Sanskrit Beyond Text:
The Use of Bonji (Siddham) in Mandala
and Other Imagery in Ancient and Medieval Japan

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Introduction

This thesis features selected examples of Japanese art from the Heian period to the Kamakura period that carry within their artistic representation the use of Sanskrit characters. As such, it is about the dissemination of Sanskrit characters in Japan and their deployment in visual culture—an area of Japanese art history that has been, to date, understudied. This phenomenon began by the ninth century with the importation of both Esoteric Buddhist texts and objects with Sanskrit, evolved to include non-religious as well as Buddhist objects during the medieval era, and continued into modern times. My thesis explores shifts in the appearance, deployment and function of Sanskrit on non-textual religious objects which, while always illustrating the polysemy of the sign, spread from representing specific deities and doctrine in Esoteric Buddhism (seen in specialized mandala forms used in Esoteric Buddhist ritual and education) to additionally representing concepts that supported the dogmatic integration of Shinto and Buddhism that was already practically inherent in the culture of ancient and medieval Japan.[1]

Although a foreign language, the primary use of Sanskrit through medieval times was in Esoteric Buddhism's Shingon (真言, literally "true word," i.e., *mantra*) sect imagery and practices; as such, its use in the Shingon sect became increasingly native and less foreign—part of doctrine and Shingon ritual. At the same time, it is also significant that the foreign associations carried by Sanskrit, although assimilated into praxis in many ways, continued to function at a multivalent level of language and image with non-native connotations yet within an increasingly localized syncretic visual culture. The Sanskrit character acting semiotically as the

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[1] As scholars have pointed out, to designate the term "Shinto" to indigenous deities is problematic as the term itself was introduced from China (Ch.: *shendao*, originally read in Japan as *jindō*) with pejorative connotations. It only developed into the new reading, Shinto, as a new "pure" term focusing on the *kami* in the fourteenth century. Teeuwen, Mark, and Fabio Rambelli. *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm.* London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p. 6. However, for ease of reading I use the term "Shinto" and "*kami* practices" throughout my thesis in reference to such native Japanese deities and practices that were originally outside the Buddhist pantheon.

sign of a Buddhist deity came to also have the potential to act as the sign for a Shinto *kami* (神,

Shinto deity) and, additionally, new world-concepts of a so-called (dogma) for the

"amalgamation" of Shinto and Buddhism. The limitations imposed by the scope of the project

do not allow me to answer all remaining questions (for example, those relating to Sanskrit's very

select dispersion to the secular). Even still, I hope this thesis presents a clearer picture of

Sanskrit's trajectory and transformation within Japanese culture (especially visual culture)

through select examples. It also aims to identify through analyses of a few examples over time

how Sanskrit in Japan, being a visual and ritual language rather than an ordinary system of

language with normal grammatical structures and everyday use, differed from the Sanskrit

'language' in India.

Today, Sanskrit in Japanese Buddhist visual culture is not a novel occurrence; however,

the occurrence of Siddham (Sanskrit characters)[2] on or in non-textual objects was new in the

ninth century, save but for a few examples. Siddham was a mainstay of the Buddhist teachings

introduced to Japan by Kūkai (774-835,空海,alt: Kōbō Daishi, 弘法大師), known as the Shingon

school of Esoteric Buddhism, or Mikkyō (密教)literally, secret teachings).[3] Although we cannot

know exactly the extent of the historical Buddhist clerics' knowledge of Sanskrit in their

undertaking of Esoteric rituals, studies to date that outline the process of such an education

demonstrate that Sanskrit study focused on pronunciation and recognition without a goal of

understanding Sanskrit as a non-religious communicable language.[4] Such an education can, in

part, be seen as both the product and continued producer of an Esoteric Buddhist semiotic theory

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[2] For ease of reading and partly for aesthetic preference to not have multiple fonts in the text, I do not include the Sanskrit diacritics in the text. Please see the glossary for diacritics in the Sanskrit words.

[3] As art historian Cynthea Bogel explains in her recent book (*With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyō Vision*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), esoteric Buddhist elements existed in Japan prior to Kūkai's introduction of Mikkyō; she uses 'esoteric' versus 'Esoteric' to distinguish between the elements that were already dispersed throughout Nara Buddhism and the organized theory and praxis that Kūkai brought back to Japan.

[4] For example, the studies done by Robert van Gulik and Fabio Rambelli delve into this topic. I will discuss these two scholars in further detail later in this thesis.

(to put it in modern English terms) that accompanied an imported form of mandala depicting Sanskrit and emphasized the polysemy of the sign, which is indeed inherent in any object that is seen.[5]

While the now commonly acknowledged polysemy of the sign was inherent even in early Sanskrit use in Japan—as exemplified by the efficacious power of Sanskrit mantras as early as the eighth century—in Mikkyō, polysemy came to have two levels. The first level is the more evident polysemic nature that connects the sign (the Sanskrit character) with specific signifieds (such as a specific deity, a specific mantra, a specific characteristic of Buddhist teachings). The second level of the polysemic nature of Sanskrit, reached only after extensive Mikkyō Sanskrit training, is the realization of endless polysemy. The sign has no specific signified, but rather endless signifieds. In essence, it is nondual. In syncretic Buddhism (an unfortunate but commonly used designation for a blend of Buddhist and native [Shinto, Daoist, other] practices), the polysemic nature of the sign is similar to Mikkyō's first level of function. Rather than endless polysemy, the signifieds of a sign are limited to set deities, both Shinto and Buddhist, as well as to the concept of *honji-suijaku* (本地垂迹, "original forms of deities and their local traces"). As noted above, however, at the ritual level mandala and other works were accepted as part and parcel of an imported Buddhist visual (and thus, ritual) culture that included, but was not limited to, Sanskrit as a foreign element. The works selected for this thesis are at once representative of the overall trajectory of Sanskrit deployment in Japanese visual culture through the fourteenth century and illustrative of these semiotic turns.

There are many objects that depict Sanskrit on or within their formal expressions, but a comprehensive study of these forms would be far too broad for a master's thesis. This thesis will

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[5] Polysemy refers to a sign's capacity for multiple meanings (or signifieds). While such meanings can be cultural or religious, these meanings (or signifieds) can also be a result of more personal experiences due to humankind's tendency to associate objects with ideas or experiences.

therefore explore Sanskrit in Japanese visual culture by focusing primarily on two very different types of mandala, the Sanskrit letter *hō mandara* (法曼荼羅, Skt: *Dharma mandala*) and the topographic landscape of or relating to a shrine complex, the *miya mandara* (宮曼荼羅, shrine mandala).[6] I will illustrate the diffusion of Sanskrit from objects in Mikkyō visual culture to objects in other areas of Buddhism and Japanese culture primarily through an analysis of these two objects, very different in time and shape; between them lies a huge valley of material to be explored by future research.

Although the use of Sanskrit on non-textual objects appears to have been introduced to Japan by Kūkai, the concept of word as power was not new in the early ninth century. By this point in time, there was already a pre-existing belief in the talismanic power of Sanskrit mantras. The presence of the *kotodama* (言霊, literally "word spirit")[7] concept is further evidence of a cultural belief of words as repositories of supernatural power. Despite its lack of use in Shingon texts (until the Edo period, 1615-1868), the first known textual appearance of *kotodama* dates to the eighth century—directly prior to Kūkai's importation of Mikkyō.[8] Pre-existing beliefs and trends no doubt contributed at least in part to the rapid adoption of Kūkai's new use of Sanskrit.

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[6] An esoteric Buddhist mandala is the paradigmatic mandala form, but in Japan, the term mandala (in Japanese *mandara*) came to be used for a variety of representational forms, some outside esoteric Buddhism. This is the case with the *miya mandara*.

[7] This word's first known appearance is in the *Manyō'shu* (万葉集, "Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves"), a collection of Japanese poetry compiled in the eighth-century sometime after 759 CE. In the *Manyō'shu*, it is used as part of a classical name for Japan: *kotodama no sagiwau kuni* (言霊の幸う国, translated as "the land where the mysterious workings of language bring bliss" in the 2003 fifth edition of *Kenkyūsha's New Japanese-English Dictionary*). From what scholars can discern, it seems that the ancient term *kotodama* referred to the concept that words are repositories of supernatural power; this view of *kotodama* exists even today, especially in Shinto belief.

[8] This is mentioned in Rambelli's online lecture series (see bibliography) as well as other academic sources on early Japanese literature.

Siddham (Jp.: *shittan* 悉曇) is a written form of Sanskrit that was used in North India from circa 600 to 1200 CE and spread throughout Asia via Buddhism.[9] From Kūkai's importation of both textual and non-textual Chinese objects with Sanskrit—which were subsequently copied—this practice spread during the following centuries until Sanskrit could be found on a variety of forms. Objects with Sanskrit are many and extant examples include, but are not limited to, texts such as sutras, commentaries, and written mantra; ritual implements such as bell and vajra; two-dimensional images such as various types of mandala,[10] religious landscapes, and those used for the rite known as *a-ji kan* (阿字観, the rite of meditating on the Sanskrit character A); on or inside three-dimensional forms such as sculptures, reliquaries, and *gorintō* (五輪塔, death memorials or gravestones in a "five elements" form shaped like a pagoda); and eventually the secular swords of warriors.

As noted above, the foci of this thesis are the Sanskrit letter *hō mandara* and the topographic landscape shrine mandala, or *miya mandara*. The deities in the *hō mandara* (also called a *shūji mandara*, 種字曼荼羅) are shown in their "seed-syllable" or *shūji* (Skt.: *bija*) form. Shūji (also given as [short "u"] *shuji*) are Sanskrit characters that are alternately the embodiment of the *honzon* (本尊, primary deity) or the mantra of that deity, depending on how the character is presented.[11] In order to provide a base of reference for the study of the *hō mandara* within the hierarchy of ritual and Sanskrit education in Buddhism, in Chapter One I will briefly discuss imagery used in and related to the *a-ji kan* rite before beginning the study of the mandalas. This

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[9] Sanskrit characters are often called *bonji* (梵字) in Japanese as well—a term basically meaning characters of the Sanskrit language (Jp.: *bongo*, 梵語). Shittan is a term that refers to this specific form of Sanskrit writing (Siddham). For convenience, I will simply call these characters Sanskrit throughout this thesis.

[10] When referencing titles or specific types of mandala in Japanese art (for example, the *hō mandara*), I will use the Japanese term *mandara*. Outside of that, I will use the Sanskrit word mandala that is commonly found within the English language.

[11] Although sometimes these identifications are ambiguous and context will aid in discerning how the Sanskrit character functions semiotically—as will be illustrated at points throughout the thesis.

chapter will also present a brief history of the transmission and study of Sanskrit from China to Japan. In Chapter Two, the *hō mandara* is discussed. In relation to my thesis, the use of the term *hō mandara* refers to a pair of mandala also called *ryōbu mandara* (両部曼荼羅, Dual Mandala).[12] This set of mandala depicts the Buddhist cosmos by organizing deities visually in a geometric composition. Originally a religious monastic image that found its way into the worship practices of the elite, it was re-appropriated by the monastic community for ritual use by ordained monks seeking to become masters of Sanskrit.

In contrast, the purpose of the image type in Chapter Three, the *miya mandara*, was very different. These *mandara* focus on Shinto locations and *kami,* but they can also incorporate overtly Buddhist elements—for example, Buddhist deities or Buddhist Pure Lands coexistent with or transposed onto sacred Shinto sites. Miya mandara are Japanese forms of a "mandala," the concept (but not the original Buddhist visual form) of which was localized: they are devotional paintings that depict landscapes of shrines or temples, often in a map-like manner, showing topography, pilgrimage paths, and deities. Scholars therefore link this genre with the diffusion of esoteric elements of Buddhism—a mandalization of Japan's geography—as well as the increasing popularity of pilgrimage.[13] As will be explored in Chapter Three, the occurrence of Sanskrit in some *miya mandara* is further indication of esoteric diffusion and the evolving function of Sanskrit in visual culture, Buddhist and otherwise. In discussing the *hō mandara* and the *miya mandara* individually and in relation to one another, throughout this thesis I will address topics such as semiotics and the nature of the sign in visual objects with Sanskrit, the

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[12] The *hō mandara* is one of the four types of mandala described by Kūkai, which will be discussed further in this thesis. This mandala is the mandala form that uses Sanskrit characters to depict the deity rather than anthropomorphic figures—in this way, a *hō mandara* can be any type of mandala with the deity in Sanskrit form. As *ryōbu mandara* with Sanskrit characters instead of anthropomorphic figures or symbols are also widely called *hō mandara*, I will use this term throughout the thesis in reference to this type of work.

[13] A very accessible brief description of this can be found in Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis' *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography*. Her bibliography also provides other sources for further reference.

role of the visual in doctrine and praxis, and Buddhism's integration with indigenous culture by means of Shinto combinatory practices. Changes in the forms and functions of Sanskrit objects will be identified from a close study of the two mandala types.

An examination of the *hō mandara* and the *miya mandara* demonstrates the diffusion of Sanskrit from objects used and promoted by Mikkyō monks to objects in other areas of religion, including images that may have legitimized the presence of Buddhism in Japan as the original "face" of indigenous Shinto *kami*. This diffusion was so expansive that Sanskrit appeared even on the swords of warriors. This thesis discusses only the trajectory of Sanskrit in relation to the comparison between these two religious mandalas, but in so doing it will clarify areas for further study and supply the groundwork for the study of secular works with Sanskrit.

Related Studies

My methodologies are drawn from the fields of visual studies and religious studies. Although I look at some sectarian scholarship for a more intimate view of certain rituals and object use, my approach to the study of such objects remains highly influenced by the works of scholars Cynthea Bogel and Fabio Rambelli. The approach in Cynthea Bogel's recent book, *With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyō Vision*, focuses on close studies of the object paired with a thorough investigation of provenance, historical and religious framing, and possible receptions.[14] Bogel's book addresses the use of vision and visuality in Buddhist praxis and she also analyzes the use of physical and non-physical (non) materials in the process of 'visualization' (or what Bogel calls eidetic contemplation). She uses diverse sources, especially historical and documentary, but also including clerical experiences as well as scientific experiments. These

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[14] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, 2009.

aspects of her work have informed my own, but her research on Kūkai and the objects he imported has particular relevance to my thesis.

Her book is a challenging yet complementary companion to Ryūichi Abe's book, *The Weaving of the Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*.[15] Although not about visual culture, Abe's book is an extremely rich source for the study of Mikkyō with its semiological, literary historical approach—and by extension, to some areas of visual culture. Abe's attention to and analysis of sectarian and historical texts is a strong base for my own investigation of Esoteric Buddhist theory, especially as it relates to semiotics and Sanskrit from the perspective of Kūkai. These two sources have shaped my study of Mikkyō and, likewise, my approach to my thesis subject. I will reference them throughout my thesis.

Robert van Gulik's 1956 seminal work, *Siddham; An Essay on the History of Sanskrit Studies in China and Japan*, is the first English-language comprehensive study of Sanskrit use outside of India.[16] In it, he outlines in great detail the transfer of Sanskrit from India to China and then to Japan via Buddhist texts and practices. Written over a half-century ago, there are points in the book that are outdated due to later research, but overall his book provides an excellent and reliable study of primary sources (Rambelli cites van Gulik periodically in his own work). The author explores the capability of translators of Buddhist texts as well as the Sanskrit language training scholar-monks received first in China and then in Japan. Through this study, he elaborates on the changes that Sanskrit underwent in its export to other countries.

Van Gulik, perhaps most significantly, addresses the study of Sanskrit itself in Asia (known in Japanese as *shittangaku*, 悉曇学), including in the monastic careers of monks such as

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[15] Abe, Ryūichi. *The Weaving of the Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

[16] Gulik, Robert Hans van. *Siddham; an Essay on the History of Sanskrit Studies in China and Japan*. Nagpur: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1956.

Kūkai and Kakuban (1095-1183). Few scholars have covered this topic since, but Fabio Rambelli competently addresses it throughout his publications. Although his texts are full of pertinent information, a distinguishing feature of Rambelli's work is his semiotic methodology. As such, even though background in Western semiotics (such as works of scholars such as Derrida, Saussure, Peirce, and Levi-Strauss) is necessary in reference to my work on Sanskrit, Rambelli's semiotic methodology will act as my main reference. He combines Western semiotic terms with Buddhist semiotic theory in a manner that sheds light on the polysemy of the Sanskrit sign in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism. Like van Gulik, Rambelli discusses sectarian scholarship and, using religious texts and commentaries, he breaks down the various layers of meaning that can be found in the Japanese Sanskrit characters.[17] Despite Rambelli's attention to Sanskrit in Mikkyō, he generally does not discuss specific types of objects on which Sanskrit characters are found or their roles in the trajectory of the use of Sanskrit in Japanese visual culture throughout the centuries. Other scholars have informed my work, but the four scholars discussed above (Bogel, Abe, van Gulik, and Rambelli) are my primary influences. Despite the increase in recent years of the study of individual objects that incorporate Sanskrit,[18] very little (if any) work has been done to situate such objects within a broader history of Sanskrit in Japanese visual culture. In fact, the study of Sanskrit in Japanese culture is generally confined within a single field, be it literature, religious studies, *shittangaku*, or visual studies. To study and more fully understand Sanskrit in Japanese visual culture it is necessary to combine these approaches in focused visual analyses—because the visual informs and operates within all aspects of culture—that can begin to trace a trajectory within the multitude of objects that incorporate Sanskrit.

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[17] I will not discuss these layers here as this would require a lengthier discussion than this introduction warrants.
[18] In the field of art history, discussion of these works (such as the *hō mandara*) is often confined to catalog entries, which by nature are brief and lacking a deeper exploration.

The understudied nature of Sanskrit in/on visual objects could be related to the late nineteenth-century persecution of Buddhism in Japan, which caused Buddhists to de-emphasize as much as possible the foreign aspects of the religion.[19] It is likely that such actions resulted in a determined lack of interest in Sanskrit within visual culture at the very point in Japanese history when modern Japanese scholarship was being formed under the influence of Western structures of academia. Even now, Sanskrit within Japanese visual or textual culture remains understudied, although this state of affairs is changing with the work of scholars such as Rambelli. My goal with this thesis is to begin a more thorough study of such objects and to start to identify the general trends of Sanskrit use in Buddhist visual culture. To do so, it is necessary to address multiple forms of these objects. In a master's thesis, it would be impossible to provide a full exploration of each object mentioned and there is more research to be done on many works. In fact, perhaps more than fully answering questions, my thesis aims to uncover the questions that have been unaddressed and the areas where more work can and should be done.

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[19] Van Gulik put forth this hypothesis mid-twentieth century.

Chapter One

The *hō mandara,* defined above as a mandala that presents the deities in their *shūji* (Sanskrit) form, finds a place within a hierarchy of Buddhist Sanskrit education and ritual. It is one of the two image types featuring Sanskrit letters to be discussed in this thesis. To study this mandala fully, it is necessary to briefly discuss the history of Sanskrit in China, its introduction to Japan, the basic background of Kūkai and Mikkyō, and imagery used in the *a-ji kan* rite. This chapter will address these topics and, additionally, touch on the development of various systems of writing in Japan (such as hiragana) as well as the importance and legacy of Heian period (794-1185) calligraphy. This diverse group of topics will provide a foundational background for not only the study of the *hō mandara* but also the broader use of Sanskrit in Buddhist imagery.

A section of this chapter will focus on imagery that pertains to the *a-ji kan* rite and discuss textual sources for these objects. The microcosm of the *a-ji kan* imagery is important since it was utilized relatively widely as opposed to the *hō mandara*, which was eventually the culmination of a Buddhist Sanskrit education (to be discussed in Chapter Two). Studying the *a-ji kan* provides a point of entry into the religious function and meaning of Sanskrit, especially as posited by Kūkai. Kūkai's transmission of Mikkyō began in earnest with his trip to China in 804.[20] He returned to Japan in 806, bringing a collection of objects and texts for use in disseminating Mikkyō in Japan, as his master in China, Huiguo (惠果, 746-805), had instructed. Armed with these objects and texts, Kūkai established an emphasized role of Sanskrit in Japanese religious culture with his Shingon school.[21] In short, this chapter will establish a

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[20] The monk Saichō (最澄,767-822) was on another ship in the same envoy. Saichō also returned to Japan with esoteric Buddhist elements that can be found in his Tendai (天台, Ch.: Tiantai) school of Buddhism. We do not know whether these included the use of texts or objects with Sanskrit.

[21] Shingon is the name of the "school" of Buddhism that Kūkai promoted. While it is a term that was likely not officially applied during Kūkai's time to his practice and his followers, it was indeed a term used occasionally throughout his texts and those of his contemporaries. Certainly it became more commonly used as time progressed.

foundation for the comparative studies of the *hō mandara* and the *miya mandara* by providing necessary background and addressing the importance of Sanskrit as displayed in objects related to the *a-ji kan* rite.

Sanskrit in China

Sanskrit's position in Japan is, at least in part, a legacy from China. Robert van Gulik's 1956 seminal work, *Siddham; an Essay on the History of Sanskrit Studies in China and Japan*, was the first English-language comprehensive study of Sanskrit use outside of India. Van Gulik notes that the study of Sanskrit (specifically, Siddham, Ch.: 悉曇, *xitan*) as a working language was not an important aspect of a Chinese Buddhist education. In fact, the majority of the Buddhist canon was translated from Sanskrit to Chinese by monks of India and Central Asia rather than Chinese monks. Those intrepid monks who *did* study Sanskrit often traveled to India to do so and, even then, in most cases, it was centuries after the initial introduction of Buddhism to China.[22] The only way to sufficiently learn the language in China was to study with a Buddhist master who had emigrated from India or Central Asia, but as the Chinese monk Yijing (義淨, 635-713) wrote, "the old [Indian] translators [of the sutras in China] have seldom told us the rules of Sanskrit grammar."[23]

Yijing, having studied in Sanskrit at the monastery in Nalanda, had a clear understanding of Sanskrit grammar, but his notes on this topic were presented in fragments scattered throughout his texts. In fact, all mention of the structure of Sanskrit as a language were available only in such a fragmentary nature in Yijing's day. These bits and pieces alone were practically incomprehensible to Chinese scholars. Even those monk-scholars who had attained fluency in

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[22] One example of such a monk is the famous Xuanzang (玄奘, circa 602-664), who studied at Nalanda, a Buddhist center for learning in Bihar.

[23] Gulik, *Siddham*, p. 21.

the language did not compile these scattered references to grammar and language structure into a comprehensive text on Sanskrit as a communicable language. The lack of such a text contributed to the development of Sanskrit as a ritual language used for magical efficacy. In fact, the last extant lengthy text from the time of Esoteric Buddhism's prosperity in China[24] focused (like the older texts) on Sanskrit's religious use by giving "only the Indian script and the mystic meaning of the syllables, without any reference to Sanskrit grammar."[25] From as early as the Tang dynasty (618-907), someone with the appellation of Sanskrit scholar/expert could, like Xuanzang or Yijing, be reasonably fluent in Sanskrit, but it also encompassed those monks who simply possessed a fluency in character recognition and pronunciation that could be used in rites for magical efficacy. This approach to Sanskrit greatly influenced Kūkai's approach and the eventual role of Sanskrit in Japan.

The value placed on Sanskrit's visuality in China and Japan relies in part on the norm of calligraphy appreciation. Unlike Chinese characters, which are both logographs and ideographs,[26] the Sanskrit writing system is an abugida, or alphasyllabary. An abugida is a written language composed of characters that stand in for syllables; in this way, it differs from similarly phonetic languages such as English with its Roman alphabet.[27] Being an abugida, Sanskrit is able to be read aloud by those who learn the system of pronunciation, even when one has, as van Gulik concisely points out, "but a very vague idea of Sanskrit grammar."[28] Although

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[24] This text, the *Jing you dian zhu zi yuan*, seems to have been lost in China, but chapters 1-6 were preserved in Japan in manuscript copies, one of which dates to 1226. The Chinese colophon attached to this manuscript dates the original to 1035 under the reign of Emperor Renzong (仁宗, 1010-1063; r. 1023-1062), who wrote the preface for the text. More information regarding this text can be found in Gulik, *Siddham*, pp. 91-97.

[25] Ibid, p. 93.

[26] Also known as logograms or ideograms.

[27] In other words, Sanskrit (like the Roman alphabet) is a phonemic orthography with written graphemes corresponding to the phonemes, but instead of a character representing a single sound with multiple characters representing a syllable, a single character in an abugida represents an entire syllable (which can be a single sound or a combination of sounds).

[28] Gulik, *Siddham*, p. 24.

a Chinese logograph contains a component that can (but does not always) denote sound, this radical is combined with a pictographic component that denotes meaning, producing a written language where characters denote meaning rather than containing precise phonetic functions. During the very early years of Buddhism's (and thus Sanskrit's) introduction, the Chinese approached Indian script in a similar manner, assuming each character had an independent meaning.[29] Unfortunately, this misunderstanding was initially strengthened with passages from sutras that enumerate the mystic connotations of each syllable.

However, this misinterpretation was not lasting. The eventual realization of the difference between the two languages led to the Chinese use of the Indian concept of phonetics, resulting in a study of the topic that led to a pronunciation guide for a selection of their own words.[30] Indeed, works from the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) illustrate the Chinese understanding of phonetics—the Sanskrit characters used for *dharani* were transliterated into Chinese sounds rather than translated. Although Chinese characters and Sanskrit have fundamental differences, they are similar in visual qualities. Both use specific stroke orders and rely on an appreciation of balance and movement within the character. The appreciation of Sanskrit characters' aesthetic beauty is similar to the appreciation of Chinese characters, which is core to the elevated culture of calligraphy.

These various factors contributed to the emphasis of Sanskrit's value in terms of magical efficacy, both verbal and visual, while other aspects of the written and spoken language were dismissed or neglected, such as grammar patterns. Its visual interest and mystic power can be

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[29] Ibid. This and the sections on Sanskrit that follow are largely based on van Gulik's research of Sanskrit study. Written over a half-century ago, there are points in the book that are outdated due to subsequent research, but overall his book provides an excellent and reliable study of primary sources as related to Sanskrit study in China and Japan (prominent Buddhist studies scholar Fabio Rambelli still cites van Gulik periodically).

[30] For example, Shen Yue (沈約, 441-513 CE) distinguished the four tones of the Chinese language, thus (in many subsequent Chinese scholars' opinions) beginning the study of phonetics in China.

seen in early printed examples of the *Mahapratisara Dharani* (figure 1) uncovered from Tang

dynasty tombs. These images display the deity Mahapratisara as the central figure surrounded

by the text of the *dharani* with a donor kneeling beside the Mahapratisara. As art historian

Michelle Wang states, "both the text of the dharani and the deity keep watch over and protect the

donor."[31] As instructed by sutras, these images of *dharani* placed within a pictorialized space

were worn on the body (in boxes of armbands as in figure 2, boxes in one's hair, or within sashes

around one's waist) as talismans against malady or harm. Instances of this specific *dharani* from

the early Northern Song period (960-1127) indicate altered use (figure 3)—likely as part of ritual

or a meditative aid. In these later works, the Sanskrit *dharani* represents the teachings of the

deity Mahapratisara emanating outward. Figure 3 also illustrates the practice of transliteration

for use by the monastic population. Such transliteration provided pronunciation of these magical

chants; however, the differences between the sounds within Sanskrit and Chinese created

discrepancies—albeit slight—in pronunciation and de-emphasized the importance of Sanskrit as

a ritual spoken language.

In contrast, Japanese monks, starting with Kūkai, stressed the importance of learning

Sanskrit and reading it from the original characters rather than the transliterated form. The

talismanic value of the letter may have been known through Chinese imported visual materials,

but it does not seem to have gained strong currency in the Buddhist community before Kūkai's

time (in Japan, the talismanic nature was associated with *verbal* Sanskrit *dharani* rather than

visual). Furthermore, Japanese—a language whose system of writing's eventual development

process made it more disposed to phonetic writing than Chinese—could provide a slightly more

accurate reading of Sanskrit characters. Much more can be said about Sanskrit in China, but for

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[31] Wang, Michelle. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, *From Dhāraṇī to Maṇḍala: a Study of Mogao Cave 14 and Esoteric Buddhist Art of the Tang Dynasty (618--907)*. Ph.D. Thesis (Department of History of Art and Architecture)--Harvard University, 2008, p. 138.

the purposes of this thesis, it is most relevant to note that the Chinese perspective helped to shape

the role of Sanskrit in Japan, where the role of Sanskrit as a ritual and visual language was

developed further. In fact, the modern use of Siddham is centered in Japan, having mostly

disappeared from countries such as China, where Sanskrit's importance waned in contrast to its

increase in use and popularity in Japan.

Sanskrit and writing systems in Japan

Sanskrit was allegedly introduced to Japan as early as the year 609 in text on palm tree leaves

imported by Ono no Imoko (小野妹子) and preserved at Hōryū-ji (figure 4).[32] Scholarship of the

last two decades is wary of such a claim and suggests that these palm leaves date to the early

eighth century, though scholars concede that the sutra could be from the seventh century.[33] In

754, the Chinese monk Ganjin (Ch.: 鉴真, Jianzhen) brought material written in Indian characters

to Japan.[34] The Indian monk Bodhisena (Jp.: Bodaisenna, 菩提僊那) taught a Sanskrit course at

the university in the Heijō capital (Nara) after his arrival in 736. The material he taught included

at least a few *dharani*.[35] It therefore seems that written Sanskrit texts (e.g. the palm tree leaves'

sutra) existed at least in the form of *dharani* and sutras before Kūkai's introduction of Sanskrit

materials, though there are no known extant examples of Sanskrit in/on non-textual objects in

Japan prior to Kūkai's introduction of Mikkyō. With the introduction of more esoteric elements

via Kūkai's Mikkyō and Saichō's Tendai, the ritual use of Sanskrit within Buddhism became

more prevalent. In this section, I pose a tentative hypothesis of a link between the development

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[32] See Fabio Rambelli's online lecture series *Introduction: Buddhist Ideas on Language and Signs.* These palm leaves are now housed within the collection of the Tokyo National Museum.

[33] The Tokyo National Museum lists the period for this work as late Gupta, seventh to eighth century. More detail (and an outline of further scholarship) on this sutra can be found in: Nattier, Jan. "The *Heart Sutra:* A Chinese Apocryphal Text?" *The journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies.* Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 15 (2), 1992, p. 208.

[34] See Fabio Rambelli's online lecture series *Introduction: Buddhist Ideas on Language and Signs.*

[35] Ibid. See also van Gulik op cit.

of the native hiragana and Kūkai's emphasis on Sanskrit, a script that was eventually

disseminated relatively broadly throughout the culture.[36]

In his book *The Weaving of the Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist*

I will address this idea through a brief discussion of the possible influence of Mikkyō

(Sanskrit) on Japanese language. During the ninth century and prior, the normal form of writing

within government, academic, and religious texts was Chinese, but by Kūkai's time, the practice

of using simplified Chinese characters in a phonetic manner to express the Japanese language via

writing was already established—a type of writing called *manyōgana* (万葉仮名).[37] The

development of the phonetic system of writing called kana (hiragana and katakana) is difficult to

trace and modern scholars have the additional obstacle of attempting to separate myth from fact.

In his book *The Weaving of the Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist*

Discourse, Ryūichi Abe discusses his theory of the process that led to the accepted use of native

writing, kana, in the late Heian period (within certain realms of literature).[38] Despite the

existence of *manyōgana*, there were complications arising from factors such as the adaptation of

multiple systems for Chinese character pronunciation and multiple Chinese characters being

possible for each Japanese syllable. Due to such complications, the *manyōgana* system was not

standardized and therefore could not function as a country-wide system of writing. Abe explains

that two circumstances were necessary for a functional *kana* system: (1) standardized selection

and adaptation of Chinese characters and (2) the development of a theoretical base for writing in

native phonetic script rather than Chinese logographs.[39] Kūkai was an active component in both

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[36] Abe, *Weaving* has influenced this hypothesis greatly.

