## CONTENTS

### I. ARTICLES

2. Les Réponses des Pudgalavādin aux Critiques des Écoles Bouddhiques, by Thich Thien Chau  
3. Tsong kha pa's Understanding of Prāsaṅgika Thought, by Lobsang Dargyay  
5. Shingon Mikkyō's Twofold *Maṇḍala*: Paradoxes and Integration, by Minoru Kiyota  
6. Yung-ming's Syncretism of Pure Land and Ch'ān, by Heng-ching Shih  
7. Pre-Buddhist Elements in Himalayan Buddhism: The Institution of Oracles, by Ramesh Chandra Tewari

### II. BOOK REVIEWS

2. *Nāgārjunas Filosofiske Vaerker* and *Miscellanea Buddhica*, by Chr. Lindtner (Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti)  
3. *Tantric Concept of Bodhicitta: A Buddhist Experiential Philosophy*, by Minoru Kiyota (Dale Todaro)  
4. *Zen and Western Thought*, by Masao Abe (Paul J. Griffiths)
Shingon Mikkyō’s Twofold Maṇḍala: Paradoxes and Integration*

by Minora Kiyota

The Garbhakośadhātu (Taizōkai) and Vajradhātu (Kongkōkai) constitute the twofold maṇḍala¹ employed by Kūkai (773–835), the systematizer of Shingon Mikkyō. Ideas for the composition of the Garbhakośadhātu Maṇḍala are derived from the Mahāvairocana-sūtra,² whose central theme is emptiness (śūnyatā), the ontological ground of reality conceived as the ultimate truth. Ideas for the composition of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala are derived from the Tattvasamgraha-sūtra,³ the central theme of which is the cultivation of wisdom to cognize the world through insight into emptiness. The first chapter of the Mahāvairocana-sūtra articulates a Madhyamika theme.⁴ The remaining chapters deal primarily with Tantric rituals. The Tattvasamgraha-sūtra is a Yogācāra-oriented text, but it does not articulate a simple mental transformation theory. Following the Tantric tradition, it articulates instead a physical and mental transformation. These two sūtras are Tantric texts, but the term sūtra, rather than tantra, is employed in this paper to designate these texts, following the Chinese tradition.

The Garbhakośadhātu Maṇḍala and Vajradhātu Maṇḍala are iconographic devices used to represent the major theme of Shingon Mikkyō (man-Buddha integration), a theory technically referred to as sokushin-jōbutsu. Literally the term means “the realization of buddhahood in the present body.” The sokushin-jōbutsu theory is described in full in Kūkai’s Sokushin-jōbutsu-gi.⁵ The term is first found, however, in the Bodhicitta-sūtra (P’u-t’i-hsin lūn)⁶ and the idea germane to this kind of thought—inherent buddhahood or inherent buddhanature, terms which ultimately mean the same—is found in the Tattvasamgraha-sūtra. Doctri-
nally, the *Bodhicitta-sāstra* belongs to the *Tattvasamgraha* lineage. In this *sāstra*, the most important term to note is, of course, *sokushin-jōbutsu* (*chi-shen cheng-fo*). The term does not simply refer to a mental realization, but a mental and physical one. It does not refer to a future realization but to a present one. Nevertheless, the two terms—*sokushin-jōbutsu*, used in a technical context, and “man-Buddha integration,” used in a general context—are used interchangeably in this paper, depending on the context in which they occur.

This paper consists of three parts: 1) tacit assumptions necessary to understand the nature of the twofold *manḍala*; 2) the description of the twofold *manḍala*; and 3) a critical examination of the textual sources employed in the formulation of the *sokushin-jōbutsu* theory. First, Tantric Buddhist terms need to be understood in the context in which they are discussed—in the Tantric context, not in the context in which they were originally used, for example in the Mahāyāna context—because Tantric concepts taken out of their context would produce misrepresentation. Second, the description of the twofold *manḍala* will be brief because I have already dealt with that subject in my previous works and I do not intend to reiterate what I have previously said. And third, inasmuch as the twofold *manḍala* is an iconographic device to indicate “man-Buddha integration” (integration being the key concept here), the term is suggestive of tensions. The central purpose of this paper is to identify these tensions by examining Indian and Chinese textual sources. As such, in the description of the twofold *manḍala*, attention will be focused on the Vajradātu *Manḍala*, rather than on the Garbhakoṣadātu *Manḍala*, the former depicting the realm of the pursuer of truth and the latter truth *per se*. This paper is primarily a textual and doctrinal study.

### I. Tacit Assumptions

Shingon literally means the “true word.” It is derived from the Sanskrit *mantra*. *Mantra* in the context of the Vedic tradition means “words in praise of gods.” But here, in the context of Shingon Mikkyō, a school of Tantric Buddhism systematized by Kūkai in Japan, it refers to a formula in which the teachings of
the Buddha are distilled, a definition which follows the Tantric Buddhist tradition. Mikkyō is a term employed in contradistinction to Kengyō, the “revealed teaching.” The latter refers to the teaching as taught by Śākyamuni, the historically revealed Buddha; the former refers to the teaching of Mahāvairocana. Who then is Mahāvairocana?

We have said that the Garbhakosadhatu Maṇḍala is derived from the Mahāvairocana-sūtra. The central deity of this sūtra is Mahāvairocana, symbolizing truth per se. Mahāvairocana is not a historical Buddha but a transcendental one. But the two, the historical and transcendental, are not unrelated. Shingon Mikkyō claims that Śākyamuni became a Buddha through his insight into emptiness, which it conceives as the Dharma. Hence, when we say that Mahāvairocana symbolizes truth per se, we are actually saying that he is the personified Dharma. Shingon Mikkyō, therefore, following the three Buddha-body theory of Mahāyāna, claims that Mahāvairocana is dharmakāya, the embodiment of the Dharma, and Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha, is nirmāṇakāya, the Dharma transformed into a human personality. Between the two is sambhogakāya, literally the rewarded body, that is, one rewarded with the fruits of enlightenment as the result of bodhisattva practices. To put it in simple words, sambhogakāya is the means through which one realizes dharma, just like numerals are the means through which mathematical truth is expressed. Sambhogakāya bridges dharma and nirmāṇakāya. Let us now elaborate on Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana.

