

PACIFIC WORLD

Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies

Third Series Number 6
Fall 2004

TWO SPECIAL SECTIONS:
ESSAYS CELEBRATING THE THIRTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST STUDIES, AND
SIGN, SYMBOL, AND BODY IN TANTRA



FRONT COVER

PACIFIC WORLD: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies Third Series, Number 6 Fall 2004

SPINE

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REVERSE HALF TITLE

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Celebrating our Fifty-Fifth and Thirty-Fifth Anniversaries

Richard K. Payne

Dean, The Institute of Buddhist Studies,
Graduate Theological Union

IN 1949, THE BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA (BCA, affiliated with the Honpa Hongwanji tradition of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism) initiated a project celebrating its own fiftieth anniversary—the establishment of what came to be called the Buddhist Study Center (BSC). Originally located in the Berkeley Buddhist Temple, the Buddhist Study Center was an expansion of the earlier educational program that had been initiated in the 1930s, and which had been operated out of the headquarters of the BCA in San Francisco.

In the mid-1960s the BCA committed to developing the BSC into a full-scale seminary and graduate school. At this time a building was acquired to house what in 1969 came to be incorporated as the Institute of Buddhist Studies. In the mid-1980s the Institute moved into a second, much larger facility and became an affiliate of both Ryukoku University, Kyoto, and the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. Through the generous support of the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism (Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai), the Institute has the privilege of publishing the *Pacific World*, which was originally published by Rev. Yehan Numata while he was a student at the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1930s.

Throughout its history, the Buddhist Study Center and the Institute of Buddhist Studies have been important to the development of Berkeley as a center of Buddhism in the United States. For example, in the late 1950s and 1960s many of the figures of the Beat Generation who were interested in Buddhism attended lectures and participated in various of the activities offered by the Center and Institute. Miriam Levering's essay on Jack Kerouac as a Buddhist author points toward this period of the Institute's history. In 1994 Carl Bielefeldt of Stanford University gave the graduation speech, and recalls the role of the Institute of Buddhist Studies in the ongoing development of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley during the 1970s and 1980s.

Taigen Leighton, a member of the IBS's faculty, writes on Dōgen Zenji's conceptions of time and space. Dōgen was not only a contemporary of Shinran, but also like Shinran was originally trained in the Tendai school

of Japanese Buddhism. Formerly a member of the IBS faculty and administrative staff, Kenneth Tanaka examines the Pure Land thought of Wŏnhyo, a Korean Buddhist master. Although we commonly think of Japanese Pure Land as deriving from Chinese sources, Tanaka demonstrates the importance of Wŏnhyo for the history of Japanese Pure Land. Mark Blum, a long-time affiliate of the IBS, examines the thought of Kōsai, a disciple of Hōnen. Kōsai has come to be associated with an understanding of Pure Land soteriology in which a single thought, *ichinen*, is sufficient for birth in Sukhāvātī. The late Allan Andrews was also affiliated with the IBS, and presented this paper as part of a symposium on Pure Land thought organized by Kenneth Tanaka at the IBS in 1995. The late Rev. Philip Karl Eidmann was for many years one of the main faculty members of the IBS. He studied Pure Land thought in Kyoto in the 1950s, and during that time produced the translation that is reprinted here. He gave his translation the English title, *The Sutra of the Teachings Left by the Buddha*. The last two items are reprints of articles that appeared in the first *Pacific World*, published by Yehan Numata between 1925 and 1928, during his years as a student at the University of California, Berkeley. The first of these is a biographical study of Bunyiu Nanjio, one of the most important Higashi Honganji scholars of the early twentieth century. Nanjio's catalogue of the Buddhist canon is still used by Buddhist scholars. The second is a collection of three essays by Nyogen Senzaki, a pioneer in the introduction of Zen Buddhism to the United States. Senzaki propagated Zen in San Francisco, and we assume that he and Yehan Numata knew each other well.

We wish to express our deep appreciation for the membership of the Buddhist Churches of America for their visionary commitment to the establishment of a seminary and graduate school dedicated to the promotion of Shin Buddhism and the study of the entirety of the Buddhist tradition, and for their ongoing support over the last fifty-five/thirty-five years. We also wish to express our deep gratitude to the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism for their support of the Institute and of this journal.

IBS GRADUATION SPEECH

May 21, 1994

Carl Bielefeldt

Stanford University

I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT, when Richard Payne asked me speak to you today, I was quite reluctant. It was not because I was not honored to be asked and happy to be given the opportunity to make at least a small gesture toward paying back the great debt I have built up to the IBS over my years as a student at Berkeley and teacher at Stanford. It was just that I did not know what I should say at an event such as this. To tell you the truth, I never attended any of my own graduation ceremonies. Since coming to Stanford, I have been obliged to attend its graduations, but I do not think they provide me with quite the right model here.

Stanford has two kinds of ceremonies at graduation. One is a big, general affair for the entire school, to which they usually invite a famous person to speak on some global issue. As far as I can tell, this is a kind of exercise in institutional self-congratulation—a celebration of, and advertisement for, the university as a world-class place that can serve as an appropriate platform for famous people to say important things. It probably has as much to do with fundraising among the alumni as it does with marking the event of graduation.

The other type of ceremony is done at the departmental level, where someone makes a short speech to the graduating students and their assembled families. Here the emphasis is typically on the value of a Stanford education: the parents are congratulated for their wisdom in choosing the university and assured of the high return on their investment in the hefty tuition; the students are congratulated on completing a program that has prepared them for successful careers and leading roles in the society.

I trust you will agree that neither of these ceremonies serves as a very good model for us here today. Obviously the first type is wrong; otherwise I would not be here. Even if I were a famous person with important things to say about the world, somehow I cannot see the IBS watching the mail for the ensuing large donations from its alumni. More to the point, whatever congratulations are in order here today, they are not, I think, of the sort that focus on investment and gain or the training for success. In my experience, IBS is not about getting ahead in the world, and the people who choose to

study at IBS do not come here looking for careers. They come simply to study the buddhadharma. To this extent, IBS students are not going anywhere: studying the buddhadharma is not a stepping stone to something better: this is about as good as it gets.

Some people may say that we study the dharma as a kind of spiritual investment, to get good karma, perhaps, or to get enlightenment. But most people that I know willing to invest years in studying the dharma do not seem to think of it as an investment for the future; they seem to think of it more as a reward in the present, a rare and precious chance to explore a rare and precious world. In this sense, graduation from IBS might look more like a loss than a gain—getting kicked out of the “dharma realm,” so to speak, back into the matter-of-fact world of gain and loss, investment and profit. But I do not think we need to worry too much on this score (or turn this graduation into a kind of wake). Surely we do not escape the dharma realm so easily.

One of my favorite Buddhists, the Japanese Zen master Dōgen, has something to say that may help us here. In talking about what it is like to study the dharma, he says, “You only get it when you are still half-way there. So when you are all the way there, do not stop; keep going.” According to this, as I understand it, studying the dharma may be an end in itself, but there is no end to the study: it just keeps going on indefinitely. We never really graduate and get kicked out of the dharma realm. We never really become masters of dharma studies (let alone doctors) and then go on to the next phase of our lives. There are no limits to the dharma realm and no phases to dharma study—no degrees, no rites of passage; there is just more of the same, in every direction, forever.

But before we sink too deeply into some Zen-style “non-dual dharma realm” and dismiss this day as just more of the same, I would like to remember a couple of specific things for which I think we can congratulate the students and faculty of the IBS today.

Dharma study may go on forever, but it only goes on when people like us do it. The dharma may be true, as the sutras say, whether or not buddhas appear in the world, but that does not matter unless buddhas continue to appear in the world to tell us, and people like us continue to listen to them. In this sense, it is not just that we students of the dharma take refuge in the dharma; the dharma also takes refuge in us. We are, to mix the metaphor, the vessels, into which the dharma is poured and by which it is carried.

We often tend to think of ourselves as poor vessels. We are just beginners, just laymen. We know little of Buddhism and understand less. We are just moderns, far from the Buddha and the great masters of the past; just Westerners, unable to read the languages or share the depths of Asian Buddhist cultures. But we may be underestimating ourselves. After all, wherever Buddhism has gone in its two-and-a-half-millennia journey across the globe, it has always been carried by poor vessels. It has always had to start all over

again in each new place, among beginners like us, with little knowledge and less understanding. Surely, at the time, these people too must have felt about themselves as we do now. But, with the benefit of hindsight, we can now see them as pioneering heroes of the faith (bodhisattvas, if you like), without whom the dharma would never have moved across Asia or come down to us today.

The dharma may be eternal, but we also know that it is mortal. We know how it died in its homeland of India; and, if we are honest about it, we have to admit that we may be witnessing its death throes today in some of the cultures of Asia. The life of Buddhism seems to rest on its continued rebirth, again and again, in new settings, among beginners like us. We need not get too puffed up here and begin imagining ourselves as heroes of the faith in the hindsight of future generations; but the fact of people like the students of IBS, coming together on the West Coast of North America at the end of the twentieth century to begin the study of the dharma, is no small matter. We can take their graduation as a symbol of our small beginnings, and we can congratulate our graduates as new members of an ancient and noble fraternity of beginners.

The other thing I would like to remember before I quit today is this institute itself. Buddhism may be used to starting all over again in each new place, but it is not used to a place like the IBS. We may think of this place simply as a small, quiet spot in Berkeley, but in the history of the dharma, it is a bold experiment in a new style of institution, combining in one the traditional and the modern—or, we might say, the sacred and the secular—approaches to dharma study.

In my experience, too many centers of American Buddhism tend to be stuck in the sacred: narrowly parochial, focusing closely on their own sectarian traditions and insider communities, with little regard for the larger Buddhist tradition and little concern for the outside world of contemporary society. On the other hand, most centers of American academic Buddhist studies (Stanford included) tend to belong only to the outside world, treating the dharma from a safe, secular distance, simply as the object of modern historical, philological, or philosophical investigation, with little regard for the values of living Buddhist traditions and communities.

IBS is somehow in between these two worlds (a “middle way,” if you will), built on the base of a particular Buddhist tradition but reaching beyond to embrace the study of all Buddhism; grounded in the traditional values of the dharma but not shy about testing these values against the norms and needs of modern society and the findings of modern academic scholarship. Being such a bold experiment in between two worlds, IBS inevitably has its stresses and strains, and will always be subject to the push and pull of both camps—both those who might favor a narrower focus on a particular tradition and a more immediate community, and those who prefer a more secular, more purely academic style.

I think we need to have both these camps. Without particular traditions and communities of the dharma, we have only the books and ideas of a dead religion, and our academic study becomes purely academic indeed; without modern academic study and reflection on the dharma, we are left with only past habits and old answers—in its own way, equally a dead (or at least moribund) religion. But to my mind, if the buddhadharma is to continue as a healthy, living religion in the modern world, we also need places in between the two worlds, places that can serve both camps and mediate between them. IBS is one such place, one of the very few we have; and I, for one, am deeply thankful not only for the many concrete ways it has helped me but for its ongoing commitment to finding some middle way that will keep the dharma alive and well in the modern world.

In the end, then (and this is the end), perhaps today we can all congratulate not only the students and faculty of IBS but also ourselves, for having the good fortune to know such special people and such a special place in the history of the dharma. I hope you will join me in a round of applause for all of us.

Jack Kerouac in Berkeley: Reading *The Dharma Bums* as the Work of a Buddhist Writer

Miriam Levering

University of Tennessee

BERKELEY AND THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA are now home to many Buddhists. However, when author Jack Kerouac arrived in Berkeley in 1955, there were not many European-American Buddhists in the Bay Area. Kerouac, who thought of himself as a Buddhist, found another in Berkeley poet Gary Snyder. Some then—and now—have disputed whether while Kerouac was in Berkeley in 1955 and 1956 he was a “real” Buddhist, and whether his novel *The Dharma Bums*, written about his friendship with Gary Snyder, gives expression to real Buddhist insights and teachings. In what follows I wish to persuade the reader that Kerouac, who at the time wanted to devote his life to expressing dharma in writing, was indeed a Buddhist at the time, and that one of his most Buddhist books, *The Dharma Bums*, conveys authentic Buddhist messages.

There is no doubt that Kerouac was a quintessential “Beat” writer, and that he became a national spokesman for a media-created “Beat Generation.” In 1954 and 1955 the “East Coast Beats,” Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, came to California and met members of the San Francisco Poetry Renaissance, such as Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Lew Welch. This latter group, known as the “West Coast Beats,” joined the “East Coast Beats” to make the Beat Movement a national movement.¹

The contemporary critical response in the United States to two of the most revolutionary initial works of the movement, Kerouac’s *On the Road* and Allen Ginsburg’s *Howl*, was overwhelmingly negative. Critics and the popular press saw these works and their authors as repudiating all civilized values. These two works apparently urged America’s youth to abandon all moral restraint in favor of free and continual booze, drugs, and the unrestrained sexuality of jazz. America was not prepared to see these authors and their friends as engaged in a serious spiritual quest and their works as religious texts. But that was how Ginsburg and Kerouac saw themselves and their works.

JACK KEROUAC AND *THE DHARMA BUMS*

It was hard to ignore the religious nature of Kerouac's and Gary Snyder's quests as described in *The Dharma Bums*, in which Kerouac used himself as a model for the narrator (Ray Smith), Gary Snyder as the model for the hero of the novel (Japhy Ryder), and Allen Ginsberg as the model for Ray Smith's poet friend (Alvah Goldbook). But that best-selling novel, the first book Kerouac published after *On the Road*, was largely dismissed by literary critics as superficial, a kind of playing with Buddhism on the part of an author who was irresponsible, immoral, and undisciplined. It had a more conventional narration than *On the Road*, did not speak as clearly from the writer's immediate consciousness, and was not as consistently written in the marvelous "spontaneous prose" that distinguished *On the Road*. Though many have since acknowledged the importance of Beat writing to American literature, *The Dharma Bums*, perhaps in part because of its very explicit religiousness, has been ignored in most literary studies of Kerouac's work.

There is a significant divide in the studies of Kerouac's work in general and *The Dharma Bums* in particular. Those who write within fields like American literature, American studies, and even American religion do not see the Beats and Kerouac as primarily depicting or drawing on Buddhism in their writing. They rather see Kerouac and his friends as freshly appropriating traditions already present in American literature: romanticism, transcendentalism, the poetry of Walt Whitman, and so on. There are many intriguing parallels between the transcendentalists and the Beats: "Their romantic longing for lives led apart from the unnatural rhythms of city life, their certainty of correspondence between the natural and the supernatural, their sense of the prophetic role of the poet...."² Like the transcendentalists, the Beats were highly critical of the deformations of real religious insight and motivation in the established religions in the America of their time. And like the transcendentalists, the Beats were drawn by the wisdom traditions of the East. But to speak only of American influences on the vision of Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder is willfully to ignore the extent to which Buddhism, Chinese culture, and Japanese culture were real sources for the insights and values of the Beats.

In general, scholars within American literature have not felt a need to arrive for themselves at an understanding of Buddhism and East Asian cultures in order to interpret and judge the work of Kerouac and others. But beginning in 1953, Kerouac in fact spent several years in concentrated Buddhist reading, study, and practice. It is fair to say that Buddhism became central to his life and writing for the next few years. Kerouac obtained and carried with him for constant re-reading Dwight Goddard's *A Buddhist Bible*.³ Goddard's anthology contained the *Heart* and *Diamond Sutras*, the *Śūraṅgama Sutra*, the *Laṅkāvatāra Sutra*, and the *Awakening of Mahayana*

Faith (*Dasheng qixin lun*), as well as the *Platform Sutra* of the Sixth Patriarch of Zen, Hui-neng. During this period Kerouac also sought out every sutra and book on Buddhism he could find at the New York Public Library and elsewhere, and clearly knew both the *Lotus Sutra* and the Pure Land sutras by 1956. Evidence of his wide reading can be found in his recently published work *Some of the Dharma*. *Some of the Dharma* was begun in 1953 as reading notes, but it evolved into an all-encompassing four-hundred-page work of nonfiction “chronicling his thinking, incorporating reading notes, prayers, poems, blues poems, haiku, meditations, letters, conversations, journal entries, stories, and more. Kerouac felt he had discovered a powerful new form, and the Buddhism he explored with it became an important element of his worldview.”⁴ In January of 1955 Kerouac wrote to his literary agent, “From now on all my writing is going to have a basis of Buddhist Teaching free of all worldly and literary motives.”⁵ Kerouac completed *Some of the Dharma* in 1956, and began fruitless efforts to get it published. He wrote *The Dharma Bums* in 1957.

Allen Ginsburg rightly complained about this failure on the part of scholars of American literature and culture to appreciate that Kerouac was a sincere Buddhist, and to learn anything about Buddhism themselves in order to understand Kerouac. Defending *The Dharma Bums* in the *Village Voice* in 1958, he pointed out that his friend had had a genuine religious experience.⁶ Later, at a conference of Kerouac scholars and enthusiasts, he offered some instruction in basic Buddhism that would open up Kerouac’s work of poetry called *Mexico City Blues* to a deeper, more accurate interpretation.⁷

On the other side of this divide is a sprinkling of scholarly essays on Kerouac and Buddhism, particularly on Kerouac’s novel *The Dharma Bums*, by those whose chief interest is in Buddhism.⁸ While perceptive concerning aspects of Buddhism that can be seen in Kerouac’s work, the authors have a limited knowledge of the American context of the Beats. The present essay will inevitably also fall into that category. But the ideal study, toward which the present author would like one day to aspire, would be one that could combine and give proper weight to both sources of influence.

In reading *The Dharma Bums* as a reflection of Kerouac’s Buddhism, we must understand from the outset the dilemma posed by the apparent autobiographical nature of Kerouac’s novels. Kerouac has been called “the Great Rememberer,”⁹ and surely it is true that the thoughts and actions of Ray Smith and Japhy Ryder in large part correspond to what we know of the real lives of Kerouac and Gary Snyder. Yet Kerouac makes his memories of real persons into fictional characters within the context of a story that has to have a plot such as few real lives have. In *The Dharma Bums* Kerouac is also trying to make a religious point, and for that purpose no doubt edited his memories to make his fictional double more saintly than he himself had been. It can be misleading when biographers of Kerouac rely heavily on

his novels as source material, as most do. For these reasons we will refer throughout to the fictional characters by their fictional names, while giving some of what we know about the real persons from other sources that chimes with their fictional representations.¹⁰

The Dharma Bums chronicles Ray/Jack Kerouac's trip from New York to San Francisco in 1955, his meeting of Japhy/Gary Snyder while he was living with Alvah/Allen Ginsburg in Berkeley, California that fall, and his return to his sister's home in North Carolina for the winter of 1956. It also tells of his return from North Carolina to San Francisco to live with Japhy/Gary Snyder in Mill Valley, California in the spring of 1956. In those broad outlines the novel certainly follows Kerouac's life.

JAPHY AND RAY AS BUDDHIST PRACTITIONERS

Much of the novel draws a contrast between Ray Smith's attempts to practice Buddhism and those of Japhy Ryder, ways that correspond to what we know of the real ways of practicing Buddhism of Kerouac and Gary Snyder. But as the narrative time of the novel moves forward, Kerouac makes clear that he the author and Ray Smith the character also tremendously admire Japhy's way of practicing Buddhism, and as the novel progresses Ray clearly becomes influenced by it.

Ray Smith, the narrator, makes clear his self-identity as a Buddhist right away during the first important episode in the book, Ray's meeting with a hobo on a train during his own trip on the rails from southern California to San Francisco.¹¹ This hobo shares with him a prayer by St. Teresa in which she says that after her death she will return to earth by showering it with roses from heaven, forever, for all living creatures (p. 5). Ray says that this "St. Theresa bum" is the first genuine Dharma Bum he had met (p. 9). Of himself he says:

I was very devout in those days [fall of 1955] and was practicing my religious devotions almost to perfection. Since then I have become a little hypocritical about my lip-service and a little tired and cynical. Because now [1957] I am grown so old and neutral.... But then I really believed in the reality of charity and kindness and humility and zeal and neutral tranquility and wisdom and ecstasy, and I believed that I was an old-time bhikku in modern clothes wandering the world (usually the immense triangular arc of New York to Mexico City to San Francisco) in order to turn the wheel of the True Meaning, or Dharma, and gain merit for myself as a future Buddha (Awakener), and as a future Hero in Paradise. I had not met Japhy Ryder yet, I was about to the next week, or heard anything about

"Dharma Bums" although at this time I was a perfect Dharma Bum myself and considered myself a religious wanderer (p. 5).

Within the context of Kerouac's life and the original sources of the Beat Movement, the "St. Theresa bum" and Ray's sense of himself as "an old-time bhikku in modern clothes wandering the world...in order to turn the wheel of the True Meaning, or Dharma, and gain merit for myself as a future Buddha (Awakener)" connect to the strong interest he and other East Coast Beats also had in the down-and-outer, Oswald Spengler's "fellaheen," as the bearer of a new consciousness. In his *Decline of the West* (1939) Spengler said of the fellaheen that they are characterized by a "deep piety that fills the waking consciousness...the naive belief...that there is some sort of mystic constitution of actuality."¹²

But both here at the beginning and as the book unfolds it is very clear that Ray Smith is interested in something more specific than this general notion of the Beat. He is quite serious about his intention to practice the poor, simple, homeless life of meditation and prayer, not only as a hobo or fellaheen, but specifically as a Buddhist monk.

In fact, one of the central structural devices of the book is the contrast it draws between Ray Smith's idea of bhikkhuhood and Japhy Ryder's model of Buddhist monastic life. Ray Smith, who before the novel opens has spent months at a time living as a self-described *bhikkhu* devoting full time to meditation in the woods near his sister's house in North Carolina, is committed to homelessness, to wandering. At one point he says that American culture, which he compares to a madhouse, leaves him no alternative: "The only alternative to sleeping out, hopping freights, and doing what I wanted I saw in a vision would be to just sit with a hundred other patients in front of a nice television set in a madhouse where we could be 'supervised'" (p. 121).

Ray has also been practicing the Buddhist *bhikkhu*'s restraint of body, speech, and mind. One author notes that in this novel Ray is practicing almost all of the Buddhist precepts with remarkable faithfulness. (The one he was not practicing, not surprisingly, is the precept against intoxicating liquors. More on that below.) He has put in an entire year of celibacy. He says that he did so "based on my feeling that lust was the direct cause of birth which was the direct cause of suffering and death and I had really no lie come to a point where I regarded lust as offensive and even cruel" (p. 30; see also p. 29). He continues during the course of the novel to practice celibacy, apart from a few lapses. Of these his initiation into *yab-yum* (Ch. *shuang xiu*) with Japhy's girlfriend Princess is the most notable.¹³

Japhy, according to Ray, has learned Chinese and Japanese and become an Oriental scholar and discovered the greatest Dharma bums of them all, the Zen lunatics of China and Japan. He too is practicing a kind of monastic simplicity. In Berkeley, Ray visits Japhy's small house, "a twelve-by-twelve

foot shack, with nothing in it but simple Japhy appurtenances that showed his belief in the simple monastic life" (p. 18). In this house Japhy studies, meditates, and works on translating the poems of Hanshan. He is cultivating a Japanese-style garden such as one might find in a temple: "He had a few odd boulders and rocks and funny little trees to establish his Japanese tea garden" (pp. 18–19). Later, Ray stays for a while with Japhy in Japhy's cottage on the hill above Sean Monahan's house. On the door of the cottage "there is a board with Chinese inscriptions on it. Inside I saw the beautiful simplicity of Japhy's way of living, neat, sensible, strangely rich without a cent having been spent on the decoration" (p. 164). Such "beautiful simplicity" is something that Japhy connects with his East Asian Buddhist practice.

But the celibacy that Ray has adopted is not a part of Japhy's Buddhist practice. Japhy says that he distrusts any Buddhism that puts down sex. Japhy experiences a remarkable success with women, and even in his retreat cottage above his friend Sean Monahan's house he organizes parties every weekend. Abstinence from alcohol and other intoxicants is also not an essential practice on Japhy's Buddhist path.

Both men imagine that they desire a solitary withdrawal from society as the optimum condition for meditation and for writing. The Chinese poet Hanshan, Ray learns, is one of Japhy's great heroes and the chief model for his Buddhist practice. According to Ray, Hanshan was "a poet who got sick of the big city and the world and took off to hide in the mountains" (p. 20). Ray writes that when he wondered why Hanshan was Japhy's hero, Japhy answered: "Because he was a poet, a mountain man, a Buddhist dedicated to the principle of meditation on the essence of all things, a vegetarian too by the way though I haven't gone on that kick.... And he was a man of solitude who could take off by himself and live purely and true to himself" (p. 22). Japhy has in fact experienced almost totally solitary summers as a fire lookout in the High Cascades. During these summers he only communicated with other people by radio. Japhy's vision for his immediate future is a solitary search for temples and solitary Buddhist meditators in Japan. He says: "I'm going to Japan and walk all over that hilly country finding ancient little temples hidden and forgotten in the mountains and old sages a hundred and nine years old praying to Kwannon in huts and meditating so much that when they come out of meditating they laugh at everything that moves" (p. 45). Ray too hopes for a solitary life of prayer and meditation, completely withdrawn from social institutions. He writes: "I wanted to go off somewhere and find perfect solitude, and look into the perfect emptiness of my mind and be completely neutral from any and all ideas. I intended to pray, too, for all living creatures. I saw it was the only decent activity left in the world. Rest and be kind and do nothing else, practice what the Chinese call do-nothing" (pp. 105–106).

But there are important differences. Ray emphasizes the wisdom that sees the emptiness of things, that all is a dream already ended. Japhy emphasizes the wisdom that sees the realness of the empty; rather than abandoning all activity except for meditation and prayer, he thinks it is better to be alert to the empty reality and act within it as if it were real. In an extended night of talk the day after their hike up the Matterhorn in the High Sierra Mountains, Japhy suggests that in fact the world is the mind, and the mind is the world, and everything is real. He accuses Ray and Alvah of carrying on like they were in a dream, "shit, like they were themselves dreams or dots. Pain or love or danger makes you real again, ain't that right Ray like when you were scared on that ledge?" Frontiersmen are Japhy's heroes, "because they are constantly on the alert in the realness which might as well be real as unreal, what difference does it make, Diamond Sutra says 'Make no formed conceptions about the realness of existence nor about the unrealness of existence,' or words like that" (pp. 96–105).

Japhy values actions as a way of practicing Buddhism. He makes notes on natural phenomena on their two-day hike on Mt. Tamalpais, studies and translates while in Berkeley, and works cutting wood while in Marin. When Ray comes back to California to stay with Japhy in Marin, he has spent a summer of meditating and doing nothing. He is looking forward to seeing Japhy, for he thinks that during the summer away he has become enlightened to the central insights of Buddhism. Japhy, disappointingly, doesn't want to hear about his experiences. He tells Ray: "I don't want to hear your word descriptions of words words words you made up all winter, man, I want to be enlightened by actions" (p. 169).

And during their two months or so together in the cabin in Marin, Japhy asks Ray more than once why Ray is doing nothing all day, why he doesn't work. One such dialogue runs as follows: Japhy said, "Why do you sit on your ass all day?" Ray says, "I practice 'do nothing.'" Japhy: "What's the difference? Burn it, my Buddhism is activity" (p. 175).

MOUNTAINS AS PURE LANDS

There are two themes in the book that combine to make up the book's central Buddhist message, that America can be a Pure Land, a Buddha Land. The first theme is the association between purity, American mountains, and Buddhist realization. Japhy teaches Ray that mountains are the place where buddhas and "true emptiness-marvelous being" are most directly experienced. Mountains, in Japhy's view, are the place where progress on the path toward buddhahood can be made. Japhy's sense that profound religious transformation is associated with nature and with mountains shows not only that he is heir to Western transcendentalists and literary

Romantics, as well as American explorers and naturalists like John Muir. It also shows that Japhy's Buddhism, and through him Ray's Buddhism at the time of the novel, has come to them through Chinese and Japanese Buddhist wisdom and imagination.¹⁴

From the start Ray sees Japhy as free, pure, and devoted to finding the deep springs of life because he is not from a city. Japhy, he says, is "a kid from eastern Oregon brought up in a log cabin deep in the woods with his father and mother and sister, from the beginning a woods boy." Later he says:

Colleges [are] nothing but grooming schools for middle-class non-identity which finds its perfect expression on the outskirts of the campus in rows of well-to-do houses with lawns and television sets in each living room with everybody looking at the same thing and thinking the same thing at the same time while the Japhys of the world go prowling in the wilderness to hear the voice crying in the wilderness, to find the ecstasy of the stars, to find the dark mysterious secret of the origin of faceless wonderless crapulous civilization (p. 39).¹⁵

But it is the description that Ray provides of the landscape and scenery and of his own internal experiences on Japhy's and Ray's hike up the Matterhorn in the Sierras that best demonstrates both men's conviction that it is in the mountains that one is in a Pure Land where buddhas teach and buddhahood can be attained.

The account of this first of their hikes and climbs together takes up a rather large section of the book (pp. 35–94). Ray says before their sleep on the plateau: "What a night of true sweet sleep this will be, what meditations I can get into in this intense silence of Nowhere" (p. 48). Ray as narrator uses the term "pure" over and over again, as well as "diamond," to describe the landscape of the hike. Ray says it is "a pure sweet night" as they enter the foothills of the Matterhorn (p. 43). He continues: "A deer was in the road, looking at our headlamps, petrified, before leaping into the shrubbery by the side of the road and disappearing into the sudden, vast, diamond silence of the forest" (p. 44).

The next morning he awakens to a "beautiful morning—red pristine shafts of sunlight..." (p. 50). "The first thing I knew Aurora was paling the eastern hems of Amida..." (p. 48).

He notes that the road to the beginning of the trail "was dusty, a dirt road, but the lake was cerulean pure." As they start on the trail he notes that "it's pure morning in the High Sierras" (p. 54). "Here we are by this fresh pure lake walking along in this good air," and he draws a contrast with the bar in San Francisco, "The Place," in which they might have spent the morning (p. 55). As they climb higher, he exclaims, "Oh, this is like

an early morning in China and I'm five years old in beginningless time" (p. 59). He realizes that all around him are jewel-like colors, like those of the Pure Land: yellow aspens, the blue lake, and so on (pp. 58–60). Kerouac throughout *The Dharma Bums* deploys a prose that borrows images and tone from Buddhist sutras. The use of vivid descriptions of jewel-like colors in the landscape characterizes the narration of this whole section of the book, as it does the Pure Land sutras and the descriptions of buddha-fields and Pure Lands in the *Lotus Sutra*.

There is a sense of eternity in time to the landscape, along with a strong sense of the presence of buddhas. Ray notes that the "trail had a kind of immortal look to it" (p. 61). He speaks of "golden eternities," and "ecstasy" (p. 62). Japhy says that the mountain itself is a buddha, and as they near the top, Japhy says that to him the large rocks at the top looming above them are buddhas. When they reach the plateau on which they intend to camp, the same kinds of description continue. Ray says: "Here now the earth was a splendorous thing...pearl pure lucid water" (p. 66). The stream "was cold and pure like snow and the crystal-lidded eyes of heaven" (p. 67). Japhy says to Ray: "Ray, when you're up here you're not sittin [*sic*] in a Berkeley tea room. This is the beginning and the end of the world right here. Look at all those patient Buddhas looking at us saying nothing" (p. 68).

In a scene that is one of the climaxes of the hike, the two men sit on the edge of the plateau and pray and meditate (pp. 68–72). The plateau high on the mountain is a place that inspires and sustains prayer. Ray writes:

The stars began to flash. I fell into deep meditation, felt that the mountains were indeed Buddhas and our friends... It was beautiful. The pinkness vanished and then it was all purple dusk and the roar of the silence was like a wash of diamond waves going through the liquid porches of our ears, enough to soothe a man a thousand years. I prayed for Japhy, for his future safety and happiness and eventual Buddhahood. It was all completely serious, all completely hallucinated, all completely happy (p. 71).

Like the Land of Bliss, the Pure Land.

The night they spend on the plateau is a happy one for Ray. He reports that, as with the advanced bodhisattva: "My dreams were pure cold dreams like ice water, happy dreams, no nightmares" (p. 77). Japhy too feels that he is in a land of bliss, and tells Ray that mountains will continue to provide a land of bliss for Ray as they have done for him: "Japhy began to shriek and hoot and whistle and sing, full of pure gladness. Nobody was around to hear him. 'This is the way you'll be on top of Mount Desolation, this summer, Ray.'" Ray replies: "I'll sing at the top of my voice for the first time in my life" (p. 206).

For Japhy the Pure Land is not a dream or a hallucination, but is found by becoming close to matter, to the empty that is also the real, provided it is not obscured by a head full of notions: "The closer you get to real matter, rock air fire and wood, boy, the more spiritual the world is. All these people thinking they're hardheaded materialistic practical types, they don't know shit about matter, their heads are full of dreamy ideas and notions" (p. 206). Japhy says en route up the mountain that the only thing wrong with Ray is that he doesn't know to get out in the mountains, where he can be surrounded by the real material/spiritual world (p. 69).

Ray for his part embraces the idea that there is something wrong with him when he is in the city. He realizes the hiking will do him good, get him away from drinking, perhaps make him appreciate a whole new way of living (p. 55). When they reach the plateau, true to Japhy's prediction, Ray finds that he has "absolutely not a jot of appetite for alcohol" (p. 73). Part of the appeal of mountains to Ray is his growing belief that in this Pure Land he can break the grip of drinking.¹⁶

PURIFYING A BUDDHA-FIELD

The book's second theme combines with the first to make up the book's central Buddhist message, that America can be a Pure Land. Both men are committed to becoming buddhas and purifying a buddha-field.

Ray and Japhy, as well as the Kerouac and Snyder of this period on whom they are modeled, share a sense of mission to make America their own buddha-field. In this American buddha-field they will purify society of false values and teach and awaken sentient beings. But their ideas about how to do this differ. It is Ray who most naturally thinks in terms of buddha-fields, but it is Japhy who lays out the most compelling vision for what America as a purified buddha-field would be like and how he expects to work toward that end.

Both agree that America, this *sahā*-world, is far from being a Pure Land. Both Ray and Japhy are critical of what America has become in the post-war period, the cold-war period of prosperity, the rush to experience the isolated conformist life of the suburbs, "the organization man," the threat of the bomb, and the newly available wealth of electric appliances and TV. Early on Ray mentions Japhy's anarchistic ideas about how Americans don't know how to live (p. 14). In Japhy's view, cold-war Americans with their culture of conformity and repression, of working to consume, have given away all their freedom. Japhy says:

You know, when I was a little kid in Oregon I didn't feel that I was an American at all, with all that suburban ideal and sex repres-

sion and general dreary newspaper gray censorship of all human values.... My karma was to be born in America where nobody has any fun or believes in anything, especially freedom. That's why I was always sympathetic to freedom movements, too, like anarchism in the Northwest, the old-time heroes of the Everett massacre, and all (p. 31).

For Japhy, Buddhism is a freedom movement.¹⁷

Japhy makes this point in the section that I call "Japhy's manifesto" on pages 96–102. He's been reading Whitman, who reinforces his notion about the "Zen lunacy bard of old desert paths." He says:

See, the whole thing is a world full of rucksack wanderers, Dharma Bums refusing to subscribe to the general demand that they consume production and therefore have to work for the privilege of consuming, all that crap they didn't really want anyway such as refrigerators, TV sets, cars, at least new fancy cars, certain hair oils and deodorants and general junk you finally always see a week later in the garbage anyway, all of them imprisoned in a system of work, produce, consume, work, produce, consume....¹⁸

On the positive side, Japhy expresses the hope that the work he and his friends will carry out toward the creation of a buddha-field in America will make an enormous difference. The passage above continues:

I see a vision of a great rucksack revolution thousand or even millions of young Americans wandering around with rucksacks, going up to mountains to pray, making children laugh and old men glad, making young girls happy and old girls happier, all of 'em Zen lunatics who go about writing poems that happen to appear in their heads for no reason and also by being kind and also by strange unexpected acts keep giving visions of eternal freedom to everybody and to all living creatures, that's what I like about you Goldbook and Smith, you two guys from the East Coast which I thought was dead.

Ray later says about Japhy: "What hope, what human energy, what truly American optimism was packed in that neat little frame of his!" (p. 209). On page 98 Japhy expresses some of the hope and optimism that Ray finds characteristic of him. Japhy says: "Just think how great and wise America will be, with all this energy and exuberance and space focused into the Dharma." On page 203 Japhy again expresses his sense of his role in history when he says: "Think what a great world revolution will take place when

East meets West finally, and it'll be guys like us that can start the thing. Think of millions of guys all over the world with rucksacks on their backs tramping around the backcountry and hitchhiking and bringing the word down to everybody."

The strongest statement of Japhy's sense of the possibility that he and Ray may create a buddha-field as the ultimate outcome of their dedication and vow is found in what he says to Ray on their last two-day hike on Mt. Tamalpais:

Japhy was feeling very good. "Goddammit, Ray, you'll never know how happy I am we decided to have these last two days hiking. I feel good all over again. I *know* something good's gonna come out of all this!"

"All what?"

"I dunno—out of the way we feel about life. You and I ain't out to bust anybody's skull, or cut someone's throat in an economic way, we've dedicated ourselves to prayer for all sentient beings and when we're strong enough we'll really be able to do it, too, like the old saints. Who knows, the world might wake up and burst out into a beautiful flower of Dharma everywhere" (pp. 210–211).

Japhy in fact has concrete plans that he thinks will help to bring this transformation to pass. On the Mt. Tamalpais hike he tells Ray something about his plans:

Japhy was in high spirits. "Goddammit it feels good to get away from dissipation and go in the woods. When I get back from Japan, Ray, when the weather gets really cold we'll put on our long underwear and hitchhike through the land. Think if you can of ocean to mountain Alaska to Klamath a solid forest of fir to bhikku [*sic*] in a lake of a million wild geese. Woo! You know what woo means in Chinese?"

"What?"

"Fog. These woods are great here in Marin, I'll show you Muir Woods today, but up north is all that real old Pacific Coast mountain and ocean land, the future home of the Dharma-body. Know what I'm gonna do? I'll do a new long poem called 'Rivers and Mountains without End' and just write it on and on on a scroll and unfold on and on with new surprises and always what went before forgotten, see, like a river, or like one of them real long Chinese silk paintings that show two little men hiking in an endless landscape of gnarled old trees and mountains so high they merge with the fog in the upper silk void. I'll spend three thousand years

writing it, it'll be packed full of information on soil conservation, the Tennessee Valley Authority, astronomy, geology, Hsuan-tsang's travels, Chinese painting theory, reforestation, Oceanic ecology and food chains" (p. 200).

Japhy also draws on Native American tribal models. On the same hike he tells Ray:

"Ray, by God, later on in our future life we can have a fine free-wheeling tribe in these California hills, get girls and have dozens of radiant enlightened brats, live like Indians in hogans and eat berries and buds. " [Ray replies:] "No beans?"

[Japhy:] "We'll write poems, we'll get a printing press and print our own poems, the Dharma press, we'll poetize the lot and make a fat book of icy bombs for the booby public" (p. 201).

Ray, for his part, sees himself as making a contribution to humankind. When earlier, carrying his backpack, he is mistaken for a prospector for gold or uranium, he reflects: "What I was going to hunt for was infinitely more valuable for mankind in the long run than ore" (p. 108). But his ideas are different from Japhy's. Close to the end of his first stay in California, he reflects:

But I had my own bangtail ideas and they had nothing to do with the "lunatic" part of all this. I wanted to get me a full pack complete with everything necessary to sleep, shelter, eat, cook, in fact a regular kitchen and bedroom right on my back, and go off somewhere and find perfect solitude and look into the perfect emptiness of my mind and be completely neutral from any and all ideas. I intended to pray, too, as my only activity, pray for all living creatures; I saw it was the only decent activity left in the world.... I didn't want to have anything to do, really, either with Japhy's ideas about society (I figured it would be better just to avoid it altogether, walk around it) or with any of Alvah's ideas about grasping after life as much as you can because of its sweet sadness and because you would be dead someday (pp. 105–106).

But in addition to praying, he also mentions teaching as a bodhisattva, an awakened being. At the end of his first stay in California, he reflects on his own destiny: "The following week I packed up and decided to hit the road and get out of that city of ignorance which is the modern city.... Suddenly I became aware that there was a lot of teaching for me to do in my lifetime" (p. 113).

He gets together with Japhy in the city for the last time this trip, and the two come across a black woman preaching outdoors in the park. She urges her listeners to recognize and embrace "a new field" that they are being given. Ray is charmed by the woman's message, but Japhy does not like her Christian language and themes. Ray says, among other things: "'Don't you hear that big old gal calling you and telling you that you have a *new field*, a new Buddha-field boy?' Japhy was so pleased he wrinkled his eyes and smiled. Ray continued: 'Whole Buddha-fields in every direction for each one of us....'" (p. 114).

He leaves the Bay Area and hitchhikes to his sister's home in North Carolina, trying out life as a backpacker, sleeping out. In some towns it is forbidden; the police are aggressive in rounding up hobos and bums. During his stay in North Carolina he has mystical experiences, including what seems like enlightenment. He has a vision of Dīpaṅkara Buddha and the Pure Awakened Land, and imaginatively experiences the bliss of the buddha-fields (p. 149).

In January, his meditations begin to bear fruit; he feels that "Everything is all right forever and forever" (p. 137). He realizes that "everything is empty but awake" (p. 144), and concludes that "it means that I have become a Buddha" (p. 145). He wants to write Warren Coughlin, "Yes Coughlin it's a shining nowness and we've done it, carried America like a shining blanket into that brighter nowhere Already." His sense clearly is that his work of becoming a buddha and purifying the buddha-field of America is already done.

"Everything's all right," I thought. "Form is emptiness and emptiness is form and we are here forever in one form or another which is empty. What the dead have accomplished, this rich silent hush of the Pure Awakened Land." ... I have nothing to do but do what I want and be kind and remain nevertheless uninfluenced by imaginary judgments and pray for the light. Sitting in my Buddha-arbor, therefore, in that "colyalcolor" wall of flowers pink and red and ivory white, among aviaries of magic transcendent birds recognizing my awakening mind with sweet weird cries (the pathless lark), in the ethereal perfume, mysteriously ancient, the bliss of the Buddha-fields, I saw that my life was a vast glowing empty page and I could do anything I wanted.... I knew now that I was a bliss-heir (pp. 147–149).

From this point in the novel, Ray sees his search for buddhahood as already accomplished. He thinks that his experience has been described by the famous Chinese Chan Oxherding Pictures, and that his current state is depicted in the final picture in which the seeker and finder of

the ox has returned to the world and is drinking with the butcher in the market. Japhy, though, is not so convinced that Ray's attainment is really so unshakeable.

Ray's approach to purifying his buddha-field is to see himself as a teacher, as a messenger, and as one who prays for all sentient beings. At the end of the book, Ray spends sixty days living the life of the Chinese Buddhist poet Hanshan on Desolation Peak, where he has a meditation vision of Avalokitesvara: "Avalokitesvara the Hearer and Answerer of Prayer said to me 'You are empowered to remind people that they are utterly free' so I laid my hand on myself to remind myself first and then felt gay, yelled 'Ta,' opened my eyes, and a shooting star shot." Freedom through a realization of emptiness and a realization that everything is mind and can therefore be changed, poverty as freedom and a way to freedom, the bliss of awakening, kindness, and compassion—these are the messages that Ray wants to bring to America as a way of purifying his Buddha Land.

Japhy and others keep bringing up the subject of Ray's heavy drinking. Japhy says: "How do you expect to become a good bhikku or even a Bodhisattva Mahasattva always getting drunk like that?" Ray replies: "Have you forgotten the last of the Bulls [i.e., the Oxherding Pictures], where he gets drunk with the butchers?" Japhy: "Ah, so what, how can you understand your own mind essence with your head all muddled and your teeth all stained and your belly all sick?" Ray: "I'm not sick, I'm fine. I could just float up into that gray fog and fly around San Francisco like a seagull. D'I ever tell you about Skid Row here, I used to live here—" "I lived on Skid Road in Seattle myself, I know all about that." Ray as narrator thinks that at the end of the long episode in which this dialogue occurs he has won the point—drinking is not a problem for an awakened Buddhist. But if Ray stands in some measure for Kerouac himself, later events showed that drinking was a problem for this particular Buddhist, and may have contributed to his eventual failure to persist on the bodhisattva path.

As Kerouac was writing this book, his most famous novel, *On the Road*, was on the best-seller list. The Beat Generation was suddenly a colossal media event, attracting a great deal of unfair criticism. Kerouac had an opportunity to make a difference in America. He seized this opportunity to try to lead a spiritual revival as the best way of giving American culture hope for the future. Leftists criticized this attempt as not being based on any economic and social analysis, and as we know, in the sixties the leftists eventually won out. Kerouac wrote many more novels that are generally regarded by literary critics as more serious and more accomplished than *The Dharma Bums*. But *The Dharma Bums* introduced the public to a romanticized and simplified version of the ideals, teachings, and practices of Buddhism in general. It also introduced readers to the wisdom of Zhuangzi, Hanshan, Japanese haiku poets, and Buddhist masters. It also introduced readers to

the long tradition in China and Japan of celebrating a life of wandering outside the settled world, and particularly in mountains, as a purifying and revivifying route to the deepest kinds of human understanding of the world, the void, and the self. It also introduced readers to the notion that life's deepest meaning could be found in purifying the self and benefiting others, empowered by the dharma.

Increasing problems with alcohol led to Kerouac's death at age forty-seven. One troubling aspect of reading *The Dharma Bums* is that we as readers can never be sure if Ray's visions and insights are coming from a profound transformation of consciousness or if they are coming from alcohol. And in the Buddhism of Ray and Japhy in *The Dharma Bums*, it seems easy to attain realizations of emptiness, ecstasy, and freedom, realizations that Ray at least interprets as attainment of the goal. The degree to which the East Asian Buddhist paths are, for most, ones that require constant attention, discipline, and hard-won self-knowledge is not so apparent here.¹⁹

At the end of his time with Japhy, Ray dreams of a "little seamed brown unimaginable Chinese hobo" coming from the mountains into a crowded, dirty marketplace:

This one was a Chinese twice-as-poor, twice-as-tough and infinitely mysterious tramp and it was Japhy for sure.... I woke up at dawn, thinking, "Wow, is that what will happen to Japhy? Maybe he'll leave that monastery [in Japan] and just disappear and we'll never see him again, and he'll be the Han Shan ghost of the Orient mountains and even the Chinese'll be afraid of him he'll be so raggedy and beat" (p. 208).

If Japhy is modeled on Gary Snyder, we have the advantage of knowing what in fact has happened, since the fictional Ray said these words and Kerouac wrote the book. Gary Snyder once said after Kerouac's death that Kerouac had used Buddhism to accomplish what he wanted to accomplish in the twentieth century, and he (Gary) had used Buddhism to accomplish what he wanted to accomplish in the twentieth century. Kerouac was inspired by his Buddhist faith and practice to write this book. He hoped to spark a new birth of real freedom, a purification and expansion of America's heart, in a cramped, conformist, materialist period.

While striving to purify his own Buddha Land, Gary Snyder, for his part, has fulfilled many of the dreams that Japhy Ryder enunciates in this book. He has lived simply and independently in the mountains. He has gathered a tribe around him and has founded a meditation hall. As a naturalist and a poet, he has written *Mountains and Rivers Without End* and other closely observant studies of nature. He has turned his reader's attention to the concrete material world as both empty and extremely

important. He has urged those who wish to see a renewal of sustaining values in America to study the economics and ecology of their own watersheds, and has advocated global sustainability. The forms and the subjects of his written transmissions of liberating wisdom correspond well to what the fictional Japhy declared would be the contents of his "endless scroll."

Kerouac in *The Dharma Bums* wrote sentences and paragraphs of depth and beauty, conveying his strong sense that the *sahā*-world is already pure. More than that, he held out to his readers with passion and heartfelt simplicity a belief in an America transformed into a Buddha Land by ordinary people awakened to wisdom and compassion. These ordinary people were to be, like Kerouac, liberated by Asian Buddhist scriptures and practices, freely appropriated and changed by an independent, egalitarian, overly self-confident, and youthful American spirit. The result was a book that touched hearts and transformed lives.

We can see now that a great deal more knowledge of Asian Buddhist teachings and practices would have helped Ray, and presumably Kerouac as well. Yet Kerouac showed in his creation of Ray and Japhy that he was remarkably well informed about Buddhism. This is all the more impressive when one takes into account the translations of Buddhist texts available in the 1950s; these were limited in number and often unreadable. There is no doubt he succeeded in contributing to the purification of America as a Buddha Land. With *The Dharma Bums* Kerouac helped other bodhisattvas to set up centers for Buddhist practice in America. He called a generation to value wisdom and spirituality more than conformity, material goods, and success. If his Buddhism was adopted in part to solve personal problems involving love and sex, if the Buddhism of his imagination remarkably resembled the Roman Catholic Christianity of his childhood, in my judgment it is nonetheless true that for a few years beginning in 1953 Kerouac was a Buddhist. Kerouac as a Buddhist stressed wisdom and insight into emptiness as the source of real freedom. He valued renunciation, daily practice, and cultivation in solitude. Most importantly, Kerouac gave Ray the heart of a bodhisattva who sought to pray continually for the benefit others. He sought to transform America into a land of true freedom, a Buddha Land.

NOTES

1. Some of the credit for this revival goes to Carole Tomkinson, Stephen Prothero, and the American Buddhist magazine *Tricycle*.
2. Stephen Prothero, introduction to *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation*, ed. Carole Tomkinson (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), p. 7.
3. Dwight Goddard, ed., *A Buddhist Bible* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 [1938]).
4. David Stanford, introduction to *Some of the Dharma*, by Jack Kerouac (New York: Viking Penguin, 1997), p. ix.
5. Stanford, introduction, p. x.
6. Allen Ginsberg, "The Dharma Bums," *Village Voice* 12 (November 1958): pp. 3–5. Also in *The Village Voice Reader*, ed. Daniel Wolf and Edwin Fancher (New York: Grove Press, 1963), pp. 311–315 and *Deliberate Prose: Selected Essays 1952–1995*, by Allen Ginsburg (New York: Harper Collins, 2000).
7. Allen Ginsburg, "Kerouac's Ethic," in Ginsburg, *Deliberate Prose*, pp. 361–373. First published in *Un Homme Grand: Jack Kerouac at the Crossroads of Many Cultures Jack Kerouac A la confluence des cultures*, eds. Pierre Anctil, Louis Deupont, Remi Ferland, and Eric Waddel (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1990).
8. E.g., Margaret E. Ashida, "Frogs and Frozen Zen," *Prairie Schooner* 34 (1960): pp. 199–206 and Robert P. Jackson, "The Dharma Bums," *American Buddhist* 2 (October 1958): p. 1.
9. Allen Ginsburg, "The Great Rememberer," in Ginsburg, *Deliberate Prose*, pp. 348–357. First published in *University Review* 25 (November 1972): pp. 20–22, 36.
10. Others have suggested that the reason why the narrator is given the name Ray Smith rather than any of Kerouac's other names for fictionalized versions of himself—he was already employing "Deluoz" as a name for himself in other unpublished novels, for example—is that he wanted to disclaim any serious intention with this book, which was written on demand from his publisher and often is thought of as a pot boiler. I suggest rather that Kerouac knew that he needed for the sake of the "plot-line" of this novel to make claims about his experience of awakening on Desolation Peak that were not true to his actual experience. He returned to that subject and told a somewhat different story in his novel *Desolation Angels*.

11. Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976 [1958]), p. 5. All references in this essay are to the Penguin Books edition first published in 1976.

12. Quoted in Prothero, introduction, p. 12.

13. One of these lapses involved a blonde in a convertible with whom he hitched a ride on his way to San Francisco. He omitted this episode from *The Dharma Bums*, but reported it in another novel.

14. For an account in English on the sacredness of mountains in Japanese Buddhism, see the work of Alan Grappard. On the sacredness of mountains in China, see the work of Raoul Birnbaum.

15. This overlooks Ray's previous description of Japhy as an Oriental scholar. If Japhy is modeled on Gary Snyder, then Kerouac deliberately ignores the profound ways in which we and Ray know that Japhy/Gary Snyder profited from his college experience at Reed College, which gave him an opportunity to learn about Native American mythology and Chinese culture.

16. In chapter 8 of the *Lotus Sutra*, in which Śākyamuni Buddha describes Pūrṇa's future Pure Land, he says that "there will be no evil ways and no womankind, for all living beings will be born transformed and have no carnal passion." In his *Buddhism For Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Three-fold Lotus Sutra*, 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1979 [1976]), Nikkyo Niwano comments on the latter sentence as follows: "This implies that though a person has a human body, it is as though he did not have a body; the Pure Land is surely such a place" (p. 127). In my view Ray, like Kerouac himself in this period, is disciplining himself as his version of a *bhikkhu* with respect to celibacy, homelessness, and possessionlessness in order to gain a kind of freedom that includes freedom from the body. He seeks to become a person who though he has a human body is as though he did not have a body. Alcohol enables him to reach *samādhi*, but it also is a tie to the body. It is in the Pure Land of the mountains that Ray for a moment hopes to reach a freedom from alcohol. Kerouac's biographers point out that his intense interest in Buddhism and celibacy followed a love affair that ended in devastating heartbreak. In the novel we are not told anything of any event in Ray's biography that might partially explain why Ray favors celibacy and feels that desire is a cause of suffering.

17. I owe this insight and this phrase to discussions with my former student at the University of Tennessee, Sean Blevins.

18. Later Ray repeats Japhy's critique of suburban America. "Everything was fine with the Zen lunatics [i.e., his group of friends], the nut wagon was too far away to hear us. But there was a wisdom in it all, as you'll see if you take a walk some night on a suburban street and pass house after

house on both sides of the street each with the lamplight of the living room, shining golden, and inside the little blue square of the television, each living family riveting its attention on probably one show; nobody talking; silence in the yards; dogs barking at you because you pass on human feet instead of on wheels" (p. 104).

19. This point is well made by Margaret Ashida, "Frogs and Frozen Zen."

Dōgen's Cosmology of Space and the Practice of Self-Fulfillment

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A SIGNIFICANT PORTION of modern Dōgen studies has focused on one particular essay from the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen's Uji, or "Being-Time." Dōgen's writings about temporality seem intriguingly modern. In his discussions of "Time is existence and existence is time," Dōgen writes about different aspects of time, including the conventional and multidimensional. Much has been written about Dōgen's "Being-Time," including book-length treatments by Steven Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen*, and by Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence Is Buddha Nature*.¹

But in addition to time, Dōgen's view of space is critical to understanding his teachings. This essay discusses some aspects of the meaning of space in Dōgen's writings. These teachings about space both reveal his view of the nature of enlightened reality, and have consequences for the role of spiritual practice and faith for Dōgen. After presenting a number of references to space in Dōgen's writing, we will consider their implications.

GRASPING SPACE

Dōgen discussed extensively the old Zen encounter dialogue texts. Even if he did not conduct formal kōan training, in the sense of a particular kōan curriculum as in some of Rinzai Zen (as well as some of medieval Sōtō Zen), Dōgen comments on the old stories of the ancestors in a great many of his writings. One such writing about space is *Shōbōgenzō* Kokū,² the very title of which means "space."

He begins this essay with a story about two Chinese Zen masters, Shigong Huizang (n.d.; Shakyō Ezō in Japanese), and his younger Dharma brother, Xitang Zhizang (735–814; Seido Chizō in Japanese).

Shigong asked, "Do you know how to grasp space?"
The younger brother, Zhizang said, "Yes I do."
Shigong asked, "How do you grasp it?"
Zhizang stroked the air with his hand.

Shigong said, "You don't know how to grasp space."
 Zhizang asked, "How do you grasp it, older brother?"
 Shigong grasped his younger brother's nose and yanked. It might even be read that he stuck his finger in the younger brother's nostril before pulling.
 Either way, Zhizang yelled in pain, "You're killing me! You tried to pull my nose off!"
 Shigong said, "You can grasp it now!"

Before discussing Dōgen's commentary on this story, we may note that one ordinary idea of space is as a kind of empty container, just as our conventional idea of time, disputed by Dōgen in Uji, is of an objective temporal container. But for Dōgen, space is form itself. Space is your nostril, and your nose around it. Dōgen says, "Space is one ball that bounces here and there."³ About Shigong saying, "You can grasp it now," Dōgen says, "It is not that space and other space reached out together with one hand. No effort was needed for grasping space. There is no gap in the entire world to let space in, but this story has been a peal of thunder in space." Dōgen adds:

You have some understanding of grasping space. Even if you have a good finger to grasp space, you should penetrate the inside and outside of space. You should kill space and give life to space. You should know the weight of space. You should trust that the buddha ancestors' endeavor of the way, in aspiration, practice, and enlightenment, throughout the challenging dialogues is no other than grasping space.⁴

This "killing space and giving life to space" is one theme in Dōgen's writings about the nature of space. Space is not just the air between things; space is things themselves. Until his nose was pulled, Zhizang apparently thought that space was just the empty air. With the immediacy of experience of his own painful nose space, the reality of space could finally be grasped. For Dōgen, space is not an abstraction, but rather, it is concretely physical, and not apart from the dynamic effort of aspiration and practice. Giving life to space involves, first of all, recognizing its omnipresence and potential impact right in the forms we engage.

THE RESOUNDING OF SPACE

One of his basic writings about space that clarifies this is a story that Dōgen tells in a couple of places. He related the story in 1244 in an essay in *Shōbōgenzō*, "Turning the Dharma Wheel," or *Tembōrin*.⁵ A couple of years

later he told a slightly different version of it, recorded in Dharma hall discourse 179 in volume two of his *Extensive Record*, *Eihei Kōroku*, which is the version referred to here. Dōgen quotes the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, saying, "The World-Honored One, Śākyamuni Buddha, said, 'When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions disappears.'"⁶ After this quote from the Buddha, Dōgen goes on to give a list of other comments on this saying, or other versions of it, by various renowned Zen masters. Wuzu Fayān (1024–1104; Gōsō Hōen in Japanese) said, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions crashes together, resounding everywhere." A successor of Wuzu Fayān, Yuanwu Keqin (1063–1135; Engō Kokugon in Japanese), who wrote the commentaries in the *Hekigan Roku*, *Blue Cliff Record*, embroidered the saying with this lush image, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, in all space in the ten directions, flowers are added on to brocade." One of Yuanwu's successors, Fuxing Fatai (n.d.; Busshō Hōtai in Japanese) said, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions is simply all space in the ten directions." That version offers a clear image of realization of space as the suchness of reality, just as it is.

Then Dōgen quotes his own teacher Tiantong Rujing (1163–1228; Tendō Nyojō in Japanese), who first refers to the original line in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* by the Buddha. Tiantong Rujing then said, "Although the World-Honored One made this statement, 'When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions disappears,' this utterance cannot avoid becoming an extraordinary assessment. Tiantong [Rujing himself] is not like this. Tiantong says, 'When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, a mendicant breaks his rice bowl.'"

There is a question in all these various utterances about the effect of awakening. How does awakening affect not just the person who is awakening, and not just the other sentient beings around him or her, but what is the relationship between awakening and space itself? And the space itself implies all the forms that are space, that is, all sentient beings, whose liberation is the concern of the Mahayana path. This is the import of these varying statements. Dōgen's teacher said that when that happens, when one person opens up reality and returns to the source, a mendicant "breaks his rice bowl." This might be interpreted as an expression for a monk fulfilling his practice, no longer needing to pursue his mendicancy. But Dōgen himself said, "The previous five venerable teachers said it like this. But Eihei [Dōgen] has a saying that is not like theirs. 'When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions opens up reality and returns to the source.'"

This is a key statement for Dōgen about the nature of awakening, transcending all the other masters' previous evocative utterances. When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, Dōgen states that

all space in the ten directions itself also opens up reality and returns to the source; space itself becoming an expression of awakening. Clearly, Dōgen is talking about a level of reality and a realm of awakening that goes beyond psychology, and any anthropocentricity. There are some writings by Dōgen about material that might be interpreted in terms of psychology. But this level of space itself awakening, and its enlightening function, is existential, or cosmological. He looks at reality in a way that is quite different from conventional thinking, and from how spiritual practice is usually considered.