[37] Manyōgana employed the idea of borrowed sound (借音, *shakuon*) rather than borrowed meaning (借訓, *shakkun*) and used kanji (Chinese characters) in a phonetic manner. The earliest known example of *manyōgana* is an inscription on the Inariyama sword, generally dated to 471 CE. Before *manyōgana* (and even after the establishment of this practice), Chinese characters were used to write Japanese texts in Chinese—a practice that proved inefficient and likely tedious as the two languages are so different in terms of sentence structure and various other points of grammar.

[38] Abe, *Weaving*, pp. 390-398.

[39] Ibid, p. 391.

of these conditions, due in large part to his language theories relating to the use of Sanskrit. As

Abe states:

> Kūkai's theory of signs and writing contained the force that was to legitimize phonetic
> orthography…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.[40]

I will discuss these theories (the theoretical base mentioned by Abe) again at the end of this

chapter and in more depth in the next chapter. An outline of the development of a native

phonetic script and the importance of Kūkai's (and thus Sanskrit's) role therein is relevant to the

overall question of why Sanskrit remained in use in Japan when it waned in China and

elsewhere. Indeed, a more extensive study of this sort could partially account for the apparent

increased use and dissemination of Sanskrit in the centuries following Kūkai's life.[41]

A major development in the popularization of the kana script was the use of the *Iroha-uta*

(いろは歌; the *Iroha poem*, hereinafter *Iroha*) to promote and inventory the newly standardized

form of phonetic writing, as Christopher Seeley states in *A History of Writing in Japan*.[42] The

poem is a pangram, containing each sound of the Japanese syllabary (and thus each hiragana

character aside from those with dakuten) exactly once.[43] During the medieval period, the *Iroha*

and its kana syllabary was widely attributed to Kūkai;[44] however, this attribution was challenged

by late Edo period (1603-1868) scholars. Most modern scholars have argued against Kūkai as

author and now the generally accepted date of the *Iroha* is found to be after 950, but before the

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[40] Ibid, p. 397.

[41] As my thesis is focused on two visual case studies to demonstrate such dissemination, I will not here perform the extensive study on this topic (first introduced by Abe) that should follow.

[42] Seeley, Christopher. *A History of Writing in Japan*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991, p. 107.

[43] See the end of this chapter for the poem in hiragana as well as an English translation by Ryūichi Abe.

[44] The earliest of such assertions dates to the late Heian period in works such as those of Ōe no Masafusa (大江匡房 1041-1111).

last quarter of the eleventh century.[45] Regardless of actual authorship, the sustained assertion of

Kūkai as *Iroha* author and the (now disproved) legend of Kūkai as creator of the kana syllabary

show a cultural belief in a link between Kūkai and the Japanese writing system.

Although many linguists and historians have now disproved Kūkai's role as inventor of

hiragana and author of the *Iroha*, a closer look at the link (however culturally constructed it may

be) between Kūkai (Mikkyō) and these developments in kana writing could illumine new

avenues of study in the linguistic and art historical fields. The section from Abe's book

discussed above prompts such an avenue.[46] Abe details Kūkai's achievement in indexing the

Sanskrit syllabary and pronunciation (via Chinese transliteration) in the form of a textbook,

which drew from Chinese textbooks of Sanskrit that he had brought to Japan as well as from his

own study of Sanskrit in China.[47] Abe also establishes that Kūkai, in many of his own

educational texts, employed *manyōgana* phonetically to instruct readers on pronunciation—

especially as *manyōgana* provided a more accurate pronunciation guide than the Chinese

transliterations provided in imported texts. As Kūkai stated, accurate pronunciation was

important especially in relation to mantra in Shingon practice:

> The mantras, however, are mysterious and each word is profound in meaning. When
> they are transliterated into Chinese, the original meanings are modified and the long and
> short vowels get confused. In the end we can get roughly similar sounds but not
> precisely the same ones. Unless we use Sanskrit, it is hardly possible to differentiate the
> long and short sounds.[48]

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[45] For example, Okada Mareo (see bibliography) is a Japanese scholar who provides arguments against Kūkai having written the *Iroha*. An English description of Okada's arguments can be found on page 392 of Abe's book. Likewise, Christopher Seeley (*A History of Writing in Japan*) is an English source that uses primary Japanese sources to support a similar claim. For example, prior to 950, there were separate signs for *e* and *ye* (the *Iroha* does not illustrate this). Despite such arguments, there are counterarguments (though few), as Okada himself has admitted.

[46] Abe, *Weaving*, pp. 390-398.

[47] Kūkai. *Bonji shittan jimo narabi ni shakugi,* KZ, 2:719-736. As cited in: Abe, *Weaving*, p. 394.

[48] Kūkai, and Yoshito S. Hakeda. *Kūkai: Major Works*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 144.

The work of scholar David Lurie, which discusses the dichotomy of what he calls legible and alegible writing in Japan starting, is pertinent to the exploration of Sanskrit writing in Japan. In the context of his book *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing*, Lurie means "legible" to describe a readable (communicable) language and "alegible" as an adjective describing a system of writing that could not be read as a communicable language yet was still identifiable as a language.[49] In fact, Lurie describes "the magical power and social cachet attributed to alegible inscriptions."[50] In essence, throughout his book, Lurie outlines these different literacies as they relate to legible or alegible writings. Likewise, Sanskrit can be seen in such terms. Upon its first introduction to Japan, it was most assuredly an alegible system of writing found only in copies of sutras and *dharani*. The physical manifestations of *dharani*—the Sanskrit texts—were still imbued with a magical power, a process Lurie would see as relatively normative for an alegible script introduced to a foreign culture.

Mikkyō monks became in their own way highly literate in this writing system. Despite not learning Sanskrit as a communicable language, these monks' Sanskrit education focused on pronunciation and character recognition, thus creating a new form of legibility—one that revolved around Sanskrit's role in Esoteric Buddhist praxis. Arguably, this selective literacy— an altered legibility—aligns with Abe's ideas regarding the theoretical underpinnings of the development of a Japanese phonetic writing system. Although Lurie does trace the steps of the Japanese phonetic script's development using specific historical texts as examples, he does not address the theoretical forces that contribute to such a development nor what those forces may have been in Japan. He does, however, acknowledge that "[f]rom the ninth century, and

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[49] Lurie, David Barnett. *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011.
[50] Ibid, pp. 63-64.

increasingly thereafter, plentiful annotated manuscripts of Buddhist and secular works attest in detail to the emergence of this lineage of visually distinctive phonographs."[51]

Kūkai's ninth-century actions and texts—indeed, his emphasis on Sanskrit and its correct pronunciation in praxis—supported the validation of a Japanese writing system. His theoretical texts on the importance of Sanskrit and thus the importance of an accurate pronunciation (as shown in his use of phonetic *manyōgana* to instruct on proper pronunciation) provided the aforementioned theoretical base for writing in a native phonetic script. Kūkai, though neither inventor of hiragana nor author of the *Iroha*, almost surely affected in some way the development of such a script, a situation that calls for a more nuanced study in the area of linguistics as it pertains to Kūkai and the development of Japanese writing (and thus the possible relationship between increased use of hiragana and the dissemination of Sanskrit in the periods following his death).[52] Regardless, from as early as the twelfth century (if not earlier) at least through Japan's early modern age, Kūkai was inevitably historically linked with phonetic concepts first through his advocacy of Sanskrit and later through the cultural belief of his identity as author of the *Iroha* and inventor of hiragana.

Appreciation of Calligraphy

It is impossible to discuss a form of writing in Japan without at least mentioning the culture of calligraphy, a term that serves as the English translation of the Japanese term *shodō* (書道, literally the way of writing).[53] Inherent in this English word is the concept of an art form. By the

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[51] Ibid, p. 315.
[52] Aside from the refutation of his authorship of the *Iroha* and his invention of hiragana, linguists mention only the influence of Sanskrit's diacritical marks on hiragana in the form of *dakuten*. Abe's book calls for a more careful study of not only the development of a native script, but also the contributing forces behind a native script (and what forces may be prerequisites for the creation of a certain type of writing—such as a system of syllabic characters).
[53] The same English term is used for the Chinese *shufa* (書法, the way/method of writing).

very definition, calligraphy means the art of writing beautifully,[54] and calligraphy in Heian Japan *was* an exalted art. This cultural appreciation of calligraphy was an inheritance from China. China's calligraphy legacy to Japan is evident in a variety of ways, not least of which is the reverence accorded famous Chinese calligraphers such as Wang Xizhi (王羲之, ca. 307-365). Written characters were appreciated for their aesthetic beauty—"properties of balance, rhythm, vitality, contrast, and continuity."[55] By the late Heian period and early Kamakura period, similar to situations in other areas of artistic expression like painting or sculpture, techniques and lineages became a norm in the world of calligraphy. The Japanese elite were educated in the art of calligraphy and "initiated into the art in a formal ceremony entitled *fumi-hajime* (inaugural reading and writing)."[56] The aesthetics of writing were so prized that luxurious papers containing valuable materials (such as gold and silver) were created on which calligraphers could write.

It is likely that the Heian period intense admiration for written script extended to Sanskrit. Like Chinese characters, Sanskrit characters offer the chance to appreciate brushstroke and proportion while simultaneously allowing for personal style. Kūkai himself was a well-known calligrapher of both Chinese and Sanskrit.[57] In the early decades of Sanskrit's introduction, it was not originally available to a wide audience, but rather only to the clergy and pious aristocrats.[58] Like kana was initially classified as *onnade* (女手, women's writing; literally,

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[54] This English word comes from the Greek word *kalligraphia*, the stem of which is *kallos* (meaning beauty). Therefore, the idea of beauty or a pleasing aesthetic is inherent in the word. Simpson, J. A., and E. S. C. Weiner. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989: 1. Handwriting, esp. when fine or pleasing. 2. The art of handwriting. [Gk *kalligraphia* f. *kallos* beauty]

[55] Shimizu, Yoshiaki, John M. Rosenfield, and Naomi Noble Richard. *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy: 8th-19th century*. New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1984, p. 11.

[56] Ibid, p. 49 who cites the various accounts of Emperor Fushimi's (伏見天皇, 1265-1317) ceremony that were compiled by Komatsu Shigemi, in *Nihon shoryū zenshi*, A, pp. 290-291.

[57] His skills in Chinese composition and calligraphy were valued by Emperor Saga to the point where he received from the court several requests to write poems. Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 167.

[58] This will be discussed in the next chapter.

women's hand), Sanskrit was limited to the hand of the specially trained monk. A parallel can

be found in the calligraphy of kana and Sanskrit. As the use of kana spread, the use of Sanskrit

likewise became more prominent.[59] A sustained study of this trend could provide more avenues

for exploration, but it is clear that the aesthetic beauty of Sanskrit's characters is related to the

appreciation of writing that was so important in China and in Heian Japan. As aforementioned,

the visual qualities of Sanskrit are encompassed nicely by the art of calligraphy, where characters

have a specific stroke order and rely on the aesthetic beauty provided with the balance and

movement within the character. Perhaps for the context of this thesis, one can summarize the

importance of calligraphy in Heian Japan by realizing that, as Arthur Waley too pointed out, the

cult of calligraphy was a religion in itself.[60] Indeed, like religion the culture of calligraphy in

Japan is structured with schools and lineages.[61] It is extremely likely that such a strong aspect of

the culture would extend to other, visually similar forms of writing.

Importing Mikkyō

Starting in 788, Kūkai began a classical education in Heijō-kyō, entering the state university in

791.[62] He eventually left the university, disillusioned with secular life.[63] His discovery of the

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[59] Indeed, the topic of calligraphy in Japan is rich, complex, and deserving of more time and space; however, within the scope of this thesis the theoretical base of Sanskrit is more relevant for a discussion of the two focus mandalas so I will leave my own discussion of calligraphy brief. In the future, a more detailed and nuanced look at the culture of calligraphy and *kana* as well as the influence of such forces on Sanskrit's spread to a variety of objects would be beneficial. This type of approach aligns nicely with Abe's theory on the development of kana and could reveal a complex reciprocal relationship between the two writing systems of kana and Sanskrit.

[60] This assertion by Arthur Waley (Sei Shōnagon, and Arthur Waley. *The Pillow-Book of Sei Shōnagon*. London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1928, p. 13), paraphrased by me, can be found in a variety of sources ranging from academic texts (Loehr, Max. *Buddhist Thought and Imagery*. [The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller inaugural lecture, Harvard University, February 24, 1961]. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1961, p. 20) to popular printed forms (such as TIME magazine).

[61] Shimizu, Rosenfield, *Masters of Japanese Calligraphy*, p. 15.

[62] There are many more detailed descriptions of Kūkai's background—English sources include Abe and Bogel op cit. The earliest surviving biography is the *Kūkai sōzuden,* a biography is attributed to a disciple of Kūkai, Shinzei (真済, 800-860). Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 63. Although style and content indicate a later date, historians generally assert its date of composition to be prior to 857 due to the fact that Kūkai's posthumous bestowal of the title *daisōjō*

esoteric practice of the *gumonjihō* (求聞持法, Morning Star Rite) meditation, asserted by Kūkai

in his essay *Sangō shiiki* (三教指帰, Eng.: *Demonstrating the Goals of the Three Teachings*),[64]

led to Kūkai's interest in Buddhism. Another formative experience for Kūkai, mentioned in a

later biography, revolves around his supplication to the Buddha, asking for a more profound truth

to be revealed.[65] Essays written after his return from China assert that this experience directed

him to the *Dainichi-kyō* (大日経, Skt.: *Mahavairocana Sutra*), one of the principal scriptures of

Mikkyō.[66] His desire to study the ritual languages described in the *Dainichi-kyō* as well as his

frustration at not being able to answer the questions created from reading this text were possible

reasons for Kūkai's travel to China, where he would be able to study both.[67] Though Kūkai's

interest in Sanskrit is clear from his actions after his return, if the texts written after his return are

reliable such an interest can be discerned even before his travel to the continent. As Abe states,

in an emphasis of Kūkai's early interest in text and language, "his [Kūkai's] decision to study in

China was motivated by his desire to master Sanskrit…"[68]

In 804, at age 31, Kūkai was ordained for the purpose of replacing priests that had

originally been selected to travel to China for study. The first envoy had been forced back and to

bring the same priests would have been inviting another, perhaps more serious misfortune to

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(大僧正, Eng.: high priest) is not reflected in any way within the work. The chronology of events is "generally regarded as reliable, because it largely agrees with the "Daisōzu dentō daihosshii 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." Abe, *Weaving*, p. 471 (footnote 12).

[63] These events are discussed in the *Kūkai sōzuden* as well as in Kūkai's own writings. As Bogel mentions in her book, Kūkai's disinterest in secular life and his subsequent interest in Buddhism may be partially attributed to the political intrigues that led to the downfall of one of Kūkai's clan's most successful members, Saeki no Imaemishi (佐伯今毛人, 719-790). Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 64.

[64] KZ 3:324. The *gumonjihō* is described in the introduction. As cited in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 365 (footnote 7).

[65]*Kūkai sōzu den*, KZ, *Shukan*, 2. As cited in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 64.

[66] Kūkai's biography and his early essay *Sangō shiiki* mention his reading of this sutra and inability to answer questions stemming from reading the work. Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 64.

[67] Abe suggests this also.

[68] Abe, *Weaving*, p. 114.

befall the travelers—or so current beliefs would have it.[69] Kūkai's own trip to China was fraught

with difficulties, with two of the four ships of the envoy blown back to Japan while the other two

(one being Kūkai's ship) were separated and landed in different ports.[70] The members of the ship

were not allowed to disembark from their ship and enter Fuzhou until after the governor of the

area accepted a letter of supplication from Kūkai, whose Chinese skills exceeded those of the

officials traveling on the same ship. Kūkai wrote a petition to specially obtain a permit to travel

with the rest of the envoy to the capital Chang'an. Once there, the Chinese court eventually

decided to allow him after the Japanese officials from his envoy departed to stay at Ximingsi,

one of the largest temples in Chang'an associated with Esotericism.[71] During his subsequent

study, Kūkai met the monk who would be his mentor, Huiguo. The exact date of this meeting is

unknown. Nor do we know when Kūkai began to officially study with Huiguo, but Kūkai wrote

of his initiation of the *taizō mandara* (胎蔵曼荼羅, Womb Mandala) happening "earlier in the

sixth month [of 805]."[72] He received the second initiation of the *kongōkai mandara* (金剛界曼荼

羅, Diamond World Mandala)[73] in the seventh month.[74] These two initiations are still important

aspects of Mikkyō and were eventually paralleled in the process of a Mikkyō monk's Sanskrit

education in Japanese, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Despite the uncertainty of specific

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[69] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 65.

[70] Some of these difficulties are described in Kūkai's letter to the regional authorities of Fuzhou, the port where his ship landed. Kūkai, *Seireishū,* KZ, 3:266-71. As cited in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 66. An English translation of sections can be found also in Borgen, Robert. "The Japanese Mission to China, 801-806." *Monumenta Nipponica* 37, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1-28. The other ship of the envoy carried the well-known monk Saichō, who established Tendai Buddhism in Japan. Saichō's ship landed in Mingzhou and he continued on to Mount Tiantai, the center for study of Tendai Buddhism in China.

[71]Kūkai, *Shōraimokuroku,* KZ 1:69. As cited in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p 69.

[72] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 70.

[73] These two mandala are a pair now called the *ryōbu mandara*, mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.

[74] Kūkai. *Shōraimokuroku,* KZ 1: 98-99. As cited in Abe, *Weaving*, p. 123.

dates, it is certain that Huiguo was Kūkai's mentor and that he instructed Kūkai on various

esoteric practices such as mantras and mudras, *yogas*, and Sanskrit writing.[75]

Kūkai's stipend was intended for twenty years of study in China, but within just months

of beginning study with Huiguo he attained the rank of master of Esotericism. Huiguo died soon

after—also in 805—but before his death he instructed Kūkai to return to Japan to disseminate

Esoteric teachings. In 806, Kūkai returned to Japan from his intensive study with masters in

China. His return may have been problematic since he spent a stipend that was meant for twenty

years within a period of merely two years (about six months of which he studied with Huiguo).

Kūkai seems to have spent much of this money on a collection of texts and objects with which he

returned to Japan. As was the required practice, Kūkai submitted an inventory to the Japanese

court of the goods he imported and sent the goods to the capital upon his return. The original

inventory, titled *Catalogue of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items* (Jp.: 上新請来經等目録

表, *Joshin shōrai kyōtō mokuroku*, hereinafter referred to as the *Catalogue*),[76] is no longer extant,

but two early copies of it survive.[77] The *Catalogue* and the imported objects were sent to

Emperor Heizei (平城天皇, 773-824, r. 806-9) shortly after Kūkai's return to Japan. One

possible indication of the imperial court's displeasure with Kūkai's premature return from China

is that these objects were not returned to him until three years later, in 809, when he was called

to the capital.[78] Among the imported items were works in Sanskrit (42 works in 44 fascicles),

commentaries and essays on Esoteric doctrine, and Buddhist Icons (including a mandala using

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[75] Ibid. Also cited in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 70.

[76] Kūkai. *Shōraimokuroku,* KZ 1.

[77] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 113. One copy is at Tōji and the other at Hōgonji.

[78] The complexity of these events are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five of Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, pp. 112-138. Here, Bogel discusses other equally important factors that impacted this course of events; however, in the interest of time I will not elaborate on them.

Sanskrit characters to depict the deities).[79] Such basic, but necessary, background information

contributes to a study of Sanskrit's role in Japan—first within Mikkyō and then in a broader

context of Buddhism and culture. It also facilitates a brief exploration of the Mikkyō rite called

the *a-ji kan*.

The *a-ji kan* and Kūkai's "world-text" theory

The imagery of the *a-ji kan* presents a perfect entrée into Kūkai's semiotic theories and how such

theories are applied to the use of Sanskrit. Although there are no records from Kūkai's time

devoted specifically to this practice, its basis is the *Dainichi-kyō* and various commentaries have

discussed it in part. With roots in this sutra and other early texts that mention the *a-ji kan*, this

practice exists today with many variations.[80] Despite such variations, today the material focus of

the contemplation, or meditation, is often a hanging scroll (figure 5). This hanging scroll depicts

the Sanskrit character A, the Sanskrit seed syllable (*shūji*) of the central Shingon deity Dainichi

Buddha (Jp.: *Dainichi butsu*, 大日仏, Skt.: *Mahavaircana*), enthroned on a lotus pedestal

encircled by a circle, often called a mirror or moon disc.[81] The *a-ji kan* as it is practiced today at

monasteries on Mount Kōya, a key if not primary Shingon Mikkyō site, involves the following

process: cleansing the hands and mouth, sitting in the lotus position in front of an *a-ji kan* icon

(*a-ji kan honzon*, 阿字観本尊), regulating respiration, calming the heartbeat, focusing on the

honzon, and eventually visualizing it with eyes closed.[82] The goal in the *a-ji kan* is in part to

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[79] Kūkai. *Shōraimokuroku,* KZ 1. The headings in the *Shōraimokuroku* are discussed in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 116.

[80] One can find diverse explanations of such variations. For example, a sectarian description of the practice's Shingon form related to Mt. Kōya can be found in a book by the monk Miyata Taisen. Miyata, Taisen. *Ajikan: a Manual for the Esoteric Meditation*. Los Angeles, CA: T. Miyata, 1979.

[81] In Japanese called the *gachirin* (月輪, Eng.: (full) moon or moon when it's round).

[82] The process includes many other steps (such as notes on what clothing to wear, *mudras* to perform, prayers to speak, etc.), which are outlined (both in English and Japanese) in various sources. The abbreviated description that I

establish a connection within the practitioner to the Dainichi Buddha. The use of the

transformation technique in particular clearly shows this aspect of the *a-ji kan*.[83] This rite can

also be seen as a step in the process of mastering Sanskrit.[84] Although we do not know for sure

what the *a-ji kan* imagery or process was in the Heian period (or if it was a uniform practice with

uniform imagery), textual and visual evidence[85] suggests that it has remained largely unchanged,

despite relatively small variations. For example, a passage of the *Dainichi-kyō* suggests that the

imagery used in the modern *a-ji kan* is similar to early imagery used as the focus of this rite:

> Contemplate that lotus. It has eight petals and its stamens are outspread. On the flower dais is the A-syllable. It gives fiery wonder to the lotus. Its brilliance radiating everywhere to illuminate living beings, like the meeting of a thousand lightning bolts, it has the form of the Buddha's meritorious manifestations.
>   From deep within a round mirror it manifests in all directions. Like the moon in clear water, it appears before all living beings. Knowing this to be the nature of the mind, one is enabled to dwell in the practice of mantra.[86]

In the *Notes on the Secret Treasury* (Jp.: 秘蔵記, *Hizōki*), attributed to Kūkai, the practice

is obliquely referred to:

> Here is a verse on the letter *A*, which stands for the enlightened mind:
> Visualize: a white lotus flower with eight petals,
> [above which is a full moon disc] the size of a forearm in diameter,
> [in which is] a radiant silvery letter *A*.
> Unite your *dhyana* with *prajna* in an adamantine binding;
> Draw the quiescent *Prajna* of the Tathagata in [your mind].[87]

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provide is based on a sectarian Japanese text given by a Shingon monk to Cynthea Bogel, who subsequently shared the text with me.

[83] In which one "visualizes" a deity's seed syllable and symbolic forms that then "transform" into the practitioner, who is the divinity's anthropomorphic form. Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 200.

[84] Such a process would culminate (from at least the medieval times) in a ritual using *hō mandara*, which will be described in the next chapter. The *a-ji kan* is a practice that was likely spread broadly in the Mikkyō clergy. By the twelfth century, it had spread even to aristocrats as evidenced in the *Ajigi* handscroll which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[85] I will discuss one of these visual works, dating to the twelfth century, in detail in the next chapter.

[86] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, 2009, p. 199, who cites a translation by Taikō Yamasaki (*Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala, 1988) of the *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*. 18:21.

[87] Kūkai, and Yoshito S. Hakeda. *Kūkai: Major Works*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 220, who cites *Sōfu sen'yōka*, ed. *Kōbō Daishi shodeshi zenshū* 1:476, as cited and translated by Taikō Yamasaki (*Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala, 1988, p. 202).

Kūkai even provided a technique[88] for the *a-ji kan* that was not included in the *Dainichi-kyō*: "Within your breast is the moon disk. It is like the moon on a clear autumn night. Within it is the A-syllable…visualize the moon as one chū [a forearm's length] in size, then gradually expand it to fill the three thousand worlds and the palace of the Dharma realm."[89] Early texts do not detail the rite,[90] but in examining the primary texts related to the *a-ji kan* (the *Dainichi-kyō* and Kūkai's works) the importance of the Sanskrit character is evident. Through these texts one can see that the Sanskrit A signifies the ultimate goal of a Buddhist—freedom from ignorance. As Kūkai wrote, that single letter A signifies the enlightened mind. The *Dainichi-kyō*, too, emphasizes the character's ability to "illuminate living beings."[91] Additionally, the sutra passage refers to another aspect of the Sanskrit character that was also addressed in Kūkai's teachings: the Sanskrit A as the embodiment of the Dainichi Buddha (in *shūji* form).

Shūji, or seed syllables, are Sanskrit characters associated with Buddhist divinities. They are derived from *mantra*, or *dharani*.[92] Etymologically, the root of the word *dharani*, "dhr," means "to hold."[93] While a *dharani* is a formula imbued with a sort of magical power, it is also a formula that stores (holds) meaning. Thus, when one attains an understanding of a *dharani* then one holds the knowledge stored within it. An instance of the *dharani*'s use in storing meaning is

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[88] This is known as the expansion-contraction technique associated after Kūkai's time with the Diamond World lineage.

[89] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 200.

[90] As Bogel states, it is typical of early texts to not provide many details on rites. When one considers this in reference to the type of education and guidance received by Shingon monks (which, as we know from Kūkai's own experience with Huiguo, is largely an oral passing of knowledge), this is understandable. Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 199. This practice is listed in the Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai (Japan), Mikkyō Daijiten Saikan Iinkai, and Mikkyō Gakkai. *Mikkyō daijiten*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1931. Reprint 1969, vol. 1; however, there is little to no mention of it in many other texts on Mikkyō such as (to name a few): Takagi, Shingen. *Kūkai shisō no shoshiteki kenkyū*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1990; Toganoo, Shōun. *Himitsu Bukkyō shi*. Wakayama-ken Kōyasan: Kōyasan Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1933.

[91] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, 2009, p. 199 who cites a translation by Taikō Yamasaki (*Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala, 1988) of the *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*. 18:21.

[92] Abe discusses the difference between these two terms, reflecting that Kūkai and Huiguodeemed *dharani* to be a broader term that encompassed *mantra* as a variation. Abe, *Weaving*, p. 264.

[93] Gyatso, Janet. *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*. SUNY series in Buddhist studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 173.

mentioned in the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* (Jp.: *hannya haramitta kyō,* 般若波羅蜜多経), where a

bodhisattva is described as one who has "attained the dharani of nonattachment."[94] Shūji come

from either the first or last syllable of a deity's *mantra* (*dharani*), depending on which aspect of

the deity is being emphasized.[95] In this way, *shūji* originally acted as mnemonic devices used to

remember the information stored; they came to function as not only a store of meaning, but also

the essence of a deity.[96] It is true that the *shūji* is a signifier of the signified deity, but as oft-

found in religion there is a more complex nature to the sign. In Mikkyō, this signifier and

signified are not in actuality connected only by mental constructs, but rather the sign in this

instance engages with the essence of the deity (thus, *is* the essence of the deity). To see the *shūji*

enthroned on a pedestal is to see the deity—an idea that aligns with Kūkai's claim of the

polysemic nature of the sign.[97]

Like much Esoteric Buddhist theory, it seems the link between language (written or

spoken) and divine intervention (even possible enlightenment) is strongly indebted to the Indian

Vedic tradition, specifically in relation to *mantra*. The Vedas (Sanskrit for "knowledge") are an

ancient Indian body of texts from the Vedic period that compose the oldest scriptures of

Hinduism. Their content consists of formulas, hymns, spells and incantations—in other words,

mantra (*dharani*). In the words of religious studies scholars Harold Coward and David Goa, the

mantra content of the Vedas "are the sounds or vibrations of the eternal principles of the cosmic

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[94] Ibid, p. 173.

[95] The earliest instance of this concept being discussed in English comes from this text: Waddell, L. A. *The "Dharani" Cult in Buddhism; its Origin, Deified Literature and Images*. Berlin: Oesterheld & co, 1912. It has been further described in works since, such as that of Janet Gyatso, cited in the previous footnote.

[96] This seems to have occurred also outside of Japan—for example, in the aforementioned Chinese print of the *Mahapratisara Dharani* from the Dunhuang Caves (figure 3) there are Sanskrit characters enthroned on a lotus pedestal within a moon disc, just as main icons were often depicted.

[97] Similar ideas can be found in Western medieval concepts of sign, signified, and divine. There are many available sources on this topic, one being: Janowitz, Naomi. *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.

order itself."[98] Patton Burchett expounds on this idea of the Vedic belief of *mantra*, which refers to the melding of Vac's cosmic phonic energy (vibrations) with the human's vital energy (breath, or exhalation). In this Vedic belief, the entire universe is embodied in sound (word) and the objects denoted by those sounds.[99] Vac (alt. Vak) refers to either "the Word" or the divine female embodiment of energy, or both. The duality of Vac's identity unsurprisingly suggests a link between word (language) and energy (vibrations). It is both interesting and relevant to note that the female deity Vac is the consort of Prajnapati, the male embodiment of ultimate reality.[100] Vedic tradition believes that all things are created from their union (the union of energy and ultimate reality). Their union suggests an ancient belief in the union of language (human's somaticity) and reality.[101] Such a link illustrates possible roots of the belief in Mikkyō that the Sanskrit A acts in part as a sign of the realization of reality—the enlightened mind. Like those ancient Vedic beliefs, which emphasized vibration in relation to language, Kūkai's texts also give significance to the somaticity of language, specifically Sanskrit.

In Kukai's linguistic theory, language derives from voice. The primordial 'voice' is the sound of A, from which all other sounds originate. Likewise, in the Sanskrit writing system all letters include the A form within them and thus derive from the character A. This mirrors the concept of the cosmos being an emanation of the Dainichi Buddha (whose *shūji* is the Sanskrit character A). As the letter A is within every character of the Sanskrit writing system, so too is

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[98] Coward, Harold G., and David J. Goa. *Mantra: Hearing the Divine in India and America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 35.

[99] Burchett, Patton E. "The 'magical' language of mantra". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion.* 2008*:* 76 (4): 807-843, p. 822.

[100] Kūkai wrote in *The Secret Key to the Heart Sutra* (Jp.: *Hannya shingō hiken*, 般若心經秘鍵) about a link between the bodhisattva Prajnaparamita and the *hō mandara* (word and sound). In the same text, he composed a verse that discussed Prajnaparamita as a dharani that "consists of sounds and words…and stands for Reality itself." Kūkai, and Yoshito S. Hakeda. *Kūkai: Major Works*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 273. Kūkai, *Hannya shingō hiken*, KZ 1. It is interesting to note the Mikkyō link between the deity Prajnaparamita, language, and reality. This could perhaps be a remnant of earlier Vedic beliefs.

