

The Esoteric Meaning of 'Amida' by Kakuban

An annotated translation with introduction
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[Introduction]

1

Kakuban, popularly known as Mitsugon Sonja (Venerable Mystic Glorification), was born in Fujitsu-no-shō, Hizen Province (near the present Kagoshima City), on the 17th of the 6th month, 1095. His father Isa-no-Heiji Kanemoto was a high officer in charge of a manor belonging to the Ninna-ji temple, and his mother came from the Tachibana family. Born as the third of four sons, he was called Yachitosemaro.

According to the *Genkō-shakusho*, one day when Kakuban was eight years old, a messenger of the provincial governor came to see his father to press him for payment of taxes. The messenger's attitude was rude, and his father was hiding behind the screen. The boy was shocked and asked the monk who was staying at his house, "Who was that messenger?" and "Who is the highest authority in Japan?" After learning that the emperor was the highest person, he further asked the monk if there was someone superior to the emperor. The monk replied that the Buddha was the supreme authority. This incident prompted him to decide to become a Buddhist; whereupon he himself burned incense as an offering to the Buddha.

His father died when Kakuban was ten, and in 1107, at the age of thirteen, he went to Kyoto and became a disciple of Kanjo, the founder of the Jōju-in Hall and a well-known esoteric adept. In the following year, he went to Nara to study the Kusha and Hossō teachings under Keigyō at the Kōfuku-ji. In 1110 he returned to the Jōju-in and received the ordination of a novice from Kanjo and was given the name Shōgaku-bō Kakuban—"Enlightened VAM" (VAM is the mystic syllable of

Mahāvairocana in the Vajra-realm Mandala). After the ordination, Kanjo sent him to Nara again—this time to the Tōdai-ji to learn the Sanron and Kegon teachings. While studying in Nara, Kakuban had a dream in which a Shinto god urged him to go up to Mt. Kōya (source: *Ryōji-ichimi sōjō*). So he once again returned to Ninna-ji and began the preparatory practice for becoming an ācārya.

In 1114, at the age of twenty, Kakuban received the full ordination of a monk at the Tōdai-ji, Nara, and then went up Mt. Kōya, where he was greeted by a Nembutsu sage, Shōren of the Ōjō-in. Being a devout aspirant to Amida's Pure Land (source: *Shōnin-engi*), Shōren undoubtedly had a great influence on Kakuban. Kakuban learned many ritual practices under Meijaku, who was also known as an aspirant to the Pure Land through the Shingon Nembutsu. Under Meijaku's guidance, Kakuban particularly practiced the ritual called "*Kokuzō gumonjihō*," dedicated to Kokuzō (Ākaśagarbha) Bodhisattva. During his stay on Mt. Kōya, until he was twenty-seven of age, he also received the Dharma-transmission abhiśeka (Denbō kanjō) as many as eight times.

In 1121 Kakuban received from Kanjo of the Ninna-ji the abhiśeka of the two Mandalas, the Realm of the Matrix-store and the Realm of Vajra. Later he tried again and again to master the *Kokuzō gumonjihō* ritual, until at the ninth attempt in 1123 he attained the transcendent state, and thus spiritual awakening dawned in his mind.

In 1125 Kakuban is said to have written the *Kōyōshū*, three fascicles, explaining the way of birth in Amida's Land, and sent it to his mother. In the following year, he wished to build a hall on Mt. Kōya to revive the lecture-meeting of transmission of the Dharma, called "Denbō-e", which was originated by Kūkai for the promotion of studies in esoteric Buddhism. Coincidentally, a large estate in Wakayama was donated to him, so he invoked Shinto gods and built there a shrine to guard the Denbō-in which was to be built on Mt. Kōya. Later the Negoro-ji was built on this site. In 1130 Kakuban received the patronage of the Ex-emperor Toba and his sanction to build the Denbō-in on Mt. Kōya. Since that temple proved to be too small, in 1131 he built the Daidenbō-in temple (Great Denbō-in). Thus he succeeded in establishing a center for the study and practice of Shingon.

Kakuban's next effort was to revive the Shingon rituals. At that time, there were two traditions of rituals in the Tōmitsu (the esoteric Buddhism of Shingon as opposed to that of Tendai): the Ono and Hirosawa schools, each divided into subschools. Besides those, on Mt. Kōya another school, called "Chūin", was founded by Meizan (1021-1106). Kakuban sought to unify them all by establishing the Denbō-in school.