THE ENTIRE SPACE IN TEN DIRECTIONS

I will briefly mention a sampling of Dōgen's writings about space. Another such text by Dōgen is actually the first thing I ever heard by Dōgen, when the Japanese Sōtō priest, Kandō Nakajima, lectured on it. This is a writing from *Shōbōgenzō* called Ikka-no-Myōju, "One Bright Pearl."⁷ Dōgen relates a dialogue from the Chinese master Xuansha Shibeī, (835–908; Gensha Shibi in Japanese), who said, "The whole universe in ten directions is one bright pearl." The "ten directions" is a standard Buddhist term referring to the four directions, the four intermediaries between them, and up and down, representing all directions, and all of space. After hearing this statement by Xuansha, one of his monks asked, "The whole universe in ten directions is one bright pearl. How should I understand that?" Xuansha replied, "The whole universe in ten directions is one bright pearl. What's to understand?" Dōgen sometimes talks about space literally, and he also talks about "the whole universe in ten directions" as a way of talking about space in its entirety.

This idea comes up again in another writing by Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō* Juppō, "The Ten Directions."⁸ In this essay, the basic sayings Dōgen discusses are by the Chinese master Changsha (d. 768; Chōsha Keishin in Japanese), who makes a number of statements about "the whole universe in ten directions." Dōgen relates that Changsha said, "The whole universe in ten directions is the eye of a monk." Dōgen adds and comments on these other statements by Changsha: "The whole universe in ten directions is a monk's everyday speech. The whole universe in the ten directions is a monk's whole body. The whole universe in ten directions is the brightness of the self. The whole universe in ten directions exists inside the brightness of the self. In the whole universe in ten directions, there is no one who is not himself."

This is not psychology, either, but Changsha is talking about the self and the relationship of the self with space. In Dōgen's commentaries to the line, "The whole universe in ten directions is a monk's eye," Dōgen says, "The whole universe in the ten directions in its ragged and jagged

state is Gautama's eye organ. The whole universe in the ten directions is one among a monk's eyes. And going beyond this, there are limitlessly abundant eyes."⁹ The abundant eyes is a reference to the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteśvara (or Kannon in Japanese). In one of his main iconographic forms, Avalokiteśvara's whole body has a thousand hands, each with an eye in its palm, so as to more fully witness and consider the diversity of suffering beings.¹⁰ Here Dōgen describes the whole universe in the ten directions as filled with eyes, and itself an organ of compassion. Dōgen does not say so directly, but the implication is clear that the whole universe in ten directions, all of space, is itself the functioning of compassion.

Dōgen responds to the statement by Changsha, "The whole universe in ten directions is a monk's everyday speech," by saying, "Does anyone know that a great person who is free of thought transforms the body and transforms the brain within the stream of this speech, and transforms even speech in mid-speech? The correctness in word and straightness in speech of the ocean's mouth and the mountain's tongue is everydayness. Thus, even if we cover our mouth and ears, the ten directions are this real existence."¹¹ Dōgen is linking space, and this vision of the universe, not just to our seeing, but also to discourse. He sees the whole universe as expounding the dharma. The everyday sounds of oceans and mountains provide transformative voice, even when we cover our ears.

To the statement by Changsha, "In the whole universe in the ten directions, there is no one who is not himself," Dōgen says, "So among individual excellent instructors and individual concrete fists, there is no instance of a ten directions who is not him or herself. Because of being itself, each individual self is totally the ten directions."¹² Dōgen says this on a level that is not just about awakening, but talking about the nature of self and the nature of reality. In the advent of this integrated vision of the entirety of space, each individual can completely be him or herself. However, when Dōgen is talking about "self," he is also talking about "no-self" and emptiness. That reflects the joke in all of his talk about space.

SPACE AND EMPTINESS

Many Westerners believe that Dōgen does not have a sense of humor. This is a common, and understandable, impression from a lot of Dōgen's more philosophical essays, or his writings about monastic practice rituals. But as I was involved in translating the *Eihei Kōroku*, it was not so unusual that I broke out laughing at some of what Dōgen says. In this work, Dōgen gives often brief dharma talks to the monks he was training in the last period of his career at Eihei-ji. In many of them he is talking about kōans,

and poking fun at the old masters. There is a kind of irony to it. Even when translated into English, one has to become familiar with the style of discourse to understand the irony, and the playfulness in which Dōgen is engaged. One of his main forms of playing and humor is punning. His writing about space involves a particular highly significant pun.

This pun is with the character “kū,” which can be translated as “space,” or “sky,” but also as “emptiness,” that is, the translation term for the Sanskrit “śūnya” and “śūnyatā.” This *kū* is also the second of the two characters in “Kokū,” the *Shōbōgenzō* essay (mentioned previously) translated as “Space,” the first character *ko* meaning “vacant” or “empty.” When he uses this character *kū*, sometimes in context Dōgen is clearly talking about space, about spatial dimensionality, or simply about the sky. But often he is also, simultaneously, giving a teaching about emptiness. The same character that is translated as “space” can be translated as “emptiness.” This is the same character that is used in the well-known *Heart Sutra* passage that reads in Japanese, “Shiki fu i kū, kū fu i shiki. Shiki soku ze kū, kū soku ze shiki.” In English this means, “Form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form. Form itself is emptiness, emptiness itself form.” The “emptiness” in that statement is the character *kū*. But in the many contexts I have been discussing, it means simply “space.”

When Dōgen discusses space, he is often also talking about the nature of form. These words, emptiness and form, need to be unpacked, as “emptiness” is a technical term in Buddhism. It does not mean “nonbeing,” although it is very easy to hear it in terms of being and nonbeing. Emptiness is not the absence of form; rather, in Buddhism emptiness is the nature of form. Technically speaking, emptiness is the lack of inherent, substantial existence of any particular form, and of all forms. This emptiness points to the interrelatedness of forms, which brings us back to space, which is the texture of this interconnectedness. So Buddhism teaches that, “Form is itself emptiness,” or, “The whole universe in ten directions is space.” And yet that space, or emptiness, is not about grasping air, as in the first story above from Dōgen about Shigong testing Zhizang, and then pulling his nose. Space is the nose, and nostrils, and eyeballs and everything else, the chairs, the rug, and all the objects before us. Space might be thought of as “out there,” the distance between the Earth and Mars, or other galaxies. And now modern science tells us that there is some small amount of matter in the space between galaxies. So matter is itself space. But space is beyond matter and non-matter; space includes both.

So when Dōgen talks about understanding space there is a kind of word play, he is also talking about the realization of emptiness. This realization is not just an abstract description of the nature of reality, but also a spiritual teaching that is being presented. There is an active practice implied by this realization, which has to do with awakening, the prime directive in Bud-

dhism. So Dōgen talks about, "Killing space and giving life to space." Space is very much alive for Dōgen. Dōgen encourages his audience to realize what it means to be alive. Space has some impact, has some agency. There is a dynamic activity to the space that Dōgen is talking about, and all are part of that activity. All beings are included in space.

THE FLOWERING OF SPACE

The next essay for consideration from *Shōbōgenzō* is "Flowers in Space," Kūge, which has sometimes been translated as "Flowers of Emptiness."¹³ But in our context it is also legitimate to translate it, as Nishijima does, as "Flowers in Space." This text proceeds from a quote from the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* where Śākyamuni Buddha says, "It is like a person who has clouded eyes, seeing flowers in space. If the sickness of clouded eyes is cured, flowers vanish in space." The usual conventional understanding of this statement in Buddhism is that our eyes are clouded by our karmic obstructions, so we do not see clearly. We see flowers in space, sometimes translated as "cataracts." With cataracts we cannot see clearly because of the veils over our eyes, and we see delusory "flowers in space."

Dōgen's comments characteristically turn that understanding upside-down. He says:

There are the flowers in space of which the World-Honored One speaks. Yet people of small knowledge and small experience do not know of the colors, brightness, petals, and flowers of flowers in space, and they can scarcely even hear the words, "flowers in space." Remember, in Buddhism there is talk of flowers in space. In non-Buddhism, they do not even know, much less understand, this talk of flowers in space. Only the buddhas and ancestors know the blooming and falling of flowers in space and flowers on the ground, only they know the blooming and falling of flowers in the world, only they know that flowers in space, flowers on the ground, and flowers in the world are sutras. This is the standard for learning the state of buddha, because flowers in space are the vehicle upon which the buddha ancestors ride. The Buddhist world and all the buddhas' teachings are just flowers in space.¹⁴

Conventionally, "flowers in space" is an image of delusion, illusion, and non-reality. But Dōgen is affirming that all the buddhas' teachings are just "flowers in space." The supposedly illusory space flowers are exactly where buddhas teach, "The vehicle upon which the buddhas ride." And even the Buddhist scriptures are flowers in space. This paradox is in full accord with

the Mahayana principle, enunciated in the *Lotus Sutra*, of buddhas appearing precisely for the sake of awakening beings from the delusions and afflictions of the mundane world. Dōgen says further, “By practicing this flower of space, the buddha-tathāgatas receive the robes, the seat for teaching, and the master’s room, and they attain the truth and get the effect. Picking up a flower and winking an eye are all the Universe.” This is a reference to the legend of Śākyamuni holding up the flower and Mahākāśyapa, considered the First Ancestor of Zen in India, smiling. Dōgen says, “Picking up a flower and winking an eye are all the Universe, which is realized by clouded eyes and flowers in space. The true Dharma eye treasury [that is “Shōbōgenzō”] and the fine mind of nirvana, which have been authentically transmitted to the present without interruption, are called clouded eyes and flowers in space.”

Dōgen has turned a conventional image for delusion totally upside down. “Bodhi, nirvana, the dharma-body, selfhood, and so on, are two or three petals of five petals opened by a flower in space.” And then he quotes this line mentioned above, “Śākyamuni Buddha says, ‘It is like a person who has clouded eyes seeing flowers in space; if the sickness of clouded eyes is cured, flowers vanish in space.’”

Dōgen also says:

No scholars have clearly understood this statement. Because they do not know space, they do not know flowers in space. Because they do not know flowers in space, they do not know a person who has clouded eyes, do not see a person who has clouded eyes, do not meet a person who has clouded eyes, and do not become a person who has clouded eyes. Through meeting a person who has clouded eyes, we should know flowers in space and should see flowers in space. When we have seen flowers in space, we can also see *flowers vanish in space*.¹⁵

Dōgen is not just talking about space, but the “flowering of space,” and of the dharma. Zazen and the whole Buddhist project is just a “flower in space” for Dōgen. This is typical of Dōgen’s sense of humor, or at least he is playing with our usual understandings, and even the usual understandings of Buddhist scholars and teachers. It is exactly amid the space flowers that buddhas awaken and produce more space flowers. Dōgen is also reaffirming, in a very deep way, the issue of nonduality.

Usually nonduality is considered as opposed to duality. Dōgen often refers to nonduality, and it is usually thought that this is about transcending duality and discriminating mind, seeing through the dualities of form and emptiness, this and that, good and bad, right and wrong, all of the conventional dualistic illusions. But in his discussion of the flowers of space, Dōgen

is clearly talking about the nonduality of duality and nonduality. Dōgen's nonduality is not about transcending the duality of form and emptiness. This deeper nonduality is not the opposite of duality, but the synthesis of duality and nonduality, with both included, and both seen as ultimately not separate, but as integrated. In the "flowers in space" of the buddhas' teaching, "space" is not empty space, "space" is our activity and life, the dialectical synthesis of form and emptiness.

Dōgen also adds in *Shōbōgenzō* Kūge, "People who understand that flowers in space are not real but other flowers are real are people who have not seen or heard the Buddha's teaching." He is saying yes to everything, and cutting through duality and nonduality, right in our everyday life. "The everyday speech of a monk is the whole universe in ten directions" is a kind of a nonduality that goes beyond our conventional idea of nonduality. He is describing the ontological and cosmological awakening of the natural world, and the impact of space itself.

DŌGEN'S VARIED SOURCES AND THE MAHAYANA SUTRAS

Dōgen feeds diverse sources into his writings about space. One of the more interesting issues in Dōgen studies is to look at the sources of Dōgen's teachings. In the modern popularization of Dōgen as an icon, one idea has been that Dōgen represents a great Japanese philosophy that comes full-blown out of Japanese soil. But very clearly Dōgen refers frequently to the Chinese Chan Ancestors, and the whole kōan tradition. Steven Heine's book, *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition*, offers a very good description of how Dōgen is carrying on the kōan tradition.¹⁶

Another influence is the native Japanese poetic tradition, as Steven Heine elaborates in *The Zen Poetry of Dōgen*.¹⁷ Dōgen's rhetoric, his poetic style, and philosophical approach come out of both the kōan material, but also from the great literary tradition in Japan, in which he was very well versed. Yet another influence is the whole Mahayana tradition of the bodhisattva, apparent in his many quotes from various sutras. The image of "Flowers in Space" recalls the *Flower Ornament Sutra*, the *Avataṃsaka*, which also talks about space and buddha-fields as full of flowers, as well as jewels, birds, and the adorned land itself all preaching the dharma. The Mahayana sutras provide a tradition for this way of speaking about space, but as usual, Dōgen turns it a little bit.

The *Lotus Sutra* is also a highly significant influence on Dōgen's rhetorical style of proclaiming the dharma. I will just mention one of the several stories particularly relevant to space in the *Lotus Sutra*. Dōgen refers to the *Lotus Sutra* in an essay in *Shōbōgenzō* "The Lotus Dharma Turns the Lotus

Dharma,” Hokke-ten-Hokke, which is devoted to the *Lotus Sutra*.¹⁸ Dōgen quotes the *Lotus Sutra* more than any other sutra in his writings, but this essay, particularly, is focused on the *Lotus Sutra*. As background, he starts with a story about the Chinese Sixth Ancestor, Dajian Hui-neng (638–713; Daikan Enō in Japanese). A monk who had studied the *Lotus Sutra* extensively asked Hui-neng about it. The Sixth Ancestor, who according to the traditional lore had never read any of the sutras but understood them intuitively, said “You do not know the *Lotus Sutra*.” And then Hui-neng said something like, “Awakened people turn the Lotus Dharma, deluded beings are turned by it; with deluded beings the Lotus Dharma turns.” So there is byplay about “turning” or “being turned by” the *Lotus Sutra*, a duality that Dōgen characteristically overcomes by eventually stating that both cases are ultimately just the Lotus Dharma turning the Lotus Dharma.

A passage in this essay relevant to space says, “Vulture Peak [where the *Lotus Sutra* was preached] exists inside the stupa and the treasure stupa exists on Vulture Peak.” That is a reference to a story of the ancient buddha Prabhūtarātna who arrives in the *Lotus Sutra* in his stupa, hanging in mid-air above Vulture Peak. He comes to hear Śākyamuni, the historical buddha of this age, preach the *Lotus Sutra*. But it is also said that this ancient buddha always appears whenever this *Lotus Sutra* is being expounded. Dōgen says about this, “The treasure stupa is a treasure stupa in space, and space makes space for the treasure stupa.”¹⁹ So for Dōgen, again, space is not just an object in a dead, objective world. Space is active and alive, as “space makes space.” Dōgen is turning this *Lotus Sutra* story here. He is pointing to the vitality of space. Space is not just outer space, but the ground and air as well. But perhaps Dōgen is also pointing to the particular space activated by a buddha. The space at Vulture Peak is especially numinous and potent, allowing space for an ancient buddha in his stupa to hover and listen yet again to the Lotus teachings.

HONGZHI’S EMPTY FIELD AND MEDITATION ON SPACE

Another contributing source for Dōgen’s view of space, in addition to the Mahayana sutras and the kōan literature of the Chan Ancestors, is his particular link with the Chinese Caodong (Sōtō in Japanese) Zen lineage. Of course, some of the kōan dialogues are from masters in that lineage. But the most prominent Caodong teacher in the century before Dōgen was Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157; Wanshi Shogaku in Japanese), who also talks about space. Hongzhi was a strong influence on Dōgen, as he is quoted very often in Dōgen’s *Eihei Kōroku*.

Hongzhi uses the image of an empty field as a way of talking about space. In one place he says:

The matter of oneness cannot be learned at all. The essence is to empty and open out body and mind, as expansive as the great emptiness of space. Naturally in the entire territory all is satisfied. This strong spirit cannot be deterred; in event after event it cannot be confused. The moon accompanies the flowing water, the rain pursues the drifting clouds. Settled, without a grasping mind, such intensity may be accomplished. Only do not let yourself interfere with things, and certainly nothing will interfere with you. Body and mind are one suchness; outside this body there is nothing else. The same substance and the same function, one nature and one form, all faculties and all object-dusts are instantly transcendent. ["Object-dust" is a way of talking about the external, or so-called external, phenomenal world, or space.] So it is said, the sage is without self and yet nothing is not himself.²⁰

There is a meditation teaching here in, "The essence is to empty and open out body and mind as expansive as the great emptiness of space." One can intentionally, in meditation, extend awareness first to the space of the room, then expand beyond to the whole neighborhood, then even out to all of space, finally returning back to awareness of this body, and the space around it. Much of Hongzhi's writing works through using nature metaphors as a way of depicting meditative awareness. In this section, "The moon accompanying the flowing water, the rain pursuing the drifting clouds," portrays a "space of space" that is radiant, luminous, and very natural. He uses nature metaphors to show the naturalness of this "serene illumination," which is another term for zazen, for Dōgen's *shikan taza*, "just sitting," or at least for the source of it in Chinese Caodong. This meditation on space is also a very traditional Buddhist meditation practice.

Hongzhi uses nature metaphors to expound this basic buddha-nature teaching, which he presents in terms of the "empty field," or "radiant space," that can be realized in meditative awareness, in zazen, whether it is cognitively realized or not. Hongzhi says,

The field of boundless emptiness is what exists from the very beginning. You must purify, cure, grind down, or brush away all the tendencies you have fabricated into apparent habits. [Those tendencies are the clouds in our eyes.] Then you can reside in a clear circle of brightness. Utter emptiness has no image. Upright independence does not rely on anything. Just expand and illuminate the original truth unconcerned by external conditions. Accordingly, we are told to realize that not a single thing exists. In this field birth and death do not appear. The deep source, transparent down to the bottom, can radiantly shine and can respond unencumbered

to each speck of dust [each object] without becoming its partner. The subtlety of seeing and hearing transcends mere colors and sounds. The whole affair functions without leaving traces and mirrors without obscurations. Very naturally, mind and Dharmas emerge and harmonize.²¹

This passage includes a kind of meditation instruction about how to set one's perceptions in relationship to space, remaining aware without being caught by all the objects of perception, as "The subtlety of seeing and hearing transcends mere colors and sounds."

Returning to what Dōgen does with this unobstructed view of space, Dōgen clarifies that space is not merely a dead, objective, external container in which there are forms. Space is presence; space is stimulating; space has power. In Dōgen's writings on meditation, he affirms this possibility and reality of awakening space itself, going back to Dōgen's saying, "When one person opens up reality and returns to the source, all space in the ten directions opens up reality and returns to the source." Space itself awakens when one person awakens. There is almost a personal relationship, or a meaningful relationship at least, between each practitioner and this world of space that Dōgen is discussing. It is this resonance between the person sitting and the environment itself that is the realm of Buddha's functioning, as celebrated by Hongzhi, and then further elaborated by Dōgen.

AWAKENING SPACE AND THE SELF-FULFILLING *SAMĀDHI*

His discussions of the practice relationship to space go back to Dōgen's early writing about zazen, *Bendōwa*, or "Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way." The excerpts in this essay have not been presented in chronological order, but a major issue in Dōgen studies is the shifting of themes and emphases in Dōgen's writings. Modern scholars are learning more about the actual dates of Dōgen's various writings. The complexity and nuancing of shifts in emphasis, style, and mode of teaching throughout Dōgen's life cannot be reduced to simply early and late periods as in some recent stereotypes. But while there are shifting emphases during Dōgen's career, there is also very much an underlying consistency, which seems to apply to his engagement with space. All of the passages quoted above from Dōgen about space are written later than *Bendōwa*, one of Dōgen's earliest and fundamental writings about meditation, which I will discuss in terms of its practice of space.

Dōgen says, "When one displays the buddha *mudrā* with one's whole body and mind, sitting upright in this *samādhi* even for a short time, everything in the entire dharma world becomes buddha *mudrā*, and all space

in the universe completely becomes enlightenment." To say that all space itself becomes enlightenment is a startling and radical statement from our usual view of space, or of enlightenment. Dōgen continues:

There is a path through which the *anuttara samyak sambodhi*, complete perfect enlightenment, of all things returns to the person in zazen, and whereby that person and the enlightenment of all things intimately and imperceptibly assist each other. Therefore this zazen person without fail drops off body and mind, cuts away previous tainted views and thoughts, awakens genuine buddha-dharma, universally helps the buddha work in each place, as numerous as atoms, where buddhas teach and practice, and widely influences practitioners who are going beyond buddha, vigorously exalting the dharma that goes beyond buddha. At this time, because earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in the universe in ten directions [the whole of space and all the things that are space: grasses, trees, fences and so forth] carry out buddha-work, therefore everyone receives the benefit of wind and water movement caused by this functioning, and all are imperceptibly helped by the wondrous and incomprehensible influence of buddha to actualize the enlightenment at hand.²²

Because of this mutual resonance, Dōgen is saying that not only teachers help the practitioner, but that there is an "imperceptible" guidance and assistance between space itself and the person sitting. Zazen influences not only the people around the practitioner, but also, "grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles." But because the elements of space then also carry out "buddha work," they in turn inform and assist the practice of the person engaged in zazen. This is the import of this previous passage, which is part of the "self-fulfillment *samādhi*" *jijūyū zanmai* section of *Bendōwa* that is chanted daily in Japanese Sōtō Zen training temples.

The etymology of the "self-fulfillment *samādhi*" is significant in Dōgen's teaching about space itself becoming enlightenment. The etymology of *jijūyū*, or self-fulfillment, is literally, "the self accepting its function." When each person takes their place or dharma position, receiving their particular unique function or role in the world, then that active acceptance becomes the fulfillment of the deeper self that is not separate from the things of the world. There is an intimate relationship between self and the world, and that is involved in what might be called "faith," in trusting both oneself and the world. But this does not mean mere passive and unquestioning acceptance of everything. The practitioner's own active response and participation in the world, based on precepts and on principles of acting to benefit and awaken all beings, is part of the dynamic space that Dōgen is expounding.

There is a word in the previous passage that I had not heard before studying in Japan, *myōshi*, or another version is *myōka*, meaning “mysterious guidance,” or “incomprehensible assistance.” This refers to the possibility of practitioners receiving benefit from the bodhisattva energy and buddha energy of the world. But also it works reciprocally; when we sit zazen, we affect the nature of the space. After you have sat a period in the meditation hall and arise, you might perhaps feel a difference in the space. This is hardly objective or scientific in the usual sense, but if you travel to *Bodhgayā* in India, or certain old temples in Japan, places where people have practiced for a very long time, and then walk into that space, you might feel some of the impact of the centuries of practice.

This idea of *myōshi* implies trusting the world to give what is needed, no matter how painful it is. It is also taking refuge, returning to the world, returning to one’s place in the world. *Myōshi* is the basis for the whole practice of laypeople, going to the temples and making offerings, chanting, and bowing to buddha and bodhisattva statues. Japanese college students call on Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom, for help on their tests. But the other side of *myōshi* is that there is a responsibility; it is not just one-way. It is our practice that activates the response from the phenomenal world. So we have a responsibility to the world and to space, and with our responsive and aware practice, assistance can arrive from the awakened space.

CARING FOR SPACE

This view of space has some implications that are significant in terms of Dōgen’s contemporary relevance. This aspect is not all there is to Dōgen’s writing; there is also the psychological dimension implied in his teaching of “studying the self.”²³ But we could call this teaching about space the environmental aspect of Dōgen. Dōgen is saying that the environment is alive, just like the Native American peoples say that all our relations in the four directions are alive. The trees and grasses, and for Dōgen even the lights, the rug, and the chairs, have some spiritual agency.

For a modern reading and current contemporary recreation of Dōgen, one might see how this relates to Dōgen’s attention to taking care of the monastery or practice place, and taking care generally of the phenomenal world (which some people have considered “fussiness” on Dōgen’s part). According to Dōgen, the space that one practices in is alive, and supportive, in this level of dharma practice. Taking care of the phenomenal world is the natural expression of the practice of zazen. Gary Snyder says that Zen comes down to meditation and sweeping the temple, and it is up to each person to decide where the boundaries of the temple are. There are particular practice places, and then there is the whole universe in the ten

directions, and we each work within the limits of the field of space that we are in.

This view of space is also relevant to faith. The sense of faith for Dōgen is that it is not belief in some thing, in what Dōgen says, or in a buddha image, but faith as a kind of active practice relationship with space. This faith is just taking the next step, meeting each thing. That is because, from this perspective, the dharma world of space is alive. One does receive support when acting from that space of faith.

NOTES

1. Steven Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); and Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence Is Buddha Nature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).
2. See Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Enlightenment Unfolds: The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Dōgen* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), pp. 201–204.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 202–203.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
6. Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, trans., *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of Eihei Kōroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), pp. 198–199. Dharma hall discourses, or *jōdō*, literally “ascending the hall,” were the major form of presentation in Song China Chan temples. They were often quite brief, given in the Dharma hall with the teacher on the high seat on the altar and with the monks standing. Apparently they were the form favored by Dōgen, since he nearly stopped writing the longer essays of *Shōbōgenzō* after 1244, but continued using the formal *jōdō* talks, which were recorded in *Eihei Kōroku*, in training his monks at Eiheiiji until his death in 1253.
7. See Thomas Cleary, trans., *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 57–63.
8. See Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, trans., *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, Book 3 (Woods Hole, MA: Windbell Publications, 1997), pp. 185–190.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
10. For a discussion of the iconographic forms of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, see Taigen Daniel Leighton, *Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and Their Modern Expression* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1998), pp. 168–184 (revised edition of book previously published by Penguin Arkana, 1998).
11. Nishijima and Cross, trans., *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, Book 3, p. 188, with revisions by the author.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
13. See Cleary, trans., *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen*, pp. 64–75; and Nishijima and Cross, trans., *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, Book 3, pp. 9–21.
14. Nishijima and Cross, trans., *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, Book 3, p. 11.

15. Ibid., p. 12.
16. Steven Heine, *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition: A Tale of Two "Shōbōgenzō" Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).
17. Steven Heine, *The Zen Poetry of Dōgen: Verses from the Mountain of Eternal Peace* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1997).
18. Nishijima and Cross, trans., *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, Book 1, pp. 203–220. I have also consulted an unpublished translation of this essay by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Michael Wenger.
19. Nishijima and Cross, Book 1, pp. 217–218.
20. Taigen Dan Leighton, with Yi Wu. *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2000, revised and expanded edition; original edition published by North Point Press, 1991), p. 45.
21. Ibid., p. 30.
22. Shohaku Okumura and Taigen Daniel Leighton, trans., *The Wholehearted Way: A Translation of Eihei Dōgen's Bendowa with Commentary by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1997), p. 23.
23. In his celebrated essay, Genjōkōan, "Actualizing the Fundamental Point," Dōgen says, "To study the buddha way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be actualized by myriad things. When actualized by myriad things, your body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others drop away." See Kazuaki Tanahashi, ed., *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), p. 70. This basic practice of the study of the self can be interpreted psychologically in various teachings elaborated in traditional Buddhism, as well as in Dōgen's writings.

**Faith in Wŏnhyo's *Commentary on the Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*:
The Elevated Role of Faith over
Contemplation and Its Implication for the
Contribution of Korean Buddhism to the
Development of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism**

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DURING THE THREE KINGDOMS PERIOD (from the second and third centuries to 668) of Koguryŏ, Paekche, and Silla on the Korean Peninsula, there is indirect evidence of the existence of Pure Land thought and practices, but no clear textual evidence to describe them in detail. However, this period laid the foundation for the burst of Pure Land activities and writings that took place in the United Silla period (668–918).

Beginning in the early part of the United Silla period, scholar-monks pursued various fields of study as found in China at the time, but in general the most popular areas of study were Wŏnyung (Hua-yen or *Garland Sutra* school), Yusik (consciousness-only), Chŏngt'o (Pure Land), and the indigenous Korean Pŏpsŏng (Dharma-nature school). However, much of the study and practice of the doctrinal (i.e., "academic" or "scholarly") schools was in fact basically limited to the members of the aristocracy. Among them were a number of scholar-monks who made vital contributions to the creative innovations of these areas of Buddhism in general, and also specifically to producing commentaries and treatises on the Pure Land sutras. They include a list of writings by such eminent figures as Chajang (608–677), Wŏnch'uk (612–696), Wŏnhyo (元曉, 617–686), Ŭisang (625–702), Ŭijok (seventh to eighth centuries) and Kyong-hung (seventh to eighth centuries). These writings involved interpretations of Pure Land teachings and practices from the doctrinal points representing the various schools discussed above. Because of the high caliber of these works, many of these were highly respected in Japan, particularly those of Wŏnhyo, Ŭisang, and Ŭijok.

WŎNHYO'S WRITINGS ON PURE LAND BUDDHISM

Of these figures, perhaps the most representative and prominent figure is Wŏnhyo. Among the astoundingly large number of works, one hundred one in all by one account,¹ attributed to Wŏnhyo, there are eleven commentaries and treatises whose primary focus are the teachings and practices connected to the Pure Land teachings. They are:

1. *Panju sammae-gyŏng so* 般舟三昧經疏
2. *Panju sammae-gyŏng yakki* 般舟三昧經略記
3. *Panju sammae-gyŏng yakso* 般舟三昧經略疏
4. *Muryangsu-gyŏng so* 無量壽經疏
5. *Muryangsu-gyŏng sagi* 無量壽經私記
6. *Muryangsu-gyŏngchonggyo* 無量壽經宗要 (*The Commentary of the Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*), Taisho 1747
7. *Amit'a-gyŏng so* 阿彌陀經疏 (*Commentary to the Sutra on Buddha Amitābha*), Taisho 1759
8. *Amit'a-gyŏng t'onch'on so* 阿彌陀經通鑽疏
9. *Yusim allak to* 遊心安樂道 (*The Path Where the Mind Plays in the Land of Peace and Joy*), Taisho 1969
10. *Kwangyŏng chonggyo* 觀經宗要
11. *Mit'a chungsŏng ke* 弥陀証性偈 (*Verses on the Nature of Amitābha's Enlightenment*), *Hanguk pulgyo chŏnsŏ* 1.843a (See below for translation of the verses.)

Four of these are extant: *Muryangsu-gyŏngchonggyo* (#6 above, henceforth *Commentary*), *Amit'a-gyŏng so* (#7), *Yusim allak to* (#9), and *Mit'a chungsŏng ke* (#11). Of these the *Commentary* provides us with the most authentic and reliable source for understanding Wŏnhyo's Pure Land thought. For one thing, the *Commentary to the Sutra on Buddha Amitābha* was written after the *Commentary* and is basically a summary of the points in the *Commentary*, without any distinctive thought beyond the latter.

As for *Yusim allak to*, many modern scholars seriously question the authenticity of the text as being the work of Wŏnhyo.² Even a cursory look at the text reveals that much of it is the same as the *Commentary*, mostly word for word. This and other factors have led a Japanese researcher to suggest that *Yusim allak to* was compiled in Japan during the tenth century by someone affiliated with the Tendai school.³ These views are not without their opponents, however, for there are some who defend Wŏnhyo's author-

ship, while others attribute the authorship to other Korean figures. Han Po-Kwang summarizes the arguments involved in this controversy while carrying out an exhaustive research of his own in his monumental work, *Shiragi jōdokyō no kenkyū* (*A Study of Silla Pure Land Buddhism*).⁴

In light of this previous research, the question to be asked at this point is, How did Wŏnhyo, who is known primarily as a proponent of *tathāgatagarbha* (buddha-womb) thought as expressed in the *Treatise on the Awakening of Faith*, come to learn about Pure Land teachings? According to one view, Wŏnhyo studied Pure Land thought from Chajang, who in turn had studied with Daochuo in China. Chajang traveled between Changan and Wudai shan, both when he went to China and upon his return from China. And there is a possibility that he could have visited Xuanzhong Temple, a center of Pure Land practice led by Pure Land masters such as Danluan and Daochuo, and located half way between these two points. When Chajang returned to Silla in 643, Wŏnhyo (at the time twenty-seven years old) was able to learn the most current teachings prevalent in Changan that included those of Pure Land, Vinaya, and Shelun traditions.⁵

However, this does not answer the *personal* reasons that may have led Wŏnhyo to take such keen interest in the Pure Land teachings and to write commentaries on them. It turns out that Wŏnhyo not only wrote scholarly commentaries on Pure Land sutras but also engaged in and even propagated Pure Land practices among the people. The most extensive source for this aspect of his life is the *Samguk yusa* (*Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*). In commenting on this text, Richard McBride, Jr. has commented on this text, taking note of three instances (told in an obvious hagiographical style) that are most relevant.⁶

The first concerns his relationship with a noble woman. According to the account, King Muryŏl (r. 656–661) came to learn that Wŏnhyo wanted to get married and bear a son to benefit the country. At the time, a young widowed princess living in the Jasper Palace had fallen in love with the young handsome monk. The king, therefore, set up a rendezvous for the two in her chambers in the Jasper Palace, and that night the princess conceived and later gave birth to a son, Sŏl Chong, who grew up to become an eminent Confucian in his own right. Having broken the precept by his affair with the princess, Wŏnhyo disrobed to return to lay life, referring to himself as a “humble householder” (*sosŏng kŏsa*). If this account of his return to laity is correct, it is easy to conceive of the high probability that Wŏnhyo turned to Pure Land practices that are traditionally more amenable to the outlook and life-style of laypersons.

After leaving the monastic life, Wŏnhyo traveled among the people living in the thousands of hamlets of the Korean countryside, teaching them to orally recite the name of Amitābha (*yŏmbul*) for gaining birth in the Pure Land. In spreading his teachings, he employed the techniques of singing and dancing that connected well with the hearts and minds of the

populace, including the unlearned and the indigent. His proselytizing effort appears to have been enormously successful as the *Samguk yusa* notes: "All came to know the name of the Buddha as they chanted 'I take refuge in [Amitābha].'" Wŏnhyo's propagation efforts had great success.⁷

A modern historian, Lee Ki-baek, has gone so far as to postulate that eight or nine of every ten Koreans were converted to Buddhism as a result of his effort.⁸ Unfortunately, we have no clear records of the songs Wŏnhyo may have sung during his tours, but we may gain a glimpse of them from a poem of praise, *Mit'a chungsong ke* (*Verses on the Nature of Amitābha's Enlightenment*):

From a distant past and over innumerable generations
 There has been one eminent sage called Dharmākara.
 Having first aroused the thought of supreme enlightenment
 He went forth from the mundane world and entered the path,
 shattering all signs.
 Even though he knows that the one mind does not have signs
 He has pity for the flocks of sentient beings
 drowning in the ocean of afflictions.
 He made forty-eight great salvific vows
 To fully cultivate wholesome actions and forsake all defilements.⁹

The third example of Pure Land involvement from his personal life is related to the account of two friends, Kwangduk and Ŭmjang. It tells a story of Kwangduk's passing and birth in the Pure Land, and his widow's remarriage to his friend, Ŭmjang. On their first night of marriage, as Ŭmjang makes his amorous advances on his new wife, she rebukes him, saying to him, "Your seeking of the Western Paradise is like looking for a fish in a tree." She then relates to Ŭmjang that she and Kwangduk shared a devotion to Pure Land practice that was so dedicated that they refrained from any sexual relationship for the ten years of their married life. She explained how they practiced the recollection of the name of Amitābha and how they had mastered the sixteen visualizations that are discussed in the *Guan Wuliang shou jing* (*Sutra on the Visualization of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*). Wŏnhyo's connection with this tale is through these practices, for Kwangduk credits him with having properly taught them the recollection and the visualization practices they came to master. Upon hearing the dedication that she and her deceased, former husband had, Ŭmjang repented and dedicated himself to the visualization practices and eventually gained birth in the Pure Land.

As these narratives of Wŏnhyo reveal, he made enormous contributions to the propagation of the Pure Land practice of *yŏmbul* (*nian fo*) in its recitative and visualization forms. Pure Land would end up becoming extremely popular in Korea, not only as a pervasive mode of practice for the common

people but also as vital elements in the practices of many of the monastics, very similar to the pattern we saw in China. And it still continues to be the case up till the present time as sounds of recitative *yŏmbul* can be heard in many of the Buddhist temples in Korea.

FIRST KIND OF FAITH: DEEP FAITH

We turn now to the main subject of this essay, faith as discussed in the *Commentary on the Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* (無量壽經宗要, henceforth, the *Commentary*), one of the two surviving works. As I believe there are two kinds of faith found in this text, I shall refer to them as (1) "deep faith" and (2) "devotional faith," which are represented in their original terms as (1) *zhen-xin* (深信) or *xin-jie* (信解) and (2) *yin-xin* (仰信), respectively.

With regard to "deep faith" (the first of two), it is found in Wŏnhyo's explanation of the section on the lowest of the three grades of rebirth that appears in the *Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* (henceforth, the *Sutra*). Wŏnhyo speaks of deep faith in connection to "those of bodhisattva nature" (菩薩種性人) who are one of two categories of people, the other being "those of unsettled nature" (不定性人). To understand Wŏnhyo's deep faith, it is necessary to look at his views of those of unsettled nature first, which is seen in the following statement:

As for the first group (those of unsettled nature), first, even though they are unable to perform virtuous deeds they ought to generate *bodhicitta* (the aspiration for enlightenment; 發無上菩提心); this is the main cause (正因). Secondly, they ought to contemplate on the Buddha (Amitābha) for at least ten thoughts (乃至十念專念彼仏); this constitutes a supplementary practice (助滿業). Thirdly, they aspire to be reborn in that country (願生彼国); this and the former two practices combine to constitute the cause for rebirth of those of unsettled nature.¹⁰

This explanation can be summarized as follows:

1. The main cause of faith is having generated *bodhicitta*.
2. The supplementary cause is to contemplate the Buddha for at least ten thoughts.
3. As for one's vow, one ought to aspire to be reborn in the Pure Land.

Thus, the main practice is generating *bodhicitta*. Now, there is no explanation concerning the position of these people of unsettled nature on the path (Skt. *mārga*), the Mahayana category system of the levels of spiritual attainment. However, based on Wōnhyo's *Commentary to the Awakening of Faith*, they would be situated at the level of ten faiths or below, since Wōnhyo explains there that practitioners attain "settled nature" first at the level of ten dwellings, one level above that of ten faiths.¹¹

As for the supplementary cause, we have seen above that one is to practice the ten-thought contemplation of the Buddha. This is in accordance with the statement found in the sutra, "With single-minded concentration, contemplate the Buddha of Immeasurable Life for at least ten thoughts." The same can be said with regard to the vow (the third of three causes), which is in accordance with another sutra passage, "Aspire to be reborn in that country." With regard to the nature of "contemplation," it is the focusing of the mind on the Buddha, thus, differing from the oral recitation promoted most vigorously by Shandao.

Next, let us see how Wōnhyo thinks about those of bodhisattva nature, whom he considers different from those of unsettled nature:

There are three qualities to them. First, in listening to the profound dharma, they rejoice and have faith. They also generate *bodhicitta* as their main cause, but differ from the previous group in that they foster deep faith (深信). Second, they contemplate the Buddha even as few as one moment (乃至一念念於彼仏); this constitutes a supplementary cause. Whereas the previous group had to practice ten contemplations since they lack deep faith, this group does not have to engage in the ten contemplations, since they have deep faith (為顯前人無深信故、必須十念、此人有深信故、未必具足十念). Third, they aspire to be reborn in that country; this and the former [two] practices combine to constitute the cause for rebirth of those of bodhisattva nature.¹² (emphasis mine)

This statement can be summarized as follows:

1. The main cause is generating *bodhicitta*, attended by deep faith.
2. The supplementary cause is contemplating the Buddha for at least one thought.
3. As for one's vow, one ought to make the vow to be reborn in the Pure Land with sincerity.

In comparing these two groups, generating *bodhicitta* constitutes the main cause for both groups. However, the one significant difference lies in that those of bodhisattva nature have "deep faith." This has implications for what the two groups are required to practice. To understand this, let us look

once again at Wŏnhyo's statement, "Whereas the previous group (those of unsettled nature) had to practice ten contemplations because they lack deep faith, this group (those of bodhisattva nature) does not have to engage in the ten contemplations since they have deep faith." Those of bodhisattva nature are not required to practice ten contemplations *because* they have deep faith.

I find this explanation to be extremely interesting, for it throws light on the relationship between ten contemplations and faith. According to Wŏnhyo's view, faith is adequate by itself. In other words, faith has become independent of the ten contemplations. Hence, one or the other (contemplation for even one moment of deep faith) is necessary as a supplementary cause, but *both* are not deemed necessary. This is a departure from the passage in the *Sutra* regarding the Eighteenth Vow, which reads, "One should with sincere mind, serene faith, desire to be reborn *and* perform at least ten contemplations." Thus, both faith and ten contemplations were required. However in contrast, Wŏnhyo has, thus, separated the two and determined that faith could stand on its own.

One can make a further observation with regard to the relationship between faith and the ten contemplations. Not only does faith not require ten contemplations, but it is *superior* to it. One can make this claim based on Wŏnhyo's view that those with deep faith are located higher on the path than those who engage in the ten contemplations. Those of bodhisattva nature, who have deep faith, are situated at ten faiths or above, while those of unsettled nature are at ten faiths or below.

The superior status of those of bodhisattva nature is also seen in Wŏnhyo's discussion of "*bodhicitta* in accordance with principle" (順理発心) and "*bodhicitta* in accordance with phenomena" (順事発心). He identifies the former with those of bodhisattva nature and the latter with those of unsettled nature. In regards to "*bodhicitta* in accordance with principle," one seeks to cultivate deep faith (深信) in the fact that all dharmas are empty like a dream, and then engage in the *samādhi* of emptiness, non-form, and desirelessness. Deep faith, thus, involves quite an advanced level of wisdom, for it entails realization of emptiness. In contrast, "*bodhicitta* in accordance with phenomena" calls for one to raise three vows (three of the well-known Four Bodhisattva Vows), that is, to sever one's blind passions no matter how uncountable, to cultivate virtuous teachings no matter how immeasurable, and to save beings no matter how innumerable. The level of understanding in this case is clearly not at the same level as the previous one.¹³

As these discussions show, deep faith as one of the practices for those of bodhisattva nature indicates a higher level of attainment on the path than that of the ten contemplations associated with those of unsettled nature. This further confirms the high regard that Wŏnhyo had toward deep faith.

SECOND KIND OF FAITH: DEVOTIONAL FAITH (仰信)

Let us now examine the second kind of faith. The closing lines of the *Commentary* acknowledge the fact that there is still hope for those of unsettled minds (the first of the two groups discussed above), even though they are unable to fully realize the objects of the four kinds of wisdom. They are exhorted to have devotion and whole-heartedly give oneself in faith to the Tathāgata. By such action, one would not have to be confined to the hinterland, an undesirable section, in the Pure Land.¹⁴ Wōnhyo reasons that because what the sutra is attempting to describe cannot be known by one's cognitive understanding, especially by those with shallow knowledge, people must simply believe in the words of the sutra.

Accompanying Wōnhyo's exhortation of faith is his recognition of the workings of the "great power of Buddha's wisdom" (仏智大勢力). Wōnhyo, in fact, argues for the greatness of the Buddha by employing two metaphors. The first metaphor is that of "firewood that's been piling up for a thousand years." Having accumulated over a thousand year period, the pile reached a height of a thousand *li*.¹⁵ However, that huge pile catches fire and burns in just one single day. The metaphor ends with a rhetorical question as to how a one-thousand-year pile could burn up in just one day, suggesting that the answer lies in the greatness of the Buddha's power.

In the second metaphor, entitled "a traveler and a ship," it points out the fact that a person with a physical disability can travel only about one *yojana*¹⁶ even after a great number of days, but a ship propelled by a strong tail wind and a skilled captain can travel up to a thousand *li* in a single day. However, the Tathāgata's power exceeds that of the captain by incalculable times!

These two metaphors are similar to other well-known metaphors from earlier Chinese Pure Land sources. The "firewood that's been piling up for a thousand years" is similar to the "extremely long night and the light" in Tanluan's *Commentary*, while "a traveler and a ship" reminds us of the metaphor found in relation to the idea of the "two paths of the difficult and the easy" found in Nāgārjuna's "Chapter on Easy Practice." It is not clear whether these earlier works had a direct influence on Wōnhyo. However, there is general agreement among these metaphors that fire, ship, and light represent the workings of the "Other Power," and are on a superior level that transcends that of the firewood, long night, and traveling on land that represent "Self Power."

Elsewhere, Wōnhyo explains the greatness of the Buddha's power. For example, arhats and *pratyekabuddha*-s are unable to be born in the Pure Land, but those of the unsettled nature are all able to do so on account of having generated the mind of Mahayana (大乘心). And they are able to do so be-

cause of the workings of the Buddha's power as an external condition (外縁力). This power, also termed "the power of the Tathāgata's original vow" (如来本願力), is conceived and imagined in accordance with the sensibilities of the people of unsettled nature, but the vow cannot be realized by the power derived from self-generated karmic action (自業因之力).

We can, therefore, see that Wŏnhyo acknowledged the efficacy of devotional faith, but he did distinguish it from the first category of faith, that is, deep faith. And he found devotional faith and the people involved to possess the following characteristics. (1) They are seekers on levels below the ten faiths on the path, not those of ten faiths and higher. (2) The objects of their faith are the Tathāgata and the scriptures, not sophisticated doctrinal concepts such as thusness and emptiness. (3) What is called for of the seekers is confined to faith, which is supported by the power of the Buddha, and not any self-generated karmic actions. The third characteristic certainly constitutes precursory traits of "Other Power" and "faith only" that come to full development in later Pure Land Buddhist development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Wŏnhyo's understanding of faith as found in his *Commentary* can be summarized as: (1) the importance of faith in his soteriological scheme, (2) the recognition of faith as a superior form of action over that of the ten contemplations, and (3) the differences in the characteristics of the two types of faith.

Regarding this difference between devotional faith and deep faith, the one observation that we can make with confidence is the importance of the role Wŏnhyo gave to faith. And this faith contains qualities that are very similar to the radically "Other Powered" faith as represented in the teachings espoused by later Japanese Pure Land Buddhists such as Shinran (1173–1262). In this type of faith ("devotional faith") the karmic action carried out by the aspirants ("Self Power") doesn't constitute an efficient cause for their birth in the Pure Land, but, instead, requires the workings of the "Other Power" or the "original vow" from the side of the Buddha. Further, Wŏnhyo recognized that this type of faith was meant for those with relatively low spiritual capacity as it was directed to those with unsettled nature.

Also evident in Wŏnhyo's thought is the priority given to "contemplation for one moment" (一念) over "contemplations for at least ten moments" (十念). This shift can be seen in the thought of other Silla Pure Land commentators, such as Ŭijok and Kyong-hung. And it is believed that the importance given to "contemplation for one moment" influenced the practices of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism starting in the Heian period.

One proponent of this view is Ishii Yoshinaga whose following statement leaves us with a glimpse into the nature of the relatively unexplored area of research in Pure Land Buddhist studies. I shall close with Ishii's observation in hopes that others will take up the task of pursuing this topic of the relationship between Korean and Japanese Pure Land Buddhism:

The interpreting of the practice of contemplation as oral recitation and simplifying of ten contemplations to one contemplation constitute an inevitable process for Pure Land Buddhism, which is committed to making salvation accessible in keeping with the Mahayana spirit. However, long before Pure Land Buddhism emerged as an independent school focused on oral recitation in our country (Kamakura Period, Japan), the teaching of birth in the Pure Land by oral recitation, rooted in the doctrine of one thought, had already been promoted in and around Kyoto during the Heian Period. And I wish to point out once again the role that Silla Pure Land Buddhism played as one facet in the formation of Japanese Buddhism.¹⁷

NOTES

1. Han Bo-Kwang, *Shragi jōdo shisō no kenkyū* (Osaka: Tōhō Shuppan, 1991), pp. 83–93.
2. Muraji Tetsumyō, “Yushin-anrakudō Gangyō saku setsu e no gimon” (“Doubts on Wŏnhyo’s Authorship of *Yusim allak to*”), *Ōtani gakuhō* 144 (1960): p. 45. His strongest argument is that this work cites texts that were clearly written after Wŏnhyo’s death. Etani Ryūkai, “Shiragi Gangyō no Yushin-anraku-dō wa gisaku ka” (“Is *Yusim allak to* by Wŏnhyo of Silla an Apocryphal?”), *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 45 (1974): pp. 16–23. Etani suggests that the text was ascribed to Wŏnhyo to garner Wŏnhyo’s authority in promoting the message that “ordinary beings” were similarly able to be born in the Pure Land along with the “saints.”
3. Ochiai Shunten, “Yushin-anraku-dō no chosha” (“On the Theory of Japanese Authorship of *Yusim allak to*”), *Bukkyō ronsō* 24 (1980): pp. 134–137; “Yushin-anraku-dō no chosa” (“The Author of *Yusim allak to*”), *Kachō daigaku kenkyūkiyo* 25 (1980): pp. 180–210.
4. Han Bo-Kwang, *Shragi jōdo shisō no kenkyū*, p. 105.
5. Kamata Shigeo, *Shiragi bukkyōshi josetsu*, p. 192. Shelun is a Chinese school that was based on Asaṅga’s *Mahāyānasamgraha*.
6. Richard McBride, Jr., “Wŏnhyo’s Approach to Rebirth in the Pure Land” (unpublished article), pp. 5–8.
7. The original passage of *Samguk yusa* is found in Han Bo-Kwang, *Shragi jōdo shisō no kenkyū*, p. 81.
8. Lee Ki-baik, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward G. Wagner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 83.
9. McBride, “Wŏnhyo’s Approach,” p. 6. The translation is by McBride, and the original is found in *Hanguk pulgyo chōnsō* 1, 741a. Cited in McBride, p. 7.
10. *T.* vol. 37, p. 128b.
11. Kakehashi Shingyō, “Gangyō no jōdokyō-shisō nit suite” (“Wŏnhyo’s Pure Land Thought”), in *Nihon Chūgoku Bukkyō shisō to sono tenkai*, ed. Misaki Ryōshū (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1992), p. 200. Kakehashi’s reference is based on his reading of Wŏnhyo’s *Commentary to the Awakening of Faith*.
12. *T.* vol. 37, p. 128b–c.
13. *T.* vol. 37, p. 128b–c.
14. *T.* vol. 37, p. 130c.

15. One *li* = 3.9273 km.
16. One *yojana* is variously defined as 160, 120, or 64 km.
17. Ishii Yoshinaga, "Gusoku jūnen to ichinen ōjō: Heian Jōdokyō ni okeru Shiragi Jōdokyō juyō no issokumen" ("Birth in the Pure Land by Ten Contemplations or One Contemplation: One Dimension in the Reception of Silla Pure Land Buddhism in Heian Pure Land Buddhism"), *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 101 (2002): pp. 106–109.

Kōsai and the Paradox of *Ichinengi*: Be Careful of What You Preach

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WHAT IS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL experience of Pure Land Buddhism that supposedly changed so radically in the Kamakura period with the anagogic insight brought to the community by Hōnen that produced a message so powerful, so inspiring, for so many? This is one of great enigmas of Japanese Buddhism, and indeed of all Buddhist history. Unfortunately, there are enormous text-critical problems associated with nearly all the writings in the Hōnen corpus, as well as the voluminous biographical material about him and his movement written in the century following his death, and this situation makes our understanding of Hōnen exceedingly precarious. Arguably equally influential, however, are the many extant writings from the generation of Pure Land religious leaders who emerged from Hōnen's corps of authoritative disciples. Written by his most intimate students, all endeavor to "clarify" Hōnen's doctrines while describing their own religious perspectives. These works not only afford first-hand insight into Hōnen's message, but as creative voices in their own right are testimony to the lively discourse of this age, and in addressing such topics as the relationship between praxis and realization, speak to universal religious concerns. This paper examines Kōsai's thought and his views on the meaning of nenbutsu. Kōsai was one of the direct disciples who spent considerable time with Hōnen. His interpretative standpoint, usually referred to as *ichinengi* (一念義), has been problematic for Jōdoshū, Jōdoshinshū, and the government authorities since the Kamakura period.

We have very little information about Kōsai's life. He was apparently a scholarly Tendai monk living at the Western Pagoda on Mt. Hiei until he met Hōnen, which led to a personal transformation of sorts. Depending on the source, Kōsai joined Hōnen's inner circle at age 36 in either 1198 or 1208.¹ If we accept the information in the *Hossui bunrūki*, he died in 1247, some thirty-five years after the death of Hōnen. We know he had a significant number of disciples in the capital of Kyoto, northern Shikoku, and in Echigo in northern Honshū, and his line continued to attract students at least into the second half of the fifteenth century. But under political pressure from both government authorities and within the dominant factions of the Jōdoshū itself, Kōsai's lineage apparently did not survive the sixteenth

century, although his ideas have continued to be influential throughout the Edo period and into the twentieth century.

Although there is little to indicate that Hōnen himself held strong political ambitions, his impact had wide-ranging political consequences. Popular among both the highest government officials and individuals of no political significance, it is well known that his popularity brought with it political suppression both during his lifetime and for his disciples after his death. And one of the political problems was the fact that Hōnen's teachings were so popular that groups emerged claiming affiliation to his lineage yet professing doctrines of their own making, of which he could not approve. Groups labeled under the rubric *ichinengi* were probably the most tenacious problem for Hōnen and for the Jōdo school after his death. That activities of people associated actively or passively with the *ichinengi* moniker were problematic for the fledgling school is well attested to; what is much less clear is what sins such people actually committed. There are a number of extant records of people outside these groups complaining about them or the doctrines supposedly professed by their leaders; what we lack, however, are statements from those people themselves. Using what scant reliable records are extant from this period, this paper is an attempt to come to terms with the doctrines expounded by perhaps the most famous leader of the *ichinengi* movement, if not its founder, Kōsai.

WHO WAS KŌSAI?

Among the great many individuals who considered themselves direct students of Hōnen, there are two methods used today to determine which names truly belonged to his inner circle: first, if the student received personal permission from Hōnen to copy his *Senchakushū*, and second, if he is included in one of the lineage lists of intimate disciples compiled in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On both these accounts, Kōsai qualifies as a bona fide disciple. He is also one of the five core students of Hōnen mentioned in a number of these lineage accounts, including two written by Nichiren, and even the rather polemic "official" biography of Hōnen compiled by Shunjō notes that Kōsai was allowed to secretly copy the *Senchakushū* in 1208, making him the last known person to do so.² As mentioned above, Kōsai's dates are somewhat disputed, but they are probably 1163 to 1247, making him ten years senior to Shinran (1173–1262). Hōnen lived from 1133 to 1212.

The hermeneutic term *ichinengi* reflects a categorization schema that arose in the Buddhist discourse of the century or so after Hōnen's death in 1212. At this time there was considerable discussion—and considerable disagreement—among the learned clergy affiliated with the Pure Land sectarian movement as to how Hōnen's doctrine should be understood properly.

Not everyone believing in this path was directly linked in a transmission lineage with Hōnen, but his impact was so pervasive that new rhetoric like this was largely based on his stated positions, though much of the new jargon plays a minor role in his writings. As early as 1257—ten years after his death—Kōsai is already referred to as the “founder” of *ichinengi*.³

ICHINENGI AND TANENGI

Nearly all discussions of Pure Land Buddhism from this period employ the rubric of *ichinengi* and its supposed opposite, *tanengi*. By definition, the term *ichinengi* indicates “the doctrine of a single nenbutsu” and *tanengi* “the doctrine of multiple nenbutsu.” Here *ichi* is “one” and *ta* means “many,” with *nen* standing for nenbutsu. By itself, *nen* (Ch. *nien*) stems from its role as a verb meaning “to keep the mind focused on,” much like the Sanskrit *manasikāra*, and nenbutsu incorporates this sense as well, even when it is taken to mean recitation or invocation of the Buddha’s name, for that sacred name embodies in sound the Buddha and all of his qualities. As a noun, *nen* implies the brevity of an individual “thought,” thus a single nenbutsu indicates something like a single moment of buddha-consciousness. If this phrase in English seems ambiguous, the Japanese term *ichinengi* is no less so.

Be that as it may, in the literature of this era Kōsai is repeatedly labeled as the representative of the *ichinengi* position and in the hand of Ryūkan, another disciple of Hōnen, is typically placed the banner as the representative of *tanengi* thinking. The conflict between these two interpretive camps can be found in various places in thirteenth century Japanese philosophical and popular literature. Benchō, the founder of the Chinzei lineage of the Jōdoshū, described it like this:

Although the Jōdoshū is a single path of nenbutsu practitioners, the stream of those devoted to one nenbutsu (*ichinen*) and the stream of those devoted to many repetitions (*tanen*) [of nenbutsu] are divided like water and fire. The *ichinen* people laugh at those pursuing repetitious practice as being engaged in difficult or even ascetic practice.⁴ The people doing the repetitious practice criticize those taking the *ichinen* standpoint as having no commitment to practice and no self-cultivation.⁵

Although the above reflects a fairly even-handed view of things, elsewhere Benchō clearly comes down on the side of *tanengi* and can be quite critical of the *ichinengi* position. (More on Benchō’s views below.)

Since it is well known that recitation nenbutsu is designated as the true practice in Hōnen’s epistemic, these two terms clearly indicate differ-

ent views of what should be considered normative for nenbutsu practice. But this “one versus many” is not about how often or how many times one chants the nenbutsu. In *ichinengi*, the single intoning of the nenbutsu does not imply that the nenbutsu is never to be uttered again, nor does this “one nenbutsu” indicate any “common” moment of ritual practice, but the particular experience of realization. There is a kind of continuum here stretching between faith and praxis, with *ichinengi* close to the faith pole and *tanengi* at the other extreme. Or, in the tradition of Japanese religious scholasticism, these different doctrinal camps are called “*anjin-ha*” and “*kigyō-ha*,” with the word *anjin* meaning faith obtained through realization as opposed to faith nurtured through observance and practice, for example. Thus what I am calling “faith” in the context of this discussion is defined by a religious experience that is sudden and utterly transformative for the individual. Faith in the sense of belief in the Pure Land doctrine of Birth in the Pure Land of Amitābha is no less strong in the *tanengi* standpoint, but it emphasizes the need for continual practice to keep the mind pure and clean, and so is appropriate to the monastic lifestyle. In some sense, these different positions parallel the importance placed in the two dominant schools of Japanese Zen on the *satori* or *kenshō* experience in Rinzai, versus the ritual-like significance of continual sitting meditation or *zazen* practice in the Sōtō sect, because nenbutsu represents the Buddha’s wisdom for Hōnen just as *zazen* does for Dōgen.

The controversy is partly grounded in a struggle for succession, and partly in the fact that at times Hōnen taught doctrines that could be interpreted as affirming both positions. He himself was famous for long periods of daily nenbutsu practice, and it is in his efforts to match Hōnen’s massive nenbutsu invocation quantities of sixty thousand per day that Ryūkan earned the title of representative *tanengi* or *kigyō-ha* thinker, though there is much in Ryūkan’s thought to suggest a much broader sense of nenbutsu. In his *Jōdo hōmon genrushō* written in 1310, Gyōnen extols Ryūkan’s affirmation of the need for constant practice, explaining that he justified this with the assertion that since one never knows when the end will come, it is better to spend as much time in practice as is physically possible to increase the likelihood that the mind will be in a purified state at that crucial moment.

Although these categories tend to simplify and therefore obfuscate the religious perspectives of those involved—who as a rule do not use categories like these to describe their own understanding—they are of important historical significance in that they embody philosophical positions prevalent in secondary works of the Kamakura period found frequently in the rhetoric of the time, such as doctrinal histories like Gyōnen’s *Genrushō*, *setsuwa* texts like the *Shiju hyaku innen shū*, and even in the polemic Buddhist writings of Nichiren. Since long periods of practice are supposed to lead to sudden moments of realization in Buddhism, one may wonder why these positions

are perceived to be in such opposition. In the traditions of Chan and Huayan, Zongmi's scheme of sudden realization and gradual cultivation expresses the same assumption behind most Pure Land thinkers as well. But in the theatre of Kamakura period religious discourse, however inappropriate these terms may appear today, they carried great weight. There is no question that categories like these contained strong political implications, not only because they served as banners signifying competing factions, but also because of the antinomian tendencies that the civil authorities associated with the *ichinengi* belief system.