[101] Incidentally, the specific form of Sanskrit used in Esoteric Buddhism, Siddham, descends from Brahmi script via the Gupta script. The origins of the Brahmi script are disputed, but one faction of scholars believes it to have originated in Vedic script, the written form in which the Vedas were written.

Dainichi Buddha within every part of the universe. Beyond the physical construction of the script, the principle of attaching meaning to these letters comes from various sutras, within which is written that the Tathagatas empower some letters of worldly languages (Sanskrit) and present them as mantras.[102] As Kūkai expounded, the view that letters are external to the Dharma nature is an illusion cultivated by the delusory mind (the unenlightened mind); however, in apparent contrast to this type of perspective the continued meditation on such letters can illuminate the emptiness of letters—the concept of letter sameness. Kūkai's Esoteric concept of world-text has been analyzed closely by religious studies scholar Ryūichi Abe. In this concept "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."[103] In short, the "world-text" is everything that is seen and unseen in reality and each sign (optical objects, i.e., of color, shape, and movement) is a "letter" within this text. This concept—physically embodied in the *hō mandara*—will be more fully explored in the next chapter, but it is also applicable to the *a-ji kan*, the use of which is more extensive in the Mikkyō ritual tradition than the *hō mandara*. The use of a Sanskrit character as the visual focus of a rite reveals this world-text concept, where the physical "letter" is both imbued with deeper meaning while simultaneously aiming to provide enlightenment upon the realization that the sign (the letter) is a construction. Abe summarizes the complex nature of Kūkai's semiotic theory:

> 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.[104]

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[102] A Tathagata is a deity or a Buddha.

[103] Abe, *Weaving*, p. 285. Although this sentence specifies mantra, the concepts relating to constructing signs is also applicable to other aspects of Kūkai's Mikkyō praxis, such as the visual use of Sanskrit.

[104] Ibid, p. 298.

This is, as Janet Gyatso puts it, the "very neat feat of semiological acrobatics [that] the letter-as-empty signifier can perform."[105] Kūkai's world-text concept combines with seemingly conflicting aspects of his texts on the ritual use of Sanskrit to demonstrate a form of skillful means (Skt.: *upaya*, Jp.: *hōben*, 方便). The goal of *hōben* is to ease the suffering of human beings and to bring to them the knowledge of the Dharma (teachings of the Buddha) by using whichever technique can be understood by said human beings. By presenting Sanskrit visually within Esoteric rites, the Buddhist practitioner is first educated on a deeper meaning of the "letter." Once these complex meanings are understood, the practitioner can begin to understand the true meaning of *sunyata* (Jp.: *kū*, 空)[106] through the realization of the somaticity inherent in a sign. It does not exist independently, but rather is a construction. It is simultaneously empty of meaning and an emanation of Dainichi Buddha. "Its ultimate content transcends such a formulation, consisting instead of the realization of a Buddhist principle such as emptiness, or thusness, or birthlessness, which is not limited by any determination, be it temporal, spatial, or linguistic."[107] Though signs such as Sanskrit are attached with meaning in order to initiate worshippers to complex concepts within doctrine, the goal is to eventually understand that such signs are part of a world-text where every letter/sign (despite the attached meanings) is one with the Dainichi Buddha. Although this is often described as the realization of the emptiness of the sign, perhaps a better description of enlightenment (at least in the Mikkyō sphere) is the realization of a sign's quality of nonduality.[108] Inherent in every sign is the concept of

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[105] Gyatso, *In the Mirror of Memory*, p. 190.
[106] This term is often translated into English as "emptiness;" however, a more accurate translation may be spaciousness, or voidness. To maintain a meaning equal to the Sanskrit term one could use the phrase freedom of attachment. Such a phrase would align better with the concept of nonduality, a term introduced into the English language as a translation for the Sanskrit term *advaita*. A theological term, it can be defined as the quality of being in unity with the universe while appearing otherwise (appearing distinct, though not separate).
[107] Gyatso, *In the Mirror of Memory*, p. 176.
[108] This concept is described in Rambelli, Fabio. "Secrecy in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism." *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*. London: Routledge, 2006, p. 112.

nonduality and thus every sign is imbued with the possibility of achieving enlightenment "with a single glance."[109]

Sanskrit characters fulfill this directive perhaps more pervasively than other signs as the characters are a physical (linguistic) reminder of the teachings (both spoken and written) and the holy language of the Buddha. The images used for the *a-ji kan* rite illustrate the initial level of induction into the complexity of Mikkyō doctrine. Imagery related to this rite extends beyond the material focus of the meditation to other physical forms, such as the twelfth-century *Ajigi* (阿字義) handscroll (figure 6).[110] Images such as this scroll were geared toward pious aristocrats. As such, these types of images were the vehicle for moving Sanskrit out of the sole sphere of the monk (with their *hō mandara*) and into the religious culture of the laity.[111] Within the Mikkyō educational process, Sanskrit is essentially a technique of skillful means and the images used for the *a-ji kan* rite can be seen as the introductory level. The culmination of the journey to fully understand Sanskrit and its complex meanings presumably led to the understanding of essential Buddhist doctrine (perhaps even enlightenment), making the monk a Sanskrit master.[112] The *hō mandara* is part of the mastering of Sanskrit and, armed with the background provided in this first chapter, this thesis can now move on to a study of this important, though elusive, type of work.

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[109] Kūkai. *Shōraimokuroku,* KZ 1. This concept is explained in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, 2009.

[110] Its official name is the *Ajigiden* (阿字義伝), but it is popularly known as the *Ajigi* (*emaki*).

[111] I will refer to the *Ajigi* and its significance in more depth at the end of chapter two between my studies of the *hō mandara* and the *miya mandara*.

[112] The use of the noun "master" and verb "mastering" as seen in Western contexts connotes a fluency in the subject (here, Sanskrit). The term "master of Sanskrit," as used in this chapter and the next, is a monk who has become fluent on the religious use of the language rather than fluent in the language itself. Such a process of mastering Sanskrit requires extensive knowledge in pronunciation, the process of writing the characters, and the religious and ritual meanings associated with the text.

いろは歌　*The Iroha-uta*

いろはにほへと
ちりぬるを
わかよたれそ
つねならむ
うゐのおくやま
けふこえて
あさきゆめみし
ゑひもせす

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.[113]

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[113] Translation by Ryūichi Abe. Abe, *Weaving*, p. 392.

Chapter Two: The Hō Mandara

A-ji kan imagery provides an ideal starting point for the study of the *hō mandara*. Like

the *a-ji kan*, this mandala form was a ritual tool for education and the attainment of Buddhist

goals ("enlightenment"). The use of the dharma or *hō mandara* was more limited, however, than

the *a-ji kan*; it was utilized mostly by those monks who sought to become masters of Sanskrit,

possibly starting as early as the Heian period.[114] Although the earliest use of the *hō mandara*

imported by Kūkai in 806 is unknown, investigation of Kūkai's writings, the *hō mandara* within

the Four Mandala types, and other early versions of the paired (*ryōbu*) *hō mandara* can present

clues to the development of the *hō mandara* from the ninth century to the fourteenth century.

Kūkai's imported *hō mandara* and their early copies do not survive.

Although the earliest extant *hō mandara* date to the eleventh century, I will use the

fourteenth-century *ryōbu hō mandara* from Entsu-ji (figures 7 and 8) as the main object of this

chapter's study because it is better preserved than many other *hō mandara*. In color, form and

size it is especially comparable to the *dai mandara* used in Shingon rituals. I will supplement

my discussion with other images of *hō mandara* from earlier and later points in time to discuss

its possible functions. I will also investigate the theoretical foundation for this form of mandala,

especially the aforementioned world-text concept specifically as it relates to the *hō mandara*, in

which the Sanskrit characters act as signifiers of both religious entities and ideas of cosmology.

As one of the earliest known non-textual objects in Japan to utilize Sanskrit, a study of the *hō

mandara* is beneficial in tracing the trajectory of the increase of Sanskrit on other forms of non-

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[114] Fabio Rambelli, the only English source to discuss this practice, discusses it as a medieval practice, which usually means in the Kamakura, Muromachi, and Momoyama periods spanning from 1185 to 1603 (Rambelli, "Secrecy in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism," p. 121). His source is almost certainly the *Mikkyō Daijiten*, which situates the practice as "probably" thought up by *chūko shittan gakusha* (中古悉曇学者). While the term *chūko* can indeed be translated as medieval, it can also mean an older time encompassing the Heian and Kamakura periods, as I will discuss later in this chapter. Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai (Japan), Mikkyō Daijiten Saikan Iinkai, and Mikkyō Gakkai. *Mikkyō daijiten*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1931. Reprint 1969, 3:1002.

textual objects within both temple and secular contexts, or in so-called syncretic contexts, such as the *miya mandara*, taken up in the next chapter. The *hō mandara* with its roots in scripture provides a theoretical basis for the use of Sanskrit as an icon and, as such, exploring this type of ritual image can serve as a starting point in studies of other imagery that incorporate Sanskrit such as the *miya mandara* and in the more general study of the use of Sanskrit in pre-modern Japanese visual culture.

The *hō mandara* within the Four Mandala types

The *Dainichi-kyō* and texts by Kūkai describe four types of mandala: the *dai mandara* (大曼荼羅, Skt.: *maha mandala*), the *hō mandara* (法曼荼羅, Skt.: *dharma mandala*), the *sanmaya mandara* (三昧耶曼荼羅, sometimes also written in romaji as *sammaya*, Skt.: *samaya mandala*), and the *katsuma mandara* (羯磨曼荼羅, Skt.: *karma mandala*). The *dai mandara* illustrates the deities in anthropomorphic form. Deities in the *hō mandara* are represented in *shūji* form (Sanskrit seed-syllable form). In the *sanmaya mandara*, deities are in their symbolic form.[115] The fourth mandala type, the *katsuma mandara*, is the only type that is not two-dimensional, but rather a three-dimensional (sculptural) mandala. Kūkai wrote in a verse, "The Four Mandalas are inseparably related to one another."[116] He went on to explain that the *Dainichi-kyō* outlines three esoteric forms of expression for all Tathagatas,[117] which are *aksara* (Sanskrit characters), *mudras* (signs, shown in hand movements), and *bimba* (images). These are represented by, respectively, the *hō mandara*, the *sanmaya mandara*, and the *dai mandara*. According to Kukai,

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[115] Deities are represented by symbols rather than anthropomorphic form—these symbolic forms are depicted as ritual implements that are among a deity's attributes.

[116] Kūkai, and Yoshito S. Hakeda. *Kūkai: Major Works*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 227. The Japanese version is in Kūkai, *Sokushin jōbutsugi*, KZ 1.

[117] This is an honorific title of a Buddha.

each of these mandala (or expressions of the Tathagatas) implies the sort of activities that one

could call the *katsuma mandara*.[118] The question of how these mandalas differ from one another

(apart from the obvious) and why one form may be used instead of another then arises. Indeed,

the following eleventh-century correspondence between a Shingon priest and his parishioners

can provide some insight into why a *hō mandara* would be favored for lay believers over a *dai*

mandara:

> Which is more efficacious, a *mandala* with figures or one with only the Sanskrit "root-letters" symbolizing the deities? His late lordship of Uji sent for Ninkai Sōjō and made him do a Sanskrit-letter *mandala*, to which he attached great importance.

> The priest's answer was:

> It is out of the Sanskrit root-syllables that all the various figure-*mandalas* grow. If you get the Sanskrit syllables right, the efficiency of all the various figure-paintings is included. Moreover, nowadays painters often make mistakes about the colors and mudras. Far safer to go to a Shingon priest and get him to write out the root-syllables.[119]

This argument is, however, more easily made in reference to works commissioned by laity

(specifically aristocratic laity during this period). Although this correspondence sheds light on

reasons for creating the *hō mandara*, it does not contribute to our understanding of why trained

monks would make one in a temple setting. Surely, they would be trained to avoid such

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[118] *Katsuma*, or karma, literally means action. Here it seems that rather than being sculptural, the 'mandala' is the implied deportment and activities of these Tathagata.

[119] Loehr, Max. *Buddhist Thought and Imagery* (The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller inaugural lecture, Harvard University, February 24, 1961). Cambridge: Harvard University, 1961, pp. 18-20*,* who cites Arthur Waley's translation that can be found in "An Eleventh Century Correspondence." *Etudes d'Orientalisme publiées par le Musée Guimet à la mémoire de Raymonde Linossier*. Paris, 1932, II, p. 557. The original Japanese source is called the (*Tōzan Orai* (also *Higashiyama Ōrai*, 東山往来), a body of correspondence (43 letters) between a Kyōto Buddhist priest and his parishioners. The latest date mentioned in the correspondence seems to be 1091 and the letters were compiled shortly thereafter. Arthur Waley states that the scroll of letters is stamped at the end, indicating that they were owned by a Minamoto no Atsutsune who flourished around 1120. The original text of the letters can be found in the compendia *Zoke gunsho ruijū,* Hanawa Hokinoichi, and Tōshirō Ōta. *Zoku gunsho ruijū*. Tōkyō: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1923, chapter 359. The person referred to as "His late lordship of Uji" is Minamoto no Takakuni (Uji Dainagon; d. 1077) and the Ninkai (任界, 955-1046) mentioned was a Shingon priest. From this correspondence we know that eleventh-century elite court members were commissioning mandalas (perhaps not *ryōbu mandara*; likely various mandalas that differed in the groupings of the deities) that used the *shūji* forms of the deities rather than the anthropomorphic forms.

mistakes regarding "colors and mudras."[120] The complexity of the *hō mandara* is difficult to

address fully in a master's thesis, but by exploring some of the available texts and investigating

extant works I hope to present possibilities and avenues for a more comprehensive future study.

My focus in this section is on the *hō mandara* and its significance—for example, why it would

be used rather than the *dai mandara* with its figural representations of the deities, especially in

religious praxis.

> In a commentary on the *Dainichi-kyō*, Kūkai linked the *hō mandara* format and text by

discussing three editions for the sutra:

> As for the text of this sutra [*Mahavairocana Sutra*], 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 sutra of ten thousand verses transmitted by Nagarjuna. 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.[121]

Essentially, Kūkai writes that the original and fullest "text" of the *Dainichi-kyō* is indeed the *hō*

mandara.[122] The original sutra presents itself as the entire universe, where every object seen and

unseen is a "letter"—a concept of the universe and its elements that illuminates the principle of

the emptiness of things. This idea of a world-text is mirrored in the physical, two-dimensional

"*dharma mandala* (Jpn. *hōmandara*), the mandala consisting of all things of the world as its

letters."[123] In the excerpt from his commentary on the *Dainichi-kyō*, Kūkai outlined a hierarchy

of the three forms of the sutra, going from its most comprehensive (the universe/the *hō mandara*)

to consecutively more abridged versions of it: the sutra handed down to Nagarjuna, and then the

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Kūkai, *Dainichikyō kaidai* ("*hokkai jōshin*"), KZ 1:634. English translation from Abe, *Weaving*, 1999, p. 275. Brackets included in the Abe translation.

[122] It is possible that Kūkai's words on the *hō mandara* and Sanskrit use in general were the basis for the monk's response in the aforementioned eleventh-century correspondence.

[123] Abe, *Weaving*, p. 275.

shorter version passed to China and Japan.[124] As Abe states, however, this process was not just a shortening but rather a condensation of the sutra with each character of the *Dainichi-kyō* containing countless meanings. This perspective is unsurprising, especially in light of the concepts of polysemy of the sign that Kūkai emphasized in Mikkyō.

Although the concept of universe as sacred text can be found outside of Esoteric Buddhism, Kūkai's Buddhist theories relating to the universe, text, writing, and signs are unique within Buddhism itself. These theories, addressed in the previous chapter, are embodied in the *hō mandara*. To explore this further, it is necessary to take a close look at the format. Like the *dai mandara*, the *hō mandara* depicts the Buddhist cosmos by organizing deities visually in a geometric composition. This chapter focuses on a study of a *ryōbu mandara* in the format of a *hō mandara.* Ryōbu mandara can be executed in any of the Four Mandala types. All four types of mandala can refer to a wide range of mandalas (including the *ryōbu mandara*) that have various compositions of Buddhist deities grouped together. In this way, *hō mandara* can be, in composition, extremely similar to *dai mandara* and *sanmaya mandara*. Figures 9, 10, and 8 are each from a *ryōbu mandara*, but executed as a different mandala type, respectively the *dai mandara*, *sanmaya mandara*, and *hō mandara*. The visual differences in these images are the forms in which the deity appears—anthropomorphic, symbolic, and *shūji*. The complex histories of the Four Mandala types, their use, and their significance are often ambiguous, but providing this sort of background for the *hō mandara* is essential in discussing Sanskrit's dissemination in Japan.

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[124] It is relevant to note that Nagarjuna is seen as the third patriarch of Shingon Buddhism. The second is Vajrasatta, who appeared before Nagarjuna in India and transmitted the teachings (and texts) to him. The first is Dainichi Buddha. Kūkai relates a story—based on Amoghavajra's (the sixth of the Dharma lineage patriarchs) account—of the meeting of Vajrasatta and Nagarjuna in his *Record of the Dharma Transmission of the Secret Mandala Teaching* (Jp.: *himitsu mandarakyō fujōden*, 秘密曼荼羅教付法伝.). KZ 1: 1-49. Kūkai wrote an abbreviated version titled *Short History of Shingon Dharma Transmission* (Jp.: *Shingon fuhōden*, 真言付法伝). KZ 1: 50-68.

The early history of the *hō mandara* in Japan

The earliest record of a *hō mandara* in Japan is Kūkai's *Catalogue*. The *Catalogue* is divided into seven headings, which can be translated as: Newly Translated Sutras; Sanskrit [works]; Treatises, Commentaries, Essays, etc.; Buddhist Icons, etc.; Ritual Implements; Items Handed Down by the Masters; and Three Sanskrit Manuscripts.[125] The *hō mandara* is listed under the Buddhist Icons, etc. section, which as a whole itemized five mandala and five patriarch paintings.[126] This section lists an imported *Daihi taizō hō mandara* (大悲胎蔵法曼荼羅, a Great Compassion Womb *hō mandara*), either created for Kūkai in China for his departure or made earlier and given to him. Also listed in this section are two other Womb mandalas and two Diamond mandalas.[127] There are no notations in Kūkai's *Catalogue* that indicate the mandalas were conceived as pairs; however, the first Womb mandala listed and the first Diamond mandala listed have identical special documentation regarding their size: both are listed as 7 *fuku*, 1 *jō*, 6 *shaku*.[128] It is possible that these two mandalas were paired for the dual-mandala system.

Chapter Ten of Bogel's book explores the dual-mandala system in detail.[129] None of Kūkai's seven imported mandalas listed in the *Catalogue* have survived so we must rely on records and copies for clues of original intention—although, as Bogel states, "we can only infer

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[125] Translation by Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 116. Originals in Kūkai. *Shōraimokuroku,* KZ 1: 72, 87, 91, 94, 95, 96, 100.

[126] Two more mandalas were listed in the *Catalogue* under the Items Handed Down by the Masters section. *Shōraimokuroku,* KZ 1:96. Works imported by Kūkai also included five Shingon patriarch portraits (attributed to Li Zhen and his studio circa late eighth century), three of which were non-Chinese individuals. Those three paintings have the patriarchs' names written in Sanskrit on the top sections. More information can be found in Bogel, *With a Single Glance.*

[127] In addition to this *hō mandara*, Kūkai also imported two *sanmaya mandara*, one found listed among these and another listed in the section mentioned in the previous footnote, Items Handed Down by the Masters; the rest were *dai mandara*.

[128] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 118.

[129] Ibid, pp. 227-277; especially relevant is the section starting on page 232.

so much" from these.[130] The *ryōbu mandara*, often called the mandala of the Two Worlds (Jp.:

ryōkai mandara, 両界曼荼羅), are a pair of mandalas consisting of the Diamond World mandala

(Jp.: *kongōkai mandara*, 金剛界曼荼羅) and the Great Compassion mandala (Jp.: *taizō mandara*,

胎蔵曼荼羅).[131] These two forms of mandala were imported from China by Kūkai, but there are

no extant records of their pairing in China. Despite this, as previously mentioned, there is a lack

of documentation regarding aspects of Esoteric Buddhism as it was a tradition that focused on

the oral transmission of knowledge from mentor to apprentice.[132] From Kūkai's texts relating

both Huiguo's experience and his own, it is clear that each mandala was an important aspect and

mandala rite of Mikkyō teachings, even if they were not discussed as a paired concept; however,

in the *Catalogue*, Kūkai used the term *ryōbu mandara* four times in reference to the two

mandalas together, possibly indicating that the term was part of the ritual and conceptual

transmission Kūkai received from Huiguo.[133]

    Dai mandara are used ritually in the *kanjō* (潅頂, initiation, consecration, or sometimes

ordination; Skt.: *abhiseka*), where a master "sanctions the transmission of the essence of esoteric

Buddhism to a disciple."[134] This practice that uses mandalas, known more specifically as

kechien kanjō (結縁潅頂, a *kanjō* that establishes a karmic bond with an aspect or deity of

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[130] Ibid, 2009, p. 233.

[131] The Great Compassion mandala is sometimes (and more consistently later) called the Womb World mandala (Jp.: *taizōkai mandara*, 胎蔵界曼荼羅).

[132] Bogel discusses recent scholarship that presents doubts on Kūkai's transmission of the dual mandala system (in terms of veracity or his misunderstanding of Huiguo's instruction). This scholarship is based in part on the lack of evidence of a dual mandala system in China. Bogel presents her opinion that it is not a question of Kūkai's veracity or his understanding of the instruction he received, but rather that he "added his own elements" to what he transmitted. She cites his alterations of the patriarch portraits (discussed further in Chapter Five of her book) as an example of him providing "new meaning for the images." Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 23.

[133] This is mentioned in Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, pp. 233-234. These four occurrences are found in the original text: Kūkai. *Shōraimokuroku*, KZ 1: 69, line 10; 1:70, line 5; 1:100, lines 7 and 9.

[134] Rambelli, "Secrecy in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism," p. 117. Rambelli also discusses on this same page the first use of *kanjō* by Saichō in 805 and Kūkai's first use of it in Japan in 812 (both monks did so at Takaosan-ji, 高雄山寺; also known as Jingo-ji, 神護寺).

esoteric Buddhism) involves recitation by master and student, followed by the blindfolding of the ordinand.[135] The blindfolded ordinand tosses a flower onto the mandala, with the deity on whom the flower lands becoming the ordinand's focus (a sort of tutelary deity) on the Mikkyō path.[136] As mentioned in Chapter One, Kūkai himself was initiated in China first in the Womb mandala and then the Diamond mandala, his thrown flower landing both times on Dainichi Buddha.

It is not known when and how the mandalas imported by Kūkai were used in the years following his return, but the fact that the two large *dai* or anthropomorphic mandalas (the Diamond World and Womb mandalas that had special size notation in the *Catalogue*) were repaired in 821 suggests that they were used extensively in rituals. Additionally, mandala copies were created at this time.[137] These copies from 821 were themselves copied sometime between 829 and 833. These still extant copies from 829, made for the *Kanjō-in* (Abhiseka Hall) of Jingo-ji, are commonly known as the *Takao mandara*.[138] The original large mandalas that needed repair in 821 and the subsequent copies were all *dai mandara*. Although not the form of the Four Mandala types that uses Sanskrit, these *dai mandara* and the records related to their use are pertinent in a discussion of the much less documented *hō mandara*. Or perhaps more to the point is the fact that these records exist in more detail for the *dai mandara* as early as the ninth century while the documentation of the *hō mandara*'s use seems to have lacked such exactitude.[139] Clearly, the role of the *dai mandara* was established in Japan upon Kūkai's return.

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[135] Ibid.

[136] This is a simplified description of the process. More detailed descriptions can be found in texts by scholars such as Ryūichi Abe, Cynthea Bogel, or Fabio Rambelli.

[137] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 121 cites a votive document (*ganmon* no. 54, "Request to create Two Daimandara for providing the Four Merits" in Kūkai. Seireishū, fasc. 7, KZ 3: 476-77) from 821 that notes the repairs and copies.

[138] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 234 who cites Sawa Ryūken, "Kōbō Daishi shōrai no mikkyō bijutsu," pp. 364-84.

[139] These mandalas are listed in: Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai (Japan), Mikkyō Daijiten Saikan Iinkai, and Mikkyō Gakkai. *Mikkyō daijiten*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1931. Reprint 1969, vol. 1. This entry directs the reader to an entry on *shittan mandara*, which directs the reader to entries related to the *shittan kanjō* (to be discussed shortly); however,

In contrast, the *ryōbu hō mandara*'s use seems more ambiguous, possibly even acquiring a specific role in Mikkyō praxis only in a later century.

The position of the *hō mandara* in Mikkyō praxis

As mentioned, Rambelli discussed the use of the *hō mandara* in a medieval ritual that conferred the status of master to a monk studying *shittan*.[140] This ritual is called the *shittan kanjō* (悉曇潅頂, the initiation ritual of the transmission of Sanskrit). Kanjō rites became more widespread at the end of the Heian period and even more frequent into the Kamakura period. They appeared in different forms, gradually becoming the ritual by which knowledge was transmitted—even knowledge concerning literary texts such as poetry collections was transmitted in such a ritual (*waka kanjō*, 和歌潅頂).[141] The reason for the spread of esoteric initiation rituals modeled after earlier forms from Saichō and Kūkai is not known. Rambelli believes it to be "a consequence of the systematic conceptual 'mandalisation' that was carried out in medieval Japan by esoteric Buddhism as a way to establish a sort of cultural hegemony among the intellectual elites."[142] This is surely one aspect of what was definitely a complex development; however, the spread of esoteric elements into other popular forms of medieval Buddhism (such as Pure Land Buddhism, for example) through routes such as *shugendō* (修験道)[143] points to a slightly more nuanced perspective of tracing the spread of the *kanjō* ritual. I will discuss this dissemination of esoteric elements more in the following chapter, but suffice it to say that I believe the second half of

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there is no mention of the *hō mandara*'s ritual use in many other texts on Mikkyō such as (to name a couple): Takagi Shingen. *Kūkai shisō no shoshiteki kenkyū*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1990; Toganoo Shōun. *Himitsu Bukkyō shi*. Wakayama-ken Kōyasan: Kōyasan Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1933.

[140] Rambelli, "Secrecy in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism," p. 121.
[141] Ibid, p. 120.
[142] Ibid, p. 120.
[143] Literally: "path of discipline and testing." Shugendō is a blend of mountain asceticism and shamanism that incorporates elements of Buddhism (especially Mikkyō), Taoism, and Shintoism.

Rambelli's statement, which gives esoteric Buddhism agency and the intention of cultural

hegemony, is misleading. Rather, I think that the spread of esoteric elements like *kanjō* practices

is attributed to factors such as both the syncretic view within Buddhism where various sects

often co-existed relatively peacefully and the growing popularity of Buddhism with non-

aristocrats.[144]

With the spread of *kanjō* even outside Mikkyō praxis, it is unsurprising that it would also

be adopted for diverse transmissions within. As previously discussed, the study of Sanskrit in

Shingon Buddhism is extremely important. The process of this study starts with the learning of

the Sanskrit syllabary and the common ligatures listed in the manuals *Shittan jūhasshō* (悉曇十

八章). Although this study ends with the transmission of the *Jūhasshō*, to acquire the status of

master (*ajari*) of Sanskrit one must be an ordinand in the *shittan kanjō*, where the deep meaning

of these characters is handed down.[145] Rambelli states that this *kanjō* began in the medieval

period. The ambiguity of his dating of the ritual is likely connected to the ambiguity of the

phrasing in the *Mikkyō Daijiten* (密教大辞典, Mikkyō Encyclopedia), the text that is almost

certainly his source. In the *Mikkyō Daijiten*, originally published in 1931, the only reference to

dating this ritual is the term *chūko*, footnoted at the beginning of this chapter. Modern use of this

term often means "medieval," but it can, in fact, cover a period of time from the Heian (generally

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[144] The *kenmitsu taisei* (顕密体制, exoteric-esoteric Buddhism) theory is also significant (Kuroda, Toshio. "Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai." *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975, pp. 413-547; reprinted in Kuroda, Toshio. *Kuroda Toshio chosakushū*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1994, pp. 45-182). As Taira Masayuki has stated, though there are shortcomings to the theory, the main thrust of his essay has greatly influenced the study of Japanese religious history (Taira, Masayuki. "Kuroda Toshio and the Kenmitsu Taisei Theory." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies.* Vol. 23, No. 3/4 (Fall, 1996), pp. 427-448).
[145] Rambelli, "Secrecy in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism," p. 121.

the height of the Heian period) to the Kamakura period. This already vague dating is made even

more ambiguous by the use of "probably" (蓋し) in the same sentence.[146]

Kūkai's *Catalogue* notes the importation of only a single *hō mandara* in 806, the *Daihi*

taizōhō mandara (Great Compassion Womb Dharma Mandala, one of the paired *ryōbu*

mandara), which supports the assumption that the *shittan kanjō* (a practice using both mandalas

from the *ryōbu mandara* set) did not exist at the time of the mandala's importation and was a

later development.[147] The *shittan kanjō* continues to be used even in modern times for those who

want to specialize in Sanskrit. Rambelli concisely outlines the process of the modern ritual,

which is based on procedures of the Kojima-ryū lineage (小島流) established by Shingō (真興,

934-1004).[148] The *Mikkyō Daijiten*, too, states that this ritual is a procedure of the Kojima-

ryū.[149] Based on this information (and assuming that the Kojima-ryū did not adopt the practice

from another lineage), we can therefore conclude that the *shittan kanjō* was established no earlier

than the second half of the tenth century; however, at the present time it is not possible to

ascertain a precise originary date or even a century for this ritual. Even so, later in this chapter I

will discuss some possibilities of how such a practice could have come into being.

A brief summarization of the process provides insight into the medieval practice, as it is

likely that the core components of the ritual continued relatively unchanged within praxis,

though there may have been alterations. The process begins with a preliminary instruction phase

consisting of two parts. The first part involves the ordinand performing a variety of rituals

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[146] Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai (Japan), Mikkyō Daijiten Saikan Iinkai, and Mikkyō Gakkai. *Mikkyō daijiten*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1931. Reprint 1969, 3:1002.

[147] As mentioned earlier, see Bogel's book for a discussion of the combination of the Womb mandala and the Diamond mandala that form the *ryōbu mandara* and the possible processes by which they came to be combined and used in transmission rituals.

[148] Ibid, pp. 121-123. The Kojima-ryū lineage is also known as the Tsubosaka-ryū (壺坂流).

[149] Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai (Japan), Mikkyō Daijiten Saikan Iinkai, and Mikkyō Gakkai. *Mikkyō daijiten*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan, 1931. Reprint 1969, 3: 995.

(offerings to *honzon*, mudras, mantras, chanting the entire list of Sanskrit syllabary five times, etc.) three times a day for seven days followed by a ritual to Fudō Myōō to ensure that the *kanjō* is performed without the intrusion of demonic forces. The second part involves a similar process of the ordinand executing various rituals three times a day for seven days, as well as memorizing and writing down the complete *Jūhasshō* once each day of that seven-day period. This preliminary instruction phase is followed by the initiation ritual, where *hō mandara* are hung in the *kanjō-in* (潅頂院, the Initiation Hall) in the manner the *dai mandara* are used in initiation rites. Additionally, the hall is adorned with hanging scrolls upon which are written the *Shingon* patriarch's names in Sanskrit and the mantras of the bodhisattvas Kannon (観音) to the West, and Monju (文殊) to the East.[150] The master transmits Sanskrit seeds, *shūji*, to the ordinand during the ritual and the disciple then visualizes Sanskrit characters covering his own body and meditates on the esoteric meanings that allow the characters to embody the deities through their seeds (a meditation called *fujikan*, 布字観, Eng.: spreading the syllables).

