyō darani kyōbō*), T 20 #1134, and *Chin-kang shou-ming t’o-lo-ni nien-sung-fa* (Jpn. *Kongō jumyō darani nenjuhō*), T 20 #1133. Both of these ritual manuals were imported from China by Kūkai. See *Shōrai mokuroku* and *Sangakuroku*, KZ 1:75–76, 106–107.

87. *Saishōōkyō himitsu kada*, KZ 1:830. Although Acara does not appear in the *Golden Light Sūtra*, Kūkai suggests that the goddess of the earth Pr̄thivī, who manifests the virtue of steadfastness, represents Acara. For the mantras of Avalokiteśvara, Pr̄thivī, and Lakṣumī, see fascicles 14, 17, and 18 of the sūtra, T 16:433b–c, 439c, 440c–441a.

88. Although pronounced the same way, the title given Dōkyō, “King of Dharma,” is written differently from, and must not be confused with, the title

“Dharma Emperors” given cloistered emperors. Cf. Wm. Theodore DE BARY 1958:157.

89. *Shoku nihongi*, fscls. 26, 27, 30, KT 2:324, 332–333, 368–371.

90. *Yuikai*, KZ 1:861.

## 9. A Genealogy of Mantra: Kūkai’s Legacy

1. *Gosanjōin gosokuiki*, GR 7:81b.

2. The term *rinnō kanjō* can be found in fascicle 3 of Śubhakarasiṁha’s commentary on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 39:610c.

3. *Fushimi tennō nikki*, 3/13 Shōō 1 (1288); *Hanazono tennō nikki*, 5/18 Bunpo 1 (1317).

4. It appears that by the late Heian period, it became customary for the emperor to receive the coronation mantras and mudrās not directly from Esoteric Buddhist priests but from his regent, who was of the Kujō or Sanjō branch of the Fujiwara clan. See ABE Yasurō 1989:120–121; KAMIKAWA Michio 1989:121–125.

5. *Tōji kanchiin kongōzō shōgyō*, box 248, no. 17.

6. See, for example, the discussions in the *Greater Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, fscls. 404, 479, T 7 #220. Also see the *Vajracchedikā Sūtra*, T 8 #235:75sc.

7. For the illustration of Buddhalocana’s mudrās and mantras, see Śubhakarasiṁha’s commentary on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, T 39:633c, 716b, 720c.

8. For the ritual procedures of the abhiṣeka as a royal coronation, see ibid., 666c–667a, 736a–b.

9. *Jen-wan pan-jo-ching* (Jpn. *Ninnō hannyakyō*), T 8 #245:827b. Kūkai’s emphasis on the ten good deeds for cakravartins is described in the third section of the previous chapter.

10. The four accomplishments of the ruler in the fifth section were inspired by the four essential chapters (*shiyōbon*) of the *Lotus Sūtra*: chapters 2, 14, 16, and 25 (T 8:10b, 37a, 42a, 56c). The four mantras that correspond to the four mudrās are, respectively, of Mahāvairocana of the vajradhātu maṇḍala, Mahāvairocana of the garbha maṇḍala, the five central Buddhas of the vajradhātu maṇḍala, and the five central Buddhas of the garbha maṇḍala (T 18:20a, 242b, 263b; T 39:722c).

11. For the role of the houses of regency of Ichijō, Nijō, and Kūjō in preserving the coronation abhiṣeka, see KAMIKAWA Michio 1989:114–115, 128–131.

12. KUSHIDA Ryōkyō (1964:318–319) has pointed to another ritual manual preserved at the Shōmyōji archive, Kanazawa, entitled *Abhisēka of the*

*Cakravartin* (*Rinnō kanjō*), which describes the coronation abhiṣeka in exactly the same manner as in the Kongōzō document discussed earlier (see note 5). Kushida's manual, which carries the date of copying as 1324, states that it was composed in 1154 by a certain Chōshin of Tōji, who asserts that this coronation abhiṣeka was transmitted secretly through Amoghavajra, Hui-kuo, and Kūkai and that because the priest Kanshuku, abbot of Tōji between 926 and 930, transmitted this secret to his disciple Kankyo, the abbot of Jingoji, the exact genealogy of the masters who sustained the tradition was known to his school. (There exists no earlier record indicative of Kūkai's receiving of the coronation abhiṣeka from Hui-kuo. However, as MISAKI Ryōshū [1994:132–133] has pointed out, there are some Chinese sources that suggest that Amoghavajra referred to the abhiṣeka he bestowed upon the T'ang emperors as the coronation of the cakravartin.) Although Kushida was not able to find other sources that confirm the transmission from Kanshuku to Kankyo, he did discover several documents on the coronation abhiṣeka associated with certain priests of the late Heian period described in Chōshin's genealogy (pp. 315–317).