Another philosophical concern that emerges in the extant writings from this period asks, To what degree does the primacy of attainment transcend or even negate the value of practice? Think of the raft abandoned at the other shore, think of the oft repeated phrase in Chan that meditation does not make a buddha (or Nanyue Huairang polishing the tile before Mazu), but also think of the *a priori* assumption in Pure Land Buddhist thought that there is no attainment without the intercession of the Buddha. There are numerous statements throughout the Pure Land commentarial literature in China and Japan that speak to this issue, but it should be remembered that, mirroring the Chan debates, for Pure Land the issue of practice emerges in terms of the need for practice prior and subsequent to realization. In other words, does constant practice bring one closer to awakening when it is eagerly sought for, and is there a need to practice so diligently after the matter has been settled? This distinction is anything but clear in most Pure Land writings, and I believe this has led to no small amount of confusion in this instance. Examination of the complaints against the followers of *ichinengi*—disdain for the rules of both the sangha and society at large—suggest an intense, even zealous, focus on the issue of salvation to the exclusion of other, more mundane religious concerns such as ethics and community. However, the extant writings of Kōsai confirm both the value of nenbutsu practice and the central importance of the *ichinen* attainment. It is never clear precisely how Kōsai sees the relationship between the two.

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

In some sense, one might even hazard a comparison between millenarian movements, like the White Lotus Society in China or the Ikkō ikki movements three centuries later in Japan, and the *ichinengi* "movement" in thirteenth century Japan in that they are all public expressions of what, to the authorities, is a perversion of values. That is, insofar as most civilian governments tolerate religion and commonly have a mutually authoritating relationship with religious systems of belief and religious institutions (indeed this describes the situation in Japan at this time), an individual's pursuit of

his or her own salvation is tolerated and usually lauded as praiseworthy because it tends to direct personal frustrations away from attacks on the establishments of power, both secular and sacred. In other words, religion as status quo-confirming, as a "sacred canopy," is in everyone's self-interest. But when religion becomes the sole measure of authority in an individual's life, the authority of secular and sacred traditions may evaporate. Or, new institutions emerge that rival preexisting ones. This was the danger of the White Lotus and Ikkō ikki movements which, for a time at least, achieved some degree of autonomy as organizations. Although there are no signs of it ever becoming organized on a scale that could threaten local authorities as an "ikki," or insurrection, the doctrines of the *ichinengi* movement are described by its detractors as potentially threatening in just such a way. But it is exceedingly difficult to judge precisely how those associated with the *ichinengi* point of view felt about such things, as there are no extant statements from anyone regarding morals, ethics, or any social institution.

The prime source for the secular reaction against the ideas of *ichinengi* is found in certain entries in the *Sanchōki*, the diary of the imperial Chamberlain Fujiwara Nagakane covering the years 1199 to 1206.⁶ The entry for the twenty-first day of the second month of 1206 records a heated complaint against Hōnen who is called an enemy of Buddhism, and insists that he and other of Hōnen's disciples, such as Anraku, Kōsai (called Jōkaku), Jūren, and Gyōkū, another Hōnen disciple also preaching the *ichinengi* position (called Hōhon),⁷ be punished. In an entry on the thirtieth of the same month, a letter is copied into the diary that excoriates Gyōkū and Anraku (called Junsai) for the sin of disrespecting other buddhas in their fervor of devotion to Amida. Only one year later, Anraku and Jūren are beheaded in the most dramatic suppression of the movement, the result of an enigmatic incident in which two court mistresses took the tonsure without authorization. The grouping of Anraku and Jūren together with Kōsai and Gyōkū may indicate a philosophical affinity with the *ichinengi* position, or simply that all four were the object of scorn by the jealous enemies of the Pure Land school in the Tendai and Hossō schools. But insofar as Anraku and Jūren were known to be popular preachers, we can at least surmise from this listing in the *Sanchōki* that Kōsai and Gyōkū also had significant personal followings.

The suppression of the *ichinengi* "movement" was motivated not only by the enemies of Hōnen and the Jōdo school, but by rival factions within the school itself. It stands to reason that if Kōsai's doctrines were completely heretical within the context of Hōnen's doctrinal apparatus, he would have been dismissed as holding deviant views early on and would have been forgotten long ago. The fact that the problem of Kōsai and Gyōkū were taken up at the highest level of legal authority shows just how influential they actually were, and how persuasive were their teachings. We will briefly examine philosophical differences between these men and a rival school led

by Benchō, but suffice it to say at this point that those differences on points of doctrine do not appear to be large enough, on their own, to account for the complete suppression of this school.

The polemics against the *ichinengi* movement are included in the writings of the new orthodoxy under construction by the leaders of the Chinzei faction, most notably Benchō and Ryōchū, the second and third patriarchs of this school.⁸ It is claimed that Kōsai and Gyōkū were expelled from the Jōdo school by Hōnen himself, but this notion can be found only in two biographies of Hōnen written by members of this Chinzei lineage. Gyōkū's departure is mentioned in the *Sanchōki*, but—despite Kōsai and Gyōkū having been listed together as leaders of the problematic *ichinengi* grouping—Kōsai's name does not occur in the context of Gyōkū's removal. In fact, Kōsai's excommunication is not corroborated by any thirteenth-century source, including those that show intimate knowledge of the Jōdo school. We may, therefore, conclude that this is a fabrication.⁹

A good example of how philosophical considerations are mixed with social concerns occurs in a passage in Benchō's *Nenbutsu myōgishū*. In the midst of a discussion of how some have turned their backs on Hōnen's teaching—the identical complaint that occurs in the Chinzei inspired Hōnen biographies—the affirmers of *ichinengi* are accused not only of interfering with their own prospects for birth, but the religious situation of others through their inappropriate guidance. Advocates of long periods of sustained practice, Benchō and his lot were indeed following Hōnen's personal precedence of sixty thousand nenbutsu invocations a day. The *ichinengi* people had the audacity to dismiss this intense practice requiring long hours as meaningless, claiming that those who pursue such praxis are pursuing a path of difficult practice, when the Pure Land path is supposed to be an easy one. They question their understanding of the meaning of nenbutsu.

[The *ichinengi* people say] those who recite the nenbutsu in quantities [of thirty thousand or even sixty thousand per day] are confused. Although it is true that we are to recite the nenbutsu, our birth occurs in only one nenbutsu (*ichinen*), and this is the profound meaning that deserves to be studied.... They pick up the sutras and say that those who advocate many recitations do not believe in the teachings, and to be afraid of committing a sin is to doubt the truth of the Original Vow. Everyone who [believes this] just as they hear it end up throwing out their practice of thirty thousand or sixty thousand nenbutsu and becoming a follower of this [teaching] instead. It is frightening to see how they end up [like] foot soldiers carrying nothing [with which to defend themselves]. Even people who [otherwise] harbor [normal] fears of doing sinful deeds, when

they give in to this teaching commit sin. People who [normally] observe the five- or ten-day vegetarian dietary restrictions, from this day forward are out hunting and fishing. Nuns and monks end up eating fish and fowl while wearing their monastic surplice. They simply disregard what has been passed down [over generations] as common sense in others. People in this world [normally] show restraint before the eyes of men and women, but these people call such restraint acts of hypocrisy. They are not ashamed about things that would shame the Buddha. And they laugh at those who accuse them by saying [the accusers] are only hypocritical followers of the nenbutsu. For them the depth of the nenbutsu of the Original Vow has nothing at all to do with concern over the watchful eyes of others. [You might find] a black-robed [priest] walking with a woman, or a nun and a priest together without hesitation, or someone carrying a fish over the shoulder of their black robe, or a nun carrying some pickled vegetables in the sleeve of her black robe. These are frightening things! ... In the province of Higo the so-called continuous expediency kind of *ichinengi* is frequently extolled. In this form ... two people read the character *nen* as heart (*kokoro*), and *ichi* as one, with the purpose of joining two people together in one mind. When a man and a woman meet and decide to join their hearts, what they call *ichinengi* here means they recite *namu amida butsu* together in one voice.¹⁰

In general, the sins here are things that violate the deportment of a monk or nun, and hence cast the sangha in a bad light. There were complaints of *ichinengi* followers feeling free of social norms and engaging in the behavior deemed inappropriate, including a certain freedom of sexual activity, which may be what the final section above is referring to. The following document expresses the salacious view from another court diary of the period:

Genkū Shōnin (Hōnen) was banished to Tosa for his dissemination of the nenbutsu doctrine. His disciples these days fill the city and the country, and under the name of nenbutsu give themselves up to fornication and immoral association with the wives and daughters of good families. They violate all the laws of the Buddha and the State, and practice shameful deeds daily.¹¹

In that the popularity of Hōnen's movement was not welcomed in many quarters of the land, particularly within the entrenched monastic institutions on Mt. Hiei and at Kōfukuji in Nara, by itself we cannot assume that this statement is objective. But putting its contents together with the complaints from Benchō and in the *Sanchōki*, it appears that such immoral behavior

associated with Hōnen's teachings, frequent or infrequent as the case may be, was widely perceived to be genuine and subsequently dealt with by the politically powerful Chinzei group by laying it at the feet of the *ichinengi* people. That a doctrine which proclaims the Buddha's completed vows of compassion make entry into his paradise truly available to everyone who has faith in it, regardless of the diligence of their practice, could lead people to a sense of liberation is not difficult to understand, but the degree to which this justified not just the idea but the practice of moral license remains an open question. What I am suggesting is that the animosity toward those holding the *ichinengi* position may be more about factional rivalry than moral turpitude. That the *ichinengi* doctrine packaged this in a way more appealing, more convincing than the other disciples of Hōnen is also easy to accept, particularly with this level of animosity manifestly evidencing their success.

THE ORIGINS OF ICHINEN

Let us now turn from the overtly political aspect of the *ichinengi* suppression to the doctrinal in order to consider the question of heterodoxy in Kōsai's position. There are two areas that need to be explored in this context: what meaning, if any, Hōnen ascribed to the word *ichinen*, and what was and was not unorthodox or even "deviant" about Kōsai's standpoint on nenbutsu itself vis-à-vis Hōnen's doctrine.

First of all, it should be pointed out that there are many sutras in the Chinese canon in which the term *ichinen* (Ch. *yinien*) appears. Fumihiko Sueki has collected a number of such passages and compared them with extant Sanskrit texts for such works as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, *Daśabhūmika*, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Vajracchedika*. In Buddhābhaddra's translation of the *Huayen jing*, for example, *ichinen* may represent *ekacitta* or *cittakṣana*, that is, a single moment of thought. It is important to note that the phrase *ichinen sōō*, or "[wisdom] corresponding in a single thought-moment (*nen*)," quoted in the *Genrushō* from one of Kōsai's works, appears in the *Aṣṭa Prajñāpāramitā*. Sueki has shown how *ichinen* as *ekacitta* or *cittakṣana* is commonly used to denote moments of realization, and is frequently linked with words expressing faith such as *prasāda* and *adhimukti*. Thus we have in translations of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* the phrase, "anyone who, in hearing the name of the Buddha, feels their heart leap with joy in so much as one thought-moment (*ichinen*), obtains the great benefit," that echoes the original meaning of *prasāda*, which is to have one's mind purified, and which appears in the Ashikaga edition as the nifty phrase that emphasizes its brevity: *antaśā ekacittaprasāda api*.¹² One of the criticisms lodged against Kōsai and his comrade Gyōkū was their valuing

of a non-verbal experience of nenbutsu over recitation, and in this regard an important point to emerge from Sueki's findings is that although there are numerous examples of *ichinen* coupled with faith, contrary to popular belief there are no examples of its usage implying recitation, even in the *Sukhāvātīvyūha*.

HŌNEN ON ICHINEN

The phrase *ichinen* was also not uncommon in Japanese Tendai and even Pure Land writings before Hōnen.¹³ Perhaps most significantly in this regard is the use of the same word *ichinen* to indicate the ultimate attainment of buddhahood, as in a short work on the subject of Original Enlightenment (*hongaku*) attributed to Saichō called "Becoming a buddha in one thought-moment," *Ichinen jōbutsugi*.¹⁴ Hōnen frequently refers to the passage quoted above from the *Sukhāvātīvyūha Sutra* to point out the significance of the attainment of birth, the goal of his system, in the space of a single thought-moment or *ichinen*. And the phrase *ichinen no shin*, or "faith in one thought-moment" (or, 'one nenbutsu') occurs frequently in the writings of Shinran. What was Hōnen's position on the issue of affirming or realizing one's birth in the Pure Land in only a single thought-moment, as the *ichinengi* doctrine states? As with many other issues that became controversial after his death, Hōnen has left a rather ambiguous trail of statements on this. The ambiguity, however, can be traced to which aspect of the issue he was addressing himself: philosophical/doctrinal or social/ethical. When speaking to the issue of that which he affirmed as orthodox Pure Land doctrine, Hōnen said this in a letter:

Question: In the discussion of the "profound mind" [as found] in the *Wangsheng lizan*, Shandao states that: "Whether ten invocations or one invocation [of the Buddha's name], one will attain Birth without fail. Do not harbor any doubts that this is [true] even for only one nenbutsu (*ichinen*)."¹⁵ But in Shandao's explanation of the profound mind [as written] in his *Guanjing shu*, he describes it as: "Thought-moment after thought-moment [nenbutsu after nenbutsu], one does not drop [the Buddha] from one's mind. This is called the practice of those rightly assured [of Birth]." Which of these should we decide upon?

Answer: The ten invocations or one invocation refers to the way one believes in the nenbutsu. Therefore, in terms of faith you should take the position that a single nenbutsu (*ichinen*) brings about Birth; and in terms of practice, I encourage you to vigorously engage in [nenbutsu] practice throughout your life.¹⁵

Elsewhere, Hōnen also stated,

The highest grade of the lowest class of sentient beings are those people who have committed [one of the] ten evil acts. If, in their final moments of life they put forth a single nenbutsu (*ichinen*), their sins will be dissolved and they attain Birth.¹⁶

In these passages Hōnen not only recognizes the validity and importance of religious attainment that comes in a single thought-moment of nenbutsu, but defines faith itself as “the position that a single nenbutsu brings about Birth.” He also encourages his audience to continue their nenbutsu practice both before and after attaining faith. On the other hand, when a letter arrived from the Etchū region along the Japan Sea coast which questioned the *ichinengi* doctrines being taught in that area, Hōnen responded this way:

The doctrine that states that Birth can be accomplished in a single nenbutsu (*ichinen ōjō no gi*) is also very popular here in the capitol. This is generally preposterous, and hardly worth even discussing.... This is just a misinterpretation of Shandao’s gloss on the “ten invocations, one invocation” phrasing in the *Larger Sukhāvativyūha Sutra* in which he said that one should have no doubts about the possibility of attaining Birth in only one *nen*.... These days there are a lot of foolish people without any understanding who cling to the idea of ten nenbutsu or only one nenbutsu and abandon the need for any further practice; they are completely shameless about this.¹⁷

I think we can infer from these two statements that Hōnen did indeed affirm that there is a need for spiritual realization or religious confirmation in the Pure Land path, and that this is indeed experienced as a sudden, momentary psychological breakthrough. But when this was interpreted by some of the *ichinengi* followers to mean that therefore further practice was irrelevant, specifically that once birth was confirmed, then even the usual norms of monastic life were also unnecessary, this crossed the line of acceptability. I would suggest that the conflict seen here is not between competing definitions of practice or between disparate conceptions of faith, but rather reflects the inevitable contradiction or conflict between Hōnen’s assertion of exclusive nenbutsu as a salvific construct and the social/political implications of a doctrine that eschews any concern for moral propriety.

In general, Hōnen’s standpoint is one characterized by what we might call a “critical selection” built upon a philosophical edifice of rejection as the justification for establishment. This hermeneutic is called *hairyū* in the rhetoric of the Jōdo school. As Hōnen concludes at the end of chapter two of his *Senchakushū*:

I believe that anyone who reads these words should abandon the miscellaneous and cultivate the exclusive [practice]. Why should anyone abandon the exclusive cultivation of the right practice, by which a hundred out of a hundred attain Birth, and stubbornly cling to the cultivation of miscellaneous practices, by which not even one out of a thousand attains Birth?¹⁸

One might say that the so-called eighty-four thousand doctrines of Buddhism are all efficacious in their own way, but they are *neyārtha* in comparison to the single *nītārtha* doctrine of nenbutsu. This attitude is particularly clear in chapters two and twelve of the *Senchakushū*. Viewed from the standpoint of nenbutsu as a kind of meta-authority, what is striking about Hōnen's rhetoric is that while he recognizes the value of all Buddhist teachings and practices, the need to abandon everything else suggests a monism rarely seen in Japan until that time. In throwing out the option of pursuing other paths, cultivating other practices, seeking aid from other buddhas or liberation in the doctrines of other sutras, Hōnen raises the path to the Pure Land of the Buddha Amida to the status of being "the chosen" form of faith. The other Buddhist doctrines and practices are never identified as wrong or misleading; in Hōnen's language they are merely miscellaneous or heterodox, and sometimes they are even called "ancillary" (*jo* 助). And yet the establishment of this orthodoxy requires the rejection of that orthodoxy, or in this case, all other orthodoxies. His is an approach that inevitably led to devoted supporters and resentful antagonists.

Consider, for example, the "history" of the phrase *shahei kakuhō* (捨閉閣抛), or "rejection, closing, removing, and abandoning." Originally coined by Nichiren in his *Risshō ankokuron*, the term *shahei kakuhō* was culled from four verbs of denial used by Hōnen in the *Senchakushū* and used in Nichiren's polemic as proof that the world was going to hell because of the popularity of Hōnen's hermeneutic of refutation of the established order. The four denials are:

- (1) Daocho's "rejection" (*sha*) of the efficacy of the traditional path for the Pure Land path, as well as Shandao's rejection of a multiplicity of practices for devotion solely to nenbutsu
- (2) "closing" (*hei*) the gateway of focused or meditative practices to focus on recitation
- (3) of the two possible ways to escape samsara, "set aside" (*kaku*) the traditional path and select the Pure Land path
- (4) "throwing aside" (*hō* or *nageutsu*) all other forms of practice to take refuge in the nenbutsu.

Despite the origin of the phrase in Nichiren's polemic, as these phrases express themes of Hōnen that are repeated over and over in the *Senchakushū*, their content can hardly be denied. As a result, the phrase *shahei kakuhō* grew to reach a level of acceptability that would have shocked Nichiren, even becoming canonical within Japanese Pure Land discourse itself, if not a moniker representative of the core of Hōnen's mature teaching.¹⁹ Accepting Nichiren's attack as a pejorative usage, we nevertheless might ask, What does this phrase imply about moral and ethical issues, if not the question of the relevancy of the monastic precepts?

It goes without saying that Nichiren saw something pernicious in Hōnen's interpretation of the Buddhist canon. However, if one were pressed to find a moral message in the hermeneutic of denial summarized by the phrase *shahei kakuhō*—for there is no direct moral message here—one would have to conclude that morality and the values associated with monasticism are decidedly not relevant, if not implicitly rejected. This stems from the centrality for Hōnen of Daocho's distinction between the traditional path to self-perfection and the path to the Pure Land, the theme with which Hōnen opens his *Senchakushū*, and is reflected in this formula. Shandao's move to shift emphasis from difficult meditations to the simple recitation of the Buddha's name also strongly implies that moral perfection is beside the point. This is clearly presumed in Hōnen's famous *panjiao* statement that the *Sukhāvativyūha* is the "sudden among all sudden teachings." Why? Because it alone allows individuals to attain their religious goal without removing all their *kleśa*. Cultivation of *śīla* is an absolute requirement in any notion of the Buddhist path prior to Daocho's formulation, and there is nothing in the careers of either of these monks to suggest they did not hold their station in esteem. But when it comes down to what is required to attain Birth, neither Daocho nor Hōnen expresses any serious concern for *śīla* in their notion of the Pure Land path. This point has been overlooked and yet is central to our understanding of Kōsai's doctrine and the entire thrust of the values embodied in the doctrine of *ichinengi*.

Indeed the radical nature of the Pure Land path lies precisely here: the cultivation of all traditional religious values associated with Buddhism such as merit, virtue, morality, meditation, wisdom, and so on are not required and for many, even antithetical and therefore counterproductive to the goals of Pure Land Buddhism. The latter is generally the position taken by Shinshū thinkers, and there are hints of the same in Kōsai. I would also argue that the Shinshū doctrine of *akunin shōki*, that the Buddha's message is actually directed at those with the worst moral state, is not philosophically possible without the presumption of freedom from moral restraints implied by *ichinengi*. In other words, Hōnen's message of liberation mediated by the activities of an actively involved Amida Buddha who reaches out to everyone, especially those with the greatest moral need, is immediately suggestive of the observation that a religious life of good works is simply

insufficient, and even the attempt to reach the Pure Land in that manner is tantamount to a *jiriki* attitude.

KŌSAI AND THE HŌNEN ORTHODOXY I: METHODOLOGY

If we look at the fundamental religious presumptions that lie within Kōsai's standpoint, it cannot be denied that by and large the *ichinengi* position is doctrinally of a piece with Hōnen's general approach. Kōsai accepts Amida as occupying a unique position among all buddhas, and the enactment of his vows as a reality that has provided access to his buddha-realm in a way not seen elsewhere within the pantheon of buddhas and bodhisattvas. Kōsai also accepts the primacy of nenbutsu as *nītārtha*,²⁰ as the chosen practice for the chosen path. In other words, the *ichinengi* position also builds a system of religious meaning upon certain publicly accepted ritual traditions associated with reaching Amida's Pure Land that, following Hōnen, reject other choices of praxis and belief.

Below is an example of how similar is the methodology employed by Kōsai. But notice how his adoption of Hōnen's "hermeneutic of selection" (which from another point of view would be more appropriately termed a "hermeneutic of rejection"), in which orthodoxy is expressed by means of rejecting A to establish B, is faithful in spirit but then continues to roll further down the road than Hōnen ever dared to go. Here is Kōsai in his *Gengibunshō* sub-commentary on Shandao's commentary on the *Guanjing*:

The section after "Moreover, the [*Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*] also says," displays the heart of the essay. First, one is seen to abandon the path to self-perfection and enabled to practice the path to the Pure Land. Next, the assorted practices are abandoned and the nenbutsu is encouraged to be practiced. The abandonment of the path to self-perfection for the path to the Pure Land is based on the ideas in the *Huayan jing*.... Abandoning the karmically good practices of meditation and being encouraged [to cultivate] the karmically good practices that do not require concentration; abandoning the miscellaneous practices and being encouraged to practice recitation of [the name of] the Buddha; abandoning the many recitations and encouraging the one recitation; abandoning the many buddhas and being encouraged to direct one's practice to Amida. These are based on the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Guanjing*, and others, with the last among the four being based only on the *Guanjing*. Abandoning the oral recitation and being encouraged to practice nenbutsu in one's mind is based on the Larger [*Sukhāvāṭṭyūha*] sutra. Taking this as the truth and taking other paths and other practices as leading to Birth at another time is clearly based on the *Smaller Sukhāvāṭṭyūha Sutra*.²¹

There is nothing in this passage that is not standard Jōdoshū doctrine, except the final assertion about abandoning oral recitation. I will return to this point below.

KŌSAI AND THE HŌNEN ORTHODOXY II: SAMĀDHI AND THE ORTHOPRAXY OF RECITATION

As stated above, the word “nenbutsu,” both in its original Chinese form and its usage in Japan, did not always mean recitation of the sacred name of the Buddha. The term could also denote concentration on the icon or image of a buddha (not necessarily Amida), or simply something like “keeping the Buddha in mind.” Thus we see the term “becoming a buddha in one thought” (*ichinen jōbutsu*) in Tendai *hongaku* literature.²² Indeed, it is quite possible that the ritual invocation of the Name emerged as a device precisely for the purpose of maintaining the focus of one’s attention on a buddha or buddhahood and all that that the notion of buddha represented.

Where Kōsai diverges from the more common discourse of his contemporaries in the Pure Land movement is the way he uses nenbutsu to designate something more than mere praxis, even orthopraxis. In other words, it comes down to the question of precisely what the nenbutsu means, both as signifier and signified. Kōsai’s stance would not have been possible without Hōnen, whose doctrine of critical selection imbued the nenbutsu with an authority not previously seen. We have already seen instances when Hōnen himself put forth a doctrine in which the attainment of Birth is achieved in a single nenbutsu. Although he repeatedly stressed the superiority of recitation nenbutsu, did Hōnen’s elevation of nenbutsu necessarily restrict its meaning to the recitation form? I have already discussed elsewhere the interesting paradox of Hōnen’s own record of *samādhi* attainment, the *Sam-mai hottokki*.²³ This work describes Hōnen’s *samādhi* attainment in a dream and yet it was accepted as a religiously authoritative experience. The story is told that it occurred during an intense nenbutsu vigil called *betsuji nenbutsu* in which there is little doubt that the practice centered on recitation. But the nature of the attainment was completely unexpected—an important point emphasized by Jōdoshū scholars—and hence falls into the *ichinen* hermeneutic category.

There was a long tradition in East Asian Buddhism of striving for the trance state of *samādhi* in which either Amitābha Buddha or some aspect of his Pure Land appears to the practitioner. This extrasensory moment was believed to constitute confirmation of a non-backsliding stage on the Path, and this special single nenbutsu moment expressed the *ichinengi* position that can only be understood as a brief moment of *samādhi* attainment. The most important question for Hōnen on the subject of *samādhi* lies in his

assertion of the doctrine that affirms the religious value of *samādhi*, but only if it is obtained through recitation practice, called *nenbutsu samādhi*, rather than through other means such as the visualization exercises also found in the *Guanjing*. His boldest statement on the superiority of *nenbutsu samādhi* is found in chapter twelve of the *Senchakushū*. Notice that the critical categories here are not invocation versus silent mentation, but *samādhi* attained through visualization versus *samādhi* attained through *nenbutsu*. He does this by reading the term “*nenbutsu*” in the epilogue section of the *Guanjing* to imply recitation, even though the sutra itself is not so explicit and certainly could be read to merely mean “keep the Buddha in mind,” as is implied in the previous sentence.²⁴

Question: Among all eleven [deep] contemplations in the *Guanjing*, [one can understand Śākyamuni] would put aside the shallow forms of visualization, but he would want to transmit the deep forms [to Ānanda], among those being the ninth contemplation in which one visualizes Amida Buddha himself, for this is precisely the *samādhi* of buddha-contemplation (*kanbutsu-zammai*). He should therefore put aside the other twelve contemplation practices but transmit the buddha-contemplation practice. Yet in the Xuanyifen chapter of [Shandao’s commentary] it says that the doctrinal focus of this sutra is buddha-contemplation *samādhi* and it is also *nenbutsu samādhi*. If these two form the focus of the sutra, why [do you claim that] he [Ānanda] abandoned the buddha-contemplation *samādhi* and only entrusted the *nenbutsu samādhi*?

Answer: One can see that the intent of the Buddha’s Original Vow is for sentient beings to solely devote themselves to invoking Amida Buddha’s Name; it is because all other fine practices both meditative and non-meditative are not of the Original Vow that they were not the subject of [Śākyamuni’s] entrustment. Moreover, while the practice of buddha-contemplation *samādhi* [in the ninth visualization practice] may be the most superlative among these other practices, it is still not of the Buddha’s Original Vow and hence it was not entrusted. *Nenbutsu samādhi* is the Original Vow, that is why it was entrusted.

This is an important point of doctrine for Hōnen, for much of his philosophical edifice stands upon it. Namely, that despite Shandao’s claim that both *nenbutsu* and *kanbutsu samādhi* are the doctrinal crux of the *Guanjing*, Hōnen sees the sutra ultimately expressing a message in which only the *nenbutsu* form remains in the end. When *nenbutsu* and *kanbutsu* are paired like this, the implication of *nenbutsu* is strongly that of recitation, as *kanbutsu* represents visualization.

When the problem is stated in these terms, then Kōsai will agree that recitation is of higher value and affirm Hōnen's paradigm. But then how do we explain his clear statements that non-recitation nenbutsu is of higher value, confirmed by Benchō's criticism of his fellow *ichinengi* leader, Gyōkū? What Kōsai, and probably Gyōkū, were trying to do is to focus on the psychological experience of the *nenbutsu samādhi*, not the means to achieve it. Notice that in asserting the superiority of silent nenbutsu over recitation, Kōsai does not base his judgment on a different reading of this passage of the *Guanjing*, Shandao's commentary on it, or even Hōnen's interpretation. Rather he states that "Abandoning the oral recitation and being encouraged to practice nenbutsu in one's mind is based on the *Larger* [*Sukhāvāṭṭīyūha*] *Sutra*." Unfortunately Kōsai does not make clear precisely what section in this sutra he is using for this judgment. Certainly Kōsai, and the historian Gyōnen for that matter, felt that his positions did not violate the spirit of Hōnen's doctrine, and we can guess from these passages that he could claim this because he fully recognized Hōnen's claim of the superiority of *nenbutsu samādhi*.

When we look at Hōnen's usage and his reaction to others' usage of *ichinen*, it is important to keep in mind that just like the term *ichinen*, the concept of nenbutsu itself encompassed not only recitation but a wide range of ritual and meditative practices in his Tendai sect both prior to and after Hōnen; this is no less true for the ritual use of nenbutsu centered on Amitābha Buddha, for the object of nenbutsu can of course be Śākyamuni, Maitreya, Vairocana, and so on. And one of the core hermeneutic traditions within the Tiantai/Tendai school centers on the issue of *samādhi* practice linked to buddha-mentation. The impact of Hōnen's legacy, following the argument mentioned above, appears to have been such that among those considering themselves members if not representatives of the movement that carried his name, the orthopraxis based on nenbutsu was now restricted to that achieved by means of uttering the sound of the Buddha's name in reverence. And this new rule appears to have been broken by the *ichinengi* leaders to the ire of others in the movement. The paradox, of course, is that the attainment of *nenbutsu samādhi* happens in the form of a sudden shift in consciousness, even if it occurs in the midst of repetitive invocations of the Name.

ON THE MEANING OF NENBUTSU

There is a veiled criticism of the *ichinengi* doctrine in the following comment by Benchō (1162–1238) found in another of his works, the *Jōdoshū yōshū*, on the subject of Gyōkū. As the Chinzei line eventually reached a position of preeminence within the post-Hōnen organization, the views of Benchō

and Ryōchū gained an unassailable orthodox status in the Jōdo school, and this particular composition is today studied as a handbook defining their philosophical positions on some eighty topics. Benchō writes:

Hōhonbō (= Gyōkū) says that *nen* [of nenbutsu] means to think on, or to read. This position denies [*nen*] as vocal recitation.²⁵

Apparently the denigration of recitation practice was one of the serious errors of Gyōkū. The above passage was written in 1237, when the political situation for Benchō was such that the organization was still recovering from a massive persecution ten years earlier that had been triggered by Ryūkan's successful attack on the reactionary Tendai cleric Jōshō (n.d.), who had written an anti-Hōnen polemic. A 1227 persecution led to another series of exiles, and despite the origin of the conflict residing between Ryūkan and Jōshō, it was not only Ryūkan who faced exile but Kōsai as well. Benchō's slight reflects the fact that the removal of both Gyōkū and Kōsai from the capital did not mean the end of the appeal that the rival *ichinengi* "movement" presented to the public. After all, Gyōkū had been exiled eighteen years earlier in 1207.

Even less is known about Gyōkū than Kōsai, but he appears to have been Kōsai's elder.²⁶ The two are frequently mentioned as pairs in connection with the *ichinengi* doctrines, but after the 1207 crackdown led to his exile to Sado Island, he no longer appears in any extant historical record and is presumed to have died there. All of Gyōkū's writings have been lost or destroyed, and we only have secondary explanations of his interpretations in sources from the much later Edo period (1605–1868). If we are to believe these descriptions, and the most explicit comes from an eighteenth century statement of Chinzei orthodoxy called *Chinzei myōmoku mondō funjinshō*,²⁷ Gyōkū asserted there were two aspects to the Pure Land, one of form (*sō* 相) and one of principle (*ri* 理). In Kōsai's language, these would be called two distinct Pure Lands available as the object of Birth, with one clearly superior to the other. Again, similar to Kōsai's position, there are correspondingly two forms of nenbutsu as well. Gyōkū calls these recitation nenbutsu (*shōnen* 称念), and essence or ideational nenbutsu (*rinen* 理念). Those who practiced recitation nenbutsu only reached a shallow understanding and hence were born in the "Pure Land of form" (*sō no jōdo* 相の浄土); those who practiced the ideation nenbutsu were rewarded with Birth in the "Pure Land of essence" (*ri no jōdo* 理の浄土)."

Within the Jōdo school itself, the *ichinengi* stance reflects what we might call the strong side of *tathāgatagarbha*-based interpretation on the relationship between personal efforts and efforts of the sacred other, expressed by some with the rubrics of *jiriki* and *tariki*. For example, if my faith assures me that I will be sitting before a buddha in a paradise after I die, regardless of my

inability to lead a sinless life here and now, and regardless of my ability to accomplish *samādhi* or any other difficult meditation, why should I be too concerned with the appropriateness of my practice, or even what happens in the secular dimension of my life? After all, the Pure Land sutras assure me that the Buddha has not only promised but fulfilled his promise to override whatever negative karmic residue I might have that would prevent such an exalted rebirth for me under the usual laws of causality. The similarity of the Chan/Zen position—that my mind is originally pure and this purity is unaffected by anything I do—is not a coincidence, of course, for the Pure Land discourse arises from the same Mahayana religious principles that deconstruct the traditional rules of causality. The famous stories in Ch’an of monks burning Buddhist images to keep warm or Nanquan slicing a cat in two express the same amoral position that truth transcends any notion of good and bad, and that even improper actions such as striking someone are justified if they serve the cause of awakening to truth. In Pure Land language, this is usually expressed in the notion that the power of the Buddha is sufficient to override all other karmic considerations for the *kleśa*-ridden individual. The famous Shinshū doctrine of *akunin shōki*, which states that the Buddha’s vows are specifically directed toward evil men and women, manifests this same viewpoint, and stands as an example of how close Shinran stood to the *ichinengi* position.²⁸

To be fair, the Shinshū understanding of the *akunin shōki* doctrine is not that the Buddha condones evil behavior—quite the contrary—but that the universality of his compassion is so great that it seeks out those furthest from the truth, those with the least chance of attaining liberation on their own. But the implications of *akunin shōki* clearly suggest that moral and ethical purity are not requirements for salvation, a position that could easily lead to the inference that such concerns are not at issue in “the great matter” of religious emancipation. Shinran’s own abandonment of his monastic status confirms this view, and it should be noted that this decision was endorsed by Hōnen, confirming that monastic status was not required to reach the Pure Land. Shinran was quite explicit that he felt it impossible for him to suppress his sexuality. There is no evidence of Kōsai taking a similar position on the monastic precepts, but one of the criticisms of the *ichinengi* movement was unrestrained sexual behavior.

The above description of Gyōkū’s view of nenbutsu is remarkable in that it would have been unthinkable even a generation earlier. Here one is reminded of Bakhtin’s statement that

a word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant.... Each and every word expresses the ‘one’ in relation to the ‘other.’ I give myself verbal shape from another’s point of view, ultimately, from the point of view of the

community to which I belong.... A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by speaker and his interlocutors.²⁹

That is, a word derives its meanings and parameters of propriety from the results of how its usage is accepted in interaction with other interested parties. What Benchō's document tells us is that the social context of the rhetoric of nenbutsu had, by 1237, changed to the point where the word nenbutsu defined as recitation had become established as the new orthodoxy, at least within the Pure Land school. In other words, Hōnen's message was no longer being argued; within at least the Chinzei lineage it had become the new standard of measure. And insofar as those professing *ichinengi* refuse to restrict their use of nenbutsu to recitation, they are deemed by Benchō as to be violating these new rules. As none of Gyōkū's writings are extant, we cannot confirm how precisely he used this sacred term, but if he did refer to the experience of nenbutsu in a way that did not imply recitation of the Name, he certainly has centuries of precedence behind him. Also ordained and trained in the Tendai tradition, Benchō was well-aware of that precedent; his statement is a testimony rather to the new struggle over whose word the nenbutsu now is, and who has the authority to determine what "the point of view of the community" will be. And if history is our judge, then the word ultimately belonged to Benchō.

But unlike Gyōkū, we do have certain fragments of Kōsai's writings, which raises the question of what precisely was Kōsai's standpoint on nenbutsu. There are only two extant primary sources of Kōsai's thought: the quotes and discussion by Gyōnen that appear in the *Jōdo hōmon genrushō*, and one section of Kōsai's sub-commentary on Shandao's *Guanjing shu* called the *Gengibunshō*. Writing in the early fourteenth century, Gyōnen's account is unique in that it quotes from three otherwise lost Kōsai texts accompanied by Gyōnen's own analysis of the key issues in Kōsai's doctrine. In the Gyōnen presentation, the only *nen* that is discussed is the all-important single *nen* of realization. Gyōnen explains that Kōsai understood this as a kind of mystic meeting of the mind of the individual and the mind of the Buddha. It is the detailed focus of this moment that is considered the heart of the doctrine, and since it is sudden and momentary, it is called *ichinen*. But there is no reference as to what this *nen* is signifying. In Gyōnen's description, *nen* is used as if it represented a single moment of perception, much like the abhidharmic sense of *citta*.

Let us now turn to how Benchō himself uses the same term *ichinen* in his own writings on *samādhi* experience. In a text called *Nenbutsu sanjin yōshū*, Benchō repeatedly affirms "the great event of Birth [attained] in a single nen[butsu] (*ichinen*)."³⁰ And in his *Jōdoshū yōshū* quoted above, he makes this statement about the importance of *ichinen* in his chapter on attaining *nenbutsu samādhi*:

Question: When [someone talks about] putting forth a single *nen* (*ichinen*), what kind of *nen* is this?

Answer: Putting forth the single *nen* refers to the *ichinen* of perceiving the Buddha [in *samādhi*]. Practice means the single practice of reciting the Name, in which the various thoughts are removed. Everything outside of this single *nen* [should be] considered “other thoughts” (*yonen*).³¹

In the Dingshanyi section of his commentary on the *Guanjing*, Shandao wrote: “Because one sees a buddha’s body, he therefore sees a buddha’s mind.”³² The term “perceiving the Buddha” (*kenbutsu*) is the standard expression denoting *buddha-anusmṛti samādhi* so, like Hōnen, Benchō regards *ichinen* as denoting the mental experience of *samādhi*. Now look at Gyōnen’s description of what Kōsai meant by the term *ichinen*:

When [Kōsai] spoke of a “single *nen*” (*ichinen*) he meant one thought-moment of Buddha wisdom, pointing precisely to the buddha-mind. It is this mind that is being referred to in [his use of] *nenbutsu*. The mind of faith (*shinjin*)³³ of an ordinary being is in complete accord with the wisdom of the Buddha [in that moment]. It is this singular *nen* of Buddha wisdom that is the Original Vow of Amida Buddha.

When the believing thoughts (*shinnen*) of someone engaged in practice correspond to the mind of the Buddha, the mind [of that person] becomes congruent with an [associated] single thought-moment (*ichinen*) expressed in the force of the Vows issuing from the Buddha’s wisdom. Subject (the buddha-mind) and object (the sentient being) are not two. Faith and wisdom are one and the same. As these continue, thought after thought (*nennen*), one’s Birth is assured.

Just how one manages to achieve this mystic unity between the mind of the practitioner and the mind of the Buddha is never stated; indeed this may come through recitation *nenbutsu* practice. And notice that despite the frequent use of *nen* in this passage as both noun and verb, nowhere is it clarified that this refers to recitation practice. If anything, the psychological description seems to steer the reader away from that inference. Although in this description of *ichinen* Gyōnen does not mention *samādhi*, it is clear that Kōsai is not referring to a normal perceptual event. Benchō clarifies the fact that *nen* in other situations refers to practice—presumably recitation *nenbutsu*—but *ichinen* refers to the *samādhi* of attaining a vision of the Buddha.

Notice also the striking similarity between Hōnen's phrase "*nenbutsu samādhi* is the Original Vow" and Kōsai's "It is this singular *nen* of Buddha wisdom that is the Original Vow." In that we can assume that Kōsai's singular *nen* of Buddha wisdom denotes a *samādhi* experience, I would assert that, aware of Hōnen's pronouncement, Kōsai is providing a gloss. That is, in carrying the label *ichinengi*, in effect Kōsai is consciously representing his approach as being focused on that which was the defining moment for Hōnen and indeed the entire point of his religious doctrine. While Hōnen did not describe *nenbutsu samādhi* or *kenbutsu samādhi* in quite the way that Kōsai did, neither did Benchō, Shōkū, Ryōchū, Shinran, Ryūkan, Seikaku, Ippen, or any of the other influential Pure Land leaders at this time. But the difference in understanding of what constitutes the psychology of *nenbutsu samādhi* alone certainly is not sufficient to brand his line as unorthodox or heterodox, and hardly justifies banning the *ichinengi* interpretation from the Jōdo movement.

The core problem with using *nenbutsu samādhi* as the centerpiece of a soteriological scheme in Pure Land Buddhism is that it implies difficulty of praxis, working against the core message of universal accessibility to the Buddha's Pure Land as goal. This contradiction has led some to discount Hōnen's record of his *samādhi* attainment in the *Sammai hottokki* as apocryphal. This also explains why, despite the fact that Shinran frequently extols *nenbutsu samādhi* in his *Kyōgyōshinshō*, quoting scriptures to justify its position as "the true supreme and profound gate,"³⁴ the topic does not occupy a place of central concern in what evolved to become Shinshū orthodoxy in the post-Shinran era.³⁵ Kōsai is well aware of this problem, and offered this rationalization in Gyōnen's words:

If the practitioner is Born there, it is not due to the self-power (*jiriki*) of this ordinary person working on his own. An ordinary person is burdened with the weight of mental afflictions (*kleśa*) and restrained by his own sins. It is because the Tathāgata in his Land of Reward cuts off a [significant] portion these [hindrances].

This position is identical with the Daocho-Shandao-Hōnen position, reflecting what had become the standard Pure Land doctrine of why, through the Buddha's intervention, ordinary beings could attain a buddha-land in which the Buddha is in a *sambhogakāya*. Putting aside the question of how one achieves this *samādhi*, it is the mechanism whereby the Other Power doctrine called *tariki* becomes the "hidden" reason why Birth is possible at all. Once again, standing clearly within this orthodoxy, Kōsai also uses this rationale to explain the experience of *nenbutsu samādhi*. And he does it in a way that also clarifies the superiority of this form of *buddhānusmṛti samādhi* to the visualization form that Hōnen excluded from his *panjiao*. More on this from Kōsai's Gengibunshō:

[When Shandao states that] *nenbutsu samādhi* is the doctrinal message [of the *Guanjing*], he means that the *nenbutsu* which invokes the Name of the true-body is the core doctrine.... The *Commentary* discusses this from ‘part five’ ... down to ‘what is broadly revealed is the *nenbutsu samādhi*.’ The gist of the three [Pure Land] sutras is indeed centered on recitation *nenbutsu*, [explained] broadly in terms of continuation over time, the difficulty of practice.... From beginning to end, the text and meaning of the three sutras is [ultimately] focused on the doctrine of the sacred name (*myōgō*). That is, the outward form of the true body [of the Buddha] is in the karmically good meditative practices, and the sacred name of the true body is the focus of the karmically good non-meditative practices. Both doctrines are of the true body, the abandonment of meditative practice and establishment of non-meditative practice, the rejection of an array of practices, and the extolling of *nenbutsu* is the core of this [*Guanjing*] sutra, itself the backbone of all three sutras. It is not confined to the three [Pure Land] sutras, but many sutras also preach the same. It is not confined to what is praised by the one buddha Śākyamuni, but many buddhas have done the same. Although [the doctrine of contemplation-*samādhi* (*kanbutsu-zammai*) is widely proclaimed,] the single doctrinal focus of *nenbutsu samādhi* is not yet widely known among many teachers.... And in that [Shandao has] analyzed this one sutra in terms of these two doctrines [of *samādhi*], the Buddha’s hidden hermeneutic has been revealed. And what is that hidden hermeneutic? It is to put aside the contemplation-*samādhi* and close down [the practices of] the various paths of this temporary doctrine [of expediency] and establish the *nenbutsu samādhi* [as the way] to open the door to the orthodox path of the true [Pure Land] school (*shinshū*). Without rejection, we cannot establish [something new]. Without closing [something], we cannot open [something new]. It is for this reason that the various buddhas have confirmed [this reading] and what this one monk has pointed out is precisely this teaching of rejection and establishment.³⁶

The first passage connects recitation of the Name to different Pure Lands inhabited by Amida in different bodies, a theory that appears to have been an invention of Kamakura Pure Land thought. Hōnen does not express this view, and it may be that Kōsai is the person who introduced this interpretation into the discourse. Pertinent to this discussion is the psychological preparedness the passage urges upon the practitioner. The Shandao-Hōnen paradigm compares the practitioners who can do the difficult visualization exercises described in the *Guanjing* with those who can only do recitation *nenbutsu* with a mind incapable of such concentrated meditation, and

concludes that the Buddha actually favors those who can only do the non-meditative recitation practice. Kōsai is also extolling recitation practice, but he adds the requirement of a certain intentionality in the way one keeps the Buddha in mind during the invocation of his Name. Thus for Kōsai, recitation is not rejected as a mode of nenbutsu, but he is urging his followers not to simply walk into the practice without psychological preparation, reducing their praxis to a ritual without focus, for that will lead to Birth, but a second-class form of it.

The second explanation above taken from the *Gengibunshō* also compares the two categories of practice, but here he cleaves to the Hōnen doctrine more explicitly by valuing *nenbutsu samādhi* and endorsing Hōnen's hermeneutic approach of rejecting one doctrine in order to affirm another. It is yet another example of Kōsai standing within the Hōnen orthodoxy. Taking all these Kōsai passages together, including the one which explicitly values mental nenbutsu practice over oral recitation, this leads to the inference that while he accepted recitation nenbutsu as an orthopraxis, it remained only a means to an end. That is, nonverbal nenbutsu ultimately became the goal of his system but only in the sense that it meant the attainment of a *samādhi* that confirmed Birth in the Pure Land. And it is in speaking from the perspective of *samādhi* attainment that the valorization of *ichinen* brings forth Kōsai's statement that recitation, as the vehicle that brought him to that realization, is to be jettisoned.

Returning finally to the meaning of *nen* in nenbutsu, it appears that what we are left with is the inevitable conclusion that *nen* is a polyglossic expression that in toto encompasses various forms of what we might call "buddha-consciousness," including reciting his name, imagining his form, concentrating on his qualities, and ultimately obtaining a transcending momentary vision of the Buddha. In its religious significance, then, it would not be going too far to compare the *nen* of the *ichinen* with the epiphany associated with *munen* (Ch. *wunien*) or the mental state of "no-thought" in Ch'an or Zen, which the *Platform Sutra* extols as the core principle of Ch'an. But as the fountainhead of the Kamakura period discourse in Japan, all of these meanings associated with the term *nen* in the Pure Land tradition are included in nenbutsu.

There are passages in which Kōsai's own use of nenbutsu rather than simply *nen* or *ichinen* can be seen. These serve as further examples of how Kōsai's positions could be viewed as certainly close enough to those of Hōnen as to be considered orthodox, if somewhat unusual. Here are two passages that refer to nenbutsu in which the sacred Name is clearly designated and its recitation extolled as well. First from the *Jōdo hōmon genrushō*:

Contemplation of the true body of the Buddha (the ninth contemplation in the *Guanjing*) is, properly speaking, [an experience of] a true

body; this is the Buddha in his Reward-body. When holding this name in mind, one is practicing the true and proper nenbutsu. If one recites a nenbutsu to a buddha in his Transformation-body, he/she receives the reward of womb birth as someone born in a Pure Land of a buddha incarnate in a Transformation-body. If one recites the nenbutsu to a buddha in his Reward-body of glory, however, one receives the reward of a Birth by transformation in a Pure Land of a buddha [manifest] in a Reward-body. The holding in one's mind of [provisional] images [as in the eighth contemplation] is merely complying with the Original Vow of that [provisional] buddha; it is not aligned with the Original Vow of the actual Tathāgata. If one recites [the Name of] a buddha in this Reward-body of glory, one will be properly aligned with the Original Vow [of the actual Tathāgata]. As the direct cause by which one transcends [one's spiritual status as] an ordinary [person], this wondrous practice [boosts one to] the first bodhisattva stage.³⁷

This doctrine links recitation nenbutsu practice to specific visualization practices in the *Guanjing*, and is based in the interpretation that the eighth contemplation entails visualizing a buddha as he would look in a Transformation-body, that is, as flesh and blood, while the meditation described in the ninth contemplation directs the mind toward the Buddha in his Reward-body, a fantastic manifestation beyond samsara. What Kōsai has done here is take the hermeneutic tradition that assigned different shades of meaning in the visualization experiences obtained while cultivating the eighth and ninth contemplations in the *Guanjing* and used that line of thinking as the basis of his creative assertion that recitation practice itself—by then thoroughly established as the orthodoxy of the new Pure Land “school”—was not uniform in its significance, but to be distinguished based on this same distinction between the two forms of visualization practice. This shows us that for Kōsai the nenbutsu was not a free-floating concept, but there were a variety of discreet forms, each based on a specific practice or doctrine.

CONCLUSION

Because of the paucity of extant materials, there is very little about the *ichinengi* movement that can be known with certainty. We know that people associated with this form of doctrinal interpretation produced distaste and even enmity among some social classes of their contemporaries, but without any written statements on the apparent social-moral-political tension created by some within this “movement,” we are left with only fragments of their doctrinal formulations on *ichinengi* thought. The crimes

allegedly committed by these monks and their followers center around two basic issues: distortion of Hōnen's doctrines and preaching a form of antinomianism. We are left with the tasks of not only reconstructing the *ichinengi* doctrinal system, but also of critically imagining how ideas that were labeled unorthodox could have given rise to behavior held to be so immoral and iconoclastic that suppression and even violence arose from its detractors.

I have tried to show how, with so much similarity in the interpretations of Hōnen and Kōsai, the banishment of Kōsai and Gyōkū strongly suggests factors other than ideological purity were at work. We know that the process of institutionalizing Hōnen's new religious paradigm after his death in 1212 led to a messy squabble over the next two or three generations when competing lineages struggled to seize the reigns of authority and thereby define what the new orthodoxy and orthopraxy would be. And out of that struggle the rhetorical categorization of *ichinengi* versus *tanengi* emerged by the 1250s in an array of contexts, becoming the standard if rather parochial analytic tool for centuries to come. Even scholarship in the first part of the twentieth century relies heavily upon these convenient categories. There are a great many difficulties, however, in the application of this frame to the extant religious literature from this period, just as there is in trying to apply the term *hongaku*, or original enlightenment, to this or that Buddhist thinker. Indeed there is much in the *ichinengi* perspective to suggest a *hongaku* orientation, but I will defer that discussion to a different venue.

But one thing appears to be certain. Aside from Gyōnen's neutral use of *ichinengi* in his discussions of Kōsai's thought, as a general rule the term elicited some form of criticism in this and later periods. When we see such, we must ask, Does this stem from the social/political dimension of the *ichinengi* "problem," or from its doctrinal challenge to the Jōdo orthodoxy being established at the same time? We have not looked at the Jōdoshin school in detail here, but the phrase of Hōnen discussed above, "faith in one nenbutsu" (*shin no ichinen*), functions as a kind of statement of orthodoxy in Shin doctrine,³⁸ and is particularly prevalent in the letters (*Ofumi*, *Gobunshō*) of Rennyo in the fifteenth century. As the stigma surrounding *ichinengi* stubbornly persists even today, Shinshū scholars have been at pains to affirm their doctrine of *ichinen* while denying their standpoint represents the discredited dogma of *ichinengi*.³⁹

Ultimately, it all seems to come down to what one means by nenbutsu. It does appear that Kōsai left behind Hōnen's episteme when he said that mental nenbutsu is superior to verbal nenbutsu. But I have tried to show that in a more fundamental way, in his creative justification of the doctrine of *nenbutsu samādhi*, Kōsai deserved to uphold the banner of Hōnen's fledgling Pure Land school as much as any of this other disciples. These two views of nenbutsu are not necessarily mutually exclusive if we remember that when Kōsai spoke of a single nenbutsu he was not saying that this is the only

form of nenbutsu, but rather that this was the *defining* form of nenbutsu. What Kōsai valued most was a special moment of practice that perhaps should not even be called practice, since it indicates a moment of attainment rather than the “cultivation of causes” for awakening.⁴⁰ It is a moment that is internal and therefore quiet, it is “sudden,” and it is characterized by the epiphany of feeling touched by the universal compassion of the Buddha’s wisdom, a moment that indicates the attainment of *samādhi*. Kōsai’s *ichinen* is therefore a nenbutsu of realization, just as Hōnen and Shinran also called the moment of attaining faith *ichinen*. It is a *samādhi* attainment that does not necessarily result from any visualization exercises in the *Guanjing*. As a nenbutsu without visualization we can term it *mukan*, and we can also call it *munen* when *nen* means recitation nenbutsu because there is none, but also when *nen* means the object of one’s willful focus because all individual thoughts are put aside for one thought-moment of the Buddha’s mind in this instant. Emphasizing that this is not praxis in the usual sense, one of Kōsai’s disciples called the doctrine *munen*.

I have tried to show how in rhetoric and methodology, Kōsai remains far closer to Hōnen’s standpoint than he has been given credit for by the judgment of history so far. Yet, in his focus on the experience of realization and accompanying abandonment of the religious primacy of recitation nenbutsu, as well as his disrespect for what were essentially ritualistic nenbutsu services, Kōsai emerges as an iconoclastic mystic with probably no small degree of personal charisma. If Weber’s principle about charismatic founders is correct, then with Hōnen’s death the process of institutionalization of the movement he founded allowed little room for new charismatic leaders among its ranks. And with Japanese society in political upheaval and the truly explicit sexual practices continuing underground in the Tachikawa branch of Shingon at this time, it is not hard to imagine how the authorities, both secular and sacred, could see Kōsai’s ideas as pernicious. But that does not mean we should.

NOTES

1. See Kōsai in the *Hōnen Shōnin gyōjō ezu*, ch. 29, in *Jōdoshū zensho* 16.446. He is also listed in all the early lineage texts of the Jōdo-shū, such as the *Renmon shūsha*, unknown author, unpublished, 1548 manuscript, p. 18; and the fifteenth century *Hossui bunrūki*, ed. Bukkyōshi Gakkai (Kyoto: Bukkyōshi Gakkai, 1918), p. 10.
2. *Hossui bunrūki* has 1198, the *Chokuden* has 1208. The former states that he died at the age of eighty-five in 1247.
3. See the *Shiju hyaku innenshū* at *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, 1913 ed. (vol. 148), p. 116.
4. One the cardinal orthodoxies of the Pure Land path is that it is easy to tread. To label a form of Pure Land practice difficult is to imply heterodoxy; to call it austere or ascetic implies heresy.
5. Translated from the *Jōdoshū myōmoku mondō* by Benchō, in *Jōdoshū zensho* 10.413b.
6. Fujiwara Nagakane, *Sanchōki*, in *Zōho shiryō taisei* (Kyoto: Rinsen, 1965), 31.88 and 96.
7. Also known as Hōhonbō [also Hōbō], Gyōkū is the fortieth name on a list of 190 students of Hōnen signed to the Nison'in recension of the *Shichikajō kishōmon*, a document written in 1204 to counter charges of immorality among Hōnen's movement. Gyōkū's name appears along with Kōsai (as Jōkakubō) in the *Sanchōki*. See Zōho Shiryō Taisei Kankōkai, *Zōho Sanchōki* (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1965), 88b.
8. As Hōnen is designated as the first patriarch of this Chinzei line, Benchō, the actual founder of the lineage, is designated as the second.
9. The two biographies asserting Kōsai's excommunication are the *Hōnen Shōnin gyōjō ezu* by Shunjō (1255–1335), at *Hōnen Shōnin den zensho* (Kyoto: Hōnen Shōnin den zensho kankōkai, rev. ed., 1977), p. 318, and the Daigoji held text called simply *Hōnen Shōnin denki*, at *Hōnen Shōnin denki zensho*, 430.
10. *Jōdoshū zensho* 10.375.
11. *Kōteiki-shō*, author unknown, at *Hōnen Shōnin denki zensho*, 973. See *Kōteiki shō* entry for second year of Kenei 建永 (1207), twenty-eighth day of the eighth month, in *Gunsho ruiju* (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruiju Kanseikai, rev. ed., 1960), vol. 3. Translation modified from *Hōnen: The Buddhist Saint* (Kyoto: Chionin, 1925), p. 606.
12. Sueki Fumihiko, *Bukkyō: Kotoba no shisō-shi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten,

1996), pp. 75–97. As Sueki points out, there are really two different senses in which the phrase *yinien* is used in sutra translations—*ekacitta* and *ekakṣana*—and the issue is further complicated by the fact that the phrase *yinien* does appear in non-Buddhist literature as well, though apparently in the psychological sense.

13. Sueki mentions that *ichinen* is found in the *Ōjōjūin* by Eikan (1033–1111); the Heian period *Ōjōden*; in the works of Chinkai (1092–1152); in poems contained in the *Ryōjin hishō* compiled by Emperor Go-Shirakawa by 1198; and in the twelfth century *Sanjū-shika no kotogaki*, compiled by the Tendai monk Kōkaku (n.d.), discussed below in n. 16.

14. Included as part of the compilation called *Tendai shōbushū shaku*, in *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, 1913 ed. (vol. 24), p. 57.

15. Translated from the *Saihō shinanshō*, in *Hōnen Shōnin zenshū*, p. 636; see also p. 464.

16. *Senchaku hongan nenbutsu-shū*, Taisho No. 2608, 83.16a9.

17. *Hōnen Shōnin zenshū*, pp. 537–538.

18. *Senchaku hongan nenbutsu-shū*, 4b21.

19. The *Shin jōdoshū jiten* by Etani Ryūkai (Tokyo: Kōbunkan, 1978), p. 311, and the *Jōdoshū daijiten* (Tokyo: Sankibō Shoten, 1976), edited by Jōdoshū daijiten hensan iinkai, 2.153, both cite Nichiren as the source of this formula, but acknowledge it as representative of Hōnen's method. The latter work comments that Nichiren identified what Hōnen was doing, but didn't understand its "true significance." The phrase occurs frequently in Edo period sectarian scholarship of the Jōdoshū without pejorative implication. And Nakamura Hajime's first gloss of this term in his *Bukkyōgo daijiten* expresses this clearly:

The assertion of Hōnen's teaching: abandon the mind which practices in a *jiriki* fashion, close the gate of cultivating merit through meditation, put aside all contrivances, and give up [the goal of attaining] wisdom in all things (p. 607).

20. [Ed.: "*nītārtha*" refers to "texts"—in this case the "text" of the nenbutsu—that have explicit or definitive meaning, expressing ultimate truth. These are distinguished from texts that are "*neyārtha*," whose meanings are implicit, expressing only conventional truth, or which are provisional in the sense of being expedients intended for a particular individual or group.]

21. *Gengibunshō*, at *Nihon daizōkyō* 90.392a1.

22. In the *Sanjū-shika no kotogaki* by Kōkaku, at *Tendai hongaku-ron* (in *Nihon shisō taikēi* 9.179). This text also discusses how there is an "original" *ichinen* that is unchanging.