In the context of Shingon Mikkyō, Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana is most important. Etymologically, Mahāvairocana is derived from “Mahā,” meaning “great, all-encompassing, and all pervasive,” and “virocana,” meaning “light,” symbolizing truth. Mahāvairocana is a light deity. He is conceived as the personified Dharma because Shingon Mikkyō does not conceive of him simply as an objectified truth concept, but as one who has the power to create, like light, who encompasses all things, like space, and pervades all things, like the vital forces (energy) of the universe. In the context of the “man-Buddha integration” theory, the Buddha here refers to Mahāvairocana. It is this kind of Buddha with whom the practitioner attempts to realize integration. Bodhicitta is the agent of integration.
Bodhicitta is a compound derived from bodhi, meaning enlightenment, and citta, referring to the human consciousness. Bodhicitta literally means the “thought of enlightenment,” although, in the Mahāyāna context, it is frequently translated as the “aspiration to enlightenment.” Aspiration to enlightenment actually refers to bodhicitta-utpāda and literally means the awakening to the thought of enlightenment. I make this distinction between “aspiration” and “awakening” because in the context of Shingon Mikkyō, the latter makes more sense: Shingon Mikkyō claims that “awakening” (to the thought of enlightenment) is “enlightenment” itself, and that there is no difference whatsoever between “awakening” and “enlightenment.” This is because Shingon Mikkyō does not differentiate between the causal and resultant aspects of enlightenment, an issue we shall discuss in more detail later. Regardless of whether it refers to the causal or resultant aspect, what does bodhicitta actually mean within the context of the central theme of Shingon Mikkyō, that is, man-Buddha integration? It refers to wisdom, that is, insight into emptiness, insight into the fact that all phenomena are devoid of a self-nature (svabhāva), that the absence of self-nature enables phenomenal change. Kūkai, however, was not only concerned with ontological issues. He was concerned with existential issues. Hence, in his Hizō-hōyaku, he describes emptiness metaphorically as follows:

The Great Space (emptiness), boundless and silent, encompasses ten thousand images (phenomena) in its vital forces;

The Great Sea (emptiness), deep and still, embraces a thousand elements in a single drop;

The all-embracing one (Mahāvairocana who personifies emptiness) is the mother of all things.12

The name “Kūkai” literally means the “sea of emptiness.” To Kūkai, emptiness was the universe itself with the power to actively communicate by creating, nurturing and regulating all things. Wisdom refers to insight into emptiness of this kind. Technically, it is referred to as bodhicitta, the agent of man-Buddha integration, a matter which the twofold mandala is designed to depict.
Edgerton defines *manḍala* as a "circle, piece of ground specifically prepared in honor of a Buddha or saint (for him to sit on)". Toganoo analyzes the term into *manḍa*, meaning "cream, best part, highest point, the essence of things, etc.," and "la", the suffix, meaning "possessed, support and complete." Tucci defines it as a "means of integration." The first and second are etymological descriptions, and the third is a functional one describing how a *manḍala* is employed by a practitioner. All three definitions, however, are interrelated soteriologically. But in the context of this paper, the third is most relevant.

Further, I have used the term "iconography" to indicate a *manḍala*. I have done so because, although a Shingon Mikkyō *manḍala* is a graphic illustration of a doctrine (the *sokushin-jōbutsu* theory), it is also a graphic portrayal of deities. There are a total of 418 deities in the Garbhakoṣadhatu Maṇḍala and 1,461 deities in the Vajradhatu Maṇḍala. I have no intention of describing all of them. I will simply describe the major ones, those who have direct or close relevance to the doctrinal content described in this paper. Further, having studied in China, Kūkai introduced the twofold *manḍala* to Japan, but neither its original composer nor the manner in which it was introduced to China from India is clear. A legend has it that the Garbhakoṣadhatu Maṇḍala is a painting by Subhakārasimha (637-735) of a world he saw in space, and that the Vajradhatu Maṇḍala is a painting by Vajrabodhi (671-74) made under the instructions of the Buddha. Subhakārasimha, together with I-hsing (683-727), his Chinese disciple, translated the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* into Chinese, and Vajrabodhi translated the *Tattvasamgraha-sūtra* into Chinese. As we have previously said, ideas for the composition of the Garbhakoṣadhatu Maṇḍala are derived from the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* and ideas for the composition of the Vajradhatu maṇḍala are derived from the *Tattvasamgraha-sūtra*. What is important to note here is not so much the original composer of the twofold *manḍala*—for that is an issue which remains uncertain—but the introduction of the *Mahāvairocana* tradition by Subhakārasimha and the *Tattvasamgraha* tradition by Vajrabodhi from India to China. These two Indian Tantric traditions were synthesized in Ch'ang-an. Hui-kuo (746-805), the Chinese master, transmitted this synthesized Buddhist Tantric tradition to Kūkai, who systematized the *sokushin-jōbutsu*
theory based on this tradition in Japan. The Buddhist Tantric
tradition which has synthesized the doctrinal content of the
Mahāvairocana-sūtra and Tattvasamgraha-sūtra survives only in
Japan.

We are now ready to examine the twofold maṇḍala. We shall
first briefly touch upon the Garbhakṣaṇadhatu Maṇḍala and then
focus our attention on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala because this
paper is concerned more with the issue of tension than with truth per se, as we previously said.