13. *Jichin kashō musōki*, the Kissuzō archive, Shōren'in, Kyoto, reproduced in toto in AKAMATSU Toshihide 1957:318–322. For a bibliographical study of the manuscript, see TAGA Munehaya 1970:421–429.

14. KAMIKAWA Michio (1989:119–121) has introduced yet another ritual manual, entitled the *Abhiṣeka of the Enthronement of the Son of Heaven* (*Tenshi sokui kanjō*), a document dated 1474 and preserved at the En'yūzō archive at Sanzen'in, Kyoto. A record of the transmission of a secret teaching given to the Tendai abbot (*tendai zasu*) Gyōin by the former Tendai abbot Kōshō, it describes the coronation abhiṣeka in exactly the same manner as the *Mudrā of Coronation* and Jien's interpretation, depicting it as consisting of (1) the mudrās of the five eyes, (2) Mahāvairocana, (3) the rule over the four cosmic oceans, (4) the ten good deeds, and (5) the four powers. It indicates that the Tendai School held the identical interpretation of the ritual procedure of the coronation abhiṣeka, speaking further for its standardization. For an outline of the development of Tendai Esotericism in the mid-Heian period and how it differed from the Shingon School, see KIUCHI Gyōō 1984:309 ff and MISAKI Ryōshū 1988:515–605.

15. According to *Nihon shoki*, the sword, Ama no murakumo no tsurugi, was obtained by Susanoo, a younger brother of Amaterasu, from within the stomach of the eight-headed dragon that he slew in the land of Izumo. It was then proffered to Amaterasu by Susanoo. The gem, Yasaka ni no magatama, was granted by Amaterasu to Ninigi when he was to descend from Amaterasu's celestial realm of Takamagahara to the earth to found the nation of Japan. The mirror, Yata no kagami, was forged by god Ishikori todome to illumine

the world, while Amaterasu, the sun goddess, hid herself in the cave of Ama no iwato.

16. For a list of the ritual manuals of both the Shingon and Tendai Schools circulated during Kamakura period that revolve around the union of the two divinities, see MISAKI Ryōshū 1994:137 ff.

17. *Jichin kashō musōki*, AKAMATSU Toshihide 1957:319.

18. *Gōke shidai*, fscl. 3, ZKS 36:438a–439a.

19. The Ichidai ichido ninnōe was instituted by Emperor Seiwa in the Jōgan years (859–866). Its ritual is described in detail in fascicle 21 (Genbaryō) of *Engishiki*. For a detailed study of the emperor's distribution of the relics, see *Tōji busshari kankeiki* in KAGEYAMA Haruki 1986:230–257.

20. *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, fscl. 35, KT 4:443.

21. *Ōkagami*, fscl. 2, NKT 21:66.

22. *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:96.

23. For Daikakuji, see *Nihon sandai jitsuroku*, fscl. 28, KT 4:370. For Gangyōji, see *Nihon saidai jitsuroku*, fscl. 32, KT 4:414. For Ninnaji, see *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:101–102. For Kajūji, see *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:104–105. For Hosshōji, see *Nihon kiryaku* 2, fscls. 1, 2, KT 11:26, 28, 32. For En'yūji, see *Ninnaji shoinkeki*, NS 1:334. For Myōkōin, see *Eigaku yōki*, GR 16:632. Also see *Sanmon dōshaki*, GR 16:557.

24. See TSUCHIYA Megumi 1983:49–58. For the extra-ritsuryō status attained by these temples, see TAIRA Masayuki 1992:98–109; HIRAKO Jōkai 1981:491 ff, 507 ff, 529 ff, 541 ff, 581 ff; TAKEUCHI Rizō 1958:518–565. For Jinzen and the aristocratization of the Mount Hiei leadership, see HORI Daiji 1986.

25. Examples of these reports submitted by Gubukuji, Hōryūji, Daianji, Gangōji, and Saidaiji can be found in NI 1:343–340.