23. There are four different recensions of the *Sammai hottokki*, but the oldest are those found inside the *Saihō shinanshō* compiled by Shinran and in the biography of Hōnen called *Genkū shinikki* found at Daigoji. The text can be found now at *Hōnen Shōnin zensho*, p. 863.
24. See the *Guanjing* (*Foshuo guan wuliangshou jing*) at Taisho No. 365, 12.346b9–14.
25. *Jōdoshū yōshū* in *Jōdoshū zensho* 10.228a.
26. Gyōnen gives no details about Gyōkū's life or thought. The theory that he was Kōsai's senior is based on Matsuno Junkō's reading of the account of their movement in the *Sanchōki*; see Matsuno, *Shinran* (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1959), p. 116.
27. *Chinzei myōmoku mondō funjinshō*, by Myōzui (d. 1787), *Jōdoshū zensho* 10.431.
28. A case has also been made to show that Hōnen himself took a position no different from *akunin shōki*. See Kajimura Noboru, *Akunin shōki setsu* (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppan, 1993).
29. M.M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. C. Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), p. 86.
30. *Jōdoshū zensho* 10.395.
31. *Jōdoshū zensho* 10.220
32. *Guanjing shu* T 37.268a28.
33. Shinjin has come to be a technical term for the realization of faith in Jōdoshin writings, but it enjoyed wide usage prior to Shinran, by Tanluan, Daocho, Shandao, Genshin, Hōnen, and others.
34. *The Collected Works of Shinran*, 39.
35. The term *nenbutsu samādhi* occurs twenty times in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, yet the *Shinshū jiten*, p. 616, compiled by Nishimura Shichibei (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1935), for example, concludes its explanation of *nenbutsu samādhi* by explaining that the attainment of the *samādhi* in which one perceives the Buddha's face or his virtues is a symbol of the principle of universal suchness. Then it concludes with: "In Shinshū, this meaning is not utilized."
36. *Gengibunshō*, in *Nihon daizōkyō* 90.378b16.
37. Taishō No. 2687, 84.197b10. On how the type of nenbutsu practiced affected the type of Birth one receives, see Sumita Chiken, *Jōdo genrushō* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1972), p. 282
38. This phrase is particularly popular in Shinshū materials. For Hōnen's usage, see the *Saihō shinanshō* at *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* 4.208.
39. This problem is not merely "academic" in Shinshū. In 1806 there was

a major disturbance at the Nishi Honganji Temple over a splinter group's insistence on the *ichinen* of faith as the center of Shinran's doctrine, a position which confronted a church orthodoxy at that time which stressed the primacy of good works as the key to Birth. In the end, the government had to intercede to resolve the dispute, eventually won by the *ichinen* group.

40. For example, see *Gengibunshō*, in *Nihon daizōkyō* 90.371a4.

Hōnen on Attaining Pure Land Rebirth: The Selected Nenbutsu of the Original Vow

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HŌNEN IN THE HISTORY OF EAST ASIAN PURE LAND BUDDHISM

PERCEIVED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE of the development of the Pure Land tradition in East Asia, Hōnen (1133–1212) is situated at an important juncture. Not only did he introduce Shandao's populist Pure Land thought to Japan, he also contributed to the transformation of continental forms of Pure Land Buddhism into distinctly Japanese forms.¹ Institutional Pure Land Buddhism in Japan prior to Hōnen was based upon continental models—largely monastic and emphasizing contemplative practice; after Hōnen it became entirely a layperson's Buddhism, emphasizing devotion. Thus, a study of Hōnen's Pure Land thought can give us insights into the varieties of Pure Land, both geographically and typologically. We will first characterize Hōnen's position on how to attain Pure Land rebirth and then return to these geographical and typological considerations.

For exploring Hōnen's views we will utilize only fully authenticated works, those either entirely or partially autographed by him.² We will rely primarily on his *Passages on the Selected Nenbutsu of the Original Vow* (*Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū*), but will also utilize the *Seven Article Admonition* (*Shichikajō seikai*) and his letter to Kumagae Naozane dated second day, fifth month.³ Other texts traditionally attributed to Hōnen may be authentic, but the *Passages* is Hōnen's only comprehensive doctrinal work, and the two other fully authenticated texts we will use contain important statements on practice for rebirth.

HŌNEN ON ATTAINING PURE LAND REBIRTH: THE NENBUTSU OF CALLING ON THE NAME

It is widely believed that Hōnen espoused as practice for rebirth "sole nenbutsu" (*senju nenbutsu*, "sole practice nenbutsu"), that is, the exclusive cultivation of vocal nenbutsu. While this assumption is problematic and

will be reexamined below, it is true that Hōnen propounded vocal nenbutsu, calling on the name of Amida Buddha, as the best practice for Pure Land rebirth. Hōnen employed two quite different rationales for asserting the superiority of vocal nenbutsu. The first of these he presents in the second chapter of his *Passages on the Selected Nenbutsu of the Original Vow* where he differentiates the “right practices” (*shōgō*) for Pure Land rebirth from ineffective “mixed practices” (*zōgō*), and further differentiates the right practices into the “assured right practice” (*shōjō no gō*) and “assisting right practices” (*jōgō*).⁴ The right practices are first, reading and reciting the *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra* (*Kan Muryōjubutsu kyō*),⁵ *Amitābha Sutra* (*Amida kyō*), and *Sutra of Limitless Life* (*Muryōju kyō*); second, contemplating (*kanzatsu*) and meditating (*okunen*) on the Pure Land and Amida Buddha; third, venerating Amida; fourth, calling vocally (*kushō*) the name of Amida; and fifth, singing praises and making offerings to that Buddha. Of these, he designates number four, vocal nenbutsu, as the assured right practice, that is, the practice certain to result in Pure Land rebirth because it is in conformity with the practice designated by the eighteenth vow of Amida Buddha.⁶ This conformity of vocal nenbutsu to the eighteenth vow involves Hōnen’s second rationale, which we will examine shortly. The remaining right practices, that is, those other than calling on the name, are designated by Hōnen as “assisting practices.” Although here he does not explain how they assist vocal nenbutsu, in Chapter Four he calls them “supporting practices” (*jōjō*) in that they generate karma that produces the same result as vocal nenbutsu.⁷

As we can see, the right practices are all exclusively Pure Land practices, focusing on Amida or the Pure Land. Any practice directed toward some other buddha, as well as more general practices such as charity (*danna*; Skt. *dāna*) and observance of the Buddhist precepts, are rejected as largely ineffective.

In Chapter Three of the *Passages* Hōnen presents the second of his two basic rationales for the superiority of nenbutsu. There he claims that calling on the Buddha is the best practice for Pure Land rebirth because it is the practice selected by Amida for his eighteenth bodhisattva vow. The eighteenth is the well known vow of the *Sutra of Limitless Life*, which Hōnen read as promising Pure Land rebirth for all who call on Amida with deep faith ten times or more.⁸ Hōnen maintains, moreover, that Amida chose calling on his name as the practice of this vow because the name possesses all of his “ten thousand” karmic merits, or kinds of wholesome karma, which will be acquired by sentient beings who call the name, and because it is an easy practice whereas other practices are difficult. This principle of the ease of the selected practice, nenbutsu, revealed to Hōnen not only the inferior capacity of sentient beings in an age of final dharma (*mappō*), but also the Buddha’s soteric intentions. Because of his great compassion Amida sought

to bring about the universal, egalitarian salvation of all sentient beings of whatever ability, merit, station, or gender. “And thus was it not,” Hōnen asks, “for the purpose of equally and universally (*byōdō*) bringing about the rebirth of all sentient beings that the difficult [practices] were rejected and the easy adopted as the [practice] of the original vow?”⁹ Thus, vocal nenbutsu is the easy practice endowed with Amida’s ten thousand merits guaranteed to make rebirth available to every sentient being.

We should also note that Hōnen explicitly interprets the nenbutsu of this vow as vocal nenbutsu. He does this by identifying the “ten *nen*” (*jū nen*) of the vow with the “ten *nen*” in the passage in the *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra* on the rebirth of the very worst of human beings. That well known passage reads,

... [he] makes them call (*shō*) without interruption [until they] complete ten nenbutsu (*jū nen*), calling “Namu Amida Butsu.”¹⁰

For Hōnen the “ten *nen*” of the vow, that is, the selected practice of the vow, was definitely vocal rather than contemplative nenbutsu.

HŌNEN AND “SOLE PRACTICE NENBUTSU”

While it is generally thought that Hōnen taught “sole practice nenbutsu” (*senju nenbutsu*), that is, the cultivation of vocal nenbutsu exclusively, this is not supported by his arguments in the *Passages*, nor by any of his fully authenticated writings.¹¹ First of all, according to his exclusive versus mixed rationale for the superiority of nenbutsu, Pure Land practices other than vocal nenbutsu—such as chanting Pure Land sutras, making offerings to Amida, and meditatively contemplating the physical features of Amida—are called assisting practices, those practices which contribute to bringing about rebirth. Further, Hōnen does not claim that practices other than the “right” practices are entirely ineffective for rebirth. While he maintains that of those who cultivate the mixed practices only one or two out of a hundred will attain Pure Land rebirth,¹² nonetheless, even this ratio would indicate that the mixed practices are effective to some degree. Moreover, in regard to Hōnen’s second rationale for the superiority of vocal nenbutsu, in spite of the privileged status that he claims was bestowed upon vocal nenbutsu by the eighteenth vow, he does not therefore entirely reject other practices. Regarding the status of practices not selected by the vow he cites this passage from the Tendai Pure Land classic, *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* (*Ōjō yōshū*),

Question: All good works, each and every one, have their benefits. Each and every one can earn rebirth. Why do you urge only the single dharma-gate of nenbutsu?

Answer: That we now urge nenbutsu does not hinder cultivation of the various other excellent practices. It is just that anyone—man or woman, noble or commoner, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying, and regardless of time, place, or any other conditions—can cultivate it without difficulty. Moreover, there is nothing to equal the convenience of nenbutsu for those seeking rebirth at the time of death.¹³

Thus, even while claiming that vocal nenbutsu is the vow-selected practice, Hōnen agrees with the view of the *Essentials* and does not insist that other practices are useless for achieving rebirth.

Finally, in Chapter Twelve of the *Passages* where Hōnen subordinates the practices taught in the *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra* to the nenbutsu of the eighteenth vow, he nonetheless acknowledges that any of the thirteen contemplations of the *Contemplation Sutra* and all of the practices called “three kinds of meritorious conduct” (*sampuku*) set out in that scripture—such as filial piety, observing the precepts, arousing aspiration for enlightenment, and reading and reciting the Mahayana scriptures—can become good karma for rebirth in the Pure Land.¹⁴

Thus we see that in his major work, the *Passages*, Hōnen does not espouse “sole nenbutsu.” As a matter of fact, only once in the *Passages* does he use the term, “sole nenbutsu practice” (*senju nenbutsu*). This is at the end of that work where he praises Shandao, calling him “the guide to sole nenbutsu practice” (*senju nenbutsu no dōshi*).¹⁵

Yet, in his own times Hōnen certainly had a reputation as a radical teacher of sole practice nenbutsu. For example, the *Kōfukuji Temple Petition* (*Kōfukuji sōjō*) identifies him as the leader of a nenbutsu sect (*nenbutsu no shū*) who promotes the sole practice of the nenbutsu,¹⁶ and the *Miscellany of Foolish Views* (*Gukanshō*) of Jien (1155–1225) claims that Hōnen promoted sole practice nenbutsu.¹⁷ Indeed, Hōnen’s statements on this issue were somewhat ambiguous. While he acknowledged the efficacy of practices other than nenbutsu, in his writings he constantly urges the sole or exclusive practice of nenbutsu.

THE QUANTITY OF NENBUTSU REQUIRED FOR REBIRTH

Another issue concerning Hōnen’s teachings on nenbutsu is the quantity of nenbutsu necessary for Pure Land rebirth. This is a significant issue because different quantities of nenbutsu imply differences in the way nenbutsu functions to effect rebirth and rebirth for different types of persons. First of all, Hōnen interprets the number of nenbutsu specified in the eighteenth vow quite inclusively as any quantity from ten repetitions

up to that accumulated over a lifetime of cultivation, or from ten down to even one calling,¹⁸ while noting that some other interpreters understood it in a much more narrow sense as exactly ten or as ten or less invocations. In general, however, Hōnen urged aspirants to produce as many nenbutsu as possible, both on a day-to-day basis and throughout their lives.

In Chapter Nine of the *Passages* he specifies that one's Pure Land practices—presumably the exclusively Pure Land practices set out in Chapter Two—should be cultivated in a fourfold manner (*shi shuhō*): first, lifelong, second, reverentially, third, exclusively, and fourth, ceaselessly. He singles out the first of these, lifelong cultivation, as the most important because without it the remaining three modes would not be consummated.¹⁹ Moreover, this position was not merely theoretical for Hōnen. Several early biographical texts indicate that Hōnen himself cultivated an enormous quantity of nenbutsu daily, sixty thousand repetitions or more.²⁰ And in his letter to Kumagae Naozane, as we will see below, Hōnen urges Naozane to pursue up to sixty thousand nenbutsu per day.²¹ When we calculate that at the rate of one nenbutsu per second, it would take sixteen and two-thirds hours to accomplish sixty thousand repetitions, and we get a sense of the total commitment and enormous amount of exertion that Hōnen thought necessary to assure entry into the Pure Land.

Hōnen's view that assurance of rebirth required the generation of as many nenbutsu as possible over a lifetime was the conventional view of his times, the twelfth century, but there were alternative views with important implications. Some of Hōnen's disciples interpreted the *Sutra of Limitless Life* as requiring only one nenbutsu. This can be justified not only by an interpretation of the eighteenth vow's "ten-nenbutsu" passage, but also by the so-called "vow fulfillment passage" of that sutra which promises rebirth to all who produce even one nenbutsu (*ichinen*).²² The implication of this view is that rebirth is accomplished primarily by faith in Amida and his vow rather than by the good karma generated by many nenbutsu, and further that evil-doers can be reborn by this faith and the power of Amida's vow despite their bad karma. In this interpretation, many repetitions of the nenbutsu can be seen as an attempt to expunge bad karma and thereby through self-effort become worthy of Pure Land rebirth, rather than to utter the nenbutsu but once in reliance upon the Other Power of Amida's compassionate promise in the vow. Varieties of this position were espoused by several of Hōnen's disciples—by Shinran, whose views are well known, and also apparently by others such as Kōsai and Hōhombō Gyōkū.

Either justifiably or unfairly, the teaching on rebirth by just one nenbutsu was associated early on with the radical view called "encouragement of evil conduct" or "unhindered evil" (*zōaku muge*), the notion that one can with impunity violate the Buddhist precepts—for example, against meat-eating and sexual misconduct—because Amida saves in spite of their bad karma

those who call on him.²³ In his *Seven Article Admonition* (*Shichikajō seikai*) Hōnen emphatically condemned this distortion of his teachings, without explicitly rejecting, however, the view of rebirth by just one nenbutsu.²⁴ And in 1206 he expelled from his community of disciples the monk Hōhombō Gyōkū, allegedly for teaching encouragement of evil conduct.²⁵

On the other hand, in Hōnen's age, rebirth by ten nenbutsu implied rebirth achieved only or especially at the time of death because of the close association of this specific quantity of nenbutsu with the passage from the *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra* just cited on the rebirth of the worst of beings by ten nenbutsu uttered at the moment of death. Among aristocrats and clergy the cultivation of nenbutsu at times of critical illness or at the approach of death was a common practice. The general view was that nenbutsu cultivated at this juncture had the power to expunge extraordinary amounts of evil karma, as depicted in the *Contemplation Sutra*, and thus to bring about the rebirth of even grievous transgressors. A related view was that this deathbed nenbutsu was effective because it established the "right reflection" or "right thought" (*shōnen*) at the very moment of death, and thus it was thought important to constantly cultivate nenbutsu throughout one's life so as to be well practiced and prepared to generate the "right reflection" at death, or in the event that death was untimely so as to be in possession of the "right reflection" at the last moment. These views emphasizing deathbed nenbutsu tended to see nenbutsu as expiatory, and also saw it as a consciousness purifying form of meditative practice, deemphasizing its relationship to the eighteenth vow.²⁶

In his authenticated works Hōnen did not emphasize deathbed nenbutsu. And as a matter of fact, in Chapter Twelve of the *Passages* he declines to identify the deathbed ten nenbutsu of the worst of beings with the nenbutsu of the eighteenth vow, equating it rather with one of the so-called "non-meditative wholesome practices" (*sanzen*) of the *Contemplation Sutra*, reading and reciting Mahayana scriptures.²⁷

HŌNEN AND SELF POWER VERSUS OTHER POWER NENBUTSU

Thus, we see that Hōnen urged those seeking Pure Land rebirth to cultivate enormous quantities of nenbutsu, both on a day-to-day basis and over a lifetime. This could be considered Self Power practice, that is, the attempt to save oneself through the accumulation of many meritorious acts rather than to rely on the saving power of the Buddha. We must remember, however, that for Hōnen the merit or good karma of nenbutsu cultivation ultimately derived from Amida, who had invested the nenbutsu with ten thousand merits by means of his many eons of purified bodhisattva cultiva-

tion (*shōjō no gyō*).²⁸ For Hōnen, utterance of the nenbutsu was always “the practice of the original vow” (*hongan nenbutsu gyō*).²⁹ Indeed, the significance of Hōnen’s concept “selected nenbutsu of the original vow” (*senchaku hongan nenbutsu*), the main theme of the *Passages* and the idea around which his thought is structured, is that nenbutsu is the practice intentionally chosen and endowed by Amida’s vow with that buddha’s extraordinary karmic power. Thus, for Hōnen the nenbutsu is the means of acquiring the karmic merit earned by Amida during his bodhisattva career. We might ask, If the nenbutsu has such extraordinary karmic merit, then why are such large quantities required? Shouldn’t just a few, ten, or even one utterance be adequate? Hōnen, in his authenticated works, never asked himself that question. We can find the suggestion of an answer in his letter to Kumagae Naozane, where he tells Naozane that if he cultivates up to sixty thousand nenbutsu per day then even minor violations of the Buddhist precepts will not impede his rebirth. This means that Hōnen thought nenbutsu expunged bad karma, and we might speculate that he urged constant nenbutsu cultivation so as to remove bad karma whenever it occurred.³⁰ In the *Passages* we find that Hōnen indeed acknowledges the power of nenbutsu to extinguish even the weightiest bad karma, as for example in the situation described in the *Contemplation Sutra* for the rebirth of the worst type of person (*gehon geshō*) by ten nenbutsu cited above. This sutra goes on to claim,

Because of calling on the Buddha’s name, with each reflection (*nen-nen no naka ni*) they remove [the evil karma generated by] eighty billion eons of samsaric offenses.³¹

However, in the *Passages* Hōnen rarely refers to the removal of bad karma by nenbutsu except in relation to this section of the *Contemplation Sutra* and the parallel section on the rebirth of the “best of the worst” (*gehon jōshō*) by just one nenbutsu.³² Moreover, these grievous transgressors, persons so depraved as to have committed the “ten evil acts” or the “five irredeemable offenses” were not the primary target of Hōnen’s teachings.³³ He considered virtually all sentient beings living in an age of final dharma, the relatively virtuous as well as unrepentant perpetrators, as equally the ordinary deluded persons (*bonbu*) for whom Amida had pledged his vows.³⁴

If not primarily as exorcism of bad karma, then how did Hōnen understand that nenbutsu functioned to bring about Pure Land rebirth? First of all, though an innovative thinker, Hōnen was nonetheless a Buddhist thinker and believed deeply in the fundamental role of karma—as he put it, “cause and effect”³⁵ (*inga*)—in producing both bondage and liberation. He did not often exposit on the role of karmic causation in bringing about Pure Land rebirth, perhaps because the role of karma was such a given within his Buddhist worldview, but in Chapter Nine of the *Passages* he quotes a

Chinese text, the *Standard Interpretations on the Western Land* (*Hsi-fang yao-chueh shih-i t'ung-kuei/Saihō yōketsu shakugi tsūki*) as saying that

... lifelong practice [of nenbutsu] means constantly generating pure causation (*jōin o nasu*) from first arousing the aspiration for enlightenment to [the realization of] enlightenment without ever backsliding.³⁶

Of course, as we have noted, for Hōnen this pure causation ultimately derived from the bodhisattva practices performed by Amida.

In addition to this power of the nenbutsu to expunge bad karma and generate good karma for rebirth, there was another way Hōnen saw nenbutsu functioning to bring about Pure Land rebirth. This was by establishing a devotional bond of mutual care and concern between the practitioner and Amida. This devotional character of nenbutsu is clarified by Hōnen in Chapter Two of the *Passages* where he discusses the advantages of exclusive versus mixed practice. He says,

Those who cultivate the right and assisting practices become extremely intimate and familiar with Amida Buddha. Thus it says in a prior passage of the *Commentary [on the Contemplation Sutra]* by Shandao,³⁷ “When sentient beings engage in cultivation and with their mouths always call on the Buddha, the Buddha hears them; when with their bodies they always venerate and worship the Buddha, the Buddha sees them; when in their minds they always reflect on the Buddha, the Buddha knows them; when sentient beings meditate (*okunen*) on the Buddha, the Buddha meditates on them. Because none of the three modes of either that [Buddha’s] or these [sentient beings’] karmic action is ever relinquished, we call this the intimate karmic condition.”³⁸

As we see, cultivation of nenbutsu was for Hōnen an act of devotion expressing adoration for and reliance upon Amida as a personal savior. It was an intense, exclusive, and constant worship of the Buddha which elicited a like response, enormously magnified in degree. Thus, for him the “right practices” were best not only because they generate good and annul bad karma, but also because they generate a karmic bond of mutual intimacy and care between devotee and soter that will protect the devotee during life and assure his or her birth in the Pure Land at death.³⁹

Within classical Pure Land Buddhist thought, devotion to Amida is of course expressed as the three attitudes necessary for Pure Land rebirth (*sanjin*) set out in the *Contemplation Sutra*: first, sincerity (*shijō shin*), second, deep belief in Amida and corresponding acknowledgment of one’s own

fallen condition and helplessness (*jinshin*), and third, aspiration for rebirth (*ekō hotsugan shin*). Consonant with his understanding of the devotional character of nenbutsu, Hōnen also firmly believed that these three attitudes were essential to effective nenbutsu cultivation.⁴⁰

In summary we can say that while Hōnen did acknowledge that nenbutsu can expunge even the most evil karma and make rebirth possible for the most heinous offenders converted to Pure Land faith only upon their deathbeds, he urged his contemporaries to cultivate every day throughout their lives as much nenbutsu as possible, the richly meritorious nenbutsu of the vow, so as to accumulate as much good karma for rebirth as possible, but also to create a caring, loving, and saving bond with Amida.

HŌNEN ON THE BUDDHIST PRECEPTS

While Hōnen's position in the *Passages* on the practices for rebirth is systematic and fairly clear, we find in his *Seven Article Admonition* what seems like a glaring contradiction to that position. This involves the role of the Buddhist precepts, the fundamental guides to moral conduct for Buddhists. In the *Passages* Hōnen explicitly relegates the observance of the precepts to the status of "mixed cultivation"⁴¹ and declares it to be a practice not selected by the original vow and therefore unnecessary for Pure Land rebirth.⁴² However, in the *Seven Article Admonition* he orders his disciples,

Cease and desist the following: claiming that the nenbutsu dharma-gate does not include the observance of precepts, urging sexual misconduct, liquor-drinking and meat-eating, calling those who observe the precepts "cultivators of mixed practices," and teaching that those who rely on Amida's original vow need have no fear of committing evil deeds.⁴³

And he adds,

With regard to the above, the precepts are the foundation of the buddhadharma. While various forms of cultivation are pursued [by different persons], these same [precepts] should be observed by all. Thus, preceptor Shandao would not raise his eyes to view a woman. The import of this form of behavior goes beyond the basic monastic rules (*hon ritsu*) [and involves basic morality]. For Pure [Land] practitioners (*jōgō no tagui*) not to conform [to the precepts] is to lose all the teachings inherited from the *tathāgata*-s and to ignore the example of our patriarchs.⁴⁴

Here Hōnen contradicts the position he took in the *Passages* and emphatically demands of his disciples that they observe the precepts.

There are several ways we can attempt to understand this contradiction. While the *Passages* was a theoretic statement of doctrines, the *Seven Article Admonition* was a response to charges by Hōnen's critics of serious abuses by him and his disciples. It was a pragmatic and passionate attempt to correct those abuses and fend off persecution of his movement. As we can see, this particular admonition (number four) focuses on the gross distortion of his teachings called unhindered evil. Perhaps in these circumstances Hōnen felt constrained to enjoin the observance of precepts in spite of the position he took earlier in the *Passages*. Indeed, he may have changed his views on this matter between the composition of the *Passages* in 1198 and the issuing of the *Seven Article Admonition* in 1204. Yet, Hōnen's position on the precepts in the *Seven Article Admonition* seems like a pragmatic compromise with principle in the face of external pressure.

Fortunately, another of Hōnen's authentic writings touches on the subject of the precepts and gives us an opportunity to more fully understand his position. This is his letter to Kumagae Naozane, probably composed also in 1204 but prior to the *Seven Article Admonition*.⁴⁵ Kumagae Naozane, a.k.a. Rensei (1141–1208), was a warrior from the eastern provinces who had distinguished himself in the Gempei War of 1180–1185 and became a close vassal of the warrior chieftain or Shōgun, Minamoto Yoritomo.⁴⁶ But then in 1187 he had a falling out with Yoritomo, and in 1191 or 1192 entered the Buddhist clergy. Later he journeyed to Kyoto and became Hōnen's disciple, probably in 1194.⁴⁷ Subsequently he left Hōnen's center and traveled about, but apparently stayed in touch with Hōnen by correspondence. Hōnen's letter to Naozane is dated the second day of the fifth month and is in response to a no longer extant letter from Naozane in which Naozane apparently asked Hōnen about the advisability of pursuing certain practices. Hōnen responded:

I was so pleased to receive your letter. Indeed, since last [I received a letter from you or saw you] I was very worried, and I am very pleased at what you have written. Please read what I am going to write about "just nenbutsu" (*tan nenbutsu*).

Nenbutsu is the practice of the Buddha's original vow. Because observance of precepts, recitation of sutras, incantations, contemplation of buddha-nature (*rikan*), and so on are not the practices of that Buddha's original vow, those who seek [the land of] Boundless Bliss should without fail first cultivate the practice of the original vow, and then in addition to that, if they want to add other practices, they may do so. Also, [to cultivate] just the nenbutsu of the original vow is alright. Those who seek [the land of] Boundless Bliss

without cultivating nenbutsu, cultivating only practices other than nenbutsu, will not be able to attain rebirth in Boundless Bliss....

Also, sexual relations with women (*nyobon*) is definitely [a violation of] the precept forbidding sexual relations (*fuinkai*). And disinheritance of one's children is definitely [a violation of] the precept forbidding anger (*fushinkai*). Because the observance of the precepts are not in the original vow, you should observe them only as much as you can manage (*taetaran ni shitagaite tamotase tamau beku sōrō*).... To utter just nenbutsu (*tada nenbutsu*) thirty, fifty, or sixty thousand times a day with all your heart is the practice certain to achieve rebirth. Other good works are for when you have time to spare from nenbutsu. But if you utter sixty thousand nenbutsu a day, what other practices need you do? If you diligently, with all your heart, cultivate thirty or fifty thousand nenbutsu per day, then even if you violate the precepts a little that ought not prevent your rebirth....

However, even though the practice of filial conduct (*kōyō no gyō*) is not in the Buddha's original vow, [your mother] is eighty-nine years old. What you are fully prepared and waiting for [the death of your mother] will probably happen this year or soon. It is very sad. But whatever happens should not pose a problem [for you]. You are the only one who is waiting with her, and you must without fail [continue to] wait with her....⁴⁸

Apart from a theoretic, doctrinal context, and absent external pressures, this was Hōnen's heartfelt advice to a disciple. First of all we should note that he instructs Naozane that nenbutsu, especially when cultivated to the utmost of one's ability throughout each day, is solely sufficient for Pure Land rebirth because it is the practice designated by the Buddha's original vow. Other practices not selected by the vow can be helpful, but should be cultivated only after nenbutsu and to the extent that they do not interfere with nenbutsu cultivation. This clarifies what Hōnen meant by "sole practice nenbutsu" (*senju nenbutsu*). He clearly meant that for Pure Land rebirth one need cultivate "just nenbutsu" (*tada nenbutsu*).

Hōnen goes on to advise Naozane that this is true also in relation to precept observance. Like all "mixed practices," precepts observance is not necessary, though it may be marginally helpful *in addition* to nenbutsu. Hōnen's comment that violating the precepts a little ought not to hinder Naozane's rebirth if he has cultivated thirty or fifty thousand nenbutsu per day indicates, as we remarked above, that Hōnen acknowledged that nenbutsu expunges bad karma, but it also shows that Hōnen saw precept observance as primarily useful for preventing the accumulation of evil karma. And, by advising Naozane to observe the precepts only as much as

he could manage, Hōnen probably meant that while nenbutsu is easy and convenient for anyone in any circumstances (as stated in the passage from the *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* quoted by Hōnen and cited above), strict observance of the precepts is difficult and requires special circumstances, specifically those of a monastic setting. Naozane was a so-called “lay priest” (*nyūdō*). A lay priest was a person who had entered the clergy after pursuing a secular career, and in many cases while still remaining to some degree a householder. Because Naozane still had a wife, mother, and children, he had many secular bonds and obligations. Therefore, it would have been difficult and perhaps inconsiderate and unjust of him in his circumstances to have rigorously observed the monastic precepts. However, as we have seen, Hōnen definitely viewed bad karma as a hindrance to Pure Land rebirth, and for Hōnen as for any Buddhist, the surest way to avoid bad karma was to observe the precepts. Thus, he advises Naozane to observe them as much as he can manage, that is, to the extent that he is able within his circumstances. In response to Naozane’s questions Hōnen advises him that within his circumstances he should avoid having sexual relations with his wife and not disinherit his son, but fulfill his filial obligations by remaining at home with his mother until she dies.⁴⁹

Hōnen’s advice in this letter helps us to resolve the apparent contradiction we noted between his views on observance of the precepts in the *Passages* on the one hand and in the *Seven Article Admonition* on the other hand. Although not necessary for Pure Land rebirth, he apparently thought that everyone should attempt to observe the precepts as much as their circumstances would allow so as to avoid the accumulation of bad karma. For those who were regularly ordained monks he would have probably urged a rigorous observance, for lay priests a less strict conformance as dictated by their particular circumstances, and for laypersons a sincere attempt to observe at least the primary rules, such as those forbidding the taking of life, stealing, and lying.⁵⁰ On the other hand, given the special circumstances of an age of final dharma when virtually all human kind have become just “ordinary deluded beings” (*bonbu*), he was convinced that strict observance of precepts was almost impossible. While in the *Passages* Hōnen attempts to explain why Amida had selected nenbutsu rather than other practices for his vow, he remarks,

If observance of the [lay] precepts and monastic rules had been made [the practice of] the original vow, then those who violate or who have not taken the precepts would have no hope of rebirth at all. Yet those who observe the precepts are few, while those who violate the precepts are extremely numerous.⁵¹

Thus, while one should avoid evil conduct by attempting to observe the precepts, one’s major efforts should be dedicated to the cultivation of nen-

butsu. If one's nenbutsu cultivation is of sufficient quality and quantity, one will be reborn in spite of one's bad karma.⁵²

THE VARIETIES OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM

Finally, let us return as promised to a consideration of the varieties of Pure Land Buddhism. At the beginning of this study I ventured the view that Hōnen contributed to the transformation of continental forms of Pure Land Buddhism into distinctly Japanese forms. By this I mean that institutional Pure Land Buddhism in Japan prior to Hōnen was based upon continental models—largely monastic and emphasizing contemplative practice—but after Hōnen it became entirely a layperson's Buddhism, emphasizing devotion. An adequate defense of this thesis is far beyond our limitations of time and space here, but let me briefly consider the ways in which Hōnen's teachings on practice facilitated participation by laypersons in Pure Land Buddhism. In addition to his rejection of earlier Buddhist mystical, monistic systems of thought and of the complex rituals associated with them,⁵³ Hōnen, as we have documented, rejected the core practices of Buddhist monasticism—meditation and observance of the precepts. His rejection of meditation, that is, contemplations of the Pure Land and its beings (*kanzatsu, kambutsu*), was total and definitive for the Pure Land tradition that followed him.⁵⁴ As we have seen, the complex visionary meditations that dominated the Pure Land tradition prior to Hōnen, and that even for Shandao continued to be an important form of practice, were replaced by the simple devotional act of calling on the name of the Buddha.

With regard to the value of precept observance, we first acknowledged contradictions between the positions taken by Hōnen in the *Passages* on the one hand and in the *Seven Article Admonition* on the other, and then explored how Hōnen clarified the relation of the precepts to the nenbutsu in his letter to Kumagae Naozane.⁵⁵ There he unequivocally declares that the cultivation of nenbutsu is absolutely essential for the attainment of rebirth, while the observance of the precepts is of only marginal value. Based on the advice he gives to Naozane we can conclude that for Hōnen one could be a layperson, pursuing a lifestyle completely unobservant of the Buddhist behavioral precepts as such, and yet cultivate the requisite quantity and quality of nenbutsu for Pure Land rebirth. Finally, in exploring the character of Hōnen's nenbutsu we discovered that while he urged sustained cultivation of enormous quantities of nenbutsu and saw this nenbutsu as accruing good karma for rebirth (albeit the karmic merit derived from that which Amida had invested in the nenbutsu), he also taught that sincere and deeply believing nenbutsu cultivation establishes an intimate and caring bond between the cultivator and the Buddha, and at death the Buddha

would therefore welcome the devotee into the Pure Land. As James Foard has pointed out,⁵⁶ Hōnen was one of those early Kamakura Buddhist leaders who participated in a devotional movement that eliminated the necessity of institutional or sacerdotal mediation and made salvation immediately available to laypersons. Thus, with few exceptions, after Hōnen Japanese Pure Land Buddhism became a layperson's Buddhism.⁵⁷

NOTES

1. Elements of Shandao's thought had been introduced to Japan prior to Hōnen by Genshin (942–1017) and Yōkan (1033–1111). By “populist” I refer to that Chinese Pure Land tradition that reached its fullest expression in Shandao (613–681) and shaped its teachings to address and guide to liberation the largest number of persons possible, both clergy and laity and of whatever social stratum or spiritual capacity.
2. Only seven or eight texts exist in manuscripts bearing Hōnen's handwriting: the *Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū*; the *Shichikajō seikai*; the letter to Kumagae Naozane dated second day, fifth month; three partial letters to Shōgyōbō, undated; a single line of text and Hōnen's signature on the so-called *Ichigyō ippitsu Amida kyō* (*One-line-one-brush Amitābha Sutra*); and possibly the *Ichimai kishōmon*; see Tōdō Kyōshun and Itō Yuishin, “Hōnen Shōninshinpitsu ruishū kaisetsu,” in *Jōdoshū kaishū happyakunen kinen Hōnen Shōnin Kenkyū*, ed. Bukkyō Daigaku Hōnen Shōnin kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Ryūbunkan, 1975).
3. Probably written in 1204; see Akamatsu Toshihide, *Zoku Kamakura Bukkyō no kenkyū* (*Further Studies on Kamakura Period Buddhism*; Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1966), p. 297.
4. Hōnenbō Genkū, *Passages on the Selected Nenbutsu of the Original Vow* (*Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū/Senchakushū/Senjakushū*, T. 2608), T83.2c.
5. I will not use diacritical marks in words derived from Sanskrit when they occur in titles I have translated into English.
6. This formulation Hōnen obtained from Shandao (*Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra* [*Kuan Wu-liang-shou-fo-ching shu / Kan Muryōjubutsukyō sho*, T. 1753, T37.272a–b]), who derived it from the *Discourse on the Sutra of Limitless Life and Verse in Aspiration for Rebirth* (*Wu-liang-shou-ching yu-p'o-t'i-she yuan-sheng chieh, Muryōjukyō ubadaisha ganshō ge* [also known in Japanese under the abbreviated names: *Ōjō ron* and *Jōdo ron*], **Sukhāvatīvyūha upadeśa*, T. 1542), attributed to Vasubandhu, where these five practices are called the “five gates of buddha-reflection” (*wu nien-men/go nenmon*).
7. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.7b.
8. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.4b–6c. The vow is found at T12.268a.
9. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.5c.
10. *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra* (*Fo-shou kuan Wu-liang-shou-fo ching / Bussetsu kan Muryōjubutsu kyō*, T. 365), T12.346a.
11. With the possible exception of the *Ichimai kishōmon*.

12. T47.439b–c.
13. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.5c; Genshin, *Ōjōyōshū* (*Essentials for Pure Land Rebirth*, T. 2682), T84.76c.
14. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.14c–15c.
15. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.20a.
16. Robert E. Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1987), p. 75; Kamata Shigeo and Tanaka Hisao, eds., *Kamakura kyū-Bukkyō* (*Traditional Kamakura Period Buddhism*; Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971), p. 32.
17. Delmer M. Brown and Ichirō Ishida, *The Future and the Past: A Translation and Study of the Gukanshō* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 171; Ikawa Jōkei, ed., *Hōnen Shōnin den zenshū* (*The Complete Biographies of Hōnen Shōnin*, rev. ed.; Takaishi, Osaka Pref.: Hōnen Shōnin den zenshū kankōkai, 1967), p. 975.
18. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.6b21–25.
19. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.13a–b. The fourfold manner of practice, like many of Hōnen's key doctrinal positions, was derived by Hōnen from Shandao (T47.439a7–18), but is not exclusive to Pure Land piety. It is a general Mahayana prescription for bodhisattva practice found, for example, in the *Abhidharmakośa Śāstra* (T.1558.29.141), and in Vasubandhu's *Commentary on the Compendium of the Mahayana* (T.1595.31.209), which were modified by Shandao to conform to his exclusivistic Pure Land devotionism.
20. Chion kōshiki, Ikawa, *Hōnen Shōnin den zenshū*, p. 1036; and Sammai hotokuki, in Ishii Kyōdō, ed., *Shōwa shinshū Hōnen Shōnin zenshū* (hereafter Shsz) (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1955), p. 864.
21. Ōhashi Toshio (Shunnō), ed., *Hōnen-Ippen* (*Hōnen and Ippen*; Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971), pp. 166–167.
22. T12.272b.
23. See *Kōfukuji sōjō* in Kamata and Tanaka 1971, p. 40 and Morrell 1987, p. 86.
24. Shsz 1955, p. 788.
25. Itō Yuishin, *Jōdoshū no seiritsu to tenkai* (*The Establishment and Development of the Pure Land Denomination*; Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1981), pp. 127–130.
26. For the *locus classicus* on deathbed rebirth, see Genshin, *Ōjōyōshū*, T84.69a–71b and Allan Andrews, *The Teachings Essential for Rebirth: A Study of Genshin's Ōjōyōshū* (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1973), pp. 82–86.
27. T83.16a.
28. *Muryōjūkyō*, T.12.267c8; *Senchakushū*, T83.4c28.

29. T83.16b13–20.

30. This was a traditional function of nenbutsu; see *Ōjōyōshū*, T84.66c–67a and Andrews, *Teachings*, pp. 72–73. Matsunaga and Matsunaga claim that Hōnen emphasized the cultivation of large quantities of nenbutsu as a means to exorcise or remove “sin,” i.e., bad karma. However, to support this view they cite Hōnen’s unauthenticated writings, works so numerous and varied that one or another can be used to support almost any opinion about Hōnen. See Daigen Matsunaga and Alicia Matsunaga, *Foundations of Japanese Buddhism*, vol. II (Los Angeles: Buddhist Books International, 1976), pp. 61–62.

31. *Amitābha Contemplation Sutra*, T12.346a18–20.

32. For Hōnen’s references to rebirth by ten or one nenbutsu see *Passages*, Chapter 10, T83.13b6–29 and Chapter 12, T83.16a8–15. In these references Hōnen does identify the deathbed nenbutsu of these evil persons with the nenbutsu of the eighteenth vow, emphasizing that only because this nenbutsu has been empowered by the vow of Amida is it able to remove such extraordinarily bad karma. Yet, as we have pointed out, in his classification of the practices of the *Contemplation Sutra* he declines to identify the nenbutsu of these miscreants with the nenbutsu of the vow.

33. The ten evil acts (*jūaku*) include the taking of life, theft, falsehood, adultery, greed, and wrath, and the five irredeemables (*gogyaku*) include patricide and matricide.

34. In traditional language we would say that evil as well as good persons were equally the primary objects of Hōnen’s teachings (*zennin akunin byōdō shōki*); see Kasahara Kazuo, ed., *Nyonin Ōjō* (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1983), pp. 37–38.

35. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.15b.

36. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.12c; 134.6–7. See also Chapter 12, T83.15b.

37. T37.268a6–9.

38. Hōnen, *Passages*, T83.3b27–3c2. “A prior passage” means prior to the primary passage of this chapter. This is from Shandao’s interpretation of Śākyamuni’s pronouncement in the ninth contemplation of the *Contemplation Sutra* that those who cultivate buddha-reflection are embraced and never abandoned by the light emanating from Amitābha’s body. The three modes of karma, i.e., of action and its results, are vocal, physical, and mental karma, or speech, act, and thought.

39. During one’s life the nenbutsu provides protection from evil spirits, sudden illness, untimely death, and all misfortunes and calamities; see Hōnen, *Passages*, Chapter 15, T83.18a.

40. Hōnen, *Passages*, Chapter 8, T83.12a28–b3. Unlike Shinran, who was

strongly influenced by Tanluan and for whom faith in the power of the vow and the nenbutsu vitiated the need for incessant nenbutsu cultivation, Hōnen's view of the function of faith derived from Shandao, for whom faith enabled practice. For Hōnen, faith in Amida, the vows, and the nenbutsu provided the motivation and inspiration for assiduous practice. For example, in Chapter 8 of the *Passages* (T83.10a16–11a11) we find Hōnen citing Shandao that,

... deeply believing (*jinshin*)—and I implore all practitioners [to do this]—is to believe whole-heartedly in the Buddha's words, and with no regrets about the past to firmly decide to practice according to these. What the Buddha charges you to reject, reject. What he charges you to cultivate, cultivate. What he charges you to avoid, avoid. This is called conforming to the Buddha's teachings, conforming to the Buddha's intentions, conforming to the Buddha's vows. This is to be a true disciple of the Buddha.... Next there is establishing [deep] faith in relation to cultivation, and there are two kinds of cultivation [we should have deep faith in]: (1) right cultivation and (2) mixed cultivation.

In other words, for Shandao and for Hōnen, deep faith meant to believe deeply that the nenbutsu of the vow is the practice that will certainly result in Pure Land rebirth, and consequently, one should cultivate it assiduously.

41. T83.3b.

42. T83.5c–6a.

43. Shsz, p. 788.

44. Ibid.

45. Akamatsu, *Zoku Kamakura Bukkyō no kenkyū*, p. 297; traditionally dated 1193–1194.

46. Naozane also became the protagonist of a *nō* play and several *kabuki* dramas.

47. Akamatsu, *Zoku Kamakura Bukkyō no kenkyū*, pp. 290–295; Fumiko Miyazaki, "Religious Life of the Kamakura Bushi: Kumagai Naozane and His Descendants," *Monumenta Nipponica* 47, no. 4 (1992): pp. 437–439.

48. Ōhashi, *Hōnen-Ippen*, pp. 166–167.

49. Although filial behavior is not a requirement of the Buddhist precepts, it is enjoined in the *Contemplation Sutra* (T12.341c9–12), and Hōnen remarks in the *Passages* that it does generate karma for rebirth (T83.15a8–12).

50. Hōnen himself strictly observed the precepts throughout his life.

51. T83.5c25–6a5.

52. In traditional studies of Hōnen's position on the precepts a passage

from the *Gekishu seppō* (Shsz 1955, p. 243), the *Mappō tōmyōki*, is frequently cited to show that Hōnen viewed the observance of precepts in an age of final dharma as totally irrelevant to rebirth (see, for example, pages 91–92 in Robert F. Rhodes, trans., “Saichō’s *Mappō Tomyoki: The Candle of the Latter Dharma*,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 1, no. 311 [1980]: pp. 79–103). However, the authenticity of the *Gekishu seppō* is not confirmed by an autographed manuscript, thus it might be an apocryphal work.

53. While Matsunaga and Matsunaga (*Foundations*, p. 61) claim that Hōnen participated in ordination rites using esoteric tantric ritual, this claim is dubious. (It is probably based upon the assertion of Ishida Mizumaro on page 266 of “Hōnen ni okeru futatsu no seikaku,” in *Jōdokyō no tenkai* [Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1967], pp. 264–268, but Ishida moderated his view considerably in his revision, “Hōnen no kairitsu kan,” in *Nihon Bukkyō ni okeru kairitsu no kenkyū* [Tokyo: Nakayama Shobō, 1986], pp. 313–322.) That Hōnen ordained Kujō Kanazane and two other aristocrats and that he conferred the Buddhist precepts on Kanazane, his wife, and his daughter when they were ill is certain (*Gyokuyō* and *Meigetsuki*; Ikawa, *Hōnen Shōnin den zenshū*, pp. 966–968). That he did so by means of esoteric rites is speculation. An early biography, the *Genkū Shōnin shinikki*, does claim that Hōnen participated in esoteric rituals (Alan A. Andrews, “A Personal Account of the Life of the Venerable Genkū,” in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999], p. 376.), apparently while still residing at Kurodani prior to 1174, but this claim is also dubious; see discussion of the process of compilation of the *Genkū Shōnin shinikki* in Tamura Enchō, *Hōnen Shōnin den no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1972), pp. 16–21 and 292.

54. The issue of Hōnen’s alleged personal participation in contemplative exercises must be treated separately from his teachings on this issue.

55. The original manuscript of Hōnen’s letter to Naozane, written in Hōnen’s own hand, has been preserved and is therefore unquestionably authentic; see Tōdō and Itō, “Hōnen Shōnin shinpitsu ruishū kaisetsu.”

56. James Foard, “In Search of a Lost Reformation,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7, no. 4 (1980): pp. 261–291.

57. The primary exceptions are the Jishū and Ōbaku Zen.

The Sutra of the Teachings Left by the Buddha
Translated from Kumārajīva's Chinese
by Rev. Philip Karl Eidmann

Editor's Note: Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, Rev. Philip Karl Eidmann was one of the key faculty for the Institute of Buddhist Studies, serving during the administration of Rev. Haruyoshi Kusada. During the 1950s Eidmann had studied in Kyoto, where he gained his expertise in Pure Land Buddhism. It was during this time that he was asked by Ruikotsu Madani, President of the Chugai Nippo, a religious daily newspaper, to translate this short sutra. In a short appendix to the translation Mr. Koyata Yamamoto records that he was struck by the message of the teachings when he heard it recited as part of a memorial service for his son at Shisendo Temple in northern Kyoto. Following the service he requested and was given a copy of the sutra, which he then continued to read on his own.

The publication seems to have been motivated more by faith than by scholarship, and does not include any annotations or source information, which we have added here: The text is Taisho number 389. It is used as a liturgical text in both Taiwan and Japan, where it seems to be particularly associated with the Sōtō Zen sect. Indeed, Shisendo Jozanji, where Mr. Yamamoto encountered the text, is a Sōtō shū temple. The temple was founded in 1641 by Ishikawa Jozan (1583–1672), who had served as a samurai under Tokugawa Ieyasu. It was Ishikawa's retirement hermitage, and is still famous today for its gardens. It only became affiliated with Sōtō shū after his death, when it was occupied by the nun Zenrin Tairyo.

The full title of the text in Japanese pronunciation is "Butsu suiatsu nehan ryaku setsu kyō kai kyō" and is more commonly known under its abbreviate form of "Butsu yui kyō kyō" (Ch. Fo ijiao jing).

Rather than attempting to update the translation, we have chosen to honor Rev. Eidmann's style and spelling, retaining them as found in the original publication. Only a few corrections to obvious errors have been made.

The editor would like to thank Maciej Kanser, Chun-fang, Nobuyoshi Yamabe, Wakoh Shannon Hickey, and especially Taigen Dan Leighton for their assistance with identifying this text and providing additional background information.

I. INTRODUCTION

Shakyamuni Buddha, when he first set in motion the wheel of righteousness, saved Kondanna, and in his last sermon he saved Subhadra. Those who were to be saved he has saved, and now he lay among the Sal trees, about to enter Nirvana. The time was the middle of the night, calm and noiseless. For the sake of all the disciples, he briefly spoke of the most important doctrines.

II. ON THE CULTIVATION OF VIRTUE IN THIS WORLD

1. Admonishing on Bad Actions

“Ye brethren! After my death you must reverence and honor the commandments. They are like finding a light in the darkness, like a poor man finding a great treasure. You ought to know, therefore, they are indeed your great teacher. There should be no difference in these, from when I myself lived on earth. Those who would follow pure discipline ought not to buy, sell, nor exchange. They ought not covet fields and buildings, nor accumulate servants or attendants or animals. From all planting and all sorts of wealth ought they to run away like one would from a fire or a pit. You ought not cut trees and grass, plow the soil, hoe the fields, mix medicines, divine fortunes, study the stars’ positions, cast horoscopes by the waxing and waning of the moon, nor reckon days of good fortune. All these are things which are improper.

“Control your bodies. Eat at proper times. Conduct yourselves in purity. You should not concern yourselves with worldly matters nor mix potions, nor bind yourselves to eminent people in friendship nor become familiar with them that you can boast of it indecently. All these are not to be done! You ought, with fixed mind, in Right Contemplation (Sammāsati) aspire to salvation. You ought not conceal your faults, nor give rise to heresy, nor lead people astray. Of the four gifts, you know the limits; you know what is enough. When you have received a small offering, you must not hoard it. Here, therefore, I shall speak briefly about the forms for protecting the precepts. The precepts are the basis of the decision of release (moksa). Therefore they are called the pratimoksa rules. If you rely on the cause from the precepts, you will attain many stages of concentration and the knowledge of the extinction from suffering. For this reason, brethren, you ought always keep the precepts pure and never break them. If man can hold these precepts pure, this indeed will be good. If there are no pure precepts, no good merit can arise at all. You ought to know for this reason, that the merit of the place of perfect calm is acquired through the precepts.”

2. Admonishing on the Control of Body and Mind

“Ye brethren! If already you would be able to live the precepts, you must repress the five senses. Their five desires must not enter through your neglect. It is just like a cowherd, taking a stick and by showing it, stops the cows from entering another man’s field which is ripe for the harvest. So, if you indulge the five senses, not only will their desires not be stopped within bounds, but, like not controlling a bad horse by a bit, soon certainly the individual must fall in an abyss. Likewise you will be subject to pain through many kalpas: Your whole existence will be suffering. The evil of that robber (the five senses) extends through many lives, creating very great pain. Ye must control yourselves! For this reason, wise men control them and do not indulge in them. These desires should be kept like prisoners who may not wander about. However, even those who entertain them, all soon may extinguish them. As for these five senses the mind acts as their master. For this reason ye must always guard your mind well. Much more than a snake, wild beasts, or a hateful robber, ought the mind to fear unsatisfaction. It’s like, for example, a man who, carrying some honey, goes bouncing along his path looking only at the honey and fails to notice a deep hole. Or, again, it’s like a mad elephant which has no goad, or like a monkey who, getting to a tree, cannot, except with difficulty, be controlled. Hasten to deflect these desires. You must not let them be neglected. If you indulge this mind, you lose the good of being a man. If you limit these desires in one place there is nought you cannot accomplish. For this reason, brethren, you ought to strive diligently and subdue your minds.”

3. Admonishing on Many Wishes

“Ye brethren: In receiving all food and drink you ought to accept them as medicine. You must not accept or reject what you like or dislike: just support your bodies and avoid starvation and thirst. As the bee in gathering flowers, takes only the taste of them, but does not harm their color or scent, so, brethren, do ye! Accept just enough of people’s offerings to avoid distress! Don’t have many demands and thereby break their good hearts. A wise man, for example, having judged the amount of capacity of his ox’s strength, does not wear out his strength by overloading.”

4. Admonishing on Sleeping

“Ye brethren! With determination of mind practice the good Law by day. Don’t waste your time! In the early evening, nor even late night, do not cease your struggle. Even in the middle of the night you should inform

yourselves better by reading the sutras. You will gain nothing by passing your whole life in vain through sleep. You ought to think of the world as burning in a fire. You must desire to save yourself quickly. You must not sleep! The robber (depravities) is always stalking and killing man much more even than if he were in a house of hatred. How can you sleep without arousing yourselves? The depravities are a poison snake sleeping in your mind. They are, in fact, like a black cobra sleeping in your room. It can be quickly gotten rid of with the spear of keeping the precepts. Only when that dormant snake has fled can you sleep peacefully. If you sleep without the snake being gone, you are a rash man. The clothing of conscience, among all finery, is the very best. Conscience is like an iron goad which can control man's unrighteousness. Therefore, brethren, you must always be conscientious. You must not be able, even for a moment, to ignore it. If you depart from conscience, you lose all merit. He who has regrets has that which is good. He who has no regrets will not be different from birds or beasts."

5. Admonishing on Anger

"Ye brethren! If there were a man who came and dismembered you joint by joint, you must not hate him, but rather include him in your heart. And you must guard your mind that no complaining word come out of it. If you give way to hateful thoughts, there is a barrier in your own way, and you lose the benefit of your merit. Patience is a virtue which the keeping of every precept or any other austerity cannot equal. He who can practice patience can truly be called the great and strong man. He who cannot endure abuse as he would drink ambrosia cannot be called an enterer of the way or a wise man. Why is this? Because the farm of hatefulness shatters all good and destroys your good name so that, in present or future generations, man will not wish to see it. You should realize that hatefulness. Those householders, dressed in white, who have desires and do not practice the way, are not in righteous control of themselves. Even hatred is understandable in them. But, just as lightning and thunder cannot appear in a white filmy cloud, it cannot be in the homeless ones who practice the way without desires and confine their hatefulness."

6. Admonishing on Conceit

"Brethren! With your head in your hands you ought to look at yourself like this: 'I've already abandoned all ornamentation. I wear plain colors and have a bowl, to beg my living.' If arrogance and pride arise, you must rapidly extinguish them. The growth of arrogance and pride is not good even for those wearing white and living in the world, much less to say for the homeless ones who, having entered the way to achieve release, subdue their bodies and practice begging."

7. Admonishing on Flattery

“Ye brethren! A mind full of flattery is incompatible with the way. Therefore you must in simplicity correct such a mind. You must understand that flattery is only cheating. The man who has entered the way, therefore, has no use for it. So examine ye well, and with a correct mind base yourself on simplicity.”

III. CHAPTER ON THE MERIT OF THE GREAT MEN WHO HAVE ENTERED HOMELESSNESS

1. The Merit of Few Desires

“Ye brethren! You must understand that the man of many desires, by reason of his desire for reward, has much suffering too. The man of few desires neither desiring anything nor seeking anything, thereby does not have these sorrows. You ought to practice having only a few desires. But much more than this, is the merit of the practice of few desires. The man of few desires need not by flattery sway another’s mind, nor is he led by his passions. The man who entertains few desires has a contented mind, and he has no cause for sorrow and fear. The things he gets are enough. There is never an insufficiency. Therefrom, indeed, is Nirvana. Such is what is called desiring little.”

2. Merit of Contentment

“Ye brethren! If you want to escape from all suffering, you must see what contentment is. The basis of contentment is, indeed, to obtain rich joy, calmness, and peace. The man of contentment, even though he lies on the ground, still is happy. He who is not contented, though he were in heavenly palaces, still would not be contented. He who is not contented, even though he be rich, he is poor. The man who is contented, even though he be poor, is rich. He who is not contented is pulled by the five desires and therefore he is pitied by the one who is contented. This is what is called contentment.”

3. The Merit of Seclusion

“Ye brethren! If you desire quietude, inaction, and joy, always avoid confusion and noise, live alone in a quiet retreat. The man who lives in solitude is respectfully worshipped by Indra and all the gods. This is why you should leave your own and other communities to live alone in seclu-

sion, pondering the extinction of the origin of suffering. Those who rejoice in company have the pains of company, just as when many birds flock upon a great tree, it is in danger (of collapse). Attachment to the world drowns one in suffering of mankind, just as an old elephant drowning in the mud cannot get himself out. This is what is called seclusion."

4. The Merit of Constantly Striving Energetically

"Ye brethren! If you strive energetically there is nothing that is hard. For example, a constant trickle of water will bore a hole in a rock. Therefore, ye must always strive energetically. If the mind of a disciple become in many ways idle and inattentive, it is just like making a fire by friction and you rest before it is hot: even if you desire fire, you cannot get a blaze. This is what is called striving energetically."

5. The Merit of Not Forgetting

"Seek a personal teacher: Seek a good friend. There is nothing like not forgetting. If one does not forget, that robber, the depravities, cannot enter. For this reason ye must always have concentration present in your mind. If you lose concentration, you lose all merit thereby. If then your power of concentration is strong and hard, even though the five desires were to enter, they cannot do any harm, just as, if you have put on armour to enter the battle, there is nought to fear. This is what is called not forgetting."

6. The Merit of Concentration

"Ye brethren! If you unify your mind, your mind is then in concentration. Because your mind is in concentration, you can know the basic nature of the appearance and disappearance of the world. For this reason ye must always strive diligently to practice various stages of concentration. If you gain concentration, the mind doesn't wander. Just as a house with little water carefully conserves that in its reservoir, so should the disciple also. For the sake of the water of knowledge you should practice concentration; do not let it leak away. This is what is called concentration."

7. The Merit of Perfect Knowledge

"Ye brethren! If you have perfect knowledge, then you have no greed. Always examine yourself that you do not let yourself be in error. Thereby, then, from within subjectivity and objectivity, you can get release. If you do not do so, you already are not a follower of the way, nor are you a white clad layman either! There would be no name suitable for you. Perfect knowl-

edge is a strong ship which carries you across the sea of old age, sickness, and death. Again, it is a great brilliant light in deep darkness. It is a good medicine for all who are ill. It is a sharp ax which cuts the tree of evil. For this reason, you must, by listening, pondering, and practicing knowledge, make yourself progress. If a man has the clarity of perfect knowledge, tho' his organs be base, still he can clearly see into mankind. This is what perfect knowledge is."

8. The Merit of the Goal

"Ye brethren! If you enter into many kinds of useless discussion, then your mind will be confused, and though you leave your homes, still you won't attain release. For this reason, brethren, you ought immediately to cease confused thinking and useless discussion. If ye want to attain the joy of calm, extinguish the illness of useless discussion. This is what is called no useless discussion."

IV. CHAPTER SHOWING PROFOUND FINAL MERIT

"Yet brethren! In all kinds of virtue you must always wholeheartedly get rid of laxity, just as you would a hateful robber. That which the Lord of great compassion has preached for your benefit is now concluded. Yet ye must strive diligently to practice it. Whether you live in the mountains or in the lowlands, whether you live under a tree or in seclusion in a quiet room, ponder the doctrines which you have received. You must not let them become lost. You must always exert yourself to practice them energetically. If you do not do this and die vainly, afterwards it will be the occasion of much regret. I am like a good doctor, who recognizes the illness and prescribes a medicine: but whether it will actually be taken or not is not up to the doctor. Again, I am like a good guide who directs a man to the best path. If, not hearing that, he doesn't go on it, the fault is not with the guide."

V. CHAPTER SHOWING THE ENTRANCE INTO A FIRM TESTIMONY

"Ye brethren! If you have any doubts regarding the Four Truths, you ought to ask about them immediately. You must not have concealed doubts without wishing to dispel them."

At that time, the Lord spoke thus three times, but there was not a man who questioned him. What was the reason why? Because the assembly had not doubts! At that time Aniruddha, seeing what was in the minds of

those assembled, said to the Buddha: "Lord! The moon might grow hot, and the sun might grow cool, but the four truths which Buddha taught cannot change. The truth of suffering, which Buddha taught, is of real suffering which cannot become joy. Accumulation of desires truly is its cause. If suffering is destroyed, it is when its cause had been destroyed. If the cause is destroyed, its result is destroyed. The way of destroying error is the path of truth, and there is no other path. Lord! All these brethren are firm and without doubts concerning the four truths."

VI. CHAPTER ON CUTTING OFF THE DOUBT BY DISCERNING THOSE WHO HAD NOT YET ENTERED AND THOSE WHO HAD ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT

"If, in this assembly there are those who have not finished their task, perhaps on seeing the passing of the Buddha they shall fall sad. If there are any who have just entered the way, on hearing what the Buddha is teaching, they all will attain salvation. As clearly as one sees lightning in the night, he then can see the way. If anyone has already finished his task and already has crossed the sea of suffering, they will think only this: 'The Lord has passed on. Why was this done so rapidly?'" Although Aniruddha had spoken these words, all in the assembly without exception clearly penetrated the meaning of the four holy truths, the Lord wished all in this great assembly might become stronger. With a mind of great compassion, he spoke for the benefit of the assembly.

