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## Contemplations and Imagery: Issues Relevant to Ancient Japanese Esoteric Buddhist Icons, Ritual Practice, and Cultural Contexts<sup>1</sup>

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THE SYSTEMATIZED “ESOTERIC TEACHINGS,” *mikkyō*, promoted by the monk Kūkai (774–835) during the ninth century, feature an efficacious ritual system that includes contemplations (Ch. *guan*, Jpn. *kan*) and ritual imagery. In his *Jo [tatematsuru] shin shōrai kyōtō mokuroku hyō* (Catalogue of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items), an inventory of the texts, icons, and other goods he brought home from China in 806 following two years of study abroad, Kūkai explained the transformative potential of *mikkyō* teachings—and also of the new imagery. He writes: “Because the secret storehouse [*mikkyō* teaching] is so profound and mysterious it is difficult to manifest with brush and ink [i.e., text]. Thus it is revealed to the unenlightened by adopting the form of images [Jpn. *zuga*]. The great variety of postures and *mudrās* [depicted in mandala images] are the effect of the Buddha’s great compassion. With a single glance [at the images] one becomes a buddha.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Kūkai ends his *Catalogue of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items* with a verse:

The dharma neither manifests nor conceals itself,  
According to the individual it comes and goes,  
Like a gem difficult to obtain.<sup>3</sup>  
Once attained the mind will be opened....  
I’ve assiduously copied the texts,  
That have come from far away....  
May this blessing be instrumental,  
In pacifying the nation and in bringing prosperity to the people,  
Only to hear [the teachings] only to see [the mandala],  
May all be freed from ills.<sup>4</sup>

Just four characters comprise the penultimate line of the verse: “one hearing, one seeing,” that is, simply the sound of the teachings and the sight of the mandala free the adherents from their ills. *Mikkyō* images were not only illustrations of the divine agents of power, but were the power of the divinity itself. According to Kūkai, a single glance at the images was the same as direct experience of the dharma—not a reflection of it. Kūkai claimed the same potential for language.

The best known type of *mikkyō* visual culture is the painted mandala and its ritual platforms. A mandala is usually understood as an illustration or diagram of the myriad esoteric divinities, but it can take many forms. According to Kūkai’s transmission there are four types of mandala, which are understood as the four characteristics of all phenomena, of perception, or four attributes of the Mahāvairocana Buddha. The four types of mandala are the great mandala, *mahā* mandala (Jpn. *dai-mandara*), which represents the divinities in their anthropomorphic form and is usually painted; the symbolic-form mandala, *samaya* mandala (Jpn. *sanmaya-mandara*), which represents the divinities with symbols such as their attributes; the seed-syllable form mandala, dharma mandala (Jpn. *hō-mandara*), or *bīja* mandala, which represents the divinities in their Siddham (Sanskrit) seed syllable (*bīja*); and the three-dimensional mandala, karma mandala (Jpn. *katsuma-mandara*), which represents the universal activity of the Mahāvairocana Buddha.

Kūkai taught that the material and visual forms of his teachings instantiate the absolute, transcendent *dharmakāya* Buddha, whose preaching is made accessible through ritual activity. In *mikkyō*, there is an unprecedented equivalency of ritual performance, including “sight” or understanding of the mandala, with the realm of the *dharmakāya* Buddha. When the novice sees the mandala for the first time<sup>5</sup> he or she is to understand the force of the mandala as “becoming the Buddha.” According to Kūkai, a mandala is one of many visual instantiations of esoteric practice and thought. It is not only a representation, or a didactic tool, but the very form of buddhahood. The painted, symbolic, or sculptural mandala, like the practitioner’s body, the sculpted icon, and the implements of ritual practice, participates in the *dharmakāya* universe or assembly of divinities. The *mikkyō* divinities are invited to the ritual space by means of the adherent’s practice. Kūkai addressed the relationship between practitioner, ritual practice, and the material-somatic topography of *mikkyō* in terms of the “three

mysteries” (Jpn. *sanmitsu*, Skt. *trigyuha*), the body, speech, and mind of the formless *dharmakāya* Buddha. The three inhere in all sentient beings in the ritual body: *mudrās* (*ingei*, hand gestures), recitation of mantras (*shingon*, incantations), and eidetic contemplation (*kansō* or *kannen*, often called “visualizations” in the literature). The paradigmatic ritual format is *abhiṣeka* or initiation (*kanjō*). This transformative power of the teachings and the mandala was unlike the efficacy claimed by eighth-century Japanese Buddhist praxis. Ritual and icon had long been understood as powerfully efficacious,<sup>6</sup> but their immediate correlation to attainment is new.

In the Japanese esoteric Shingon teachings, of which Kūkai is the founder, both metaphorical and optical vision can reveal or constitute new ways of understanding, perceiving, and comprehending. Imagery is accessible to perception in unrestricted ways that texts are not. Two- and three-dimensional forms are received differently, as are forms that are “viewed” as opposed to those that are held or manipulated.

What of immaterial forms, such as the components of contemplation? Some Chinese masters promoted a structured, sequential discernment of reality that reveals the experienced world as “nothing but cognitive construction.”<sup>7</sup> The progressive levels of “seeing” or “viewing” (Ch. *guan*, Jpn. *kan*) the world in contemplations (also *guan*) are “ways of understanding the nature of our experience of existence,” cultivated in meditation but without a distinct “visualization” objective.<sup>8</sup> If esoteric practices and modes of representation influenced the production of imagery in Japan broadly, as I believe occurred, this also spurs us to evaluate their effective structure within culture and society.

*Guan*, the key term for understanding eidetic contemplation, is the Chinese term for “discernment.” It is used either alone or in combination with other Chinese characters.<sup>9</sup> *Guan* may refer to two types of meditation, one “visualizing” and one “seeing” the divinity; though they have very different components and meanings, they are at times impossible to distinguish. Both are soteriologically oriented and both are part of cognition and perception. The “contents” of contemplation cannot be articulated in words, and yet the ritual texts both prescribe and describe the steps of contemplations. Contemplations produce (non)forms, but the (non)forms borrow descriptives such as color, shape, and size.

In the Japanese Shingon tradition, the ritual adherent and the *dharmakāya* Buddha, Dainichi, find common ground through the three mysteries (Skt. *triguha*, Jpn. *sanmitsu*). As propounded in Kūkai's *Transforming This Body into the Realm of Enlightenment*, "each divinity possesses three mysteries [countless] as the dust of [all the] lands. [The three] are mutually empowering and encompassing. So it is with the three mysteries of sentient beings."<sup>10</sup> The three mysteries are the secret communications of the *dharmakāya*'s body, speech, and mind. As explicated in the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, the body, speech, and mind of the Mahāvairocana Buddha are reflected by the three parallel practices that inhere in all sentient beings: *mudrās* (*ingei*, hand gestures), recitation of mantras (*shingon*, incantations), and eidetic meditations (*kansō* or *kannen*).<sup>11</sup> These three activities of the body (*sangō*) are made coexistent with the three mysteries of the *dharmakāya* universe through ritual activity and result in the attainment of great perfection. Among the three ritual activities, "mind" refers to contemplation; contemplative techniques are the highest level of *mikkyō* ritual.

*Kansō* are part of nearly every Shingon ritual and hold a primary role in *abhiṣeka* (initiations), the core practices of the tradition. To the outsider, contemplations seem to have a transparent, mimetic relationship to material form or representation. From the adherent's perspective, this relationship appears to be very different and calls for discussion of the nature of reality in ritual contemplation and its goals. A lack of ethnographic evidence and relative abundance of written liturgical texts leave lacunae that have been filled with either speculations or, conversely, pared down to available sources—ritual texts and commentaries. We are also limited by the fact that many *kansō* techniques are orally transmitted by the master to the disciple (or are tailored by master for disciple) and are not offered to the uninitiated. The present essay addresses this situation with an examination of "mind" and contemplation from the standpoint of representation and visual culture. Relative to practice, I note only that texts cannot be relied upon to provide the full content of contemplative practices, neither ancient nor modern, but nor can modern ethnographic evidence. To refer to *mikkyō* contemplation in English, I use the term "eidetic contemplation" instead of the more common "visualization," which could be translated unsuitably as "mental imagery," its closest equivalent in (Western) cognitive science. "Mind imagery" could also

be used, with the understanding that “mind” refers to “*mikkyō* mind” and that “imagery” in this case includes formless imagery.

*Kansō* are visually rich. My analysis takes up the history of “imagery” in contemplation, both material imagery (icons, etc.) and immaterial imagery (eidetic form). It is of interest that there is no agreement in cognitive science as to what constitutes a “mental image.” The various debates in studies of mental imagery may be useful in an analysis of the relationship between *mikkyō* contemplation, representation, and visual culture. My approach, however, is that of an art historian and, though discussions between Western scientists and Buddhist practitioners can be enlightening and fruitful,<sup>12</sup> I refrain from attempting to explain Buddhist processes in terms of Western cognitive research. Cognitive science is making discoveries regarding the brain’s processing of visual perception, concept of self, dreams, and memory. It has shown how consciousness can be manipulated—inducing out-of-body experiences, for example—and brought such topics into the mainstream.<sup>13</sup> The kinds of discoveries that cognitive science claims, however, often come as no surprise to masters of Buddhist meditation.