II. The Twofold Maṇḍala

Garbhakṣaṇadhatu Maṇḍala. We have said that the Garbhakṣaṇadhatu Maṇḍala is an iconographic representation of
truth per se, that the ideas for its composition are derived from
the Mahāvairocana-sūtra, and that Mahāvairocana is the per-
sonified Dharma representing emptiness. The central theme of
the Mahāvairocana-sūtra is found in the passage below:

... bodhicitta is the cause, compassion its roots and skill-in-
means the ultimate.¹⁶

The term “ultimate” in Sanskrit is parayavasāna, meaning “the
peak, end result, final, etc.” In the text, the above passage is
quoted as a response to the question of what enlightenment
means. This passage means that bodhicitta is the cause of en-
lightenment, compassion nurtures that cause, and improvising
skill-in-menas to implement the compassion-rooted-wisdom is
enlightenment. Enlightenment is empirically directed. The Gar-
bhakṣaṇadhatu Maṇḍala consists of twelve halls, as indicated in
Fig. 1.
The concepts underlying the composition of this mandala are **bodhicitta** (cause), compassion (roots), and skill-in-means (ultimate), which are identified as **dharmakāya**, **sambhogakāya** and **nirmāṇakāya**, respectively, as outlined below:

The Halls of:

- **Bodhicitta** (wisdom)
  - 1. Eight Petals
  - 2. All-knowledge
  - 3. Avalokiteśvara
  - 4. Vajrapāni
  - 5. Vidyādhāras
- **Compassion**
  - 6. Śākyamuni
  - 7. Kṣitigarbha
  - 8. Ākāśagarbha
  - 9. Sarvanivaraṇa-viṣkambha
  - 10. Mañjuśrī
  - 11. Susiddhi
- **Skill-in-means**
  - 12. Exterior Vajra

Halls numbered one to five represent **bodhicitta**. Among the five halls, number one represents the **bodhicitta** bud. The halls surrounding it indicate the blooming of **bodhicitta**. Halls num-
bered six to eleven represent compassion, indicating the nurturing of bodhicitta. The hall numbered twelve represents skill-in-means for helping others which is the ultimate purpose of the compassion-rooted-bodhicitta. That bodhicitta is equated with dharmakāya, compassion with sambhogakāya, and skill-in-means with nirmanakāya means that bodhicitta is wisdom per se, compassion the wisdom-nurturing-element, and skill-in-means the empirical verification of wisdom. In short, this maṇḍala shows that truth, cognized by wisdom and hence ultimately identical with wisdom, is not simply a fixed and frozen conceptual category, but a dynamic one capable of infiltrating the empirical world and that improvising skill-in-means is the norm to verify bodhicitta within the person.

**Vajradhātu Maṇḍala.** We have said that the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is an iconographic device representing the path of mental cultivation and that the ideas for its composition are derived from the Tattvasamgraha-sūtra, a Yogacara-oriented text. It is a Yogācāra-oriented Tantric text. The central theme of this maṇḍala is inherent buddhahood (or buddhanautre). This maṇḍala shows the way by which buddhahood is realized. The maṇḍala consists of “nine halls,” as indicated in Fig. 2.

![Fig. 2 The Nine Halls of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala](image)

1) Karma, 2) Samaya, 3) Sūkṣma, 4) Pūja, 5) Four Mudrā, 6) One Mudrā, 7) Naya, 8) Trailokyavijayakarma, 9) Trailokyavijayasamaya.

This maṇḍala again shows that enlightenment is not an absolute—fixed and frozen—concept, that it is the dynamic practice of enlightening self and others. It also shows explicitly that
Shingon Mikkyō practice constitutes a process philosophy. That is, the "nine halls" represent the path a practitioner moves through: "one-to-nine" showing the path of enlightening others and "nine-to-one" the path of enlightening oneself. What needs to be noted here is that whereas Mādhyamika deals with an ontological issue, that is, the notion of ultimate reality, which it claims is emptiness, Yogācāra deals with an epistemological issue; that is, the manner through which phenomena are cognized—through mental constructions. This *mandala* is a representation of the epistemological issue. We shall now discuss each of the "nine halls." The description of the first hall will be somewhat elaborate, since it is the most significant hall. The rest will be brief.

1) *Karma Hall.* The central hall, technically referred to as the Karma Hall, in the sense that it is the hall which depicts mental functions, is an iconographic representation of the Yogācāra theory of mental transformation (*āśraya parāvrtti*). It is central and the most significant among the "nine halls." Details of the Karma Hall are outlined in Fig. 3.

*Figure 3. The Karma Hall*

![Karma Hall Diagram]
This hall consists of five small circles (I, II, III, IV and V) encompassed within a larger circle, which in turn is encased within three squares. The larger circle is referred to as the Vajra Circle and the five smaller ones are referred to as the Vimoksa Circles. Vajra, literally meaning a “diamond,” refers to “wisdom as indestructible as a diamond.” Vimoksa means liberation. The Vajra Circles are iconographic representations of an acquired, not innate, wisdom which is endowed with the properties of liberation—liberation from greed, hate and delusion. This requires an explanation.

It will be recalled that we have already referred to “wisdom” with reference to the Garbhakoṣadhātu Maṇḍala. In the case of the Garbhakoṣadhātu Maṇḍala, wisdom referred to innate wisdom, the wisdom of Mahāvairocana. In the case of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, it refers to acquired wisdom. This is so because in the former we were talking about a universal wisdom, the objectified wisdom personified as Mahāvairocana. In the latter, we are talking about a wisdom cultivated by the practitioner, a sentient being. Of course, we are not talking about two different and independent types of wisdom. Innate wisdom, being universal, is realized by cultivating the wisdom of the practitioner. Acquired wisdom refers to cultivated wisdom. The ultimate cultivation of acquired wisdom is innate wisdom, which Shingon Mikkyō conceives as universal. Cultivation brings about mental transformation. This kind of theory presumes that the “wisdom” of Mahāvairocana (innate, universal) is inherent in the mind of the practitioner but requires cultivation to unveil it. This is the reason why I have identified bodhicitta as the agent of integration: it represents the wisdom of Mahāvairocana (innate) as well as that of the practitioner (acquired).