"Ye brethren! Don't feel grieved! If I were to live in the world a whole kalpa, our association would still have to end. You cannot find any association which does not end. The doctrine of benefit to one and all has been completed. If I were to live longer, it would be of no benefit. Those who were to be saved in both heaven and earth, have all without exception been saved. Those who have not been saved, have all, again, created the cause of their attaining salvation. From now on, all my disciples, turning it over in their minds, must practice this; thereby this will be the Body of the Tathagata's Law, which will be forever without destruction. Therefore you must know the world is all transient, and meeting certainly implied separation. Don't feel grieved! Such is the nature of the world. You must strive diligently and seek immediate release. With the light of perfect knowledge, destroy all the darkness of ignorance. The world is dangerous and perishable, and there is nothing strong and enduring. Now I attain extinction: this is like getting rid of a bad sickness. This, which we call a body, is a criminal thing. It is sunk in the great ocean of birth and death. Is there a wise man who would not be glad to get rid of this, like one might kill a hateful robber?"

VII. CHAPTER ON SEPARATION FROM MANY KINDS OF
SELFHOOD AND PURE SELFLESSNESS

“Ye brethren! Ye ought always aspire wholeheartedly to the way of release. The whole world of moving and non-moving forms is in appearance disquieting and not calm. Stop ye a moment! Speak not! Time is passing away. I am going to Nirvana. This is what I have taught at the last.”

Bunyu Nanjio: His Life and Work¹

M. Zumoto

I.

BY THE LAMENTED DEATH of Dr. Bunyu Nanjio,² Japan has lost not only a great scholar but one of the most influential leaders and preachers Buddhist Japan has produced in modern times. For a space of over forty years he has occupied in our Buddhist world a position which it will not be easy for a long time to fill adequately.

Born a third son to the abbot of the Sei-unji Temple of the Higashi Hongwanji branch of the Shinshū sect at Ogaki on July 1, 1849, Bunyu early developed a keen thirst for knowledge and a wonderful power of memory which marked the most distinctive traits of his character all through his fairly long life. In his *Reminiscences (Kwaikyu Roku)*, published shortly before his death and to which I am indebted for most of the biographical material made use of in this article, he tells us in a tone of affectionate remembrance of the torments he had to suffer at the hand of his immediate elder brother, four years his senior, on account of his too rapid progress in the study of Chinese classics. The two brothers used to go together to the same tutor, Kaiō Hishida, a well-known Chinese scholar in the same town. It was anything but pleasing to the elder boy to see his younger brother reading more pages with the tutor than he was permitted himself, thus threatening to catch up with him in a very short time. So on the way home, when they were going through a lonely spot, the envious brother would run ahead of Bunyu and frighten him by suddenly coming upon him from behind a bush, or when the barley was ripening the poor young pupil often had to run home crying to his mother with his face blackened with smuts from the roadside farm. His suffering from this quarter was over when he was eleven, as his brother was adopted into the family of the abbot of another temple of the same sect in that district.

When he was about fifteen an incident happened which is worth recording as it reveals a peculiarity of his physical nature which showed itself repeatedly through his long life. On one occasion he was sent by his father on an important mission to a temple some twenty miles away. It was imperatively necessary that he should be back within about two days. Although the journey was done by a river boat, it was rather a strenuous job for a boy of his age, but he successfully carried it out. When, however,

he returned to his temple on the morning of the third day he was so tired that he at once went to bed. When he woke up it was early morning, so he naturally thought that he had slept for twenty-four hours. But the truth was he had slept for just two full days. "This," he says, "is a strange habit but all through my life I have very often slept at a stretch for an almost interminable length of time."

It goes without saying that Bunyiu's training in religious subjects was by no means neglected. On the contrary he was so well equipped in this respect that we find him at the age of sixteen already accompanying one of his religious masters on ministering tours as assistant preacher. As a matter of fact he was now entering upon a more serious study of the deeper aspects of Buddhist philosophy and literature. For this purpose he had to go to Kyōto and enroll himself at the academy of his sect, where there were lectures by competent authorities on all sorts of subjects. But unfortunately his peaceful studies were now broken by a sudden call to a field of activities for which young priests are not usually trained. It was a call to arms.

Mighty events were now stirring the country. By the end of 1866 it was clear that the revolutionary movement for overthrowing the Tokugawa shogunate which had been agitating the nation for nearly half a century reached a stage where there was no possible room for a peaceful settlement. All the clans were getting ready for the fight which was now inevitable. The Clan of Ogaki, which was far from Kyōto, and which everybody knew was to be the scene of the first act in the approaching tragedy, took immediate steps in strengthening its fighting forces by enlisting volunteer farmers and Buddhist priests within its territory. Bunyiu was one of the youngest recruits in an infantry contingent of one hundred twenty priests all belonging to the Higashi Hongwanji branch of the Shinshū sect—a modern resurrection of the old soldier monks whose military feats in the defense of their faith against the onslaughts of Nobunaga's troops forms a picturesque chapter in the history of feudal Japan. In enlisting these priest recruits, the clan authorities of Ogaki procured in advance the assent of the headquarters of the sect in Kyōto, an assent which was given on the condition that the force thus raised would be put at the disposal of the Higashi Hongwanji Temple in case of need.

It is interesting to remark that incidentally it is made clear by the *Reminiscences* that that branch of the Shinshū sect, in consideration of past favor and patronage, intended to place its fighting forces organized in Ogaki and other districts throughout the country under the command of the shogunate government in the event of war. As a matter of fact early in 1867, when the outbreak of hostilities was imminent, the Higashi Hongwanji sent a special messenger to Ogaki ordering the Shinshū contingent to hurry up to Kyōto. And our young soldier tells us of a sleepless night when the thought of going to war kept him excited. But he was not destined to go to

war, for the next morning a second messenger arrived from Kyōto calling off the first order. Events had moved faster than had been expected. After short but sharp encounters in the outskirts of Kyōto, the Imperialist forces at once made themselves the master of the situation in the whole country round about, and moreover the shogun who had voluntarily deposed himself issued a command to all his followers not to offer any resistance to the Imperialist troops. This order was not respected by all of his followers, and a sanguinary civil war had to be fought before the Restoration of 1868 was completed. But so far as the Higashi Hongwanji was concerned it saw no excuse to throw its lot with the clans which continued the fight against the wishes of their former chief. So after a little over a year of soldiering, Bunyiu was again free to resume his studies.

Referring to this period of novel experience, Bunyiu says that he has to confess to his shame that he learned to drink and even remembers having had a quarrel with some of his fellow soldiers. But the rough life of a soldier was not altogether without benefits. For one thing, constant physical exercise did him much good in developing his body. "It made me," he says, "strong enough to undertake constant journeys, sometimes to distant parts of the earth, and to live to the age of nearly four scores." He was a few months over seventy-eight when he died.

Late in the spring of 1868, Bunyiu went up to Kyōto to finish his education at the Takakura Gakuryo, the highest seat of learning open to the young priests of his sect. He was at once admitted because his name had been registered there by his father some time in advance. He was doubly welcome because he was provided with a letter of introduction by the Reverend Dokwan Inaba, a widely known priest and scholar then resident in Ogaki. He was evidently a man of strong and magnetic personality. In his early youth before his soldier days, Bunyiu was trained under him in the art of preaching. "He was," says the admiring pupil, "a man of most scrupulous probity and purity. He practiced what he preached, and was in every way fit to be a teacher of men. I owe him a deep debt of gratitude, for it is owing to the beneficial influence of his teaching and examples that I have been able until today to adhere to the path of right living."

Instruction was given in the form of lectures upon the scriptures and metaphysical treatises. These lectures were classified according to their relative importance as main and subsidiary, attendance at the former being apparently compulsory and at the latter elective. Some of these subsidiary lectures are stated to have been very popular among the students.

Shortly after Bunyiu's matriculation at the academy, there was opened an institute as an adjunct to it for the purpose of conducting research into the teachings of other religions. The subject of study that attracted the widest attention at the institute was Christianity. The students of the academy were of course free to attend any of the lectures or take part in the debates

which were constantly carried on. Bunyiu remembers having participated in a discussion on the relative merits of Buddhism and Christianity. The study of Christianity became so popular at the Institute that it seems to have created considerable uneasiness among some teachers at the academy. One of them made a pointed reference to the undesirableness of wasting time over this foreign religion, for which he got into hot waters, as the students took the matter up and made a public question of it. Ultimately he had to offer an apology and submit to degradation to an inferior position. This incident is interesting as an indication of the spirit of toleration characterizing Buddhism and its followers.

The expense at the academy was incredibly moderate. Two *bu*, or fifty *sen* in modern currency, we are told, were more than sufficient for tuition and boarding. But Bunyiu's father, being poor, had to supplement his expenses by copying documents, a drudgery for which he was paid at the rate of a *sen* for every three sheets or six pages.

His stay at the academy did not last long, for in the summer of 1879 we find him back at home for good. So his stay was altogether a little over a year. Whether it was the difficulty of procuring the modest sum of two *bu* a month or whether he thought to prosecute further studies to better advantage at home by his own unaided efforts, we are not told. Whatever may have been the reason of his early withdrawal from the academy, it is quite clear from various circumstances that his academic record was highly creditable. It is equally plain that his singularly attractive personality gained for him high esteem and confidence among both teachers and students. One of the former, the abbot of the Okunenji Temple in the province of Fukui, entertained such a high opinion of his scholarship and character that he expressed an earnest desire to adopt him into his family. The young man seemed to have liked the teacher sufficiently to express his willingness to accept the proposal subject to approval by his father and eldest brother. On going home he took the first opportunity to broach the matter to them. His brother was not averse to it, but his father made no hesitation in brushing it aside as unthinkable, his assistance being absolutely necessary at home as his brother was rather weak in health and incapable of active efforts. So for the next two years he stayed at his father's temple, assisting him in religious duties as well as in the side business of giving instruction in Chinese classics to boys of the neighborhood. He also did a great deal of reading in religious texts and general literature, so much so, indeed, that he was now recognized as a highly accomplished scholar. One of the books that he devoured with particular ardor was a Chinese biography of the Buddha. There is a phrase in it which made an indelible impression upon his mind and which has been a source of unfailing inspiration to him during his whole life. And that is, "for the sake of the Law and not of self" 爲法不爲身, which restated in modern phraseology is the doctrine of service to others.

II.

It has been stated that one of his instructors at the Takakura Academy at Kyōto desired to adopt Bunyiu into his family, a proposal which was flatly refused by the boy's father. If the latter thought that this ended the matter, he was entirely mistaken, for he was dealing with a man of unusual persistence and dogged determination. This man was abbot of the Okunenji Temple in the province of Echizen, highly respected in Shinshū circles for his ability and attainments. He was so favorably impressed with the intelligence and personality of his young pupil that, in spite of the rather peremptory manner in which his first proposal was turned down by Bunyiu's father, he kept at it for over two years constantly returning to the charge through all sorts of avenues until at last he won his prize. This was in the beginning of 1871, when Bunyiu was about twenty-two. The Okunenji, of which Bunyiu was now the prospective heir, seems to have been in a far better position financially than his father's temple. Moreover, the head of that temple having for two successive generations been noted for scholarly accomplishments, it possessed a library of works on Buddhist and Confucian philosophies quite unusual in a provincial center. We can easily imagine with what ardent joy our scholar at once buried himself among these rare books.

Scarcely had he time to settle down at his new home when we find him going up to Kyōto for the rite of tonsure or *tokudo* as it is called in Japanese. This is a preparatory initiation into the priesthood, the full ordination, *gusoku*, being usually performed a few years later. At the tonsure the novice receives a new name by which he will be known until later in life he gets some title of distinction. We have by anticipation called the subject of this sketch by the name which was conferred upon him on the occasion of this ceremony, because that was the name by which he was known to the outside world. But for the sake of historical accuracy we may as well mention here once and for all that in his boyhood he was called Kaku-maru, while in his student days at Kyōto he rejoiced in the name of Sōkaku. While on this topic I may say a word as to how he came by his family name of Nanjio, though by so doing I anticipate the story by a year and a half. In feudal times, none but the two-sworded *samurai* and a few privileged members of the landed and commercial classes were permitted the use of family names. The privilege was also denied to the priesthood, in whose case, however, the name of the temple, particularly where its possession was hereditary as with the Shin sect, was generally used in the same way. Our young novice, for instance, was at the time spoken of as Bunyiu of Okunenji, while his adopted father was called the Reverend Okunenji. But in the autumn of 1872, an Imperial edict was issued abolishing this time-honored system of class discrimination and granting everybody the privilege of using his

family name. With many families, it simply meant the removal of the ban for the public use of its hereditary name, but in the case of many others, boasting of no hereditary *uji*, names had to be coined afresh, and many an interesting story is recorded of the queer things that happened in this connection. Bunyiu's case is one among many. When the edict in question was issued, Bunyiu lived in Kyōto where he occupied a prominent clerical position at the headquarters, while his adopted father was traveling on an extended preaching tour in the northeast. The edict required that the new names should be registered within a week, and in the imperfect condition of the means of communication at that time, it was impossible for the father and son to communicate with each other. So they had to register each a separate name for their family, the father taking the name of Kanagasu after the village in which the family temple is located and the son that of Nanjio after the county. Some time afterward on his way home from the north the father visited his son at Kyōto, and learning of the name the latter had adopted, he at once expressed his preference for it as being much prettier than his own choice. So Nanjio is the name by which the family has since been called.

After his initiation into the novitiate, Bunyiu remained a few months at the research institute of the academy where the principal subject of study was Chinese classics. Being already a past master of the subject, he at once rose to the top of the class and shortly after went home to his adopted temple in Echizen. His fame for eloquence and scholarship extending widely throughout the province, he was in constant demand for lectures and sermons. When he was not called away from home on these errands he divided his time between the routine work of looking after the parish and giving lessons in Buddhist lore and Chinese literature to students, some of whom came from the Research Institute of Kyōto.

About this time an incident occurred which enhanced his reputation very much. Lord Matsudaira of Fukui, the most powerful feudal prince in that region, being a devout upholder of Buddhism, there was established at his castle a school where the priests of the different denominations used to be brought together occasionally for mutual improvement in religious and philosophical subjects. Bunyiu's adopted father happened to be vice-chancellor of this institution and being a man of a dominating temperament, he seems to have created among the priesthood generally a certain amount of antagonistic sentiment against him. To make it worse, his immoderate boasting about his accomplished adopted son certainly did not tend to assuage the feelings of his friends and colleagues. So one day they laid a trap for Bunyiu in the form of a request for a public exposition of the famous dedicatory preface to the *History of Japan* by San-yō. That preface in Chinese is full of quotations and other passages only decipherable by men well versed in classics. Bunyiu did not happen to have a copy of the work by him at the

time, so he applied for a loan of it to the authorities of the institution, but it was not forthcoming until he actually took the platform to undergo the ordeal. The hall was filled to the limit by the instructors and the priestly students of the higher standing. The anxiety of his father and friends was, we are told, intense beyond description. But they were soon relieved by the ease and fluency with which our young scholar expounded sentence after sentence. When the exposition was over, he was assailed from every quarter of the hall with all sorts of questions, some serious and well-meant but mostly with an obvious intent to embroil him in difficulty. But he kept his temper under perfect control, and with praiseworthy patience and generosity he answered each and every question in so lucid and convincing a way, that the whole audience had to go away without a single point scored against him. From that moment, none questioned his supremacy in scholarship, and he was honored as the acknowledged prodigy of learning in that part of the country.

In the spring of 1872, Bunyiu went up to Kyōto where he was appointed at the headquarters. From that time until the late spring of 1876, when he left for England to study Sanskrit, he was constantly employed in important positions, except for one whole year (1874) when he had to stay at home in Echizen to look after his ailing adopted mother, his father being away on an important public mission.

Nanjio—as we must now call him, for that is the name by which he has since been known to the public here and abroad—on one occasion during this period accompanied the Archbishop of Higashi Hongwanji on his official visit to Tōkyō. From his account of this journey, it is interesting to recall the princely style in which His Holiness traveled. In feudal times he was accorded like a *daimyo* the privilege of exacting the prostration on the ground of everybody along the route of his progress. On the present occasion such custom was no longer observed, but his closed palanquin (*kago*) as it was carried along attended on foot by Nanjio and other retainers was the object of deep, spontaneous reverence by crowds of devout Shinshū believers, especially in Mino and Owari. At Nagoya, one of the greatest strongholds of that sect, the offering of small coins which the devotees, lining deeply both sides of the streets, threw at the palanquin was so great that many of the pieces penetrated through the loose bamboo lattice and struck His Holiness' person with sufficient force to cause him considerable pain. So he called out to Nanjio to devise some means of relief from the pelting rains of metallic offerings. Nanjio was equal to the occasion, and taking his hat he held it out to the enthusiastic worshippers, at the same time calling on the attendant on the other side of the palanquin to follow his example. When the hats were full, the contents were emptied into the palanquin. The process was repeated so frequently that the carriers began to complain of the increasing weight of the burden which they insisted was

more than they could bear. It required all the resources of sweet persuasion possessed by Nanjio—and he had a large store of it—to keep the rebellious carriers from dropping the holy fare on the road.

This period (1873–1876) of Nanjio's secretarial and administrative activities at the Shinshū headquarters derives special interest from the fact that it coincides with one of the most humiliating chapters in the history of the Buddhist cause in Japan. All through the Tokugawa regime Buddhism monopolized official patronage and protection, Shintō being kept in a state of inferiority and subjection. The revolution of 1868, which abolished the shogunate government and restored the Imperial House to actual supremacy in government from which it had for centuries been deprived, naturally brought about a radical change in the relative position of Shintō and Buddhism. The former was now the favored creed and it was by no means modest in paying its old score against Buddhism. Through their influence over the higher functionaries of the newly established Imperial government, many of whom were rabid Shintō believers, the priests of the national cult succeeded in getting it recognized as the dominant official faith. A proclamation was issued requiring Buddhist priests to conduct all religious rites according to Shintō rituals and fashion their preachings within the limits of the following "Three Principles," namely (1) respect the gods and love the country, (2) elucidate the principles of nature and humanity, and (3) pay reverence to the Emperor and obey all Imperial commands.

This was tantamount to a sudden disownment of Buddhism as a national religion and a command to it to accept a position of abject subordination to Shintō. It was a severe blow and an intolerable insult to a great religion which had for centuries enjoyed a position of unchallenged supremacy. It might have been expected that the Buddhist leaders would stoutly refuse to submit to such humiliation. But to their shame it must be stated that not only no show of resistance was attempted but they vied each other in complying with the humiliating terms imposed upon them by the militant Shintōists. Nanjio narrates with evident disgust that great luminaries of the Buddhist world went so far as actually to join in Shintō rites performed at the Zojo-ji Temple in Shiba, clad like Shintō priests and bearing offerings of fresh fish! It is true that they were not long to suffer from such degradation. But their emancipation was the result not of their own exertions but of the revolt of the general sentiment of the people at large.

III.

We now come to the most important period in the life of Nanjio, namely, his sojourn of eight years in England devoted to the study of Sanskrit and research in the Buddhist scriptures in that language.

When Archbishop Gennyō of East Hongwanji made a tour of Europe in the early years of Meiji, he was surprised to find that great progress had been made in the study of Sanskrit and Indian thought at the principal seats of learning there. This was a revelation to him. He was so impressed with the need of introducing this subject of study into Japan where it had been so shamefully neglected that he caused a member of his retinue, Mr. Shuntai Ishikawa, to begin at once the study of the sacred language of ancient India. This was while the party was staying at Paris, then the leading center of Oriental learning in Europe. Ishikawa lost no time in applying himself to the study of that difficult tongue, but before he made much progress the party had to come home, and through want of a proper teacher and probably more through his stronger inclination for activities of a nonacademic character, the study was dropped by him never to be taken up again.

But neither Ishikawa, who soon became a power in the denomination, nor his spiritual head gave up the idea of reviving the study of Sanskrit in Japan. So it was decided in September, 1884, to send two promising young priests to England to take up this important study, and the choice fell upon Nanjio and a friend and colleague of his, Kenju Kasahara. But this was kept a secret until the happy young men left Tōkyō eight months later, because it was feared that an early announcement of the fact might occasion unexpected obstacles in the way of carrying out the project. The secret was, indeed, so well guarded that when on the day of their departure for Yokohama to board their steamer they paid a farewell visit to the senior officiating priest at the Tōkyō headquarters, the latter on learning the object of their visit was dumbfounded with surprise and wounded pride, and without saying a word he abruptly left his guests and went to the chapel, where he probably tried to appease his agitated mind by repeating "Namu Amida-Butsu." How much success he may have had in this pious exercise his visitors did not stay to ascertain.

Two months after he received the order to go abroad, Nanjio obtained a fortnight's leave to visit his people at the Okunenji Temple in Echizen, where he was also joined by his real parents from Ogaki. That was the last time he spent with his father in this life, the latter dying a year before his return from England. Early in 1885, he was transferred to the headquarters in Tōkyō to facilitate his secret preparations for his journey and that of his fellow traveler. In this task he was very efficiently assisted by Mr. Taichi Tanabe, a well-known official in the Foreign Office, who not only supplied him with necessary official letters but gave him all sorts of useful hints and suggestions, even taking him to the Seiyoken Restaurant at Ueno to give him an object lesson in table manners.

Kasahara joined him at the end of May, by which time everything was ready for their departure. The French mail boat on which they had secured berths was to sail from Yokohama early on the morning of May 14, so they left Tōkyō on the previous afternoon. Archbishop Gennyō, who took almost

fatherly interest in Nanjio and who had come up to Tōkyō a short while before, kindly accompanied them to Yokohama, where he gave them a farewell dinner at the Oriental Hotel. After dinner, they boarded their ship and felt for the first time the pleasure of a complete release from the tension imposed upon them by the necessity of making preparations for their voyage without letting anybody into their confidence. That night, according to Nanjio, they talked for a long time on all sorts of topics, rehearsing their past experiences and discussing their future plans. It may also be taken for granted that no small contribution was made to their merriment by the little incident that happened when they paid their farewell visit to the head officiating priest of their denomination in Tōkyō.

Nanjio was in his twenty-seventh year, while Kasahara was three years younger. Nanjio was an accomplished Chinese scholar but knew no European tongue; Kasahara had studied French and could read a little, but could not speak. They were however, fortunate in having as their fellow passenger a young diplomat, Mr. Seitoku Okoshi, who was going to London to take up the post of chancellor at our legation there, and who, being a graduate of the French Department in the Foreign Language School of Tōkyō, spoke French fluently. During the seventy-five days that they spent on board they had to rely upon this gentlemen's assistance whenever they had anything to do with the ship's officers or men. The *Reminiscences* is replete with Chinese poems depicting in vivid local colors scenes and customs Nanjio observed at various ports the steamer touched. If these were rendered into English by a competent hand, they would certainly form a most pleasant and interesting reading. Nanjio was a poor sailor and loved his cabin best, though he confesses he rarely failed to do full justice to the excellent cuisine. Apart from writing poetry, his chief source of pleasure was reading records of travels, especially one by the late Oshu Nakai describing his trip to Europe.

Arrived at Marseilles on August 1, Nanjio and his friends traveled over land to London with a ten days' stay in Paris. He had heard of the Grand Opera and went there one night, but he did not stay there long because he could not enter into the spirit of the music. But he is lavish in the praise of beautiful views along the Seine which made a strong appeal to his poetic imagination.

At London where Nanjio and Kasahara arrived on August 11, they found rooms secured for them by kind friends in a quiet hotel near Kensington Park. There on the first night Nanjio made a blunder which nearly cost him his life. He was tired and went to bed early, after putting out the gas light with a puff. During the night he was awakened by noises outside his room, when the strong and suffocating smell of gas which filled the room made him at once realize the situation. The anxious people in the passage came in and stopped the gas, thus saving a life that meant so much for the advancement of Buddhist learning in Japan.

Through the kind offices of the late Mr. Magoichiro Yokoyama, representing Okura & Co. in London, Nanjio and his friend Kasahara were taken as paying guests in the family of Mrs. Robson, a widow whose husband had been professor of Latin in the University of London. There they had an excellent opportunity to learn English as they were treated as members of the family and came into constant touch with the landlady and her two grown-up girls. But like most their compatriots they were afraid of talking lest they should make mistakes. Their natural reserve was strengthened by the readiness of the young ladies to laugh at their strange manners. The upshot was, says Nanjio, that they learned very little English while they lodged with this family.

A few weeks after they moved to Mrs. Robson's house, they were locked out and had to walk about in the streets of London the whole night through their failure to let her know where they were going. Nanjio heard of Henry Irving playing Shakespeare's *Henry the Eighth*, and as he was fond of plays, he prevailed upon Kasahara, who did not care much for the theatre, to go and have a glance at how English actors compared with their confreres in Japan. Nanjio did not expect to understand the play nor to enjoy it properly, so he did not suppose they would stay long at the theatre. But to their surprise, from the very outset the play held them spellbound; they understood and enjoyed it thoroughly. They were so absorbed in it that when the curtain dropped for the last time they could hardly realize that they had sat to the end of the play. When they got home it was past midnight, and hard and repeatedly as they knocked, the door was not opened for them. So they wandered through the streets and tried to snatch naps on benches in the park until the long weary night at last retreated before the tardy light of welcome day. Safely back in their room, their trouble was not ended, for unable to offer any oral explanation to the landlady, they had to write out a bare statement of facts by constant reference to dictionaries.

In those days there existed in London an association of Japanese students which met occasionally for purposes of mutual instruction. At one of its meetings Nanjio spoke on the Buddhist doctrine of cause and effect and on the fundamental principles of the Shin sect, which seemed to have produced a deep impression upon those present. Among the principal members of the association, mention is made of the late Baron Hozumi (then known as Mr. Iriye), Dr. Joji Sakurai, Privy Councillor and President of the Imperial Academy of Japan, the late Dr. Baron K. Takagi, the late Mr. Baba Tatsui, a prominent figure in our political world some forty years ago, and the late Mr. Teruhiko Okamura, who made a great success at the bar.

Nanjio and his friend got allowances from the Eastern Hongwanji Temple, but the amount was moderate, and as neither of them had any other source of income, they had to pinch and economize. How hard up they sometimes were may be inferred from an incident narrated in the *Reminiscences*. Nanjio accidentally met the late Viscount Suyematsu, then a

junior member of the staff of our legation in London, and the acquaintance thus casually made soon ripened into a life long friendship, for they were men of congenial taste and habits. On one occasion Suyematsu gave Nanjio a light job which consisted in making a clean copy of some official document Suyematsu had drawn up. For this work Nanjio got an honorarium of a pound note, which gave him intense joy because he could now satisfy his long felt want of a Greco-English dictionary and a bath. Many years later when they met at a dinner in Tōkyō given to Nanjio by his friends and admirers in commemoration of the publication of a Sanskrit edition of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* which he had compiled, he recalled this incident and made a public recognition of the welcome help Suyematsu had given him at a time of need.

Through Suyematsu, Nanjio got acquainted with Marquis Tseng, the brilliant Chinese Minister at London, and the members of his staff. They used to meet now and then to try their skill at impromptu verse-making. With one of the Chinese secretaries, Mr. Yang Wenhuei, he formed a friendship which ended only with the latter's death. Yang, being an ardent believer in Buddhism, he had much in common with Nanjio. Yang shortly afterward returned to China, and retiring from the diplomatic service, lived at Nan-king where he was for many years engaged in the publication of Buddhist works. Nanjio kept in touch with him, and in response to his request, supplied him from Japan with copies of a large number of standard books on the Buddhist doctrine that had been lost in China.

Nanjio and Kasahara stayed in London for about two years during which time they devoted their whole time and energy to the study of English. We are not told anything about their instructors except Mr. Magoichiro Yokoyama about whom mention has already been made and from whom they got their first lessons in English. But English was not the main object of their study; it was only a medium of approach to Sanskrit. For some however, the prospect of securing instruction in that ancient language seemed remote, nobody to whom they had applied for help or advice for this purpose being able to render them any service.

IV.

Facilities for the study of Sanskrit were at last secured for Nanjio and Kasahara by the Japanese Minister at London, the late Mr. K. Uyeno, early in 1879. Through a Rev. Brookes, a friend of his, a letter was obtained from Dean Stanley of Westminster Abbey to Professor Max Müller of Oxford. The latter received them at his home very warmly, and by his advice they put themselves under the care of a young student of his, Mr. Arthur A. Macdonnell, who later became Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford.

Nanjio tells us it was a hard task for him to master the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar, and he pays a grateful tribute to the kindly patience with which his instructor helped him along in his difficult study. He spent the summer in the Channel Islands where he kept up his study of Sanskrit. If he found his first acquaintance with that language rather forbidding, he evidently surmounted the initial difficulty without much loss of time, for in less than a year we find him sufficiently advanced in his study to be able, with the help of a dictionary, to feel his way intelligently through a sutra in the original text.

In January 1880 Nanjio and Kasahara began a systematic study of Sanskrit sutras under Prof. Max Müller himself. In September Max Müller left for Berlin to attend a meeting of the Congress of Orientalists. Thither, by his advice, they soon followed him, and there they were fortunate to make acquaintance of a number of prominent scholars. On their way home, they made a stay of thirty days at Paris, during which time they succeeded by diligent application in making copies of a number of important Sanskrit sutras which by Professor Max Müller's suggestion they were able to take out from the Paris Library. Nanjio says he never had in his life so busy a time as during this stay in the French capital. He and his comrade had to work almost incessantly day and night. In 1881, Nanjio went up to London and volunteered to put in order the manuscripts of the catalogue of the Chinese Tripiṭaka kept in the library of the India Office, a task which had been attempted with but indifferent success by a certain English student of Chinese. While thus engaged he was surprised to receive a note from his friend Kasahara saying that he had been diagnosed by a physician as having an advanced case of consumption and that he was, therefore, going home. Kasahara was never in robust health, and his studious habits, combined with his arduous work in copying Buddhist scriptures in Paris and later in England, evidently hastened the progress of the disease. Such was his conscientious devotion to the cause of learning that even after the physician ordered him home he did not leave England until he had completed the task assigned him by Max Müller, which consisted in making a critical examination of the text of a Sanskrit work called *Dharmasaṃgraha* believed to have been written by Nāgārjuna. He came home in November and died two years later at the age of thirty-one, mourned and honored by all who knew him. Among them none grieved for his death more deeply than his master and friend Prof. Max Müller, who in a long letter printed in the *Times* paid a touching tribute to his unique character and personality. It goes without saying that Nanjio sorrowed very deeply for the loss of his life-long bosom friend. While Nanjio's bent of mind inclined toward history and literature, Kasahara was more interested in philosophy, being a keen student of Kant and Schopenhauer. His early death was, indeed, a great loss to the Buddhist world of Japan.

The work that Nanjio took upon himself of rearranging and editing an English catalogue of the contents of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, occupied him fully three years. It was issued by the Clarendon Press in April, 1883, under the title of the *Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka, the Sacred Canon of Buddhism in China and Japan*. He was presented with ten copies of the work besides an honorarium of a hundred-pound sterling, which as usual he at once invested in books. In the following month he was gratified to see the publication of the two sutras of *Muryōju-kyō* and *Amida-kyō* (*Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvāṭṭvyūha*) jointly translated by his master and himself. These were subsequently comprised in the *Sacred Books of the East*.

Nanjio's work in the field of Sanskrit research was now widely recognized in Europe, and he was planning an ambitious program of investigation when circumstances made it necessary for him to cut short his stay in England. A letter from his adopted father then living in Kyōto brought him sad news. His real father who had visited his adopted mother (who was seriously ill in that city) was seized with some sudden sickness to which he succumbed in a few hours. Moreover, his adopted mother's condition was very precarious, and so his speedy return to Japan was earnestly requested by his adopted father. Always dutiful to his parents, both real and adopted, this touching appeal left him no choice but to take the earliest opportunity to hurry homeward.

Prof. Max Müller and other friends of his, when they heard of this, heartily regretted it and tried hard to persuade him to give up his idea of going home. But their words made no effect upon his resolution which, as already mentioned, had been taken from a sense of filial duty. Shortly prior to his departure he was invested by the University of Oxford with the degree of Master of Arts in recognition of his scholarly services in connection with the publication of the catalogue of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. When he left Oxford Max Müller came with him as far as London where he took leave of his revered master in tears of sorrow and gratitude. In his *Reminiscences* he devotes several passages to his personal contact with Prof. and Mrs. Max Müller who both made a deep and lasting impression upon Nanjio and Kasahara. Both these men held them in deep and heartfelt veneration to the end of their lives.

Leaving London on March 28, 1884, Nanjio arrived at Yokohama on May 18, traveling by way of America.

V.

When Nanjio returned home May, 1884, he was surprised to find the process of transformation already in progress when he left eight years ago carried forward with wonderful success in all spheres of national life dur-

ing the short space of time he was away. But he was even more surprised to discover that his coming home had been awaited at the headquarters of his denomination with feelings of fear and misgiving. He made this discovery the day after his landing at Yokohama.

An important member of the staff of the Higashi Hongwanji Temple at Kyōto, who came up to Tōkyō specially for the purpose of welcoming him home, told him that the late Marquis Inouye, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, who took friendly interest in the affairs of that denomination, wanted to see him as soon as possible. So Nanjio accompanied his friend to call upon the powerful statesman at once at his official residence. The latter asked him whether he had in mind any new scheme of work at the headquarters of his sect. To this he replied that he had no idea whatever to try his hand at the administrative work of the sect, his ambition being to engage in the prosecution of the scholarly research he had begun in Europe. Thereupon the host turned to the emissary from Kyōto, and said, to the great amazement of Nanjio: "You have heard from Nanjio himself what his plan of work is, and so I don't think it necessary for me to take the matter up with him."

From this conversation it was plain to Nanjio that some influential people in Kyōto had been much worried by the apprehension that he might have some plan of radical reforms, which they probably knew were urgently needed but which they did not care to be imposed upon them by him. The expectation that he might take keen interest in the executive work at the headquarters was quite natural, because that was his chief concern prior to his departure for Europe. But Nanjio's chief interest was now in the prosecution of his Sanskrit study. It is also possible that his earlier experience in executive work was not quite congenial to his simple and straightforward character which abhorred all forms of intrigue and duplicity. And it is a notorious fact that even the government of religious communities is by no means free from trickery and dishonesty.

Whatever may have been the reason, the forty-odd years of Nanjio's arduous life after his return from England were devoted entirely to activities unconnected with executive affairs at the headquarters, except in an advisory capacity during his old age. He occupied a succession of prominent positions as professors and presidents of Buddhist seminaries and colleges in Tōkyō, Kyōto, and Nagoya. For some years after his return he served as lecturer on Sanskrit and Buddhism at the Imperial University of Tōkyō. He was one of the earliest recipients of the newly created doctorate of literature from the Minister of Education, and later he was appointed member of the Imperial Academy. He was thus highly honored for his scholarly attainments not only in Buddhist circles but in the country at large.

Besides his duties in the field of education, he found time for religious work on preaching trips in various parts of the country. He was an eloquent preacher, and wherever he went he always commanded a large and attentive

audience. In course of time he accumulated a large number of set sermons which he used to repeat with slight alterations, so that his assistants learned some of these compositions by heart. On one occasion he came to a meeting unexpectedly, and to the astonished amusement of the audience he solemnly repeated word by word a sermon that had just been preached by one of his assistants. After the meeting was over, one of the audience was asked as to what he thought of the funny incident. "Why," he said, "it is always satisfactory to have a story confirmed by the original inventor." Nanjio's valuable and indefatigable work as a preacher was as highly appreciated by the head of his sect as his work in the fields of research and education. At the time of his death, he occupied in his sect a position corresponding to that of a bishop in the Church of England without any administrative authority.

Since his return from England, he made two trips abroad. On the first trip (1887) he visited India where during about a month he went over the ground made sacred by Buddha's feet. On his way home he spent a few weeks in China visiting Tientai Shan and other places of interest in the history of Buddhism. At the great monastery at Tientai Shan he asked for a copy of the well-known *History of Tientai Shan*, but no priest seemed to know of such a work. But while being shown about one of the temples he noticed piles of wood blocks carelessly stowed away in a corner of a bell-tower exposed to wind and rain. You may easily imagine his surprise and joy when, taking down a few of those blocks, he discovered that they were the originals from which the missing work was printed.

The other visit abroad was to Siam, which country he visited in 1898 as a member of the numerous delegation selected by the different sects of Buddhism for receiving and taking home a relic of Buddha which the King of Siam graciously offered to the Buddhists of Japan. This was part of the relics that had just been excavated on the borders of Nepal and presented to his Siamese Majesty. This mission was a great success, being accorded a very warm reception by the royal family of Siam. On the return of the mission a special temple was erected at Nagoya for the safe custody of the holy relic. This is called the Nissenji (Japan-Siam Temple) and is taken care of by the different sects in turn.

It would take a full volume to give a detailed account of Nanjio's many-sided activities as a scholar and religious worker. So for the present I must content myself with the brief outline sketch which I have so far jotted down. But no sketch of his life, however brief, can be suffered to appear in print without some attempt at summarizing the valuable contributions he made to the world's knowledge of Buddha's teaching. Fortunately, the difficult task in this respect has been kindly lifted off my shoulder by Dr. J. Takakusu, who has supplied me with a statement which I append here in his own words.

VI.

Literary Achievements of the Late Dr. Nanjio

by J. Takakusu

The late Dr. Bunyiu Nanjio was a foremost authority on Sanskrit. His worldwide fame as a great scholar was established as early as the latter part of the 1800s, when Sanskrit literature began to be studied by and influence the literary world of Europe. All the foremost Sanskrit scholars, who appeared in those days, passed away one after another, until after the Great War only two men survived, one of whom being Dr. Emil Sénart, President of the French Academy and publisher of Sanskrit *Mahāvastu*, and the other Dr. Nanjio. The savants were looked up to as an illustrious and peerless pair in the field of Sanskrit research. The lamented death of one of them leaves a void which is hard to fill.

The name of Dr. Nanjio is inseparably associated with the catalogue of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. Whenever we speak of the Tripiṭaka, we recall the name of Dr. Nanjio, and the mention of Dr. Nanjio brings up the association of the Tripiṭaka. It was Dr. Nanjio, who compiled and annotated the catalogue of the Chinese commentary on the Tripiṭaka and published it through the University Press of Oxford. It was in recognition of the great value of the work thus completed by him that the University of Oxford conferred upon him the degree of M.A., and it was this work that made him famous throughout the world. It is safe to say that no Orientalist is without this invaluable book in his library.

While in Oxford Dr. Nanjio also edited in collaboration with his honored teacher Prof. Max Müller the *Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvataṣṭyaṣṭya, Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra*, etc., all of which were received with admiration by Western scholars of Oriental literature, religion, and philosophy.

For some years after his return to Japan from Oxford, Dr. Nanjio was chiefly engaged in the propagation of Buddhism, and his name was not heard in the field of Sanskrit research. It was, therefore, with something of agreeable surprise that the whole world of Buddhism hailed the publication by the Russian Academy of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, which he edited in collaboration with the great Dutch scholar, Dr. H. Kern. This work of his was especially appreciated, because Dr. Kern had declared that the publication of the sutra would have been impossible without Dr. Nanjio's cooperation.

All these books are indispensable to students of Sanskrit literature and Buddhism. Such students and the followers of the sects founded on the

teachings of Buddha embodied in these works owe to Dr. Nanjio a heavy debt of gratitude for the great service he has rendered them. It appears that he undertook and completed translations of all the other sutras of this group but these have not yet been published.

Dr. Nanjio's last contribution to the study of Sanskrit literature was the publication by the Otani University of Kyōto of *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, which he had copied while he was studying at Oxford. A translation of the sutra was subsequently published by the same university. This translation was completed by him with the assistance of Mr. Hotoku Idzumi, one of his best pupils.

There is another Sanskrit sutra which Dr. Nanjio had copied and put in order. This is *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra*, and is in course of publication under the hands of Mr. Idzumi. It is a discredit to the reputation of Japan that during nearly half a century since Dr. Nanjio returned home from Oxford, carrying with him a great pile of Sanskrit sutras which he had copied, the publication of all these sutras has not as yet been completed. This fact, however, tells in a convincing way how stupendous was the work done by Dr. Nanjio at Oxford. I well remember how often Dr. Max Müller held up Dr. Nanjio's life as an example of assiduity and painstaking work for us Japanese students to follow. I also remember how Mrs. Müller used to refer to Dr. Nanjio in high terms as a representative Japanese gentleman.

Dr. Nanjio was possessed of a wonderful memory. He remembered all the details of the experiences he had during his long life. His diaries were lost by the great earthquake fire of 1923, but recalling his life and career he recently wrote a book of reminiscences and had it published under the title of *Kwaikyū Roku*. This book has now become the last of his literary works.

NOTES

1. This article was originally published as five separate articles in *Pacific World* IV, no. 2 (February 1928): pp. 56–60; *Pacific World* IV, no. 3 (March 1928): pp. 103–106; *Pacific World* IV, no. 4 (April 1928): pp. 153–157; *Pacific World* IV, no. 5 (May 1928): pp. 198–200; and *Pacific World* IV, no. 6 (June 1928): pp. 247–250.
2. According to the generally accepted system of transliteration, his name should be written without *i*'s thus: Bunyu Nanjo. But he preferred to retain the *i*'s, because that was the way his name appeared on the English visiting card prepared for him in London by his friend the late Mr. Magoichiro Yokoyama, from whom he got his first lessons in English.

Reflections on Zen Buddhism

by Nyogen Senzaki

Editor's note: Nyogen Senzaki was one of the disciples of the famed Zen teacher Sōen Shaku, whose participation in the World Parliament of Religions of 1893 was instrumental in introducing Zen to the West. Shaku made another trip to the United States in 1905. At that time he was accompanied by Senzaki, who stayed on in the United States, and who eventually began teaching in 1922, establishing a Zen center in San Francisco. Despite his propagation of Zen in the United States, Senzaki has generally been obscured by another, much more famous of Shaku's disciples, D.T. Suzuki. The following articles originally appeared in *Pacific World* I, no. 2 (September 1925): pp. 40–42, 56; *Pacific World* II, no. 2 (March 1926): pp. 41, 48; and *Pacific World* II, no. 6 (May 1926): pp. 57, 71.

ZEN BUDDHISM

THERE IS A SAYING: The one who knows much says little, and one who knows little says a great deal. This proverb also may apply to Zen. If you should ask any Japanese if he knows the term “Zen,” and he answers “yes,” you can judge him to be a learned man, and you will see that he is of higher culture than the ordinary Japanese. If you ask, however, what is Zen, you will never get, from anyone, an answer that will give you a clear understanding; for many Japanese think about Zen, and even like it very much, but few will talk about it.

If you meet anyone who chatters about Zen too much, you can be assured that he has not the Zen spirit as yet. If you ask others, a wise one might tell you to go to a Zen master—that is, a Zen teacher. Then you pay a visit to a Zen monastery, and meet a Zen master. “What is Zen?” you may ask him. He may shut his door in your face, or he may slap your cheek with his strong hand. There comes a spark of Zen. Zen spirit cannot be explained, it must be experienced.

The word “Zen” is a Japanized Sanskrit. It should be pronounced *dhyāna* in its original. When Buddhism entered China, the translators adopted two Chinese characters to stand for the word *dhyāna*. The Chinese never had the phonetic letters until very recently, so they applied two characters like this 禪那 to represent *dhyāna*. These characters were pronounced “zen-na”

at that time, though modern Mandarin pronounces them “shan-nai.” Of course, they simply copied the nearest pronunciation to Sanskrit, and they used several synonyms for *dhyāna* besides these two characters.

In these two characters, the last one is auxiliary, but the first one has some very interesting meanings. When the ancient Chinese worshipped the heavens, they used to sweep the ground very carefully, then they stood on this swept ground and paid homage to the heavens. This ceremony was called Zen and written in this first character. Another meaning of this character is “to inherit.” When a father gave the family treasures to his son, or when the Emperor abdicated his throne in favor of the crown prince, this was also called Zen, and was written as this character. Another meaning of this character is “quietness,” which coincidentally comes very near the true meaning of *dhyāna* in Sanskrit. In Sanskrit, *dhyāna* means quietness, or meditation, or contemplation, and Chinese synonyms for *dhyāna* are translated accordingly. When Zen Buddhism flourished in China, this one character Zen became the signification of that teaching, and entered Japan with its simple and new name.

Zen Buddhism first entered China from India in the Leang dynasty, which began in 502 of the Christian Era and flourished in that land for nearly one thousand years. In these one thousand years were included the Tang dynasty and Sung dynasty—the golden age of Chinese literature. Many Japanese Buddhists went to China in that time, learned Zen, and then returned to the Mikado’s land, that is, Japan.

Now in this modern age, in India, Zen spirit is sparsely found, and in China, it has almost vanished. It seems to me Zen has remained in Burma and Siam in a different form. True Zen masters, however, are living in Japan at the present, and they are the few who carry the lamp of wisdom which was inherited directly from the Buddha Śākyamuni, and handed down from master to master. It is the mission of the Japanese Buddhists to introduce this thought to the Western world, and have the term “Zen,” which is Japanized Sanskrit, live up to its true meaning.

Buddha Śākyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, was born in India as a crown prince, but gave up his bright future for the spiritual emancipation to free himself from all worldly delusions and to enlighten his fellow beings on this earth. He was called Siddhārtha Gautama. He entered the monkhood when he was twenty-nine years old, and studied many teachings of that time, seeking the true emancipation. He journeyed from place to place for six years, and at the end of that time, he found himself tired and weakened from his wanderings and many fastings. Then, one day, he took a bath in the river Nairanjana, a branch of the great Ganges. Owing to his weakness, he could not regain the bank of the river. A milk maid, Nandabara, happened there, and after helping him out, she gave him some rice milk. On gaining strength, he determined to attain Buddhahood through *dhyāna*—that is, meditation.

He then crossed the river and went to Gaya, which is now called Bodhgayā. There he sat under the Pippala Tree and meditated seven weeks. He entered into a spiritual condition called *samādhi* until one dawn, and when he saw a star blaze forth in the eastern sky, he, at that moment, acquired the realization. He cried out: "I see now all beings in this world have perfect wisdom and complete virtue, but they simply do not know it. I must teach them the truth." That was five hundred thirty years before the Christian Era, or 2455 years ago. All Japanese Buddhists believe this date, and J. F. Fleet almost believes the same.

Buddha Śākyamuni preached in India until he was eighty years old, and then passed from this world. His teachings were recorded in many thousands of scriptures. Zen Buddhism endeavors to actualize what Buddha Śākyamuni acquired through his meditation. Buddha said, "If you are brave enough to break down your delusions, you will be a buddha at this moment. If you are weak-minded and walk back and forth, you will never get enlightened."

In Buddhism, a truth-seeker is called a bodhisattva, meaning a person who has a great big heart and seeks his own enlightenment to enlighten others. Buddhism is not a teaching revealed from heaven. It is the teaching of our own living world. It is the result of our own intellectual work. Buddha was not a son of a Supreme being. He was merely a human, a truth-seeker, a bodhisattva. We all should be bodhisattvas, and we will be buddhas in the future, not the future of a hereafter, but in these actual living days.

Generally speaking, I am a Buddhist, but I do not belong to any sect. As a citizen of the world, I have a right to study the thought of any teaching and discuss any problem of human experience freely, in the comparison of modern science and philosophy.

One writer said, "Can any faith not based on the Christian Bible contain anything good? Once upon a time, the question would have been answered with a sharp and emphatic negative. Such times have passed away." This is the age of free thinking. We should enjoy our privilege as thinkers in the twentieth century.

Zen is a sort of monism, and a very practical one. People think that Buddhism is a pantheism. Yes, you can trace some pantheistical color in many Buddhist scriptures, as well as some polytheistic features here and there. But, its significance should rather be called materialistic pantheism or plainly atheism. Buddhism is a religion of thought, not feeling; therefore, the more you trace back into its essence, the more you will experience a cold, intellectual analysis of thought. A study of Buddhism will be "an ambassador of good will and understanding between East and West—between the old world of thought and new world of action," and then, "may help to a revival of that true spirit of charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and color." The true meaning of worldly brother-

hood will be found right there. Buddhism is the backbone of the Oriental culture, and Zen is the spirit of Buddhism.

Dr. David Starr Jordan once walked in a garden with a little girl, to whom he told James Whitcomb Riley's story of the "goblins that get you, if you don't watch out," an uncanny freak of imagination supposed to be especially attractive to the children. The little girl said to him, "But, there isn't any such thing as a goblin, and there isn't ever going to be such a thing." She was such a practical little girl. Dr. Jordan said to her, "Maybe there isn't any such a thing as anything." Then she said to him, as she looked about the garden for unquestionable reality, "Yes, there is such a thing as a squash." Dr. Jordan mentioned this anecdote in his book and said, "In this conclusion of the little girl, the reality of the objective world, the integrity of science, the sanity of man are alike bound up. The distinction between objective and subjective, between reality of perception and illusion of nerve disorder, between fact and dream, between presence and memory, is fundamental in human psychology—is essential in human conduct."

Now, Zen realization transcends all distinctions and sees them all as one. There is no such thing as a squash separate from the whole universe. You just call it a squash. You may call it an orange; why not? I wave my hand. This is really not my hand. I grasp my hand. I am grasping the whole universe, and now I am opening my hand. There goes out the whole universe. I am not trying to make the matter strange; I am only trying to show you absoluteness, or oneness, or emptiness, according to the Prajñā school of Buddhism. Emmanuel Kant called it "noumenon." They say in German, "das Ding an sich," that is, "the thing in itself." In Kantian philosophy, noumenon is used to denote an object, thought, which is not also an object of intuition or perception, actual or possible. According to Kant, knowledge is possible only as the object of perception. It is the result of the cooperative function of perception and conception. Perception without conception is blind. Conception without perception is empty. Now, noumenon is an object of conception without collaboration of perception. Such a noumenon would be, for instance, a substantial soul as a thing itself, or matter as a thing itself. In antithesis to noumenon stands phenomenon. That little girl about whom Dr. Jordan was speaking accepted phenomenon as a squash. But, to find out what a squash really is will take a thinker's hard work. Zen will teach you how you can realize this noumenon, and how you can live up to it—one for all, and all for one.

Jalal-ud-din Rumi was a Persian philosopher and poet who lived in the early part of the thirteenth century. He was a thinker of Persian Sufi. To him, the ego, the world, and the Divine were one. He considered God as absorbing universe. Vedānta is pantheistic with occasional theistic phraseology, but Sufi has more poetical color to it. Sufis are so strongly devoted to the Beloved that they look for the Divinity everywhere, and see

Divinity everywhere. I can see that Sufis are walking to the Zen road. The intellectual forms given to the most Sufi doctrines in Persia are from foreign sources, among which must be mentioned Buddhism and Neo-Platonism. "An experience in feeling God" or "A way to the One" is another gate to enter *samādhi*, that is, Zen realization.

I am very much interested in the German mystics—like Johannes Eckhardt—Meister Eckhardt they call him. He said, "The eye with which I see God, is the eye with which God sees me." In Buddhism, they say "I come to Buddha, and Buddha comes to me. Buddha, my mind, and all fellow beings are one." Eckhardt's pupil, Johann Tauler, preached to some Zen thought in his Christian pantheism, if I may call it by this name. He was in the Dominican Order, in the first part of the fourteenth century. "Apart from God, there is no real thing," were his words. That is exactly the idea of Eckhardt, yet, you can enter Zen through any gate—east, west, south, or north, only do not cling to a seat of any doctrine, just walk freely and enjoy the emancipation. Then you will know that all teachings in the world are your own inner treasures, and all thoughts of the world are the running currents in your inner ocean.

Master Sengai, a Japanese Zen teacher, once sang:

*"Hotoke towa ikanaru mono to hito towaba,
Kaze ni kaketaru aoyagi no ito."*

Translated is:

*"What is Buddha? You may ask.
Look at the weeping-willow there!
See, the gesture of thready limbs,
playing with the breezes sweet!"*

Here is the whole thing, nothing more, and nothing less. This is the true intellectual oneness as well as the harmony of science and philosophy, of poetry and religion. This is a viewpoint of universal brotherhood according to Zen Buddhism. Buddha said: "I see now, all beings have perfect wisdom and complete virtue. They do not know it. I must show them the truth." Abdal Baha said: "O people of the world, you are the fruits of one tree, and leaves of one branch." Our friends of Bahaism express the words in Esperanto. Let us use these words as a formula for modern Zen Buddhism.

"Ho popolo de la mondo, vi estas ciuj la fruktoj de unu arbo kaj la folioj de unu branĉo."

BODHI-DHARMA

Bodhi-Dharma was the twenty-eighth successor of Buddha Śākyamuni. He was the first patriarch to bring Zen teachings into China. We do not know how old he was when he went to China, but history gives us the date of his arrival there. It was in the Leang dynasty, in the year 520 of the Christian Era. He must have been quite old at the time, for he had already done a great deal of spiritual work in India.

After he received his teacher's mantle and became the twenty-eighth patriarch, he studied forty years more. Then he started to preach in the southern part of India. At that time there were six schools of Buddhist philosophy, each believing its doctrine to be the best. Bodhi-Dharma thought none of these perfect as the Buddha's teaching, so he challenged them and won them over to his teachings after many debates. Since then, throughout the entirety of India, he has been recognized as the twenty-eighth successor of the Buddha.

After preaching in India, he started for China. It took him three years to reach there from India—drifting on the sea and wandering in the strange lands. References in history, however, show that the Chinese Buddhists had heard of him before he came to China, as some of his early works had been translated into the Chinese.

He entered the capital of China, and there met the Emperor Wu Ti. After entertaining him cordially, the Emperor said to him, "I have established many churches; I have educated many priests and priestesses; I have translated and published many sutras; now, what merit shall I receive for all of this?" Bodhi-Dharma answered disdainfully, "No merit." Then the Emperor asked him, "What is the most profound teaching of all sages?" Dharma said, "In all your spacious outlook, there is no such thing as a sage existing." The Emperor was a little excited and said, "Then, who are you?" Dharma said quietly, "I know not."

This is one of the famous dialogues in Zen. Let us go over it again, and have a little discussion about it. The Emperor Wu Ti was, perhaps, expecting to receive a promise from this living buddha that he would go to paradise after his death. As the Bible says, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Poor Emperor—he failed to understand Bodhi-Dharma, and lost the key to paradise, if any such place exists. Dharma said, "No merit." This is the best merit for the Emperor, and for anyone else.

Thomas Carlyle wrote two very interesting terms for his "Sartor Resartus." They are "Ever-lasting Yes" and "Ever-lasting No." In Buddhism, these two terms are not like two parallel lines which will never meet, but are like two lines which make an angle. The Emperor was clinging to "Ever-lasting Yes," so he thought Dharma declared "Ever-lasting No." If the Emperor

could have realized that this angle is merely an illusion, he would not have asked about "the most profound teaching of all sages."

"No merit"—such a priceless treasure! Dharma was showing his pocket, frankly and openly, turned inside out, and the Emperor thought there was something hidden somewhere. Such a stubborn, ignorant man! Dharma was, however, a nice, old gentleman, and said, "In all your spacious outlook, there is no such thing as a sage existing."

Read Cornwall's poem:

*"The sea! the sea! the open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the ever free!
Without a mark, without a bound
It runs the earth's wide regions round."*

At this moment, you can meet Bodhi-Dharma, face to face. Wu Ti, the Emperor, still failed to open his eyes, and asked again, "Who are you?" "I know not," was Dharma's ultimatum. He now saw that his teaching was beyond the understanding of the Emperor. The elephant can hardly keep company with rabbits.

Dharma left the palace and quit the capital the next day. He then went north, crossing the great river, Yang-Tsu-Chiang, and passing through the Wei states, he climbed the Sung Mountain and took up his residence in a little temple called Shao-Lin-Szu. Those who wished to realize the cream of Buddhism went to his place there and studied Zen. He stayed there nine years, devoting himself to mediation many hours every day. Few people understood him. The rest called him "a blue-eyed monk who loves to sit, facing the wall."

He taught his disciples with brief but strong words. He always said, "Outside of the sutras, outside of all teachings, there is another way. I direct your mind straightforward, and you see your own inner self." At Shao-Lin-Szu, he found and ordained his successor, and then passed away. The lamp of wisdom was thus handed one to another, yet, the light of knowledge, the true knowledge of emancipation, will burn on forever, and illuminate the world beautifully.

When I came to this country, I was told that America had no philosophy, and that she is only reflecting the speculations of other lands. This was not wholly true. America had philosophers, original thinkers who, though their influence may not have reached abroad, were makers of history at home. Of course, I enjoyed reading many free thinkers' books, from Thomas Paine to Robert Ingersoll. I admired very much the native philosophy of Emerson's Transcendentalism. When I saw that Emerson casually puts Jesus and Socrates on the same level, and then goes on to quote Coleridge and Spinoza, Plato and Zoroaster, and ends with the assertion, "All goes back to the East," I

smiled and said to myself: "There is no East, when you really think, for the West is East, and the East is West."

"I found, however, that what I had been told about "the speculations of other lands" bothered me a great deal until I read William James. In the other works, there was always a little of the medieval—even in Emerson. But I felt that James had washed it all away. Some free thinkers had a lot of deistic notions which did not agree with my Zen taste. Then, at last, I found light in James' Pragmatism.

Pragmatism has emerged triumphantly as the development of national thought. It is a typical American philosophy. The name Pragmatism was first used by Charles Peirce in 1878, and some twenty years after, William James wrote his famous *Pragmatism*. It is a method, not a system. Zen can be called a method, too, in comparison with many other Buddhist sects. The method of Pragmatism consists in the pursuit of knowledge, in close relationship with human existence and its development. Nothing is to be reckoned true that cannot be justified from this point of view. The true thus becomes a portion of the good. The true is whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief.

Suppose you are to ask what is the Holy Path, and Zen answers you "Outside of your room." Naturally you will then say, "I do not mean the street. I mean the great road of God and man." Then Zen will say, "You can take a street-car and then take the ferryboat, if you like." If one tries to reach the Holy Path apart from his actual life, he is running away from Zen. Zen belongs neither to fairy land nor to dream land. In this respect, Zen is in common with Pragmatism.

Pragmatism is the philosophy of practicality, the gospel of energy, whose prime criterion is success. It has been called a business philosophy which demands results—a bread and butter view of life which aims at consequence. In short, Pragmatism furnishes a sort of speculative house-cleaning which says that a philosophic theory must have cash value, and be true if it works—and false if it fails. As far as speaking like this, I feel that I am describing Zen at the expense of Pragmatism, begging pardon of Professor James.

Bodhi-Dharma's influence has spread over all of Japan; not only by Zen thought, but in somewhat of a playful manner, it has seasoned Japanese life. It is so popular that no God-like sense comes with the mention of the name Dharma. Children draw his picture on their kites. Geisha-girls use his statue as a lucky God—rather a toy. Tobacco stores use his picture as a trademark; vaudeville performers use his name as the subject of their jokes; popular songs are written about him, now and then. When Japanese children make a snow-man, they call him snow-Dharma. Many novelty manufacturers use him as a design. There is no such word as "blasphemy" as far as Dharma is concerned. The most popular toy of Dharma is called

“Okiagari-koboshi,” meaning “ever-getting-up monklet.” It will never fall down, but always rebound to an upright position.

FISH BALLOONS

Let us imagine that we are in Tokyo, Japan, on the fifth of May—the day of the Boy’s Festival there. We see many thousands of balloons floating above the houses of the city. You may wonder what they are, and wish to know the meaning of this strange custom.

According to a Chinese legend, all fish try to go up against the rapid stream of great rivers, just as you have often read of the salmon that go up the Columbia River. Far away on the upper stream, there is a cascade that the fish must leap over. If any fish swims to the cascade and leaps over the waterfall, each of its scales radiates golden light, and the fish transforms itself into a dragon, and jumps up on the clouds, and goes to heaven. Many thousands of fish try to reach the goal, but few succeed in reaching there. They have very few heroes among them.