#### GUAN

The Buddhist lexicons give the Sanskrit *vipaśyanā* for *guan*: meditative insight or the clarity required to discern the real from the unreal, the vision that frees us from the bonds of attachments and suffering.<sup>14</sup> Especially in the Tiantai/Tendai tradition, *guan* means to see things as they really are, to discern or perceive the principle of reality. Sight (Ch. *jian*, Jpn. *ken*), can be many things, including insight, discernment, and other kinds of Buddhist apprehension, but it is also associated with form or a deluded view(point), especially in the Mādhyamika tradition. SAWA Ryūken notes that *kan* differs from *ken*, “sight,” as it refers to the mind that discerns and illuminates with wisdom.<sup>15</sup> In the *mikkyō* ritual system, *guan* (*kan*) refers more narrowly to “the workings of the mystery of the mind among the three mysteries,”<sup>16</sup> and to the workings of the mind in practices such as the A-syllable contemplation, the lunar disk contemplation, *gosō jōjinkan* (contemplation on the [Buddha] body comprised of the five marks), and other practices of the *shido kegyō* (four-methods emancipation practice). These esoteric initiations are among those taken up in the popular and academic literature.

The types of eidetic meditation practices that are named *guan/kan* in China and Japan followed a history of practices in which “recalling”

or “seeing” the divinities, or intoning their names, was used to improve concentration, or for other soteriological goals. The standard Buddhist account of memory employs two technical terms: *smṛti* and *pratyabhijñāna*. In what has been referred to as a “wave of visionary theism” across north India in the early centuries CE, Hindu and early Mahāyāna texts alike give us protagonists who have spontaneous visions of the supreme individual or the Buddha or paradise, and then through devout and accomplished practice of visualizations come to “learn to do for themselves what was given them” involuntarily.<sup>17</sup> The simultaneous popularity in northern India of Hindu texts that enabled, through contemplative practice, the revelation of a vast theophany in a vision of blazing light—revelations that were previously granted only through the grace of the deity—seems more than coincidence. The practice is *bhakti*, a precise contemplative activity that manifests an iconographic visualization of the god. As described in the Hindu *Bhagavadgītā*, and in meditation manuals and Pure Land-related texts alike, divine grace is posited by the text as primary, and yet the deity soon relents and teaches a visionary contemplative technique.<sup>18</sup>

There were increasingly frequent references in Buddhist literature circulating in early medieval China to *buddhānusmṛti*, “contemplating the image of the Buddha.” These are rendered in Chinese translations as either *nianfo* (Jpn. *nenbutsu*) or *guanfo* (Jpn. *kanbutsu*), “recalling the Buddha” and “contemplating the Buddha,” respectively, in addition to other less common terms. *Nianfo* is strongly associated with the recitation of the Buddha’s name in the Pure Land traditions; this vocalizing aspect should, however, historically speaking, be considered one of many possible components of “recollection” practices, such as offerings, prostrations, and the like. The mental or eidetic aspect of *nian* (recalling) is evident in its transmission from India to Central Asia and then to China where, despite the many ritual components of *nianfo*, the earliest translated sutras generally use *nianfo* for *mental* recollection of the Buddha and distinct terms such as *zhengming* (praising the name) or *jiming* (keeping the name) for intonation of the Buddha’s name.<sup>19</sup> The Sanskrit terms for mental constructions of forms, *vipaśyanā* and *bhāvanā*, are also translated in Chinese as *guan*. From within this same pool of visionary schema and contemplative techniques arose many elements of Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism.

In Buddhism the term *guan* fundamentally refers to examination and study, to the discernment of distinctions and illusions, and to the

illumination of wisdom; hence, for example, the parallel functions and characteristics of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin). In systematized Japanese esotericism, *kan* (usually *kansō*) refers to functions of the “mystery of the mind,” one of the three esoteric mysteries: dictionaries of Buddhism and *mikkyō*, and other general dictionaries, also state that, “broadly speaking, any contemplation of the form and principle of the various dharmas is called *kansō*.”<sup>20</sup>

Scholars have noted an emphasis on eidetic contemplation practices in a group of six sutras that contain the Chinese character *guan* in their titles, all or most of which were likely composed in Central Asia and China during the late fourth and early fifth centuries.<sup>21</sup> These sutras feature a wide range of divinity types. It is possible that they represent the final development in contemplations that stress eidetic types of contemplation over calming and other kinds of meditative concentrations. The sutras feature both buddhas and bodhisattvas. They are:

*Sutra on the Sea of the Samādhi of Buddha Contemplation (Guanfo sanmei hai jing)*

*Sutra on Contemplating Maitreya Bodhisattva’s Rebirth above in Tuṣita Heaven (Guan Mile pusa shangsheng Doushuaitian jing)*

*Sutra on Contemplating Amitāyus Buddha (Guan Wu liang shou fo jing; often referred to simply as the Visualization Sutra, well known in Japan as the Kanmuryōjūkyō)*

*Sutra on Contemplating the Two Bodhisattvas Bhaiṣajyarāja and Bhaiṣajya-samudgata (Guanyao wang yao shang er pusa jing)*

*Sutra on Contemplating the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha [Void Storehouse, Jpn. Kokūzō] (Guanxu kong zang pu sa jing)*

*Sutra on the Practice of Contemplating the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (Guan pu xian pusa xing fa jing)*<sup>22</sup>

On what does the mind base the construction of the (non)forms in eidetic meditation? Unlike the Theravādin meditation techniques in which material objects, typically clay disks (*kaṣiṇa*), were focus points that were then mentally “visualized” as a preliminary concentration exercise toward higher states of meditation,<sup>23</sup> in the *guan* practices of these six sutras contemplation begins with a series of “thoughts” (*zhuan xin*) and mental preparations, leading to a complex eidetic progression, culminating with seeing (*jian*) the deity in an elaborate and



highly detailed realization.<sup>24</sup> In the *guan* sutra devoted to Amitāyus/Amitābha, and related to Amitāyus images like the so-called Taima Mandara (Chinese) imported tapestry and Dunhuang *bianxiang* paintings, we find an elaborate exposition of a contemplation technique.<sup>25</sup> Śākyamuni teaches Queen Vaidehī a means of spiritual escape from physical imprisonment: a ladder of meditations, the culmination of which reveals the Pure Land. A disciple who employs this sutra begins with a contemplation of the sun setting in the west; then considers attributes of the Pure Land, such as jewel trees and waterways; then in the mind constructs a step-by-step visualization of the Buddha Amitāyus, starting with the lotus and ending with the image seated on a throne. A subsequent step recapitulates the earlier eidetic contemplation of the Buddha's body: "Only to imagine a Buddha image brings immeasurable benefits; how much more when one visualizes a Buddha complete with all His body attributes."<sup>26</sup> A distinction is made between imagining the Buddha and an eidetic contemplation of the Buddha.

Alexander Soper discusses the iconography and content of three sutras on Amitāyus and concludes that the *guan* sutra, *Sutra on Contemplating Amitāyus Buddha*, is the last of three stages in audience and content, with increasing emphasis on visualizations.<sup>27</sup> According to Julian Pas, it may be that the term *nian* (or *chan*, i.e., meditation, Skt. *dhyāna*) "was no longer felt suitable to describe the new method of visualization-inspection recently developed in meditation centers" that gave rise to these types of sutras.<sup>28</sup> The translators or alleged translators of the texts were all Central Asian, strongly suggesting developments in Buddhist praxis in Central Asia. Indeed, the most descriptive passage concerning eidetic meditations in the travels of the Chinese monk Xuanzang (602?–664) takes place just after his sojourn in Kashmir.

The number of commentaries on *guanxiang* (contemplation of images) sutras and abundant numbers of *jingbian* (*sūtra bianxiang*, narratives) related to the practice attest to the popularity of eidetic contemplation during the Tang dynasty. Kūkai and other monks who visited Chang'an encountered them. The *guan* texts contain many specific references to techniques and to the visual appearance of icons. Among the *guan* sutras, *Contemplating Amitāyus Buddha* is the most complex and explicit in its exposition of the *guan* technique. In the ninth exercise, contemplation of the Buddha's bodily marks, it states: "He who sees [i.e., obtains a vision of] Buddha Amitā, also sees the innumerable

Buddhas of the Ten Quarters. Because he obtains a vision [*jian*] of the innumerable Buddhas, the Buddhas appear in front of him [*xianqian*] and he receives the prophecy [of future Buddhahood].”<sup>29</sup> Soper notes that compared to earlier texts devoted to Amitāyus, the Amitāyus *guan* sutra specifically mentions setting up images as a requirement, in addition to raising *stūpas*; and that all six of the *guan* texts named above mention the ritual requirement for the altar of flowers, lamps, votive banners, and so on. Soper states that *guan*, “which [he] prefer[s] to render as visualize . . . describes here a special kind of mystical adventure, which can have become possible in the Buddhist world only after the cult of images had been accepted and drawn deep into the center of religious experience.”<sup>30</sup> He feels strongly that the step-by-step buildup of visual images required of the *guan* sutras was aided by memories of Buddhist icons, and I concur. The texts do not prove a relationship of *guan* practices and material imagery, but do give inferential evidence.