As Rambelli states, "In this meditation, the *shittan* characters clearly function as symbolic shifters performing the transformation of the disciple into the deity."[151] After this, the culmination of the rite takes place with the master conveying in the form of transmission documents[152] certain (secret) instructions on issues such as pronunciation, writing styles, etc., as well as a lineage chart tracing the transmission of Sanskrit from Dainichi Buddha to the ordinand. A section in the transmission documents titled *Ten Prohibitions of Sanskrit* (Jp.: *Shittan jū fuka no koto*, 悉曇十不可ノ事) illustrates that Sanskrit characters are "sacred entities of a

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[150] A bodhisattva (Jp.: *bosatsu*, 菩薩) is one who is able to attain enlightenment, but delays out of compassion in order to assist with others' enlightenment.
[151] Ibid, p. 122. This is similar to the transformation visualization process of the *a-ji kan* mentioned in Chapter One.
[152] These documents are compiled as one document with twelve parts, titled *Twelve Essential Documents Concerning Sanskrit* (Jp.: *Shittan jūnitsū kirigami daiji*, 悉曇十二通切紙大事).

specifically Buddhist nature" that have "soteriological power" and, as such, should not be written on "impure materials."[153] Neither should they be destroyed.[154] A study of Sanskrit's efficacy as a soteriological tool is necessarily complex, especially due to the polysemic nature of Sanskrit characters in Buddhism, but such work has been approached by Fabio Rambelli.

Much of Rambelli's work on Mikkyō features semiotic study, including his outline of the transformative nature of Sanskrit characters (signs) as they relate to the concept of *hōben*. In the introduction, I mentioned the two levels of understanding the polysemic nature of the sign. Rambelli's work likewise addresses such levels, but using specific Esoteric Buddhist terminology. Rambelli analyzes the terms *jisō* (字相) and *jigi* (字義), explaining that "[j]*isō* refers to a signification based on appearances,"[155] or, in more concise terms, *jisō* is the superficial level of understanding the sign where one attaches certain meanings to the sign. In contrast, *jigi* refers to a deep, esoteric meaning (true meaning). The term *jigi*, while in some cases acting as the opposite of *jisō*, is also "a meta-term transcending the dichotomy (fallacious because it results from attachment to false ideas) between *jisō* and its contradictory."[156] Its use as a meta-term is synonymous with the term unobtainable (Jp.: *fukatoku*, 不可得), referring to the concept of nonduality. When one can achieve an understanding of the character's *jigi*, then unobtainability can be understood: "the point at which a sign ceases to be a sign."[157] Kūkai himself interpreted these terms slightly differently. In his texts, the *jisō* is the idea that each sign has a single specific meaning and *jigi* is the idea that each sign has countless meanings (endless

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[153] Ibid, p. 123, who states that the translation is based on work by Kushida (Kushida Ryōkō. *Zoku Shingon Mikkyō seiritsu katei no kenkyū*. Tōkyō: Sankibō Busshorin, 1979) and Kodama (Kodama, Giryū. *Bonji de miru Mikkyō: sono oshie, imi, kakikata*. Tōkyō: Daihōrinkaku, 2002)

[154] Ibid, p. 123. Rambelli lists ten prohibitions from this document translated into English on this page.

[155] Rambelli, "Secrecy in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism," p. 112.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

polysemy of the sign).[158] This interpretation, though different from the concepts of these terms just mentioned, maintains emphasis on the existence of different semiotic levels of a sign where one ultimately realizes the nondual (the endlessly polysemic) nature of the sign (*jigi*). Additionally, Kūkai's interpretation similarly establishes these two semiotic levels as levels of understanding (with *jigi* superseding *jisō*) by associating *jisō* with exoteric Buddhism (Jp.: *kengyō*, 顕教) and *jigi* with Mikkyō.[159] Viewed in this way, *hōben* can be seen as employed in *a-ji kan* use, where the adherent understands the Sanskrit sign in terms of *jisō*. Upon further study and contemplation, the goal is for the adherent to eventually understand the Sanskrit in terms of *jigi*. Presumably, this is also the point where one masters the study of Sanskrit.

Although Rambelli's work presents a thorough study of the semiotic nature of Sanskrit and is sensitive to the historic forces surrounding the use of this text, as a scholar of religious studies he understandably approaches Buddhist (visual) culture from a textual standpoint. Very little work (if any) has been done to situate the forms within visual culture that use Sanskrit.[160] An attempt to create a more comprehensive study of the use of Sanskrit on/in non-textual objects is the next step—a step that will allow a more nuanced understanding of later forms on which Sanskrit appears, such as the *miya mandara* that will be discussed in the next chapter. On the other hand, even an investigation of the great variety of works within a single visual form—for example, the *hō mandara*—illustrates the necessity of a deeper exploration. Among the extant *hō mandara* there are variations that challenge modern viewers to examine further the function

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[158] Kūkai's concepts of *jisō* and *jigi* can be found in works such as: *Shōji jissōgi*, KZ 1; *Unjigi*, KZ 1; and *Bonji shittan jimo narabini shakugi*, KZ 2. This is also discussed in Rambelli's chapter in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*.

[159] Kūkai. *Bonmōkyō kaidai*, KZ 1: 809-819.

[160] More recently, the use of Sanskrit (*bonji*) has been explored in a few individual cases (mostly in Japanese scholarship), but these explorations are brief and isolated. For example, scholarship on images of the Buddha Amida discusses the inclusion of Sanskrit characters; however, they only discuss such use in isolation. See 高間 由香里. 禅林寺所蔵山越阿弥陀図について (On the painting of Yamagoshi Amida, owned by Zenrin-ji). 史学研究. 266, 広島史学研究会, 2009 年 as an example of a work that addresses Sanskrit characters within the scope of a single work.

of such mandalas, as multiple functions may be suggested by multiple forms. As established, the early use of the *hō mandara* is unknown, and it is only in the Kojima-ryū lineage, from no earlier than the tenth century, that there is record of its use in *kanjō*, as Rambelli has pointed out. Extant examples of the *hō mandara* indicate still a different function.

In the field of art history, catalog entries are the main arena for even the mention of these types of mandala, yet such entries could usually stand as an entry for a *dai mandara* aside from a single line mentioning the use of Sanskrit instead of anthropomorphic forms to represent the deity. This is understandable, as *ryōbu mandara* are rather standardized. The mandalas present a systematized grouping of deities. The differences among such mandalas are generally in medium (metallic inks on purple or blue dyed fabric or paper versus polychrome on silk, for example), slight variations in the deities depicted, and the size or represented form of the deities (anthropomorphic, symbolic, or *shūji*). The deities' forms, even when non-figural, are still presented iconically on the lotus pedestal within the moon disk. There is seemingly no distinction made between the reception of the various forms of the deities. For example, a *shūji* form of Dainichi Buddha is no less Dainichi Buddha than an anthropomorphic form.[161] In the words of Robert Sharf, an icon is "a specific sort of religious image that is believed to partake or participate in the substance of that which it represents. In other words, an icon does not merely bear the likeness of the divine but shares in its very nature."[162] Namely, the Buddhist icon is not simply a material sign of an immaterial signified, but is simultaneously the sign, signifier, and signified as it is endowed with the deity.[163]

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[161] Of course individual situations may be more complex. The choice of a specific form of deity may lie with patron or even with the normal practice of the lineage to which the monk executing the image belongs. Indeed, it may also lie with the function of such objects, which (in the case of *hō mandara*, especially early versions) can be unknown.

[162] Robert H. Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics." *Representations*. Vol. 66 (Spring 1999), p. 48.

[163] Rambelli, Fabio. "Secret Buddhas: The Limits of Buddhist Representation." *Monumenta Nipponica*. Vol. 57 (3), 2002, p. 283. There is also a discussion here of the unconditioned deity and the conditioned icon (conditioned by location and materiality where the Buddha is not) to indicate the differentiation in Buddhist doctrine of icon and

The *shūji* enthroned on the lotus, like the figural representation, remains the essence of the deity. Yet as anthropomorphic forms are usually more easily recognizable than the other various forms, they have more popular currency—it makes sense that most catalog entries would discuss the *hō mandara* in relation to the *dai mandara*. Describing the concepts of *shūji* and *hō mandara* could be a challenge in the brief entries required of catalogs; however, this results in the oversimplified view that *hō mandara* are simply *dai mandara* with a Sanskrit letter as the form of the deity rather than a human figure. Such types of discussion reveal the understudied (and unknown) nature of the *hō mandara* within modern scholarship. Modern scholarship has established that Kūkai imported the first *hō mandara* (only the *Taizō* of the *ryōbu mandara*) in 806 when he returned from China. The use and fate of this work is unknown. The earliest extant *ryōbu hō mandara* date to around mid-eleventh century, around two hundred years later than the first recorded *hō mandara*.[164]

Despite the gap between Kūkai's imported *hō mandara* and the earliest extent versions (there were surely many *ryōbu hō mandara* created in the interim, but none dating before the eleventh century have survived), there are other extant early works that are highly relevant. Among them, the earliest are Sanskrit letter items found interred within the famous Tōji Lecture Hall statues (figure 11), created under Kūkai's direction and completed in 839, five years after his death. Scholars generally also accept that same date for the interred objects. During repairs to the 839 statues in 1197, gilt copper containers were found within the heads of fifteen of the

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deity. In practice, this clear distinction by the Buddhist clergy or laity is not always made—as seen in the animating of Buddhist icons through acts such as the eye-opening ceremony. This can also be found in tales such as the story in the *Nihon ryōiki* (日本霊異記, *Miraculous Stories of Japan*, written sometime in the late eighth century or early ninth century) of the tree that was cut down for a Buddhist sculpture. It was abandoned and used in a bridge, eventually calling out to a passerby until the man helped it fulfill its destiny of becoming a sacred image. This story presents an example of the material for Buddhist imagery as animated, though this in part was also due to the "traditional belief that a kami might reside in a tree, endowing it with a life and will of its own" (Guth, Christine. *Shinzō: Hachiman Imagery and its Development*. Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University. 1985, p. 20).

[164] A *ryōbu hō mandara* dating to 1052, which I will discuss shortly, is likely the earliest extent version.

twenty-one statues on the altar.[165] Modern x-rays and repairs have substantiated the twelfth-

century records of relic containers in the statues.[166] These containers held "relics" of

semiprecious stones, incense and slips of paper on which are written Sanskrit letters (figure 12)

in a "mandala configuration appropriate to each deity."[167] Such interred items, called *nonyūhin*

(納入品), are found throughout the history of Buddhist sculpture and typically consist of relics or

relic-like items and other sacred small objects. The Sanskrit letter arrangements, also called

bonmon mandara (梵文曼荼羅, Sanskrit character mandala), are executed in black ink on paper.

The Sanskrit letters are mantric seed-syllables. Unlike the anthropomorphic deities of a *dai*

mandara or the letters of later versions of *ryōbu hō mandara*, only one of the Sanskrit characters

of the Tōji mantra slips is enthroned on a lotus pedestal. Four other characters are encircled in a

disk, but this could have been a convention to assert organization to the cluster of characters

rather than a way to grant the characters icon status. Conversely, the disk could be the moon

disk (Jp.: *gachirin*, 月輪) the sacred lunar orb used as the surface or physical form on which the

meditation-locus *aji-kan* letter is written, and found within many "courts" (deity palaces) on the

Diamond and Womb mandala.

Although these Sanskrit slips have not been discussed in relation to *hō mandara*, these

slips were almost certainly interred just thirty years after Kūkai's return from China, either under

his supervision or just after his death. They are surely indicative of the early adoptive stages of a

relatively new practice of arranging Sanskrit characters like a mandala assembly of deities. They

may also indicate the influence of similar mantra/mandala images found in Central Asia and

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[165] Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 333. The following section on these statues is based on Chapter Eleven of Bogel, *With a Single Glance*. She references Maruo, Shōzaburō. *Nihon chōkokushi kiso shiryō shūsei: Heian jidai : zōzō meiki hen*, vol. 1, Tōkyō: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1966, which contains images, descriptions, and documents relating to the statues and the interred items.

[166] For more information see: Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, pp. 333-334 and Maruo, *Nihon chōkokushi kiso shiryō shūsei*, pp. 49-51.

[167] Maruo, *Nihon chōkokushi kiso shiryō shūsei*, pp. 49-51.

China during the Tang dynasty, discussed at the beginning of Chapter One, which could have circulated in Nara-period temples. Bogel argues throughout her book that the existence of vajra and other esoteric implements in eighth-century Japan points to knowledge of Esoteric ritual devices before Kūkai's importations.[168]

Throughout his life, Kūkai, who returned with a single Womb *hō mandara*, expressed a fascination with Sanskrit and a profound belief in its specific role in the deepest meanings of the "secret storehouse," i.e. the Shingon Esoteric teachings. This fascination combined with his ideas of polysemy and "letters" within a "world-text" is, unwitting or not, ideally represented in the concept of the *hō mandara*. Even if Kūkai did not establish a ritual that utilized the *hō mandara*, which I nonetheless believe that he did or at the very least intended to, he promoted concepts that would support the establishment of such a ritual. His texts and ideas are without a doubt the basis for later ritual uses of Sanskrit in Esoteric praxis, such as the *shittan kanjō*. It is possible then to view the Tōji Sanskrit slips as an indication of the practices Kūkai was transmitting to his disciples from circa 809 to his death in 835, or—at the very least—a forerunner to a fuller incorporation of Sanskrit mandalas into the realm of Esoteric Buddhist rites, especially the *ryōbu hō mandara*. The works found within the Tōji sculptures could very well be significant in discussing the Four Mandala types. The sculptures in Tōji's Lecture Hall together form a sculptural mandala, or *katsuma mandara*, one of the Four Mandala types. As previously noted, Kūkai saw the Four Mandalas as inseparably related and each expression (*aksara*, *mudra*, and *bimba*—respectively, the *hō mandara*, the *sanmaya mandara*, and the *dai mandara*) of the Tathagatas as implied in *katsuma mandara*.[169] The anthropomorphic figures of the sculptures

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[168] Although it is possible these images circulated in eighth-century Japan, if Sanskrit existed in/on non-textual objects prior to Kūkai's importation it was almost certainly in few numbers and not very well-known.

[169] Kūkai, and Yoshito S. Hakeda. *Kūkai: Major Works*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 227. The Japanese version is in Kūkai, *Sokushin jōbutsugi*, KZ 1.

can be seen as referencing *dai mandara* and the hand gestures and various attributes of the icons as referencing *sanmaya mandara*. With this reading, three of the Four Mandala types are clearly present. If each sculpture originally contained within it Sanskrit slips in mandala configurations, the fourth and final mandala type would be present—a physical manifestation of the inseparability of the Four Mandala types.

One of the earliest *ryōbu hō mandara* from a sutra deposit, dated 1052 but buried in the year 1113 on Mount Kōya similarly depicts the characters without the lotus pedestals, although these works are clearly mandala and thus the Sanskrit (here, definitely *shūji*) are clearly the icons—the expression of the deities. An examination of this set will serve as an example of why the *hō mandara* format alone would benefit from a detailed study (figures 13 and 14).[170] Excavated within the vast burial complex on Mt. Kōya known as Okuno-in and now owned by Kongōbu-ji, the buried mandalas were executed in ink on undyed silk and are, as may be expected of articles found in a sutra mound, relatively small. They each measure around 50 x 45 centimeters. Despite the early twelfth-century date of the set's burial with other objects, the Diamond World *hō mandara* contains a dedicatory inscription on the back dating the pair to 1052.[171] This seems to be the earliest dated extant example of any *hō mandara*, *ryōbu* or single. The year 1052 was an important date in Buddhism, being the accepted year for the beginning of *mappō* (末法, the Age of Dharma Decline), or the third (and final) age of Buddhism—the degenerate age of Buddhism. More will be suggested about their function below.

The excavated mandalas were buried along with a *hokke shūji mandara* and various sutras. Also buried were two additional documents, one being the prayer of the *bikuni* Hōyaku

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[170] Further examples of mandalas with *shūji* (including mandalas that are not *ryōbu mandara*) are provided throughout many sources, one of which is the *Taishō zuzōbu* 1: 1167-1188.

[171] These objects are listed in: Enryakuji (Ōtsu-shi, Japan), Kongōbuji (Kōya-chō, Japan), Ueno no Mori Bijutsukan, Nara Kenritsu Bijutsukan, and JAC Project. *Hieizan, Kōyasan meihōten: Hieizan sekai bunka isan tōroku kinen, Kōyasan Heisei no daishūri kinen*. [Tokyo]: Sankei Shinbunsha, 1997.

(比丘尼法薬) and another being the "list of the Bikuni Hōyaku kuyō [offering]."[172] Therefore,

the patron of the sutra burial site (the nun Hōyaku) is clear.[173] There are many interesting

aspects of this set of mandalas. For example, the pair's use in a burial site points to a function

outside *kanjō* rituals. Dating it to 1052 may be a clue to the purpose of its original creation.

Perhaps these mandalas were made because Sanskrit had a special, talismanic strength whose

power could transcend what was thought to be the coming degenerate age of Buddhism; however,

it was not buried until around the year 1113.[174] If it was truly painted in 1052, what was its

significance in the interim years and who possessed it during those sixty plus years?[175] In light

of the eleventh-century letter that references Minamoto no Takakuni's commission of a *shūji*

mandara, it is likely that the set buried at Okuno-in was originally for personal use by the nun

Hōyaku. Women were not allowed into the sacred area of the Okuno-in so, in funding (or

providing objects for) a sutra burial, Hōyaku was thus able to establish a link to the holy site.[176]

The answers to these questions may never be available, but they lead to interesting avenues of

study. Outside texts, the only other objects from this site are *shūji mandara*. While this could

have been the result of an emphasis on Sanskrit characters as representations of deities, it is also

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[172] Enryakuji (Ōtsu-shi, Japan), Kongōbuji (Kōya-chō, Japan), Ueno no Mori Bijutsukan, Nara Kenritsu Bijutsukan, and JAC Project. *Hieizan, Kōyasan meihōten: Hieizan sekai bunka isan tōroku kinen, Kōyasan Heisei no daishūri kinen*. [Tokyo]: Sankei Shinbunsha, 1997, p. 242. A *bikuni* is a fully ordained Buddhist nun.

[173] The nun Hōyaku and this burial site were the topic of a presentation by sectarian scholar Shunshō Manabe at an Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies conference in 1998.

[174] In the future, I intend to research this set of mandalas further, looking deeper into aspects of the work such as the patron as well as the 1113 date and corresponding pilgrimages.

[175] As Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis says in her book (Ten Grotenhuis, Elizabeth. *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, p. 198, footnote 42), scholar Yanigisawa Taka believes the year 1052 for the painting of both these Diamond realm and Womb realm mandalas is generally acceptable. I do not know enough about sutra burials yet to be able to provide a firm opinion, but I wonder if it is possible that the works were created closer to the time of their burial and inscribed with the important date of 1052 (of *mappō*) to apply a more complex intention to their burial (not merely personal sponsorship for one's own benefit, but also for the benefit of mankind living in the future age of darkness and degenerateness). Another possibility is that the works were commissioned at 1052 for the gain of merit or protection in the face of the *mappō* and held by the patron or the patron's family until the 1113 date, when they were given for the sutra burial.

[176] Due to a variety of reasons (among which was the belief that women tainted a pure and sacred site with blood because of their cycle of menstruation), women were not allowed on sacred mountaintops, including Mount Kōya, until modern times.

possible that this was for practical reasons. Sanskrit versions of the deities would have been more easily copied on a small area of silk than the anthropomorphic figures, particularly considering the similarities between executing Sanskrit text and Japanese characters. However, it also seems likely that such small mandalas were relics in some form, similar to the mantra slips in the Tōji statues. The talismanic power of Sanskrit could have made the *hō mandara* an appealing choice to accompany sutras for burial—just as the early Chinese Mahapratisara *dharani* works (mentioned in Chapter One) were originally used for burials, albeit human not sutra.

Although a regular calligraphy brush can be used to write Sanskrit, the instrument generally used is a brush with softened wooden bristles. With either tool, there is a fluidity and stroke order to which one must adhere—as with Japanese calligraphy. Although *dai mandara* (and anthropomorphic representations of deities) can certainly be executed in ink without color, the lack of color somehow translates into the *hō mandara* (deities' *shūji* representations) with more ease. Also, the chances of making an iconographic mistake in a *dai mandara* are higher than in a *hō mandara*. The eleventh-century correspondence cited earlier not only supports this, but also provides an example of another *shūji mandara* commission (from the Uji Dainagon, or Minamoto no Takakuni).

The personal sponsoring of *hō mandara* continued after the early twelfth century. Another example can be seen in the *Ryōkai hō mandara* that is owned by Taisan-ji in Kobe and dates to circa 1300 (figure 15). Though it could provide an interesting object of study on its own merit, its significance to an overall discussion of *hō mandara* lies in its unique format and the materials used to create it. This *hō mandara* hanging scroll presents the Diamond realm mandala with its bottom border abutting the top border of a Womb realm mandala. A border that features

lotus blossoms and leaves surrounds the two, making them appear as a single unit. The Taisan-ji

work is the only extant example that combines the embroidered *hō mandara* pair in a single

hanging scroll.[177] From this, it is clear that this *hō mandara*, like the set from the sutra burial site,

was not used for the aforementioned *kanjō* rite, which requires the mandalas to be hung

separately.

In fact, the material used to make the image suggests a more personalized use. The

imagery is embroidered with silk floss and human hair. Embroidered images of Buddhas, or

shūbutsu (繡仏), sometimes utilize human hair in order to create a bond between deity and

worshipper.[178] Hair was also seen as an acceptable offering to the gods in return for protection

as early as the eleventh century.[179] This practice was popularly used in images of Amida Buddha

(阿弥陀如来), which themselves often included Sanskrit (figure 16).[180] It is interesting to note

that, although Amida is depicted in *shūji* form in the Amida triad embroideries, in embroidery

works depicting the descent of Amida he is in anthropomorphic form often with *shūji* in various

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[177]As the original Japanese says in the caption for this image: 完全な種子両界曼荼羅を刺繍で表した例は、本件
が現在唯一である。*Nihon no bijutsu*. Tōkyō-to: Shibundō (2005), no. 470, figure 12. Although these two
mandalas are paired as the *ryōbu mandara,* combining them (in any medium) onto a single object is unusual.
[178] The practice of embroidering with hair rather than thread is called *hatsushū* (髪繍). There are no extant
examples of *hatsushū* works from ancient Japan (to the end of the Heian period, 1185), but records written in the
following periods occasionally mention *hatsushū* works of Buddha that were produced in the ancient period (Tōkyō
Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, and Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan. *Nihon no bijutsu*.
Tōkyō-to: Shibundō (2005), no. 470, p. 94). More detail on *hatsushū* can be found in this volume of *Nihon no
bijutsu*. Also see Ten Grotenhuis, Elizabeth. "Bodily Gift and Spiritual Pledge: Human Hair in Japanese Buddhist
Embroideries." *Orientations* 35 (1): 31, 2004.
[179] "An Eleventh Century Correspondence." *Etudes d'Orientalisme publiées par le Musée Guimet à la mémoire de
Raymonde Linossier*. Paris, 1932, II, p. 533. This is Arthur Waley's aforementioned translation of the eleventh-
century correspondence titled *Higashiyama Orai* found in Hanawa Hokinoichi, and Tōshirō Ōta. *Zoku Gunsho Ruijū*.
Tōkyō: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1923, chapter 359. The practice of offering hair in return for one's life or
health can be found in other texts, as Waley points out in a footnote, such as the *Sutra of the Wise Man and the Fool*
(chapter 11). The eleventh-century priest directs his questioning parishioner to a Chinese text, "*Jen Wang Ching*."
[180] Figure 16 is an example of a devotional image of Amida Buddha that incorporates Sanskrit. Many examples of
shūbutsu works that depict Amida with Sanskrit (ranging from Amida descents to Amida triads) can be found
throughout Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, and Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan.
Nihon no bijutsu. Tōkyō-to: Shibundō (2005), no. 470. Although the dissemination of Sanskrit into religious sects
dedicated to Amida Buddha (such as the *Jōdo shū*, 浄土宗) could itself be at least a full chapter, I will mention only
works related to such sects as supplementary images that contribute to the overall understanding of situating these
two mandalas, the *hō mandara* and the *miya mandara*, in relation to one another and in an attempt to begin an
identification of the general trends of Sanskrit use in Buddhist visual culture.

arrangements around him. Since the form of the Buddha is figural, the inclusion of *shūji* in the descent images clearly does not stem from an intention to avoid iconographic mistakes in depicting anthropomorphic figures. Like the Sanskrit in most of these Amida Buddha depictions, the Sanskrit within the Taisan-ji *Ryōkai hō mandara* is embroidered completely with human hair.

The *tsuizen kuyō* (追善供養, memorial service held for the dead) is the initial rite held post-funeral for the dead. These services include auspicious images that sometimes used the hair of the worshipper who had died or someone related to the person. Such imagery is used also in the *gyakushu* service (逆修, memorial service held for oneself) performed by the living, where one would donate one's own hair. As Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis states, "Using the hair of devotees to represent sacred figures was a dramatic way to collapse the distinction between devotee and deity, to show the merging with the sacred for which devotees longed, in this life or after death."[181] It is likely that the high amount of embroidered Buddhist Sanskrit images incorporating hair stems from ways to truly merge one's self with the deity. As previously discussed, Sanskrit as an icon was not only a repository of power, but the character itself was the essence, or seed (*shūji*), of a deity—the character *was* the deity. Likewise, at least as late as the medieval period, hair was an important symbol of status and personal identification to the Japanese.[182] Indeed, I believe that the high use of Sanskrit in hair embroidery is due to the attempt to merge one's self with the very essence of divinity. Perhaps the Taisan-ji mandala was created for similar, very personal reasons. Having both the Diamond realm and the Womb realm

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[181] Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, p. 95. For details on death and the belief in Amida's Western Paradise as salvation see her "Visions of a Transcendent Realm: Pure Land Images in the Cleveland Museum of Art." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*. Vol. 78, No. 7 (Nov., 1991), pp. 274-300. More about *shūbutsu* and their use in death rites can also be found in Ishida Mosaku's introductory essay from Nara National Museum, *Shūbutsu*. Tōkyō: Kadokawa Shoten. 1964, pp. 2-9.

[182] The shaving of one's hair would indicate a monastic lifestyle. Cutting one's hair short could indicate shame (brought on one's self or brought on by the action's of one's master, as in the case of samurai). Hair helped to mark one's status in a time when status was irrevocably connected to self-identity. In the Edo-period woodblock prints, there are depictions that explore the cultural view of hair in other ways as well. Hair and its relation to embroidered Sanskrit would be a very interesting topic for further research.

mandalas on one hanging scroll presents the two mandalas not as a set, but rather as a single entity that could be displayed with more ease on a specific occasion—perhaps the *tsuizen* memorial service, for example. In exploring extant *hō mandara* such as these, it becomes clear that a future systematic, in-depth study of extant works could provide insight not only into when and why the *shittan kanjō* was standardized, but also possible other uses and meanings which may have contributed to the dissemination of Sanskrit to other visual forms.

To summarize, around two hundred years after Kūkai's single *hō mandara* that was imported in 806, there seems to have been a peak in the creation of mandalas using Sanskrit—as evidenced by eleventh-century correspondence as well as works such as the *ryōbu hō mandara* from the Okuno-in sutra burial site. From study of these examples as well as the circa 1300 mandala owned by Taisan-ji, these *ryōbu hō mandara* appear to have been used for more personal devotion whereas the Two Worlds *dai mandara* was utilized mainly by Mikkyō monks in *kanjō*. From the time Kūkai first entered Japan with his imported objects to the centuries following, Sanskrit use in non-textual objects became more prominent with monks such as the anonymous ordained man from the *Tōzan ōrai* encouraging parishioners to commission such works. Viewed in this light, I think it is possible—perhaps even highly likely—that the *shittan kanjō* developed out of a need for a Sanskrit "expert" (or master, Jp.: 阿闍梨, *ajari*; taken from the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit *acarya*, meaning a person who knows and teaches the rules).[183] With the increased use of Sanskrit in visual culture, such a master would fit into the

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[183] The need for an expert in Sanskrit as a visual and religious language is clearly illustrated in a variety of examples of objects that incorporate Sanskrit. Once such example is a Zao gongen (蔵王権現) plaque discussed in detail by art historian Heather Blair. The back of the plaque is filled with Sanskrit characters. Blair discusses the unusual Sanskrit mantra on the back (it does not appear anywhere else written in this way), positing that because in either the correct form of Sanskrit or in the incorrect form that appears on this plaque the Japanese pronunciation remains the same, we can assume that the incorrect Sanskrit of this written mantra was a result of a first transliterating the mantra from the (correct) Sanskrit into Japanese and then once more into (this time incorrect) Sanskrit. Examples such as this plaque suggest that there were patrons, designers, or artisans who could navigate Esoteric imagery, but were not highly educated Mikkyō monks and therefore not fully capable in the more complicated imagery that

hierarchical system that ensured the correct practice of Buddhism as well as iconographic and theological accuracy in worship.

The growth of Sanskrit use

To support such a conclusion, it is necessary to provide a few brief examples of the dissemination of Sanskrit in visual culture. One such example is Heian-period *zuzō* (図像, iconographic) imagery meant as instruction for those who create Buddhist icons. Images such as figure 17 provide the anthropomorphic figure of the deity as well as other basic information, including the symbolic form (*sanmaya*) and the *shūji* form (Sanskrit).[184] Indeed the presence of *shūji* in the iconographic manuals for the Lotus sutra (Jp.: *hokekyō* 法華経) could have assisted in the spread of Sanskrit to eleventh- and twelfth-century works commissioned by the elite. The inclusion of Sanskrit in such works is evidence that, as early as the twelfth century, it had become necessary to have a reference of the deities' *shūji* as these characters were at the very least recognizable to the elite as visual tools for efficacy. The frontispiece of chapter fourteen (Jp.: *Anraku-gyōbon*, 安楽経本) of the famous twelfth-century *Heike nōkyō* (平家納経, Sutra Dedicated by the Heike (Taira Clan), figure 18)[185] is one example of a Buddhist work sponsored by military elite that utilized Sanskrit—almost certainly a result of such iconographic manuals.[186]

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required someone seen as an expert in Sanskrit. Guest lecture on Zao Gongen and Kinpusen by Professor Heather Blair for the Mountains and Gods graduate art history seminar (Professor Bogel), October, 2009. Such examples with errors in Sanskrit mantras or *shūji* are also indicative of the need for an Esoteric master of Sanskrit.

[184] It is interesting to note that this specific example does not consistently provide *shūji* for every deity. More images of this work and basic information regarding it can be found in: Yamato Bunkakan. *Fugen bosatsu no kaiga: utsukushiki hotoke e no ionri : tokubetsuten*. Nara-shi: Yamato Bunkakan, 2004. Iconographic manuals were used throughout the Buddhist sects, but those that include the *shūji* seem to be found mainly within the Shingon or Tendai schools.

[185] The character 平 can be read as *Taira* or *hei*. This set of scrolls is the Lotus sutra (Jp.: *Hokekyō*, 法華経).

[186] Since this set of Lotus sutra scrolls is well-known and well-studied due to its powerful patron Taira no Kiyomori (平清盛, 1118-1181), there are many scholarly sources available (see for example: Komatsu, Shigemi. *Heike nōkyō no kenkyū*. Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1976.).