In 1134, an imperial decree was issued to designate the Daidenbō-in and the Mitsugon-in, the latter constructed as Kakuban's residence,

as temples for offering up prayers for the emperor, and Kakuban was nominated as the first *zasu* of the Daidenbō-in. Monks of the Kongōbu-ji, the head temple of Mt. Kōya, became angry and tried to expel Kakuban, but an Ex-emperor's decree ruled that these monks be punished. Later that year, Kakuban was additionally appointed *zasu* of the Kongōbu-ji. Until that time, the *zasu* of the Tōji in Kyoto had also been the *zasu* of the Kongōbu-ji, and so Mt. Kōya had been effectively under the jurisdiction of Tōji. For fear of arousing further the wrath of those monks who had already sought his expulsion, Kakuban finally resigned as *zasu* of both temples and retired to Mitsugon-in.

Nevertheless, the antipathy of the Kongōbu-ji monks against Kakuban was aggravated. They even took to arms and attempted to kill him. Kakuban, however, remained in Mitsugon-in and began a discipline of silence for a thousand days. In 1139, the armed monks destroyed the Denbō-in and its sub-temples, numbering more than eighty. Kakuban fled to Negoro in Wakayama, never to return to Mt. Kōya again. He spent the rest of his life there teaching students and writing books. In 1143 when he was forty-nine years of age, he became ill, and later that year he passed away while sitting in the lotus posture, making the appropriate *mudrā*, and facing towards Mahāvairocana's Pure Land. He was given the posthumous title Kōgyō Daishi (the Master who Revived the Teaching) by Emperor Higashiyama in 1690.

Reconciliation and conflict ensued between the Kongōbu-ji and the Negoro-ji, lasting for more than a hundred years. The great master Raiyu (1226-1304) finally moved the Daidenbō-in and the Mitsugon-in to Negoro in 1288, and declared the independence of the new school, called Shingi Shingon.

2

Kakuban's life-work can be summarized under the following four headings:

- (1) Reviving the *denbō-e* lecture meetings to promote the study of the Shingon teachings;
- (2) Founding the Denbō-in school to unify various traditions of Shingon ritualism;
- (3) Independence of the Kongōbu-ji from the jurisdiction of the Tōji;
- (4) Founding a new school of thought and practice uniting Shingon esotericism and the Nembutsu, called 'Shingon Nembutsu' or 'Himitsu Nembutsu'.

Kakuban's literary works, amounting to more than 150, show the depth and scope of his scholarship grounded in his dedication to and his

mystic experience of Shingon esotericism. Above all, he made a great contribution to the transmission of Kūkai's teachings by elaborating his theories of "attaining Buddhahood with one's present body" (*sokushin jōbutsu*), "the Dharmakāya's exposition of the Dharma" (*hosshin seppō*), "the ten spiritual stages" (*jūjūshin*), and so on. Based on his practice and personal experience, Kakuban also wrote a number of manuals of ritual performance, especially on the rite for increasing memory, dedicated to Ākāśagarbha (*Kokūzō gumonjihō*), contemplation of the Sanskrit syllable "A" (*ajikan*), and contemplation of the moon-disk (*gachirinkan*). His devotion for the rite of Ākāśagarbha is worthy of our special notice, for through the successful performance of this practice, he is said to have attained a spiritual awakening similar to the realization of Buddhahood with one's present body.

Kakuban is generally credited with having started the tradition of the esoteric Nembutsu, but there were some predecessors. From the middle of the Heian period, especially after Genshin (942-1017) published his famous *Ōjōyōshū*, Amida worship became very popular on Mt. Hiei and elsewhere. In Shingon, too, the contemplative and oral practice of the Nembutsu became popular. Saisen (1025-1115) of the Ninna-ji wrote some works on Pure Land Buddhism. Jitsuhan (1089-1144) of Konponjōshin-in, Nakagawa, Nara, who founded the Nakagawa ritual school of Shingon, practiced the Nembutsu of the Pure Land school in his later years and recommended it to his followers; he wrote among other works the *Jōdo-ōjōron*.