26. The exemption from the ritsuryō duties of the major monasteries erected in the early and mid-Heian period proceeded in two stages. Earlier, private temples built through the patronage of powerful aristocrats and imperial princes and princesses applied for the status of *jōgakuji*, literally, the temples of fixed stipends. The *jōgakuji* were given the full recognition by the state, but, unlike the national and provincial temples erected by the state, the *jōgakuji* had their own temple estate and did not rely on the state's funding. In exchange for the submission of the temples' financial report, the state provided the *jōgakuji* with the funds for everyday staples, such as candles and fuels, and for major repair. However, many *jōgakuji* monasteries opted not to request these state funds in order to be exempted from the duty of reporting annually to the court the status of their properties. (For an example of this exemption from the early Heian period, see *Ruiju sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:116.) Already by the mid-Heian period, there were no longer major monasteries that made request for

the title of jōgakuji. They instead asked the court's recognition as *goganji*, which meant either the temples erected by the emperor, empress, and imperial princes and princesses, or the temple built by the imperial liege to pray for prosperity of the emperor, the imperial house, and the nation. To begin with, goganji did not receive the state's support for everyday supplies and repairs and were not subject to the state's supervision in the management of temple's property. As a means to alleviate the pressure the state felt to support Buddhist institutions, the Heian court seems to have eagerly issued the recognition to private temples of jōgakuji and, later, goganji. For the development of the systems of jōgakuji and goganji, see TAKEUCHI Rizō 1958:509–586; HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:417–452.

27. For the number of the nenbundosha allotted to these temples, see the edict issued by the Grand Ministry (*daijōkan*) collected in fascicle 2 of the *Rujiju sandaikyaku*, KT 25:95, 96, 97, 99, 100.

28. Daijō kanpu, 9/16 Gankei 5, 3/21 Ninna 1; *Ruiji sandaikyaku*, KT 25:132–133.

29. *Ruiji sandaikyaku*, fscl. 2, KT 25:97; *Honchō kōsōden*, fscl. 7, DBZ 63:56b–c.

30. *Honchō kōsōden*, fscl. 7, DBZ 63:63b–c.

31. *Tōnan'inmu shidai*, DBZ 65:194a–198.

32. *Kōfukuji bettō shidai*, fscl. 1, DBZ 65:105a–c; *Honchō kōsōden*, fscl. 48, DBZ 63:292c–293b. For Jōshō, also see *Nanto kōsōden*; *Shingonden*, fscl. 7; *Kechimyaku ruijūki*, fscl. 3.

33. *Ruiji sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:101–102.

34. Daijō kanpu jibushō, 6/3 Shōhei 1; *Shingon shosan kanpu an*, ZG 28A:407b–408b.

35. *Ruiji sandaikyaku*, fscl. 3, KT 25:104.

36. Ibid., 98.

37. See the list of prominent Nara priests in the Shingon Dharma lineage chart in the *Nanto kōsōden* DBZ 64:108b–111c.

38. See, for example, the biographies of Yakushin (827–906), Kangen (853–925), and Kakuban (1095–1143), all of whom were renowned as founders of major ritual schools within the Shingon School. They received training at Daianji, Kōfukuji, or Tōdaiji in the Sanron and Hossō studies prior to their Esoteric Buddhist training. Kangen, for example, served the lecturership at Yuimae at Kōfukuji. See *Honchō kōsōden*, DBZ 64:63a, 65a, 86a.

39. *Daijō zōjiki*, GR 25:467b.

40. Daijōkan chō daigoji, 9/17 Engi 10; *Shingon shosan kanpu an*, ZG 28A:410a–b.

41. *Tōdaiji bettō shidai*, GR 4:569a–597b.