Shingon Mikkyō incorporates the Yogacāra theory of mental transformation to describe the transformation from the acquired to the innate. Hence a brief description of the Yogacāra theory of mental transformation is called for in order to understand the nature of this hall which, in the context of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala, is expressed iconographically.

Yogacāra established eight levels of consciousness as follows:

1) eye-vijñāna
2) ear-vijñāna
Vijñāna is the instrument of discrimination. (We cognize things through discrimination.) The first six vijñāna refer to the conscious level of perception, the last two to the unconscious level. Thus, the first five are the agents of perception. Manovijñāna conceptualizes the perceived. Manas evaluates the conceived. Ālaya is the consciousness foundation. Saying it the other way around, ālaya is the repository of the “seeds” of past experience. Manas, “perfumed” by the “seeds” deposited in the ālaya, evaluates the perceived. Manovijñāna, shaped by the manas, conceptualizes the sensory information transmitted by the first five vijñāna. Thus manas maintains two functions: a) it establishes its identity by relying on the ālaya; and b) it shapes the manner in which manovijñāna conceptualizes the sensory information transmitted by the first five vijñāna. Its function is cyclic. Manas is what is commonly referred to as the ego.

We have employed the terms “seeds” (bīja) and “perfume” (vāsanā). These are metaphorical terms, the former referring to a potential and the latter the influencing character of that potential. Ālaya is the repository of the perfuming potential, that is, a karmic repository, or simply put, a habit-forming repository. Yogācāra epistemology essentially refers to the ālaya theory of causation. In the context where the ālaya is a karmic repository and the manas maintains a cyclic function, we can summarize the ālaya theory of causation as follows: a karmic potential reveals itself as the result of a set of conditions in the form of manas (ego), which in turn shapes the quality of manovijñāna (value concept); and conversely, when the manas shapes the quality of manovijñāna, it simultaneously deposits its potential in the ālaya. But—and this is important—neither the manas nor the ālaya represents an absolute, unchanging entity. The two are co-dependent and co-arise, meaning that one shapes the quality of the other. Thus, though the ālaya is a karmic repository, that is, it is the repository of “unwholesome seeds,”
these "seeds" are not absolute. "Unwholesome seeds" can be transformed into "wholesome seeds" by cultivating wisdom; that is, cultivating insight into reality, the nature of which is emptiness, which brings about a change in perceiving the world. Yogācāra, literally meaning the practice of yoga, claims that this kind of wisdom is cultivated through meditative practices, meaning more specifically that the human ego—that which cognizes the world by making the self the measuring stick—is tamed through meditative practices. This is not the proper place to discuss the details of Yogācāra meditative practices, for the issue we are concerned with here is mental transformation.

Mental transformation in the context of Yogācāra refers to the vijñāna (discrimination)-jñāna (nondiscrimination) transformation outlined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vijñāna</th>
<th>jñāna</th>
<th>definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) ālaya</td>
<td>ādarsa</td>
<td>&quot;mirror-mind,&quot; i.e., pure cognition, or wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) manas</td>
<td>samatā</td>
<td>&quot;equality-mind,&quot; i.e., a mind which cognizes all things in a proper perspective, a mind which cognizes all things as complimentary entities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) mano</td>
<td>pratyavekṣanā</td>
<td>insight to deal with the particular problems of the world without bias but with compassion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) 1st five</td>
<td>kṛtyānusūṭhāna</td>
<td>knowledge to implement insight into practice through skill-in-means.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yogācāra meditation is designed to internalize one's experiences, to evaluate them without making the self the measuring stick (that is, without bias), and to cognize phenomena as complementary entities of the world. Whether one sees the world in that context or not depends on whether one has cultivated wisdom or not. But regardless of whether one has done so or not, Yogācāra claims that the world is a mental construction because the karmic seeds deposited in the ālaya shape the manner in which one sees and evaluates the world. The purpose of Yogācāra meditation is to cultivate the ability to see the world
from the perspective of jñāna-wisdom, the wisdom realized through mental transformation, not from the perspective of vijñāna.

The Yogācāra mental transformation theory forms the model for the composition of the Karma Hall. Thus the four jñāna—ādarsā-, samatā-, pratyaveksanā-, and kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna—are personified as the four Buddhas (see Fig. 3), namely Akṣobhya (II), Ratnasambhava (III), Amitāyus (IV) and Amogasiddhi (V), respectively. Mahāvairocana (I) is surrounded by these four Buddhas, the latter representing the attributes of the former. Thus Mahāvairocana is dharma-kāya and the four Buddhas sambhogakāya. Each attributive Buddha is endowed with the properties of samādhi and prajñā, the former conceived as a preparatory discipline to realize the latter. In the Karma Hall, these properties are personified and depicted as the 16 samādhi-bodhisattvas (I-1, 2, 3, 4; A, B, C, D; and 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 in the second square) and 16 prajñā-bodhisattvas (II-1, 2, 3, 4; III-1, 2, 3, 4; IV-1, 2, 3, 4; and V-1, 2, 3, 4). The 16 samādhi- and 16 prajñā-bodhisattvas are nirmanakāya. Thus the Karma Hall is depicted by 37 deities: Mahāvairocana and his four attributive Buddha, plus the 16 prajñā- and 16 samādhi-bodhisattvas as outlined below:

The Karma Hall thus is a representation of enlightenment per se. To realize what has been depicted iconographically is the goal of the practitioner. But, inasmuch as Shingon Mikkyō claims that enlightenment is the practice of enlightening others, enlightenment precludes the notion of dwelling exclusively in
the realm of enlightenment. The enlightened one must move to the realm of *samsāra*, improvise skill-in-means, and help others. Hence the path (see Fig. 2), “nine-to-one,” represents the practitioner moving from *samsāra* to enlightenment and the path, “one-to-nine,” from enlightenment to *samsāra*. The Shingon Mikkyō concept of enlightenment then is cyclically conceived. Its path to enlightenment represents a process philosophy with no terminal point established. Let us now briefly examine the remaining eight halls.