From about the end of the tenth century, *kanjin-hijiri*, who urged devotees to make donations for building temples and for other purposes, began to settle on Mt. Kōya. A little later, Nembutsu practitioners called *hijiri-gata* or *kōya-hijiri* (Kōya sages) began to appear. They were originally *jōji* (also *shōji*; one who performs miscellaneous duties at a temple while remaining a layman and sometimes married). Those *hijiri* who held the Pure Land faith and were devoted to the Nembutsu, were also in charge of the crematorium and mortuary chapel. A number of groups of *hijiri* lived on Mt. Kōya from the middle of the eleventh century. They practiced both Shingon esotericism and the Nembutsu, and their influence on the spiritual life of the general public was great.

3

Kakuban's theory of esoteric Nembutsu appears in the following works:

(1) *Gorin kuji hishaku* (*The Esoteric Meanings of the Five Elements and the Nine Syllables*; *Kōgyō Daishi senjutsushū* (henceforth abbreviated to KDS.) Vol. 1, 149-152);

(2) *Ichigo taiyō himitsushaka* (*The Esoteric Exposition of the Most Important Matter in Life*, KDS. Vol. 1, 157-176);

(3) *Amida hishaku* (*The Esoteric Meaning of 'Amida'*, KDS. Vol. I, 149-152).

It is believed that the *Gorin kuji hishaku* was written during the last few years of the author's life. This work is also called *Tongo ōjō hikan* (*The Esoteric Contemplation for Quick Attainment of Birth in the Pure Land*). The five elements are: earth (indicated by 'A'), water ('VA'), fire ('RA'), wind ('HA'), and space ('KHA'); they symbolize the five Buddhas, five wisdoms, and so forth. The nine syllables of the Amida Mantra are: OM, Ā, MR, TA, TE, JE, HA, RA, and HŪM (*Oṃ amṛta teje hara hūṃ*). Kakuban explains that the five elements and the nine syllables are essentially the same and that through contemplation of them, one can attain birth in the Pure Land. In this work, Kakuban asserts that the practitioner of the Shingon Nembutsu attains birth in the highest grade of the highest class (cf. note 11) like Nāgārjuna, who had already in this life attained the Stage of Joy. As for the specific cause of birth in the Pure Land, he says (KDS. Vol. I, 212): "The three refuges and the five precepts are the karmic cause for birth in the Pure Land. The six contemplations, four dhyāna, ten good actions, meditation on voidness, and so forth, can also be the causes of birth there."

The *Ishigo taiyō himitsushaku* teaches nine specific points to remember for Pure Land aspirants. These include "repenting of one's karmic transgressions" (5), "contemplation of the Pure Land" (7), and "decisive assurance of birth" (8). Kakuban emphatically states: "Amida is the manifestation of Mahāvairocana's wisdom; Mahāvairocana is the essential nature of Amida." (KDS. 1, 172) He thus clarifies the essential identity of Amida and Mahāvairocana and that of Amida's Pure Land of Utmost Bliss (*Gokuraku*) and Mahāvairocana's Land of Mystic Glorification (*Mitsugon*). The eighth instruction is "the most important matter to be taken care of," as the author notes under that heading (KDS. 1, 172). Here he elaborates on the terminal care to be taken of a dying person in order to safeguard his attainment of birth in the Pure Land: Five Dharma friends should be in the room of the dying person and see that the deathbed rite is properly performed. The rite consists mainly of repeating the Nembutsu. They should recite the Nembutsu in time with the breath of that person for one to seven days, until he dies. The five friends should also envision that as they pronounce "NA MO A MI TA BUH", these syllables enter the mouth of the dying person as he inhales, and that those syllables turn into the sun, which shines forth from his six sense-organs and breaks the darkness of his karmic transgressions. This contemplation enables him to attain the sun-meditation, as taught in the *Kanmuryōjukyō*, and thus gain birth in the Pure Land.

The *Amida-hishaku* is a short work covering only one page in the Taishō Tripitaka edition, but it presents the essential teaching of the esoteric Nembutsu. Kakuban first explains that Amida is the manifestation of the wisdom of the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana and corresponds to the wisdom of wonderful discernment (*myōkanzatchi; pratyavekṣaṇā-jñāna*). When one realizes the ultimate One Mind which contains all the Buddhas, divinities, their wisdoms, and other realms of beings, one attains unity with Amida. Next, the author explains thirteen different names of Amida related to his manifestations of Light, each as one of the functions of the Dharmakāya's wisdom of discernment. Lastly, he presents the esoteric meanings of AMITA.