42. Tōdaiji chōjō an, *Shingon shosan kanpu an*, ZG 28A:421b–422a.
43. Tōdaiji kitsujō, *Shingon shosan kanpu an*, ZG 28A:422b.
44. Ibid., 422a–b.
45. *Tōji chōja bunin*, GR 4:678b–677b; *Daigoji shoshin gusho an*, fourteenth chō, manuscript copy at Shiryō hensanjo library, Tokyo University.
46. Tōdaiji kitsujō, *Shingon shosan kanpu an*, ZG 28A:422b.
47. Ninnaji kitsujō, *Shingon shosan kanpu an*, ZG 28A:423a.
48. *Tōdaiji gusho*, ZG 27B:79a.
49. Ibid., 32a–33a.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 31a, 46b, 80a.
52. Ibid., 31a, 73a.
53. *Tōbōki*, fscl. 1, ZZG 12:5a–b.
54. *Ninnaji gyoden*, fscl. 1, GR 5:430a–b; *Genkō shakusho*, fscl. 17, KT 31:243.
55. *Nihon kiryaku* 2, fscl. 1, KT 11:24. Also see MORIYAMA Shōshin 1933: 885.
56. *Nihon kiryaku* 2, fscl. 1, KT 11:5–7. *Fusō ryakki*, fscl. 23, KT 12:170.
57. For a list of the names of successive Dharma Emperors up to the end of the Tokugawa period, see MJ:622.

58. Another institution closely linked to the Dharma Emperor was *hosshinnō*, Dharma princes, imperial princes who, although ordained, retained their imperial privileges and, supporting the Dharma Emperor, continued to participate in statecraft from administrative offices in their resident temples. For example, Ninnaji attained a particular eminence throughout the mid- and late Heian periods through its monzeki system that limited its abbacy only to Dharma princes. While retaining their privileges external to the jurisdiction of the *ritsuryō*, they supervised the work of the Office of Priestly Affairs, which was now located at Ninnaji.

For the formation of the system of *hosshinnō* and its relationship to Ninnaji's monzeki system, see ENDŌ Motoo 1994; NISHIGUCHI Junko 1986; USHIYAMA Yoshiyuki 1990:238–299; and HIRAKAWA Jōkai 1981:529–551. Ninnaji was originally erected for the Emperor Uda's son Prince Atsuzane, who was then ordained. Following his abdication, Uda was ordained in 899 by Shingon master Yakushin (827–906) and cloistered to Ninnaji. In 901 Yakushin gave Uda the esoteric initiation of the highest order, *denbō kanjō*, and made Uda an Esoteric Buddhist master, whose Dharma name was Kongōkaku. In 967 Uda's Dharma heir Kangū (884–972), then the abbot of Ninnaji, designated Kanchō (916–998), a son of Prince Atsuzane and grandson of Uda, to succeed his abbotship of the temple. In 986 Kanchō retired and gave the abbotship to Gakei (926–1012), another grandson of Uda and Kanchō's younger brother. After that point, a rule was established at Ninnaji that only the imperial princes

affiliated with Uda's branch of the imperial house who became the esoteric masters in the Dharma lineage originating with Yakushin would assume the monastery's abbotship.

59. For studies of the emergence of the emperors' private monasteries and their significance as religious institutions, see TAKEUCHI Rizō 1958:555–566; HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:541–681, 600–679; NISHIGUCHI Junko 1986; ENDŌ Motoo 1994.

60. DK Iwashimizu monjo 1 #8.

61. *Honchō zokubunsui*, fscl. 29b, KT 30:206.

62. *Sōgō bunin*, fscls. 2, 3, 5, DBZ 65:19a, 37a, 80b–c.

63. See HIRAOKA Jōkai 1981:367 ff for some instances in which Sōgō appointments violated the general rule. For the acceptance of priests of the Tendai School in the Office of Priestly Affairs, see TAKAGI Yutaka 1973:23–30.

64. For example, the Buddhist chronicle *Fusō ryakki* reports that in 1072, when the first Saishōe was held at Enshōji, the Tendai priest Raizō of Onjōji, the lecturer, was asked by the Kōfukiji priest Raishin, who served as one of the discussants, to interpret the *Golden Light Sūtra* from the point of view of Buddhist logic. In the presence of Emperor Gosanjō (r. 1068–1072), Raizō refused to do so, retorting, “the discipline of Buddhist logic was originally developed by Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and other Indian masters to defeat heretics. It is not needed for Japanese Buddhism, which is already grounded deeply in Mahāyāna doctrines” (*Fusō ryakki*, fscl. 29, 10/25 Enkyū 4, KT 23:311–312). In response to this statement Raizō’s candidacy was approved by the attending scholar-priests.

As Raizō’s example shows, these national lectures (or, for esoteric priests, national initiatory rites) served as important occasions for priests of different schools to exchange their views and display their mastery. At the same time, it encouraged them to become well versed in disciplines other than their own, including both Exoteric and Esoteric Teachings.