This story suggests the struggle of life which we, human beings, are experiencing. Japanese parents wish their children, especially their boys, to be strong and brave, and to be always ahead in the battlefield of life. Therefore, on this day, they tie a fish balloon on the top of a bamboo rod, and set it up on the roof. Besides, they display images of heroes both in history and in legends, in their homes. Their aim in life is not only to get ahead among the islanders, but to be one of the leaders among the nations of the world.

A Chinese Zen-poet, Kanzan, wrote a poem which expresses an ideal of man—in the viewpoint of Buddhism in general. The translation reads as follows:

Be a man, a real man. Do everything neatly and accurately. Hold your mind like a great iron wall against all evil thoughts. Just one road for you—that is the road of *bodhi*. Walk ahead on this road without hesitation. Do not take the wrong road. If you do, you will suffer. Do not yearn to become Buddha. Meet your own true self.

There is nothing new in describing a manly man, but we have to take notice of two points. First: we do not recognize sin and punishment in the way the Western religions do. No God or gods will punish us for our wrongdoings. We believe in the law of cause and effect. Whatever we sow, we have to reap by ourselves. The ethical aspect of Buddhism is based on clear understanding, not on make-believe. When we find our true self, we realize our mission in life, yet, if we take a wrong road, we must go back to

the right one, paying in time and toil to regain the lost part. This striving may be called punishment by some, but for us, it is a part of *bodhi* which means "wisdom" or "the true path of man."

For instance, we start for Golden Gate Park, and we wander on the way, and go to Fillmore Street Park. To stay in Fillmore Street Park thinking and praying for Golden Gate Park to come to us will avail us nothing. We must enter Golden Gate Park by ourselves. The moment you realize that Fillmore Street Park is not Golden Gate Park, you are in the right road, and your every step, every breath, and even every drop of your sweat, is for Golden Gate Park, and not for Fillmore Street Park anymore.

A Buddhist is also subject to the law of causation or the law of cause and effect of this world, just the same as anyone else, but for him, every struggle, every trouble, and even every pain of his life is for the development of his own buddhahood. Step by step, he is coming nearer to the true emancipation, nay, he is paying his tributes to the *prajñā-pāramitā* which is the work of true wisdom.

Second: we are Buddhists, but we do not worship Buddha. Buddha was a teacher. We owe him a great deal for his noble thought, but we cannot depend on him for our own emancipation. One cannot open the inner eye merely by praying "Buddha" or calling Buddha's name. You must get realization through your own striving. Buddha does not save you. You must save yourselves.

Zen students always say, "Do not follow Tathāgata, just stand up yourself, if you are a real man." Zen Buddhism is a very rational, non-sentimental, purely intellectual religion. No poetical dreams are allowed in Zen Buddhism. The only way to enter Zen is to catch alive your own true self, and stay alive with it.

The following story will make my meaning clear: Gutei was a Chinese Zen master in the olden time. When anyone asked him, "What is truth?" he always raised his finger. That was his way of preaching. Even on his deathbed, he raised up his finger, and said, "I got this Dharma from my teacher, and practiced it in my whole life." He then shut his eyes and passed away.

He used to have a boy as his attendant. This boy was always imitating what his master did. When anyone asked him a question, he would raise up his finger just like his master did.

The master called the boy to him and said, "The people say you are mocking my preaching. Is it true?" The boy had formed the habit of raising up his finger to any question, and instantly he raised his finger in front of the great master. The master caught him in that moment, and with a sharp knife, he cut off the rascal's finger.

The boy cried painfully. Then the master asked the boy, "What is truth?" and the force of habit was so strong that the boy tried to raise up his finger

again, and on discovering it was gone, and that there is nothing to indicate with, the boy got enlightened.

He all at once discovered that truth does not need a finger as a pointer, that truth is always present. He became a great fish, he leaped the cascade, he ascended the clouds, and the glory of the dragon was his. He became a man, real man, just because he did not follow the Buddha or any master or masters, but he realized his own true self.

Editorial Note: Sign, Symbol, and Body in Tantra
Proceedings from the Spring, 2002 Conference of the
Society for Tantric Studies, sponsored by the
International Center for Semiotic and Cognitive Studies,
University of San Marino

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF JUNE, 2002, members of the Society for Tantric Studies (STS) convened at the International Center for Semiotic and Cognitive Studies of the University of San Marino (Centro Internazionale di Studi Semiotici e Cognitivi, Dipartimento della Comunicazione, Università degli Studi, Repubblica di San Marino). The meeting of the Society for Tantric Studies formed one part of a larger conference organized by the International Center that brought together a number of specialists in semiotics who were interested in esoteric traditions. The conference was entitled "Segni, simboli e corpi nelle tradizioni mistiche dell'Oriente e dell'Occidente," and was organized by Fabio Rambelli and Richard K. Payne. The following essays have been selected from the papers presented by members of the Society for Tantric Studies. The authors have all revised their papers for inclusion in this issue of *Pacific World*.

The organizers would like to thank the International Center for Semiotic and Cognitive Studies for its generous sponsorship of the conference. In particular, Professor Patrizia Violi was instrumental in assisting with the conference organization. We would also like to thank the staff of the Center for assisting with the daily logistics of the conference. They made possible a very smooth-running conference in a location whose beauty and charm only added to the pleasure of sharing our work with our colleagues.

Richard K. Payne

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Child Guardian Spirits (*Gohō Dōji*) in the Medieval Japanese Imaginaire

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THE RISE OF THE CULT OF *gohō dōji*, guardian or servant spirits in the form of boys, was a particular medieval Japanese phenomenon vividly captured in both narrative accounts and visual representations.² In illustrated scrolls (*emaki*) of this period, we often see strange-looking boys attacking malevolent spirits, acting as mediums in possession and exorcism rites, or appearing as attendants and saviors of monks or other practitioners of Buddhism. Frequently they served as attendant spirits of esoteric deities, such as Acalanātha (Fudō Myōō), Sarasvatī (Benzaiten), and Vaiśravaṇa (Bishamonten). More generally, these child guardian spirits were personally attached to priests and hermits who had acquired power and holiness through their practice of austerities.

Rather than uncovering the origin or development of the cult of itself, this paper will examine the discourse and the symbol of *gohō dōji*.³ The discourse on *gohō dōji* extended beyond esoteric Buddhist texts to the larger Buddhist literature, such as *Dainihonkoku hokekyōgenki*, *Kokonchomonjū*, and *Konjaku monogatari*, and further on to the broader Japanese literature, such as *Genji monogatari*, *Heike monogatari*, and *Uji shūi monogatari*. Moreover, *gohō dōji* became a symbol that permeated other religious traditions beyond the Tendai and Shingon circles, unifying or organizing the magical beliefs of the medieval Japanese regarding guardian deities or servant spirits. For example, in Onmyōdō (“the way of yin and yang,” that is, Daoism), servant spirits such as *shiki gami* (ritual deities) or *shiki ōji* (ritual princes) came to be identified with *gohō dōji* during the medieval period. In Shugendō, we also find guardian *dōji*, or *ōji*, attending to the needs of *shugenja*, or *yamabushi* (practitioners of Shugendō), and protecting them. Similarly in folk religion, the guardian deity of the household was a child, the *zashiki warashi* (parlor child), who could bring fortune or misfortune to the house in which he or she resided.

Before turning to such discourse, I want to briefly examine how the symbol of *gohō dōji* was created in the medieval Japanese imaginaire. It is a double symbol that drew both from the symbol of the Buddhist protective or guardian deities (*gohō*) and also from the symbol of the child (*dōji*)—as represented by the class of child deities in Japanese religion and as illustrated by the status of the child in medieval Japanese society at large.

GUARDIAN DEITIES

Gohō dōji belonged to the larger family of guardian deities (*gohō zenshin*). These deities were turbulent or fierce deities, who were often local deities or demonic beings such as *yakṣa-s*, *rākṣasa-s*, or *nāga-s*, and were initially opposed to Buddhism but after their conversion became protectors of the dharma. Such deities or beings possessed the ambivalent character of Śaiva and Buddhist tantric deities: the more terrible and dangerous they were, the more powerful were the protection and benefits given to their worshippers. It was the dangerous power of these local deities that was harnessed to protect against and to destroy obstacles, both inner and outer. In addition to protecting the buddhadharma against its enemies and delivering punishments, they also rewarded believers and provided worldly benefits (*genze riyaku*), often becoming deities of happiness and prosperity (*fukujin*).

In general, the iconography of these guardian deities depicted the characteristic quality of the group, which was fierce, grotesque, and wrathful. *Gohō dōji* often appeared as strange-looking boys, otherworldly, and even as demonic spirits, as will be discussed later. They were characterized by ambivalent sacredness, possessing both positivity and negativity; whereas they were dangerous and extremely violent in punishing transgressors of the dharma, they were very loyal and zealous in serving followers of the dharma, attending to their every need, however minute.

SYMBOL OF THE CHILD

In medieval Japan, it was said that until the age of seven, one did not fully belong to the world of humans. It was not until boys reached fifteen and girls thirteen years of age that they became adults, after going through rites of passage. Thus up to that time they did not yet belong to the human world, but rather were believed to be close to the gods and the demons. In fact, the original meaning the Chinese character *dō* (Ch. *tong*) of *dōji* was "slave," which was tattooed on the forehead of one who was not a complete person or one who had not been initiated. The character signified those who did not belong to the human order, in other words those who were in the world, but not of it. Therefore such an existence made them effective intermediaries and messengers between the visible and the invisible worlds.⁴

Since they had no social status and were not attached to land, children were given freedom of movement. Their mobility and fluidity are attributed, first, to their lack of any social or religious ties, or what Amino Yoshihiko referred to as *muen* (estrangement, lack of ties to secular society), and second, to a sense of "immediacy" since they could be present at a moment's

notice.⁵ Since children were not of the world or of society, they were placed or displaced into the margins or boundaries of the Buddhist and social world. This capacity for traversing borders as boundary beings led to a number of protective threshold deities manifesting in the form of children in Japanese religion. For example, the protective deities of the house or the boundary that manifested in the form of a child included the *zashiki warashi* (the child of the parlor, who is about five or six years old), the *kamadogami* (hearth god, who is said to be an ugly child from the Dragon Palace), and *dōsojin* (god of crossroads, who takes the form of a child at times).⁶

However, the freedom and mobility of children were balanced or offset by their dependency. Accordingly, child gods were often lesser gods under the control of a master god, or servants or followers of older gods, or attendants to eminent monks.⁷ Tanaka Takako is of the opinion that the origin of *gohō*, referring to child *kami*, belonged in a system of gods based on family relations, that is, *kenzokujin* (family / dependent deities).⁸ Furthermore, Tanaka states that these child *kami* served their parents, performed odd jobs, and were the intermediaries between gods and human beings.⁹ *Gohō dōji*, as protectors of the dharma, belonged to the extended family of buddhas, *kami*, monks, practitioners of Buddhist rites, and servants of Buddhist halls, and were on call for all kinds of service. It was owing to their status as children that they could be summoned by “parent deities,” monks, and practitioners in general. Their position was in sharp contrast to other guardians of the dharma, such as the arhats (disciples of the Buddha Śākyamuni who attained awakening).¹⁰ These arhats also served as guides or protectors of practitioners of Buddhism, but they appeared at will, and were not to be summoned like servants, as in the case of the *gohō dōji*. Thus, the form that this particular class of guardian spirits adopted, that of children, or more specifically that of boys, illustrated their dependent, servile, and marginal status in the Buddhist family. Such views of children reflected the attitude toward children in medieval Japanese society at large. Servant spirits taking the form of children were something to which people could easily relate. Their immediacy, accessibility, and willingness to serve made them ideal servants.

During the medieval period, the symbol of the child, or divine child, was particularly important. Many buddhas and bodhisattvas manifested in child form during this time, when belief in the final age of the dharma (*mappō*) was popular. Buddhas and bodhisattvas were supposed to manifest in the form most appropriate to save sentient beings. For example, Kannon (Avalokiteśvara) and Monju (Mañjuśrī) both appeared as children or youths and in such form became very popular among outcasts, women, prostitutes, and homosexuals. This phenomenon was also in line with the Buddhist notion of *upāya*, or skillful means (*hōben*), which allowed the use of any means necessary or appropriate to help sentient beings obtain en-

lightenment. *Kami* (native deities) also appeared in child form, especially those that became protective deities in the Buddhist pantheon, such as the thunder deity, illustrating the relationship between buddhas and *kami* as that of parent and child.¹¹ Under the combinatory paradigm of *honji suijaku* (original forms of deities and their local traces), *kami* came to be seen as the local traces (*suijaku*) of the original forms (*honji*), that is, the Buddhist divinities.¹²

Furthermore, during this period the emperor (*tennō*) was often a child, and he represented a very powerful symbol to rally under, even though in reality his powers were marginal.¹³ Thus, the symbol of the child came to represent both sacredness and marginality at the same time. The ambiguity of the symbol dissolved the duality and polarization of purity and pollution, sacred and profane, this-worldliness and other-worldliness, obedience and transgression, freedom and dependency, and peacefulness and turbulence. These distinctions were not absolute for the child, but rather represented a continuum of potentialities to be activated or possibilities to be manipulated by external principals, as in the case of *gohō dōji*. The ambiguous potentials of these children were put to use by their principals, namely the master deities upon whom they depended, and the religious specialists who they served.

GOHŌ DŌJI AS ATTENDANTS

In the *Keiranshūyōshū* (*A Collection of Leaves Gathered on Stormy Streams*), a collection of doctrinal essays and oral transmissions dated to 1348, the chapter on *Gohō no koto* (*Matters Regarding Gohō*) contains several accounts of how dharma protectors took the form of *gohō dōji* in serving eminent monks and saints.¹⁴ One of them relates the origin of Otogohō (“youngest protector of the dharma”), the youngest son of an Indian king, who came to Japan and became a *gohō*.

The *Seburiyama engi* gives: Now in India, southern India, there was a king named Tokuzen Daiō who had fourteen sons. Seven days after birth, the fifteenth was lost. The king asked Nāgārjuna to use his heavenly eye to locate his beloved lost son, who was subsequently found at Seburiyama in Kyūshū, Japan. Overjoyed, the king, leading the fourteen princes along with Nāgārjuna, went to Seburiyama. The king became Sarasvatī (Benzaiten), one of the Sixteen Benevolent Deities (*zenshin*) and Sixteen Great Bodhisattvas. The fifteen princes are his acolytes (*dōji*). The youngest prince is the Sensha Dōji and is also known as Otogohō. He is also one of Fudō’s *gohō dōji*, Seitaka Dōji.... Among the five hundred eighty thousand *dōji*

of *Saishō-o kyō*, the fifteenth *dōji*, Sensha Dōji, is the foremost and is also known as Kisho Myōzō Dōji.¹⁵

This *gohō dōji* was known by different names according to the deities or saints he served. Otogohō, by virtue of his power, was able to protect saints even when he was not physically present, as illustrated by the following story.

When Monk Sōō crossed the bridge at Katsugawa, his rosary fell into the river and was swept away by the current. He threw his single-pronged *vajra* into the water, and ordered it to take the rosary back. The *vajra* caught up with it, and even though it was against the current, the *vajra* drove the rosary in front, just like a snake pursuing a frog. When they came close to the bridge, the *vajra* hung the rosary on itself, and presented it to the monk. It was an unparalleled wonderful deed. This was also the doing of Otogohō.¹⁶

Thus Otogohō could activate his protective power even from afar, by influencing the *vajra* to go after the rosary and also floating the rosary against the current towards the bridge. However, it was not clear whether his spirit possessed the *vajra*, which then was empowered and saved the rosary. Otogohō was said to have served monks such as Shōkū Shōnin of Shoshazan and Tani no Ajari Kōkei.

In their role as attendants to monks, *gohō dōji* also provided more mundane services such as bringing flowers, fruits, and water; lighting incense; and even drawing baths. For example, the monk Butsuren, a reciter of the *Lotus Sutra*, liked to take a hot bath three times a day. Two beautiful boys appeared and offered to serve him, gathering firewood and heating the water for his baths, bringing him fruits as well. These boys were thought of as *gohō dōji*, whom Butsuren recognized as belonging to two of the converted demons in the *Lotus Sutra*; they vanished forty-nine days after the death of the monk.¹⁷

Aside from menial duties related to the daily needs and comfort of monks, *gohō dōji* also removed obstacles to their practice. For instance, in the *Kokonchomonjū*, two *gohō dōji* saved the priest Yuirembō from the interference of a *tengu* (goblin).¹⁸ The priest was kept from his copying of the *Lotus Sutra* through the *tengu*'s constant hindrance, and was finally carried off into the mountains by the *tengu*. A *gohō dōji* saved the priest and then reduced the *tengu* to the size of a rat to prevent further trouble.

Gohō dōji also monitored the practice of priests, keeping them from excessive austerities. In the *Heike monogatari*, Priest Mongaku practiced painful austerities, for example, letting poisonous insects bite him and standing under the Nachi waterfalls in the thick of winter.¹⁹ Once he submerged himself to the neck under the water for several days. When he was swept away in the current, a handsome youth appeared and pulled him ashore. Not discour-

aged by this setback, Mongaku went back under the waterfall and on the second day, eight youths came to pull him out again, during his recitation of the three hundred thousand Fudō invocations. Despite their efforts, he fought them off and continued his practice. Nevertheless, when he stopped breathing on the third day, two divine youths descended from the summit of the waterfall and revived him by rubbing him down with their fragrant hands, from head to toe. These two boys identified themselves as Kongara and Seitaka, the two main attendant *dōji* attached to Fudō.²⁰ Another case illustrating the guardian role of the *gohō dōji* was that of Eikō Risshi. In an excess of religious zeal, Eikō Risshi climbed up a cinnamon tree and cast himself down into the valley. He was saved by a *gohō dōji*, who spread out his sleeves and caught him.²¹

Moreover, *gohō dōji* would manifest in dreams to deliver the prediction of the practitioner's attainment of buddhahood and to show the correct path when one is lost. In the *Dainihonkoku hokekyōgenki* (*Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra from Ancient Japan*), we see the following story. The Tendai Priest Chōen of Tsukushi Province had recited the *Lotus Sutra* and worshipped Fudō Myōō since his youth. After many years of ascetic practice, he acquired miraculous powers. One day after fasting for twenty-seven days and reciting the *Lotus Sutra*, he dreamt that the Eight Great Attendants of Fudō Myōō, all equipped with weapons, including swords and iron *vajra*-s, listened to his recitation and said admiringly, "The ascetics who served the Buddha were the same as the Buddha and would attain the supreme enlightenment just as other bodhisattvas!"²² On another occasion when he lost his way trying to cross Mount Ōmine, he recited the *Lotus Sutra* fervently and a boy appeared in his dream showing him the right way.²³

Gohō were also used in monks' contests of magical powers. For instance, a *genkurabe* or contest in magical powers took place between Jōzō Hōshi, whose *gohō* brought him flowers and water as described in the *Kokonchomonjū*, and the *gohō* of another powerful ascetic called Shun'yū. They sent the *gohō* into a white stone. Jōzō commanded the stone to move, whereupon it began to jump up and down like a football. Shun'yū then commanded the stone to be still, whereupon it at once lay quiet. Next, Jōzō recited a passage from the *Nirvana Sutra* in a voice that echoed among the clouds, and the white stone leapt up and split in half. The two contestants finally got up, bowed to each other, and departed. This type of match attested to the advancement of a monk in his practice. *Gohō dōji* act as a kind of barometer to gauge the practitioner's progress. The more advanced a monk was in his spiritual power, the more powerful his *gohō* would be. Also, the tale showed that the power of the priests was not exercised directly over the stone, but over the *gohō* who acted as an intermediary, through whom the stone was made to move.²⁴

Even though the *gohō dōji* were protectors of the dharma, sometimes they would go against the spirit of the dharma in obedience to their master.

We see a description of such behavior in the *Uji shūi monogatari*.²⁵ The *yama-bushi* Keitōbō was furious that the ferryman ignored his request to board a boat, despite the fact that he had not offered to pay the fee for crossing over. He commanded his *gohō* to turn the boat back. But when there was no response, he threatened to cut himself from the Buddha's three treasures. Thereupon, the boat turned around and headed for the shore. However, this did not assuage his anger and he next ordered the *gohō* to sink the boat. He was finally satisfied when the boat capsized and everyone on board was thrown into the water.²⁶

Gohō dōji could also be excessively violent in carrying out their duties. In the following excerpt from *Konjaku monogatarishū*, we see this in an account of the *gohō dōji* of Shōkū of Shoshazan:

Shōkū was a reciter of the *Lotus Sutra*. He isolated himself in Kirishima and recited the *Lotus Sutra*, day and night. Subsequently he moved to the mountains and continued to recite the *Lotus Sutra*. Children about ten years of age sat down with him and read with him.... Later, a youth of about seventeen or eighteen years of age with red hair appeared announcing that he would serve Shōkū. Even though the youth was short, he was very strong. He cut wood for Shōkū. Other disciples did not regard this youth as a great treasure, and said to Shōkū, "This child's gaze is frightful and we don't like him." Much later, a youth bigger than the first youth appeared. Over a little matter, the smaller youth got mad and hit the bigger youth on the head. With one punch, he killed him. They poured water on the youth, but failed to revive him. Shōkū told the small youth that he was useless and decided to send him away. The child started to cry, and said that if he were to leave, he would be greatly punished. Yet Shōkū drove him out. The youth cried and repeated that he must serve the saint, otherwise he would be punished by his master. And again he refused to depart. His disciples asked Shōkū what kind of being this youth was. Shōkū said that he had prayed to Bishmonten for someone to serve him and the youth was sent.²⁷

From this story we discover that the *gohō dōji* had red hair and had great strength. This *gohō dōji* belonged to Bishamonten's family and was a converted *yakṣa*, thus he was a *yakṣa dōji*. Bishamonten was served by a number of these *yakṣa dōji*. Owing to the fact that they were converted demonic spirits, they could forget the rules and fail to exercise moderation at times, ending up inflicting cruelty and violence when they used their strength during the performance of their assigned duties. Even though they were commanded by *kami*, buddhas, and monks, and served them, they could kill other beings over a mistake, or in anger. *Gohō* were powerful,

dangerous, and turbulent spirits, whose negligence or zeal was sometimes out of control in the fulfillment of an order.

GOHŌ DŌJI AS MEDIUMS IN EXORCISM

In another capacity *gohō dōji* became mediums for exorcism conducted by priests or other religious specialists, in addition to driving out evil spirits themselves. This development was in line with the general use of child mediums in exorcism.²⁸ During the medieval period there was a popular notion that illness was caused by evil spirits (*mononoke*), which would have to be exorcised by healing rituals.²⁹ Sometimes instead of the *gohō dōji* directly driving out an evil spirit from the possessed, a medium (*yorimashi*), usually a child or woman, would be used as an intermediary to entice the *mononoke* to leave the body of the sick and enter the body of the *yorimashi* instead. Thereafter, the *mononoke* would be ousted from the body of the *yorimashi* by the *gohō dōji*.

In the *Uji shūi monogatari*, we see two accounts of *gohō dōji* driving out evil spirits. In one, the Lord Uji (Fujiwara Yorimichi, 992–1074) became ill after falling off a horse, and the high priest Shin'yo was summoned to perform an exorcism. Before the priest arrived, a spirit that possessed one of the ladies-in-waiting revealed that he was responsible for the Lord Uji's illness, and was subsequently driven out by a *gohō dōji* who came ahead of the priest.³⁰ Here we can again see that the *gohō dōji* could be invoked to carry out a monk's orders from a distance.

Similarly, a *gohō dōji* was also mentioned in a story about the curing of the illness of the prime minister from Horikawa (Fujiwara Mototsune, 836–892), also in the *Uji shūi Monogatari*.

He (the prime minister) said, "While I was asleep, I was just dreaming that fearsome demons were inflicting all manner of tortures on me when a boy with his hair done in a bun on each side and carrying a wand came in the direction of the inner gate and drove the demons off with the wand, till they scattered and ran away. When I asked him who he was, he said, 'A certain priest of the Gokuraku-ji, grieving over your illness, has been beside the inner gate ever since this morning, praying for you by zealously reciting the *Ninnō Sutra*, the scripture he has recited for many years. As a tutelary spirit watching over him, I have driven off these evil demons which were afflicting you.' At that point I woke up, and afterwards felt quite well, just as if I had been wiped clean of an illness."³¹

From the story, it was clear that it was not the sound of the sutra being chanted nor other incantations that acted directly upon the *mononoke*, but

that such sounds acted as catalysts to activate the *gohō* to “possess” the sick person, thus driving out the *mononoke*. Exorcism by *gohō dōji* could be accomplished either by direct possession, or by this kind of double possession. *Gohō* appeared in dreams to those who were ill, as in *Uji shūi monogatari*, and then manifested again in dreams to confirm that the person had been cured.³²

From the end of the Heian period into the medieval period, *shiki gami* came to be identified with *gohō*. This development is illustrated in the *Naki Fudō emaki*, which tells the story of Chikō, the high priest of Miidera.³³ Shōkū volunteered to be the *yorimashi* in order to cure his teacher, Chikō, of illness. In the rite of exorcism performed by the *onmyōji* Abe no Seimei, he used two *gohō*, who were depicted as two *oni* (demons), instead of *shiki gami* to drive out the *mononoke*, or *yakubyō gami* (epidemic deities), that were causing Chikō’s illness. *Gohō* were *igyō* spirits (strange spirits), and in this case demonic spirits. Here one *gohō* had a long nose and looked more like a human, the other *gohō* had a short nose, more similar to a monkey. They both had the image of warriors with knives fastened to their waists and sticks in their hands.

Finally, one can say that the most memorable image of *gohō dōji* is the sword-*gohō* (Tsurugi no Gohō or Ken no Gohō) in the illustrated scroll, *Shigisan Engi*.³⁴ This *engi* or foundation legend described miraculous tales about Myōren, a high priest who devoted his life to the worship of Bishamonten in seclusion at Shigisan in Yamato Province. Scroll one was that of “The Flying Granary” and it told how Myōren sent his bowl flying to obtain alms instead of leaving the mountain itself.³⁵ In the second scroll, Myōren was summoned to perform a rite of exorcism for the Emperor Daigo. Prior to this, many prayers and rites were performed to cure of the emperor’s illness, but he did not recover. Thus, on someone’s advice, the Imperial Court requested Myōren to travel to the palace to perform an exorcism. Despite the imperial summons to go to the capital, Myōren did not go to the palace, but instead performed the rite at Shigisan. He was asked how the emperor would know whether the rite was effective. Myōren replied that at the end of the rite, he would send his servant spirit, a sword-*gohō*, who would appear in the emperor’s dream as evidence of the efficacy of the rite. The sword-*gohō* did appear in the Tenno’s dream with a *dharmacakra* preceding him or ridden by him, and he carried a sword in his right hand and ropes in his left. He wore a collar from which hung numerous swords.³⁶

GOHŌ DŌJI AND SHIKI GAMI

Onmyōji were active not only in performing rites of exorcism like Buddhist priests, but also in performing divination and prayer rituals for the

aristocrats. *Onmyōji* activated servant spirits, which could take the form of children or animals. In *Onmyōdō*, illness was believed to result from a curse of an enemy or from an angry spirit. On the one hand, the *gohō* or *shiki gami* prevented the interference of evil spirits in the practitioners' worship of deities and drove away spirits possessing the sick. They would "return the spirits" who were possessing the ill person, in other words, send the spirits back to the person who originally had put a curse on the ill person. Thereby, in returning a curse, these *shiki gami* took revenge on the original wrongdoer, punishing him or her.³⁷ On the other hand, *shiki gami* could in turn deliver a curse, making the accursed ill, or even causing death.

In the *Uji shūi monogatari*, we see how *gohō* were attached like shadows to their masters. There is a story about an old priest who was accompanied by his *gohō*, two lads of about ten years old, on a trip in an attempt to test Abe no Seimei's skills. Seimei saw through this right away and made the old priest's *gohō* disappear. The old priest, then realizing that Seimei had tremendous power, said, "It is easy to make use of *gohō*, but to make the *gohō* that someone else is using disappear is a feat that is beyond me. From now on I wish to be your pupil."³⁸ Thereupon Seimei returned the two lads to the old priest.

We can observe how fierce *shiki gami* can be when they are delivering a curse. The following tale relates how Abe no Seimei used his magic powers to protect an archivist minor captain, who had been cursed by a jealous brother-in-law. The *shiki gami*, who was delivering the curse to kill the captain, could not harm him owing to Seimei's protection. In turn, the *onmyōji* who had been employed to put the curse and had sent a *shiki gami* to deliver the curse was struck dead when his curse was sent back to him by Abe no Seimei.

Seimei was once seated in his official place at the Palace, watching the high court nobles arrive with their fine array of outriders, when he saw an elegant and very handsome young archivist minor captain alight from his carriage and enter the palace. Just at that moment, Seimei saw a crow fly over the officer's head and drop its dung on him. Seimei took a careful look at it and thought to himself, "What a shame that such a handsome and very popular young man should have been attacked by an evil spirit! This crow is clearly some diviner's familiar [*gohō* or *shiki gami*]." Evidently it was not the officer's destiny to die yet, for Seimei felt so sorry for him that he went over and asked him, "Are you having an audience of His Majesty? Forgive me if I seem a little presumptuous, but why have you come to the palace? I have seen signs that you will not live through the night. Fate willed that it should be revealed to me. Please come with me and let me see what I can do."... With

the minor captain clasped tightly in his arms, Seimei cast spells to protect him, and all night long, without a moment's sleep, he never once stopped reciting incomprehensible incantations and prayers.

It was a long autumn night, but he concentrated his efforts, and towards dawn there came a knocking at the door. At Seimei's suggestion, someone was sent out to see what it was, and it turned out to be the familiar who had been brought down on the minor captain by his brother-in-law, who had held the archivist's Fifth Rank. They lived in different parts of the same house, and the minor captain's brother-in-law was jealous because their father-in-law had a poor opinion of him, while he was very pleased with the minor captain as a son-in-law and made a great fuss of him. The brother-in-law was so jealous, in fact, that he had engaged a diviner to bring this spirit familiar down onto his rival. The minor captain had thus been close to death when Seimei had observed him, and after Seimei's night-long praying, a messenger had come from the diviner, who had brought down the evil spirit and announced in a loud voice, "Foolishly, and without reason save that I had been commanded to do so, I brought down an evil spirit on you, but you had such strong protection that it has turned back on me and I have now been struck dead, as a result of the awful thing that I did." "Do you hear that, sir?" said Seimei, "If I had not discovered this last night, that is what would have happened to you." The messenger was sent back in the company of a servant, who on inquiry was told that the diviner's death had been instantaneous. The son-in-law who had engaged the diviner to bring down the evil spirit was immediately sent packing by his father-in-law, who was overcome with tears as he thanked Seimei, and was scarcely able to reward him handsomely enough to express his gratitude.³⁹

SHUGENDŌ AND GOHŌ DŌJI

Gohō dōji played similar roles in Shugendō as in Buddhism and Onmyōdō. These roles included guiding, attending, and protecting the practitioner (*shugenja*) into the mountain, and also of serving the *shugenja* in obtaining oracles and in rites of possession and exorcism.⁴⁰ The *shugenja* often carried small images of a *dōji* or *ōji* as their guardian deities in their ascetic practices in the mountains, and sometimes they enshrined these images at the roadsides.⁴¹ According to the *Diary of Visiting Kumano* ascribed to En no Ozunu (*En no Gyōja no Kumano sankei no nikki*), places where *dōji* or *ōji* were enshrined were believed to be defiled or haunted by evil deities,

and thus purification ceremonies or rituals for the enshrined deities were performed there.⁴² For example, in the medieval period pilgrimage to one of the sacred sites, Kumano, started with a visit to the Fushimi Inari Shrine, where each pilgrim was given a *gohō* to accompany and protect him or her. After the completion of the pilgrimage, each pilgrim would again go the shrine in order to return the *gohō*.⁴³ In particular, the *gohō* “*kongō dōji*” was highly valued in Kumano, where there were a hundred thousand *kongō dōji*, and there was an ascetic rite, the “Kongō Dōjihō,” which should be practiced at Kumano.⁴⁴ *Kongō dōji* were popular beyond the Shugendō circle during the medieval period, as they were mainly invoked in calamity-averting or exorcistic rituals.⁴⁵ They appeared in many forms and could multiply in number.

Gohō dōji also performed the role of mediators, communicating people’s wishes to the deities. In obtaining oracles, *shugenja* would send their *gohō* to possess the mediums, who would then function as mouthpieces or oracles (*kuchiyose*). The mediums or *yorimashi* were selected from boys and girls who were clever and without blemish, from about seven to fifteen years old.⁴⁶ The mediums would achieve identification with their *gohō* and would use the power thus acquired to summon the requested spirits. As for rites of exorcism, there were two types.⁴⁷ In *tsukimono otoshi* (getting rid of possessing spirits), the *shugenja* would drive out the possessing spirit. In *chōbuku* (subduing the spirits), the *shugenja* would ritually identify with Fudō Myōō, so that the *shugenja* could manipulate the *gohō dōji* of Fudō Myōō, who would in turn drive out the evil possessing spirits. It was clear that for the *chōbuku* more power was needed, since it was employed when the regular *tsukimono otoshi* proved to be ineffective. In the *chōboku*, it was the manipulation by the *shugenja* of Fudō Myōō’s retinue of *gohō dōji* who could then control and defeat the evil deities or spirits. Fudō Myōō’s retinue of servant spirits included Kongara and Seitaka, who were his two main attendant *gohō dōji*, as well as his Eight Great *Gohō Dōji*, and Thirty-six Great *Dōji*.

The founder of Shugendō, En no Ozunu (also known as En no Ubasoku and En no Gyōja) also had his *gohō dōji*: two demon attendants whom he had converted, known as Zenki (Front Demon) and Goki (Back Demon), in addition to the Eight Great *Dōji*. In the *Nihon ryōiki*, it was said that in his late forties En no Ozunu went to live in a cave, wore clothing made of vines, drank the dewdrops on pine needles, bathed in pure spring water to rinse away the filth of the world of desire, and learned the “Formula of the Peacock” (*Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī*) to attain extraordinary power. Thus, he could employ spirits (*kijin*, demonic spirits) and *kami*.⁴⁸ The *Shoku Nihongi* records miracle tales about En no Ozunu: “Popular tradition had it that Ozunu had demonic powers at his beck and call; that he had them draw his water and gather his firewood; and that if they failed to

obey him, he would bind them with spells.”⁴⁹ The founder of Hakusan Shugendō, Taichō, was attended by two *gohō dōji*, Fuseri Gyōja and Shōjō Gyōja. Shoshazan’s Shokū was also attended by two *gohō dōji*, Oto Gohō and Waka Gohō. *Shugenja* used *dōji* as servants or attendants, especially in exorcism and in the rite of the flying bowl (*hihatsuhō*).⁵⁰ For example, En no Ozunu was said to have put his mother in his begging bowl and sent it flying to China.⁵¹ Myōren had the services of Tsurugi no Gohō (the sword-*gohō*) and Kūhatsu Gohō (the empty begging bowl *gohō*).

Now let us look at a particular form of *gohō* for the *yamabushi*, the *tengu*, and explore the relationship of *tengu* to *gohō dōji* in Buddhism.

GOHŌ DŌJI AND TENGU

Tengu is a type of long-nosed goblin. In the beginning there was the crow *tengu*, characterized by the beak and wings of a Siberian black kite, the original incarnate form of the creature; sometimes it was embodied as a human with a bird’s bill.⁵² By the early seventeenth century, the image of the *tengu* had generally become that of a ruddy-faced and long-nosed itinerant monk, symbolizing vainglory. In the *Tengu zōshi*, *tengu* were said to inhabit mountains and to descend to the world of man to cause mischief. It also says that Buddhist monks who forget the true teachings of their faith would turn into *tengu*.⁵³

In the Buddhist context, the enemies of *gohō dōji* were the *tengu*, as illustrated in the story of Zegaibō.⁵⁴ Zegaibō was a Chinese *tengu* who came to Japan in order to challenge the senior priests of Enryakuji at Mt. Hiei, only to suffer an ignominious defeat. The story is as follows.

In 966, during the reign of Emperor Murakami, Zegaibō, the chief *tengu* of the Empire of China, came to Japan. Meeting Nichiraibō, the Great *Tengu* of Mt. Atago, Zegaibō boasted that he had subjugated all the high priests in China and that the purpose of his visit to Japan was to measure his virtue with monks in Japan, possibly to obstruct their enlightenment. Asked to serve as a guide, the Japanese *tengu* led his Chinese colleague up Mt. Hiei.

Zegaibō turned himself into an old monk while Nichiraibō hid behind a tree in the distance, waiting until monks descended the mountain. Yokei Risshi was riding in a palanquin on his way to the palace and as Zegaibō approached, a burning iron wheel sent him flying, with his wings burned. Nichiraibō laughed and said that this monk believed in Fudō Myōō, and was reciting a mantra of Fudō Myōō—the mantra of the fire realm—which burned

demonic forces. Zegaibō, not discouraged by this thwarted effort, got ready again.

Next came Jinzen(sen), a bishop of Imuro, who was also a believer of Fudō Myōō. Jinzen recited another mantra of Fudō Myōō and suddenly two red-haired boys appeared with raised canes and started to chase Zegaibō, and the *tengu* was severely beaten. Nichiraibō rebuked Zegaibō, and Monzebō, the *tengu* of Mt. Hira, joined in the reprimand. Nichiraibō told Zegaibō that the two boys were the servant spirits of Fudō Myōō: the *gohō dōji* Kongara and Seitaka.

Without any sign of contrition, Zegaibō ran into the party of Ryōgen (Jie Daishi), the august abbot of the Tendai sect, whose young mysterious-looking attendants bound the *tengu* up and gave him a good thrashing, led by Oto Gohō and Waka Gohō. The beaten Zegaibō was carried home by Nichiraibō's *tengu*, who ridiculed him mercilessly.

Zegaibō asked for treatment in a hot spring to ease his pain, but was told that since spas were sacred sites, he would be sure to have another hard time of it there. Then they gave him a hot bath on the banks of the Kamo River and nursed him. Seventeen days later, when he finally recovered, Zegaibō thanked Nichiraibō for his help. Realizing the futility of his extended stay in such a sacred site, he expressed his wish to return to China.⁵⁵

Tengu were regarded in Shugendō as servants of *kami*, buddhas, eminent monks, and *yamabushi*, like the servant spirit of *gohō dōji* in Buddhism.⁵⁶ In Buddhist tales such as the *Konjaku monogatari shū*, however, these *tengu* were depicted as turbulent mountain deities and were represented as enemies of Buddhism. We see illustrations of this development in *Tengu zōshi* and in the account of Zegaibō, which is different from the development in popular cults of *tengu*. In popular religion, *tengu* were worshipped for preventing fire and robbery. *Tengu* were mountain spirits, deities that were pacified and converted by the *yamabushi*, and in esoteric Buddhism they became identified with Kongō Dōji. Thus the cult of Kongō Dōji, the protective spirit of Shugendō, became influenced by the cult of *tengu*.⁵⁷ Ōmine had the Eight Great Kongō Dōji and the Eight *Tengu* as protective spirits.⁵⁸ *Tengu* also became deities of happiness/wealth (*fukujin*), owing to the belief that they brought good harvests. For those who mine mountains, *tengu* were regarded as gods of fortune. This brings to mind the fact that other turbulent spirits who were creators of obstacles became protectors of them and also became deities of wealth, such as Dōsojin.

The story of Zegaibō takes the perspective of the eminent monks of Hieizan, emphasizing the miraculous powers of Fudō Myōō and *gohō dōji* against the evil power of the *tengu*. In Tendai *mikkyō*, the *tengu* symbolized

the Buddhist concept of evil, later turned into a path of rebirth, and finally were regarded as enemies of Buddhism. Haruko N. Wakabayashi stated that *tengu* are enemies of Buddhism, demonic creatures that defy Buddhism, and constituted the antithesis to the ideal of the Buddhist order.⁵⁹ Thus, these *tengu* are very similar to “*ma*” (*māra*).

An illustration of how *tengu* could be saved from the evil path and also be reborn as a monk with the help of *gohō dōji* is as follows.

A *tengu* from India was on his way to China, heard the water of the ocean chanting a phrase of the “*Daihannyakyō*,” and decided to prevent such chanting and looked for its source. Thus following the sound of the chanting, he passed over China and arrived at Japan. Tracing it to a river flowing from Mt. Hiei, he saw the Four Heavenly Kings and other protectors of the dharma guarding the water. He went toward a heavenly child (*tendō*), here a *gohō dōji*, guarding the river and asked why the water was chanting the sutra. The *gohō dōji* replied that it was owing to the fact that the source of the flow starts from the privy of the learned monks of Hieizan. The *tengu* was so taken by the account that he forgot his thought of putting a stop to the chanting and instead upon promising to become a monk at Hieizan disappeared. He kept his word and later was reborn as the monk Myōgu.⁶⁰

Here we see *gohō dōji* guarding a river that chanted sutra and originated from a privy at Hieizan. And we also see that the *tengu* was so moved by the *gohō dōji*’s account that he was converted to Buddhism and later reborn as a monk.

In Buddhist tales, *tengu* were viewed as obstacles to the followers of the dharma. They were even known to possess people, but were in turn exorcised, like *mononoke* or evil spirits. Despite their trouble-making, we find that they were rendered powerless when they encountered the protectors of the dharma, and sometimes were even converted by the *gohō zenshin*. In contrast to this Buddhist outlook, *tengu* continued to be worshipped as gods of fortune and even gods of fertility in popular religion.

GOHŌ DŌJI AND YŌKAI

While the enemies of Tendai *mikkyō* were the *tengu*, we find that the *yōkai* (ghosts, goblins) were the enemies in Shingon and Onmyōdō. *Gohō dōji* would protect against *yōkai* attacks and could even convert such *yōkai*. Following the Shingon doctrines of *sokushin jōbutsu* (attainment of buddhahood in this very body) and of *hijō jōbutsu* (plants and other

nonsentient beings' ability to attain buddhahood), even *yōkai* could attain buddhahood. In the Muromachi period, the representatives of the *yōkai* were the *utsuwa no yōkai* (tool goblins), also called *tsukumogami* (ghosts of old objects).

In *Tsukumogami-ki* (*Record of the Ghosts of Old Objects*), an *otogizōshi* of the late fifteenth century, we see the following account.⁶¹ The text begins by quoting the *Onmyō zakki* (*Miscellaneous Records Concerning the Yin and Yang*), which states that *utsuwa mono* (tools) obtain spirit or *tama* after hundreds of years.⁶² People used to welcome spring by throwing away old tools in the street; this custom was known as *susuharai*. As a result new tools, furniture, and clothing were brought into the house as the old ones were tossed out or discarded into the streets. During the Kenpō era (964–968), there was a rebellion of old tools. They were angry about being discarded after having provided years of service. Thus, these tools transformed from inanimate to animate beings, became ghosts of tools (*utsuwa yōkai*) on the first day of spring (*setsubun*), and sought revenge on human beings by killing them and their animals. These *yōkai* organized themselves and made a procession along First Street in Kyōto. The Emperor summoned a Shingon high priest to perform the great rite of the “Supreme Dhāraṇī” (*sonshō darani*) for seven days and seven nights. On the evening of the sixth day, a light was seen—the light of the Seven Heavenly Boys, who were on their way to the north of Kyōto to fight these *utsuwa yōkai*. These Seven Heavenly Boys, *gohō dōji* of *myōō* such as Fudō Myōō, appeared to the *utsuwa yōkai* and said that if they would take refuge in the Three Jewels and arouse the desire to attain enlightenment, their lives would be spared; otherwise, they would be killed. The *yōkai* were terrified and as a result asked for instructions in Buddhist teachings, and converted to Buddhism. One day, while they were being instructed about Shingon teachings and their miraculous power, such as *sokushin jōbutsu*, several of the *utsuwa yōkai* were said to have “become buddha in their very bodies” (*sokushin jōbutsu*).

Finally let us turn to household servant spirits in folk religion, the *zashiki warashi*, or literally, children of the parlor or the drawing room.

CHILD SERVANT SPIRITS OF HOUSES: THE ZASHIKI WARASHI

Zashiki warashi were child servant spirits who were attached to a specific house. They were children aged from five or six, up to twelve or thirteen years old. These children were usually boys, although there were also some rare instances of girls. According to the folklorist Chiba Toku, usually one could not see *zashiki warashi*, who were said to have red faces

with long, flowing hair. However, one could trace their whereabouts by following the footprints that they left behind.⁶³ Having *zashiki warashi* reside in one's house would bring good fortune, while their departure would bring misfortune.⁶⁴ There were many names for *zashiki warashi*, which varied according to locale: *zashiki bokko*, *kurawarashi*, *kurabokko*, *notabariko*, *ushitsukiko*. These servant spirits represented a type of *tsukimono* (possessing spirits), since they possessed the house in which they lived. In medieval Japan, people attributed sudden increases or decreases in wealth to possession by animals, animal deities, humans, or plant spirits. It was believed that whereas possession by spirits that were lower than the human existence (e.g., foxes or dogs) would bring malevolence, possession by spirits higher than the human form (e.g., *kami*) would bring benefits.⁶⁵

In Yanagita Kunio's *Tōno monogatari* (*The Legends of Tōno*) there were several accounts of *zashiki warashi*.

Among the older households there are quite a few houses that have the spirit *zashiki warashi* (parlor child). At the oldest this *kami* is twelve or thirteen years old. From time to time it reveals itself to people. At Iide in Tsuchibuchi village, Kanjūrō Imabuchi's daughter, who goes to a girls' high school, recently returned home for vacation. One day in the dark corridor all of a sudden she bumped into a *zashiki warashi* and was badly shocked. This *zashiki warashi* was definitely a male child.

At Yamaguchi in the same village the mother of Mr. Sasaki was sewing alone one day when she heard the sound of paper rustling in the next room. That room was only for the master of the house, but he was in Tokyo. Thinking it strange, she opened the wooden door and looked in, but no one was there. After having been seated a short time, again there was the sound of someone sniffing. She concluded that it must be *zashiki warashi*. It had been rumored for some time that *zashiki warashi* resided in this house. The house that this *kami* lives in is said to become rich and prestigious.⁶⁶

Zashiki warashi could also be a girl child as we see in the following account.

It has been traditionally said that there are two girl *kami* in the house of Magozaemon Yamaguchi, also an old house in Yamaguchi. One year a certain man from the village was on his way back from town and near Tomeba bridge when he met two lovely girls whom he had never seen before. They were walking pensively towards him.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

"We have come from Magozaemon's in Yamaguchi," they replied.

"Where are you headed now?" he inquired.

"To a certain house in another village," was the reply.

That certain household in a somewhat distant village is now wealthy and the people live well. Hearing this the man conjectured that Magozaemon was headed for ruin, and it was not too long after that twenty or so people in the family died in one day from mushroom poisoning. Only one seven-year-old girl did not die. She merely grew old without having any children, and recently died of an illness.⁶⁷

Chiba identified the *zashiki warashi* with Okunai-sama, the household deity that looked after the fate of the family. He also connected *zashiki warashi* with the small child or *kozō* from the Dragon Palace, and to Hanatare Kozō (translated by Komatsu Kazuhiko as "Snotty-nosed Brat"), whose stay in one's house was tied to the fortune of the house.⁶⁸ The story of Hanatare Kozō is as follows.

This child was given to an old man in Higo who sold firewood. He had prayed to the Dragon God and thrown his unsold firewood into the water. A beautiful woman appeared and gave him a child with the admonition that since this child was a gift from the Dragon God, the child would grant any wish of the old man, but in return, he must offer the child a shrimp a day. The old man put the child beside his altar and went into town to buy a shrimp to offer to the child every day. The child produced everything the old man asked for, and in no time, he became very rich. One day, however, he got tired of going into town to buy a shrimp for the *hanatare kozō* so he told the child to go back to the Dragon Palace. Upon the child's departure, his house and wealth vanished.⁶⁹

The child who was worshipped every day brought fortune, and in this respect is a child of good fortune. In contrast, the child who was neglected or expelled brought misfortune, and in this respect is a disaster-causing child. Furthermore, this child is strange (*irui igyō*)—in most versions of the tale of the Dragon Palace Child he is depicted as being physically ugly, or mentally abnormal. This reminds us of other strange children (*idō*), such as the *onigo*, or demon child. Such *onigo* include Benkei, who was black in color, and Kintoki, who was red in color, both of whom could also bring both benefit and harm to the human community. Such strange children were both desired and feared at the same time. Their turbulent and unpredictable nature needed to be "well-managed" by their master. Only in this way could their oscillation between bringing wealth and bringing calamity be brought under control, and benefit those around them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The *gohō dōji* was a double symbol combining both the symbol of the guardian deity and the symbol of the child. Guardian deities were originally demonic spirits and local deities opposed to Buddhism. Their turbulent or fierce propensities were not eliminated, but rather were kept intact, and placed under the management of buddhas and bodhisattvas in the service of Buddhism. These deities were violent and merciless in punishing the transgressors of the dharma, but benevolent and compassionate in rewarding the followers of the dharma. Like other guardians of the dharma, *gohō dōji* were also characterized by the same dual propensities of malevolence and benevolence in protecting the followers of Buddhism. But while their duty to protect the dharma was similar to that of other guardians, since they were also children, they had to be supervised or directed by adult principals, in this case master deities or religious specialists. Furthermore, because they were children they could perform more mundane tasks or odd jobs. *Gohō dōji* not only followed the orders of their masters and delivered their messages, but also attended to their every need, no matter how menial or trivial. However, since they were children, their actions were not always predictable, as they might at times be overzealous in carrying out their orders. The changeability supposedly characteristic of children—oscillating between benevolence and malevolence, peacefulness and turbulence, compassion and cruelty, freedom and dependency—was put to use by the adult principals. As double-edged swords, able to bring blessings or calamities at the command of their masters, *gohō dōji* became very popular and effective servants. In Buddhist circles and beyond, accounts of these child servant spirits soared in the medieval Japanese imaginaire, as these children took on different names or forms in the ever-expanding discourse about them.

NOTES

1. I am very grateful to Iyanaga Nobumi for his valuable comments, corrections, and encouragement. As always, I am thankful for Paul Harrison's criticism and support. An earlier version of this paper was presented at a workshop which I held on "Images and Concepts of Childhood" at Stanford Humanities Center and Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies, Stanford University, December 2000.
2. I have not been able to find an equivalent for the symbol of *gohō dōji* in medieval Chinese discourse. In medieval Chinese hagiography, there are references to monks being served or attended by spirits or ghosts, but no mention of child servant deities in particular. In the *Song gaoseng zhuan* deities (*shen*) and spirits appear as evidence of the resonance (*ganying*) eminent monks inspire. On this issue, see John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1997). For instance, we find spirits who assist monks in sweeping roads, lighting lamps, replenishing incense, drawing water, bringing fruit and wood, causing floodwaters to recede, and in punishing those who abuse monks. See for example, *Song gaoseng zhuan*, T. 2061, vol. 50, 25.17 (870b23–24) and 22.2 (850a9–11). The one specific instance I came across of such a guardian child spirit is the heavenly youth who attended Daoxuan, identified as Nuocha or Nacha, the son of Vaiśravaṇa (Bishamonten). See *Song gaoseng zhuan*, T. 2061, 14.1 (791a9–13). Daoxuan is also served by Weituo, a youthful deity who can be viewed as another *gohō dōji* type, and Weituo's servants. See *Daoxuan lüshi ganlong lu*, T. 2107, vol. 52 (435c1–6). There are, of course, acolytes who attend bodhisattvas, for example Guanyin's two acolytes, Shan Tongzi (Virgin Lad [Keeping Track] of Good Deeds) and E Tongzi (Virgin Lad [Keeping Track] of Evil Deeds). These two Virgin Lads are the subject of an extensive study by Michel Soymié, "Notes d'iconographie chinoise: les acolytes de Ti-tsang (I)," *Arts asiatiques* 14 (1966): pp. 141–170. However, these acolytes do not become a unique symbol like *gohō dōji* in medieval Japanese discourse.
3. Carmen Blacker and Christine Guth have both written general surveys on the subject of divine boys, in the context of Japanese Buddhism and Japanese art respectively. See Carmen Blacker, "The Divine Boy in Japanese Buddhism," *Asian Folklore Studies* 22 (1963): pp. 77–88 (also in Carmen Blacker, *Collected Writings of Carmen Blacker* [Tokyo, Tokyo Library Japan, 2000], pp. 101–109) and Christine Guth, "Divine Boy in Japanese Art," *Monumenta Nipponica* 42, no. 1 (1987): pp. 1–23. Whereas Blacker defines the "divine boy" in terms of *gohō dōji* in Buddhism specifically, Guth represents the "divine boy" as a religious archetype, such as the infant

Buddha or Shitta Taishi, the infant Prince Shōtoku or Nambutsu Taishi, the boy Kōbō Daishi or Chigo Daishi, the boy Monju or Chigo Monju and the adolescent Monju or Nawa Monju, and the child Kannon or Chigo Kannon. Yanagita Kunio has also written a short article on the subject. He stresses the point that these heavenly children (*tendō*) who protect the buddhadharma are also demonic spirits and are used as mediums in exorcism. Yanagita Kunio, "Gohō dōji," *Kyōdo kenkyū* 2, no. 11 (1915): pp. 641–654. More recently Koyama Satoko, a Ph.D. candidate working on the *gohō dōji*, has published a number of articles on her research. See for example, Koyama, "Chūsei zenki no Shōren'in monzeki ni okeru gohō dōji shinkō no juyō," *Nihon shūkyō bungakushi kenkyū* 4, no. 1 (2000): pp. 38–62; Koyama, "Dainihonkoku hokekyōgenki ni miru gohō dōji," *Setsumu bungaku kenkyū* 35 (July 2000): pp. 105–117; Koyama, "Gohō dōji no zuzōteki sekai," *Setsumu* 10 (February 2000): pp. 41–68; Koyama, "Chūsei zenki ni okeru dōji shinkō no ryūsei to mappō shisō," *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū* 43, no. 1 (2000): pp. 45–69. She examines the possible origins and the development of the cult of *gohō dōji*. Some of her main points are as follows. The popularity of *dōji* in the early medieval period can be seen as a result of the belief in the final age of the dharma (*mappō*), in which buddhas and bodhisattvas will manifest in the most appropriate form to save sentient beings, i.e., in the form of children. Furthermore, the cult of *dōji* originated from the *Lotus Sutra*, and as a result the earliest form of *dōji* are the *tendō*, who protect those who recite the *Lotus Sutra*. These *tendō* later came to be identified with the *dōji* of Fudō Myōō, in particular, Kongara and Seitaka, in addition to the *kongō dōji* who vowed to protect sentient beings during *mappō* as *gohō*. Thus by the latter part of the medieval period, the cult of *gohō dōji* developed as the amalgamation of the cults of *tendō* and *gohō*, to encompass the servant spirits of esoteric deities such as Fudō Myōō and Benzaiten, and in this way the *gohō dōji*'s protection extended well beyond the reciters of the *Lotus Sutra* to the followers of the dharma. The actual term *gohō dōji* came to be used during the latter part of the Muromachi period even though in the mid-Heian period there were expressions such as *gohō* or *tendō*. On the art history front, there have recently been two special exhibitions on children in Japanese art at the Hikone Castle Museum in 2000 and at the Tokyo National Museum in 2001. The respective catalogues from the exhibitions are *Bijutsu no naka no dōji*, compiled by Hikonejō hakubutsukan, 2000, and *Bijutsu no naka no kodomotachi*, compiled by Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 2001. Furthermore there is a journal issue devoted to the forms of children in the medieval period. See Tsuda Tetsuei, ed., "Chūsei no dōji-gyō," *Nihon no bijutsu* 2003, no. 442 (March). I am indebted to Iyanaga Nobumi for this reference.

4. The *vidyā rāja* Acala (Fudō Myōō) is also a youth, at times appearing as a child, and is a messenger. See, for example, *Asabashō*, T. zuzōbu 9,

324b23–25. In Daoism, we see that messenger deities often took the form of children, e.g., the Azure Lad and the Jade Maiden. For a study on the Azure Lad, see Paul Kroll, “In the Halls of the Azure Lad,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, no. 1 (January–March 1985): pp. 75–94. We can also compare such child deities with other Western messenger deities, such as the Greek Hermes, who is often represented as a young deity and is a god of communication, and Eros, another young deity who is a god of communication between men and women. I am indebted to Iyanaga Nobumi for bringing this comparison to my attention and also for the following reference. See Laurence Kahn, *Hermes passe, ou, Les ambiguïtés de la communication* [collection Textes à l’appui] (Paris: F. Maspero, 1978).

5. For discussion of the notion of *muen*, see Amino Yoshihiko, *Muen, kugai, raku: Nihon chūsei no jiyū to heiwa*, Heibonsha sensho 58 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1978) and Amino Yoshihiko and Abe Kinya, [*Taidan*] *Chūsei no saihakken: ichi, zōyo, enkai* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1994).

6. See Iijima Yoshiharu, “Folk Culture and the Liminality of Children,” *Current Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (1987): pp. 41–47. This also brings to mind two Indian threshold deities or guardians of the door: Skanda, who appears as a handsome young man (Kumāra) or sometimes even as a boy (*dōji*), and Gaṇeśa, a god of obstacles who is an ugly dwarf with a pot-belly and an elephant head with a single tusk. For a discussion of these guardian deities, see R.A. Stein, “The Guardian of the Gate: An Example of Buddhist Mythology, From Indian to Japan,” in *Asian Mythologies*, ed. Yves Bonnefoy (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 112–136. On the birth stories of Gaṇeśa and Skanda, see Iyanaga Nobumi, *Kannon hen’yōtan*, Bukkyō shinwagaku II (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2002), pp. 11–31. Skanda later becomes Weituo in China and his form is very similar to that of *gohō dōji*. Weituo is known to have served the monk Daoxuan, bringing him food from the heavenly kitchen every day (Iyanaga, *Kannon hen’yōtan*, pp. 117–121). He is also known to be able to send a begging bowl flying. For more details on this issue, see note 35. Weituo not only becomes the guardian of the monastery gate in China from the seventh century onwards, but later also becomes the guardian of the kitchen in Chan and Zen monasteries to ensure plentiful food supply for the sangha. Mañjuśrī, another young man type, is also known as the keeper of the refectory. Stein, “The Guardian of the Gate,” pp. 125–127.

7. Iijima, “Folk Culture and Liminality of Children,” p. 42, and Nakano Chizuru, “Gohō dōji to dōdōji,” *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū* 27, no. 1 (1984): pp. 23–62.

8. Tanaka Takako, “Torai suru kami to dochaku suru kami,” in *Nihon no kami*, vol. 1: *kami no shigen*, ed. Yamaori Tetsuo (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1995), pp. 174–208.

9. Tanaka, "Torai suru *kami* to dochaku suru *kami*," p. 206.
10. For studies of the cult of arhats see Michibata Ryōshū, *Rakan shinkōshi* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1983) and Sylvain Lévi and Edouard Chavannes, "Les seize Arhat protecteurs de la Loi," *Journal asiatique* 8 (1916): pp. 5–48, 189–304.
11. I have discussed this issue elsewhere. See Irene H. Lin, "From Thunder Child to Dharma-protector: Dōjō hōshi and the Buddhist Appropriation of Japanese Local Deities," in *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, eds. Teeuwen and Rambelli (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 54–76.
12. On *honji suiaku*, see Teeuwen and Rambelli, *Buddhas and Kami in Japan*.
13. I have examined this issue elsewhere. See Lin, "The Ideology of Imagination: The Tale of Shuten Dōji as a Kenmon Discourse," in *Buddhist Priests, Kings, and Marginals: Studies on Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, eds. Bernard Faure and François Lachaud, *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie* 13 (2002–2003): pp. 379–410.
14. T. 76, 2410, 782–784. For an introduction to the *Keiranshūyōshū*, see Allan Grapard, "Keiranshūyōshū: A Different Perspective on Mt. Hiei in the Medieval Period," in *Re-Visioning "Kamakura" Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), pp. 55–69.
15. T. 76, 2410, 783a and b. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Benzaiten is given as having fifteen or sixteen sons who are incarnations of various Buddhist deities symbolizing various crafts of which she is a patron. See Louis Frédéric, *Buddhism: Flammarion Iconographic Guides* (New York: Flammarion, 1995). Sensha Dōji is an incarnation of Yakujō Bosatsu. Seitaka Dōji, who serves Fudō Myōō, is often paired with Kongara as the two acolytes most often represented with him. He can have two, eight, thirty-six, or forty-eight child acolytes.
16. T. 76, 2140, 783c. Iyanaga Nobumi kindly edited my translation of this story and pointed to the fact that this single-pronged *vajra* had been transmitted to the Monk Sōo from the monarchical rector (*sōjō*) Ryōkai of Jimuro and is still in Mt. Hiei.
17. *Konjaku monogatari* shū, fasc. 13, no. 23. *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 24, ed. Takagi Ichinosuke et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1957–1968), pp. 239–240.
18. *Kokonchomonjū*, fasc. 17, no. 600, *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 84, pp. 461–462.
19. Helen Craig McCullough, trans., *The Tale of Heike* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 178–179.
20. In the *Asabashō*, the chapter on Fudō Myōō contains a section describing the two attendants of the deity, Kongara Dōji and Seitaka Dōji. *Asabashō*, T. zuzōbu 9, 325a19–20. The text states that Kongara Dōji is very careful and

respectable, whereas Seitaka is hard to deal with and has a malevolent character.