Typically, secondary literature on meditation approaches only the perceptual gap between an enstatic form of introversion, wherein sensory processing is ceased, and ecstatic forms, in which a practitioner is unaware of his or her environment because of enhanced participation in eidetic meditation and its alternative sensory reality. Even within ecstatic forms, however, the difference between “visualizing” and “realizing” is perhaps blurred at the highest level. Alan Sponberg distinguishes between ecstatic contemplation techniques, in which “the practitioner seeks a state of enhanced sensation by throwing himself into an alternative reality rich in aesthetic and emotional detail,” and an enstatic form prominent in the older *dhyāna* traditions in which a state of sensory stasis is sought. The Buddhist master Kuiji (632–682), Xuanzang’s successor in Faxiang (Jpn. Hossō) circles, made a Maitreya statue every month as part of his practice and may have conducted daily recitations before a Maitreya statue of the bodhisattva vows.<sup>31</sup> Here, a connection between the images (statues) and the Maitreya visualization techniques is implicit. Sponberg notes, “the apparent distinction between ‘visualizing’ and actually ‘seeing’ Maitreya probably becomes meaningless as one’s skill in the technique is perfected.”<sup>32</sup>

The *mikkyō* traditions acknowledge continuities between Shingon *guan* and other historical practices, but the popular Shingon literature tends to stress a direct relationship between eidetic contemplations and Shingon mandalas. There must have been contemplation practices in Nara-period Buddhist traditions, but they were not emphasized

in records before the arrival of *mikkyō* (followed by developments in pure land praxis). In the whole of the late eighth-century compilation of Buddhist stories *Nihonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki* (Miraculous Stories of Good and Evil Karmic Effects in the Nation of Japan, hereafter Miraculous Stories) there is not a single usage of the character *kan* in reference to any kind of contemplation. *Nen* (recollection, contemplation) occurs, but it is rare: in two tales (1-6 and 1-17), both set outside Japan, *nen* is used for Kannon Bodhisattva contemplation. The story "On Gaining an Immediate Reward for Faith in Bodhisattva Kannon" concerns the elder Master Gyōzen who was sent to Koryō (Korea) to study.<sup>33</sup> When the country was invaded, he needed to cross a river to safety. As he contemplated (*nen*) Kannon at the riverside, an old man in a boat appeared to take him to the other side. He realized later that the old man was an incarnation of Kannon, and he made a vow to venerate an icon of Kannon.

*Nen* as a reference to a form of contemplation also appears in the story "On Suffering War Damage and Gaining an Immediate Reward for Faith in an Image of Bodhisattva Kannon."<sup>34</sup> The story relates how a governor of Ochi district in Iyo Province was sent to the Kingdom of Paekche in the seventh century, taken prisoner by Chinese soldiers, and sent to Tang China. He and other prisoners were put on an island, where they acquired an image of the Bodhisattva Kannon, which they devoutly worshipped. "They worked together cutting down a pine tree to make a boat, enshrined the Kannon image in the boat, and, meditating [*nen*] on the image, made their individual vows." With the Kannon on the boat, they drifted to Tsukushi (Kyūshū) and were able to tell their tale to the emperor. In these two tales, *nen* suggests a focused devotion. The term *shōnen*<sup>35</sup> occurs in one tale (3-12): the story of the "Blind Man Whose Sight Was Restored Owing to His Chanting of the Name of the Nichimanishu of the Thousand-Armed Kannon."<sup>36</sup> This story states that the man "was devoted to Kannon and contemplated the name [*shōnen*] of Nichimanishu to restore his eyesight." Other than in these three tales, *nen* is not used with regard to "contemplation."

Another devotional practice noted in the *Miraculous Stories* that may have had a contemplative component concerns the tying of a rope to a statue while intoning *dhāraṇī*. Otherwise, the only other type of meditative practice mentioned in the work is intoning the sutras (most often, the *Lotus Sutra*), a practice that was well established in the eighth century and widely considered to be efficacious.

*Guan* contemplations are central to Faxiang texts popular in China by the early Tang period,<sup>37</sup> but although *guan* practices are prescribed by texts that existed in pre-Heian Japanese compilations, there is no indication that they had anything but minor currency before Saichō and Kūkai returned from China—this even though the ritual apparatus for certain types of Amitābha Pure Land visualizations presumably existed in Japan, as substantiated by the Taima Mandara tapestry image. Unlike the situation in China, the introduction of *mikkyō* to Japan meant not only the influx of a huge new pantheon of divinities, but also a lexicon of ritual practices that contributed both the conceptual apparatus for envisioning the mandala cosmology and also the ritual technology to do so. With the introduction of *mikkyō* by Saichō and Kūkai in the early ninth century, *kan*, *kansō*, *kannen*, *kansatsu*, *sō*, and other terms with an eidetic contemplation component became current—not only in *mikkyō*, but in a range of traditions. Once again, this is not to doubt that meditations with eidetic content were already known in Japan, only that they were neither widespread nor important to practice. Some of the claims, then, made by Shingon exegetes are historically valid for Japan even though they are not true for the study of ritual or meditation in China—which nonetheless is given as the source for Japanese esotericism. Such claims may arise from the truly radical nature of the *mikkyō* worldview to the ninth- and tenth-century Japanese context.

#### SHADOW IMAGES

A famous Chinese painting at Mount Lu was allegedly based on the Buddha's "shadow" or "reflection," *foyingxiang* (Skt. *Buddha bimba* or *pratibimba*, Jpn. *butsu eizō*).<sup>38</sup> A "shadow image" made at the behest of the monk Huiyuan in 412 may have been used for *guanfo sanmei* (Skt. *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, Jpn. *kanbutsu sanmai*), that is, "samādhi for contemplation of the Buddha."<sup>39</sup> Legends about this image provide many clues concerning the Buddhist articulation of reality vis-à-vis imagery and the ways in which images became sacred. The shadow image was not visible at all times or from close by. It was neither image nor illusion—and it was both. Here we find some of the same entanglements suggested by the term "memory" in English. Memory is not stable: it neither equals the form of the object it recalls, nor can it be compared to another person's memory of the same object except in the process of representation.

Another famous shadow image was produced by quite literal means: King Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, wished to give a portrait of the Buddha to the king of Rauruka, but the painters summoned to make the portrait were unable to move their eyes from the perfection of their model. The Buddha therefore cast his shadow on paper and the painters added color after tracing the silhouette.<sup>40</sup> Such “portraits” or reflections of the Buddha were essentially images based on a residue, a form of “relic,” and were important conveyors of meaning and efficacy in Buddhist Asia.<sup>41</sup> Of the Christian tradition of relics and images of relics, Hans Belting suggests that “the observation that *images* could become relics and relics were displayed as images, introduces us into a historical process which can be understood as a general reevaluation of images. The reality that was sought in them was made *visible* by them.”<sup>42</sup> Something similar might be said for the legend of the Buddha’s shadow and the tremendous potency of its artistic heritage in Buddhist Asia.

The term *xiang* (Jpn. *zō*) in *foyingxiang* can mean “image,” “figure,” “form,” and so on. *Xiang* has a complex and ancient history in China. From pre-Buddhist times it referred to signs and symbols of power and magic. According to T. Griffith Foulk and colleagues, “For the Chinese, the act of representing or reflecting reality was closely associated with the ability to discern and iconically manipulate the structures or patterns underlying manifest phenomena.”<sup>43</sup> The term *foxiang* (Jpn. *butsuzō*) is most often used to translate the Sanskrit *Buddha pratima*, or *Buddha pratibimba*, the image of the Buddha. It can in some cases refer to images of bodhisattvas or deities other than a buddha. Another term that refers to an image is *xingxiang* (Jpn. *gyōzō*), literally “formal image,” which has distinct meanings in *mikkyō*.

Of the *xiang* (Jpn. *zō*) compounds noted above, *foyingxiang*, *foxiang*, and *yingxiang*, the latter two are the most common referents to a Buddhist image in the Buddhist sutras. The words are equivalent to an “icon” or a material image in some contexts, but in others indicate an eidetic image. Buddhist references to *xiang* philosophically question the notion that any form is real, simultaneously maintaining that all “empty” or non-real forms are actualized images of the Buddha. This differs from discussions in Western literature on art that take up the challenge of the represented “real.” In the circa 800 compilation *Miraculous Stories*, the term *zō* or *butsuzō* is most frequently used for Buddhist statues, and *gi* or *gazō* for painted Buddhist images.<sup>44</sup> *Zō* is not

used alone, but is modified by the name of the divinity or the material used to make the statue, or in some tales by “female” or “broken”; the honorific *sonzō*, “the venerable image,” is also used.<sup>45</sup> Eighth-century temple documents that inventory statues use the same terms.