The frontispiece of this chapter illustrates the Sanskrit character pronounced *baku* in

Japanese, which is the *shūji* (seed syllable) of the Historical Buddha, Shaka Buddha (釈迦, Skt.:

Sakyamuni). Chapter fourteen of the Lotus Sutra, in which Shaka Buddha preaches on the

myriad of Buddhas within the various and vast universes, certainly supports the choice of

depicting Shaka Buddha; however, the use of the *shūji* form to do so is curious. The chapter

does not expound the holiness or efficacy of the Sanskrit language. It is possible that the ideas of

polysemy and the "world-text" are more relevant to the choice to use the *shūji* form of Shaka

Buddha. At one point in this chapter's scene, the sands of the Ganges River rise up and turn into

bodhisattvas ready to serve the Buddha—clearly illustrating the polysemic nature of each "letter"

(object) in the "world-text" (universe). The use of Shaka Buddha's *shūji* form directly

references concepts relating to letter (sign). For those Buddhist worshippers who had attained a

deeper understanding of the world, the depiction of the Shaka Buddha on the frontispiece for

chapter fourteen of the *Heike nōkyō* could have acted as a reminder to not reduce "the

polyvalence of signs into the single, most obvious meaning,"[187] a practice which would only

hinder the path to true enlightenment. Regardless of deeper meaning, at the most basic level the

Heike nōkyō is an example of non-textual Sanskrit use commissioned by an elite patron.[188] As

the increased use of Sanskrit likely prompted the inclusion of *shūji* in iconographic manuals, in a

cyclical fashion these iconographic manuals in turn contributed to the increase in use.

Another twelfth-century handscroll, known as the *Ajigi* (阿字義, *The Significance of the*

Letter A),[189] not only provides another example of the dissemination of Sanskrit as a visual

element (rather than textual) among the elite but also clearly points to the spread of a belief in

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[187] Abe, *Weaving*, p. 285.

[188] The presence of Sanskrit in a non-textual capacity within the *Heike nōkyō* is a project I would like to work on in the future. I do not discuss this set of scrolls in much detail here, but rather provide it as a further example of Sanskrit's spread to the elite.

[189] This scroll is also known as the *Ajigi-den* (阿字義伝).

Sanskrit's efficacious abilities.[190] Although the identity of the patron is unclear, scholars surmise

due to the mention within copies of the manuscript that either the producer or the patron was a

person with relations to the powerful aristocratic Kujō clan (九条家).[191] There is no record of its

date, but from the technique of its production and visual analysis scholars have ascertained that it

was made in the late twelfth century, about a century and a half after the *hō mandara* pair found

buried on Mt. Kōya.[192] This luxurious scroll of ink, gold, and silver on paper is, despite being

titled only *Ajigi*, actually a collection of three distinct texts: *Ajigi*, *Aji kunō* (阿字功能, *The

Efficacy of the Letter A*), and *Jōsangō shingon* (淨三業真言, *The Three Actions of Shingon*). The

first text, *Ajigi*, explains the Buddhist meaning of the first character—A—of the Sanskrit

language. It largely aligns with aforementioned concepts such as the principle of nonduality

within Sanskrit letters (specifically the letter A).[193]

The text following the *Ajigi* in the scroll is the *Aji kunō,* and expresses the method and

efficacy of the *a-ji kan* rite. The text explains three levels of blessings: a lower level, a middle

level, and the supreme level. In the lower level, for example, one can ensure the safe passing of

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[190] To date, there are no English texts on this work; however, there are at least four Japanese essays that discuss it (see bibliography).

[191] Sasaki Isamu, Terada Mamoru, Komatsubara Yūko, Umano Naoko. "*Ajigi* Picture Scroll (Property of Fujita Museum of Art): Introduction of the Materials (Reprint and Indexes)." *Kuntengo to kunten shiryō* (Hiroshima Daigaku Nihongoshi Kenkyūkai), No.109, p. 28. The Kujō family is a branch of the eminent Fujiwara clan. The owners of the scroll from the Heisei period on are detailed in: Komatsu, Shigemi. *Ajigi. Kegon gojūgosho emaki. Hokekyō emaki*. Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha. Zoku Nihon Emaki Taisei, vol. 10, 1984.

[192] Komatsu, Shigemi. *Ajigi. Kegon gojūgosho emaki. Hokekyō emaki*. Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1984. Zoku Nihon Emaki Taisei, vol. 10, p. 1. This essay goes on to say that an 1833 text states that it is a work of the Buddhist priest Jakuren (寂蓮法師, 1143-1202), who was also known as Fujiwara no Sadanaga (藤原定長). Originally intended to be the adopted heir of a Fujiwara, Jakuren became a monk when sons were produced. The 1833 text literally states that the *Ajigi* is a *Jakuren no e* (literally Jakuren's picture), which coincides with the assertion that the work is a late twelfth-century production, but since there is no record of Jakuren's skill at painting this is only an oral (therefore possibly inaccurate) transmission.

[193] I include the original Japanese text at the end of this chapter as well as my own English translation. In summary, the text describes the Sanskrit character A as the general principle of nonduality between Buddhas and mankind. It emphasizes the multifarious nature (polysemy) of the letter A by describing it as a symbol of this principle as well as stating that it is the body of the *bodaishin* (菩提身, see footnote 204 for detailed explanation of this term in the translation at the end of the chapter), and even the universal body of Dainichi Buddha. The last line of the scroll's *Ajigi* text states: この阿字はこれ胎 蔵界の大日如来の法界の身 也 (translation: This character A is the body of Taizōkai, Dainichi Nyōrai, and the Dharma Realm.)

a deceased person through the practice of the *a-ji kan*. In the uppermost level of the *a-ji kan*'s efficacy is the experience of arriving at the supreme perfect enlightenment. The first half of the last text, the *Jōsangō shingon*, elaborates on the meaning of this section's title and then explains that if one chants mantras, one will become pure through the power of the various Buddhas and will not fall to the worlds of hell, the animal realm, or the realm of the hungry spirits. The second half of the text explains the comfortable world (*anraku*)[194] of the Lotus Sutra and *nenbutsu* (念仏, prayers to Buddha) before going on to cite specific mantras. The text's focus on the meaning and efficacious nature of Sanskrit (here, specifically the letter A) points to the growing importance of Sanskrit as a visual feature of religious praxis outside the clergy community.

This is seen also in the two illustrated figures of the scroll, the only imagery that accompanies the text (figures 6 and 19). The first figure is a nun and thus a member of the Buddhist clergy. The second figure of a male is a court noble.[195] The image source for these figures performing the *a-ji kan* is a combination of religious iconographic imagery and imagery from *monogatari* scrolls.[196] The materials for the scroll, aside from being very luxurious and thus creating merit for the patron, are appropriate for the content. The radiance of Dainichi Buddha, the "Great Sun" Buddha, is reflected in the extravagant use of gold and silver as part of the image's ground, representing the universal radiance (presence) of Dainichi Buddha, whose association with the Sanskrit letter A was established at the beginning of the scroll. In this way, the work explicitly conveys the nonduality of Dainichi Buddha with the world—Dainichi Buddha (the Dharmakaya) existing even within a single dust particle. Japanese sources have

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[194] This is notable since the *Heike nokyō* Sanskrit frontispiece is from the chapter titled *Anraku*. This link is something to be explored in the future.

[195] Sasaki Isamu, Terada Mamoru, Komatsubara Yūko, Umano Naoko. "*Ajigi* Picture Scroll (Property of Fujita Museum of Art): Introduction of the Materials (Reprint and Indexes)." *Kuntengo to kunten shiryō* (Hiroshima Daigaku Nihongoshi Kenkyūkai), No.109, p. 27. The original Japanese from this essay identifies the male figure as 公卿像 (*kuge zō*, Eng.: figure of court noble).

[196] Ibid, p. 27, who cites Komatsu, Shigemi. *Ajigi. Kegon gojūgosho emaki. Hokekyō emaki*. Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1990. Zoku Nihon Emaki Taisei, vol. 7.

described many aspects of the scroll (including the figures and their sources), but sustained

attention to the visual characteristics can provide insight to Sanskrit's (or at least the *a-ji*'s)

position in twelfth-century Buddhism. The text throughout the rest of the scroll, both before and

after the figures, seems to float on a plane in front of this radiance, reaching out to the

viewer/reader. The figures alternate between coming forward and moving back in space. They

are situated on top of the ground in some areas, but by having some of the metallic flakes/dust

overlap their bodies they are also pushed back into the space, so that they appear enveloped by

the presence of this radiance, the Dainichi Buddha. In this way, they are immersed in the world

of enlightenment. This is also implied by the visibility of the enthroned Sanskrit character A

located in the traditional site of the *kokoro* (心).[197] Both visually and textually, this scroll

embodies the monastic and, by this time, aristocratic belief in the Sanskrit letter A's efficacy as a

tool to achieve merit and possibly enlightenment.

Although these examples illustrate a familiarity among the higher social classes with the

use of Sanskrit characters in religious praxis, even those in the lower strata of society were at

least exposed to Sanskrit characters even if they did not fully understand their role in

Buddhism.[198] The *Hōjōki* (方丈記, *The Ten Foot Square Hut*), a famous Japanese literary work

written in 1212 by Kamo no Chōmei (鴨長明, circa 1153-1216), contains evidence of Sanskrit's

exposure among the various social classes of the then-capital Heian-kyō (Kyōtō). This text

details the turmoil of the late twelfth century when many disasters befell the capital, among them

earthquakes, fire, famine, and death. Death ran rampant throughout the city and the number of

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[197] This word is sometimes translated as heart or mind, but these terms alone are not completely accurate, as *kokoro* has a nuanced meaning that encompasses the English terms of heart, mind, and spirit.

[198] Bogel stated in her book, "*What one saw* in ancient Japan depended very much on who one was—courtier, monk, empress." (Bogel, *With a Single Glance*, p. 163). As she elaborated in this section, more work can be done in using literary sources to explore the visual world of the people of ancient Japan (though her comments are centered more specifically on visuality and *how* the ancient Japanese saw rather than *what*, which is highly relevant to my discussion here).

bodies became so great that the corpses piled up on the streets of the city. A section describing a

drought and resulting famine around 1181 mentions Sanskrit:

> "The Abbot Ryūgyō of the Ninnaji, grieving for the countless people who were dying,
> gathered together a number of priests who went about writing the letter A on the forehead
> of every corpse they saw, thus establishing communion with Buddha."[199]

> 仁和寺に、慈尊院の大藏卿隆曉法印といふ人、かくしつゝ、かずしらず死ぬるこ
> とをかなしみて、ひじりをあまたかたらひつゝ、その死首の見ゆるごとに、額に
> 阿字を書きて、縁をむすばしむるわざをなむせられける。[200]

This account provides a rare kernel of evidence that the capital's citizens, regardless of social

class, were at the very least exposed to the Sanskrit letter A and understood it as a powerful

visual form that was inherently linked to the essence of the Buddha. Although a massive

undertaking, a comprehensive study of literature from Kūkai's time to the Kamakura period

might uncover more examples.

To conclude this chapter, I want to reiterate that when Kūkai returned from China and in

the decades following the use of Sanskrit in non-textual forms of visual culture seems to have

been limited to the monastic community (mostly Mikkyō). Objects incorporating non-textual

Sanskrit were, for example, things like the rather mysterious single *hō mandara* listed in Kūkai's

Catalog, ritual implements such as vajra bells placed at a ritual altar, reliquaries held by temples,

or works such as the Tōji Sanskrit slips. These objects functioned within the temple setting in

rituals that included only monks and deities. However, extant imagery and documentation from

as early as the first half of the eleventh century illustrates the dissemination of Sanskrit from the

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[199] Keene, Donald. *Anthology of Japanese Literature: From the Earliest Era to the Mid-nineteenth Century*. New York: Grove Press. 1955, p. 203. Keene provides background for this sentence in footnote 6 on the same page: "In Shingon Buddhism, of which the Ninnaji was a center, great significance is given to *A*, the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet, the beginning of things, and it is believed that all afflictions can be ended by contemplating this letter."
[200] This is the original Japanese for the English excerpt directly preceding. Shirane, Haruo. *Classical Japanese Reader and Essential Dictionary*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2007, p. 7. The *Hōjōki* text printed in this book is based on Nishio Minoru. *Hōjōki, Tsurezuregusa.* Nihon koten bungaku taikei 30 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957), pp. 23-45.

temple monk to the individual (aristocratic) laity, seen in the use of Sanskrit in works commissioned by aristocrats (such as individualized mandala) at the urging of ordained monks, who themselves were incorporating a new sort of visual literacy.

This practice seems only to have increased through the twelfth century.[201] Such an increase likely prompted the creation of a new position in the Buddhist hierarchy of master and student: a master of Sanskrit.[202] This role would be accompanied by a ritual through which a monk would receive such a title—the *shittan kanjō*. Additionally, by at least the end of the twelfth century, as the excerpt of the *Hōjōki* suggests, even the lower social classes recognized Sanskrit as an efficacious Buddhist tool.[203] Kūkai did not simply import a visual culture that utilized Sanskrit visually rather than textually, but he imported the theoretical basis via his texts relating to the *hō mandara* for such a use of Sanskrit. Due to this basis, the *hō mandara* and the brief exploration I have here provided into its background established a precedent for changing meanings and functions in the use of Sanskrit. With this precedent in mind, turning to Sanskrit's spread to other arenas such as syncretic practice in the medieval period (seen in the *miya mandara* of the next chapter) will contribute to the broader study of trends within Sanskrit use in Japanese visual culture.

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[201] Throughout her book, Bogel discusses Kūkai's introduction of a new visual language, the notion of the "logic of similarity," meaning there is no differentiation between sign and signified; they are one and the same—in short, within Esoteric Buddhism, as Hank Glassman pointed out in a recent CAA review on Bogel's book, "there can be no such thing as a symbol." Glassman, Hank. "Hank Glassman. Review of "With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icons and Early Mikkyō Vision" by Cynthia [SIC] J. Bogel." *CAA Reviews*, 2012.

[202] During the twelfth century (when works such as the *Ajigi* and *Heike nōkyō* were made), as some powerful court families experienced decreased wealth and power many aristocratic sons were tonsured and dispersed to important temples. Perhaps it is not surprising that even highly specialized (esoteric) visual forms would find their way to the realm of the court, traveling within families (from monks to their powerful, courtly relatives).

[203] Many religious practices were being popularized around this time among commoners (especially in the centuries following the *Hōjōki*). One example is the work of the monk Ippen (一遍, 1234–1289), who propagated the *nenbutsu* (念仏, practice of reciting the Buddha's name), specifically a sort of dancing *nenbutsu*, among Japanese citizens of all social classes.

阿字義

此阿字は ・ 是十方三世の ・ 諸佛と ・ 一切

衆生との ・ 無二無別の ・ 本性清淨

の ・ 理なり ・ 是則 ・ 菩提心の ・ 躰なり

是則 ・ 法身如来なり ・ この阿字は ・

一切法の ・ 寂静の ・ 躰にして ・ 本不

生不滅なり ・ この阿字は ・ これ ・ 胎

蔵界の ・ 大日如来の ・ 法界の ・ 身

也

Ajigi

This character A is the principle of the inherent pure nature that the various Buddhas of all

directions and the three existences [past, present, and future] together with all living things

[mankind] are one and not different [nondual]. That is to say, this [the *a-ji*] is the body of the

bodaishin [Skt.: *bodhicitta*].[204] Namely, this [*bodaishin/a-ji*] is the Dharmakaya [Dharma body]

[205] of Dainichi Nyōrai. This character A is the quiescent body of all Dharma enlightenment and

is neither arising nor ceasing. This character A is the body of Taizōkai, Dainichi Nyōrai, and the

Dharma Realm.

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[204] From *bodhi* (awakening, or enlightenment) and *cit*(*ta*) (mind, or consciousness). *Bodaishin* is the intention to reach enlightenment and benefit all living beings.

[205] "Body" can be misunderstood to be a physical, material body. Dharmakaya is formless. It can be a translation of "essence" as in "essence and function," which is how Chinese commentaries used the term.

Chapter Three: The Miya Mandara

The visual and textual evidence presented in Chapter Two demonstrates that, by at least the end of the eleventh century, Sanskrit not only began to acquire a more systematized role in praxis, but moved from use in exclusive monastic imagery to a broader audience. Although Sanskrit almost certainly expanded first from the monastery to the realm of the secular elite,[206] Sanskrit characters were soon recognizable among the various classes as visually efficacious.[207] The expansion of Sanskrit use in visual culture is difficult to track partly because of localized factors that contributed to its use in a new form. This chapter explores the use of Sanskrit in shrine mandala, or *miya mandara*.[208] A look at such *miya mandara* via the case study of an early thirteenth-century *Kasuga miya mandara* now in Tokyo's Nezu Museum (春日宮曼荼羅, figure 20; hereafter referred to as the Nezu *Kasuga mandara*) offers a chance to dissect some of the complex factors of Sanskrit's dissemination.

Featured prominently at the top of the hanging scroll painting are four discs within which Sanskrit characters are enthroned on a lotus pedestal. This depiction of characters is, by now, recognizable as a standard way to depict the *shūji* form of the deity. Hovering directly above the central architectural structures (the main shrine), the location of the Sanskrit within the image indicates the change in visual function. In *hō mandara* the Sanskrit characters are solely depictions of Buddhist deities. Conversely, the Sanskrit characters in *miya mandara* also encompass associations with other, localized deities—as I will explore in this chapter through analysis of the Nezu *Kasuga mandara*. In studying *miya mandara* both generally and in the

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[206] As noted in the previous chapter, many of the high-ranking monks of the powerful temples were sons of the nobility so such a shift is not surprising.

[207] For example, the aforementioned excerpt from the *Hōjōki* provides textual evidence that the use of Sanskrit characters as a Buddhist ritual tool of monks on the streets of the capital was witnessed by the capital's citizens in the late twelfth century.

[208] For a brief description of *miya mandara* and its history (in Japanese), see: Nezu Bijutsukan. *Kasuga no fūkei: uruwashiki seichi no imeiji*. Tōkyō: Nezu Bijutsukan, 2011, pp. 104-111.

specific Kasuga work, it is possible to discern overall trends in the use of Sanskrit in the broader

medieval arena of visual culture by identifying possible factors surrounding Sanskrit's adoption

in works that are extremely localized. Due to the specificity of circumstances regarding these

miya mandara, there must be a more nuanced look at how the Sanskrit functions within them.[209]

Within *miya mandara*, the meaning and functions of Sanskrit evolved yet again in Japanese

visual culture.

Kasuga Shrine's legendary origins and relationships

The *Kasuga miya mandara* is a hanging scroll that, at its most basic, depicts the topography of

Nara's Kasuga Shrine (hereafter Kasuga). In order to follow a basic visual analysis of this scroll,

which is laden with shrines to the deities of Kasuga, it is necessary to "frame" this work with a

brief history of Kasuga and its deities. As scholar Royall Tyler outlines, the origins of the

Kasuga Shrine are seen through two lenses: first, the canonical version laid out in the various

legends about the shrine throughout time and second, the origins reconstructed by modern

scholars.[210] While the latter may be more accurate, the former is more relevant in addressing the

cultural milieu for works of art from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By this time, the

legends had become the accepted history of the Kasuga Shrine. In fact, the *Kasuga gongen genki*

emaki (春日権現験記絵巻, Tales of the Miracles of the Divinities of Kasuga [Shrine] Picture

Scroll; hereafter referred to as *Genki*) set forth many of these miraculous legends in the first

years of the fourteenth century—the century after the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* was created.

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[209] There are many versions of *miiya mandara* as well as *mandara* that, although not called *miya mandara*, are very similar. For example, in the catalogue mentioned in the previous footnote, twelve *Kasuga miya mandara* spanning the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries are illustrated with a variety of other *mandara* and mandala-like images.

[210] Tyler, Royall. *The Miracles of the Kasuga Deity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 46. Although Tyler, a literature scholar, does not generally discuss visual works, his compilation of the background (both legendary and historic) of the Kasuga Shrine is thorough and draws from many sources, including historical texts and modern Japanese scholarship. The following sections on the background of the Kasuga deity and Kasuga Shrine draw heavily from his work.

However, since many of the tales in the compilation existed in other texts before the *Genki*'s production, this handscroll set is relevant to thirteenth-century Kasuga (the Kasuga of the Nezu *miya mandara*).[211]   Such records—textual and visual—contribute to modern understanding of the medieval cultural beliefs surrounding Kasuga. As the *emaki* (絵巻, picture scroll) embodies such beliefs and motivations, I will outline the history of Kasuga Shrine and the Kasuga deity using *Genki*'s tales and Tyler's study of them as my source and then move to an analysis of the Sanskrit that appears in the image.

The creation of the shrine revolves around what is called the Kasuga deity and its interaction with the powerful Fujiwara clan. According to the *Genki*, the legendary origin of the Kasuga deity—the ranking deity Takemikazuchi no Mikoto (武甕槌大神, one of Kasuga Shrine's main four *kami* housed in its inner sanctuary)—is found in the famous cave episode of Amaterasu no Ōmikami (天照大御神, literally the great respected *kami* who shines in the heavens; hereafter referred to as Amaterasu).[212] *Genki* emphasizes the service given to Amaterasu by three of the main deities of Kasuga: Takemikazuchi, Futsunushi (経津主神), and Amenokoyane (天児屋命 or 天児屋根命). "It evokes particularly their glorious success in restoring light to the world in the episode of the Heavenly Rock Cave."[213] According to the

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[211] Ibid, pp. 38-40.

[212] Amaterasu, goddess of the sun, is one of the main *kami* of Japan, supposedly born of Izanagi no Mikoto's left eye. The very islands of Japan are said to have been born from the union of Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto. The stories involving these deities are described in the eighth-century texts *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. The characters for writing Izanagi differed slightly between the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* (*Kojiki*: 伊邪那岐; *Nihon shoki*: 伊弉諾). Likewise, Izanami no Mikoto can be written as either 伊弉冉尊 or 伊邪那美命. The oldest tales of Amaterasu are in the *Kojiki* (古事記, Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀, The Chronicles of Japan), both dating to the eighth century. Amaterasu is *kami* of both the sun and the universe as well as one of the highest ranking *kami*—if not *the* highest ranking *kami*—in Japan. It is especially notable that Amaterasu came to be associated as the Japanese face ("trace") of Dainichi Buddha, who is also associated with the sun and universe. Members of the imperial family are said to be her descendents on earth (this is stressed in particular regarding the Emperors).

[213] Tyler, *Miracles*, p. 47. Amaterasu's brother, Takehaya Susanoo no Mikoto (建速須佐之男命; hereafter referred to as Susanoo), born of the washing of Izanagi no Mikoto's nose, is the Shinto god of sea and storms and is seen as a

scroll, Amaterasu therefore bestows the name Kasuga no Daimyōjin (春日の大明神, guardian deity of Kasuga). Thereafter, the scroll mentions the *kami*'s descent to different locations in Japan.[214] After adding Himegami (姫神) to the ranks of the aforementioned three Kasuga deities, the scroll details Takemikazuchi's journey to Kasuga, where eventually the four main Kasuga deities are permanently located.[215] As Kasuga Shrine was the tutelary shrine of the Fujiwara family in Nara these Kasuga deities were also the domain of the Nakatomi/Fujiwara clan.[216] This sentiment, found also in *Genki*, is expressed clearly in Nakatomi no Tokifū's account from *Koshaki*[217] of a conversation with the Kasuga deity:

> …the Deity said further: "I will accept offerings set before Me by the Nakatomi Ueguri clan; but offerings set before Me by another clan, I will not accept. If you allow such offerings to be made, I will strike [the offender] with terror. At the same time, the trees

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tempestuous *kami*. In the well-known tale, Amaterasu and Susanoo have a great quarrel that prompts her to seclude herself from the world within a cave. The seclusion of the sun goddess causes darkness to fall over the land. Many *kami* attempted to lure her out of her cave, but she remained secluded. In the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, she is lured out by the dance (now known as *kagura*, or "god entertainment;" 神楽) of the goddess Ame no Uzume (天宇受売命 or 天鈿女命). Either work can be seen for the full tale.

[214] It is also relevant to note that this scroll describes the Nakatomi clan's descent to Japan (Nakatomi is the early clan name of the Fujiwara). Ibid, p. 48.

[215] Himegami is likely the *kami* originally worshipped by Mount Mikasa (*Mikasa yama*). As for the story recorded in this specific scroll, Tyler writes that until the mid-fourteenth century all tales emphasized Takemikazuchi, but starting from the latter half of the fourteenth century tales instead emphasize Amenokoyane; regardless of which deity is emphasized, all four deities are included in Kasuga origin tales as well as the *Kasuga miya mandara*. As the Nezu *miya mandara* was created in the thirteenth century, I relay the origin tale that emphasizes Takemikazuchi. More on the emphasis of Amenokoyane can be found in Tyler's book, *Miracles*, especially chapter eight. The location of the Kasuga Shrine was seen as a place of the *kami* (*shinji*, 神事) as early as 756. A map in the Shōsōin collection dates to 756 and illustrates the precincts surrounding Tōdai-ji. The modern location of Kasuga Shrine is shown on the map as a square, within which the characters for *shinji* are written. Shinji can be translated as "sacred place." Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, pp. 144-145.

[216] The Fujiwara clan is a branch of the Nakatomi clan, the founder receiving the title Fujiwara from the then emperor. The Nakatomi clan continued as a sacerdotal lineage of Kasuga Shrine while the Fujiwara clan continued from its inception as a strong political party, outranked only by the Imperial family, until around the end of the Heian period. The Fujiwara were still a powerful family in many respects and continued to regard Kasuga Shrine and the adjacent Kōfuku-ji as, respectively, their Nara tutelary shrine and temple.

[217] A record dated to 940, the *Koshaki* (古社記, An Ancient Record of the Shrine) allegedly contains an account of this event written by Nakatomi no Tokifū (731-818, 中臣ときふう; one of the aristocrats who is said to have accompanied Takemikazuchi to Kasuga) around the year 780. On the back of this text from "940" (written on used paper) is a part of a calendar with a date that corresponds to 1234 so this passage or its attribution may be spurious; however, it may also be a copy of an earlier work. Tyler, *Miracles*, p. 47. As mentioned in the previous footnote, this work may date to either the tenth century or the thirteenth century.

on My mountain will die. When this news reaches the clansmen they will be overcome with fear, for they will know that I have ascended to the empyrean, and am gone…"[218]

Yet, the Fujiwara did not have complete control over Kasuga Shrine.[219] To more fully understand the dynamics of Kasuga's power in the medieval period and thus the impact and intentions of Kasuga images, one must also consider Kōfuku-ji (興福寺), the tutelary Buddhist temple of the Fujiwara adjacent to Kasuga Shrine.[220] It is hard to separate these two institutions because before the Meiji Restoration[221] they were more singular than separate—what Allan Grappard would call a multiplex.[222] Kōfuku-ji was created by or for Nakatomi no Kamatari (614-669, 中臣鎌足; also known as Fujiwara no Kamatari, 藤原鎌足), the founder of the Fujiwara clan.[223] One text states that he built a chapel in his residence in 657; however, another text associates the chapel's erection with his death in 669.[224] This chapel, moved with each relocation of the capital, was finally constructed by Kamatari's son Fuhito (659-720, 藤原不比等) as a proper temple when Heijō-kyō (平城京, modern-day Nara) was established as the

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[218] Ibid, p. 51. English translation of *Koshaki* by Tyler. This threat of the Kasuga deity's departure from Kasuga—and thus the death of the trees—is realized later in *Genki*. Such tales legitimized the Fujiwara's monopoly of the Kasuga deity's power.

[219] The head priests of Kasuga Shrine increasingly acted in their best interests and those of the Shrine, especially as they gained more power. There was also the issue of competitiveness between the Fujiwara and the Nakatomi, as I mention in a later footnote.

[220] Though dated, a good survey history of Kōfuku-ji can be found in Nagashima Fukutarō. "Kōfukuji no rekishi." *Bukkyō geijutsu*, no. 40. 1959.

[221] An example of the study of the separation of such institutions can be found in: Grapard, Allan G. "Japan's Ignored Cultural Revolution: The Separation of Shinto and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji ("Shimbutsu Bunri") and a Case Study: Tōnomine". *History of Religions*. 23 (3): 1984, pp. 240-265.

[222] Grapard, Allan G. "Institution, Ritual, and Ideology: The Twenty-Two Shrine-Temple Multiplexes of Heian Japan." *History of Religions*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Shintō as Religion and as Ideology: Perspectives from the History of Religions (Feb., 1988), pp. 246-269.

[223] Kamatari received the Fujiwara clan name from Emperor Tenji (天智天皇, 626-671) just before Kamatari's death. The *Shoku Nihongi* (続日本紀, complete in 797 and part of the Six National Histories of Japan) records an imperial order of 698 that distinguishes the Fujiwara from the Nakatomi (sacerdotal lineage). This distinction in the government structure established that the Fujiwara house would perform political duties and the Nakatomi sacerdotal lineage would perform liturgical duties. Grapard, Allan G. *The Protocol of the Gods: a Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p. 22.

[224] As cited in Tyler, *Miracles*, p. 68, these texts are respectively *Fusō ryakki* and *Kōfukuji ruki*.

capital. It was then called Kōfuku-ji and was strongly associated with the Hossō Buddhist (法相) tradition.[225]

Although the history of Kōfuku-ji and its complex relationships with various factions within the Buddhist establishment as well as the aristocracy is extremely rich, the link with Hossō is significant in relation to the Buddhist school's Chinese patriarch, Xuanzang. Later in this chapter, I will briefly mention the medieval return to Buddhist roots and precepts that encompassed a medieval Buddhist interest in India. Xuanzang is well known for having travelled throughout India and for being one of the few non-Indian monks who, as mentioned in Chapter One, achieved a sophisticated level of fluency in Sanskrit. The *Genjō sanzō e* (玄奘三蔵絵, *Xuanzang's Travels in India*, figure 21) handscrolls depict the life of Xuanzang from his birth in China, with large sections of the scrolls devoted to his travels within India, the original land of Buddhism. Furthermore, Kōfuku-ji seems to have been at least a Shingon temple ally in the ninth century.[226] In contrast to the animosity between Kōfuku-ji and Mt. Hiei,[227] the relationships between Kōfuku-ji and Shingon centers such as Tō-ji and Mt. Kōya were generally peaceful. In fact, there is a story in the *Kōfukuji ruki*[228] that concerns Kōfuku-ji's Nan'endō (南円堂, south circle hall, first built in 813) consecration by Kūkai. As Royall Tyler suggests,

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[225] Although Nara temples were generally acquainted with any Buddhist school circulating, most temples were particularly skilled in a certain area of Buddhist thought and practice—one might say they specialized in certain forms of Buddhism. The Hossō school of Buddhism was introduced to Japan in 654 by Dōshō (629-700, 道昭), who studied under its Chinese founder Xuanzang (Jp.: Genjō; mentioned in Chapter One). Kōfuku-ji became the center of Hossō studies, winning out over other temples such as Gangō-ji. It is significant to note that Kōfuku-ji had a large collection of texts related not only to the Hossō tradition, but also other traditions. This collection also, incidentally, contained many esoteric texts. Ibid, pp. 68-70. More on the transmission of Hossō to Kōfuku-ji can be found in Grapard, *Protocol*, pp. 64-65.

[226] Royall Tyler states that Kōfuku-ji was a Hossō and "at least equally a Shingon temple."

[227] Mt. Hiei was the center of Tendai Buddhism, the other popular new sect of Buddhism in the ninth century. The Nara schools (the Buddhist temples and schools that were prominent powers when Heijō-kyō was the capital) did not generally have peaceful relations with the Tendai school (and thus Mt. Hiei).