21. Hanawa Hokiichi, compiler, *Gunsho Ruiju* (Tokyo: Nagai Shoseki, 1928–1937), book 487.

22. Yoshiko Dykstra, trans., *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra from Ancient Japan: The Dainihonkoku hokekyōkenki of Priest Chingen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 114–115. Usually the text is read *Dainihonkoku hokekyōgenki*, not *hokekyōkenki* as Dykstra reads it. Thus in the paper I refer to the text in the conventional way.

23. Yoshiko Dykstra, *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra from Ancient Japan*, p. 115.

24. *Kokonchomonjū*, fasc. 2, no. 46, *Nihon koten bungaku Taikei* 84, pp. 81–83. Another magical contest involving a *gohō* is found in *Ōkagami* fasc. 3, *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 21, pp. 148–149; Helen Craig McCullough, trans., *Ōkagami: The Great Mirror Fujiwara Michinaga (996–1027) and His Times, A Study and Translation* (Princeton and Tokyo: Princeton University Press and University of Tokyo Press, 1988), p. 150.

25. D. E. Mills, trans., *A Collection of Tales from Uji: A Study and Translation of Uji Shūi Monogatari* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

26. Mills, *A Collection of Tales from Uji*, pp. 193–194.

27. *Konjaku monogatari* fasc. 12, no. 34, *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 24, pp. 185–186.

28. For a discussion of the use of child-mediums in possession and exorcism, see Michel Strickmann, *Chinese Magical Medicine* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 194–227.

29. For a study of such exorcistic rituals, see Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Hyōrei shinkoron* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1994).

30. Mills, *A Collection of Tales from Uji*, p. 146.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 425–426.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

33. There is a variation of this story in the *Soga monogatari*. See Thomas J. Cogan, trans., *The Tale of the Soga Brothers* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1987), pp. 189–193.

34. *Nihon emaki taisei 4: Shigisan engi* (Tokyo: Chūōkoronsha, 1977).

35. Scroll one tells of how Myōren sends his bowl flying to the foot of the mountain, where there lived a rich landlord, for the purpose of obtaining food. One day, people in the squire's house were taking rice out of the granary when Myōren's bowl came flying into a corner of the granary. Later, having forgotten that the bowl was still inside the storehouse, the

workers closed the door. Suddenly the granary began to shake and rose into the air. The door opened, the bowl came out of the granary, and the bowl carried the building in flight to Shigisan. The squire later apologized for his negligence and begged Myōren to return the rice. Myōren said that the granary had to stay there, but the rice would be sent back. A noteworthy factor of this account is that one of the supernormal powers that could be acquired through meditation was the ability to fly (*rddhi*-s, which belong to higher knowledges or *abhijñā*-s). Here, Myōren's ability to send his bowl flying was indicative of his advanced state of practice that gave him the power of flight, which extended to his begging bowl. This brings to mind a similar account, Jietaisi of the flying bowl, which gets filled with jewels owing to the miraculous power of Skanda or Weituo. See Stein, "The Guardian of the Gate," p. 127 and Iyanaga, *Kannon hen'youtan*, pp. 84–86. Another point worthy of mention here is that Myōren's worship of Bishamonten may have also given him and objects associated with him powers of flight. In the *Bishamontennōkyō*, it states that when a practitioner recites the sutra and makes offerings to Bishamon, the deity will manifest in the form of a *dōji* or a layperson, according to the wish of the practitioner. See *T. 21, 1244*: 215–216, 216a. Furthermore, the sutra continues by saying that "those who recite the sutra will obtain the ability to fly about freely." Art historians Miya Tsugio and Sawa Takaaki have suggested that the sword-*gohō* is the fifth servant spirit of Bishamonten, which is evident from the similarity of images of the *dōji* with that of this fifth servant spirit (an adult wearing a similar sword suit). Miya Tsugio, "Shigisan engi kyojitsu zakkō," in *Bukkyō setsuwa-e no kenkyū*, ed. Kameda Tsutomu (Tokyo: Tokyo bijitsu, 1979), pp. 129–146. For the image, see *Taishō zuzōbu* 7, 551; Sawa Takaaki, "Shigisan engi to Toba sōjō Kakuyu-kō," in *Nihon emaki taisei 4: Shigisan engi* (Tokyo: Chūōkoronsha, 1977).

36. There is a version of this story in the *Uji shūi monogatari*, which reveals more about the sword-*gohō* and his relation to Bishamonten. Mills, *A Collection of Tales from Uji*, pp. 286–291.

37. For a study of *shikigami*, see Komatsu, *Hyōrei shinkōron*, pp. 145–228. Izanagiryū, a folk religion with Onmyōdō influence, also used servant spirits known as *shiki ōji*. These servant spirits were summoned by prayers, and they would get rid of the curse causing the illness of the person who was wronged. For a study of *shiki ōji*, see Saitō Hideki, *Izanagiryū: shiki ōji* (Tokyo: Shinkigensha, 2000).

38. Mills., *A Collection of Tales from Uji*, pp. 339–340.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 175–176.

40. For a detailed study of these rituals, see Miyake Hitoshi, *Shugendō girei no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1985). For a summary of such rites, see Miyake Hitoshi, "Religious Rituals in Shugendo: A Summary," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, nos. 2–3 (1989): pp. 101–116.

41. Miyake Hitoshi, "Kumano Gongen: The Idea of Deity in Shugendō," in *Shugendō: Essays on the Structure of Japanese Folk Religion* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001), pp. 36–59.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
45. For example, women were believed to be especially susceptible to possession by evil spirits during the time of childbirth. Thus, when the daughter of Taira no Kiyomori, the Empress Kenreimon'in, was giving birth, a number of eminent monks were summoned to perform esoteric rituals to ensure safe delivery, and the Kongō Dōji ritual was one of these rites. Helen Craig McCullough, trans., *The Taiheiki: A Chronicle of Medieval Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 12 and McCullough, *The Tale of Heikei*, pp. 100–101.
46. Miyake, *Shugendō girei no kenkyū*, p. 349.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 445–474.
48. Kyoko M. Nakamura, trans., *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997), pp. 140–142.
49. Gorai Shigeru, "Shugendo Lore," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, nos. 2–3 (1989): pp. 117–142.
50. For the rite of the flying bowl, *Nyōi hōju tenrin himitsu genshin jōbutsu konrinjūdōkyō*, see T. 19, 961: 330–324, 330c–331a and Iyanaga, *Kannon hen'youtan*, pp. 83–99.
51. *Shugendō no hon: kami to butsu ga yūgō yamagai no mandara*, Collection Bukkusu Esoterika 8 (Tokyo: Gakushū kenkyūsha, 1993), pp. 34–40.
52. For a detailed study of the *tengu*, refer to the pioneering work of M.W. de Visser, "The Tengu," *Transactions Asiatic Journal* 36, no. 2 (1908): pp. 1–159.
53. *Tengu zōshi*, in vol. 27 of *Shinshū Nihon Emakimono Zenshū*, ed. Umezu Jirō (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1978).
54. *Ibid.*
55. Zegaibō-e in vol. 27 of *Shinshū Nihon Emakimono Zenshū*, ed. Umezu Jirō (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1978). Compare this story to the following tale, which I have also translated. According to Komatsu Kazuhiko, the former story is based on the latter account. Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Nihon Yōkai ibunroku* (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1995), p. 90.

There was a powerful *tengu* who lived in China, named Chira Eiju. He came to Japan and upon meeting Japanese *tengu* said that in his country, even though there were virtuous monks, the *tengu*

were free in their actions. Hearing that there were also practicing monks in Japan, he wanted to compare the monks of the two countries and challenge the Japanese monks. Together they went to Hieizan's Ishi sotoba at Ōtake, and the Japanese *tengu* said that since his face was already known, he would hide, and advised the *tengu* from China to transform himself into an old monk and wait for passersby. Yokei then approached, sitting in a palanquin on his way to the capital. The Japanese *tengu*, who was anxious to see what tricks the Chinese *tengu* would play, instead saw the priest's procession pass by. Surprised at the turnout, he found Eiju hiding in a valley. Eiju explained that when he went near, he did not see the priest, but saw flames on top of the palanquin. Afraid to be burned, he hid himself in the valley. His next attempt was on Priest Jinzen. However, an attendant of the priest, a child with short hair (*gohō dōji*) swinging a stick, preceded the monk, saw Eiju, and chased him away. Then a group of people was seen descending the mountain. It was the Priest Jie surrounded by a group of boys, about twenty or thirty of them, holding whips. One of them said, "There is something suspicious nearby," and another said, "This is the place where the old monk hides," and others said, "Let's bind him ... don't let him escape." About ten of them approached and pulled him out, and started to whip him, asking his identity. The old monk replied that he was a *tengu* from China and recounted the whole story: how when Yokei (Jikaku daishi) came by, he chanted the mantra of Fudō Myōō, and then a big blaze appeared on top of his palanquin, thus he had to run away to escape the flame. Then when Jinzen came and read the mantra of Fudō Myōō, Seitaka Dōji came and, holding an iron cane, chased him away. Hearing this, the group of boys then each took a turn and trampled on him. Thus beaten, the Japanese *tengu* took Eiju to a hot spring before sending him back to China (*Konjaku monogatari-shū* 4, pp. 145–49).

56. Gorai, "Tengu to minkan shinkō," in *Tengu zōshi*, vol. 27 of *Shinshū Nihon Emakimono Zenshū*, ed. Umezu Jirō (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1978), pp. 35–38.

57. Ibid., p. 44.

58. Ibid., pp. 44–45. *Tengu* are turbulent spirits: *onryō* or *kijin* on one side and protective deities on the other side.

59. Haruko Nishioka Wakabayashi, "Tengu: Images of the Buddhist Concepts of Evil in Medieval Japan" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1995).

60. *Konjaku monogatari-shū*, vol. 4, in *Iwanami koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 25 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1962), pp. 144–145. Iyanaga brings to my

attention that this tale represents a type of religious nationalism: a *tengu* from India comes to Japan via China, following the chanting of a phrase of the *Daihannyakyō*, traced to Mt. Hiei. Thus, the source of the sutra chanting originates in Japan and reaches India via China, representing a “reverse flow” of the dharma. Nichiren had a similar idea that in the age of *mappō*, the dharma flows from the East to the West. This brings to mind other kinds of religious nationalism, for instance the reverse *honji-suijaku* of later Shinto and the ideas of Hirata Atsutane in the Edo period.

61. *Tsukumogami-ki*, in Yokoyama Shigeru and Matsumoto Takanobu, eds., *Muromachi jidai monogatari taisei* 9 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1981). Komatsu has studied this text; see *Nihon Yōkai ibunroku*, pp. 195–202.

62. This text is cited in *Tsukumogami-ki*, 417–425. Fabio Rambelli discussed this text at length in “Objects, Rituals, Tradition: A Genealogy of the Memorial Services (*kuyō*) for Objects in Japan,” work in progress, pp. 24–29. Komatsu Kazuhiko also discussed this story in *Hyōrei shinkōron*, pp. 336–338 and *Nihon Yōkai ibunroku*, pp. 188–202. Also see accounts of such parade of *yōkai*, or the *Hyakki yagyō*, e.g., Tanaka Takako, *Hyakki yagyō no mieru toshi* (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1994) and Tanaka Takako, Hanada Kiyoteru, Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, and Komatsu Kazuhiko, *Zusetsu Hyakki yagyō emaki o yomu* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1999).

63. Chiba Toku, “Zashiki warashi,” in *Minzokugaku kenkyū* 3 (1952): pp. 61–84.

64. We also see mention of *zashiki warashi* in Yanagita Kunio’s “Momotarō no tanjō,” 1933 and Orikuchi Shinobu’s *Tabi to densetsu* 7: 1 and *Minkan densetsu* 12: pp. 3, 6.

65. Komatsu, *Hyōrei shinkōron*, pp. 26–27.

66. Kunio Yanagita, *The Legends of Tōno*, trans. Ronald A. Morse (Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, 1975), p. 22.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

68. Chiba, “Zashiki warashi,” pp. 8–9. Similarly, there are dog spirits that possess houses, *inugami tsuki*. If these *inugami* are satisfied, the house will be wealthy. If they are neglected, calamity will befall the house.

69. Komatsu has studied this Dragon Palace Child. Komatsu Kazuhiko, “The Dragon Palace Child: An Anthropological and Sociohistorical Approach,” *Current Anthropology* 28, no. 4 (August–October 1987): pp. 31–39. The story can be found in Seki Keigo, *Mukashibanashi no rekishi* (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1966), pp. 8–22. We can view the Dragon Palace Child as a type of wish-fulfilling child (*nyōi-dōji*), a transformation of the wish-fulfilling jewel (*nyoi hōju*) of the Dragon Palace. We recall that the possessor of the *nyoi hōju* is granted any wish and thus becomes a great king, as in the case of Daishokkan Kamatari. On this subject, see Abe Yasurō, “Daishokkan no seritsu,” *Kōwakamai kyoku kenkyū* 4 (Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 1986), pp. 80–195.

Transpositions of Metaphor and Imagery in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and Tantric Buddhist Practice

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TANTRIC BUDDHIST *SĀDHANA*-S, the complex visualization practices in which a practitioner first visualizes and then identifies him- or herself with a buddha or bodhisattva, are no doubt the result of a confluence of many cultural, historical, and religious phenomena ranging from folk practices and re-appropriation of Vedic themes to a working out of the complex doctrines of the Mahayana in ritual form, the further elaboration of visualizations of buddhas (*buddhānusmṛti*), and even shamanic practices. In this paper, I would like to suggest one small piece of this historical puzzle that, I believe, helps elucidate one facet of the relationship between the early esoteric tantric tradition in India and the more mainstream Mahayana sutras. Specifically, I would like to point out a pattern of imagery found in a number of Mahayana sutras presenting narratives of the encounter of a disciple with a buddha or bodhisattva—narratives that, I argue, constitute the prototype for tantric *sādhana*-s. Moreover, *sādhana*-s constitute a ritualization of these narratives. The episodes in which this pattern is most obvious are in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, a *circa* second-century Indian Mahayana text in which the hero of the story, Sudhana, encounters many bodhisattvas in his pilgrimage through South Asia. My contention is that there was a process in the development of *sādhana*-s—and perhaps in their incorporation into the elite traditions of Mahayana—that involved a transition from doctrine and metaphor to imagery in the Mahayana sutras, and then from imagery to ritual in tantra.

I will illustrate the first transition, which involves a literary device that I will call the “concretization of doctrine,” with a passage from the *Samādhirāja Sūtra*. In this sutra, the Buddha expounds a form of meditative concentration (*samādhi*) called “manifestation of the sameness of the essential nature of all dharmas.” He explains that the one characteristic necessary for acquiring a pure mind is that of sameness or evenness (*sama*) of mind toward all beings. This teaching brings earlier teachings of equanimity (*upekṣa*), as an attitude or disposition, together with the Mahayana understanding that all elements of existence are the same, that is that their basic nature is empty. After the Buddha gives several attitudes and practices entailed in this *samādhi*, a

number of events occur; many in the audience achieve various degrees of understanding and awakening, the earth quakes, and finally:

a boundless light flooded the world and the whole world system.... All living beings were suffused with that light. And the sun and moon, though powerful, mighty and strong, seemed not to shine at all. Even the pitch-dark spaces between worlds, even they were suffused by that light, and the beings who had been reborn there suddenly became aware of each other, saying, "What! Could it be that another being has also been reborn here!" And so it was down to the great Avīci Hell.¹

Here the idea of the sameness of all dharmas is rendered in the metaphor of light, which is turned into a display of visual imagery. Light flooding the world is a common image in Mahayana sutras, and in this particular case, the event of light suffusing and penetrating all corners of the world, from the highest realms in which the gods live to the lowest hell-realms equally, is a concrete symbol for the very doctrine of the sameness of all dharmas that is propounded by the Buddha just previous to this event. First, the Buddha preaches an attitude of equanimity toward all beings and an understanding of the sameness of the nature of all dharmas. Then, the light manifests as a symbol of this concept, permeating the highest and lowest worlds equally without any partiality or discrimination. This example suggests that symbolic visual imagery in this text is an attempt to evoke a sensual presentation homologous with a cognitive concept. A specific doctrine or idea is concretized in a visual image.

Visual imagery like this from the sutras becomes further concretized and embodied in tantric *sādhana*-s. These practices focus on *maṇḍala*-s containing a rich array of imagery and symbolism. Tantric *maṇḍala*-s depict a central buddha or bodhisattva in his or her buddha-field, and generally include the representation of a palace on a lotus coming out of the sea, the central figure in the palace, and buddhas and bodhisattvas arranged directionally around it, along with a variety of other scenes that vary from *maṇḍala* to *maṇḍala*. All of the details of the deities' gestures, dress, implements, positions, facial expressions, and surrounding environment are concretizations of specific Buddhist concepts. A *sādhana* entails the construction of a *maṇḍala* in the imagination of the meditator—often in explicit detail and with all of these cognitive concepts embodied in the *maṇḍala* in mind—and his or her symbolic transmutation into an awakened being by identifying body, speech, and mind with those of the represented deity. The process also includes a strong element of devotional practice and the abundant use of the symbolic vocabulary of tantric Buddhism, including visual symbols, *mudrā*-s, and mantras associated with individual buddhas.

Although tantric *sādhana*-s vary considerably in content, using many different deities as objects of meditation, most show basic structural similarities. The following is an outline of the stages that are often standard in Buddhist *sādhana*-s. I am drawing primarily from three visualizations of Tārā found in the *Sāadhanamāla*, a collection of disparate *sādhana*-s compiled in the eleventh century, but containing many practices dating from the earlier phases of tantric Buddhism.² The basic stages include preliminary practices such as purifying both the practitioner and the site, uttering “seed syllables,” paying homage to relevant buddhas and bodhisattvas, confessing sins, dedicating merit from the practice to all beings, and pronouncing the three refuges. The main visualization generally consists of envisioning in the mind’s eye a buddha or bodhisattva, often in fairly explicit detail, with various symbolic implements and physical characteristics. This “generation phase” is essentially the construction of a *maṇḍala* in the imagination. In some *tantra*-s, detailed instructions are given for visualization of quite intricate *maṇḍala*-s. Some have a multi-leveled palace with pillars, banners, and jewels. The *Gulhyasamāja maṇḍala* has thirty-two deities, all of whom are to be envisioned having precise postures, gestures, colors, and ornaments. All of these are to be maintained in the mind’s eye in detail. A passage from a Tārā *sādhana* gives a flavor of the language:

Then one should visualize the blessed, holy Tārā proceeding from the yellow seed syllable *tām* situated on the spotless sphere of the moon, which is inside the filaments of a lotus in full flower, in the middle of the moon already visualized in one’s heart. One should conceive her as deep green in color, with two arms, a smiling face, endowed with every virtue, and free of all defects, adorned with jewelry of heavenly gold, rubies, pearls, and jewels. Her two breasts are decorated with beautiful garlands, her arms wrapped in bracelets and bangles.... She is a radiant and seductive figure in the prime of youth, with eyes like a blue autumn lotus, her body dressed in heavenly garments, seated in a half-lotus posture in a circle of light rays as large as a cart-wheel. With her right hand, she makes the sign of granting wishes; in her left she holds a blue lotus flower in full bloom. One may cultivate this image of the blessed one as long as one wishes.

Then, the [image of] the blessed one [Tārā] is led away on numerous bundles of light-rays illuminating the triple world. [The rays] issue from the yellow seed syllable *tām*, which is in the filaments of the lotus in the circle of the moon situated in one’s heart. Then one sees the blessed one, perfect since beginningless time, as the essence of truth (*jñānasattva*), brought forth from empty space. When she has been brought forth and established on the firma-

ment, one should receive her by offering oblation at her feet with scented water and fragrant flowers in a jeweled vase. One should worship her ... with flowers, incense, lamps, food, scents, garlands, perfumes, garments, umbrellas, flags, bells, banners, and so on.³

The culmination of the practice is the "completion phase," the identification of the practitioner with the deity. In some *sādhana*-s, such as the one above, the practitioner achieves this identification envisioning the *maṇḍala* in front of him or her and then "entering" the *maṇḍala* and merging with the deity. Others avoid the initial duality altogether and instruct the practitioner to envision him- or herself from the outset *as* the deity.⁴ In the Tārā *sādhana* quoted above, the visualization ends with the instruction to see the entire universe and oneself as Tārā. The entire scene is then dissolved back into emptiness through a series of stages.

With this ritual in mind, let us turn to the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. The text was composed in India, and by the time of its translation into Chinese by Buddhābhaddra in the early fifth century, it had been incorporated into the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, a large collection of a number of sūtras. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, another text within the *Avataṃsaka* collection, circulated in India as separate texts before this incorporation.⁵ The *Gaṇḍavyūha* itself was composed between the first and early third centuries.⁶ The location of its initial composition was likely in southern India, where most of the story takes place; however, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Avataṃsaka* as a whole were important in northern India and Central Asia, and portions of the extant versions were likely composed and augmented there. When the latter was originally brought to China, it was from Khotan rather than from India, and historically later portions of the text refer to Kashgar and even China.⁷ Thus it is a composite product of the cosmopolitan, multi-cultural milieu of South and Central Asia in the early centuries of the common era. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* itself, however, is a product of India.

The extent of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*'s influence in the Indian cultural sphere is unclear. There is relatively little surviving commentary from India on the text in comparison to that on works such as the Perfection of Wisdom literature. Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly part of the Buddhist curriculum in the great Buddhist universities and was widely read by Indian scholars, as it is referred to in a number of prominent commentarial texts including the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśaśāstra*, Śāntideva's *Śikṣasamuccaya* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Kamalaśīla's first *Bhāvanākrama*, and Bhāvaviveka's *Madhyamakahrdayakārikās*.⁸ It occupies a prominent place in the Nepalese canon as one of the nine *Vaipulya* texts, but made its greatest impact in East Asia, where the *Avataṃsaka* became the basis for the Hua-yen school in China and the Kegon in Japan. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* was evidently important during the Buddhist period in Indonesia, as extensive scenes from it are represented on the great Buddhist monument Barabudur.⁹

The contents of the sutra are full of luxuriant—even extravagant—visionary imagery. In the opening passage of the text we find the Buddha in Jeta Grove at Rājagṛha, the place of many of the Buddha's sutra dialogues. In the Pāli suttas, the Buddha is often surrounded by a group of his disciples, is asked a question, and gives a discourse in reply. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* begins in this standard way, except that he is in a palace or peak-roofed building (Skt. *kūṭāgāra*). But the simple scene immediately gives way to a lavish visionary episode in which the dwelling expands, becoming infinitely vast.

The surface of the earth appeared to be made of an indestructible diamond, and the ground covered with a net of all the finest jewels, strewn with flowers of many jewels, with enormous gems strewn all over; it was adorned with sapphire pillars, with well-proportioned decorations of world-illuminating pearls from the finest water, with all kinds of gems, combined in pairs, adorned with heaps of gold and jewels, with a dazzling array of turrets, arches, chambers, windows, and balconies made of all kinds of precious stones, arrayed in the forms of all world-rulers, and embellished with oceans of worlds of jewels, covered with flags, banners, and pennants flying in front of all the portals, the adornments pervading the cosmos with a network of lights.... The Jeta grove and buddha-fields as numerous as particles within untold buddha-fields all became co-extensive.¹⁰

The entire first chapter slowly develops this scene that had suddenly arisen before the group in Jeta Grove. There are endlessly winding rivers of fragrant water that murmur the teachings of the buddhas; palaces that float by in the air; countless mountains arrayed all around; clouds laced with webs of jewels and raining down diamonds, garlands, flowers, and multi-colored robes; celestial maidens flying through the air trailing banners behind them while countless lotus blossoms rustle in the incense-filled air. After the initial description of the scene, bodhisattvas from distant world-systems in the ten directions begin to arrive, and with each of their appearances, more miraculous scenes emerge. The wonders of what has now become a buddha-field are described in rich detail, and by the end of the chapter, we have a geometrical array of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and disciples in a circle—and the text actually uses the term “*maṇḍala*,” no doubt in its primary meaning as simply “circle”—surrounding Śākyamuni Buddha in an idealized, mythical landscape filled lights, jewels, rivers, and palaces.

The *Gaṇḍavyūha* is by no means unique in constructing such “proto-*maṇḍala*-s”; quite a number of Mahayana sutras contain such visionary episodes that establish a sacred, mythical space by arranging buddhas and bodhisattvas in a geometric pattern. The *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sūtra* offers

a more succinct account of such a transformation of an ordinary scene into a *maṇḍala* in the story of a devout bodhisattva named Ruciraketu. Interestingly, the following episode appears to take place while Ruciraketu is practicing recollection of the Buddha (Skt. *buddhānusmṛti*), a visualization exercise not unlike later *sādhana*-s in which the practitioner envisions the Buddha in front of him or her, contemplating his qualities.

While Ruciraketu was recollecting the qualities of the Buddha, his house became immense and extensive, made of cat's eye, adorned with numerous divine jewels, and, transformed by the tathāgata, it was filled with fragrance beyond the divine. And in the house there appeared in the four directions, seats made of divine gems. On those seats were divine cushions covered with fine cotton cloth, and on the cushions were divine lotuses adorned with jewels, transformations brought about by the tathāgata. And on those lotuses appeared four blessed buddhas: in the east appeared the tathāgata Akṣobhya; in the south appeared the tathāgata Ratnaketu; in the west appeared the tathāgata Amitāyus; in the north appeared the tathāgata Dundabhisvara.

Then, as the great city of Rājagṛha was pervaded with a great light, the great three-fold multiple world system and world systems in the ten directions as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges river became pervaded with light. Divine flowers rained down, heavenly musical instruments were heard, and the beings in the great three-fold multiple world system became, by the Buddha's power, possessed of divine bliss.¹¹

Here we see a similar theme of a dwelling becoming infinitely vast and transforming into a Pure Land with buddhas appearing in each of the cardinal directions, unmistakably suggesting *maṇḍala* imagery.¹² Such imagery serves various functions in Mahayana sutras. It establishes the place as a *tīrtha*, a sacred place conducive to communion between sacred and ordinary beings. It also suggests a "buddha's-eye view" of the scene, thus inviting the reader to see the world as a buddha does by participating in his or her vision. Moreover, it makes up for a certain lack of credibility that Mahayana sutra writers must have experienced when writing "Thus have I heard" by suggesting that the events of the sutra occurred on a supernatural plane of existence and thus were not available to those who had long ago established the Pāli Canon. In fact, such scenes are a common literary device in Mahayana sutras.¹³

Having established the setting of the sutra as a buddha-field, the subsequent chapters of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* narrate the story of Sudhana visiting numerous colorful bodhisattvas around South Asia trying to discover the

“practice of the bodhisattvas.” These include monks, nuns, ascetics, practitioners of various crafts, goddesses, children, and quite a few laywomen, including even a prostitute who draws men to the dharma using “kisses and embraces.” All illustrate and exemplify some facet of Buddhist thought or practice. Many of Sudhana’s encounters are variations on the initial visionary scene produced by the Buddha, and include approaching a seemingly ordinary setting only to find it suddenly transformed into an extraordinary display in the presence of the bodhisattva. Although each bodhisattva is especially skilled in some element of dharma practice, they all (except the last two) send Sudhana to the next teacher, claiming that they ultimately don’t know the practice of the bodhisattva.

In the final two climactic encounters, Sudhana presumably finds what he is looking for when he visits Maitreya and Samantabhadra. Upon encountering Maitreya, the buddha of the future, Sudhana finds himself before the immense “tower [or palace—again, a *kūṭāgāra*] of the adornments of Vairocana.” The palace represents the *dharmadhātu*, the realm of suchness wherein all phenomena interpenetrate and the microcosm and macrocosm become co-extensive. Maitreya leads Sudhana through the door into the palace, and within it Sudhana sees that it is immeasurably vast, filling all of space, and adorned with the lavish scenery that is by now a common motif in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*: jewels, banners, flowers, and immense mansions with archways, mirrors, turrets, chambers, sculptures, lush vegetation, singing birds, and lotus ponds. He also sees hundreds of thousands of other similar structures symmetrically arrayed in all directions. Sudhana bows reverently and at that moment, sees himself in all of the structures. Then he sees Maitreya’s entire career as a bodhisattva with different episodes and lifetimes visible in each of the palaces. Among them he then sees one tower in the center, larger than the rest, and in it he beholds a billion-world universe, within which are one hundred million sets of four continents. Within each of these he sees Maitreya enacting the career of a bodhisattva. On the walls of the towers, within each piece in the vast mosaic patterns covering the surface, he sees similar scenes. Just as he perceives infinite spatial depths, he sees into vast stretches of time, both past and future, and seems to experience countless eons in just a few moments. Then, with a snap of his finger, Maitreya causes the entire spectacle to disappear, declaring: “This is the nature of things; all elements of existence are characterized by malleability and impermanence, and are controlled by the knowledge of the bodhisattvas; thus, they are by nature not fully real, but are like illusions, dreams, reflections.”¹⁴

In his final encounter, Sudhana approaches the bodhisattva Samantabhadra. After a number of preliminary signs and displays of light, Sudhana, in a state of profound concentration and with all his energy and senses directed toward the vision of Samantabhadra, sees the great bodhisattva seated on a

lotus. Light rays emanate from Samantabhadra's body illuminating all the worlds throughout the cosmos, and upon contemplation of Samantabhadra's body, Sudhana sees within it billions of buddha-fields in all their detail, with rivers, oceans, jewel mountains, continents, villages, forests, and countless different orders of life. He also sees the succession of all of these worlds simultaneously in the endless past and infinite future eons.¹⁵

Seeing this vision, he attains the "ten states of perfect knowledge" and, upon Samantabhadra's laying his hand on Sudhana's head, attains even deeper forms of awakening, seeing in the countless world-systems now visible to him countless Samantabhadras laying hands on countless Sudhanas. In the final phase of Sudhana's encounter with the great bodhisattva, upon contemplating Samantabhadra's body, he is able to see inside it, wherein he sees countless buddha-fields containing numerous buddhas surrounded by assemblies of bodhisattvas all teaching the dharma. He sees countless universes inside the pores of Samantabhadra's body, all containing various orders of sentient beings. Then he enters into Samantabhadra's body and the worlds therein, and begins enacting the career of a bodhisattva, thus attaining his sought-after practice of the bodhisattvas.

Then, Sudhana, contemplating the body of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, saw in each pore untold multitudes of buddha-fields, each filled with countless buddhas. And in each of the buddha-fields, he saw the buddhas surrounded by assemblies of bodhisattvas. He saw all of these multitudes of lands situated and arranged in various ways, in various patterns, with multiple manifestations, mountain ranges, clouds in the sky, various buddhas arising, and various proclamations of the wheel of dharma. And just as he saw in one pore, he saw in every pore, in all of the marks [of a superior person], in the limbs and parts of Samantabhadra's body. In each he saw multitudes of worlds, and from them emerged clouds of created buddha-bodies, as many as the number of atoms in all buddha-fields, pervading all worlds in the ten directions and bringing developing beings to full awakening.

Then Sudhana, guided by the words and teachings of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, entered into all the worlds within Samantabhadra's body and cultivated beings there toward maturity.... As he entered one buddha-field with qualities as many as atoms in untold buddha-fields within Samantabhadra, so with each moment of awareness he entered more such buddha-fields; and as in one pore, so it was in all pores. In each moment of awareness he proceeded further among worlds as countless as atoms in untold buddha-fields, going into worlds of endless eons—and still he did not come to an end.... He moved through one buddha-field in an

eon. He moved through another in as many eons as atoms in untold buddha-fields without moving from that field. In each moment of awareness he cultivated beings toward full awakening. Thus he continued until he achieved equality with Samantabhadra in his practices and vows, and with all tathāgatas in their pervasion of all buddha-fields, in their fulfillment of practices, in their full awakening, visionary transformations, and visions, in their turning of the wheel of dharma, in their purity of knowledge, in their voice and speech, in their level of awakening, in their great friendliness and compassion, and in the inconceivable enlightening transformation of the bodhisattvas.¹⁶

This vivid passage describes a collapse of spatial and temporal categories as Sudhana enters many worlds simultaneously and, in a single moment of awareness, spends eons in each world. As he moves through Samantabhadra's cosmic body, he attains "equality with Samantabhadra," becoming identified with him with respect to dharma practice.

There exist some marked similarities between the imagery and structure of the visionary episodes of the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* and those of tantric *sādhana*-s. If we look only at the three visionary episodes I have mentioned in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*—the opening scene with Śākyamuni, Maitreya's palace, and the merging with Samantabhadra—we see the basic components of a *sādhana*. The first is the visionary construction of an idealized, sacred environment—a geometrically arrayed *maṇḍala* with a central buddha or bodhisattva and various other figures surrounding him or her. Introductory passages in which the Buddha creates (or reveals) a Pure Land in the midst of the ordinary world are common in Mahayana sutras and must surely have been models for the *maṇḍala*-s used by *tantrika*-s.

Although the Tārā *sādhana* quoted above does not contain one, the palace (Skt. *kūṭāgāra*) is a prominent theme in both the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* and tantric *sādhana*-s. This architectural structure appears to have had a special significance to Indian Buddhists. The Buddha appears in one at the beginning of the sutra, and Sudhana's vision under the guidance of Maitreya is that of the cosmos presented as an immense *kūṭāgāra* with multiple *kūṭāgāra*-s inside. In some *tantra*-s, part of the generation phase is "generation of the residence," which contains a *kūṭāgāra* with seats for four deities.¹⁷ Indeed, many *maṇḍala*-s are themselves conceived of as palaces that are at the same time models of the cosmos or a buddha-field, and the visual representations of these palaces often contain the three-story, peaked-roof design of Indian *kūṭāgāra*-s. The palace-cosmos homology is quite prominent in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*, which may contain its earliest extant representation in Buddhist literature.

The prominence of the palatial dwelling in Mahayana sutras is closely related to another homology that becomes widespread in Buddhism as it

becomes integrated into classical Indian culture: that of buddha and king. In both text and *maṇḍala*, buddhas preside over buddha-fields as ruler and as object of devotion. As the creator and leader of the realm, the buddha, although he or she is not described as a monarch in the literature, implicitly assumes the place of royalty. That buddhas were strongly associated with royalty is clear from the royal imagery in descriptions and artistic depictions of buddhas in their buddha-fields and especially the way the *kūṭāgāra* is represented as a magnificent royal palace. Similarly, tantric *maṇḍala*-s are full of royal symbolism and are directly related to royal power. The *maṇḍala* represents not only the cosmos, but the cosmic kingdom of a deity who inhabits the center of the *maṇḍala*, as the king stands at the center of the kingdom. The conquest of a kingdom was sometimes symbolized in India by the conquering king going to the four compass points in his realm, traveling the periphery, then coming back to the capital in the center.¹⁸ The royal imagery common to *maṇḍala*-s and sutras also draws on the prominent theme in India of the *cakravartin*, the divine king who turns the wheel of the kingdom from the center. Much of the other imagery found in both tantric *maṇḍala*-s and the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* is also suggestive of royalty, such as jewels, banners, garlands, and emanations of light from the bodies of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Aside from the mere resemblance in imagery, though, the connection between the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* and *sādhana*-s is evident in crucial narrative and structural elements. For instance, when Sudhana approaches the various bodhisattvas on his journey, they often become radiant, supernatural beings, emitting lights and performing miraculous acts. Such transformations and displays call to mind tantric visualization in front of the practitioner, in which the meditator envisions a resplendent deity in front of him or her in terms similar to those used in describing the bodhisattvas in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*. Most striking, however, is the theme of “entering,” found in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* and acted out in *sādhana*-s. Entering (Skt. *praveśa*) and related concepts, such as “penetration,” are key metaphors in the Buddhist vocabulary of practice and awakening.¹⁹ In many Buddhist texts, they serve as metaphors for knowledge and discernment, denoting the penetration of insight through illusory forms and ideas to the truth of things as they are. Such metaphors are especially important in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*; in fact, the entire text could be read as a rendering of such metaphors in visionary imagery, through its repeated images of the interpenetration of all phenomena as well as the final two chapters in which Sudhana enters first Maitreya’s *kūṭāgāra*, and finally, Samantabhadra’s body, thereby attaining full awakening. When Sudhana sees the world as it is, he sees each phenomenon as distinct and at the same time entering into every other phenomenon. In order to attain this unimpeded vision of all things in one thing and of one thing in all, he himself must enter the *dharmadhātu*, represented by Maitreya’s palace, and

then Samanabhadra's cosmic body, where he sees himself reduplicated endlessly in all the vision's forms. As the *Samādhirāja* concretizes the notion of the sameness of all dharmas, the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* concretizes the metaphors of entering and penetration by presenting them in narrative visionary imagery. Tantric practitioners, in turn, embodied these metaphors and imagery by ritualizing such narratives and envisioning their own entry into the deity. Indeed, the encounter of Sudhana and Samantabhadra—with Samantabhadra's extraordinary appearance and Sudhana's entering into his body, thereby identifying himself with the great bodhisattva—is identical in its basic structure to the completion phase of a *sādhana*.

Even the phase of dissolution in the *sādhana*, in which the practitioner dissolves the image back into emptiness, appears to be prefigured in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*. Maitreya, after showing Sudhana the spectacular vision of the cosmic *kūṭāgāra*, snaps his finger and makes the entire scene disappear, claiming that the world-appearance is controlled by the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and can be dissolved by them. It is just such a claim that is enacted in the *sādhana* when the practitioner ritually creates and dissolves a world, thereby appropriating the powers of the awakened beings.

From the similarity between tantric *sādhana*-s and such visionary episodes in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* and other Mahayana sutras, I am led to believe that such episodes are not only a precedent to, but also a prototype of, tantric *maṇḍala*-s and visualizations, and that these practices are ritualizations of encounters such as those in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*. That is, tantric *sādhana*-s are ritual reconstructions of the face-to-face encounter of disciple and awakened being represented in the sutras—an encounter that allows the practitioner to become symbolically identified with an awakened being, as Sudhana becomes identified with Samantabhadra.

While finding a great deal of the imagery common to tantric practices and *maṇḍala*-s present in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*, a circa second century text, is surprising, finding the basic elements of the *sādhana* is quite unexpected given the lack of evidence for tantric Buddhism until centuries later.²⁰ It is on the issue of dating, however, that a potential problem with this argument occurs, for it is well-known that Mahayana sutras often contain interpolations from later dates and are, therefore, cumulative creations. Thus even though scholarly consensus puts the date of the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*'s composition around the second century, that does not mean the versions that we have in our libraries today accurately reflect early versions of the text. In fact, one could be tempted on the evidence I have presented to make precisely the opposite argument—that the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* was amended after the emergence of tantra by tantric-influenced scholars, and that the encounters described above reflect the later influence of the tradition (although tantric influence hardly seems necessary to explain the contents of the text). Nevertheless, although the sutra has, in fact, been appended and different versions of the

text have circulated in India, China, and Tibet, Luis Gomez's study of the extant manuscripts, as well as early references to the text in other Buddhist literature, show that early versions of the sutra, ones that clearly pre-date any known tantric traditions, *do* in fact contain all of the elements I have mentioned.²¹ We have, then, a second-century text containing the basic elements of the defining ritual of a tradition for which there is no evidence until hundreds of years later.

While it is risky to make historical assertions of "influence" based primarily on internal evidence and resemblance, I believe the similarities between the visionary encounters in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and *sādhana*-s are clear enough as to constitute solid evidence of a historical connection. We must rely mostly on internal evidence for this assertion because so little is known about the history the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in India or of how it was used in that cultural context. It is apparent that it directly influenced at least one tantric text, the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, but it is impossible to say from any other evidence, except from the text itself, that it contains "proto-tantric" material. Of course, these elements in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* do not provide an exclusive "explanation" for the emergence of tantric *sādhana*-s, which no doubt had a number of sources. They do, however, suggest a resource that *tantrika*-s likely drew upon in developing their rituals. In short, the Buddhist tantric *sādhana* is, among other things, a ritualization of narrative encounters between disciple and buddha or bodhisattva—an attempt to ritually re-create a mythical world and re-enact this ideal situation of encounter and identification with an awakened being in ritual time and space.

NOTES

1. Louis O. Gómez and Jonathan Silk, eds., "The Sūtra of the King of Samādhis," in *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle: Three Mahāyāna Texts* (Ann Arbor: Collegiate Institute for the Study of Buddhist Literature and Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1989).
2. Benoytosh Bhattacharya, ed., *Sādhnamāla* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1968). Some translations of Tārā sādhanas from this text exist; see Edward Conze, ed., *Buddhist Meditation* (New York: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956), pp. 133–139; Luis O. Gómez, "Two Tantric Meditations: Visualizing the Deity," in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 318–327; and Martin Willson, *In Praise of Tārā: Songs of the Saviouress* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1986), pp. 337–350.
3. Bhattacharya, *Sādhnamāla*.
4. Tibetans sometimes divide visualizations into "generation in front" and "self-generation." See H. H. the Dalai Lama, Tsong-ka-pa, and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Deity Yoga in Action and Performance Tantras* (Ithica: Snow Lion Publications, 1981).
5. Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).
6. Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Japan: Kufs Publication, 1980); Luis O. Gómez, "Selected Verses from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*: Text, Critical Apparatus and Translation" (doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1967).
7. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*.
8. Gomez, "Selected Verses from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*."
9. Luis O. Gómez, ed., *Barabudur: History and Significance of a Buddhist Monument*, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 2 (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1981).
10. P. L. Vaidya, ed., *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960).
11. S. Bagchi, ed., *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra*, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 8. (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1967).
12. Other Mahayana sutras containing such imagery include the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, *Śūraṅgama*, *Pañcaviṃśatikasahasrika Prajñāpāramitā*, and *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*.
13. David L. McMahan, "Orality, Writing, and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahāyāna," *History of Religions* 37, no. 3 (1998).

14. Vaidya, *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Geri H. Malandra, *Unfolding a Maṇḍala: The Buddhist Cave Temples at Ellora* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).
18. David Gordon White, introduction to *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
19. For an examination of the importance and function of these and other metaphors in Buddhism, see David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (New York and London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), chap. 2.
20. Scholarly consensus puts the emergence of tantra no earlier than the sixth or seventh century. See Stephen Hodge, "Considerations on the Dating and Geographical Origins of the *Mahāvairocanaḥisambodhi-sūtra*," in *The Buddhist Forum III*, eds. Tadeusz Skorupski and Ulrich Pagel (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1994), p. 59. The earliest extant Buddhist *maṇḍala*-s are at the Ellora Caves (11 and 12) and date from the seventh or early eighth century.
21. For a discussion of the history and translations of the text, see Gómez, *Selected Verses from the Gaṇḍavyūha*, pp. xxiii–xxxvii. I wish to thank Professor Gómez for confirming my information with respect to Chinese manuscripts.

Ritual Syntax and Cognitive Theory

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PRÉCIS

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY comprises four parts. The first explicates Frits Staal's 1979 claim that ritual is meaningless in such a way as to create a fuller and more coherent understanding than the majority of his critics have done. Most reactions to Staal's claim that ritual is meaningless have not only proven unproductive in terms of advancing the theory of ritual studies, but have obscured the value of his methodological contribution—the syntactic analysis of ritual activity. The second section discusses two interrelated issues: the application of the concept of syntax to ritual performance, and the utility of employing "tree diagrams"—familiar from the syntactic analysis of sentences—in developing a consistent technology for analyzing ritual activity. Briefly, the comparative study of a variety of languages has been critical to the origin of modern linguistics and to its ongoing development. In the same way comparative studies are also critical to the future development of a systematic understanding of ritual. The only way a meaningful comparative approach can be established is through the use of descriptive techniques that are systematic, detailed, and shared by researchers in the field. As a tool, the technique of tree diagramming implies certain limited, foundational theoretical assumptions, but does not necessarily entail any of the more explicit linguistic theories. The third section provides an example of the application of syntactic analysis by means of tree diagrams. The Vedic *agnihotra* ritual is analyzed and its structure discussed in relation to the possibility of it being the source of the Shingon *homa* (Jpn. *goma*). The fourth section outlines some of the ways in which a syntactic analysis of ritual can contribute to a cognitive theory of ritual. As a form of activity, ritual is organized in systematic ways. These systematic and generalizable organizations of activity reflect the ways in which humans generally organize activity, that is, there are cognitive correlates to the structures of organized activity.

I. READING STAAL

In 1979 Frits Staal published an article that outlined a new approach to the study of ritual. That article was entitled "The Meaninglessness of Ritual."¹ The provocative claim embodied in the essay's title has proven highly controversial, generating more heat than light.²

Staal's claim regarding the meaninglessness of ritual has at least five dimensions, making his claim much more complex than is usually recognized:

1. Rituals are not meaningful by reference, that is, symbolic meanings attributed to the elements of ritual—deities, implements, offerings, or actions—are ancillary to the primary quality of ritual, which is systematically organized activity.
2. A formalistic treatment of ritual activities, what Staal has called "ritual syntax," may be heuristically beneficial to the study of ritual generally. As will be discussed below, it seems to this author to be the only effective technique for establishing a meaningful comparative study of ritual, one that can transcend the boundaries of different religious cultures.
3. While they are performing rituals, practitioners are not concerned with the symbolic meaning of the ritual elements, but rather with properly following the rules of the ritual performance. The qualification—while performing rituals—is an essential one often ignored by Staal's critics.
4. Ritual elements are open to an almost unconstrained range of interpretations, that is, meaning is being attributed to—and not discovered in—the ritual.³
5. Ritual actions are more stable over time and across cultural boundaries than are their interpretations.

Most of the criticism of Staal, if not overtly hostile,⁴ suffers from a failure to exercise the principle of charity. The term "charity" is not being used here in the moral sense—that of doing a kind act, such as giving something to someone more needy than ourselves. On this reading one might mistakenly conclude that Staal's evidence, arguments, and conclusions need to be handled gently—like a package with a FRAGILE HANDLE WITH CARE label on it. The validity of Staal's evidence, arguments, and conclusions does not depend on any kind of special handling on our part.

Charity is used here in the technical philosophic sense of the epistemological principle that one should assume that one's interlocutor is attempting

to say something meaningful and worthwhile.⁵ Such a reading is generally considered to provide a more coherent and useful understanding than any “uncharitable” reading. The purpose of doing so here is not to attempt to settle these issues—about which perhaps too much has already been written—but rather to provide enough clarity to allow the reader to see beyond what has become for so many critics the sole focus of attention when considering Staal’s contributions to the study of ritual. Therefore, instead of attempting here to treat all of the criticisms—and misunderstandings—of Staal’s ideas, we will attempt to create a more coherent and useful reading than that provided by many of his critics.⁶

There are three key steps to creating a more coherent reading of Staal’s essay. The first is to locate his comments in the context of his own research, that is, the Vedic Agnicayana ritual. The second is to take him at his word when he tells us what theory of ritual he is rejecting. The third is to amplify the claim that ritual is meaningless by examining what else Staal has said about meaning. In closing I feel that it is important to also discuss at least one way in which Staal has been misunderstood, because that misunderstanding has perhaps contributed to the failure to attend to the value of his proposal for a syntactic analysis of ritual.

I.A. Staal’s Research as Context for His Claim

Examined in isolation some of Staal’s assertions about ritual appear to be universal claims, that is claims that he intends to apply to all rituals, everywhere and at all times. It is more appropriate to locate Staal’s assertions in the context of his own research program, that is, into the much more limited context of the Agnicayana ritual with which he opens his 1979 essay. For example Staal states that “There are no symbolic meanings going through their [i.e., ritual performers’] minds when they are engaged in performing ritual.”⁷ If we take this statement out of context and treat it as an unqualified universal claim, then a single example of a ritual practitioner who is familiar enough with performing the ritual to simultaneously also reflect on the symbolic references will of course disprove the universal claim. If instead of reading Staal as if he is making universal claims, we remember that he makes it clear that he is talking about the results of his own research, then the claim is not only more limited, but also more informative.⁸

At the same time, it is important to note that such contextualization does not mean that Staal’s comments are necessarily limited to the single performance of a single Vedic ritual in 1975. In my own training in the Shingon ritual tradition on Kōyasan, I was only concerned with performing the ritual properly. One might suggest that of course, as a trainee, proper performance would be my utmost concern. However, neither the ritual manual nor any of my direct oral instruction made any reference to

symbolic meanings. Of course, I “knew” that Agni was the Vedic god of the sacrificial fire, but reflection on that association did not constitute in any way an explicit part of the ritual performance.

I.B. What Theory of Ritual Meaning Is Staal Rejecting?

Another aspect of creating a more charitable reading might be to take Staal at his word when he tells us what theory of ritual meaning he is arguing against—another aspect of appropriately contextualizing his claims. He tells us quite specifically, in the opening line of the first section of his essay that “A widespread but erroneous assumption about ritual is that it consists in symbolic activities which refer to something else.”⁹ In other words, it is a referential theory of ritual meaning—the idea that ritual elements are meaningful because they have some intrinsic quality that refers in a fixed and invariant manner to some symbolic meaning—that he is arguing against.

Despite this apparently clear statement, some critics interpret him as failing to understand that all contemporary theories of ritual “assume that rituals must refer to something in order to have meaning,”¹⁰ while others interpret Staal in such a fashion that Staal himself is presented as holding exactly such a referential theory of meaning.¹¹

Such an assertion about the location of meaning is now for most philosophically informed scholars unproblematic. However, at the time of his writing the “Meaninglessness” essay, and still today in much of the discussion of ritual in religious studies, all of the attention is given to the symbolic referents of ritual elements. In other words, the ritual is “explained” by saying “this stands for that, and this other stands for that other.” One might consider, for example, a (non-theological) explanation of the Eucharist: the bread refers to Christ’s body, the wine refers to his blood, the meal refers to the Last Supper. Historically, since the nineteenth century one of the primary debates in the study of ritual was over its relation to myth: Did ritual simply enact myth? Was myth the text of ritual? Which was primary, and how then did the other derive from it?¹² Even in many contemporary cognitive theoretical approaches to ritual, one finds primacy placed on the symbolic referents of a ritual, rather than to the organization of the ritual activity, as explaining that ritual.¹³

I.C. What Else Does Staal Say about Meaning?

Staal’s comments regarding meaning found in a later work serve to clarify his rejection of ritual—and so many other things—as having meaning. In his discussion of the “positivist critique of meaning” he points out that “most contemporary philosophers accept that meaning is not the kind

of commodity that can be assigned to everything; it is primarily a property of linguistic expressions."¹⁴ This hardly accords with the representation of Staal as holding that meanings are "invariant and intrinsic to the [non-linguistic] phenomena under investigation."¹⁵

Staal's point here may also help to clarify one of his statements in the "Meaninglessness" article that is frequently cited by his critics, "In the development of our concepts and theories of ritual it is only a small step from 'changing meaning' to: 'no intrinsic meaning' and 'structural meaning,' and from there to: 'no meaning.'"¹⁶ Ritual activity, such as the aspersion rite Staal is discussing when he makes this claim, has no "meaning" intrinsic to itself, nor does it have meaning because of its network of interconnections with other ritual activities—that is, no structural meaning—because ritual activities are not the kinds of things that can reasonably be considered to bear meaning.¹⁷ Rather, the meaning that they have arise from our discussions of them, that is, our own treatment of them as lexical elements within our own discursive realms, elements to which meaning can be ascribed. Thus, when one critic says that "Rituals trade in signs that don't *possess* meaning so much as they *invite* meaning,"¹⁸ I hear not a rejection of Staal, but simply a repetition of Staal's very point.

I find Staal's point here consistent with his methodological stance regarding the study of mysticism.¹⁹ Including his earlier publication *Exploring Mysticism* (1975) can inform our understanding of his approach to the issue of ritual and meaning by placing that topic into the larger context of the development of Staal's own thinking. While it had been frequently claimed that one could not study mysticism rationally because it in itself transcended the rational, Staal asserted that "Trees and rocks cannot be meaningfully called rational, but it does not follow that they are therefore unintelligible or cannot be studied rationally."²⁰ We can read this to mean that although trees and rocks have no meaning in themselves—and that any meaning they have is the result of our attribution of meaning to them—they can be studied in a systematic and rational fashion. Like ritual, they have structures, components, and histories—which in an important sense we bring into being under those categories by the questions we ask.

I.D. Correcting One Misunderstanding

Finally, there is one misunderstanding of Staal that needs to be addressed directly. Staal is often read as if he were proposing a syntactic approach to the study of ritual as the only approach that should be taken. This exclusivist interpretation of Staal is usually implicit, rather than being made explicit. Such a straw-man who dismisses the value of other approaches to the study of ritual is then easily knocked down by drawing attention to aspects of ritual other than its syntax. Yet, nowhere that I am aware of does Staal make such an exclusivist claim. Staal is hardly unaware that we attribute mean-

ing to rituals, and that therefore an understanding of those meanings—as attributed to rituals rather than inherent in rituals—provides an important dimension of an understanding of why people perform rituals. Similarly, we can extend this to include both analytic perspectives we have inherited from the past, such as the maintenance of social organization, and more contemporary analyses, such as identity creation, economic consequences, and power relations. At the end of this paper we will make a suggestion as to what a comprehensive approach to the study of ritual might look like, one in which syntax plays a key but not exclusive role.

The debate over Staal's claim that ritual is meaningless seems to this author to have been not only largely fruitless, but to have obscured the potential value of Staal's methodological proposal—discussed in the second section of this essay—that the organization of ritual activities can be examined in the same way that the organization of the linguistic elements of a sentence is examined, that is, as a kind of syntax.

II. WHAT IS RITUAL SYNTAX?

II.A. The Heuristics of Analogies

While ritual has often been likened to language, this has usually been in the form of interpreting ritual as a kind of communication, for example, the idea that rituals are a means of conveying social values from one generation to the next. Staal, on the other hand, specifically focused on the way in which ritual activity is organized, likening this aspect of ritual to sentential structures, that is, to syntax.

More specifically, Staal's syntactic approach to ritual can be described in terms of the following argument by analogy concerning the relation between ritual and language:

1. Ritual and language are alike in both being instances of rule-bound behaviors.
2. The structure of language has been studied through the use of tree diagrams and the formulation of rules (that is, generalizations) describing the regularities of sentence structures.
3. Therefore, the structure of ritual can be studied through the use of tree diagrams and the formulation of rules describing the regularities of ritual structures.

This argument from analogy demonstrates Staal's assertion that ritual action can be analyzed in terms of its organizational structure, that is, in the same way that the organizational structure of sentences is analyzed:

syntactically. However, from our discussion above regarding Staal's views as to the location of meaning in the realm of language, it should be clear that ritual—as activity—is distinctly other than language. Whereas the elements of language bear meaning, ritual as activity can only have meaning attributed to it.

By making the analogous character of this approach clear we can avoid the mistake of simply asserting the identity of ritual and something else, such as drama. Being clear about the analogous nature of the similarity helps to restrain the inappropriate attribution of the characteristics of one term of the analogy (language) onto the other (ritual). Further, the value of any analogy is to be judged in terms of how useful it is. In other words it is only heuristic, and entails no broader claims about “what ritual *really* is.” Those approaches that simply identify ritual with something else often obscure the evaluative issue, that is, the question of the heuristic benefit of the analogy. In other words, all analogies between ritual and something else need to be considered in terms of the question, What does the analogy reveal? If the analogy reveals something that had not been visible previously, then the analogy is heuristically useful and worthy of further pursuit.

II.B. Syntactic Analysis, Description, and Comparison

Thinking about ritual syntactically is useful in at least two ways. First, it encourages systematic and detailed analyses of rituals. Such analyses are still needed in the development of a comparative study of ritual. Second, it can reveal systematic patterns of ritual organization, which may in turn contribute to a more general cognitive understanding of how humans organize their activities.

Systematic and detailed analyses provide the corpus of descriptions necessary for comparative studies. The necessity of both steps—description and comparison—for the study of language is recognized by many linguists. For example, Robert Van Valin and Randy La Polla note that:

Developing serious explanatory theories of language is impossible in the absence of descriptions of the object of explanation. Understanding the cognitive basis of language is impossible in the absence of adequate cross-linguistic characterization of linguistic behavior.²¹

Comparative study of ritual is equally necessary. The majority of the studies of ritual seem to focus on the symbolic content of a ritual (or ritual corpus), producing contextualized studies that are organized around the unique characteristics of the ritual or ritual corpus. While such studies are essential to one kind of understanding of ritual, at the same time such approaches make it very difficult to compare ritual practices. For example,

one may be told that a medieval Shintō fire ritual represents offerings made to the *kami*, apparently distinct from the Shingon *homa* in which offerings are made to the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and guardian deities. However, a syntactic analysis of the structure of the two reveals a fundamental similarity obscured by the emphasis on the symbolism of each. As a consequence of focusing exclusively on symbolic or semantic values of rituals, the study of ritual remains a loosely connected field of at times only marginally overlapping discourses. In contrast to what is being discussed here as a *syntactic* approach, those approaches that focus on the symbolic contents of a ritual or ritual corpus might appropriately be referred to as *semantic*.

Any theory of ritual practice, whether cognitive or some other, will require a consistent analytic approach, one that allows for comparisons between different kinds of rituals and between rituals from different religious cultures and historical periods. A syntactic approach employing what are known as tree diagrams allows for such consistent and detailed analysis. While the syntactic approach does not constitute a comprehensive approach to the study of ritual, as Staal himself has noted, a syntactic analysis employing tree diagrams connects ritual activity with other kinds of rule-bound behaviors, thus allowing for the study of the relation between ritual, games, theatre, language, and any other kind of systematically structured activity.

II.C. Borrowing Tools: Tree Diagrams

Tree diagrams, or more fully, “inverted tree diagrams,” start from a sentence as a whole (often represented as “S”) and then work down through phrases to smaller and smaller units of analysis. This analytic process depends upon certain assumptions about how language, or in terms of our current discussion ritual, is structured.²² The basic theoretical claims of syntactic analysis are “(a) that words belong to syntactic categories; (b) that words are in linear order; and (c) that words group hierarchically into larger constituents that also belong to syntactic categories.”²³

However, the utilization of this analytic tool from linguistics is not tantamount to the acceptance of any particular linguistic theory. Rather, the technique is an analytic one useful not only for descriptive purposes, but also for considering different theoretical explanations. While any such analytic technique, including tree diagrams, is based upon theoretical claims, such methods also provide a common technique for arguments between specific linguistic theories. The appropriation of this analytic method, therefore, does not necessarily entail any of the specific theories that it has been used to support. More specifically, the use of tree diagrams for systematically describing ritual syntax does not entail adopting the assumptions of a Chomskyan generative grammar.