2) *Samaya Hall*. *Samaya* here means vow, the vow to improvise skill-in-means to enlighten all sentient beings.

3) *Sūkṣma Hall*. *Sūkṣma* literally means “particles.” Here it refers to the wisdom of the Buddha transmitted by words (Dharma) to effectively respond to all particular problems of sentient beings.

4) *Pūja Hall*. *Pūja* means worship. Each Buddha of this hall represents a specific method to enlighten sentient beings.

5) *Four Mudrā Hall*. *Mudrā* is a sign or a seal. Here it refers to a finger-gesture made by the four Buddhas, each *mudrā* representing a specific type of Buddha-wisdom.

6) *One Mudrā Hall*. This represents the realm of Dharma-<ref>makāya Mahāvairocana, who is depicted with a *wisdom-fist-mudrā* (*jñānamuṣṭi-mudrā*), indicating that Mahāvairocana’s wisdom embraces the wisdoms of the four Buddhas. The *wisdom-fist-mudrā* is formed by both hands making fists, the left placed beneath the right, the left index finger placed upright and covered by the right fist. The five fingers of the right fist represent the five wisdoms, the left index finger represents the elements of life. This is the sign of non-duality (between man and the Buddha), the right fist covering the left index finger symbolizing the life-force emerging from Mahāvairocana.

7) *Naya Hall*. *Naya* means “path, method, or means.” This hall is a representation of *bodhicitta* (the emanation of Mahāvairocana) reflected on the minds of sentient beings. Iconographically, Vajrasattva, the seeker of the Dharma and occupying the central seat, is surrounded by four *bodhisattvas*—Iśṭavajra, Kelikilavajra, Rāgavajra and Mānavaḥra—respectively representing lust, touch, craving, and conceit. Here, odd though it may seem, the *bodhisattvas* represent delusion. The theme here is that delusions are the enlightenment materials, for without
the problems of samsāra there is nothing to negate, nothing to cultivate, nothing to achieve. There is no enlightenment without nonenlightenment, for whether we are speaking of enlightenment or nonenlightenment, we are referring to the same mind, a mind in which enlightenment and nonenlightenment co-exist. Thus, the awareness of nonenlightenment triggers a desire to seek enlightenment, just like thirst triggers a desire to seek water. The bodhisattvas depicted in this hall represent states of mind in which nonenlightenment has been transformed into enlightenment.

8) Trailokyavijayakarma Hall. Trailokyavijaya, the central deity of this hall, is an angry deity. He is three-faced and three-eyed to detect greed, hate and delusion, is equipped with tusks to cut off defilements, has in his hands the vajra scepter, bow and arrows, rope and sword to conquer evil, and tramples on Maheśvara, the male demon, with his left foot, and Umapīthā, the female demon, with his right foot. He is an incarnation of Vajrasattva, whose attribute is compassion. Trailokyavijaya’s anger is directed against evil.

9) Trailokyavijayasamaya Hall. Whereas the Trailokyavijayakarma Hall describes the physical activities of Trailokyavijaya, this hall describes his vows to enlighten all sentient beings.

Now the method I employed to describe the “nine halls” illustrates the “effect-to-cause” process, remembering here that, according to the Buddhist theory of causation, a “cause” can become an “effect” and an “effect” can become a “cause,” as in the case of the “seed and sprout” metaphor. The “seed” causes the “sprout,” but the “sprout” eventually causes the “seed.” Hence, by reversing the order of the description above, that is, by beginning from Trailokyavijayasamaya and terminating at Karma, we can describe the “cause-to-effect” process. In this case, Trailokyavijayasamaya (9), the point of departure, is the station where the practitioner awakens to realize the compassion of the Buddha and thereby becomes aware of his inherent bodhicitta; at Trailokyavijayakarma (8), he eliminates defilements; at Naya (7), he realizes that because defilements are the materials to awaken bodhicitta, he is potentially a Buddha; at Four Mudrā (5), he realizes the four attributes of Mahāvairocana collectively; at Pūja (4), Śukṣma (3), and Samaya (2), he realizes
them singularly; and at Karma (1), he realizes buddhahood.

Let us now contextualize the "nine halls" rationally. I will present three methods, though I am sure that there are other methods as well. The first, a traditional Shingon Mikkyō method, is somewhat cumbersome. It claims that the first four halls represent the four attributes of Mahāvairocana: 1) wisdom (jñāna), 2) vow (samaya), 3) truth (the Dharma expressed verbally), and 4) skill-in-means (upāya). The fifth collects these attributes in one hall. (In other words, the first four represent an analytical description of Mahāvairocana's attributes, while the fifth collects these attributes in one hall.) The sixth synthesizes these attributes in the context of a mudrā. The notion of the "four-halls-in-one" (5) and the "four-wisdoms-in-one" (6) is the Shingon Mikkyō's way of expressing that all things are of Mahāvairocana and from Mahāvairocana emerge all things. The seventh represents the awakening of bodhicitta; the eighth, enlightenment of others; and the ninth, enlightenment of self.

The second traditional Shingon Mikkyō method is to contextualize the "nine halls" into the bodhicitta, compassion and skill-in-means formula. We can then say that the first six halls represent bodhicitta (wisdom); the seventh, compassion (in the sense that nonenlightenment is transformed into enlightenment); and the eighth and ninth, skill-in-means. I have some reservations about this kind of a contextualizing scheme. The "bodhicitta, compassion and skill-in-means" formula is derived from the Mahāvairocana-sūtra, the basic text employed in the composition of the Garbhakośadhātū Manḍala. We are presently dealing with the Vajradhātu Manḍala, though it can perhaps be said that inasmuch as the two are to be integrated, the principles embodied in the Garbhakośadhātū Manḍala are reflected on the Vajradhātu Manḍala. But somehow I have the feeling that this kind of a contextualizing scheme is overtaxing the bounds of reason.