The term *honzon*, “primary divinity,” does not appear in *Miraculous Stories*. It was not used until Kūkai’s return from China, when it was introduced with esoteric divinities both material and immaterial. In *mikkyō* it refers to the divinity honored in a rite, but during the medieval period *honzon* came to mean the main divinity on an altar or of a temple, as it is used today.<sup>46</sup> In Japanese *mikkyō* practice, the *honzon* can take three forms (*ji*, *in*, *keizō*): a verbal “seed syllable” (Skt. *bīja*, Jpn. *shōji*); a symbolic *mudrā*, or hand gesture; or a pictorial representation. Each of these is further subdivided into six groups according to ritual texts. There is a section on attainment with the *honzon*, “Honzon zanmai” (Ch. “Benzun sanmei,” i.e., *samādhi*) in the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*;<sup>47</sup> Kūkai makes reference to this passage in *Transforming This Body into the Realm of Enlightenment* when he discusses the four mandalas and three esoteric forms of expression for all the *tathāgatas*.<sup>48</sup> In *Hizōki* (Notes on the Secret Treasury) (in which Kūkai claims to record the oral instruction he received in China from Huiguo), Kūkai also discusses the term *honzon*. *Honzon kaji* (ritual empowerment, Skt. *adhiṣṭhāna*) is discussed in a number of *mikkyō* ritual texts and treatises.<sup>49</sup>

Descriptions of apparitions appear early in Tendai history. The characters for *genjyō*, “manifested form” or “transformation,” are typically used.<sup>50</sup> The most famous examples concern the manifested figure of a golden (or yellow) *Acalanātha* (Yellow Fudō Myōō). *Acalanātha* (Fudō Myōō), an important cult figure in China and Japan, took a golden or yellow form in Japan as the result of the vision of the Tendai master Enchin (814–891) around 838, which triggered extensive Japanese discussions of “manifested images.” An entry in the *Tendaishu Enryakuji zasu Enchin den* (Biography of Enchin of the Enryakuji of the Tendai School), compiled in 902, relates the story of a golden Fudō who appeared while the master practiced meditative rites in a cave:

(Winter, Jōwa 5 [833], afternoon) While he was seated in meditation in a stone cavern, there appeared suddenly a golden person, who in this manifested form spoke to him, saying: “Create a picture of this visage then continue your practices.” Kashō [Enchin] responded, “You in this transformed state, who are you?” The golden figure replied, “I am the golden Fudō Myōō. Due to my relation to the adherents of the dharma, I will always protect you. Immediately immerse



yourself in the profundities of the ‘three mysteries’ [*sanmitsu*] in order to save sentient beings.” The vision as it appeared was powerful and mysterious, radiant with efficacious light. [The divinity] held a sword in his hand while his feet trod upon emptiness. Thereupon Kashō prostrated himself and vowed deep in his heart to serve. He made an image that was the very replica of his vision. The image that comes down to us today is that very one.<sup>51</sup>

The term used for Enchin’s vision is *gengyō*. He allegedly had his recollection painted, corresponding to the *Yellow Fudō Myōō* of Onjōji,<sup>52</sup> which might instead be the painting he is recorded to have admired in China during his study there. The extant Onjōji painting is so secret that it was said as early as the eleventh century to have been lost in a fire, generating many copies. An early-twelfth-century copy owned by the temple Manshuin shows the standing golden (yellow) Fudō in a nebulous space, just as the 902 record states, filling the entire pictorial space and thereby appearing to enter the viewer’s space. During ascetic practices beneath a waterfall, the Tendai master Sōō (831–918) also encountered Fudō’s manifested form.<sup>53</sup> Representation of manifested visionary forms increased from Kūkai’s time onward. In the experiences of Enchin and Sōō, the duplication of the visionary form and the material icon goes in both directions: life imitates vision, vision imitates life. This same fluidity or transparency between the material and eidetic forms seems to define Shingon contemplations. In Shingon *mikkyō*, however, the individual icon does not receive greater attention than constructing the mandala altar and entertaining the mandala divinities.

Kūkai was said to have manifested all the attributes of the Mahāvairocana Buddha during *samādhi* attainment before the emperor and Nara clerics, as represented in numerous medieval paintings. The impetus to make visible and material the attainment of enlightenment in this body, *sokushin jōbutsu*, appears to have been a medieval impulse. Fudō was the choice of deity for many adepts who self-transformed. The Shingon priest Kakuban (1095–1143) was said to have manifested himself as Fudō to evade detection by bandits; confronted with two Fudō images, one of whom they suspected to be the priest, they cut the statue with a sword and it bled.<sup>54</sup> Enchin similarly manifested the physical form of Fudō while he was in China (853–858) to avoid detection by Chinese agents—this according to the *Uji shūi monogatari*, compiled circa 1190–1242.<sup>55</sup> Such fluidity of transformation is deeply inculcated by ritual practice and would have been understood by the

meditative community at large. The contemplative practice of *nyūga ganyū*, “interpenetration of self and deity,” well established in the monastic *mikkyō* communities by Enchin’s time, may account for this kind of unprecedented occupation of the divinity in the adherent’s abode, as well as increasing numbers of references to meditative visions and their depiction in sculpted and painted forms.

The A-syllable contemplation (*A-ji kan*) is an important *mikkyō* ritual (both Tendai and Shingon) that explicitly calls for a *material* focus for the contemplation. According to Kūkai, the A-syllable itself is a mantra and a sign. It is also a visualization practice noted in several sections of the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* and its commentaries. The *A-ji kan* is considered by the Shingon tradition to be part of both the Diamond and Womb Mandala lineages.<sup>56</sup> If the *A-ji kan yōshin kusetsu* (Oral Transmission of the A-Syllable Contemplation) is reliable, Kūkai transmitted the practice orally to his disciple Jichie.<sup>57</sup> Kūkai wrote a treatise on the A-syllable (*Ajigi*). His text does not provide many details on how to perform the rite (which is typical of early texts), so practitioners today rely on later versions such as a work by Seizon (1012–1074), used by the Shingon Chūinryū (lineage).<sup>58</sup> In the Womb Mandala-style A-syllable practices, the adherent typically uses a painted hanging scroll or painted disk on a stand that depicts a painted golden A-syllable on a lotus pedestal against a silvered or white full-moon-shaped circle.<sup>59</sup> The *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* instructs:

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 mind, one is enabled to dwell in the practice of mantra.<sup>60</sup>

The material painted object used in this rite is derived from such vivid descriptions; it is difficult not to consider contemplations stimulating pictorial images, and vice versa, when we read such texts, although Robert Sharf considers the language to be discursive.<sup>61</sup> Although contemplations are in part ineffable experiences, and descriptions are not their equal, the visual or representational is, similarly, subject to language in the same way that meditation is subject to discourse. Kūkai



compares the “image” with a moon in clear water, like the reflection of a mirror. This in turn is the nature of the mind, wherein one dwells in the practice of mantra.

Such practices were orally transmitted. Indeed, Kūkai provides an aspect of the A-syllable transmission that does not appear in the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, namely the expansion-contraction technique.<sup>62</sup> He states: “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.”<sup>63</sup> The practitioner uses the image-manifesting technique to bring the image of the main divinity within his breast. He may also use the transformation technique, in which the deity is visualized using its seed syllable “A” and *samaya* (i.e., symbolic) forms—the lotus and moon—that are transformed into the divinity’s anthropomorphic form, the practitioner. These same forms of image, seed syllable, and symbol are part of the transmission of four kinds of mandala, discussed below.

#### MEDITATION ON THE MOVE

Zhiyi’s Tiantai (Jpn. Tendai) views on the Mahāyāna precepts is significant for a discussion of Saichō but not *mikkyō*; our interest here is in the contemplation and *guan* techniques in Zhiyi’s teachings.<sup>64</sup> Saichō studied a range of meditation techniques in China, including some from a Tiantai monk who may have taught him Chan meditation practices.<sup>65</sup> I have noted in chapter 1 of *With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyō Vision*, the courses of study required by the court in 805 for Saichō’s training of monks—the *mikkyō* Shanagō course and the Tendai meditation course, or Shikangō, when the Tendai, Kegon, and Ritsu schools were each given annual ordinands (*nenbundosha*) for the first time (two each). The Shikangō was based on Zhiyi’s *Mohozhiguan* (Stopping and Seeing).<sup>66</sup> Saichō was deeply interested in this practice and made it part of his Tendai teachings. Only four months before receiving a *mikkyō* initiation from Kūkai in 812, Saichō erected a Lotus Meditation Hall (*Hokke sanmaidō*, literally “Lotus Blossom of the Dharma Samādhi [Meditation] Hall”). According to Zhiyi, *samādhi* (Ch. *sanmei*) “attunes, rectifies, and stabilizes [the mind].”<sup>67</sup> *Stopping and Seeing* prescribes a system of the four kinds of *samādhi*, which are not only meditative absorptions but are also the cultivation of this state. Zhiyi’s four *samādhi* are (1) constant sitting, (2) constant walking, (3) part walking

and part sitting, and (4) neither walking nor sitting. The Lotus Hall that Saichō built was for the *hokke zanmai* of the third practice. The daily regimen includes circumambulation of the hall with recitation of the *dhāraṇī*; prostrations; repentance; and vows. After Saichō died, his disciples erected halls for all four types of *samādhi*, according to his wishes.