The presentation in this work is reminiscent of a short sūtra translated by Amoghavajra, entitled *Kuhon ōjō Amida sanmaji shūdaraniyō* (*The Sūtra Presenting the Dhāraṇī of the Amida Samādhi which Ensures Birth in the Nine Ranks of Enlightenment*) (TT. 19, 79b-80a). This sūtra first states that the Land of the Buddha of Infinite Life is manifest in the sāmādhi of pure consciousness glorified with the nine ranks of enlightenment, which it then explains. Contrary to our expectation, those nine ranks are not the same as the nine grades presented in the *Kanmuryōjukyō* (*The Sūtra on Contemplation of Amitāyus*), but are the nine stages of enlightenment (see note 11). They seem to indicate nine different virtues contained in the Pure Consciousness of True Suchness. Within this consciousness appear twelve Mahāmaṇḍala figures originating from the Great Round Mirror-Wisdom. The twelve figures are the twelve Buddhas, who, according to the *Muryōjukyō* (*The Larger Sūtra on Amitāyus*), are different names of Amida and the same as the last twelve of the thirteen names given in the *Amida-hishaku*. The sūtra continues to explain that one who contemplates those Buddhas and praises their names can escape from Samsara and reside in True Suchness. It further states that one who wishes to enter this Samādhi and purify his mind and body should concentrate on the following mantra:

OM A MR TA TE JE HA RA HŪM

By holding fast to this mantra, which is popularly known as the *Amida shōju* (the Small Amida Mantra), one can dwell in the realization of the principle of ultimate reality. The sūtra ends with the usual praise of the merit of copying and reciting it and the benefit of its leading the practitioner to the Pure Land.

Kakuban must have read this sūtra and used its essentials in the *Amida-hishaku*. He re-interprets '*kuhon jōshiki*' (nine pure

consciousnesses) as the nine consciousnesses adorned with nine grades or ranks of enlightenment which are contained in the One Mind. One noticeable divergence from the sūtra is Kakuban's use of A MI TA. Instead of following the more usual esoteric formula of the nine syllables of the Amida mantra, he teaches that one who recites AMITA (or AMIDA) can extinguish his grave karmic offenses and attain boundless wisdom and merit. He then gives esoteric meanings of A MI TA.

In summing up the above observations, we can see that Kakuban uses three kinds of Amida mantra in the three texts above:

(1) nine syllable mantra, i.e., OM (or M) A MR TA TE JE HA RA HŪM, in the *Gorin kuji hishaku*;

(2) six syllable mantra, i.e., NA MO A MI TA BUH, in the *Ichigo taiyō himitsushaku*;

(3) three syllable mantra, i.e., A MI TA, in the *Amida-hishaku*.

A comparative study of these three texts reveals that the *Amida-hishaku* is an ontological and metaphysical exposition of the Shingon Nembutsu and that the *Gorin kuji hishaku* is the most elaborate exposition of the authentic esoteric Amida mantra along the lines of Pure Land thought. Of the three texts, the *Ichigo taiyō himitsushaku* shows the closest affinity to the popular Nembutsu formula of the Pure Land school.

Throughout these works the central Shingon idea of 'sokushin jōbutsu' is evident, and the Pure Land concept of 'ōjō' is interpreted from this viewpoint. We also note that in the *Gorin kuji hishaku* Kakuban warns the practitioner of the nine syllable mantra not to despise the six syllable mantra or the three syllable mantra (KDS. I, 219). Hence we know that there is no basic difference between the three mantras. For Kakuban, Amida and other Buddhas are manifestations of Mahāvairocana, and the Pure Lands of Amida and other Buddhas are his transformed lands (KDS. I, 177).

[Translation]

THE ESOTERIC MEANING OF 'AMIDA' BY KAKUBAN

[1] General discussion

[TT. 79, 48a]

Amida Buddha is the embodiment of the wisdom of discerning and recognizing the Dharmakāya in one's own nature and is also the common ground from which all sentient beings attain enlightenment.