Another method to contextualize the "nine halls" is to make reference to a theme developed by Nagao, the eminent Japanese Buddhologist, in his recent essay, "Ascent and Descent: Two-Directional Activity in Buddhist Thought." This method has my unqualified endorsement. In this essay, Nagao says,

Ascent can be understood as an activity of movement from this world to the world yonder, or from this human personal
With reference to the “nine halls,” the path “nine-to-one,” represents the “ascent,” and the path “one-to-one,” the “descent.” Neither path represents the absolute—one is made possible because of the other. The “ascent” and “descent” paths are based on co-arising, the principle which presupposes that all things are interdependent, interrelated, and interwoven. All phenomena (such as “ascent” and “descent”), though conceived contrastively, are in fact mutually complementing one another, just like the two-thrusting movements of a piston. Thus, modern physics claims, “a phenomenon can be measured only with reference to another phenomenon.” Co-arising, simply put, is the Buddhist theory of relativity, in the sense that one complements the other. In the context of Buddhist philosophy, emptiness—nothing is absolute—underlies co-arising. But emptiness is not the causal nexus of co-arising. The Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith therefore says, “Water (emptiness) and waves (co-arising) are inseparable.”

And so we can say that emptiness is the central theme that characterizes the Garbhakoṣadhātu Maṇḍala and co-arising is the central theme that characterizes the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. Granting that the two are interdependent, interrelated and interwoven, nevertheless, the former deals with the world of Mahāvairocana, the realm of truth, and the latter with the world of humankind, the realm of phenomena. Sokushin-jōbutsu signals the integration of the two.

III. Textual Sources: Paradoxes and Integration

Kūkai is said to be the systematizer of Shingon Mikkyō. What this means is that he formulated the sokushin-jōbutsu theory by making reference to selected Tantric Buddhist texts composed in India and China. The twofold maṇḍala is designed to describe this theory iconographically. I now wish to critically examine these sources by pointing out the doctrinal paradoxes in these texts and describing how Kūkai resolved them.

A maṇḍala, as defined within the context of this work, is “a
means of integration." Integration means unifying parts, in the
case of Shingon Mikkyō, unifying man, a historical being, and
Mahāvairocana, the personification of truth. Kūkai discovered
the key to resolving the tension between man and
Mahāvairocana by syncretizing the central themes developed in the
Mahāvairocana-sūtra and Tattvasamgraha-sūtra.

The first chapter of the Mahāvairocana-sūtra articulates the
Mādhyamika theme of non-duality and establishes the doctrinal
basis of this sūtra. This is important. The Mahāyāna concept of
compassion is derived from the ontological view of non-duality—
all forms of existence are interdependent, interrelated and inter­
woven, one's existence is contingent on the existence of others,
and hence there can be no self-enlightenment without the en­
lightenment of others. Implicit in the Mahāyāna version of com­
passion is collective enlightenment. Thus, the Mahāvairocana-
sūtra speaks of "skill-in-means as the ultimate." Its concern is
with humanity at large. If this is so, the practice directed toward
realizing integration is not the fundamental issue. The funda­
mental issue is the practice of compassion. Thus, though this
sūtra has incorporated the lofty idealism of compassion and the
enlightenment of others, it does not specifically describe the
path to self-enlightenment other than making reference to the
three kalpa theories19 (kalpa here refers to the substance of delu­sion rather than the duration of time) and the six nirbhaya
theories20 (nirbhaya here means to revive). The former is simply
a categorization of Buddhist systems of thought into Hinayāna,
Mahāyāna and Ekayāna, the latter a description of the process
for awakening bodhicitta. Granting that all these practices require
meditation, nevertheless, the text does not provide specific infor­
mation as to what psychological phenomenon is expected at
each stage of meditation.

On the other hand, though the Tattvasamgraha-sūtra has
incorporated the epistemological approach of Yogācāra, pro­
vides the details of mental cultivation, and describes the rational
underlying perception, it does not articulate the lofty idealism
of the kind articulated in the Mahāvairocana-sūtra. Thus, in spite
of the fact that tradition claims that the twofold maṇḍala is de­
signed to indicate integration between the Garbhakośadhātu
Maṇḍala (the world of truth per se) and Vajradhātu Maṇḍala
(the world of the pursuer of truth), underlying this integration
is the awareness of tensions, not only between man and Mahāvairocana, but more so between compassion and meditational practice. Kūkai, following the Chinese tradition, apparently accepted these two sūtras in order to supplement lofty idealism (compassion) with practice (meditation), the former concerned with the enlightenment of others and the latter with the enlightenment of self. He employed them to formulate the sokushin-jōbutsu theory, the theory that the twofold mandala is designed to depict. This is clearly indicated in his Sokushin-jōbutsu-gi.

As said previously, the Sokushin-jōbutsu-gi is Kūkai's interpretation of the sokushin-jōbutsu theory. In the section “On the Meaning of sokushin-jōbutsu,” this text elaborates on the nature of Mahāvairocana, explains that sentient beings are the attributes of Mahāvairocana, and provides the details of practice to unveil the inherent buddhanature. It neatly synthesizes compassion and practice by making reference to both the Mahāvairocana-sūtra and Tattvasamgraha-sūtra, which by themselves, taken separately, do not allow for this synthesis. But the sokushin-jōbutsu theory not only synthesizes compassion and practice, it represents a “sudden” enlightenment doctrine. What then were Kūkai’s textual sources in the formulation of this aspect of the sokushin-jōbutsu theory?