The key to the efficacy of the four *samādhi* sequence is the proper incorporation of *guan* contemplations into all phases of the practice. Scholars of Tiantai Buddhism refer to Zhiyi's *guan* as "discernment"; the content of these *guan* is not described with the same kinds of visual terminology as that found for *kan* in Shingon ritual texts. Zhiyi's text critiques the fundamental mental processes by which *guan*, together with all other phenomena, are conceived. Daniel Stevenson notes that Zhiyi discusses the expression "discerning or visualizing the Tathāgata" (*guan rulai*) and "seeing the Buddha's marks" (*jianfo xiang hao*), asserting that "any image or characterization of a Buddha is ultimately equivalent to 'no mark'" and that discernment (*guan*) of phenomenal features is "fundamentally an empty enterprise," akin to "seeing the reflection of one's own image on the surface of the water." It is an empty enterprise that constitutes the initial experience of *samādhi*.<sup>68</sup>

In Zhiyi's second type of *samādhi* cultivation, constant walking (Jpn. *jōgyō zanmai*), the practitioner circumambulates an altar with an icon of the Buddha Amitābha for ninety days.<sup>69</sup> The meditative discernment is on the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor excellent qualities of the Buddha Amitābha, from the soles of the feet to the top of the head and from top to bottom repeatedly, with invocation of the name of the Buddha. Technique is important, but the mental processes are paramount: "as the practitioner becomes more skilled at constructing the mental image of the Buddha, the orientation of the visualizations begins to shift radically" to a constant awareness of the Buddha in which the Buddha "becomes the basis for a simple dialectical investigation into the nature of mind and the noetic act itself."<sup>70</sup> This is *nianfo*, "mindfulness of Buddha." The Amida statue at the center of the circumambulated altar is both present and not-present, just as the visualized Buddha is the object and subject. The altar is conducive to the process of discernment of phenomenon. Ultimately, its iconography and visual presence are transformed to metaphysical signifiers for understanding the nature of the mind—and absolute reality. During a circumambulation, the practitioner must not look around, but instead

fixes the eyes on the ground as he “launches visionary tableaux” (*faxiang*). According to the ritual text, the frequent practice of circumambulation hones visualization skills: visions come more easily because adherents’ minds are “polished like a water surface or a mirror on which a myriad of images would appear,” whereas those who do not practice circumambulation regularly are cluttered and clouded and “visions are not forthcoming.”<sup>71</sup>

In the last type of the four meditations, “cultivating *samādhi* through neither walking nor sitting,” Zhiyi reminds adherents that the images and goals they set up are not ultimate, but are mere conventions designed for expedient purposes. This demonstrates a difference between Shingon *mikkyō* visual culture and that propounded by Zhiyi: for the latter, imagery remains an expedient ritual tool, whereas, in Kūkai’s tradition, the divinities encountered and manifested in practice are part of a logic of similarity: “with a single glance” at the images one transforms one’s body into the realm of enlightenment.

#### CONTEMPLATION AS ATTAINMENT

Contemplations that in many Buddhist traditions would be considered but one component of praxis in *mikkyō* are acts that bring about “realization,” *sādhana*; the term *sādhana* also describes a liturgical structure or the practice itself. As described by Luis Gómez, “The typical Tantric meditation session is a pastiche or a stratified event, in which elements from different periods and currents of the tradition intermingle. Such a session, called a *sādhana* (realization, empowerment), is typically a mixture of evocation and visualization overlaying a classical Mahāyāna liturgy.”<sup>72</sup> Empowerment comes from the deployment of layered, hierarchical, and multisensory evocations, eidetic contemplations, and movements. The *abhiṣeka*—the ritual practice of the three mysteries—is the structure through which the *dharmakāya* Buddha reveals his innermost enlightenment. It may be called an “approximation”<sup>73</sup> of attainment (Skt. *siddhi*, Ch. *shengjiu*, also *xidi*, Jpn. *jōju*, *jōjuhō*) including both mundane and supramundane powers.

Quoting the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* in his *Transforming This Body into the Realm of Enlightenment*, Kūkai states: “If [a student of *samādhi*] enters the meditation called the ‘observation of Suchness, the Dharmakāya,’ he will have a vision that all is undifferentiated oneness like infinite space. If he concentrates on practicing this meditation continually, he will in his present life enter the first state of Bodhisattvahood. . . . Being

embraced by the grace of all the Tathāgatas, he will reach the final stage and be equipped with all-embracing wisdom.”<sup>74</sup>

*Siddhi* is achieved through ritual evocation and visualization, *sādhana*. In the Japanese Shingon tradition, *kaji* (Skt. *adhiṣṭhāna*) brings about a transformatory empowerment that may enable enlightenment, realizing the Buddha in this body. This transformation is structured in the *sādhana*: at the climax of the rite, the adherent potentially realizes a ritual identification of his “mind” with the “mind” of the primary divinity (*honzon*). Such realization is the doctrinal foundation for what was, in practice, a very real and difficult series of techniques that not only deployed but were *fully integrated with* visual and material means.

The primary Shingon ritual manuals, *shidai* (Skt. *vidhi*, Ch. *yigui*), stress the three ritual activities of the practitioner: *mudrā*, mantra recitation, and mind—eidetic contemplation. Such rites are differently elaborated depending on the purpose, the master, and the *honzon* of the practice, but the structure is inevitably the “guest-host” paradigm, in which one or more divinities are invited, entertained and honored, and sent back to the realm of the buddhas.<sup>75</sup> Central to this study is that eidetic contemplations are required or presupposed in each phase of the ritual framework. As noted, Kūkai explained Huiguo’s teaching on *dharmakāya* in terms of the sight and sound of the *dharmakāya*’s body and meaning. Huiguo said that the objects of the practitioner’s sight are the all-encompassing *dharmakāya* body and the sounds heard are the voices of the *dharmakāya*’s preaching. Thus, the utterances of the practitioner are also the *dharmakāya*’s preaching, and the contemplations of the practitioner are the sight of the *dharmakāya*. The mind that grasps this concept “is the reality that is the divinities populating the mandala. The reality is the divinities and the divinities are the practitioners’ very minds.”<sup>76</sup>

The body, speech, and mind of Shingon ritual are interchangeable because they are mutually constituting. They are different but in root meaning are not distinct. Kūkai writes of their interchangeability: “Because sentient and inanimate forms of existence are shaped by the letters of color, form, and movement, sentient existence does not always remain sentient and material existence, not always nonsentient. They are mutually dependent and interchangeable.”<sup>77</sup> For example, the A-syllable of the A-syllable contemplation is understood as a mantra of unequalled power. The *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* exhorts the adherent to breathe the A-syllable in and out and to contemplate it thrice daily.<sup>78</sup>

It is helpful to remember that “language” is to mantra as “representation” (or lack thereof) is to contemplation. In this way, to Kūkai all the sense fields are “letters.” Kūkai demonstrates that optical objects are marks of the *dharmakāya* universe:

Defined by the objects of sight  
 [The letters] of color, shape, and movement  
 Are both sentient and inanimate beings  
 Both life forms and their environments  
 As the Dharmakāya’s spontaneous play  
 And as their consequences, [these letters]  
 Can either trick one into delusion  
 Or guide one to enlightenment.<sup>79</sup>

#### CONTEMPLATION AND REPRESENTATION

Taxonomically and historically, eidetic contemplations can be seen as one of three types of meditative techniques generated by the Mahāyāna tradition, namely, “the resurgence of older visionary and ecstatic techniques aimed at the construction of alternative realities and the gaining of magic power to control the world of experience.”<sup>80</sup> There is a kind of bias about eidetic contemplations in the literature. They are not the purview of the tantric or *mikkyō* traditions, yet the term “visualization” is normally used in the literature in reference to eidetic contemplations by tantric and Shingon practitioners, whereas “meditation,” “contemplation,” “recollection,” “discernment,” and a host of other terms are used to refer to practices or experiences in non-tantric traditions—even though those practices and experiences may be eidetic or strongly visual in similar ways.

Wolfgang Iser writes: “The English term ‘representation’ causes problems because it is so loaded. It entails or at least suggests a given which the act of representation duplicates in one way or another. Representation and mimesis have therefore become interchangeable notions in literary criticism, thus concealing the performative qualities through which the act of representation brings about something that hitherto did not exist as a given object. For this reason I am tempted to replace the English term ‘representation’ with the German *Darstellung*, which is more neutral and does not necessarily drag all the mimetic connotations in its wake.”<sup>81</sup>

Just as Iser suggests that to conceive of representation in terms not of mimesis but of performance highlights its autonomy and its

relationship to the text, so does my description of eidetic contemplation benefit from examination of the structure of the ritual. As with the text, a “doubling” takes place in the eidetic representational context. That is to say, each text relies on extra-textual fields of reference, disrupts them, re-forms them, and yet the textual form includes and depends on “the function of that field in our interpreted world.”<sup>82</sup> Similarly, the ritual practitioner relies on fields of reference beyond those of the context for the contemplation per se—such as works of art, previous ritual experience, and experience of the contemplation as it progresses. The textual form of the contemplation is largely fixed. The content of the contemplation, a (non)form, nevertheless includes (and in the unenlightened world depends for meaning on) the visual reference field that it eschewed. Ritual texts that describe and prescribe the content of contemplations bear this out.