If you contemplate and perceive the One Mind¹, you will also recognize the reality of all the dharmas; if you know the reality of all the dharmas, you will also know the mental activities of all sentient beings. Thus the One Mind contains in itself all aspects of the twofold truth²

without distinction. Every form and mind of beings in the nine realms equally possesses the Five Wisdoms² in full array. It follows then that the sages in the Four Maṇḍalas³ originally reside in one's body, which is a temporary conglomeration of the five aggregates⁴, and continue to do so everlastingly. The Holy Ones who are responsive to the practitioner in his Three Mystic Acts⁵ eternally and pervasively dwell in his delusory mind of nine consciousnesses⁶.

Since the One Mind is identical with all dharmas, the realm of Buddhas and that of sentient beings are at once non-dual and dual. Since all dharmas are identical with the One Mind, the realm of Buddhas and that of sentient beings are at once dual and non-dual. Further, one's mind and the Buddha are, from the beginning, one. Do not attempt to make this mind become a Buddha. When delusion subsides, wisdom appears and then you become a Buddha with the present body⁷.

When it is taught (in other sects) that there is a Buddha beyond one's self and a pure land beyond this defiled land, it is for the purpose of guiding ordinary ignorant persons of deep attachment and benefiting sentient beings who have committed the gravest offenses. Expositions of the Dharma accommodated to the capacities of people present shallow and simplified teachings while keeping the principle of truth hidden. The exposition of truth by the Dharmakāya Buddha⁸ opens up the true wisdom and destroys attachments.

If you clearly recognize the deep fountainhead of the One Mind, the Mind-Lotus of the nine ranks⁹ will bloom in the Pure Mind with nine consciousnesses¹⁰; if you attain enlightenment through the Three Mystic Acts, you will perceive the forms of the Five Buddhas¹¹ manifested in your body through the five sense-organs¹². Who still aspires to the glorious land of treasures in the beyond? Who still wishes to see the exquisite forms there?

The difference between delusion and enlightenment rests with your mind, and so, there is no Buddha apart from your three modes of action¹³. Since the true and the delusory are one, you can perceive the Land of Utmost Bliss in the five states of samsaric existence¹⁴. The moment you understand this truth, this very mind of yours is called 'Avalokiteśvara,' for you clearly know the principle of universal presence of the One Mind in all conditioned and unconditioned dharmas. If you acquire the thorough knowledge of this mind, you are called 'Amida Tathāgata,' for you truly recognize the One Mind, which is your innate virtue, free from all discriminations and attachments.

The above is the outline.

[2] Explanation of the Name

Next, I will explain the name. In India it was called '*Amita*'; in China it was translated as '*wu-liang-shou*' (Infinite Life), '*wu-liang-kuang*' (Infinite Light), and so forth. There are in all thirteen translations, which are used only in the exoteric teachings. According to the esoteric interpretation, all names are, without exception, mystic names of the Tathāgata (Mahāvairocana). Nevertheless, I will explain the true meanings of these thirteen names¹⁷.

(1) Muryōju (Infinite Life): The Dharmakāya Tathāgata dwells in the Dharma-realm Palace¹⁸ without arising or perishing; for this reason, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called [48b] 'the Buddha of Infinite Life.'

(2) Muryōkō (Infinite Light): The light of the Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment and observation¹⁹ illumines innumerable sentient beings and countless worlds, benefiting them continually forever; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of Boundless Light.'

(3) Muhenkō (Boundless Light): The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment and observation is limitless and without bounds; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of Boundless Light.'

(4) Mugekō (Unhindered Light): The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment and observation realizes, all at the same time, the absence of obstruction among conditioned and unconditioned dharmas, absolute and relative truth, aspects and essence of reality, mental functions of all sentient beings, down to grass, trees, mountains and rivers; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of Unhindered Light.'

(5) Mutaikō (Incomparable Light): The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment and observation cannot be explained in relative terms, because from the beginning delusion does not exist. The true enlightenment which cannot be explained in relative terms transcends the wisdom of distinguishing the true and the false; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of Incomparable Light.'

(6) The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment and observation brilliantly illumines the darkness of ignorance in the consciousness of sentient beings and burns the defilements of their blind passions like a blazing fire; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of the Light of the Flaming King.'

(7) The light of the Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wonderful wisdom destroys the darkness of ignorance of sentient beings, reveals the Pal-

ace of Enlightenment in the Mind²⁰, and enables one to attain, for the first time, the bliss of original non-production²¹; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of the Light of Joy.'