65. To officially attest to the status of *kenmitsu hashū* as orthodoxy, there was added to the service of Misae at the imperial palace the ritual of *hashūsō*, public announcements by the eight schools. See KAMIKAWA Michio 1991:50 ff. Also see SATŌ Hiroo 1987:152.

66. *Gōke shidai*, fscl. 3, ZKS 36:75b–77b; *Gōke hishō*, ZKS 36:548a.

67. *Goshichishō*, ZG 25B:88b–89a.

68. *Tōbōki*, fscl. 2, ZZG 12:43a.

69. *Tōji busshari kankeiki*, a document formerly preserved at the Kongōzō archive at Tōji and currently preserved at the Sōgō Shiryōkan Library of the Kyoto prefectoral government. Reproduced in toto in KAGEYAMA Haruki 1986:230–257.

70. *Tōji busshari kankeiki*, KAGEYAMA Haruki 1986:231.

71. For example, in 1180 during the war of Chishō, Taira no Shigehira and his forces attacked the Nara Buddhist monasteries that sided with Dharma Emperor Gotoba. The great majority of the temple halls of Tōdaiji were reduced to ashes. Following the defeat of the Taira clan, the court appointed the Daigoji priest Chōgen (1121–1205) as the head of fund-raising (*daikanjin*) for the restoration of Tōdaiji. In 1185, Chōgen received five grains of the relic from the court to aid him in advancing his project. *Tōji busshari kankeiki*, KAGEYAMA Haruki 1986:234–235.

72. *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 21, 5/21 Kōnin 3, KT 3:114.

73. See, for example, *Nihon kōki*, fscl. 22, 2/12 Kōnin 3, KT 3:111. Also see *Shoku nihon kōki*, fscl. 17, 10/26 Jōwa 14, KT 3:201.

74. Section 11, chapter 12, of Confucius's *Analects*. Translation by Wing-tsit Chan in CHAN 1963:39. Italics added by the translator.

75. One important exception to this rule is *senmyō*, the emperor's decrees, which, reflecting the archaic function of the emperor as the supreme shaman of Shintō worship, were often recorded in man'yōgana. However, the frequency of the use of *senmyō* declined significantly during the age of statecraftism, and most of the emperor's decrees came to be written in Chinese. Henceforth the use of *senmyō* was limited only to certain ceremonial functions. See Christopher SEELEY 1991:54–55; 90–91.

76. The completion of the *Kokin wakashū* coincided with the arrival of the tail end of production of official tomes in Chinese, the discursive backbone of the *ritsuryō* state; for example, the 901 *True Record of the Three Emperors* (*Nihon sandai jitsuroku*), the final work of the six imperial histories of the Nara and Heian periods (*rikkokushi*), and the 907 *Engi Amendments* (*Engi kyaku*), the last state-certified collection of imperial edicts and legislation crucial for the interpretation of the *ritsuryō* rules.

77. For the significance of Buddhist motifs in the *Tale of Genji*, especially its later chapters, see Haruo SHIRANE 1987:169 ff. Although he does not identify the sources for his assertion, Kojin KARATANI (1993:167) has pointed out that the influence of Esoteric Buddhism was essential to the construction of the narrative structure of the *Genji*.

78. It is hoped that the following discussion will support the general theory advanced by Victor MAIR (1994) that the introduction of Buddhism and Buddhist literature in East Asia was instrumental in developing popular, vernacular literary traditions and writing systems that could be used to approximate speech. On the other hand, the history of the Japanese kana script does not fully support Mair's argument that the development of vernacular literary traditions led to the rise of national languages.

79. The earliest recorded mention of Kūkai as the inventor of the kana syllabary is in *Gōdanshō* by Ōe no Masafusa, quoted in fascicle 12 of the 1367 *Kakaishō* by Yotsuji no Yoshinari, a voluminous exegesis on the *Tale of Genji*. Other early references to Kūkai's invention of kana include *Etsumokushō*, by Fujiwara no Mototoshi, and *Iroha jiruishō*, by Tachibana no Tadakane. For a study and discussion of other medieval sources claiming Kūkai's authorship of Iroha, see MORIYAMA Shōshin 1933:706–753; MATSUOKA Seigō 1984:241–252.

80. *Iroha ryakushaku*, KGZ 2:1411–1414.