The *Anantamukha-dhāraṇī* reviews the four dharmas of the bodhisattvas and eight-seed-syllable *dhāraṇī* method, and then states:

How can one remain in quiet meditation? He should work diligently day and night without pause. To visualize the Buddha’s image [*xing-xiang*], one should not abide by physical form. One shall meditate with wisdom to perceive correctly. If the practitioner sees a Buddha appear, and is going to take it as a real Buddha, he should consider where the Buddha he has seen comes from—east, west, south, north, above, or below. If he takes this Buddha as made by man, he should consider whether it is made of clay and wood, or made of gold and bronze. By visualizing it in such a way, he achieves knowledge of the Buddha he has seen. Only because one contemplates and reflects upon the Buddha’s image day and night in a place for pure cultivation does the Buddha always appear before one’s eyes. Thus it ought to be known that all the laws to be taken as precious arise from the mind and the will. This is why the bodhisattvas, firstly, practice without abiding [in the mind].<sup>83</sup>

Here we find an admonition to perceive the non-reality of the formal characteristics of the image while at the same time relying on them to construct an eidetic realization of the Buddha’s image (*xing-xiang*); then, we are to distinguish between an eidetic image of the Buddha based on or resembling a man-made image, and one that is the (transformed) Buddha, which will lead the practitioner’s meditation to paradise. The text espouses nonperception of things (*anupalābha*). It acknowledges that eidetic meditation is in part *dependent on man-made images*—if only for definition (and therefore [non]existence). *Mikkyō*

practice depends to a large degree on the recognition of different modes of “representing,” of distinguishing between different concepts as forms, including formless forms. In the *mikkyō* and tantric traditions it is not meditation alone that allows the practitioner to see the deity. The chanting of mantras and the use of *mudrās*, as well as the decorated space of the ritual altar, are integral. Mantras formed from seed syllables that deploy the Sanskrit syllabary of alternate, symbol names for the deity are at the same time empowered by the deity and are an effective genesis of the mandala and its deities.

When the *Anantamukha-dhāraṇī* states, “One should not abide by physical form. One shall meditate with wisdom to perceive correctly,” wisdom means the clarity of empty, mindful interpretation. The construction of the Buddha’s image is through a bodily and mental process that cannot be likened to “visualizing,” but instead is like *the process of sculpting or painting*. *Samādhi* is the result of cultivation, the cultivation of the nature of the mind and the practitioner’s relationship to the *dharmakāya* Buddha. *Samādhi* involves all the senses and movement.

The kinds of explanations and concepts that a study like this seeks to present are certainly external not only to the experience of ritual, but also to the doctrine of ritual. One important metaphorical aspect of “vision” is the insight that arises from meditation. But the “visions” of the “mind” are at the same time beyond abstract metaphor. Meditation techniques are typically deployed to *induce* a type of vision, such as insight or absorption. The protagonists of the sutras see the Buddha Pure Land, or are able to multiply buddhas, or step away from visionary realms and ask, “where do the buddhas of the vision go?” This confirms the buddhas’ (non)reality. Eidetic contemplations have no form, but they are real in that they can be conjured repeatedly, described, recollected, drawn, sculpted, and can serve as real (as well as ideal) goals or catalysts for other kinds of Buddhist insights.

#### MANDALA, MATERIAL, AND PRACTICE

Insight is not only “seeing,” but is a view of reality that typically incorporates both doctrine and cultivation techniques. Contemplation techniques attend to the (non)duality of form and emptiness. By extension, icons are caught up in the paradox of experienced reality and the reality of Truth known not only through ritual techniques but also through doctrinal reflection. In the ancient *mikkyō* tradition, it would seem that ritual was primary and doctrinal study secondary.



The control and manipulation of both non-forms and forms take many shapes. Among them are eidetic contemplations, meditations using symbols or images, and movement or sound to induce states of awareness—some of them are visual, or able to be recalled through discourse (and thereby “imaginable”). In this way, mastery of vision is regulated by the preparedness of the *mikkyō* ritual practitioner. In mastering vision the practitioner masters self and reality, the goal of the *sādhana*, and ultimately attains *siddhi*. Exercises in eidetic contemplation, juxtaposed with drawings and other representations of the divinities, contrast differences and continuities so that the nature of the real is perceived. One aim of eidetic contemplation may be to grasp the nature of perceived reality. In this way and in many others material culture and the intangible power of the icon have a distinct role in esoteric ritual and doctrine.

My discussion at the opening of this essay explained that the *mikkyō* mandala is not only a pictorial image but also instantiates visual efficacy. A mandala in any form is both a representation of a matrix of divinities and the realization of truth in their perfect assembly. Mandalas are at once fixed and fluid, symbolic of the truth and the truth itself, the non-duality of dual concepts of form and formlessness. Mandalas are a material support to ritual and the conceptual basis for ritual, and they structure the worldview of the adherent. Mandalas are a visual synthesis of the system of ritual practices developed in the *mikkyō* tradition and their structure is always present, overtly or not, in all that occurs in praxis. The full title to Kūkai’s magnum opus, *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*, is *Treatise on the Ten Abiding Stages of the Mind According to the Secret Mandalas*.<sup>84</sup> The title conveys the rich meaning of “mandala” as a blueprint of the universe, which is in turn the structure of ritual and the body of the deity. Mandala are made, seen, performed, contemplated, and conceptualized. The *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* and other sutras and commentaries mention the role of mandalas and icons in esoteric practice, but not always in the ways that contemporary literature tends to stress: as the locus—both visual and ritual—of *abhiṣeka*. There are examples of ancient drawings or painted images serving as “primary icons” (*honzon*) in a rite, but the degree to which the ritualist visually engages the image is not stated in the texts. The ninth-century text, *Zokuhanshō hakki seireishū hokkanshō*, states that at the commencement of the rite for the Seven Days of the New Year, the master Kūkai “drew images according to the dharma and



performed austerities.”<sup>85</sup> In the *abhiṣeka* detailed in the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, the basis for Kūkai’s first esoteric initiation in China, the master and disciple visualize themselves as the divinities Mahāvairocana and Vajrasattva, respectively, after which the master immediately begins drawing his mandala on the central altar.<sup>86</sup> When the drawing is complete, the master prepares the disciple’s “entry into the mandala.” According to Śubhakarasiṃha’s commentary, the master recites the sutra to rouse the mind of enlightenment.<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, in the opening passage to *Treatise on the Ten Abiding Stages of the Mind According to the Secret Mandalas*, Kūkai writes: “The secret, adorned [*shōgon*] stage of the mind is awakened to the ultimate source and foundation of the self-mind [*svacitta*]. It is aware of proofs for the true measure of the self. It is what we call the ocean assembly [a metaphor for the mandala] universe for the Taizō [ritual], the mandala for the Kongōkai [ritual], and the mandala for the eighteen Kongōchō [*Diamond Peak*] [rituals]. Each of these mandalas is of four types, four *mudrās*, and so on.”<sup>88</sup>

#### NOTES

1. This essay is a revised version of chap. 8 in Cynthia Bogel, *With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyō Vision* (University of Washington Press, 2009). Used with permission of the University of Washington Press.
2. Kūkai, *Jo [tatematsuru] shin shōrai kyōtō mokuroku hyō* (Catalogue of Newly Imported Sutras and Other Items), titled *Shōraimokuroku* in *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* (Collected Works of Kūkai), 5 vols., ed. Mikkyō bunka kenkyūjo (Mount Kōya: Mikkyō bunka kenkyūjo, 1970–1977), 1:95.
3. The metaphor of the hidden gem “right below our feet” is common to other Buddhist traditions. The *Lotus Sutra*, for example, contains the story of the man who is unaware of the gem sewn in the lining of his garment.
4. *Shōraimokuroku*, *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 1:102. This translation is based on Yoshito S. Hakeda, *Kūkai: Major Works; Translated, with an Account of His Life and a Study of His Thought*, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works, Japanese Series, Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies, 87 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 150.
5. In modern-day training at Mount Kōya the practitioner’s contact with the mandala formally begins at the *kechien kanjō* (binding of karmic affinity), the initiation open to lay adherents as well as ordained monks. After determining affinity with a deity, adherents briefly view the mandala as they enter the hall. For more on the role of mandala, see Bogel, *Single Glance*, 208ff.

6. Among works by art historians who have dealt with the issue of the power of icons, see David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), and Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), who are especially informative. Also of interest is John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

7. The “five-level discernment” of *vijñaptimātratā* promoted by Xuanzhang’s eminent disciple, Guizhi, is discussed (as Kuei-chi [Tz’u-en]) in Alan Sponberg, “Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism,” in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 4 (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1986), 30–31.

8. *Ibid.*, 34.

9. Ch. *guan*, Jpn. *kan* 觀. For a detailed discussion of *kan* and *guan*, see Robert Sharf, “Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism,” in *Living Images: Japanese Buddhist Icons in Context*, ed. Robert Sharf and Elizabeth Horton Sharf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), esp. 185–187. I am indebted to Sharf’s discussion of textual sources on the etymological history of *guan*.

10. Kūkai, *Sokushinjōbutsugi, Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 1:506.

11. The three mysteries are taken up in chaps. 12–23 of the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*. There the mantras are silently intoned, the *mudrās* formed, and the *bijā* or mantra letters in Sanskrit Siddham letters contemplated.

12. See, for example, Antonio R. Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010); Christof Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach* (Englewood, CO: Roberts and Co., 2004); Eric R. Kandel, *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007); and Dalai Lama XIV et al., *Gentle Bridges: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on the Sciences of Mind* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), 84–106; also Francisco J. Varela et al., *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); and B. Alan Wallace, *Contemplative Science: Where Buddhism and Neuroscience Converge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

13. For example, “Out of Your Mind, Not Out of Your Body,” *The Economist*, Aug. 25, 2007, 72–73.

14. *Bukkyō daijiten*, ed. Mochizuki Shinkō et al., 10 vols. (Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai, 1974), 1:767.