[228] Original Japanese found in Bussho Kankōkai (Japan). *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho*. Tōkyō: Meicho Fukyūkai, 1978, 84: 306. This work is a composite of works of various dates. The compilation was likely put together in the thirteenth century as stories in the collection date to at least as late as the mid-twelfth century.

regardless of the veracity of such a tale, it establishes that Shingon Buddhism had good standing at Kōfuku-ji by the time the *Kōfuku-ji ruki* was compiled in the late Heian period.[229] Of course by this time, Shingon's link with verbal and visual Sanskrit was well established. Although I would not go so far as to state that Kōfuku-ji's relationship with Shingon Buddhism (Mikkyō) was based on the temple's reverence for Xuanzang and his connection with India, it is clear that both Xuanzang and Mikkyō looked to India for Buddhism's roots and gave Sanskrit an understandably significant role in imported Buddhism. Buddhism's Indian roots (and the significant role of Sanskrit) are visually presented as the Buddhist deities in *shūji* form within the Nezu *Kasuga mandara*.

This was due in large part to the combination of esoteric and exoteric elements of Buddhism. Such a combination at one site was not novel and Kōfuku-ji is just one example. Kuroda Toshio (黒田俊雄) first discussed in 1979 an exoteric-esoteric system he called *kenmitsu taisei* (顕密体制). In the same year, Kuroda also delved further into a study of the concept of "shrine-temple power complexes (*jisha seiryoku* 寺社勢力)."[230] A large part of Kuroda's arguments published in the 1970s and early '80s center on questioning the popularized historical assumption that the medieval period brought about "New Buddhism" and created a historical model of New Buddhism versus Old Buddhism.[231] Kuroda clearly rejected such a model, establishing that many movements in the medieval period were actually revivals or

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[229] Tyler, *Miracles*, p. 74.

[230] Taira Masayuki. "The Legacy of Kuroda Toshio." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* , Vol. 23, No. 3/4 (Fall, 1996), p. 427. For Kuroda's article on *kenmitsu taisei*, see: "Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai." *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, pp. 413-547; reprinted in Kuroda Toshio. *Kuroda Toshio chosakushū*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan. 1994, pp. 45-182. For Kuroda on *jisha seiryoku* see: "Chūsei jisha seiryoku ron." *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, pp. 187-241; reprinted in Kuroda Toshio. *Kuroda Toshio chosakushū*. Kyōto-shi: Hōzōkan. 1994, pp 187-241. Allan Grapard's aforementioned term "multiplex" (coined in his 1988 article, cited earlier and in my bibliography) is synonymous with Kuroda's term "shrine-temple power complexes."

[231] For a brief, but good, English summary see also Teeuwen, Mark, and Fabio Rambelli. *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, pp. 4-6.

reinterpretations of the so-called Old Buddhism.[232] Indeed, for that reason Kuroda situated "Old

Buddhism with medieval religion"[233] and concluded that a new set of concepts was necessary to

understand medieval Buddhism. One of the concepts he set forth was *kenmitsu taisei.* As Taira

Masayuki has stated, despite flaws in Kuroda's theory, "[w]hat will remain, I think, is Kuroda's

basic insight that the concepts by which medieval religious history is analyzed must derive from

an understanding of the internal dynamics of medieval religion itself."[234] I do not want to

suggest that only his type of approach is beneficial and that the theory itself should be thrown

out—far from that, in fact. Aspects of the *kenmitsu taisei* theory have been questioned by

subsequent scholars[235] but overall its impact on the study of medieval Buddhism has been great.

In short, Kuroda's theory enabled scholars to push past the limitations of the previous notion that

medieval Buddhism was "New Buddhism" by revealing its continuities with Heian

esoteric/exoteric (*kenmitsu*) Buddhism. This in turn prompted questions related to the process of

and forces that contributed to a shift in *kenmitsu* Buddhism from the Heian period to the

Kamakura period.

During the Heian period, Shingon and Tendai Buddhism were the main channel

through which esoteric elements and theories travelled, influencing other Buddhist traditions and

secular culture. Over time, other channels developed. Shugendō (修験道)[236] was one such

channel, even if its roots pre-date systemized Esotericism.[237] Shugendō also played a part in

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[232] Old Buddhism can now be used as a term to describe pre-Kamakura Buddhism rather than a term that indicates any analytical difference, as Taira Masayuki states in his article on Kuroda Toshio.

[233] Taira Masayuki. "The Legacy of Kuroda Toshio." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* , Vol. 23, No. 3/4 (Fall, 1996), p. 431.

[234] Ibid, p. 432.

[235] Ibid. Scholars such as Imai Masaharu and Ienaga Saburō critiques Kuroda's work. Taira himself also discusses flaws in Kuroda's original *kenmitsu taisei* scholarship, though Taira admits that Kuroda's later work does mature and address some of these flaws.

[236] Mountain ascetic practice by itinerant monks that combined elements of Buddhism and what we now call Shinto.

[237] Grapard sees Shugendō as a socio-political system by the medieval period due in part to its relation to esoteric Buddhism via Shingon and Tendai beliefs of the sacrality of mountains. Grapard, "Multiplexes," p. 266.

Buddhism's incorporation of local deities. From the latter half of the Heian period onward, localized *kami*, such as the Kōya myōjin (高野明神), and various *gongen* (権現, avatars or incarnations) were incorporated as guardian deities to protect sacred lands, mainly mountains. Shugendō practitioners propagated belief in the protective nature of such gongen figures.[238] Due in part to Shugendō practices, medieval Buddhism can still be called *kenmitsu* Buddhism, though it differed from earlier *kenmitsu* Buddhism. Although the practices of Shugendō are hard to track with exactitude due to the itinerant nature of its practitioners, it is clear that the way of life for such Shugendō monks was syncretic—incorporating aspects of Buddhism (exoteric and esoteric) and indigenous mountain and *kami* beliefs.

By the medieval period large religious complexes had amassed large estates through donations by wealthy patrons and thus were established as prominent power-holders. Kasuga/Kōfuku-ji was one such estate.[239] "Consider, for example, that the Kasuga-Kofukuji multiplex was the largest landholder of Japan during the Kamakura period and governed at all levels the entirety of the province of Yamato."[240] The complexities of Kasuga Shrine and its Buddhist counterpart, Kōfuku-ji, are far too great to be addressed in a single chapter. However, with this background on the Shrine and its various relationships, we are now able to view the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* with a gaze more akin to that of a medieval viewer.

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[238] In fact in the late Heian and early Kamakura periods, these *kami* and *gongen* began to be depicted on hanging scrolls, often with a Sanskrit character accompanying them (figure 22). One example of such a figure is the well-known Zaō gongen (蔵王権現), Mount Kimpu's avatar and guardian deity, who has strong ties to Shugendō (often being seen as the protective deity of Shugendō itself). For more on Zaō and the relationship between Shugendō and such protective figures, see: Blair, Heather Elizabeth. *Peak of Gold: Trace, Place and Religion in Heian Japan.* Thesis (Ph.D., Dept. of Religion), Harvard University, 2008; Kurayoshi Hakubutsukan. *Zaō gongen ten: kaikan jūgo-shūnen kinen: tokubetsuten.* Kurayoshi-shi: Kurayoshi Hakubutsukan, 1989; and Teikoku Bijutsuin, Bijutsu Kenkyūjo (Japan), Tōkyō Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyūjo, and Tōkyō Bunkazai Kenkyūjo. *Bijutsu kenkyū*. Tōkyō: Bijutsu Konwakai, 1931, pp. 251-52.

[239] See the work of Royall Tyler or Allan Grapard for more information on (and nuanced analysis of) the power of Kasuga/Kōfuku-ji. This multiplex was able to establish a reign over its geographical area due to its large, powerful estate and at least in small part to the medieval rise in *sōhei* (僧兵, warrior monks).

[240] Grapard, "Multiplexes," p. 267.

The visual elements in the Nezu *Kasuga miya mandara*

Although the main focus of the image is clearly the enthroned *shūji* hovering above the main architectural structures, a visual analysis of the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* will allow the viewer to identify the structures depicted and discern the significance of the visual emphasis on the Sanskrit characters.[241] Although it is traditionally said that shrine topography images such as this *Kasuga miya mandara* were often viewed starting from the bottom, it is difficult to overlook the prominent Sanskrit letters at the top. Beginning at the bottom right, however, we see the *Sanjūhassho jinja* (三十八所神社). To the left of this structure, a herd of deer meander across the picture plane; deer are the paradigmatic symbol of the shrine, as they embody the *kami* messenger of the Kasuga god.[242] As they follow the deer, the viewer's eyes encounter the diagonal of the river, which directs the gaze up to the boundary of the middle court of principal shrines (*honsha chūin*, 本社中院). The composition of the fence is heavier on the left side, where a small shrine sits surrounded by its own enclosure. A small *torii* demarcates the entrance to this individual shrine, the *Enomoto jinja* (榎本神社). The flowering trees that tower over this shrine emphasize its small size. Moving along the fence to the right is the larger structure of the *nanmon* (南門), through which one could enter the middle court. This fence ends unrealistically to the right of the *nanmon*, disappearing into the surrounding landscape and thus directing the gaze to a larger shrine within its own enclosure. This is the *Wakamiya jinja* (若宮神社).

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[241] A slightly different visual analysis (more detailed in some respects), including discussion of color and material, can be found in: Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, pp. 151-152. The Nezu *Kasuga mandara* also provides an example of the sort of "editing" that can occur in creating an image of a location. Though I will not detail that aspect here, many other scholars do so, including ten Grotenhuis.

[242] Even today, deer are associated with Kasuga Shrine and the neighboring Kōfuku-ji; when visiting either of these sites in Nara, one still encounter such tame deer.

Once the viewer has taken in the detail of this architectural element, the surrounding trees direct the gaze upwards into an expanse of a landscape interrupted by a red fence (*tō en*, 稲垣) and the *niino hashi* (二位橋). The *Iwamoto jinja* (岩本神社)—a small, unassuming shrine— appears to the left directly beneath a multi-trunked tree. These three structures (the *tō en*, *niino hashi*, and *Iwamoto jinja*) are aligned on a horizontal axis across the picture plane. The trees that sprout from this axis direct the viewer's attention up the image to the visual focus of the hanging scroll: the four shrines dedicated to the main deities of the Kasuga Shrine complex and the enthroned Sanskrit above them. These four shrines comprise the *honden* (本殿). Hovering above the four structures of the *honden* are four disks within which Sanskrit characters are enthroned on a lotus pedestal.

The shrines and the accompanying *shūji* form deities are a visual depiction of the *honji-suijaku* (本地垂迹, "original forms of deities and their local traces") [243] concept that gained currency in the medieval period. These will be explained below. Continuing up the composition to the left edge of the picture plane is the *Mizuya jinja* (水神社). Two mountains reign over the entire image from the top of the scroll: in the front Mount Mikasa and behind it Mount Kasuga (*Kasuga yama*). Like many other similar hanging scrolls from this time period, this painting seems to embody a pilgrimage path.

In the medieval period, Buddhism became more accessible to the lower classes of society, as the content of new sects or practices suggest. [244] Where the upper, educated populace were interested in "literary and artistic interpretations of their god[s]," the lower classes focused more

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[243] Teeuwen, Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami*, p. 1.

[244] For example, the practice of *nenbutsu* was promoted to all social classes by itinerant preachers (Jp.: *hijiri*, 聖) such as Ippen (一遍, 1234-1289). For more on Ippen and the practice on the *nenbutsu* as an example of preaching across the social classes, see: Ippen, and Dennis Hirota. *No abode: the Record of Ippen*. Honolulu: University Of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

on the efficacy of the deities.[245] The worship of the lower classes focused on creating a

connection with the deity through prayer and pilgrimage. With the masses of worshippers

flocking to sites to ensure a response to their supplications there "grew a culture of

pilgrimage."[246] The elite, such as Emperors and high-ranking Fujiwara court members, had been

making pilgrimages to holy sites since the Heian period.[247] Although expensive images such as

the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* were neither created by nor for lower members of society they

nonetheless embody the broadly popular pilgrimage culture. As I mentioned, the Nezu *Kasuga*

mandara appears to chart a path that one "enters" from the bottom of the image. Following the

path through the land of the Kasuga Shrine, the viewer eventually encounters the innermost

shrine: the focal point of the four structures (*kami*) in the *honden* paired with the Sanskrit

characters. A pilgrim would expect to encounter holiness on the journey—whether the actual

deity or the sacred land inhabited by such a deity. As in a physical pilgrimage, when viewing the

Nezu *Kasuga mandara* the worshipper encounters (visually) the deity worshipped. If the gaze

continues to the top of the image, the worshipper has the potential to seemingly encounter

another land—or, rather, the mountain.

As Grapard states, "by the middle of the Heian period, a sacred geography had evolved

in Japan according to which a clear distinction was made between the plains (the world of the

secular) and the mountains (the world of the holy)."[248] During the medieval period, while

pilgrimage was flourishing, sacred space was becoming more defined, especially among

mountain ascetics (*yamabushi*, 山伏). There are many examples of the mandalization of

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[245] Thal, Sarah. *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: the Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573-1912*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 97. Thal focuses on the later centuries of a pilgrimage site, but addresses the culture of pilgrimage that began to develop as early as the Heian period and became more prominent in the medieval period.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Fujiwara no Michinaga (藤原道長, 966-1028) is one such example.
[248] Grapard, Allan G. "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions". *History of Religions*. 21 (3): 1982, p. 205.

space.[249] Grapard outlines the process by which smaller areas were mandalized, then larger and

larger areas until the whole of Japan could be envisioned as a paired Diamond and Womb

mandala.[250] From such concepts of mandalizing local areas grew works of art such as *miya*

mandara. In line with this concept, the localizing of the Buddhist Paradise occurred at Kasuga.

From as early as the twelfth century, Mount Mikasa was seen as a Buddhist Pure Land.[251] In the

Nezu *miya mandara*, the viewer travels the path through the Shrine, encounters the deities, and

then arrives at Mount Mikasa (possibly read as a Paradise, a land of the Gods).

Although we do not know much about the specific patron(s) of the Nezu *miya mandara*,

"it is known that Kasuga mandara were hung at Kōfukuji for certain rituals."[252] It is likely the

Nezu *Kasuga mandara* was produced in the Kōfuku-ji atelier.[253] This is key to understanding

the presence of Sanskrit on the work as Buddhist monks would have had access to the materials

needed to produce iconographically correct *shūji*. Other Kasuga mandara, some pairing the

Shrine with Kōfuku-ji and some pairing it with depictions of Buddhist Pure Lands, were owned

by various temples, including home chapels of the elite. For example, a subtemple of Nara's

Hasedera (長谷寺) owns the early fourteenth-century *Mandara of Kasuga and the Pure Land*

(figure 23), which illustrates Kasuga Shrine as the bottom half of the image with Amida

Buddha's Pure Land in the top half (ostensibly as Mount Mikasa). Such links to Kasuga among

temples other than Kōfuku-ji are evidence of the power and importance of the Kasuga/Kōfuku-ji

multiplex in the medieval period. The Hasedera, for example, was declared a dependent temple

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[249] Ibid for more on the defining of sacred space, mountains as they relate to spirituality, and the mandalization of space.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, p. 149.

[252] Ibid, p. 150, who cites Tyler, Susan C. *The Cult of Kasuga Seen Through its Art*. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992, pp. 105-106.

[253] Ten Grotenhuis mentions it was probable that most Kasuga mandara were created at the Kōfuku-ji atelier, where there were many painters skillful enough to create such fine works. The Nezu *miya mandara* employs the use of *urazaishiki* (裏財式 back painting) for the disks within which the Sanskrit characters appear. Ibid, pp. 150-152.

of Kōfuku-ji in the Kamakura period. The creation of such Kasuga mandara and their

distribution to Kōfuku-ji's subsidiary temples demonstrate the medieval cultural belief in the

multiplex as a sacred destination. The complex forces that contributed to this painting, in which

Shinto deities are depicted in Sanskrit form, are localized around the shrine; however, a closer

look at the use of Sanskrit in the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* shows that this work is indicative of

concepts being developed in medieval times.

The *honji-suijaku* concept at Kasuga

Scholars date the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, though the

majority of scholars agree that it was created in the early-thirteenth century.[254] The depiction of

layout and architecture, although not completely accurate,[255] illustrates the shrine as it existed

prior to the destruction that accompanied the civil war in Nara during the 1170s, which resulted

in the reconstruction of the Kasuga Shrine in 1178. If the painting was not done before this date,

then it was at least done very soon afterwards from institutional memory of the architecture pre-

civil war destruction. Another piece of evidence that supports the dating of the work to the early

thirteenth century is the use of the Sanskrit character Bo to signify the bodhisattva Fukūkenjaku

Kannon (不空拳弱観音), who was originally the *honji* for Kasuga's *kami*, Takemikazuchi (the

so-called *suijaku* of Fukūkenjaku Kannon).[256]

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[254] The following section draws from Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis' analysis of scholarship on this painting and her
study of the painting itself: Ibid, pp. 152-153.

[255] As the interest of this thesis is directed toward the use of Sanskrit in this work, I will not explore the Nezu
Kasuga mandara's selective depiction of layout further. However, the selective layout of this painting may well be
related to pilgrimage practices at the time or with specific rites.

[256] Although Fukūkenjaku Kannon (having been a tutelary deity of the Fujiwara since the seventh century) was the
original *honji* for Takemikazuchi, from the early Kamakura period, Sakyamuni was an alternate *honji* for the *kami*.
From the fourteenth century on, as Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis states, Sakyamuni appeared more frequently as the
honji than Fukūkensaku Kannon—Sakyamuni, a higher ranking deity in the Buddhist pantheon, was likely seen as
more appropriate for such a historically prominent family.

To understand not only the significance of this argument concerning the dating, but also the significance of the use of the Sanskrit characters, it is necessary to discuss the concept of *honji-suijaku*. The book *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, co-authored by Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, offers a concentrated study of the *honji-suijaku* concept.[257] Essentially, this concept establishes that the Buddhist deities are the *honji*, the original, and the *kami* are the *suijaku*, the Japanese trace or manifestation of the Buddhist deities. Although there are traces of this concept in early Japanese Buddhism, some of the earliest documented uses of the terms *honji* and *suijaku* as representative of the *honji-suijaku* concept occurred in the tenth century.[258] The practice of associating a Buddhist deity with a *kami* was quite widespread in the medieval period throughout the various schools of Buddhism. For example, Dainichi Buddha (emphasized in the Shingon sect, as previously mentioned) was appropriately associated with the *kami* Amaterasu.[259] In the case of the Nezu *Kasuga mandara*, the *honji* are represented by the enthroned Sanskrit characters. Although there are no anthropomorphic figures to represent the *kami* (*suijaku*), it is not unusual to show these deities in a variety of forms. This is partially attributable to the idea of *shintai* (神体). In fact, representations show the Kasuga *kami* in a variety of forms such as a mirror or sakaki branch (figure 24). Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the *suijaku* paired with the Sanskrit *honji* in the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* are the shrine buildings of the *honden*.

In order from right to left, the pairings are as follows: the *kami* Takemikazuchi with the *shūji* form of Fukūkenjaku Kannon (Sanskrit character Bo), Futsunushi with the *shūji* form of Yakushi Buddha (薬師; Sanskrit character Bai), Amenokoyane with the *shūji* form of the

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[257] Teeuwen, Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami*.

[258] Ibid, pp. 15-21. The first known usage of the term *suijaku* with reference to kami is in a document from Dazaifu in Kyūshū, dated to 937. This book also has a detailed discussion of the development and use of the terms *honji* and *suijaku*.

[259] Both are deities associated with radiance and the sun. Both are high-ranking deities.

bodhisattva Jizō (地蔵; Sanskrit character Ka), and Himegami with the *shūji* form of the

bodhisattva eleven-headed Kannon (*Jūichimen Kannon*, 十一面観音; Sanskrit character Kya).[260]

Although the painting gives the basic units of the Kasuga Shrine, the emphasis of the

composition is on the *honden* and the accompanying *shūji* deities. The shrines in the *honden* are

represented larger than the rest of the structures, regardless of where they are situated spatially.

The emphasis given to them in scale is not the only indication of their superiority. The viewer

still sees them from slightly above, yet they are presented much more head-on than the rest of the

structures, giving a better view to the front of the shrines. Due to such a straightforward view of

these main structures, it is easy to discern the black lacquer offertory trays placed before the

doors of each shrine. The pigments have faded, but originally these shrine doors were colored a

vibrant green that would have emphasized the dark trays.[261] Similarly, the *shūji* are presented

frontally to the viewer, and against what would have been the bright, vibrant white of the disks

stood the darkly inked Sanskrit characters that are simultaneously static on their lotus pedestals

and full of movement in the graceful swoops of a calligraphic hand. The gaze follows the

energetic strokes of the characters, moving from one character to another and circling even

within the single white disks that were outlined in cut gold leaf.

Similar to the use of Sanskrit characters in the *hō mandara* or the *a-ji kan* imagery, the

Sanskrit in this painting references a concept that is polysemic in nature; however, in this work

the *shūji* is more straightforwardly the signifier of the Buddhist deity, the *honji*. The deeper

meaning to be realized here is that the *kami* and the Buddhist deities are one and the same. A

medieval text stated, "before deluded people they appear as kami; before enlightened people they

appear as buddhas. Being originally one and the same, the distinction between kami and buddhas

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[260] Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, p. 152.
[261] Ibid, p. 152. Ten Grotenhuis provides a detailed explanation of the materials used throughout this painting. This paragraph draws from her explanation.

depends exclusively on the difference between delusion and enlightenment."[262] Indeed, all three

works (*hō mandara*, the material focus of the *a-ji kan*, and the Nezu *miya mandara*) have the

broader meaning of nonduality.

Yet, the nonduality has changed from a cosmological nature to associations and

localizations of originally "foreign" deities to "native" deities.[263] Furthermore, in contrast to the

hō mandara and *a-ji kan* imagery, that deeper meaning is not realized through the depiction of

the *shūji* alone, but rather through its pairing with depictions of *kami* (seen in the architectural

structures). The Nezu *miya mandara* essentially illustrates the original "face" of the localized

kami. This leads to the interesting observation that this original "face" was not shown as a face

at all. Rather than the anthropomorphic figure of the Buddhist deity, the *shūji* form was

chosen.[264] We may never know with certainty why the *shūji* form was utilized, but the fact that

it was provides interesting points of discussion and perhaps a way to understand the nuances of

medieval Buddhism as it relates especially to *kenmitsu*. The choice to use the *shūji* form could

conceivably be related to the depiction of the *kami* in non-anthropomorphic form. As I have

demonstrated, by the thirteenth century the *shūji* form was also recognizable as a Buddhist

icon—the Buddhist deity itself. It is also possible that the use of Sanskrit characters to represent

the true form of the local *kami* is related to a deeper movement—the revival of the Buddhist

precepts and the concept of India as the root of Japanese Buddhism. I believe that the intentions

behind the use of the *shūji* form are, as is the case in many situations, a combination of such

reasons. Certainly, presenting the Buddhist *honji* in non-anthropomorphic forms resonates with

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[262] Teeuwen, Rambelli, *Buddhas and kami*, p. 20, who cites *Kami honji no koto*, quoted in Imahori Taitsu. *Jingi shinkō no tenkai to Bukkyō*. Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1990, p. 26.

[263] These terms are somewhat problematic since by this time Buddhism was entrenched in Japanese culture and arguably no longer "foreign."

[264] I would like to note here that there are *miya mandara* that do indeed illustrate the anthropomorphic forms of the Buddhist deities paired with the *kami* (often also in anthropomorphic form).

traditional views on Shinto deities (which could take many different forms such as trees, rocks, etc.) while also providing a visual link to Buddhism's roots in India. And, perhaps the simplest reason, an increased popularity of Sanskrit in non-textual objects likely caused its use to spread to other forms.

Bringing far off lands closer: the search for Indian roots

Starting in the late Heian period and moving into the medieval period, Heijō-kyō (modern day Nara) experienced a movement to revive the Buddhist precepts (Jp.: *kairitsu fukkō undō*, 戒律復興運動). This revival movement is an example of medieval Japan (specifically Nara in this case) looking to earlier roots (in this case a return to strict precepts).[265] In the process of attempting to recover Buddhism's roots, a physical connection between India and Japan was sometimes sought, bypassing China through which Buddhism was first introduced to Japan. Grapard discusses the practice of linking Japanese sacred sites to India:

> What I call manipulation of space is the phenomenon of crediting to some sacred spaces in Japan a foreign origin in order to explain the places as residences of the original nature of the divinities and to increase their prestige. We are told in many texts that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, having come to Japan, remained there in the form of Shinto divinities, and that this was possible only because they had brought with them their residences, the mountains.[266]

Not only were the *kami* the *suijaku* of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (the *honji*), but texts and likely verbal transmissions established topographic features of Japan as originating from India. There are various other examples from medieval Japan of the quest for a link to

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[265] Deeper research into this movement and other medieval movements that look to earlier roots (especially earlier Buddhist roots that link back to India) will be extremely fruitful in studying the increased use of Sanskrit as a visual element in medieval Japan. For more information on the beginning of the precept revival movement, see the following Japanese article: "The Early Movements for the Restoration of the Precepts in Nara during the Late Heian Period." *Indian Philosophy and Buddhist Studies Research*. Department of Indian Philosophy and Buddhist Studies, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, University of Tokyo, 1998, pp. 71-84. This article outlines the major figures contributing to the movement at the end of the Heian period.

[266] Grapard, "Flying Mountains," p. 218.

India. Monks such as Myōe (明恵, 1173-1232), who was an advocate for "Old Buddhism" and supporter of the Buddhist precepts revival movement, wished to travel to India. [267] He twice attempted to do so, but was instructed by the Kasuga deity to remain in Japan.[268] This story remained popular in various formats. For example, in the Noh play *Kasuga Ryūjin*, of uncertain authorship from around the fifteenth century, the reason stated for the Kasuga deity's instructions to Myōe stem from the fact that those sacred spaces (in China and India) can be found in Japan at Kasuga.[269] With the medieval interest in drawing links between India and Japan and reviving "Old Buddhism," it is unsurprising that the handscrolls illustrating Xuanzang's travels noted previously also date to the Kamakura period. This set of scrolls emphasized Kōfuku-ji's link to the great master who studied in the holy land of the historical Buddha (Jp.: Shaka, 釈迦) and glorified the Chinese founder of the Hossō school.[270] In other words, the *Genjō sanzō e* handscroll provides subtle evidence of medieval Nara's interest in harkening back to India.[271] These scrolls situated Xuanzang in a lineage of direct transmission of the Buddhist teachings from India. The scrolls, held by Kōfuku-ji, served to legitimize the temple as an inheritor of Xuanzang's Hossō Buddhism that originated in India, thus establishing Kōfuku-ji's link to the foreign land.

In light of these various movements aimed at establishing Indian roots and rediscovering an earlier, uncorrupt Buddhism (whether such a version of "Old Buddhism" ever existed or not), the choice to depict the *honji* of the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* in *shūji* form takes on a new dimension. Besides illustrating the period's belief in the *honji-suijaku* concept, the painting

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[267] Tyler, *Miracles*, p. 67.

[268] Scrolls 17 and 18 of the *Genki* handscroll set depict such scenes of Myōe.

[269] Grapard, "Flying Mountains," p. 219.

[270] Due to similarities in style and execution, this scroll set was likely painted by the same artist who painted the *Genki*, Takashina no Takakane (高階隆兼, fl. 1309-1330). Wong, Dorothy C. "The Making of a Saint: Images of Xuanzang in East Asia". *Early Medieval China.* 2002 (1), p. 54.

[271] Incidentally, the rising pilgrimage culture is also reflected in this set of scrolls, as Dorothy Wong states: "Once in India, he [Xuanzang] is portrayed making pilgrimages to all the sacred sites of Buddhism." Ibid.

establishes a visual link to India. Rather than using the anthropomorphic figures of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas—which had been Sinicized and fully adopted and adapted into Japanese visual culture much earlier—the original "face" of the deities is depicted in a form that, while recognizable by this time, inherently evoked some sense of Other (Other language, Other country as origin, etc.). Sanskrit characters in Japan were only widely legible as a visual language. In Buddhist visual culture, they were powerful forms of the deity, recalling the efficacious nature of the deity (through mantra and previous uses of Sanskrit characters such as that mentioned in the *Hōjō-ki*).

To conclude, in the Japanese medieval period the use of Sanskrit characters non-textually gained different meanings. My goal in this chapter has been to give sustained attention to one individual occurrence (the Nezu *Kasuga mandara*) in order to provide a basis for understanding broader trends in the dissemination of Sanskrit. It is clear that concepts of polysemy were still very much a part of the *shūji* form of the deity as seen in the *miya mandara*. Yet, the goal in illustrating this polysemic nature of the deity differed from the overall message of the works discussed in the previous chapter. The localized circumstances of the Nezu *miya mandara* reveal that the use of Sanskrit characters to depict deities within the painting were prompted by intentions that differed from those prior visual and iconic uses of Sanskrit. Unlike the *a-ji kan* imagery and the *hō mandara*, the emphasis here is not quite on nonduality (though it is in essence one possible result), but rather on establishing localized manifestations of Buddhism's original Indian deities. This is done by pairing two forms of what, in the *honji-suijaku* concept, were the same deity.

In the Nezu *Kasuga mandara*, the pairing of the enthroned *shūji* forms and the structure of the *honden* visually link the Buddhist divinities and the *kami*, presenting two "faces" for each

deity. Other *miya mandara* that incorporate *shūji* sometimes show three forms of the deity: the *shūji* form, the anthropomorphic Buddhist form, and the anthropomorphic *kami* form (often depicted as a noble court individual). The fourteenth-century *Sanno miya mandara* is one such example. In works like this, the polysemy of the sign envelops three forms for a single deity (a single signified). In the *Sanno miya mandara* the *shūji* are on the top row and below are, respectively, the rows of the anthropomorphic Buddhist deities and *kami*. In an interpretation of hierarchy, the *shūji* are in the position of prominence. Alternately, the middle row of Buddhist deities in human-like forms act as an intermediary between the *kami* forms and what can be seen as the essence (the seed) of the Buddhist divinities, the *shūji*. Regardless of the layout of *shūji* within the *miya mandara*, the Sanskrit characters function no less as deities and reminders of the concept of polysemy and the link to Buddhism's origin country. Essentially, for the medieval Japanese such *miya mandara* created an invisible (or rather painted) link between *there* and *here* (between the land of the Historical Buddha and Japan)—an appropriate goal for a work produced and housed in a city where contemporaneous movements to return to the roots of Buddhism in India were prevalent.

Conclusion

In the Meiji period (1868-1912), the emperor was restored to power after centuries of rule by military elites. With the Meiji Restoration came the persecution of Buddhism as a religion of foreign origin (despite all previous efforts illustrating Japan's inherent ties to this origin). In the face of such disestablishment, Buddhists de-emphasized as much as possible those foreign aspects of their religion. Van Gulik posits that it is partially for this reason that *shittangaku* (the study—originally sectarian—of the history of Sanskrit) was not more prominent in the modern period and remains understudied (though since Van Gulik's 1956 study, that situation is changing, most notably with the work of Rambelli). Using the *hō mandara* and the *miya mandara* as case studies, this thesis began to address the trajectory of Sanskrit use within Japanese visual culture; however, there are many more objects depicting Sanskrit that need to be examined in light of new research within the disciplines of visual studies, religious studies, and *shittangaku*.[272] I have demonstrated that the visual study of these works is lacking, and those that are studied are often chosen for other reasons, such that the Sanskrit aspect is given short shrift, along with wider possible implications of the use of Sanskrit. The *miya mandara* is but one such case in point.