The question of “sudden” versus “gradual” enlightenment is a doctrinal issue developed in the context of Chinese, not Indian, Buddhism. The Mahāvairocana-sūtra and Tattvasamgraha-sūtra are Indian compositions. Hence, in spite of the fact that Kūkai did make extensive reference to both the Mahāvairocana-sūtra and Tattvasamgraha-sūtra in the composition of his Sokushin-jōbutsu-gi, the “sudden” enlightenment doctrine that characterizes the sokushin-jōbutsu theory is not derived from these texts. The Mahāvairocana-sūtra deals with the ontological concept of non-duality and takes a gradual approach to enlightenment; the Tattvasamgraha-sūtra deals with the practice of unveiling one’s inherent buddhanature and it too takes a gradual approach. Kūkai’s “sudden” enlightenment doctrine was derived from the Bodhicitta-šāstra. What is important to note here is that in spite of the fact that this text belongs to the Tattvasamgraha doctrinal lineage, it is, most likely, a Chinese composition. Kūkai’s “sudden” enlightenment doctrine was derived from
Chinese, not Indian, texts to accommodate the practicality of realizing enlightenment in the present, not in an unknown future requiring eons of time. Thus, I-hsing's *Ta-jih ching-su* (commentary on the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*), a Chinese composition to be sure, also speaks of "sudden" enlightenment. It says:

If one transcends the three graspings (*mithyā-grāha*) in one's lifetime, one would realize buddhahood in the present life. Why should the duration of time (*kalpa*) be discussed?

But *sokushin-jōbutsu* is not only a "sudden" enlightenment doctrine; it is also a doctrine which presupposes that buddhanature is inherent in the makeup of all sentient beings. We now encounter a slightly complex issue.

*Kūkai* interchangeably employed the terms "bodhicitta" and "buddhahood/buddhanature." For example, he conceived *bodhicitta* as the agent to realize *sokushin-jōbutsu* (we have already established that the term literally means "buddhahood realized in the present body"). But because he also thought that the awakening of *bodhicitta* is in itself enlightenment, within the context of the *sokushin-jōbutsu* theory, *bodhicitta* itself is buddhahood. (It should be noted therefore that in the Garbhoḍaśadhatu Maṇḍala, *bodhicitta* is identified as *dharmakāya*), notwithstanding the fact that Mahāyāna Buddhism in general conceives *bodhicitta* as the causal, not the resultant, aspect of enlightenment, as previously said. To illustrate this concept—the identity of the causal and resultant aspects of enlightenment—let me make reference to the Shingon Nikkyō concept of *shoji soku goku*. This term is employed with reference to the ten *bodhisattva* stages (*daśabhūmi*), and within that context it means that the first (pramudita) is the final, that is, the first stage contains the essential elements to be cultivated in all other stages. The term does not refer to a graded process of practice.

What this means is that *Kūkai* considered enlightenment (resultant aspect) as inherent in the makeup of all sentient beings (causal aspect). And since the first stage is conceived of as "understanding" in the three stage path categorization to enlightenment—"understanding," "practice," and "realization"—*shoji soku goku* essentially means that "practice" and "realization" are inherent in "understanding." Thus, in the context of the *sokushin-
jobutsu theory, bodhicitta is conceived of as a synonym of buddhanature. We have a problem here: buddhanature is technically referred to as tathāgatagarbha, an issue which Takasaki has conclusively settled some twenty-five years ago. Let me briefly summarize what Takasaki had then said. The term “buddhanature” in Sanskrit is buddhagotra, though sometimes it is also referred to as buddhadhātu. Here gotra means “lineage,” and dhātu means “world, realm or element.” The term “element” is most relevant. Tathāgatagarbha is a compound made up of tathāgata, another word for the Buddha, and garbha, literally, a “womb.” The terms “lineage,” “element,” and “womb” project the notion that something basic is inherent. Hence, the terms buddhagotra, buddhadhātu, and tathāgatagarbha are all synonyms for buddhanature. The question then is, why did Kūkai employ the term bodhicitta rather than tathāgatagarbha?

Kūkai was familiar with the term tathāgatagarbha. This can be substantiated textually. He made frequent reference to the Shih Mo-ho-yen lun, a commentary on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith. As is well known, the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith makes reference to tathāgatagarbha. So does the Shih Mo-ho-yen lun. But though Kūkai was familiar with tathāgatagarbha thought, he was probably unaware that there was an independent system of thought called Tathāgatagarbha-vāda developed in India. I would not penalize Kūkai on this score. Historical information on Buddhist India was scanty in Kūkai’s time, as it is even at the present. It is only in recent times that Takasaki has shown that there was a “Tathāgatagarbha-vāda, an independent system of thought just like ‘Śūnyavāda’ and ‘Vijñānavāda,’ in the Lankāvatāra-sūtra.” At any rate, Kūkai probably equated bodhicitta with tathāgatagarbha because both terms presuppose that the human mind is inherently pure; that is, an enlightenment-potential is inherent in all humankind. What characterizes Kūkai’s concept of bodhicitta then is that it refers to an enlightenment-potential, that this potential is inherent in the minds of all sentient beings, and that there is no distinction between the awakening of the thought of enlightenment and enlightenment per se. This is the context in which I am speculating that Kūkai conceived bodhicitta and tathāgatagarbha as synonyms.