15. SAWA Ryūken, ed., *Mikkyō jiten: zen* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1975), 110. See also Alex Wayman, “The Buddhist Theory of Vision,” in *Buddhist Insight: Essays*, edited and with an introduction by George Elder (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), 153–162; and Mimi Yiengpruksawan, “Buddha’s Bodies and the Iconographical

Turn in Buddhism,” in *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, ed. Takeuchi Yoshinori (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1998), 391–416, for her insights on iconography as part of vision and a helpful synthesis of material on seeing.

16. *Mikkyō daijiten*, 6 vols. in 1 vol., ed. Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai (orig. pub., Kyoto: Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai, 1931; repr., Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1970, 1983), 407.

17. Stephan V. Beyer, “Notes on the Vision Quest in Early Mahāyāna,” in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, ed. Lewis Lancaster and Luis O. Gomez (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 331, 337.

18. *Ibid.*, 334–335.

19. Daniel B. Stevenson, “Pure Land Worship in China,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr., Princeton Readings in Religions (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 361.

20. *Mikkyō daijiten*, 407c, under *kansō*. See also *Bukkyō daijiten*, 809b, and for *kan*, 767a.

21. Some scholars think that the Chinese may have learned *guan* techniques, or at least deepened their familiarity with eidetic visualizations, through contact with Kashmiri practitioners. See, for example, Alexander Coburn Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China*, *Artibus Asiae*, Supplementum 19 (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1959), 144–145; Sponberg, “Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism,” 29n23 and elsewhere; and Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), *passim*.

22. The term *kuan* sutra (*guan* sutra) is from Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 144. There were certainly more texts of this type originally known. The six, given in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, 85 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabe Kaigyoku, et al. (orig. pub., Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō kankōkai, 1914–1922; repr., Tokyo: Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō kankōkai, 1969) (hereafter *T.*) are *T.* nos. 452, 365, 1161, 409, 277, and 643. See Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 144, 184, 215, and 222. See also Julian F. Pas, *Visions of Sukhāvati: Shan-tao’s Commentary on the Kuan Wuliang shou-fo ching [Guan Wuliang shou fo jing]*, SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), on the Amitāyus *guan*; and Stanley K. Abe, “Art and Practice in a Fifth-Century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temple,” *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990): 5ff.

23. See Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans. Bhikkhu Nyānamoli (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1976). Sponberg uses the Sanskrit term *ekāgratā*, or “one-pointed” attentiveness, for this practice. According to Buddhaghosa, the duplicate image created in the mind’s eye is the “acquired vision” (*uggaha-nimitta*) and the subsequent and pure sign is the “counterpart vision” (*patibhāga-nimitta*). *Kasiṇa* meditation leads to the *jhāna*.

24. The record of Xuanzang's journey to India contains a visually detailed account of his Maitreya contemplation, carried out before pirates on the Ganges who planned to kill him. See T. 2087 for Xuanzang's account and T. 2053 for Huili's biographical account. In translation, see Samuel Beal, *Si-yu-ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World* (orig. pub., London: 1884; repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), a dated but useful work; for Huili's biography, see Li Yung-hi, *The Life of Hsuan-tsang* (Beijing: Chinese Buddhist Association, 1959). Malcolm David Eckel, *To See the Buddha: A Philosopher's Quest for the Meaning of Emptiness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) translates portions; also Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, passim. I use the translation from Sponberg, "Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism."
25. T. 365 (Jpn. *Kanmuryōjubutsukyō*), translated into Chinese by Kālayaśas between 424 and 442.
26. Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 146.
27. *Ibid.*, 141–143. Soper's dating of the two earlier texts may not be accurate, and so the stages may complicate (or oversimplify) unnecessarily the history of developments. See Pas, *Visions of Sukhāvātī*, 39.
28. *Ibid.*, 36. Pas's study features Shandao's *Commentary on the Sutra on Visualizing Amitāyus Buddha*. Pas asserts that in cases where it seems that there was a Central Asian or Sanskrit term for mindfulness or contemplation, the Chinese seemed to use *guan* instead of *nian*. See also Fujita Kōtatsu, "The Textual Origins of the *Kuan Wu-liang shou ching*: A Canonical Scripture of Pure Land Buddhism," in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 149–173, which discusses the opinions of Tsukinowa, Suzuki, Nakamura, and Kasugai; and Stevenson, "Pure Land Worship in China," 358–379.
29. Pas, *Visions of Sukhāvātī*, 177n68. Pas notes that visions of the Buddha, or of other visualized features of the Sukhāvātī paradise, "are not the ultimate experience to be expected" in this kind of visualization sequence, rather *samādhi* is the supreme experience (pp. 177–178).
30. Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 143–144 (quotation is from p. 144).
31. Sponberg, "Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism," 29. The statue making is noted on Kuiji's funerary inscription; his biography, written during the Song dynasty, notes his recitation before a statue.
32. *Ibid.*, 27.
33. For the English translation, see Keikai, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai*, trans., annotated, and with an introduction by Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 20 (orig. pub., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973; repr., Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), 117 (vol. 1, tale 6). In Japanese see Keikai, *Nihon ryōiki*, trans. IZUMOJI Osamu, Shin Nihon koten

bungaku taikei 30 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996), 17–18, *genpon* 208–209. This tale is in the *Fusō ryakki* (fasc. 6, dated Yōrō 2, ninth month) and the *Konjaku monogatari-shū* 16:1, and others.

34. Keikai, *Nihon ryōiki*, trans. Izumoji, 30–31, *genpon* 214–215; *Miraculous Stories*, 128 (vol. 1, tale 17). This story is also in the *Konjaku monogatari-shū* 15:2 and the *Kannon riyaku-shū* (Kanazawa bunko, 43).

35. *Shōnen* 称念.

36. Keikai, *Nihon ryōiki*, trans. Izumoji, 145–146, *genpon* 270; *Miraculous Stories*, 237–238 (vol. 3, tale 12). This story is also recorded in the *Konjaku monogatari-shū*, 16:23.

37. Sponberg describes two distinct types of practices among many meditation techniques of importance to Faxiang practitioners during the early Tang period. The first is an “eidetic visualization whereby one enters into a different level of existence”; the second “is a set of ‘discernments’ or ‘contemplations’ presenting the successive steps by which one gains insight into the nature of existence as understood by the Yogācārins.” Sponberg, “Meditation in Faxiang Buddhism,” 21.

38. On the Japanese term *eizō* (Ch. *yingxiang*), see *Bukkyō daijiten*, 255; see also *Bukkyō daijiten*, 1988, under *shibun*. According to Roger Goepfer, in Song-dynasty translations of esoteric texts, *yingxiang* designates a pictorial representation or the visualized image of deities. For example, Shihu’s rendering of the text known in Japanese as the *Yuga-daikyōōkyō* (T. 887) repeatedly describes the shadow image as that visualized by the practitioner. See Roger Goepfer, “Some Thoughts on the Icon in Esoteric Buddhism of East Asia,” in *Studia Sino-Mongolica: Festschrift für Herbert Franke*, ed. Wolfgang Bauer, Münchener ostasiatische Studien 25 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979), 249.

39. The *Buddhānusmṛtisamādhisāgara-sūtra* (T. 643; Ch. *Guanfo sanmei hai jing*, Jpn. *Kanbutsu sanmaikaikyō*), a sutra devoted to this practice, has a long passage dealing with the miracle of the “shadow,” followed by a description of the contemplation of the Buddha’s “shadow form” (Ch. *guanfoying*, Jpn. *kanbutsu ei*). The Sanskrit title is unattested. On the shadow images and contemplations in China in English, see Marilyn M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia*, 2 vols. in 3 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999–2002), 2:104–136; and Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest*, 223–225. See also Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 185. Another legend about the shadow image tells how the Buddha cast his shadow on cloth and had it drawn by a court painter for King Bimbisāra, which is noted in Goepfer, “Some Thoughts,” 247.

40. Paul Demiéville et al., ed., *Hōbōgirin: Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d’après les Sources Chinoises et Japonaises*, 8 vols. (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient Adrien Maisonneuve and Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1929–; repr., Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1974–), 3:212b.