(8) The light of the Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wonderful wisdom clearly discerns the real significance of the absolute and relative truth and illumines conditioned and unconditioned dharmas; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of the Light of Wisdom.'

(9) The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment allows him to dwell in the enjoyment of his own Dharma everlastingly without change and cessation; hence, Mahāvairocana Tathāgata is also called 'the Buddha of Unceasing Light.'

(10) The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment is inconceivable even to the Bodhisattvas of Equal Enlightenment²² and of the Tenth Stage; hence, he is also called 'the Buddha of Inconceivable Light.'

(11) The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment is beyond the reach of the wisdom of ordinary beings and that of wise men and sages and cannot be adequately praised by them; hence, he is also called 'the Buddha of the Light Beyond Praise.'

(12) The Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wisdom of wonderful discernment is originally not defiled by the objects of the six sense-perceptions²³; hence, he is also called 'the Buddha of the Light of Purity.'

(13) The light of the Dharmakāya Tathāgata's wonderful wisdom is originally forever present and illumines everywhere at all times, day and night, regardless of time and space; because it excels the sun and the moon of this world, he is also called 'the Buddha of the Light Outshining the Sun and the Moon.'

Thus the names of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three periods throughout the ten directions are different names of the great Dharmakāya. Again, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three periods throughout the ten directions are manifestations of the discerning wisdoms of Mahāvairocana Tathāgata. Further, words and utterances of all sentient beings are, [48c] without exception, his mystic names. Those who are deluded about this are called sentient beings; that which realizes it is called the Buddha's wisdom. For this reason, one who pronounces the three syllables, A, MI, and DA, will have his grave karmic offenses from the beginningless past extinguished; one who is mindful of one Buddha, Amida, will accomplish endless merits and wisdom. Just as a single gem in Indra's net at once reflects images of innumerable gems, the single Buddha, Amida, instantly endows him with boundless intrinsic merits.

[3] Explanation of the Sanskrit Syllables

Next, I will explain the significance of the Sanskrit syllables.

(1) *A* signifies the principle of non-differentiation and original non-production²⁴ of the One Mind; *MI*²⁵ signifies the principle of non-differentiation, egolessness, and universal self of the One Mind; *TA*²⁶ signifies the principle of suchness and tranquillity of all dharmas pervaded by the One Mind.

(2) *A* also signifies the Buddha family²⁷, because it symbolizes the oneness of the principle of reality and the transcendental wisdom, and represents the essential nature of the Dharma-realm pervaded by the One Mind. *MI* signifies the Lotus family²⁸, because the ultimate reality revealed by the wisdom of wonderful discernment and observation, i.e., the voidness of sentient beings and dharmas is, like a lotus-flower, originally undefiled by objects of the six sense-perceptions. *TA* signifies the Vajra family²⁹, because the wonderful wisdom of the Tathāgata is in itself indestructible and destroys as enemies all the delusions.

(3) *A* also³⁰ signifies the principle of voidness; the essential nature of the One Mind is, from the beginning, free from delusory appearances. *MI* signifies the principle of temporariness; all dharmas pervaded by the undifferentiated One Mind are temporary existences like illusions. *TA* signifies the principle of the middle; all dharmas pervaded by the undifferentiated One Mind are free from the two extreme views and so, cannot be conceived as having fixed forms.

(4) *A* also signifies the principle of existence; the essential nature of the One Mind is originally existent, unproduced, and without extinction. *MI* signifies the principle of voidness; all dharmas pervaded by the One Mind are in themselves ungraspable. *TA* signifies Buddha; the undifferentiated One Mind expresses the principle of reality of suchness and the transcendental wisdom, which are among the qualities of Buddhahood.

The above analysis is the explanation of the Sanskrit syllables. These syllables have no fixed forms in their mutual relations, just as (images reflected in) the gems attached to Indra's net cannot be taken up or discarded, for the undifferentiated One Mind is ungraspable. The above gives the meanings (of the syllable). There is no syllable apart from its meaning; no meaning apart from the syllable. It is a delusory view of the discrimination to accept one and discard the other, or vice versa.