81. For Kakuban's work of creating an integrated hermeneutic system for the study of Kūkai's texts, see ABE Ryūichi 1992.

82. The manner in which the kana syllabary is written in the Iroha poem does not reflect the distinction between hard and soft consonants. Thus, the poem is rendered as follows in modern pronunciation: “Iro wa nioedo chirinuru o / Wagayo darezo tsune naram / Ui no okuyama kyō koete / Asaki yume miji yoimosezu.”

83. Harumi's objection to the view that Kūkai authored the Iroha poems can be found in his *Jisetsu bengo*. The argument by Harumura is found in his *Sekiso manpitsu*. For a summary discussion of the arguments of Harumi and Harumura, see OKADA Mareo 1984:264 ff.

84. *Shōrai mokuroku*, KZ 1:87–91. The textbooks on Sanskrit phonetics and the Sanskrit syllabary brought back to Japan by Kūkai were *Hsi-t'an tzu-chi* (Jpn. *Shittan jiki*), *Hsi-t'an shih* (Jpn. *Shittan shaku*), *Fan-tsu hsi-t'an-ch'ao* (Jpn. *Bonji shittanshō*), and *Yü-ch'ieh chin-kang-ting-ching shih tsu-mu-p'in* (Jpn. *Yuga kongōchōgyō shaku jimobon*). The first and the last of these are included in the Taishō daizōkyō collection, T 54 #2132; T 18 #880.

85. *Bonji shittan jimo narabi ni shakugi*, KZ 2:719–736.

86. *Tenrei banshō meigi*. The photocopy edition of the manuscript preserved in the Kōzanji archive was published in 1966 as volume 6 of the *Kōbō Daishi Zenshū* (KZ).

87. *Ichiji chōrinno giki ongi*, KZ 2:528–529.

88. *Kongōchō rengebu shinnenju giki kanpyō hachinen ten*. A manuscript copy is preserved at Ishiyamadera, Ōtsu, and the work is reproduced and discussed in TSUKISHIMA Hiroshi 1972:42–48.

89. This evolution seems to explain why kana letters were arranged phonetically into the syllabary of Gojūonzu, the table of the fifty syllables. Although its historical origin is extremely vague, the gojūonzu places the vowels *A*, *I*, *U*, *E*, and *O* in a column on one side and the consonants *ka*, *sa*, *ta*, *na*, *ha*, *ma*, *ya*, *ra*, and *wa* in a row; all the kana syllables are obtained at their intersections. This arrangement directly parallels the similar table in Sanskrit, giving rise to a belief that the standardizing of the kana script was carried on by those knowledgeable

about Sanskrit, for the most part, Esoteric Buddhist priests of the early Heian period. For the affinity between the Gojūonzu and Sanskrit phonetic systems, see MORIYAMA Shōshin 1933:742.

90. *Bonji shittan jimo norabi ni shakugi*, KZ 2:719, 723.

91. Ibid., 729–730.

92. *Shōji jissōgi*, KZ 1:528, 530, 531, 534.

93. *Bunkyō bifuron*, fscl. 4, 6:92, 183–184.

94. *Hizōki*, KZ 2:26.

95. The *ka* is read as *ga* in *toka*, which means sin, blame, or punishment, because in the context of the original poem *ka* appears as *wa-ka-yo*, which must be read as *wagayo*, “this world,” “our world,” or “my life.” This cipher seems to have been well known in premodern Japan. The eighteenth-century dramatists Takeda Izumo, Miyoshi Shōraku, and Namiki Senryū entitled their play dedicated to the celebrated forty-seven retainers of Akao province *Kanadehon chūshingura*, “Treasury of loyal retainers of the Iroha poem.” Taking advantage of the fact that the number of the kana syllables and that of the retainers happened to be the same, they suggested that the forty-seven retainers, in carrying out their vendetta against the enemy of their lord and their subsequent killing of themselves, were free of sin. KOMATSU Hideo 1979:37–39. Cf. Donald KEENE 1971:ix–x.

## Postscript

1. See, for example, TAMURA Yoshiro 1969:67–89; HIRAOKA Jōkai 1986:3–30; Charles ELIOT 1935:233–253, Shinshō HANAYAMA 1960:43–67; Ryūsaku TSUNODA, William de Bary, and Donald Keene 1958:109–171; Dale SAUNDERS 1964:134–184; William de Bary, 1972:277–279, 287; Daigen and Alicia MATSUNAGA 1974:139–200.