As I have illustrated, Sanskrit underwent a transformation as it travelled through China to Japan, changing from an ordinary system of language with normal grammatical structures to a visual and ritual system of symbols. Just as it transformed while moving eastward, it likewise transformed in the centuries following its introduction to Japan. The quantity of Heian works with Sanskrit still extant today is much smaller than those left from Kamakura period and later. While this is understandably a natural consequence of the more rapid deterioration or loss of

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[272] In the scholarship on Sanskrit, these disciplines often disregard one another. To fully comprehend the significance of Sanskrit in Japanese visual culture, it is necessary to study works using approaches from all three disciplines.

older works, there is another much less anticipated reason for the much larger amount of medieval work incorporating Sanskrit. There is enough evidence to conclude that Sanskrit use within visual culture did, indeed, increase in the medieval period. Starting with the end of the Heian period and moving into the Kamakura period, there are a greater variety of objects on which Sanskrit can be found (not only physically extant objects, but also textual references to such objects). It logically follows that a new practice will grow to be utilized more often. Furthermore, a study of specific examples and the significance of Sanskrit in such localized works uncovers yet another transformation of Sanskrit within Japan. While still a visual and ritual "language" that continued to partake in ideas of polysemy, Sanskrit characters took on other connotations than those originally assigned by Mikkyō teachings.

As noted in Chapter One, before Kūkai's importation of new objects and ideas in 806, Sanskrit was used textually in sutras and recorded mantras, albeit very infrequently. The power of words is well noted in Japanese culture, as seen throughout time in concepts such as *kotodama*. Even though the term *kotodama* was not used in relation to Buddhism, specifically Shingon, until the Edo period (as mentioned in the introduction), the presence of the *kotodama* concept among secular literature does indicate a cultural belief in words as repositories of supernatural power— at the very least, it illustrates an acknowledgment of the power of words (text, language). Aside from all of the examples of *shūji* forms of deities, there are other examples showcasing the belief in the power of words. For example, in a twelfth-century scroll of the Lotus Sutra, each character of the text is enthroned on a lotus pedestal within a moon disk as if a deity (figure 25). In the medieval period, important phrases could likewise be enthroned and presented as an icon (*honzon*; figure 26).[273] Although I did not discuss them in this thesis, like the *kotodama* concept,

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[273] This work shows the *nenbutsu* phrase on a lotus pedestal; works such as these can be tied with written texts (for example, those by Ippen) to explore a semiotic nature akin to *shūji honzon*.

they are representative of a cultural outlook that existed at least from the eighth century toward words, which surely contributed to the visual dissemination of Sanskrit.

Perhaps it was due in part to this outlook and the already prevailing belief in mantra's talismanic power that Kūkai's importation of works where Sanskrit was featured as a nontextual, visual element was quickly accepted and adopted. The pre-existing belief in the power of the spoken word (mantra) was transferred to the written forms that Kūkai emphasized. Early instances of this fledgling practice can be seen in the Tōji Sanskrit slips. With such works, the growing popularization of Sanskrit as icon (evident in records of the eleventh century as noted in Chapter Two) seemed to establish a need for Sanskrit masters within the Buddhist hierarchy. The rite that conferred such a title utilized the *ryōbu hō mandara*, re-appropriating it from the realm of aristocratic worship.[274] Although at this point we do not know for sure when this rite (the *shittan kanjō*) was established due to the lack (or ambiguity) of extant records, it seems likely that it was during the twelfth century or later when *kanjō* ceremonies were more widespread in various areas of culture.[275]

The original imagery of Sanskrit characters on objects from Shingon Buddhism such as the *hō mandara* were mainly a didactic tool for monks and elite to aid in discovering truth and banishing ignorance (in a way, a form of *hōben*, or skillful means, until a higher understanding was reached). Over the centuries, these characters were adopted and adapted for uses that still resonate with *hōben*—not for overall enlightenment, but rather for understanding various other concepts such as the relationship between indigenous deities and the pantheon of Buddhist deities. Such is the case in the Nezu *miya mandara*, where the characters portray the nonduality of Buddhist deities and native *kami* as well as visually illustrate a link between the localized

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[274] Despite this, we can conclude from the continued variations of such mandalas that the *ryōbu hō mandara* remained in use among aristocrats.
[275] Perhaps further studies into the *hō mandara* may shed light on this.

deities (and regions) of Japan and the original Buddhist deities (and regions) of India. The adaptability of Sanskrit as a form of *hōben* and a symbol of power endowed with soteriological efficacy likely spurred the dissemination of Sanskrit to the many other medieval objects still extant. A brief look in the *Kamakura Bukkyō* volume of *Zusetsu Nihon no Bukkyō* is enough to provide examples of the many and varied objects on/in which Sanskrit was incorporated.[276] In short, over a period of 400-500 years, Sanskrit on non-textual objects of visual focus had filtered from strictly Shingon (Mikkyō) Buddhist practice into other traditions such as Amida Buddha worship and even into combinatory worship by the Kamakura period.

A semiotic shift occurred concurrently with such physical disseminations of Sanskrit in visual culture. As I have illustrated, the function of Sanskrit on non-textual objects, while always emphasizing the polysemy of the sign, spread from representing specific deities and doctrine in Esoteric Buddhism (seen in specialized mandala forms used in Esoteric Buddhist worship, ritual and education) to additionally representing concepts like the *honji-suijaku* concept that supported a cohesive integration of Shinto and Buddhism. In all cases, the Sanskrit character was a sign that signified power. In iconic presentation—as seen throughout this thesis—Sanskrit is "read" as a sign of the signified deity and all that the deity represents.[277] Or rather, depending on the level of the monk's study in Sanskrit, in such instances the character can cease to be a sign and *is* the deity; at a higher level of understanding, the sign and signified are merged in a representation of nonduality. In Sanskrit's dissemination to other forms within Japanese visual culture, characters came to also have the potential to act as the sign for a Shinto *kami* (神, Shinto deity) and, additionally, new world-concepts of a so-called "amalgamation" of Shinto and Buddhism. At the ritual level in Esoteric Buddhism, mandala and other works were

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[276] In the introduction, I provided a brief list of some such types. Miyama Susumu. *Zusetsu Nihon no Bukkyō: Kamakura Bukkyō*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, vol. 4, 1988.
[277] At this level of understanding, the *shūji* can refer to even the efficacious mantra of the deity.

accepted as part and parcel of an imported Buddhist visual culture that included, but was not

limited to, Sanskrit as a foreign element. Mere centuries later, the foreign associations,

assimilated in large part into Buddhist praxis, carried by Sanskrit within works illustrating

combinatory practices such as the Nezu *Kasuga mandara* continued to function at a multivalent

level of language and image with non-native connotations yet within increasingly localized

(Shinto) visual culture.

Within the works I have addressed in this thesis there is room for future research that

could lead to a greater understanding of the complex use of Sanskrit in visual culture.[278]

Additionally, further research on the many other objects containing Sanskrit, such as

reliquaries[279] and ritual tools, could provide insight into Sanskrit as a living albeit strictly visual

and ritual system of symbols in Japan (still a "language" in a visual way). Additionally, studying

extreme anomalies in the use of Sanskrit will prove extremely beneficial. One such anomaly is

the use of Sanskrit on warrior's swords (for example, figure 28). These swords are so far the

only historical example I have found of Sanskrit in secular use.[280] A careful study of these

swords and the many other objects incorporating Sanskrit may assist in further clarifying how

Sanskrit functioned in Japanese society. Further, such study would begin to identify why the

multivalent power of the Sanskrit letter, while seen also by the non-ordained though generally

still in a religious context, was used on this weapon but not on other objects outside a sacred or

ritual context.

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[278] I have indicated some of these areas throughout the thesis, but there are certainly more.

[279] Particularly interesting is that Sanskrit was used on Mikkyō reliquaries, but also began to be used in Shinto reliquaries. Figure 27 is one example of a Shinto reliquary that uses a *ryōbu hō mandara*. This work is a great object to address in future projects.

[280] The samurai culture developed a relationship with shrines, especially as swordsmithing took on a sacred aspect that required rites of purification and abstinence before forging a blade. As Shinto priests wear white clothing, the swordsmith was also required to wear white. Each sword was "thought to take on its own spiritual life; success or failure in battle was attributed to the spirit of the sword." (Stanley-Baker, Joan. *Japanese art*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1984, p. 106). The inclusion of Sanskrit as a *horimono* (彫物, engraving or carving) on the blade is likely related in part to conferring efficacy unto the "spirit of the sword."
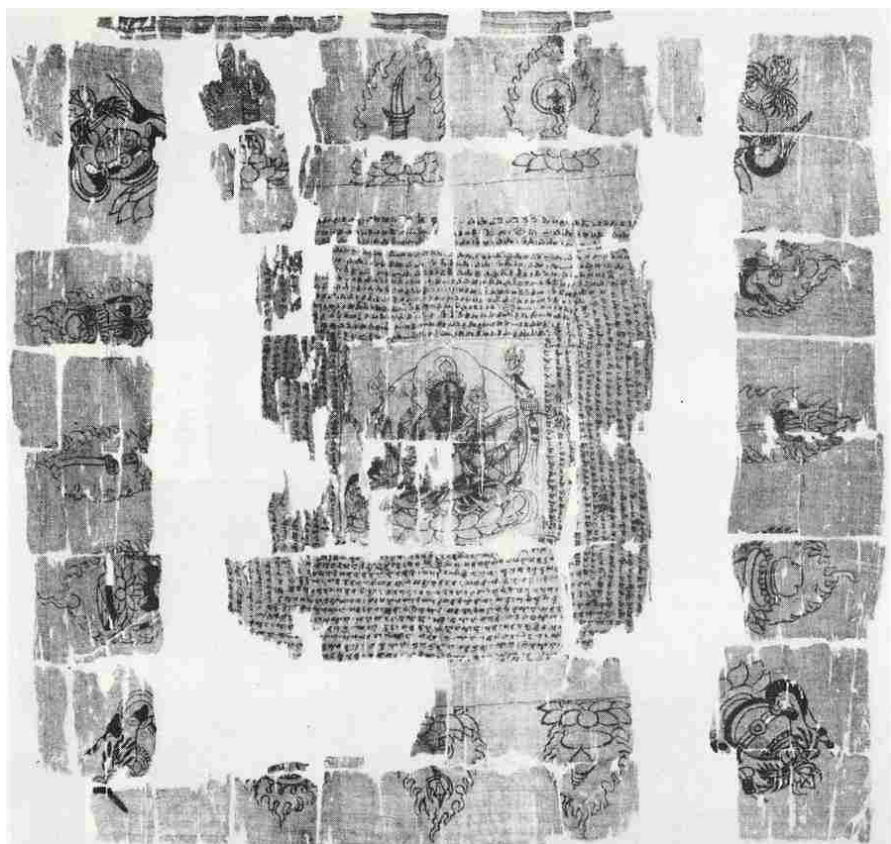
Figures

Figure 1. *Mahapratisara Dharani*. 7th–9th century. China, Tang dynasty. Ink and color on silk. H 26.5 cm. W 26.5 cm. From Michelle Wang, unpublished dissertation (Harvard University, 2008).
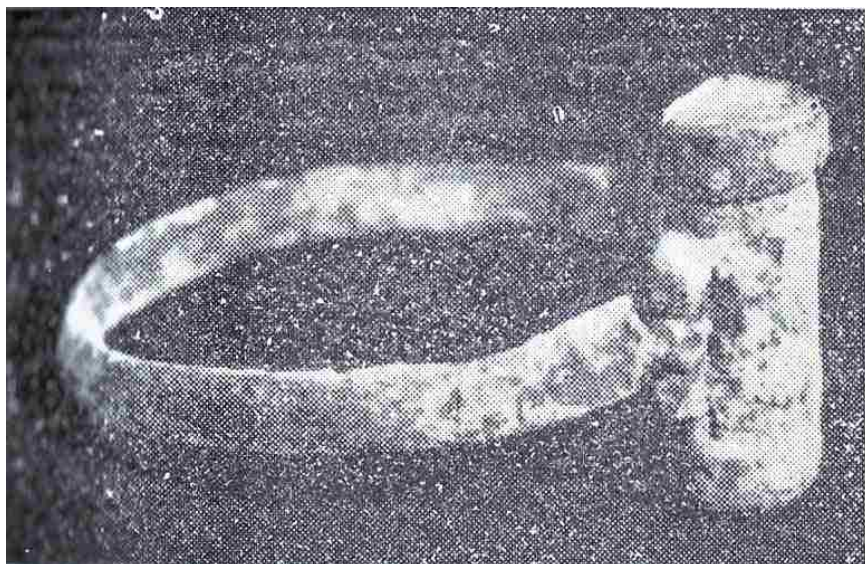

Figure 2. Armband. 7th–9th century. China, Tang dynasty. Gilt bronze. H 4.5 cm. W 2.4 cm. D 7.9 cm. From Michelle Wang, unpublished dissertation (Harvard University, 2008).
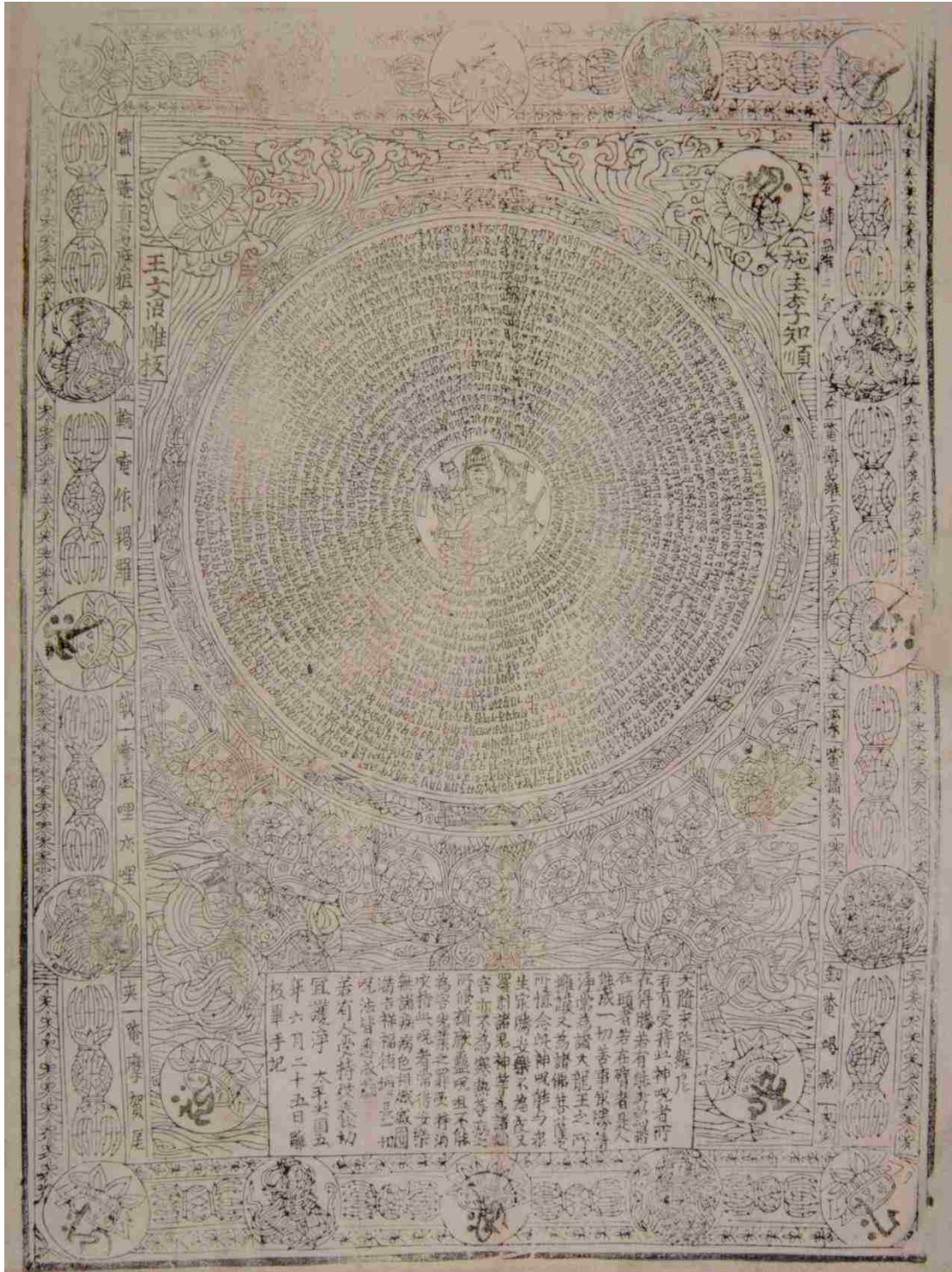
Figure 3. *Mahapratisara Bodhisattva with Text of* Da sui qiu tuoluoni. Dated 980. China. Ink on paper. H 30.3 cm. L 41.7 cm. British Museum, *The Printed Image in China from the 8th to the 21st Centuries*.
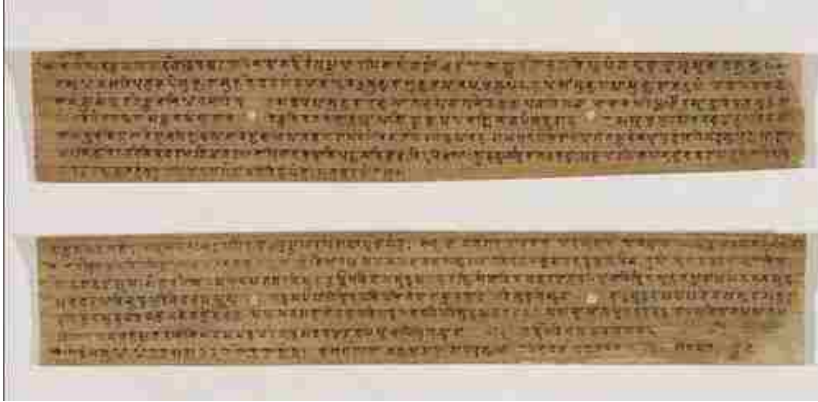
Figure 4. Two pieces from *Sanskrit Version of the* Heart Sutra *and* Vijaya Dharani. 7th–8th century. India, late Gupta period. Ink on pattra (palmyra leaves), ink on paper. *Heart Sutra*: H 4.9 cm. L 28 cm. *Dharani* H 10 cm. L 28.3 cm. Tokyo National Museum. Important Cultural Property. Originally owned by Hōryū-ji. From Tokyo National Museum's emuseum website: http://www.emuseum.jp/.

Figure 5. Modern practitioner during *aji kan*. From Mt. Kōya's English-language website:

Figure 6. *Ajigi* (The Significance of the Letter A): sheet 8 (detail) and sheet 9 (detail, first section). 12th century. Ink, silver, and gold flakes on paper. Entire work: H 26 cm, L 690.3 cm. Fujita Museum of Art (Fujita Bijutsukan), Osaka. Important Cultural Property. From *Ajigi; Kegon goj gosho emaki; Hokekyō emaki*.

Figure 7. *Seed-syllable Mandala of the Two Worlds: Womb World Mandala*. 14th century. Colors on silk. H 110.8. W 96.2 cm. Entsu-ji, Kōyasan, Wakayama. From *Sacred Treasures of Mount Koya: The Art of Japanese Shingon Buddhism*.
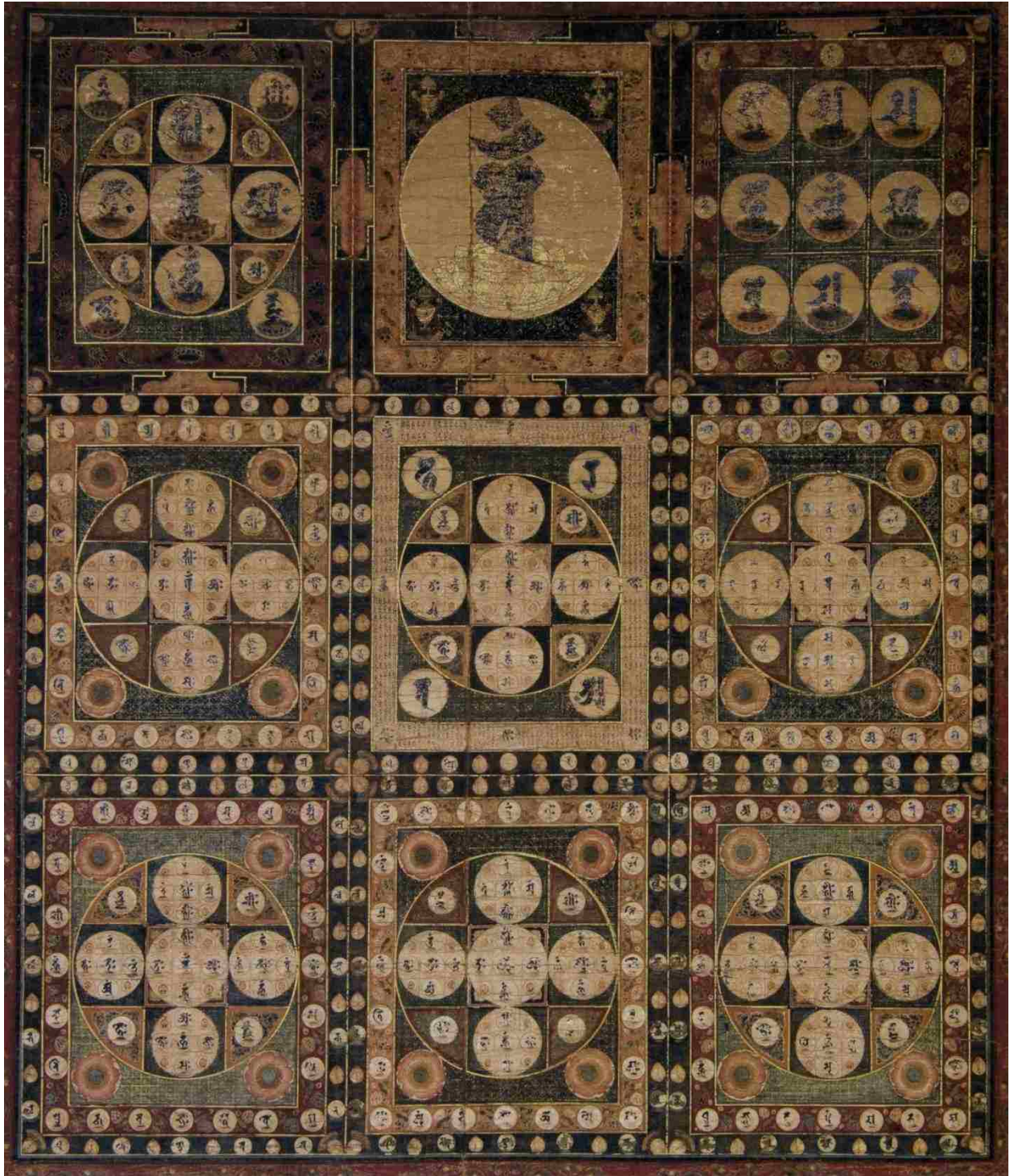
Figure 8. *Seed-syllable Mandala of the Two Worlds: Diamond Mandala*. 14th century. Colors on silk. H 110.8. W 96.1 cm. Entsu-ji, Kōyasan. From *Sacred Treasures of Mount Koya: The Art of Japanese Shingon Buddhism*.
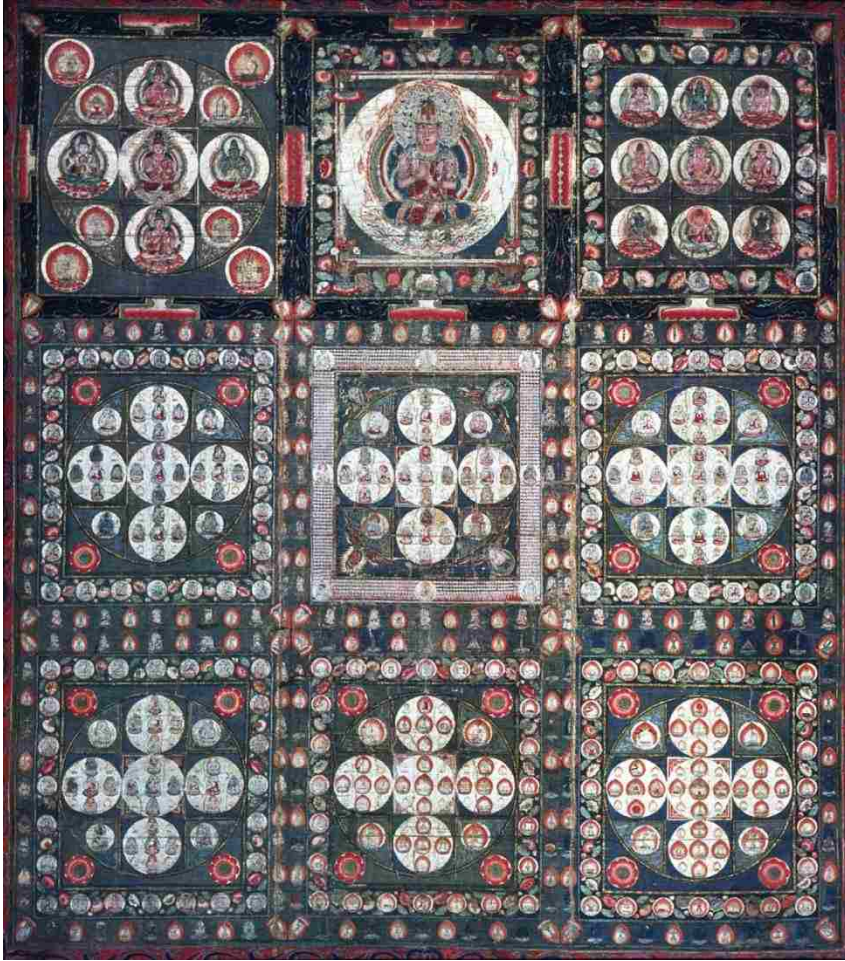
Figure 9. *Dai Mandala of the Two Worlds: Diamond World Mandara*. Late 9th century. Color on silk. H 183. W 154 cm. Kyo-ogokoku-ji (Tōji), Kyoto. From *Meiho Nihon no bijutsu*, v.8.

Figure 10. *Sanmaya Mandala of the Two Worlds: Womb World Mandala*. 18th century. H 108. W 108.8 cm. Hoju-in, Kōyasan. From *Sacred Treasures of Mount Koya: The Art of Japanese Shingon Buddhism*.

Figure 11. *Sculptural mandala* (katsuma mandara) in the Lecture Hall of Tōji: view from West at the central sculptural group. Dated circa 839 CE. From *Meiho Nihon no bijutsu* 1980, v. 8.