To hate this Saha world and seek birth in the Land of Utmost Bliss, or to dislike this defiled body and revere the Buddha-body, is termed ignorance and also delusion. Even in the world of defilement, during the period of decline, if one continues to meditate on the undifferentiated Dharma-realm, how can one not attain the Buddhist Way?

NOTES

- ¹ The One Mind is the all-inclusive absolute mind, from which all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and sages appear and to which all dharmas and sentient beings return. It is the same as the Buddha-nature. The merits and virtues contained in the One Mind are symbolically represented as Mahāvairocana.
- ² The twofold truth or reality is: absolute reality (*paramārtha-satya*) and conventional or relative reality (*samvṛtti-satya*).
- ³ The nine realms are: hell, the realms of hungry spirits, animals, asuras, humans, devas, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas, that is all realms other than that of the Buddha, the tenth.
- ⁴ The five wisdoms are: (1) the wisdom of realizing the essence of the Dharma-realm (*dharmadhātu-svabhāva-jñāna*), (2) the great round mirror-wisdom (*adarśa-jñāna*), (3) the wisdom of non-distinction (*amatā-jñāna*), (4) the wisdom of wonderful discernment (*pratyavekṣaṇā-jñāna*), and (5) wisdom of manifesting transformed bodies (*kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna*).
- ⁵ The four maṇḍalas are: (1) great maṇḍala (*mahā-maṇḍala*); a Buddha or Bodhisattva or a painting of his figure; (2) maṇḍala of sacred attributes (*samaya-maṇḍala*); symbols held in the hands of a divinity such as an ensign, sword, wheel, jewel, or lotus flower; also a painting of such an object; (3) maṇḍala of sacred letters (*dharmamaṇḍala*); seed-syllables, words, and the meanings of all sūtras; and (4) maṇḍala of iconic figures (*karma-maṇḍala*); sculptures showing the posture and gestures of a divinity.
- ⁶ The five aggregates (*pañca-skandhāḥ*) are: (1) matter or form (*rūpa*); (2) perception (*vedanā*); (3) conception (*saṃjñā*); (4) volition (*saṃskāra*); and (5) consciousness (*viññāna*).
- ⁷ The three mystic acts are: (1) bodily mystical act; forming the manual sign (*mudrā*) of a specific divinity; (2) verbal mystical act; reciting the mantra of a specific divinity; and (3) mental mystical act; meditating on a specific divinity.
- ⁸ The nine consciousnesses are: (1) visual consciousness, (2) auditory consciousness, (3) olfactory consciousness, (4) gustatory consciousness, (5) tactile consciousness, (6) mental consciousness, (7) ego-consciousness (*manas*), (8) *ālaya*-consciousness, and (9) *amala*-consciousness. The theory of nine consciousnesses is attributed to the Shōron (Shelun) school, which flourished in China for about a hundred years from the later half of the sixth century. In the present context, however, the ninth consciousness, which is usually considered undefiled, is treated from our viewpoint as being obscured by delusion.
- ⁹ Cf. H. Inagaki, "Kūkai's *Sokushin-jōbutsu-gi*," *Asin Major*, Vol. 17, Part 2, 1972; reprint published by Ryukoku Translation Center, 1975,

under the title, "Kūkai's Principle of Attaining Buddhahood with the Present Body."

¹⁰ Refers to Mahāvairocana.

¹¹ "The nine ranks" (*kuhon*), as used in the *Kanmuryōjukyō*, refers to the nine grades of aspirants who attain nine different levels of birth in Amida's Pure Land. Here the term seems to refer to the following nine ranks mentioned in the *Kuhon ōjō Amida sanmaji shū-daranikyō* (TT. 19, 79c; hereafter, abbreviated to *Daranikyō*): (1) the upper grade of the upper class, *shinjikiji* (stage of true form), (2) the middle grade of the upper class, *mukuji* (stage of non-defilement), (3) the lower grade of the upper class, *rikuji* (stage of separation from defilement); (4) the upper grade of the middle class, *zengakuji* (stage of excellent enlightenment); (5) the middle grade of the middle class, *myōrikiji* (stage of absence of impurities); (7) the upper grade of the lower class, *shinkakuji* (stage of enlightenment of truth); (8) the middle grade of the lower class, *gengakuji* (stage of enlightenment of wisdom); and (9) the lower grade of the lower class, *rakumonji* (stage of the gate of happiness). In this sūtra these ten ranks represent the nine pure consciousnesses of True Suchness. In the *Gorin kuji hishaku* (KDS. I, 212) Kakuban seems to use the term *kuhon* in the same sense as in the *Kanmuryōjukyō*, but his usage of this term in the *Shingonshū sokushin jōbutsugishō* (KDS. I, 32) is also different from that in the *Kanmuryōjukyō*.