Of course, the thesis I have developed here must be considered a tentative one. But what is most important to note is
that among the major śāstra sources Kūkai employed—the Bodhicitta-śāstra to describe bodhicitta and the Shih Mo-ho-yen lun to describe tathāgatagarbha (which Kūkai possibly equated with bodhicitta) as the central concept underlying the sokushin-jōbutsu theory—both are traditionally considered apocryphal texts. Here we encounter an interesting issue. In spite of the fact that the two major sūtra sources of Shingon Mikkyō—the Mahāvairocana-sūtra and Tattvasamgraha-sūtra—are obviously Indic compositions, Kūkai employed Chinese apocryphal texts to interpret Indian thought. Hence, notwithstanding the Indic origin of Tantric Buddhism, the manner in which Indian Buddhist Tantric thought was interpreted by Kūkai illustrates a domesticating process. That is, Shigon Mikkyō has its roots in Indian Tantric Buddhism which was domesticated in China and systematized in the context of sokushin-jōbutsu theory by Kūkai in Japan. To reiterate, Kūkai made reference to Indic sources, became aware of doctrinal paradoxes inherent in these sources, interpreted these sources through Chinese apocryphal texts, and systematized his sokushin-jōbutsu theory. The sokushin-jōbutsu theory has synthesized compassion and practice, incorporated the Chinese doctrine of “sudden” enlightenment, and conceived bodhicitta and tathāgatagarbha synonymously. Thus, in spite of the negative connotation that the term “apocryphal texts” projects, this group of texts most clearly illustrates the process of domestication, indicating that the Chinese and Japanese were capable of engaging in philosophical speculation, developing religious insights, and recording them, just like the Indian ācāryas.

IV. Conclusion

The Garbhakośadhātu Maṇḍala is a representation of the world of Mahāvairocana, the world of truth; the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala is a representation of the world of sentient beings, the pursuer of truth. In this paper, we have focused attention on the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala. This maṇḍala portrays the path to be observed by the practitioner to realize integration with the world of Mahāvairocana. Bodhicitta is the agent of integration. Integration is sokushin-jōbutsu. Sokushin-jōbutsu is possible because Shin-
Shingon Mikkyō maintains that bodhicitta contains the "seed" of Mahāvairocana and is inherent in all sentient beings. But here we must add that sokushin-jōbutsu does not simply refer to a mental integration. It refers to the integration of body, speech and mind because Shingon Mikkyō claims that the body, speech and mind of humankind are the body, speech and mind of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana. Most relevant here is speech. Speech refers to a mantra (shingon). Mantra is not simply a chanting exercise. It is the other way around. It is the voice of the Tathāgata; it is the means to dwell in the world of the Tathāgata; it is to verify that one is the Tathāgata. Shingon is Mikkyō, the secret teaching. The term "secret" is an existential term. It represents a type of teaching which penetrates the deeper layers of the human consciousness, bringing about the awareness of the contingency of all forms of existence, and leading to the realization of man-Buddha integration within the present body as portrayed in the twofold mandala. Insight into Shingon Mikkyō requires insight into the twofold mandala. Kūkai therefore said, "The mandala is the essence of the secret teaching." The twofold mandala represents the ultimate ideal of Shingon Mikkyō, "I-in-Buddha and Buddha-in-me," a realm to be realized in the present life. Hence in a formal Shingon Mikkyō ritual the practitioner sits facing a statue of Mahāvairocana symbolizing emptiness, flanked by the twofold mandala, the Garbhakośadhātu on the right and Vajradhātu on the left, to realize man-Buddha integration. But the purpose of this paper was not simply to present a descriptive account of the twofold mandala—an iconographic representation of the sokushin-jōbutsu theory—but to discuss the problematics involved in the selection of textual sources in the formulation of this theory. Kūkai ingeniously systematized this theory by synthesizing ideas related in his sources, ideas which at times contradicted on another. It is in this context that we see Kūkai as the systematizer of Shingon Mikkyō as a distinct and independent school of Japanese Buddhism.

Sūtra authors are unknown. Names therefore are not identified. Some of the sāstra authors can be verified, some cannot. Those who can be are
identified, others are not. Names of contemporary Japanese authors are rendered in the Japanese manner, last name first and first name last. Names of Japanese-Americans are rendered in the Western manner.

Abbreviations:


NOTES

* After the completion of this paper, I received the 47th volume of the *Acta Asiatica* from my good friend, Takasaki Jikido, of Tokyo University. In it are two papers—"The Hermeneutics of Kūkai" by Tsuda Shin'ichi and "Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai) and Tathāgatagarbha Thought" by Takasaki Jikido—which are directly related to this paper. The former is a critical study of Shingon in which Tsuda claims that the doctrinal contents of the two major canonical sources of Shingon (*Mahāvairocana-sūtra* and *Tattvasamgraha-sūtra*) are directly opposed to each other. The latter consists of a critical comment on the former and describes the Tathāgatagarbha basis of Kūkai's thought. The reader of my paper will gain much by making reference to these two papers. For details, see *Acta Asiatica* 47 (1985): "The Hermeneutics of Kūkai," pp. 82-108; "Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai) and Tathāgatagarbha Thought," pp. 109-129.


4. See n. 2.
7. For an English translation of this sāstra, see TCB, pp. 80-93.
9. Nagao Gadjin has written an excellent article on this subject in English. See his “On the Theory of Buddha-Body,” The Eastern Buddhist 11 (1973) 80ff. See also TCB, pp. 3-5.
10. It might be interesting to point out here that because Shingon Mikkyō conceives Mahāvairocana as the “vital forces” of the universe, the Gedatsukai, a new religion in contemporary Japan with Shingon Mikkyō roots, conceives of Mahāvairocana as the “Sun Spirit” and associates him with the Shinto kami, Tenjin-chigi, the creator of heaven and earth. See Kiyota, Gedatsukai: Its Theory and Practice (A Study of a Shinto-Buddhist Syncretic School in Contemporary Japan). Los Angeles-Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1982, see pp. 46, 47, 76 and 81. I have elaborated on this subject in “Gedatsukai: A Case Study of Shinto-Buddhist Syncretism in Contemporary Japan,” a paper delivered at the U.S.-Japan Conference on Japanese Buddhism held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in August 1985.
11. For details, see TCB, pp. 6-7.
19. For details, see TCB, pp. 15-17.
23. I have treated the subject of dasabhūmi within the Shingon Mikkyō context in SB, pp. 115-121, see in particular, p. 117, where I have associated the term “shoji soku goku” with bodhicitta.

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