41. See Wu Hung, “Buddhist Elements in Early Chinese Art (2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.),” *Artibus Asiae* 47, nos. 3–4 (1986): 274. In Japan, relics from China or India were thought to be particularly sacred.
42. Hans Belting, *Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New Rochelle, NY: A. D. Caratzas, 1990), 214 (emphasis mine).
43. T. Griffith Foulk et al., “On the Ritual Use of Ch’an Portraiture in Medieval China,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie, revue de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient, Section de Kyoto 1993–1994*, 7, numéro spécial sur le Chan/Zen (1993–1994): 160. “The etymology of *hsiang* [xiang], and the use of the term in texts such as the *I Ching* [Yijing] and the *Tao-te-ching* [Daodejing], suggests the sense of mystery and creative power associated with the iconic reduplication of reality in ancient China. This is corroborated by the mystique of bronze mirrors . . . the back of the mirror imaged the world through a set of icons or *hsiang* arranged in geometric *mandala*-like patterns” (160). See also Wu Hung, “Buddhist Elements,” for an excellent discussion of mirrors and mirroring.
44. Zō 像, *butsuzō* 佛像, *gi* 儀, *gazō* 画像.
45. *Sonzō* 尊像. See Keikai, *Nihon ryōiki*, trans. Izumoji (vol. 1, tales 7, 33, 35; vol. 2, tales 14, 17, 22, 39).
46. In China, *benzun*, the equivalent of *honzon* (Skt. *svayadhivatā*), was used to refer to a Buddhist image since the sixth century.
47. T. 18 no. 848:44; see *Mikkyō daijiten*, 2068.
48. Kūkai, *Sokushinjōbutsugi*, translation from Hakeda, *Kūkai*, 230–231.
49. Kūkai, *Hizōki*, *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 2:10, 30, 34. See also the section on *juhachidō* ritual in TOGANOO Shōun, *Himitsu jisō no kenkyū*, vol. 2 of *Toganoo Shōun zenshū* (orig. pub., Kōyasan: Kōyasan Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1935; repr., Kyoto: Sōhatsubaimoto Rinsen shoten, 1982), 44–48.
50. *Gengyō* 現形.
51. *Tendaishu Enryakuji zasu Enchin den*, in *Dai nihon Bukkyō zenshū*, ed. Bussho Kankōkai, 151 vols. (Tokyo: Bussho Kankōkai, 1912–1922; new ed., Tokyo: Meicho Fukyūkai, Shōwa 53–58 [1978–1983]), 28:1364–1365, dated Engi 2 (902) by Miyoshi Kiyoyuki (847–918). For a detailed discussion, see AJIMA Noriaki, “Konjiki Fudo Myōō gazō no kenkyū: konpōnzō to manshūinbon,” *Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan kiyō* 29 (1994): 66.
52. The Onjōji work has long been considered to be the very work painted for Enshin; it is rarely displayed, and we must be content to view a copy based on a lost copy (by Renshō, 988–1048) owned by Manshuin, circa 1107 and painted by Gyōson (1055–1135). Recent scholarship by the widely respected late YANAGISAWA Taka believes it to be Chinese. See YANAGISAWA Taka, “Onjōji kokuhō



kinshoku Fudō myōōgazō (Ki Fudō) ni kansuru shinchiken—Fudōmyōō gazō shūrihōkoku,” *Bijutsu kenkyū* 385 (Feb. 2005): 135–150. The late Yanagisawa’s opinions are highly regarded, but the silence surrounding this report in Japan may suggest disagreement. Conservators who analyzed the *Yellow Fudō Myōō* painting from 1996 to 1998 could find no comparators in Japan for the materials and techniques, and concluded that this painting was made in China. AJIMA Noriaki has recently argued that Enchin had the painting made for the dharma transmission (*abhiṣeka denpō kanjō*) for two of his disciples in the last year of his life, 891. Ajima, “Konjiki Fudo Myōō gazō.” He discusses Renshō’s claim that the original painting was destroyed in the Onjōji fire and also discusses subsequent copies. See also AJIMA Noriaki, *Hibutsu konjiki Fudō myōō gazō* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 2001). He dates the Yellow Fudō to after both Enchin’s return from China in 858 and the circa 880 Sai’in Mandara.

53. The *Tendai Nanzan Mudōji konryō kashōden* (circa 918–923), the *Katsuragawa engi* attributed to Jien (1155–1224), and the early thirteenth-century *Uji shūi monogatari* all describe Sōō’s experience.

54. Bernard Frank, “Vacuité et Corps Actualisé: Le Problème de la Présence des ‘Personnages Vénères’ dans leurs Images selon la Tradition du Bouddhisme Japonais,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 11, no. 2 (1988): 53–86.

55. Douglas E. Mills, *A Collection of Tales from Uji: A Study and Translation of Uji Shūi Monogatari* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 390.

56. *Mikkyō daijiten*, 17.

57. *T. 3:329*. On the ritual and its history, see Toganoo, *Himitsu jisō no kenkyū*, 224–226; and in English, Yamasaki Taikō, *Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism*, trans. Richard and Cynthia Peterson, ed. Yasuyoshi Morimoto and David Kidd (Boston: Shambhala, 1988), 182–215.

58. *Mikkyō daijiten*, 17. Kūkai’s transmission text has served as the basis for hundreds of commentaries and expanded versions of the practice in the Shingon tradition; the practice can be performed in as little as a few minutes or for an hour or more. The practice was favored by the Shingon master Kakuban. Yamasaki, *Shingon*, 192–206, translates various texts.

59. Toganoo, *Himitsu jisō no kenkyū*, 224. Although the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* states that the A-syllable should be visualized above an eight-petaled lotus dais, it does not specify the moon disk.

60. *T. 18:21*. Trans. in Yamasaki, *Shingon*, 199.

61. Sharf, “Visualization and Mandala in Shingon Buddhism.”

62. After Kūkai’s time, the expansion and contraction elements of the rite were associated with the Diamond World lineage, not with the Womb lineage derived from the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*.

63. Sōfu sen'yōka, ed., *Kōbō Daishi shodeshi zenshū* 1:476, as cited and translated in Yamasaki, *Shingon*, 202.
64. See Paul Groner, *Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School*, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 7 (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California, Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1984), 220–228, on the precepts.
65. *Ibid.*, 43.
66. In English see Zhiyi, *Stopping and Seeing: A Comprehensive Course in Buddhist Meditation*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston: Shambhala, 1997).
67. Daniel B. Stevenson, “The Four Kinds of Samādhi in Early Ti'en-t'ai Buddhism,” in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 4 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 48–49. The passage is from Zhiyi's *Mohozhiguan*, T. 46:11a22–28.
68. Stevenson, “The Four Kinds of Samādhi,” 57. Zhiyi is citing a passage in the sutra *Wenshu wenjing* (T. 14:506c–507a).
69. T. 46 no. 1911:26c.
70. Stevenson, “The Four Kinds of Samādhi,” 59.
71. *Fangdeng sanmei xingfa*, T. 46 no. 1942:946, summarized and translated in Eugene Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2005), 377. Chinese pagodas such as Longhuta at Shentongsi in Shandong suggest the passage of time by four-directions iconography and symbols of the four seasons. On the medieval Chinese visual context and contemplations, see E. Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra*.
72. Luis O. Gómez, “Meditation,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 2 vols., ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 2:520–530.
73. Tson-kha-pa Blo-bzan-grags-pa, *The Yoga of Tibet: The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra, 2 and 3*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Hopkins, The Wisdom of Tibet Series 4 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 185–88, cited in Charles D. Orzech, “Seeing Chen-Yen Buddhism: Traditional Scholarship and the Vajrayāna in China,” *History of Religions* 29, no. 2 (Nov. 1989): 100n36.
74. From Kūkai's *Sokushinjōbutsugi*, translation from Hakeda, *Kūkai*, 231.
75. On tantric *sādhana* see, for example, Sanjukta Gupta, “Tantric Sādhana: Pūjā,” in *Hindu Tantrism*, ed. Sanjukta Gupta et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979); Luis O. Gómez, “Two Tantric Meditations: Visualizing the Deity,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr., Princeton Readings in Religions (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 318–327; and David L. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan Successors*, 2 vols. (Boston: Shambhala, 1987). See also Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete*



*Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 229; Shashi Bhushan Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1950); and Swami Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (London: Rider, 1965). For an excellent discussion of tantric ritual, mandalas, and the philosophical, historical, and practical features of tantric thought and practice, see David Gordon White, introduction to *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3–38.

76. Kūkai, *Hizōki, Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 2:40–41.

77. *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 1:531, translation from Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 284.

78. *T.* 18 no. 848:19.

79. *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 1:527, translation from Abé, *Weaving*, 284. Abé uses “letter” throughout. I would prefer “mark,” since the point of the text is that letters are signs that make things legible, and in the case of the discussion of the “objects of sight” it seems more appropriate to refer to them as “marks” or “shells” produced through differentiation.

80. Stephen Beyer, “The Doctrine of Meditation in the Mahāyāna,” in *Buddhism, a Modern Perspective*, ed. Charles S. Prebish (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 148. The other two types of meditation technique are “the standard meditative structure” of earlier Buddhism “yet with the twofold process of calm and insight infused with a universalist fervor,” and “new techniques of spontaneity” for a direct experience of freedom (p. 148; emphasis mine).

81. Wolfgang Iser, “Representation: A Performative Act,” in *The Aims of Representation: Subject, Text, History*, ed. Murray Krieger, *Irvine Studies in the Humanities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 217.

82. *Ibid.*, 218.

83. *T.* 19 no. 1018:705c–706a, trans. Zhiyan. 1019:675–679 by Amoghavajra.

84. Kūkai, *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron, Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 1:397–414. Kūkai composed the work in 830 in response to Emperor Junna’s request for an explanation of the Vajrayāna teachings. The title is frequently abbreviated such that the second half, “according to the secret mandalas,” is lost.

85. Quoted in YAMADA Kōji and MIYAJI Akira, *Tōji, Nihon no kojibijutsu* 12 (Osaka: Hoikusha, 1988), 72. Here, “images” is 像.

86. Abé, *Weaving*, 133; *T.* 18:6b–9b; *T.* 39:30c–642c.

87. Abé, *Weaving*, 134; *T.* 39:661b.

88. Kūkai, *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron, Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 1:397.