2. At the time of the Emperor Kanmu’s shift of the capital to Kyoto in 794, Kūkai was twenty-one years old. In an autobiographical work dated 797, Kūkai states that he entered the State College at age eighteen and that he was disillusioned shortly thereafter with the Confucian education he was receiving at the college and began his Buddhist training as a lay practitioner. See *Sangō shiiki*, KZ 3:324. Also see Yoshito HAKEDA 1972:15–16, 102. Saichō was twenty-seven years old in 794. He had already begun his formal career as a priest with his precept ordination at age nineteen and with his rise to the rank of training priest (*shugyō nyūisō*) at the state temple (*kokubunji*) in Ōmi Province at age twenty-five. See Saichō’s *kokufuchō* and *dochō*, DK 6:604; HI 8 #4281; DZ 5 furoku:101. For a discussion of Saichō’s ordination and an example of

the standard procedure for inducting novices into the priesthood, see NAKAI Shinkō 1986:88–89.

3. Probably the earliest examples of the analogy drawn between the leaders of the Reformation and founders of the Kamakura New Buddhist schools were Uchimura Kanzō's 1894 *Daihyōteki nihonjin*, Tamura Tsutomu's 1896 *Shiteki hyōshaku shinran shinden* and his 1909 *Shūkyō kaikakushi*, Kimura Shōkō's 1911 *Hōnen to Shinran*, and Hara Katsurō's 1911 *Nihon chūseishi no kenkyū*. With his emphasis on the parallels between the European Reformation and Japanese "reformation" Buddhism, IYENAGA Saburō's 1947 *Chūsei bukkyō shisōshi kenkyū* provided a critical link between the prewar and the postwar studies of Kamakura New Buddhism. For an example of the characterization of Kamakura New Buddhism as monotheistic, see FUJII Manabu 1962:248 ff.

4. Among works in Western languages, Robert MORREL's (1987) study of Jien, Myōe, Jōkei, and other reformers of the Old Buddhism schools of the Kamakura period represents the approach of this group of scholars.

5. Interestingly, Tamamura Taijō, one of the historians of Japanese Buddhism in the prewar period, whose study, exceptionally, recognized the importance of institutional history to any understanding of Japanese Buddhism, employed the term *kenmitsu bukkyō* to describe the Old Buddhism, the eight Buddhist schools established prior to Kamakura New Buddhism. See TAMAMURO Taijō 1940:205–238. However, Tamamuro's usage does not hint at the deconstructive sense in which Kuroda uses the same term to discredit the rationale for separating medieval Japanese Buddhism into New Buddhism and Old Buddhism.

6. Although various aspects of Kuroda's thought have already made their influence felt on the study of Japanese religious history in Western languages, a systematic treatment of his theory of *kenmitsu taisei* and its implication for reevaluating the history of Japanese Esoteric Buddhism seem to have escaped the attention of scholars in the West. Kuroda's discussion of the oneness of Buddhist law and kingly law (*buppō ōbō ichinyō*) has provided the principal theoretical framework for Neil McMullin's 1984 *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan*, which illustrates how Oda Nobunaga's military campaign finally destroyed the medieval power equilibrium between Buddhism and the state. Kuroda's argument against treating medieval Japanese Shintō as a separate, autonomous religious entity is strongly echoed in Allan GRAPARD's 1992 *The Protocol of the Gods*. Works on secular medieval Japanese history that indicate Kuroda's influence includes Paul Varley's 1971 *Imperial Restoration in Medieval Japan*, Thomas Keirstead's 1992 *Geography of Power in Medieval Japan* and Hitomi Tonomura's 1992 *Community and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan*. More recently, James DOBBINS (1996)

prepared as a guest editor one of the issues of *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23 (3–4), Fall 1996 to be dedicated to Kuroda, which made available some of his key works in English translation. The volume also has introductory essays by Dobbins and other scholars, which assess the importance of Kuroda's scholarship for the study of Japanese religions and history.

7. See Jōkei's discussion in his *Myōhōshō* (T 69 #2281) and *Hossō shin'yōshō* (T 71 #2311). Also see his *Jizōkōshiki*, a Kasagidera manuscript at the Nara National Museum, printed in TAIRA Masayuki 1992:280–284. For the affinity of Jōkei's thought to Shinran's, see TAIRA 1992:126–134, 266–279.