Figure 12. Tōji Sanskrit slips (bonji mandara; Sanskrit character mandala). Probably 9th century. Ink on paper. Lecture Hall, Toji, Kyoto. From *Nihon chokokushi kiso shiryo shusei: Heian jidai: zozo meiki hen*, vol. 1.
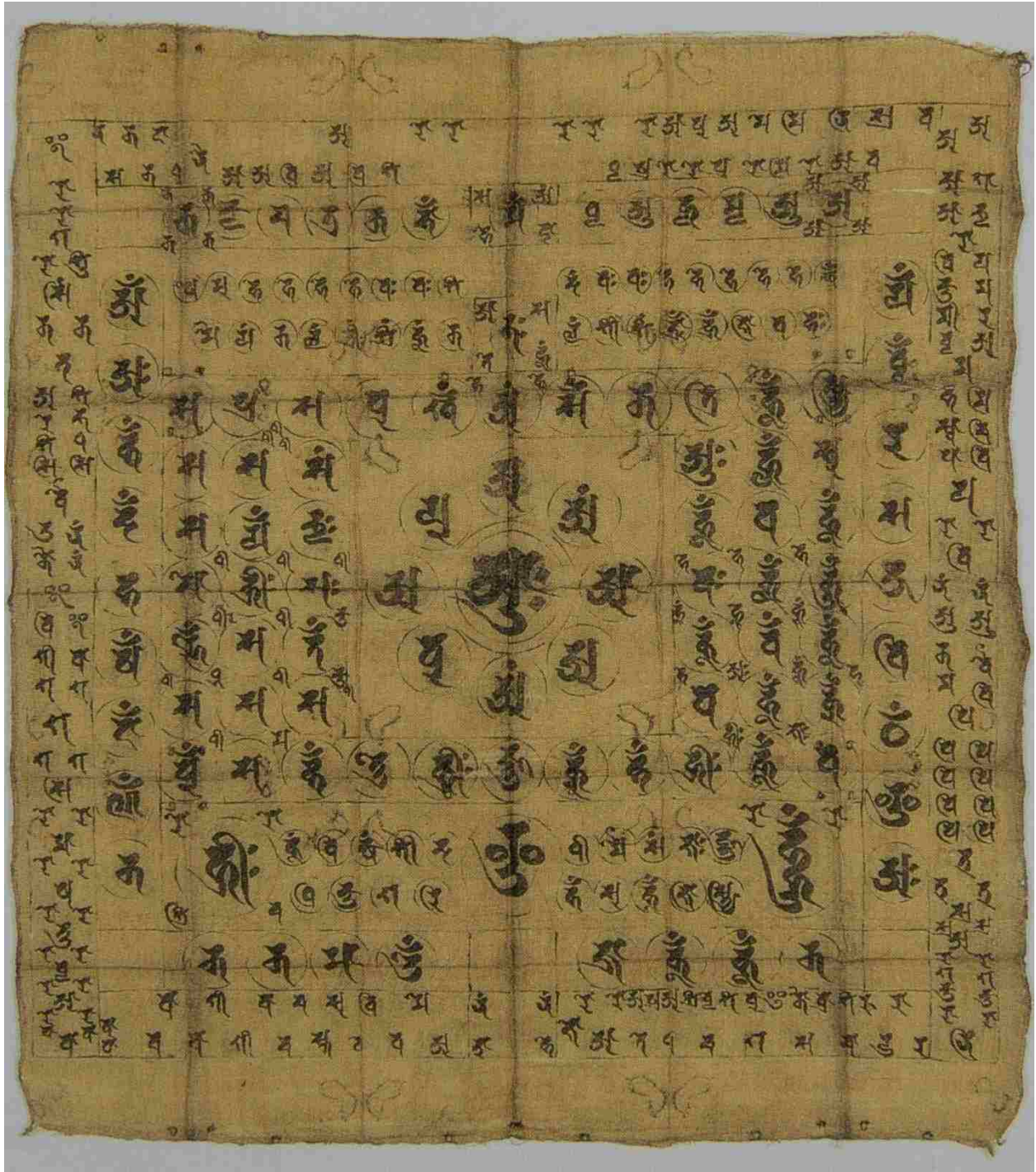
Figure 13. *Womb World Seed-syllable Mandala* (Taizōkai shūji mandara). Dated 1052 CE, buried 1113 CE (Okuno-in, Koyasan, Wakayama, Kinki, Japan). Ink on silk. H 51.6 cm. W 47.3 cm. Kongōbu-ji, Kōyasan. From *Hieizan, Kōyasan meihōten: Hieizan sekai bunka isan toroku*.
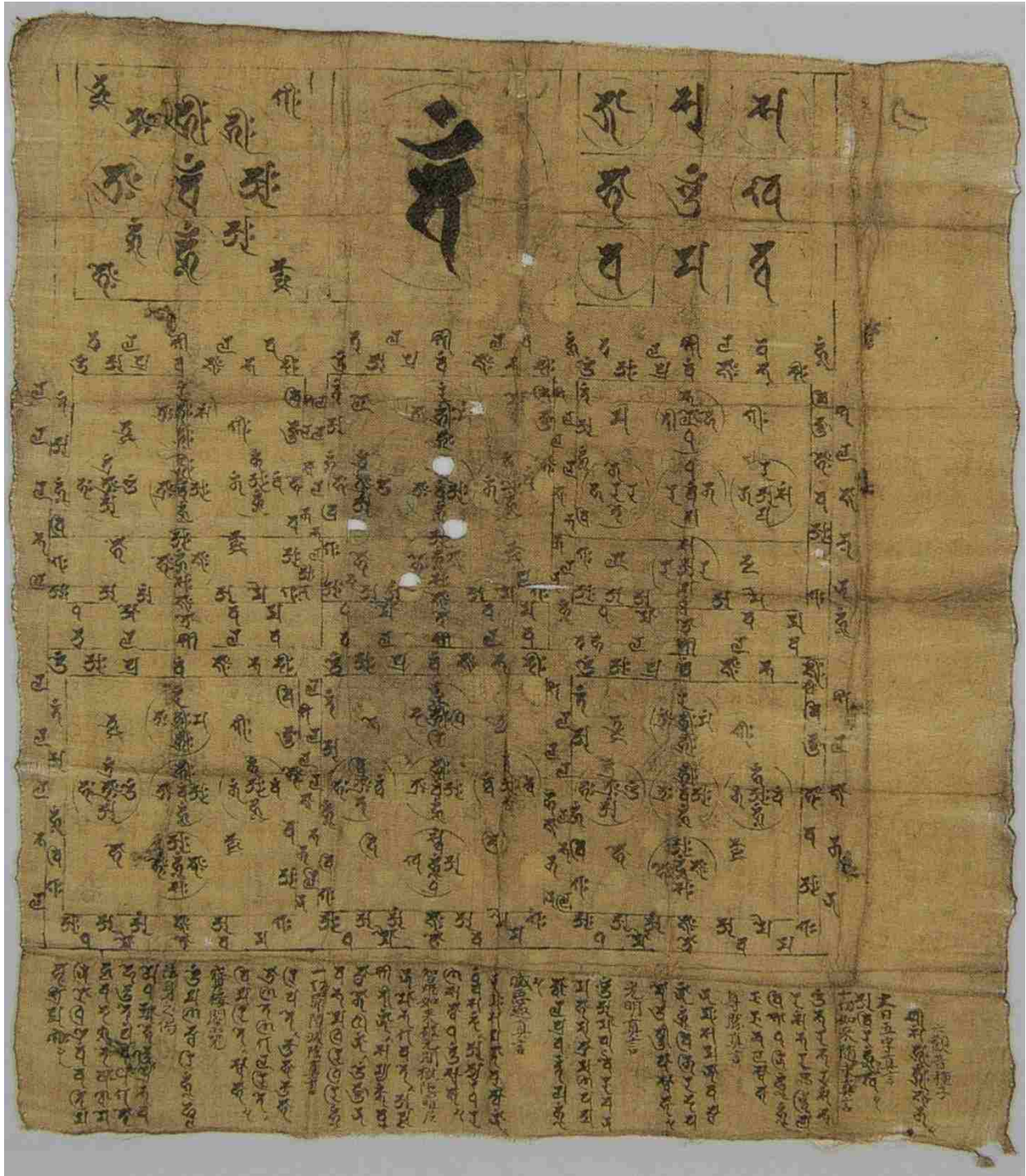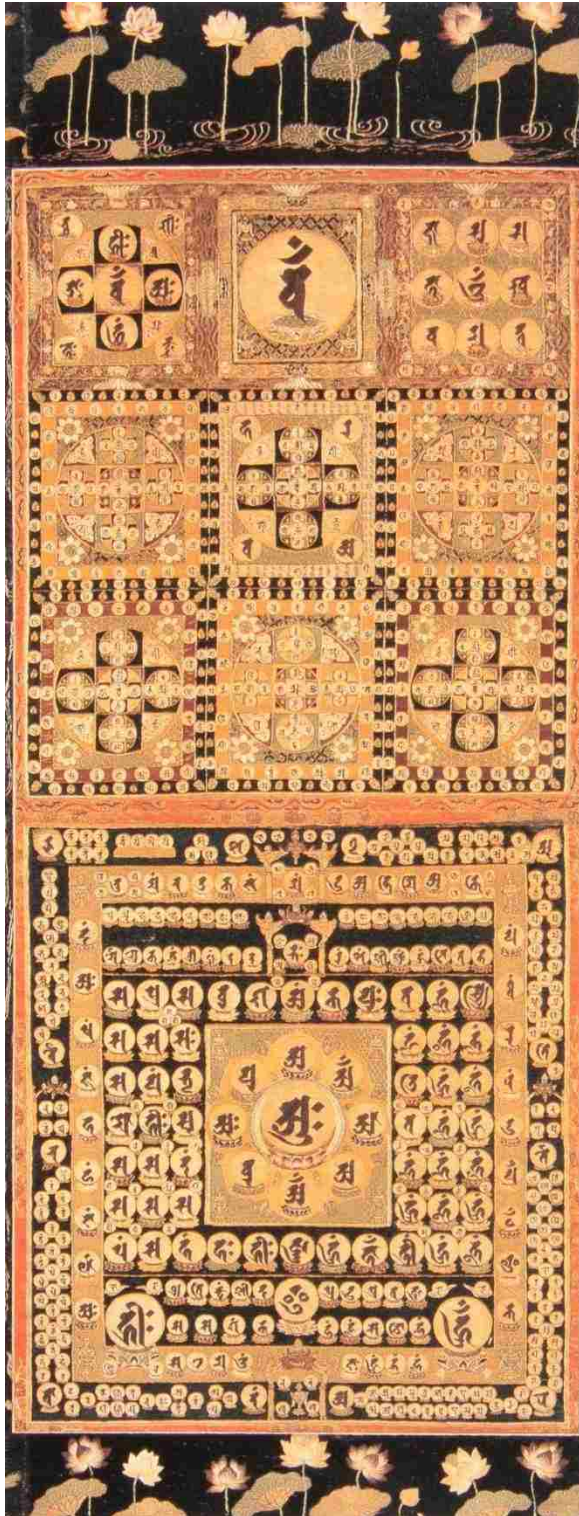
Figure 14. *Diamond World Seed-syllable Mandala* (Kongōkai shūji mandara). Dated 1052 CE, buried 1113 CE (Okuno-in, Koyasan, Wakayama, Kinki, Japan). Ink on silk. H 51.6 cm. W 47.3 cm. Kongōbu-ji, Kōyasan. From *Hieizan, Kōyasan meihōten: Hieizan sekai bunka isan toroku*.

Figure 15. *Embroidered Seed-syllable Dual World Mandala* (Shūji ryokai mandara). Dated circa 1300 CE. Silk floss and human hair. H 114.4. W 44.8 cm. Taisan-ji, Kobe. From *Nihon no Bijutsu* No. 470: *Shūbutsu*.
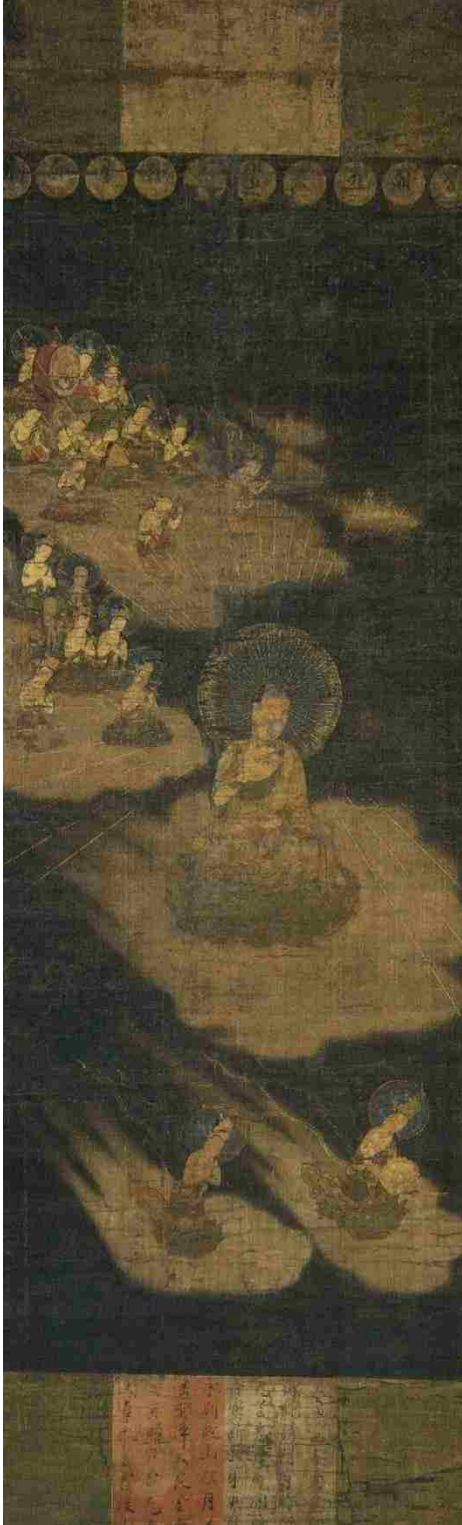
Figure 16. *Descent of Amida Nyōrai* (Amitabha). 14th century. Color on silk. H 152.3. W 47 cm. Saikyo-ji, Shiga. From *Hieizan, Koyasan meihoten: Hieizan sekai bunka isan toroku*.

Figure 17. *Collection of sheets of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from the Womb and Diamond mandalas.* 2 sheets of Diamond world mandala (top: Kongo'o bosatsu; bottom: Kongōsatta). 12th century. Color on paper. Each sheet: H 24.9, W 13.9 cm. Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku, Tokyo. From *Fugen bosatsu no kaiga : utsukushiki hotoke e no ionri : tokubetsuten*.
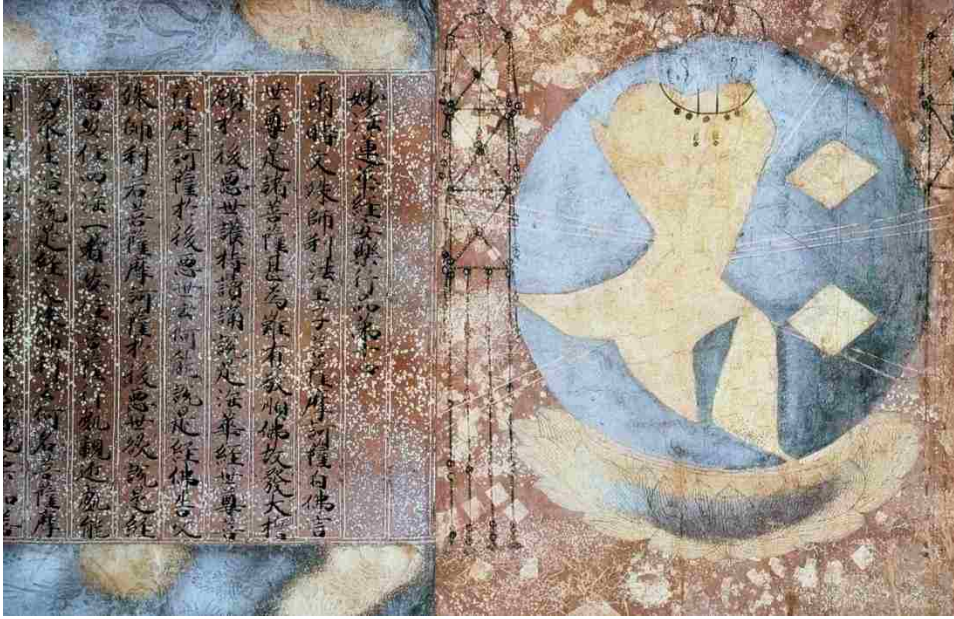
Figure 18. *Heike Nōkyō: Anrakugyōbon* (chapter fourteen) frontispiece. Dated 1164 CE. Color, gold, and silver on paper. H 26.2 cm. Itsukushima Shrine.From *Nihon Bijutsu Zenshu* vol. 9.

Figure 19. *Ajigi* (The Significance of the Letter A): sheet 7 (detail) and sheet 8 (detail of first section). 12th century. Ink, silver, and gold flakes on paper. Entire work: H 26 cm, L 690.3 cm. Fujita Museum of Art (Fujita Bijutsukan), Osaka. Important Cultural Property. From *Ajigi; Kegon goj gosho emaki; Hokekyō emaki*.
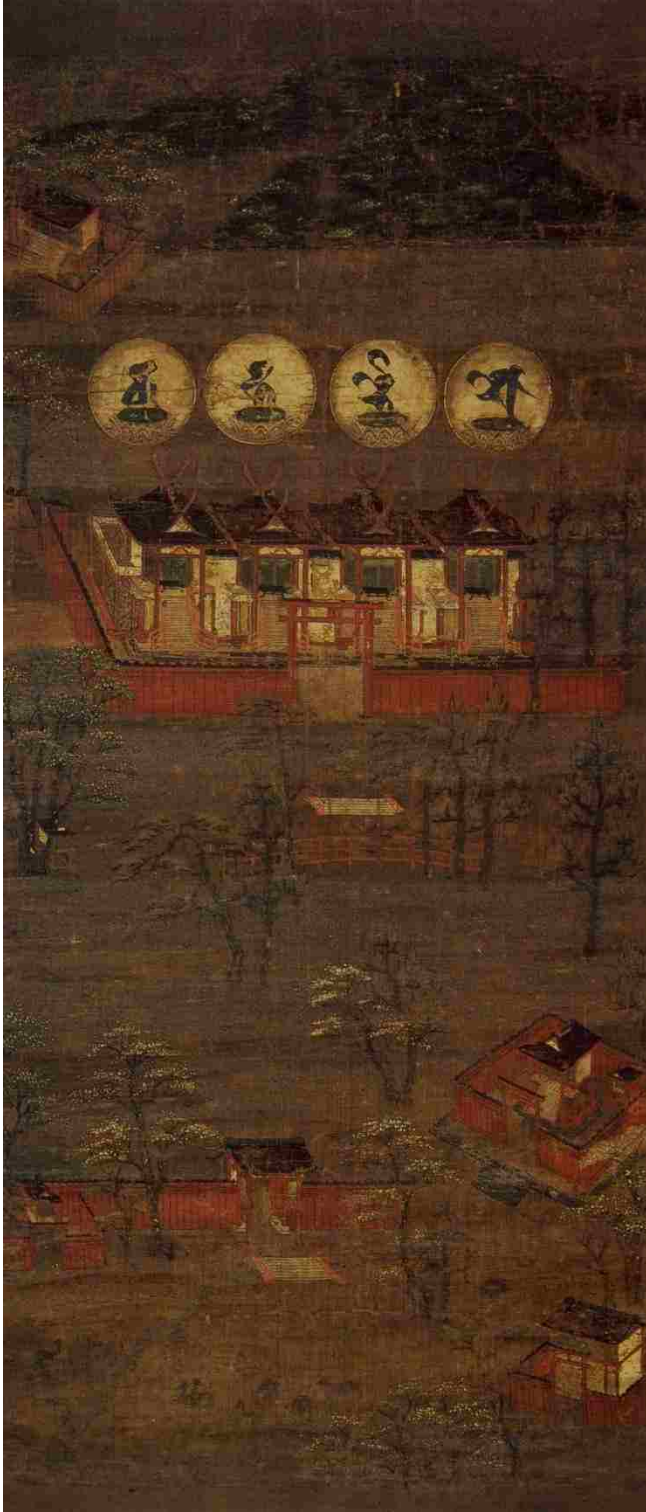
Figure 20. *Kasuga Shrine Mandala* from the Nezu Museum (*Kasuga miya mandala*). H 65.4. W 28.5 cm. Ink and colors on silk. Nezu bijutsukan (Nezu Museum), Tokyo. Important Cultural Property. From *Nihon no bukkyo* 2: *Mikkyō*.

Figure 21. Scroll of *Xuanzang's Travels in India* (Genjo Sanzō-e). Scroll 2. Attributed to
Takashina Takakane. Early 14th century. Ink and colors on paper. Overall work: H 40.3 cm, W
1200-1920 cm. Fujita Museum of Art (Fujita Bijutsukan), Osaka. From *Genjo Sanzo e*, vol. 8.

Figure 22. *Avatar of the Three Shrines of Hakusan* (Shirayama Sansha gongen). 13th century. Color on silk. H 79.7. W 42.7 cm. Shirayama Hime Jinja, Ishikawa. Important Cultural Property. From *Shinto Gods and Buddhist Deities: Syncretic Faith in Japanese Art*.

Figure 23. *Kasuga Pure Land Mandala* (Kasuga Jōdo mandara). 13th-14th century. Ink and color on silk. H 99.6. W 42 cm. Noman'in, Nara. Important Cultural Property.From *Kasuga no fukei: uruwashiki seichi no imeji*.

Figure 24. *Kasuga Deer Mandala* (Kasuga shika mandara). 14th century. Ink and color on silk. H 70. W 27.9 cm. Private collection. Important Art Object. From *Kasuga no fukei: uruwashiki seichi no imeji*.

Figure 25. *Lotus Sutra with each Character on a Lotus Pedestal* (ichiji rendai hokekyō). 12th century. Ink, color, and gold on paper. Overall: H 26, W 322.2 cm. Yamato Bunkakan, Nara. National Treasure. From *Fugen bosatsu no kaiga : utsukushiki hotoke e no ionri : tokubetsuten*.

Figure 26. *Embroidered Incantation of the Buddha's Name* (Nenbutsu). 14th century. Thread on silk. Hokyoji, Kyoto. From *Nihon no Bijutsu* No. 470: *Shūbutsu*.

Figure 27. *Portable Shrine (or reliquary) of the True Figure of the Deity of the Daijingu*. 14th century. Wood and black lacquer. Total H 55.5 cm. Saidaiji, Nara. Important Cultural Property. From *Shinto Gods and Buddhist Deities: Syncretic Faith in Japanese Art*.
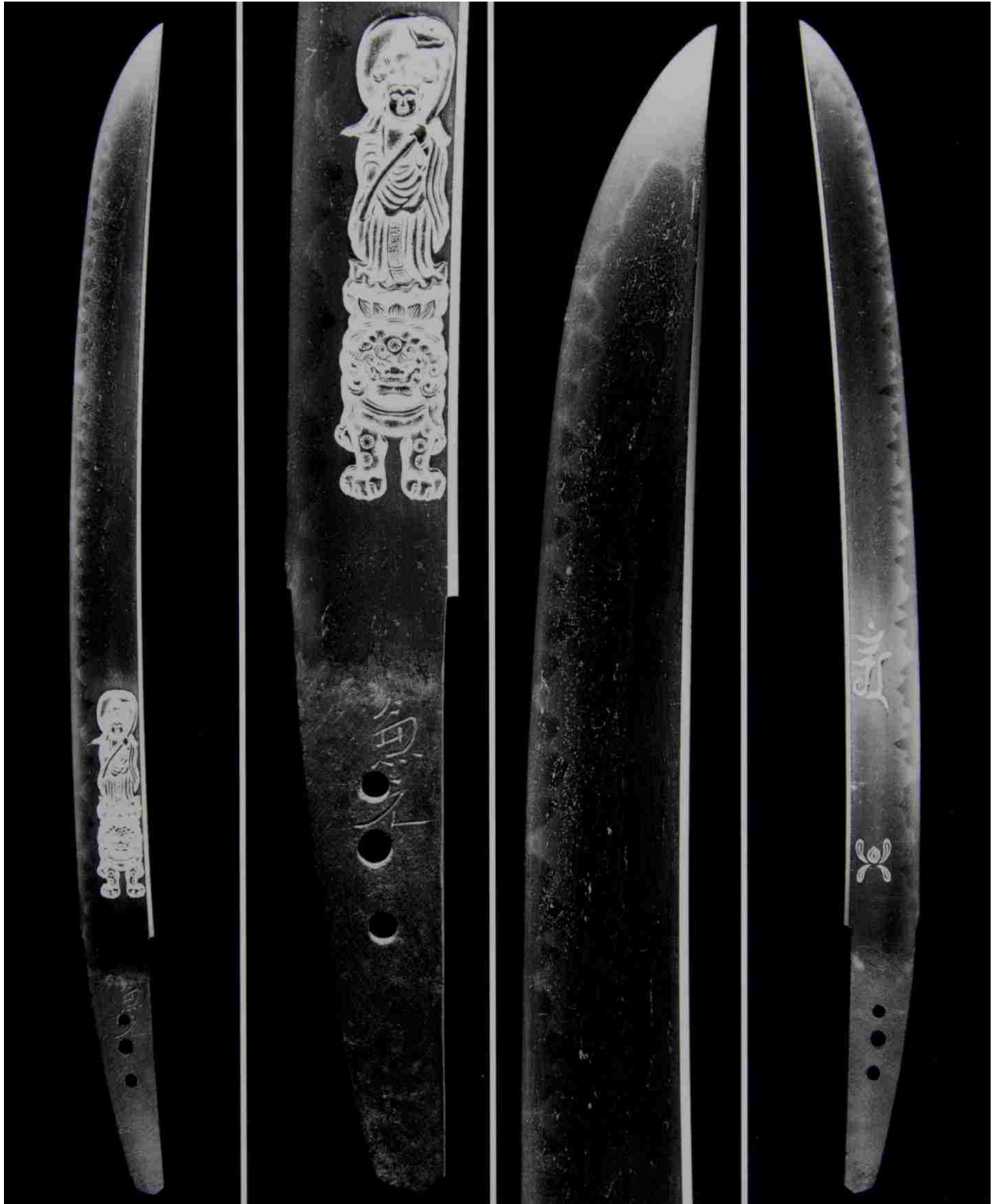
Figure 28. *Short Sword* (Wakizashi): bodhisattva Monju; bonji of Fudo and stylized Buddhist lotus throne. Signed 'Kanemoto' (of Seki). Dated circa 1530 CE. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. From *The Japanese Sword: The Soul of the Samurai*.

Glossary

ajari 阿闍梨 — expert, or master; taken from the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrt *acarya*, meaning a person who knows and teaches the rules

a-ji kan honzon 阿字観本尊 — a-ji kan *icon*

a-ji kan 阿字観 — the rite of meditating on the Sanskrit character A

Aji kunō 阿字功能 — The Efficacy of the Letter A

Ajigi 阿字義, alt.: Ajigiden 阿字義伝 — The Significance of the Sanskrit Letter A

akṣara — Sanskrit characters

Amaterasu no Ōmikami 天照大御神

Ame no Uzume 天宇受売命 or 天鈿女命

Amida Buddha 阿弥陀如来

Anraku-gyōbon 安楽経本

bikuni 比丘尼 — nun

bimba — images

bodaishin 菩提身; Skt.: *bodhicitta* — aspiration for Buddhahood

bodhisattva; Jp.: *bosatsu* 菩薩

Bodhisena; Jp: Bodaisenna 菩提僊那

bongo 梵語 — Sanskrit language

bonji 梵字 — Sanskrit characters

chūko 中古 — medieval or medieval and peak of ancient

dai mandara 大曼荼羅; Skt.: *maha mandala*

Daihi taizōhō mandara 大悲胎蔵法曼荼羅 — Great Compassion Womb Dharma Mandala (one of the paired ryōbu mandara)

Dainichi-kyō 大日経 — *Mahavairocana Sutra*

daisōjō 大僧正 — high priest

dhāraṇī — sacred Sanskrit phrase used to efficacious effect

Dōshō (629-700) 道昭

emaki 絵巻 — picture scroll

Emperor Fushimi 伏見天皇 (1265-1317)

Emperor Heizei 平城天皇 (773-824, r. 806-9)

Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (1010-1063; r. 1023-1062)

Emperor Tenji 天智天皇 (626-671)

Enomoto jinja 榎本神社

Fuhito 藤原不比等 (659-720)

fujikan 布字観 — spreading the syllables

Fujiwara no Kamatari 藤原鎌足

Fujiwara no Sadanaga 藤原定長

fukatoku 不可得 — unobtainable

Fukūkenjaku Kannon 不空羂弱観音

gachirin 月輪 — moon disk

Ganjin 鑑真; Ch.: Jianzhen

Genjō sanzō e 玄奘三蔵絵   Xuanzang's Travels in India

gorintō 五輪塔   death memorials or gravestones in a "five elements" form shaped like a pagoda

gumonjihō 求聞持法   Morning Star Rite

gyakushu service 逆修   memorial service held for oneself

hannya haramitta kyō 般若波羅蜜多経   Prajnaparamita Sutra

Hannya shingō hiken 般若心經秘鍵   The Secret Key to the Heart Sutra

Hasedera 長谷寺

hatsushū 髪繍   hair embroidery

Heijō-kyō 平城京   modern day Nara

Heike nōkyō 平家納経   Sutra Dedicated by the Heike (Taira Clan)

Higashiyama Ōrai 東山往来

hijiri 聖   itinerant preachers

Himegami 姫神

himitsu mandarakyō fujōden 秘密曼荼羅教付法伝   Record of the Dharma Transmission of the Secret Mandala Teaching

Hizōki 秘蔵記   Notes on the Secret Treasury

hō mandara 法曼荼羅; Skt.: *dharma mandala*

hōben 方便; Skt.: *upaya*   skillful means

Hōjōki 方丈記   The Ten Foot Square Hut

hokekyō 法華経   Lotus Sutra

honden 本殿

honji-suijaku 本地垂迹   original forms of deities and their local traces

honsha chūin 本社中院

honzon 本尊   primary deity

horimono 彫物   engraving or carving

Hossō 法相

Hōyaku 法薬

Huiguo 惠果 (746-805)

Iroha-uta いろは歌   the Iroha poem

Iwamoto jinja 岩本神社

Izanagi 伊邪那岐 or 伊弉諾

Izanami no Mikoto 伊弉冉尊 or 伊邪那美命

jigi 字義   true meaning; deep, esoteric meaning

jisha seiryoku 寺社勢力   shrine-temple power complexes

jisō 字相   signification based on appearances

Jizō 地蔵

Jōdo shū 浄土宗   Jōdo sect

Jōsangō shingon 淨三業真言   The Three Actions of Shingon

Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音

kagura 神楽   god entertainment

kairitsu fukkō undō 戒律復興運動	Buddhist precepts
kami 神	Shinto deity
Kamo no Chōmei 鴨長明 (circa 1153-1216)	
kanjō 潅頂; Skt.: *abhiṣeka*	initiation, consecration, or sometimes ordination
kanjō-in 潅頂院	Abhiseka Hall or Initiation Hall
Kannon 観音	
Kasuga gongen genki emaki 春日権現験記絵巻	Tales of the Miracles of Kasuge [Shrine] Picture Scroll
Kasuga miya mandara 春日宮曼荼羅	
Kasuga no Daimyōjin 春日の大明神	guardian deity of Kasuga
katsuma mandara 羯磨曼荼羅; Skt.: *karma mandala*	
kechien kanjō 結縁潅頂	a *kanjō* that establishes a karmic bond with an aspect or deity of esoteric Buddhism
kedashi 蓋し	probably
kengyō 顕教	Exoteric Buddhism
kenmitsu taisei 顕密体制	exoteric-esoteric system
Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師	
Kōfuku-ji 興福寺	
Kojiki 古事記	Record of Ancient Matters
Kojima-ryū 小島流	Kojima lineage
kokoro 心	heart, soul, mind

kongōkai mandara 金剛界曼荼羅	Daimond World Mandala (on of the paired ryōbu mandara)
Koshaki 古社記	An Ancient Record of the Shrine
kotodama no sagiwau kuni 言霊の幸う国	the land where the mysterious workings of language bring bliss
kotodama 言霊	literally "word spirit"
kū 空; Skt.: *Śūnyatā*	emptiness, voidness
Kujōke 九条家	Kujō clan
Kūkai 空海 (774-835)	
Kuroda Toshio 黒田俊雄	
Manyō'shu 万葉集	Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves
manyōgana 万葉仮名	early Japanese syllabary composed of Chinese characters used phonetically
mappō 末法	the Age of Dharma Decline
Mikkyō Daijiten 密教大辞典	Mikkyō Encyclopedia
Mikkyō 密教	Esoteric Buddhism—literally, secret teachings
miya mandara 宮曼荼羅	shrine mandala
Mizuya jinja 水神社	
Monju 文殊	
monogatari 物語	tale, legend, story
Mudrā	sign, shown in hand movements
Myōe 明恵 (1173-1232)	

Nakatomi no Kamatari 中臣鎌足 (614-669)

Nakatomi no Tokifū 中臣ときふう(731-818)

Nan'endō 南円堂   south circle hall

nanmon 南門   southern gate

nenbutsu 念仏   practice of reciting the Buddha's name

Nihon ryōiki 日本霊異記   Miraculous Stories of Japan

Nihon shoki 日本書紀   The Chronicles of Japan

niino hashi 二位橋

Ninkai 任界 (955-1046)

nonyūhin 納入品   interred item

Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041-1111)

onnade 女手   women's writing; literally, women's hand

Ono no Imoko 小野妹子

ryōbu mandara 両部曼荼羅   Dual Mandala

ryōkai mandara 両界曼荼羅   Mandala of the Two Worlds

Saeki no Imaemishi 佐伯今毛人 (719-790)

Saichō 最澄 (767-822)

Sangō shiiki 三教指帰   Demonstrating the Goals of the Three Teachings

Sanjūhassho jinja 三十八所神社

sanmaya mandara 三昧耶曼荼羅 sometimes also   symbolic form mandala

written in romaji as *sammaya*, Skt.: *samaya mandala*

Shaka 釈迦; Skt.: Śākyamuni — Historical Buddha

shakkun 借訓 — borrowed meaning

shakuon 借音 — borrowed sound

Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513 CE)

Shingō 真興 (934-1004)

Shingon fuhōden 真言付法伝 — Short History of Shingon Dharma Transmission

shinji 神事 — place of the *kami*

shintai 神体 — body of the *kami*

Shinzei 真済 (800-860)

shittan gakusha 悉曇学者 — scholar of Sanskrit

Shittan jū fuka no koto 悉曇十不可ノ事 — Ten Prohibitions of Sanskrit

Shittan jūhasshō 悉曇十八章 — The Eighteen Points of Sanskrit

Shittan jūnitsū kirigami daiji 悉曇十二通切紙大事 — Twelve Essential Documents Concerning Sanskrit

shittan kanjō 悉曇灌頂 — the initiation ritual of the transmission of Sanskrit

shittangaku 悉曇学 — the study—originally sectarian—of the history of Sanskrit

shodō 書道 — literally the way of writing

Shoku Nihongi 続日本紀 — Classical Japanese history text

shōraimokuroku 請来目録	Catalogue of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items
shūbutsu 繍仏	embroidered Buddha
shufa 書法	the way/method of writing
shugendō 修験道	mountain ascetic practice by itinerant monks combining elements of Buddhism and Shinto
shūji mandara 種字曼荼羅	seed-syllable mandala
Siddhaṃ; Jp.: *shittan* 悉曇; Ch.: *xitan*	
taizō mandara 胎蔵曼荼羅	Great Compassion Mandala
Takaosan-ji 高雄山寺; also Jingo-ji, 神護寺	
Takehaya Susanoo no Mikoto 建速須佐之男命	
Takemikazuchi no Mikoto 武甕槌大神	
Tendai 天台; Ch.: Tiantai	
tō en 稲垣	
Tsubosaka-ryū 壺坂流	Tsubosaka lineage
tsuizen kuyō 追善供養	memorial service held for the dead
urazaishiki 裏財式	back painting
waka kanjō 和歌潅頂	
Wakamiya jinja 若宮神社	
Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca. 307-365)	
Xuanzang 玄奘 (circa 602-664)	

yamabushi 山伏   mountain ascetics

Yijing 義淨 (635-713)

zuzō 図像   iconographic, iconography

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