¹² The Pure Mind with nine consciousnesses refers to the purified states of the nine consciousnesses mentioned above; Kakuban's phraseology is reminiscent of 'kuhon jōshiki sanmaji' (Samādhi of Pure Consciousness with nine ranks) mentioned in the *Daranikyō* (TT. 19, 79c).

¹³ For the five Buddhas, see H. Inagaki, *Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist Terms*, 3rd and 4th editions, 1988 and 1992, under *gobutsu*.

¹⁴ The five sense-organs are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and the tactile body.

¹⁵ Refers to Amida's Pure Land.

¹⁶ Bodily act, speech, and thought.

¹⁷ The five states of samsaric existence are: hell and the realms of hungry spirits, animals, humans, and devas.

¹⁸ Of the thirteen names, the first is the name of Amida Buddha specifically used in *Muryōjukyō*. The next twelve names are his appellations describing different functions and characteristics of his light; cf. TT. 12. 270a-b. The *Daranikyō* also mentions those twelve appellations related to his light, stating that they represent twelve Mahāmaṇḍalas (i.e., figures of Buddhas and sages) which are reflected in the great round mirror-wisdom.

¹⁹ The Dharma-dhātu Palace of Mahāvairocana in the Realm of the Matrix-store Maṇḍala is located in the Maheśvara Heaven

- (Daijizaiten); its full name is *Kōdai kongō hokkaigū* (the Great Palace of the Diamond-like Dharma-realm).
- ²⁰ Myōkanzatchi corresponds to the sixth consciousness and is represented by Amida. Here it is interpreted as belonging to Mahāvairocana.
- ²¹ 'Palace' is a symbolic expression of Enlightenment realized in the ultimate nature of one's mind.
- ²² 'Original non-production', Skt. *anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*, is the insight of realizing the voidness of all dharmas.
- ²³ 'Equal Enlightenment' is the highest stage of a Bodhisattva which corresponds to the fifty-first stage of the fifty-two-stage career.
- ²⁴ 'The objects of the six sense-perceptions' are form, sound, odor, taste, tangible objects, and objects of the mind.
- ²⁵ The Sanskrit syllable 'A' is here construed as 'ādy-anutpāda' (original non-production).
- ²⁶ 'MI' seems to be construed here as 'mahātman' (great self).
- ²⁷ 'TA' represents 'tathatā' (true suchness).
- ²⁸ The three families, Buddha, Lotus, and Vajra, are the three divisions of Buddhas and divinities in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. The lotus symbolizes the ultimate principle (*ri*) contained in the pure Bodhi-mind and free from defilement by blind passions; the indestructible wisdom (*chi*) of realizing the ultimate principle is compared to the Vajra; the two perfect virtues of Enlightenment belong to the Buddha family. Three syllables used for them are respectively A, SA, and VA.
- ²⁹ The Lotus family is also known as Kannon-bu (Avalokiteśvara family) and Hō-bu (Dharma family). In the Realm of the Matrix-store Maṇḍala, the thirty six sages, headed by Avalokiteśvara, belong to this family.
- ³⁰ The Vajra family corresponds to Kongōshu-in (Vajrapāṇi section) of the Realm of the Matrix-store Maṇḍala which contains thirty three sages, headed by Kongōsatta (Vajrasattva).
- ³¹ The theory that A, MI and TA represent the triple truth of the void, the temporary, and the middle was propounded in the *Kanjin ryakuyōshō* (*Eshin Sozu zenshū* I, 277), ascribed to Genshin (942-1017). Kakuban also says in the *Gorin kuji hishaku* (KDS. I, 212): "The practitioner of the Single Path of the Unconditioned (i. e., one who follows the Tendai teaching) contemplates the void, the temporary, and the middle through the contemplation of A, MI, and TA."

[This paper was first published in the *Kōgyō daishi Kakuban kenkyū*, Shunjūsha, Tokyo, 1992, pp. 1095-1112.]