8. Taira Masayuki (1992:20) elaborates this point further as follows:

Kamakura New Buddhism is, in short, an aggregate of Buddhist schools that received recognition [by the shogunate] in the Tokugawa period as independent church organizations, and designate as their founders religious leaders of the Kamakura period. In other words, we historians of Buddhism have developed a perverted method of classifying Shinran, Dōgen, Nichiren, Jōkei, Eizon, and others as New or Old Buddhist figures. That is, our criterion derives not from the analysis of their thoughts and acts in their historical period but from the fate of their followers in later ages (especially the Tokugawa period). The distinction between New Buddhism and Old Buddhism originates not in medieval religious history but in late Muromachi and Tokugawa religious history. It may be a useful conceptual tool for analyzing the history of Tokugawa Buddhism, but for understanding medieval Buddhist history, it is of no value and is even harmful.

9. This explanation reveals the reason underlying the importance the Tokugawa shogunate placed on suppressing heretical branches within officially sanctioned Buddhist schools, such as the Fuju fuse branch of the Nichiren school and various *ianjin*, antiorthodox interpretations of Shinran's teaching in the Jōdo shin School, many of which represented antiecclesiastic, lay movements. See TAMAMURO Taijō 1940:331–351.

10. *Kii zoku fudoki*, Kōyasan no bu, fscl. 51, KZF 5:61.

11. Said has identified as Orientalism counterparts of the European colonialism in intellectual productions and academic institutions. Elsewhere Said remarks, "So far as the West was concerned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West. The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places

things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing (pp. 40–41).” Also see Donald LOPEZ 1995:11 ff.

12. Cf. Edward SAID (1978:21): “The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient. “*Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden*” [They cannot represent themselves, they have to be represented by others], as Marx wrote in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (original italic, translation added).

13. As the case in point for this aristocratization of the monastic institutions, Kuroda refers to the system of *monzeki* in which the abbotship of a monastery, or of a subtemple (*inke*) in a monastic complex, was reserved for the princes of a particular imperial line or sons of prominent noble clans that supported the monastery. The monzeki system was established not only at major temples of the Shingon and Tendai Schools, but at the principal monasteries of Nara, such as Tōdaiji and Kōfukuji, which encouraged the combined study of exoteric and esoteric discipline (1994:36–90). As KURODA discussed at length in his 1980 *Jisha seiryoku* (*Buddhist-Shintō Establishment*), the monzeki priests established their own administrative office (*kumonjo* or *mandokoro*) and seized control of the management of the monasteries and their properties, often overriding official administrative procedures (1980:49–54).

14. For an analysis of the ideas of cakravartin and the relationship between religion and state in Indian Buddhist history, see John Strong 1983:71–133. Also see Stanley TAMBIAH 1976, 1978.

15. “Tōdaijiryō minonokuni akanebeshō jūnin tō ge,” *Tōdaiji monjo*, HI 3 #331.

16. For a summary of Shintō court rituals, see KAWADE Kiyohiko 1978:199–407. For the relationship between Buddhist and Shintō rituals at the imperial palace, see KUROSAKI Teruto 1992.

17. DK, Iwashimizu monjo, I #18.

18. *Honchō zokubunsui*, KT 29:206.

19. *Tendai zasuki*, DS series 5, 10:208.

20. For the worship of Shintō gods in Buddhist temple domains, see BABA Ayako 1988. For a study of militia-monks and their reliance on the religious authority of Shintō gods, see HIRATA Toshiharu 1986.

21. This point is discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5 of this book.

22. For a summary discussion of the theories about distinguishing the

esoteric and exoteric advanced by Ennin, Enchin, and Annen, see KIUCHI Gyōō 1984:201 ff, 309 ff.

23. Saichō's and Kūkai's contrasting attitudes toward the Nara monasteries, the controversy over Saichō's interpretation of Buddhist precepts, and the implications of these two issues for the dissemination of Esoteric Buddhism are discussed in chapter 1.

24. It is interesting to note that the Mādhyamika School, the Indian precursor to the Japanese Sanron, has been the principal doctrinal underpinning for Esoteric Buddhism within the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

25. For a summary discussion of Shinkō and his innovative interpretation of Shingon rituals for the practitioners of the Hossō School, see OISHIO Chihiro (1995:47 ff).

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