II.D. What a Syntactic Method Is Not: The Semantics of Ritual

One of the long-standing fundamental divisions in the study of language has been the distinction between syntax and semantics. Syntax is understood as the examination of the organization of language, focusing almost entirely on the level of the sentence. From the perspective of the cognitive study of language, this corresponds to a set of questions about the processing of language: "What cognitive processes are involved when human beings produce and understand language on line in real time? How specialized to language are these processes?"²⁴ Traditionally semantics examines the meaningful contents of language: "Semantics is generally defined as the study of meaning."²⁵

One of the first attempts at a cognitive theory of religion as a whole, including ritual structure, was undertaken by E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley.²⁶ Lawson and McCauley's approach to a cognitive theory of ritual is primarily semantic in emphasis. It points beyond a simple lexicon of ritual symbols toward an understanding of the semantic or conceptual structure of ritual. Their approach focuses on an aspect of ritual that is identifiably distinct from the syntactic, and which therefore requires its own set of analytic tools. Thus, contrary to what Lawson and McCauley have said about Staal's approach, suggestive of the opinion that it is at least inferior, if not irrelevant, they are in fact simply doing something different, not superior.²⁷ As Jackendoff has pointed out, "We cannot afford the strategy that regrettably seems endemic in the cognitive sciences: one discovers a new tool, decides it is the only tool needed, and, in an act of academic (and funding) territoriality, loudly proclaims the superiority of this tool over all others."²⁸ In light of this, I suggest that given its focus on the organization of ritual activity—syntax rather than semantics—Staal's analytic method is, in fact, useful for the study of ritual.

II.E. Examples of Ritual Syntax: What a Syntactic Analysis Reveals

As discussed above, syntactic analysis can reveal regular patterns in the organization of ritual activities. In his work on Vedic ritual, Staal has clearly demonstrated the existence of patterns he calls "embedding" and "recursive embedding," while from my own work on Shingon ritual I have identified two kinds of symmetry and terminal abbreviation as consistent patterns. The application of syntactic analysis to the Vedic *agnihotra* in the next section of this paper reveals another pattern, called here "refraction."

II.E.1. Embedding and Recursive Embedding

Embedding identifies the way in which one ritual is expanded through the insertion, or embedding, of an additional ritual sequence into it (see

figure 1). In the Shingon ritual corpus, there is typically a section of additional recitations of mantra devoted to various deities following the central actions of ritual identification of the practitioner with the chief deity. Additional recitations to other deities can be embedded into this sequence of deities. For example, in some rituals Kūkai, the founder of the Shingon tradition in Japan, is added to the list of deities, while in others Amaterasu, the Japanese Sun Goddess, is added. In this way, the ritual is open to the embedding of additional ritual elements.

Recursive embedding identifies the way in which such embedding can be repeated, either by sequentially embedding ritual sequences or by repeated embedding inside of previously embedded ritual sequences (see figures 2 and 3). The Shingon *homa*—votive fire ritual—is an instance of sequential embedding. Based on the ritual foundation of the Juhachi dō ritual, the different Shingon *homa*-s frequently have a series of five sets of offerings added in the midst of the additional recitations to various deities. These five sets of offerings are not only similar to one another, but are effectively independent rituals in themselves. Staal describes the process of repeated embedding in his article on the “Meaninglessness of Ritual,” drawing on the Vedic ritual corpus which has more complicated rituals than those found in the Shingon tradition.

II.E.2. Two Kinds of Symmetry

All of the rituals of the Shingon tradition that I have examined are organized symmetrically. That is, there is a central ritual action that the first part of the ritual leads up to, while the second part of the ritual repeats the actions of the first part. There are two ways in which those actions are repeated, however. The most predominant of these is “mirror-image” symmetry in which the order of ritual actions is simply reversed in the second half of the ritual performance. In other words, actions A, B, and C at the start of the ritual are repeated in the order of C, B, and A in the second part of the ritual (see figure 4). For example, in the invitation of the deities into the ritual enclosure the jewelled carriage is sent off to the cosmic *maṇḍala* where they reside, and then returns bringing them into the ritual space. At the end of the ritual, the deities enter into the carriage and are returned to the cosmic *maṇḍala*. Here the logic of the actions imposes a mirror-image symmetry, one in which the actions are performed in reverse order.

There are also instances, however, in which a set of activities is performed in the same order in the second part of the ritual as in the first. In other words actions A, B, and C from the first part of the ritual are repeated in the same order—A, B, and C—in the second part. I have named this latter pattern “sequential symmetry.” These instances are found in sets of actions which themselves have a certain logic of performance that appears

to override the tendency toward mirror-image symmetry (see figure 5). For example, at both the beginning and end of the *homa* ritual the practitioner performs two actions, one “putting on the armor,” and then, “protecting the body.” In both cases—at the beginning and end of the ritual—these are done in the same order.

II.E.3. Terminal Abbreviation

“Terminal abbreviation” refers to the way in which activities in the second half of a ritual are often abbreviated. In the Shingon corpus of rituals there are two forms of terminal abbreviation. Sometimes the number of repetitions of an action may be reduced. For example, while in the establishment of the ritual space three repetitions of a mantra may be recited, in its dissolution at the end of the ritual the same mantra might be recited only once. Another form of abbreviation is the simplification of a set of actions. For example, inviting the deities from the cosmic *maṇḍala* at the beginning of the ritual performance may take nine actions, while sending them back to their seats in the *maṇḍala* at the end of the ritual may only involve three actions (see figure 6).

III. APPLICATION OF SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

III.B. The Very Possibility of a Syntactic Analysis

As mentioned above the focus on Staal’s claim that ritual is meaningless has almost entirely obscured the question of the utility of his suggestion regarding the syntactic analysis of ritual structures. However, one critic, Hans H. Penner, has directly addressed syntactic analysis, saying that “No one could take his [Staal’s] ‘rules’ [i.e., typical syntactic patterns of ritual organization] and apply them to a ritual, including the ancient Agnicayana ritual which he observed some years ago in a new performance in India. The ‘rules,’ therefore, are an interesting exercise, but they are irrelevant.”²⁹ Penner goes on in a footnote to this, saying that “Staal knows that his diagrams are not applicable to any ritual.”³⁰ This seems a rather odd, if not mischievous, reading of Staal’s essay. Staal does indeed quite clearly indicate that the diagrams he has created “do not correspond to any existing ritual.”³¹ However, what Staal is attempting to convey is ways of conceptualizing syntactic patterns that may be found in a variety of different rituals.³² As Staal is attempting to convey a generalization, one should hardly expect him to do so by reference to a specific ritual.

One might wonder whether Penner intends to imply that the kinds of transformations in rituals that Staal is talking about do not occur, or if they do that they are of no possible significance. If we do not accept either of

these two alternatives, then Staal's syntactic analysis employing tree diagrams is hardly irrelevant—particularly as there seems to be no alternative technology for discovering and describing such systematic patterns in the organization of ritual activities.

If we are to take Penner seriously on this point, however, it will be useful to actually apply a syntactic analysis to a specific ritual, and to display that by means of a tree diagram. Having already done so with various Shingon rituals, and wishing to avoid the danger of only finding what I thought I already knew, I decided here to apply the technique to a ritual from a not-unrelated ritual tradition, the *agnihotra* of the Vedic ritual tradition. The *agnihotra* is a relatively short ritual offering into fire performed on a twice-daily basis. Having focused my own attention on the Shingon *homa* for several years, I have long wondered whether this ritual—being widely familiar to those involved in the creation of the tantric ritual tradition—might have formed the immediate precursor to the tantric *homa* in India, leading eventually to the Shingon *homa* in Japan.

Like the gaps in the archeological record of evolution, there are gaps in the historical record of the development of tantric ritual (though, of course, just as the gaps in the one may be filled by new findings of fossil remains, so also new findings in the history of Indian ritual may be forthcoming). Early advances in evolutionary science depended on a close examination and comparison of the structures of plants and animals.³³ Such examinations not only reveal otherwise unseen relations, but also suggest ways in which changes occurred. A close examination of the structure of *agnihotra* can allow us to determine whether it was the direct precursor to the tantric *homa*. Thus, in addition to simply demonstrating the feasibility of a syntactic analysis, the following will also demonstrate the utility of such analyses.

III.B. The *Agnihotra* in Vedic Ritual Culture

Vedic rituals are generally divided into two broad categories, *gr̥hya* and *śrauta*. The *gr̥hya* rituals are simpler, relatively younger, and only require a single fire. They form a group of life-cycle rituals, that is, ones that mark significant changes in social identity. They have been referred to as “domestic rites.”³⁴ *Śrauta* rituals, on the other hand, are more complicated and apparently date from an earlier period in Vedic religious history. These rituals require three fires: “the *Gārhapatya* (householder's fire), the *Āhavanīya* (the fire ‘to be offered into’, which functions as its name implies), and the *Dakṣiṇāgni* (southern fire).”³⁵ The *gārhapatya* hearth is circular and is located at the west end of the central axis running through the ritual enclosure; the *dakṣiṇāgni* hearth is a demilune and is located along the south edge of the ritual enclosure; and the *āhavanīya* hearth is square and located at the eastern end of the central axis. The *gr̥hya* rituals only employ the *gārhapatya* fire in its circular hearth.

The *agnihotra* is a votive ritual performed twice a day, once in the evening and again in the morning.³⁶ Having both *grhya* and *śrauta* forms, the *agnihotra* appears to be something of a bridge between these two categories. It may be performed either on one or three fires, and despite the general injunction that *śrauta* rituals require more than one priestly officiant, even in its *śrauta* form the *agnihotra* only requires one.

In 1939 P.-E. Dumont published translations into French of eight different ritual manuals for the performance of the *agnihotra*.³⁷ In introducing his collection of translations Dumont gives a general description of the *agnihotra*, which we will quote here at length:

Although the *agnihotra* is a relatively simple sacrifice, it occupies a place of the greatest importance in Vedic ritual. The other sacrifices—such as the sacrifices at the full and new moon, the bloody sacrifice, the soma sacrifice, the horse sacrifice—are more complicated and are offered with more pomp. But what makes for the importance of the *agnihotra* is that it is a daily sacrifice and a perpetual sacrifice. In effect, it is a sacrifice that every head of family belonging to the caste of Brahmins or to the caste of Vaiśyas must offer every day, evening and morning, for the duration of his life.

The *agnihotra* consists essentially of an oblation of milk offered to Agni. In some particular cases, one may offer an oblation of other sacrificial substances, for example: curdled milk, soma, rice gruel, boiled rice, clarified butter, grains of rice, or meat. But, in the normal sacrifice, it is milk that is offered in oblation. One begins by lifting from the *gārhapatya* fire a flaming brand, by means of which one lights the *āhavanīya* fire; then one places the cloth at the hearth, and then sprinkles the surroundings, and pours an uninterrupted jet of water uniting the *āhavanīya* hearth with the *gārhapatya* hearth. Following that, one leads in the cow that is to supply the milk for the *agnihotra*. The cow is milked by an Ārya, who gathers the milk in a clay basin, one which must have been made in the summer by an Ārya (that is, by a man belonging to one of the three higher castes, and not by a Śūdra). Then, one takes a few embers from the *gārhapatya* fire, and these are placed so as to heat the basin and its contents. One adds a little water to the milk, and one then withdraws the basin from the fire. One then draws out of the basin four or five small spoonfuls of milk, and these are poured into the large *agnihotra* ladle; solemnly one carries the offering contained in this ladle to the *āhavanīya* fire, and, after having placed a stick of dry wood on the *āhavanīya* fire, one pours into the fire two libations of milk, the first while reciting the prescribed formula, the second in silence. Then the priest—or the sacrificer, if the sacrificer officiates for himself—drinks the rest of the milk in the ladle. At the end of

the sacrifice, one offers libations of water to the gods, to the fathers [ancestors, RKP], to the seven sages (*ṛṣi*-s), to Agni who inhabits the earth, or to other deities, such as the serpents [*nāga*-s, RKP], and the ants.

The agnihotra is connected with the *agniyupsathāna* rite, which consists of worshipping the sacred fires by reciting the propitiatory stanzas and formulas. The sacrificer first worships the *āhavanīya* fire, then the cow that provides the milk for the agnihotra, then the *gārhapatya* fire; then a second time, the agnihotra cow, then the *āhavanīya* fire again. According to certain texts, the priest also addresses his homage to the house, to the cows, and to the calf of the cow that provides the milk for the agnihotra, to the earth, to the sky and heaven, and to the regions of space.

One should distinguish two agnihotras: that of the evening and that of the morning. These two are really nothing but two parts of one and the same sacrifice. On the other hand, one can consider the agnihotra to be a perpetual sacrifice. In the proper course of things the sacrificer is obliged to offer the agnihotra each evening and morning for his entire life. It is obligatory that this sacrifice be offered for the sacrificer's entire life, without break, until death or until such time that the sacrificer, becoming old, renounces the world to lead the life of an ascetic mendicant. At this point, his son in his turn offers each day, evening and morning, the same sacrifice.

The obligation to offer the agnihotra each day is essential, because it seems clear that the principal objects are the perpetuation of both the continuity of the sacrifice and the continuity of the family of the sacrificer. In fact, according to Kātyāyana, at the end of the *agniyupasthāna*, the sacrificer recites, "You are extended; you are a son; extend me (that is, prolong my life, my descendants) by this sacrifice, by this pious action . . . And enable my sons to continue this work, this manly (virile, effective) action of mine!" Similarly, according to the Āpastamba, the sacrificer recites, "I direct this prayer, that accompanies the light, for the son (for the continuation of my family)."

The agnihotra is a sacrifice, the object of which is to procure for the sacrificer prosperity, health, longevity, wealth in cattle, and, above all, numerous male descendants, that is, the continuation of the family.³⁸

The final ritual manual for the performance of the *agnihotra* from Dumont's collection is that of the *Vaitāna Sūtra*. An English translation of that text is included as an appendix to this essay.

III.C. Ritual Actions of the *Agnihotra*

Abstracting from the text, we find the following order of specific actions (n.b.: numbers assigned to actions here do not correspond to numbers assigned to stanzas by Dumont as found in the appended translation):

1. milk cow
2. clarify milk with burning straw
3. add water to the basin (*sthālī*)
4. remove basin to the north
5. arrange cloth
6. sprinkle around fires, with recitation (*Jātavedas*)
7. pour stream of water connecting *gārhapatya* and *āhavanīya* fires, with recitation (immortality).
8. wipe the two ladles (*agnihotrahavaṇī* and *sruva*)
9. heat the two ladles in the *gārhapatya*, with recitation (expelling *Rakṣas*)
10. pour four draughts of milk into the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle
11. carry ladle and stick of wood to the *āhavanīya*, with recitation (leading the sacrifice)
12. put the *agnihotrahavaṇī* on the straw
13. put stick of wood in *āhavanīya*, with recitation (to *Agni*)
14. first libation into *āhavanīya*, with recitation (inviting *Savitar* and *Indra*)
15. looking at *gārhapatya*, with recitation (prolonging life and progeny)
16. second libation into *āhavanīya*, with silent recitation (*Prajapati*)
17. raise *agnihotrahavaṇī* over *āhavanīya*, three times, with recitation (joy to *Rudras*)
18. place *agnihotrahavaṇī* on straw
19. wipe the ladle
20. wipe hands on straw, with recitation (joy to plants and trees)
21. wipe the ladle
22. place sacred thread on right shoulder
23. wipe hands on straw, with recitation (comfort to the Fathers)
24. place stick of wood on *gārhapatya*

25. first libation into *gārhapatya*, with recitation (prosperity)
26. second libation into *gārhapatya*, with silent recitation (Prajapati)
27. place stick of wood on the *dakṣiṇa*
28. first libation into the *dakṣiṇa*, with recitation (Agni)
29. second libation into the *dakṣiṇa*, with silent recitation (Prajapati)
30. sprinkle around three fires, with recitation (Jātavedas)
31. put down the two ladles on the straw to the north of the *āhavanīya*
32. first drinking up of remainder, with recitation (vital breath, *prāṇa*)
33. touch the liquid
34. second drinking up of remainder, with recitation (embryos, *garbha*)
35. third drinking up of remainder, with recitation (joy to gods)
36. first pouring out of water for the Sun, with recitation (serpents and Itarajanas)
37. clean the ladle on the straw
38. second pouring out of water for the sun, with recitation (serpents and Puṇyajanas)
39. third pouring out of water for the sun, with recitation (Gandharvas and Apsaras)
40. heat the two ladles in *āhavanīya*, with recitation (joy to seven Ṛṣis)
41. wipe *agnihotrahavanī*, with recitation (conduct to south)
42. final propitiation

Such a linear presentation, however, is not useful in understanding the way in which the ritual actions are organized.³⁹ At best, it can tell us that there are some similarities between the *agnihotra* and the Shingon *homa*, such as the use of two ladles and the invocation to Agni.

III.D. Structure of the *Agnihotra*

The organization of the *agnihotra* is displayed in figure 7. What we find here is a regular pattern in which one structural unit is followed by a transition, and then two more structural units similar to the first. We find this in the highest level of the ritual's organization, where what we are calling here collectively the "major libations" (that is, the libations into each of the

three fires) are followed by a transition, and then by the consumption of the remaining offerings and the offerings for the sun. At one level lower, within the major libations, we find the offerings into the *āhavanīya*, followed by a transition, and then the offerings into the *gārhapatya* and *dakṣina* fires. At the lowest level (of the analysis as presented here), within both the consumption of the remainders and the offerings to the sun, a first ritual action is followed by a transition, and then two more. What characterizes each of the transitional ritual units is that they all involve cleaning of some sort, such as wiping the hands and wiping the ladle.

The way in which this organization of ritual activities occurs at different levels of the ritual leads me to think of it as a kind of “refraction.” The question remains, however, whether the syntactic analysis of other Vedic or related rituals will reveal a similar pattern of refraction. What does seem clear, however, is that since this syntax differs quite a bit from the Shingon tantric *homa*, the *agnihotra* is not in fact the immediate ritual precursor to the tantric *homa* as it is known today in Japan.

IV. FROM RITUAL SYNTAX TO COGNITIVE THEORY

In turning our attention now to the question of building on the syntactic analysis of rituals as a means of developing a cognitive theory of ritual, at this point we only consider the question of what would constitute a cognitive theory of ritual. We hope thereby to establish a foundation for later work toward a more detailed cognitive theory of ritual. The discussion here is not proposed as definitive, but rather to set out in broad strokes the different dimensions of what would constitute a cognitive approach to the study of ritual. From this perspective we need to consider two dimensions of the question of what constitutes a cognitive theory of ritual. First, we should consider what a comprehensive approach to the study of ritual might include, and, second, what kinds of research programs currently exist in cognitive science.

In the following section the analogy between ritual and language will give us an overview of what a comprehensive study of ritual might look like. In the section following we will briefly examine the three current research programs in cognitive science—computational, connectionist, and embodied–dynamic.

IV.A. What Constitutes a Cognitive Theory of Ritual?

In his recent comprehensive survey of linguistics, Ray Jackendoff has identified six dimensions of the study of language.⁴⁰ Furthering the analogy between ritual and language, taken together these six dimensions would appear to also describe a comprehensive study of ritual. These six are:

phonology, syntax, semantics, spatial structure, pragmatics, and historical linguistics. Phonology, dealing with the actual production of speech as sound, corresponds to the study of the articulation found in individual performances of ritual. Just as different persons would enunciate the expression, "Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio," in different ways, so also will different practitioners give different ritual performances. In 1982 I observed two performances of the Shingon *homa* performed by a priest in Ise Prefecture, Japan. The practitioner who performed these rituals had also trained in the performance of the tea ceremony (Jpn. *cha no yu*), and I found his performance to be the most aesthetically nuanced of all of the *homa* performances that I observed over a year's study. The precision of his movements and the slightly dance-like flourishes that he employed could be compared to the careful enunciation and rhythmic cadence of a well-trained public speaker, or the delivery of that line from *Hamlet* by a classically trained Shakespearean actor. Attention to the articulation of actions can contribute to the identification of the syntactic and semantic units of a ritual.

Ritual syntax focuses on the ways in which the activities performed in the course of a ritual are organized, while ritual semantics would look at the meanings of ritual agents, actions, objects, and implements, and the relations between them. Spatial structure is a category not commonly considered—according to Jackendoff, the details of "spatial structure are hardly even touched upon."⁴¹ He suggests that

One can think of spatial structure variously as an image of the scene that the sentence describes, a schema that must be compared against the world in order to verify the sentence (a "mental model" in Johnson-Laird's [1983] sense), the physical (or non-propositional) structure of the model in which the truth conditions of the semantic/conceptual structure are applied, or perhaps other construals.⁴²

As applied to the study of ritual, one might consider the ways in which different rituals appropriate activities in the ordinary world of human activity as organized metaphors. For example, the *homa* is structured as a feast offered to an honored guest, while the Eucharist employs the metaphor of the Last Supper as its organizing principle. The idea that ritual employs a "spatial structure" links it to broader cognitive issues regarding the non-linguistic representation of the experienced world. Specifically, to what extent do we employ representations of the world that are sequences of actions, an embodied representation rather than a verbal one? Consider, for example, something like the course of action one undertakes when shopping for groceries. This is indeed in part linguistically structured (the grocery list, perhaps), while other aspects would appear rather to be embodied—the order of moving around the grocery store, and so on.

Pragmatics examines the ways in which language is used to communicate, that is, the interpersonal aspects of the use of language. Jacob L. Mey offers as a definition, "Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society."⁴³ For the study of ritual, sociological inquiries would correspond to pragmatics. For example, questions of when and why rituals are performed, who sponsors ritual performances, and the effect of the ritual performance on social stability would constitute a pragmatics of ritual.

Historical linguistics studies how languages change over time, such as the ongoing change of vocabulary, of pronunciation, and of grammar. In relation to ritual, changes such as those in the kinds of rituals that form a ritual corpus and the deities evoked would exemplify a historical approach to ritual studies.

These six aspects of contemporary linguistics—phonology, syntax, semantics, spatial structure, pragmatics, and historical linguistics—can be seen as analogous to the dimensions required for a comprehensive study of ritual.

IV.B. Approaches to Cognitive Science

Francisco Varela has identified three different theoretical approaches to cognitive science: computational, connectionist, and embodied–enactive. The first, computational, was inspired by the development of computational theory in mathematics, as for example, the familiar Turing machine and its hypothetical big brother the "Universal Turing machine." The Turing machine paved the theoretical road for the creation of modern electronic computers by dividing computational tasks into an algorithm (or more familiarly, a program) and a mechanism that carried out the algorithm, now usually through a binary system. This model of computation was held to be adequate for understanding human thought (itself defined, circularly, as a kind of computation).

The second theoretical approach identified by Varela is the connectionist. This approach turned to an examination of neural networks, and determined that cognitive processes in humans were much more complex than could be adequately represented by a single, linear application of a sequentially organized series of instructions—as proposed by the computational approach. Rather, a variety of neural events occurring simultaneously were understood to be interconnected in the computational process.

The third theoretical approach identified by Varela, the embodied–enactive, again shifted the focus—now to examining human beings as living organisms fully enmeshed with their environments. For the purposes of ritual studies, the idea of environment can be extended from the physical environment to include the social environment as well.⁴⁴ One of the inspirations for this approach was robotics. When the attempt was made to engage

robots with the real world, it was found that the computational approach alone overloaded any computational capacity.⁴⁵ For example, trying to match the ability of a human to grasp an object depending solely upon computation would have required vastly more computational capacity than available. Rather than depending solely upon computation, it was found that feedback from the robot's own body allowed it to adjust its actions, employing a much more elegant computational capacity.

Given the nature of ritual as an embodied activity conducted in a socio-cultural context, the third approach seems to this author at least as the only one worth pursuing in the development of a cognitive theory of ritual.⁴⁶ The computational approach seems to be both theoretically and pragmatically flawed. It depends upon an analogy between the mind and a universal Turing machine, an analogy that has allowed for idea of a variety of instantiations of mind, such as an electronic computer or a system of beer cans. This latter means that mind is disembodied, and philosophically leads right back to the problems found with Descartes' dualistic conception of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The engineering limitations of computation as the basis for robotics indicates the need to take into account the way in which bodies interact with their surrounding environment. Neurologically, connectionism may prove to be the best approach, though the difficulties of relating different levels of analysis are well recognized. Bradd Shore has suggested three levels of analysis, "instituted models (social constructs), mental models (psychological constructs), and neural networks (biological constructs)."⁴⁷ While the issue of the relations between these levels is a theoretically important one for cognitive science, in the short term it may be more fruitful for ritual studies to focus on working within a level rather than attempting to also solve questions of relations between levels, or "inter-theoretic relations," at the same time.

For ritual studies, the embodied-enactive approach allows a way of bridging the levels between individual psychology, embodied activity, and the social environment—including the ritual tradition and the religious institutions within which they are maintained.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Based on the discussions above, I would like to emphasize that there are characteristics of ritual that have been frequently overlooked, characteristics that a more balanced approach to the study of ritual will need to take into account. This is intended to point to aspects of the project of ritual studies that are in need of further exploration.

Ritual is a form of regularized bodily activity. An important aspect of these regularities is the way in which ritual activities are organized, and

can be appropriately discussed as a ritual syntax. This is the breakthrough that Staal established in his 1979 article.

There are, of course, a number of other factors which contribute to the forms that bodies of ritual practice, specific rituals, and individual ritual performances take. These include social, political, economic, doctrinal, and yet other kinds of contextual elements. One of the semantic elements of ritual requiring further explication is that rituals often appropriate the organization of other kinds of activities—feasting, bureaucratic petitions, and so on—as a metaphor for ritual performances.

Ritual forms one part of a larger category of human behavior, that is, rule-bound activity. As a consequence the examination of ritual gives us a window on the ways in which such activity is organized and the cognitive contribution to that organization.

Figure 1: Embedding:
A new ritual element or sequence (X) is
added into an existing ritual (R).

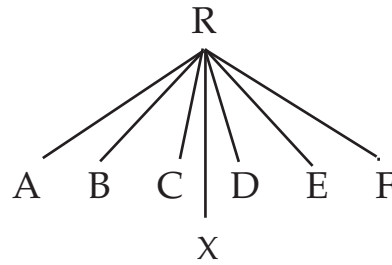


Figure 2: Sequential Recursive Embedding:
New ritual elements or sequences (X^1 through X^5) are
embedded as a sequence into an existing ritual (R)

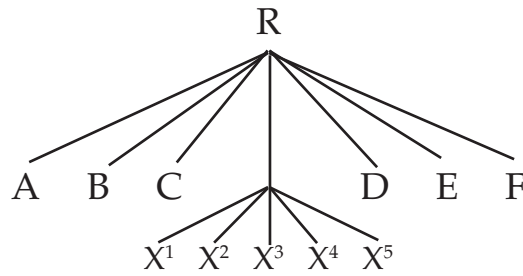


Figure 3: Repeated Recursive Embedding:
A new ritual element or sequence (Y) is embedded
into a previously inserted ritual element or sequence (X)

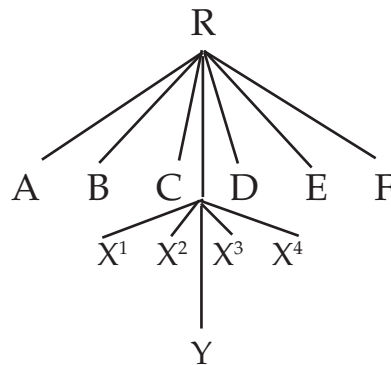


Figure 4: Symmetry: Mirror Image

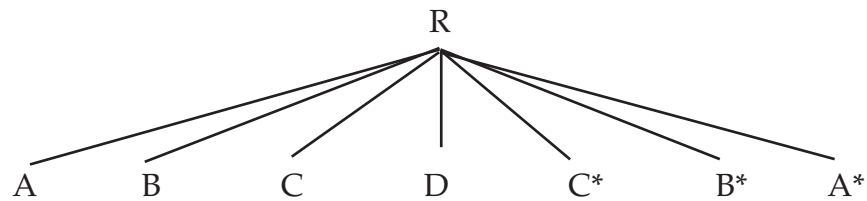


Figure 5: Symmetry: Sequential

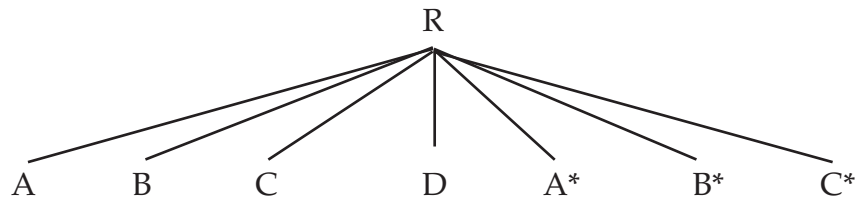
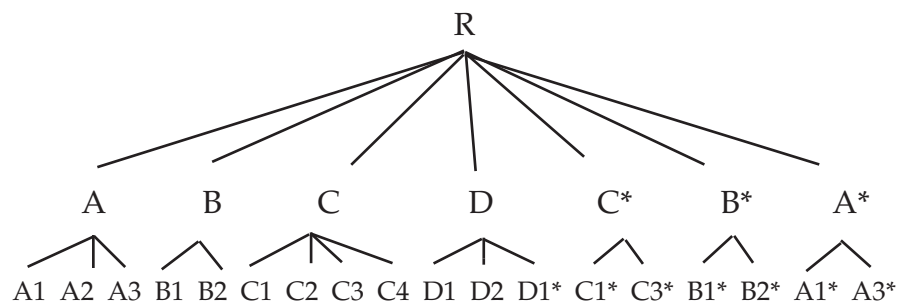


Figure 6: Terminal Abbreviation



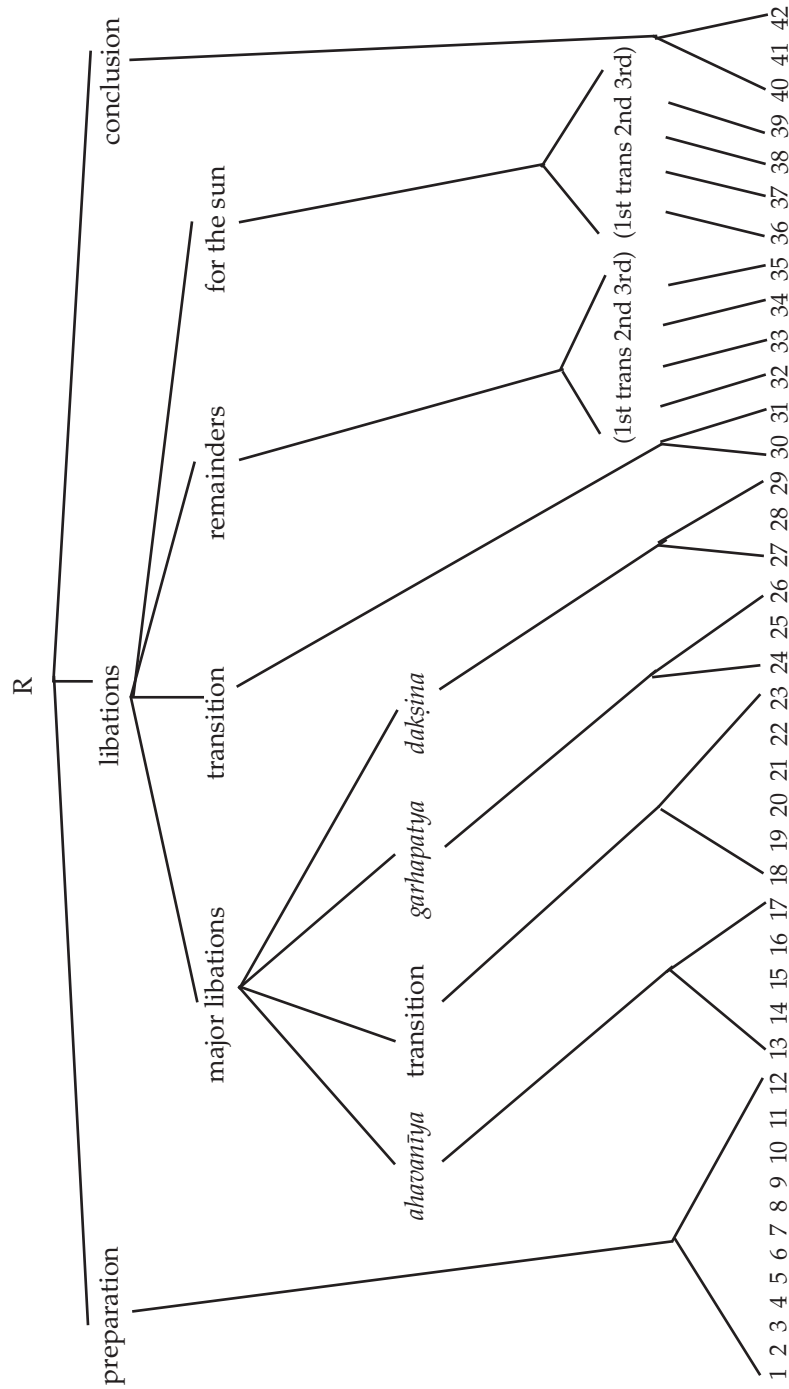


Figure 7: Structure of the Agnihotra

APPENDIX

The *Agnihotra* Ritual according to the *Vaitāna Sūtra*

translated from

P.-E. Dumont, tr.,

L'Agnihotra: Description de l'agnihotra dans le rituel védique

(Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), pp. 204–209.

Richard K. Payne

Dumont's emendations are in parentheses (); his comments—usually cross-references to the same ritual act in other versions of the text—are in square brackets []; my notes and comments are in angle brackets < >. Dumont's French translation reads rather awkwardly, perhaps being a rather literal translation from the Sanskrit. Rather than attempting to represent Dumont's French literally, I have taken some liberties with sentence structures in order to make the translation read more fluidly in English. In addition, I have placed those of Dumont's internal references that provide additional substantive information into notes, and have eliminated others that are simply cross-references to other sources. The reader interested in the details of this rite's relation to the rest of the Vedic literature is advised to consult Dumont's own notes in the original.

This translation is not intended to be definitive, particularly as it suffers from two handicaps. First, it is a translation of a translation, and second, I have never had the opportunity to actually observe this particular ritual being performed. It is to be hoped, however, that the translation is at least adequate for the purposes of demonstrating the syntactic analysis of ritual. I would also hope that this work draws additional attention to the *agnihotra*, and that more qualified scholars will be able to correct any errors made here.

Agnihotra according to the *Vaitāna Sūtra*.

A. Generalities

1. The *Agnihotra* is a sacrifice which is offered to Agni, each day, evening and morning.

B. The Evening *Agnihotra*

2. After having taken milk from the *gavīdā* cow (this is the *agnihotrī*, the cow whose duty it is to provide milk for the *agnihotra*), the officiant (the *adhvaryu*

or the brahman), acting for the sacrificer, performs the *agnihotra*, that is to say will pour the milk of the *agnihotra*, when hot, into the *garhapatiya* fire.⁴⁸

3. And after having clarified the milk for the *agnihotra* (by means of burning straw), and when the milk has risen up to the edge of the *sthālī* (up to the edge of the bowl that holds the milk), the officiant adds water to it. Then he removes the *sthālī* to the north.

4. Then (unless the rite is being performed in a place where it has been performed previously), the officiant arranges the cloth at the sacred fires; and he sprinkles their surroundings, while reciting (for each of them): "You who are the sacred order, I water the surroundings with the truth, Ō Jātavedas!"

5. After having thus sprinkled the surroundings of the sacred fires, the officiant pours from the *garhapatiya* to the *āhavanīya*, a stream of water (uninterrupted), while reciting: "You are the drink of immortality. Unite immortality with immortality."

6. Then, after having wiped the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle and the *sruva* (the small ladle), the officiant heats the two ladles (in the *garhapatiya*), while reciting: "Chased and burnt are the Rakṣas. Chased and burnt are the enemies. Expelled and burnt are the Rakṣas. Expelled and burnt are the enemies."

7. Next, using the *sruva*, he draws (out of the *sthālī*), and pours into the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle, the draughts (four draughts of milk).

8. Then, after having raised the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle, over which he holds a stick of wood, up to the level of his mouth, he then walks (in that position) to the *āhavanīya* fire, while reciting: "Here, I lead the sacrifice to the highest heaven."

9. After having put down the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle on the straw (to the west of the *āhavanīya*), the officiant places the stick of wood in the *āhavanīya* fire, and murmurs: "You who are the refulgence of Agni, you who possess the wind, you who possess the vital breath, you the celestial, you the brilliant, I pour out heaven to you (to obtain heaven)."

10. Next, as the stick burns, he makes the first libation, while reciting: "Divine Savitar join us here, join us here night accompanying Indra—that Agni accept with goodwill (this offering)! Svāhā!"

11. Then, he looks at the *garhapatiya*, while reciting: "That this world (earth) prolong me (prolong my life, prolong my descendants)!"

12. Next, he makes (in the *ahavaniya* fire) a second libation, greater (than the first), and recites, but only in thought: "O Prajapati, none other than you, none in the encircling, producing all forms, that which we desire as we make the oblation, give to us! Empower us to be masters of riches!"

13. Then the officiant raises the *agnihotrahavaṇī* over the *āhavanīya* fire three times to the north, while reciting: "I give joy to the Rudras."

14. After having placed the *agnihotrahavaṇī* on the straw, the officiant wipes (with his hand) the bowl of that ladle, from base to top (i.e., from the handle to the tip of the bowl).

15. Next, to the north (of the spot where he has placed the ladle), he wipes his hands (on the straw), while reciting: “I give joy to the plants and trees.”

16. Then, after having wiped the bowl of the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle from the base to top (i.e., from the handle to the tip of the bowl) a second time, the officiant places his sacred thread on his right shoulder; and, to the south (of the spot where he has placed the ladle), he wipes his hands (on the straw), while reciting: “I give *svadhā* <comfort> to the Fathers.”

17. The oblations of the *agnihotra* into the two fires behind (the *gārhapatya* and the *dakṣiṇa*) are not done at this point (according to some) when it is a question of a particular vow (it is optional). But, according to the masters (of the school to which the author of the *Vaitāna Sūtra* belongs) it is always obligatory.

18. One proceeds in the following manner. After having placed a stick on the *gārhapatya* fire, the officiant draws one (first) libation out of the *sthālī* by means of the *sruva*, and pours that libation into the *gārhapatya*, while reciting: “May the master of prosperity produce prosperity here! May Prajāpati (the master of progeny) preserve the progeny here! To Agni, the master of the house, the rich master of prosperity! Svāhā!”

And he makes a second libation into the fire in the same manner as he made the second libation into the *āhavanīya* (cf. no. 12).

Then (after having placed a stick on the *dakṣiṇa* fire) the officiant draws up (by means of the *sruva*) a first libation from the *sthālī*, and pours this libation into the *dakṣiṇa* fire, while reciting: “To Agni, the consumer of food, the master of food! Svāhā!”

[And he makes a second libation into the *dakṣiṇa* in the same manner as the made the second libation in to the *āhavanīya* fire].

19. After that, the officiant sprinkles (the surroundings of each of the three sacred fires), while reciting (for each of them): “You, the Truth, with the Sacred Order (I sprinkle the surroundings, oh Jātavedas)!”

20. Then he puts down the *sruva*, the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle, and (the plants on) the straw to the north of the (*āhavanīya*) fire.

21. Then the officiant drinks up the remainder (of the *havis*, of the milk) found in the *agnihotrahavani* ladle. He proceeds in the following manner:

He drinks up (a first time) a part of the remainder, after having recited: “I give joy to the vital breath.” Next, he touches the liquid. Next, he drinks up, a second time, a part of the remainder, after having recited: “I give joy to the embryos.” And finally, he drinks up all of the remainder, after having recited: “I give joy to all the gods.”

22. Then, prior to cleaning the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle, the officiant uses that ladle to pour out water (for the Sun), while reciting: "I give joy to the Serpents and the Itarajanas." Next, after having cleaned the ladle on the straw, he pours out the water (to the Sun) a second time (using that ladle), while reciting: "I give joy to the Serpents and to the Puṇyajanas." And finally, (in the same manner) he pours out the water (for the Sun) a third time, to the west (of the *āhavanīya* fire), while reciting: "I give joy to the Gandharvas and to the Apsaras."

23. After that, the officiant heats the *sruva* and the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle (in the *āhavanīya* fire), while reciting: "I give joy to the seven ṛṣis."

24. Next, he wipes the handle of the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle from top to bottom (i.e., from the bowl to the tip of the handle), while reciting: "I conduct to the south."⁴⁹

25. In the event a mistake has been committed during the rite of milking the *agnihotra* cow (cf. no. 2), or during one of the rites which follow, he makes an offering of a libation to the divinity for whom the rite was performed.

C. The Morning *Agnihotra*

26. In general, the rites of the morning *agnihotra* are the same as those of the evening *agnihotra*.

27. But, for the morning *agnihotra*, when after having placed the *agnihotrahavaṇī* on the straw, the officiant puts a stick into the *ahavaniya* fire (cf. no. 9), and instead of saying: "You who have the refulgence of Agni," etc., he says: "You who have the refulgence of Sūrya (of the Sun)," etc.

28. And when, as the stick burns, he pours out the first libation (cf. no. 10), instead of saying "Gather together with the God Savitar, gather with the night accompanying Indra," etc., he recites: "Gather together with the God Savitar, gather together with the dawn accompanying Indra; to Sūrya (the Sun) accept (this offering) with goodwill! Svāhā!"

29. And when, after having cleaned the *sruva* and the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle (in the *ahavaniya* fire), instead of wiping the handle of the *agnihotrahavaṇī* ladle from top to bottom (i.e., from the bowl to the base of the handle), he wipes it from bottom to top (i.e., from the base of the handle to the bowl).

30. All of the other rites are the same.

D. The *Agniyupasthāna*

31. The *agniyupasthāna* (adoration of the fire by the sacrificer) is done as it is described in the Brāhmaṇa.⁵⁰

NOTES

I would like to thank Glenn Wallis and Bonnie A. Payne for their very helpful comments and suggestions, and Natalie Fisk for her careful reading of the text.

1. Frits Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual," *Numen* 26, no. 1 (1979): pp. 1–22.

2. See for example, Hans H. Penner's abusive "Language, Ritual and Meaning," *Numen* 32, no. 1 (1985): pp. 1–16. Penner misreads Staal at several points, at times so egregiously as to almost seem to be intentional. Penner also makes some factual errors, as for example his claim that rituals have no authors. It is unclear what he could possibly mean by this, but certainly the Shingon rituals with which I am familiar have known authors.

3. This applies to both emic and etic understandings of the function of a ritual. Staal points out, for example, that as early as the work of Robertson Smith, Hubert and Mauss, van Gennep, and Durkheim, it had been recognized that the same ritual could serve different functions depending on the context. Staal quotes van Gennep, "the same rite, remaining absolutely the same, can change its meaning depending on the position it is given in a ceremony, or on whether it is part of one ceremony or another" (Frits Staal, "The Search for Meaning: Mathematics, Music, and Ritual," *American Journal of Semiotics* 2, no. 4 [1984]: p. 5).

4. See for example, not only Penner (n. 2, above), but also Michael Everson, "The Study of Ritual as an Aspect of Human Religiosity," *The Mankind Quarterly* 32, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall/Winter 1991): pp. 57–75. Available on-line: <http://www.evertype.com/misc/ritual.html>, accessed February, 2005.

5. The "principle of charity" has been defined as the hermeneutic principle that "If a participant's argument is reformulated by an opponent, it should be expressed in the strongest possible version that is consistent with the original intention of the arguer. If there is any question about that intention or about implicit parts of the argument, the arguer should be given the benefit of any doubt in the reformulation." Jonathan Davis, "A Code of Conduct for Effective Rational Discussion," http://www.ukpoliticsmisc.org.uk/usenet_evidence/argument.html (accessed May 3, 2005). The principle originates with Quine's discussion of the problems of translation. See Staal's own discussion in Frits Staal, *Universals: Studies in Indian Logic and Linguistics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 6–7.

6. A systematic treatment of Staal's critics can be found in Carl Andrew Seaquist, "Ritual Syntax" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2004).

7. Staal, "Meaninglessness," p. 3
8. Though neither typical of most critiques of Staal, nor representative of the rest of his article, the context of Staal's theorizing is recognized by Robert Sharf in a footnote to his "Thinking Through Shingon Ritual" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003): p. 54, n. 5.
9. Staal, "Meaninglessness," p. 3.
10. Penner, "Language, Ritual and Meaning," p. 3.
11. Sharf, "Thinking Through Shingon Ritual," p. 53. See also Penner.
12. Robert A. Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).
13. For example, E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
14. Frits Staal, *Rules Without Meaning: Ritual, Mantras and the Human Sciences*, Toronto Studies in Religion, vol. 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 21.
15. Sharf, "Thinking Through Shingon Ritual," p. 53.
16. Staal, "Meaninglessness," p. 11. Repeated in Staal, *Rules Without Meaning*, p. 134.
17. Compare Poul Andersen's statement that "the concept of meaning probably does not really make any sense ... without being anchored in people—i.e., those to whom things mean" ("Concepts of Meaning in Chinese Ritual," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 12 [2001]: p. 161). Despite the evident similarity to Staal's assertion, Andersen's article intends to be critical. For example, Andersen quotes Kenneth Dean's summary of Staal's assertions regarding the relation of ritual and meaning: "in and of itself ritual is meaningless and therefore open to endless interpretation" (quoted from Kenneth Dean, *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998], p. 9). Andersen then goes on to say that his "fundamental problem with statements such as these is not so much that they are false, but rather that they are vacuous. For it appears to me that 'in and of itself,' *everything* is meaningless" (p. 162, emphasis in original). It seems odd that when Staal places meaning in the human realm of language it is vacuous, while when Andersen does it, it is significant.
18. Sharf, "Thinking Through Shingon Ritual," pp. 53–54.
19. Frits Staal, *Exploring Mysticism: A Methodological Essay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).
20. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

21. Robert van Valin and Randy La Polla, *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3. Such an approach is, of course, in contrast to the Chomskyan one that hypothesized a single Universal Grammar. Some of Chomsky's interpreters concluded that since the Universal Grammar would be equally revealed by the study of any single language, it was concluded that comparative studies were unnecessary. See Ray Jackendoff, *Foundations of Language: Brain, Meaning, Grammar, Evolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 75, for a discussion of this misunderstanding of Chomsky.
22. David M. Perlmutter and Scott Soames, *Syntactic Argumentation and the Structure of English* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 26–29.
23. Jackendoff, *Foundations of Language: Brain*, p. 24.
24. van Valin and LaPolla, *Syntax*, p. 4.
25. John Lyons, *Semantics*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), I:1.
26. Lawson and McCauley, *Rethinking Religion*.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 167–168.
28. Jackendoff, *Foundations of Language*, p. xiii.
29. Penner, "Language, Ritual, and Meaning," p. 2.
30. *Ibid.*, n. 3.
31. Staal, "Meaninglessness," p. 18.
32. Two additional issues regarding Penner's critique that go beyond the scope of this essay are the meaning of the term "rules" in Staal's usage, and whether Staal actually intended, as Penner implies (p. 1), the entirety of the theoretical structure of transformational or generative grammar. My own understanding is that Staal intended "rules" to be generalizations about typical forms of ritual organization, since the patterns that he identifies are based on his study of Vedic rituals, rather than a kind of Chomskyan deductive description of "ritual competency." Second, although Staal employs the terminology of "transformation," he did not intend the term to be burdened with the full weight of Chomskyan and post-Chomskyan theory.
33. See <http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/clad/clad1.html> for a discussion of the modern application of these techniques.
34. Jan Gonda, *Vedic Ritual: The Non-Solemn Rites* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), p. 3. Gonda uses the term "non-solemn" for these rites.
35. Stephanie W. Jamison, *The Ravenous Hyenas and the Wounded Sun: Myth and Ritual in Ancient India* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 19.

36. The evening fire is considered primary. Gonda, *Non-Solemn Rites*, p. 416. As Staal suggests generally about ritual, there are a variety of disparate functions attributed to the *agnihotra*. Citing several sources, Gonda indicates three such functions for the *agnihotra*: (1) maintaining the course of the sun, i.e., the processes of sunset and sunrise, (2) that the oblations satiate the air, sky, earth, man, and woman that they enter, and (3) that the oblations reach the sun, where they become rain, which in turn becomes the food that nourishes living creatures (*Non-Solemn Rites*, p. 416).

37. P.-E. Dumont, *L'Agnihotra: Description de l'agnihotra dans le rituel védique* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1939).

38. Dumont, *L'Agnihotra*, pp. v–vii. The translation here is of the opening to Dumont's introduction, his discussion becomes more technical and textual thereafter.

39. This is one of the issues around which the syntactic analysis of ritual through the use of tree diagrams parallels the modern development of syntactic analysis of language. Van Valin and LaPolla note that

One of the most important theoretical claims Chomsky made in his early work was that no theory of grammar could approach descriptive or explanatory adequacy if it recognized only a single level of syntactic representation, namely the overt or surface form. He argued that an additional, abstract level of syntactic representation is required (p. 17).

40. Jackendoff, *Foundations of Language*.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Mey, *Pragmatics*, p. 6.

44. Armin W. Geertz points out that while "even hardcore neuroscientists are realizing that cognition is a *somatic and social* phenomenon as well as a neural one ... most scholars of religion currently using cognitive approaches either deny or underplay the importance of culture in cognition, and, subsequently, in the cognitive science." Armin W. Geertz, "Cognitive Approaches to the Study of Religion," in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne, 2 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), II: 354. I would suggest that one reason for this lack of attention to the cultural dimensions of cognition on the part of scholars of religion has been the unquestioned assumption of the primacy of experience in the understanding of religion, and a knee-jerk rejection of any approach that appears to be reductionistic.

45. Andy Clark, *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 23.

46. For a comprehensive discussion of the differences between computational, connectionist and embodied theories of cognition, as well as a convincing argument for the superiority of the embodied, see Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).

47. Bradd Shore, *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture, and the Problem of Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 344.

48. Dumont: According to the work by Caland, the word *gavīḍā*, a strange name given to the *agnihotra* cow, has its origin in an erroneous interpretation of a passage from the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa: I.3.11, 12. <The reference to Caland is to: Willem Caland, *Das Vaitānasūtra des Atharvaveda* [Wetenschappen and Amsterdam: Verhandlingen der K. Akademie, 1910]>.

49. Dumont: cf. Śārikah. nos. 22 + 71. ("I conduct them to the south." (?) Cf. Caland: Vaitāna-sūtra, p. 21.)

50. Dumont: However, the Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa (the Brāhmaṇa of the Atharvaveda) such as we have, contains no such description of the *agniyupasthāna*.

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama's Oral Teachings on the Source of the *Kālacakratantra*

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THIS PAPER WILL PRESENT some rhetorical and discursive elements in oral versions of the history of the *Kālacakratantra* as currently presented by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Focusing on the definition of the *Kālacakra*'s "word of the Buddha" (*buddha vacana*), the paper will show how the Fourteenth Dalai Lama constructs an innovative version in his teachings, manifesting the relations between the esoteric tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and its contemporary religious milieu as it is being defined in exile. These relations are apparent both in the information that is being taught and in the argumentation that constructs it.

DEFINING THE *KĀLACAKRATANTRA* AS *BUDDHA VACANA*

The issue of the source of the *Kālacakratantra*, or in other words, defining the *Kālacakratantra* as *buddha vacana*, is of prime importance, not only for the study of the *Kālacakra* itself, but for the study of *tantra* in general.² From the esoteric perspective connection with the Buddha is significant, not simply as a quasi-historical element, but as an element of practice, one that establishes a direct link with the possibility of enlightenment. According to the prevailing version in the *Kālacakra* tradition, the Buddha Śākyamuni taught the *Kālacakratantra* to King Suchandra of Shambhala. According to the *Kālacakra* tradition, it was at this occasion that the Buddha taught all of the *tantra*-s.

From a traditional hermeneutical perspective the source of the teaching is of prime importance as it defines the fourfold relationship of: original author/original audience // current teacher/current audience. The significance of this point within the context of tantric teaching is that it is considered to be part of the five preliminaries, the first of the "seven jewels" (Tib. *rgyan bdun*) expounded by Candakīrti.³ Within the "preliminaries" the master establishes the text's original context by first relating the name of the *tantra*,

second identifying its original audience, third identifying its authority, fourth its size, and fifth its purpose.⁴ As elaborated by Tsong-kha-pa, establishing a text as originating from the Buddha, a Buddha emanation, establishes the text as an avenue to buddhahood. The connection with the Buddha is also important in that the connection is used as an explicit analogy for the master who conducts the initiation. According to the *Vimalaprabhā*, in terms of the ultimate truth, the “master” refers to the Buddha Śākyamuni.⁵

From a Western-based scholarly perspective, attributing the *Kālacakratāntra* to the Buddha is of course problematic. Scholars date the *Kālacakratāntra* to around the eleventh century. These two perspectives, the emic and the etic, are, as put by Jackson, “Profoundly, perhaps irrevocably opposed, based as they are on radically differing views not only on how evidence is to be weighed in the determination of religious history, but also on the place and potential of the mind within the scheme of the cosmos.”⁶ What I argue in my analysis is that we can no longer speak of such a clear-cut dichotomy. In the current situation, where Buddhist masters are active in the West and where many Western Buddhologists adhere to Buddhism, the images produced by these two different prisms are increasingly superimposed on one another. This is apparent especially when one analyses oral versions of the Dalai Lama’s presentations of the history of the *Kālacakra*.

ACCOUNTS IN THE KĀLACAKRA LITERATURE

Although the root text of the *Kālacakra*, the *Kālacakramūlatantra*, is allegedly lost, there are various sources which claim to quote passages from it. These include the *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*,⁷ as well as the three texts which form the Bodhisattva Corpus (*Byang chub sems dpa’i ’khor*): the *Vimalaprabhā*, the *Lakṣābhīdhānoddhṛtalaghutantrapīṇḍārthavivaraṇa*,⁸ and the *Hevajra-pīṇḍārthatīkā*⁹—commentaries on the *Kālacakra*, *Cakrasamāvāra*, and *Hevajralaghutantras*, respectively.

Bu-ston quotes the following verses out of the *Kālacakramūlatantra* in his *History of the Kālacakra* (*Dus ’khor chos ’byung rgyud sde’i zab don sgo ’byed rin chen gces pa’i lde mig*):

In the same way that the Teacher set forth
Prajñāpāramitā at Vulture Peak
 He also taught the dharma in the Mantrayāna way
 at ’Bras spungs.

To whom? Where did he teach?
 Who taught the *tantra*?
 In the assembly of whom did he teach?
 Why (did he teach)?

He taught at Vulture Peak Mountain
the unsurpassed Mahayana,
the way of the *Prajñāpāramitā*
to the bodhisattvas

Then the Tathāgata was dwelling at one great stupa
in the *maṇḍala* of *dharmadhātu*
with the bodhisattvas, and so on.

In the ether which is not motionless, completely pure,
all pervading, and extremely radiant,
the abode of the multi-colored *vajra*,
a dwelling place, a magnificent *dharmadhātu*,
it was there that the *tantra* was taught.
It is necessary for the merit and wisdom of human beings.¹⁰

The *Vimalaprabhā*, the main commentary on the *Kālacakralaghutantra*, attributes the teaching of the *Kālacakra* not only to Śākyamuni Buddha, but also to the *Ādibuddha* (Tib. *dang po'i sangs rgyas*), to previous buddhas (specifically to Dīpaṃkara), and also to Mañjuśrī.¹¹ The *Vimalaprabhā* emphasizes that the teaching of the *Kālacakra* was not one single event taught by one single buddha, but rather a teaching that happened, happens, and will happen in the three times by countless buddhas.¹²

ORAL TEACHINGS

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche is considered one of the highest living authorities on *Kālacakra* in the dGe-lugs-pa school. In his oral teachings, Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche attributes the *Kālacakra* to the historical Buddha without raising any of the problematic issues that may be related to such an assertion. As for the question of when the Buddha taught the *Kālacakra*, Kirti Tsenshab presents two different traditions, prevalent in commentaries on the *Kālacakra*. One attributes the teaching of the *Kālacakra* to the Buddha's eighty-first year, while the other attributes the teaching of the *Kālacakra* to the Buddha's thirty-sixth year. When presenting both versions, Kirti Tsenshab himself did not seem to favor either of these two views:

So the Buddha achieved Buddhahood and then he taught *Kālacakra*. When did he teach the *Kālacakra*? There are two different traditions of calculating the year in which he taught the *Kālacakra*. One tradition is that of the three Gyatsos, these are three Tibetan scholars

who share the second name Gyatso. There was one called Norsang Gyatso,¹³ one called Chodrak Gyatso,¹⁴ and one called Lhundrup Gyatso.¹⁵ According to these three, he taught the *Kālacakra* in his eighty-first year at the end of his life.¹⁶

Then in another tradition which is that of Bu-ston Rinpoche and Tsong-kha-pa and mKhas-grub-rje he attained enlightenment when he was thirty-five and then in the following year when he was thirty-six, at that time he taught the *Kālacakra*. So there are these two different traditions, whether he taught the tantra when he was thirty-six or when he was eighty-one, the difference is forty-five years.¹⁷

Serkong Rinpoche

Also very close to textual versions is the oral version that was presented by Serkong Rinpoche in his *Kālacakra* teachings that took place in the USA in 1982:

As it is said in the root tantra text, "Just as the universal teacher taught the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras at Vulture Peak, likewise he taught the various tantras at the stupa, called Śrī Dhanyakataka."

What this quotation is saying is that at the time after the great universal teacher Śākyamuni manifested his enlightenment, he taught at the place called Vulture Peak, the perfection of wisdom sutras, the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras. In this same fashion, in another location, there is a stūpa which is called Śrī Dhanyakataka.... And there, inside this stūpa, he rose with these two mandalas, he rose in the form of the deity Kālacakra and delivered the various tantric teachings, or root texts.¹⁸

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama

When teaching in India to a mostly Tibetan audience the Dalai Lama presents a similar traditional account, without relating to the scholarly-traditional discrepancy. He only refers to the discrepancy within the tradition itself, mentioned above by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, as to whether the Buddha taught the *Kālacakra* in his thirty-sixth or eighty-first year:

Now with regard to the time when the supramundane victor Śākyamuni Buddha set forth the *Kālacakratānta*, there is one system that [says] this occurred right in the year of his own display of gaining highest enlightenment. . . . In another system it is said that he set it forth one year prior to his death. According to the as-

sersion of the adept and scholar Nor-bzang rgya-mtsho, Buddha set forth the *Kālacakratāntra* in the year prior to his death. It is said in the *Kālacakratāntra* itself that just as Buddha was setting forth the Perfection of Wisdom sutras on the Vulture Peak, so he was setting forth the *Kālacakratāntra* at the *stūpa* at 'Bras spungs. With regard to those whom Buddha was manifestly or explicitly setting forth the *tantra* at that time, the *tantra* was requested by the King Suchandra of Shambhala.¹⁹

In another *Kālacakra* initiation (in Spiti, India, 2000), discussing the validity of the *Kālacakra* teachings, the Dalai Lama described what we could term as a "Vajrayāna validity circle," which is based on *faith*. In the Dalai Lama's exposition of this validity principle, first comes the valid *original teacher*, the Buddha, who has given the tantric teachings. The validity of the *scriptures* is established through him. In the second stage, learned scholars wrote valid *commentaries*. Then, by reflecting on the teachings and the commentaries, one can become a valid *lama*. Then, in the fourth stage, by relying on the *lama*, the adept is able to develop *experience* within his or her own mind, hence the valid experience. These four aspects of validity not only work in a linear way, but in a circular manner, working the other way on a higher level. Once the student has developed his or her own *experience*, he or she is able to develop further veneration towards their *lama*. Acknowledging that the wisdom of the *lama* came into existence from practicing the profundity of the teachings of the *commentaries*, one sees them as valid. Since these commentaries are based on the *teachings of the Buddha*, both sutras and *tantra*-s, one is:

able to develop conviction towards the valid teachings of the Buddha and you are able to see that these teachings of the Buddha contain complete meaning and in this way you are able to develop genuine faith towards the Buddha. So relating to these tantric teachings, which are quite hidden from our mind to start with, it is important to develop conviction [relating to them] through these four points of validity.²⁰

This presentation is an interesting variation on the discussion of conviction as found in the first chapter of the *Vimalaprabhā*:

Here in the Mantrayāna the Bhagavān speaks of three types of conviction: first, conviction derived from the *tantra*; then conviction derived from the guru; then conviction derived from oneself. The path of the true, perfect Buddha becomes completely

pure by means of these convictions. Otherwise, without these three convictions, the path that the guru relates to the disciple will not give the result of true, perfect Buddhahood; due to the idiocy of the disciple's faith, he will get a worldly result in accordance with phenomenal truth.²¹

TEACHING IN THE WEST

When teaching in the West, the Dalai Lama relates to the basic discrepancy between traditional accounts and scholarship. Acknowledging the type of information to which his contemporary audience is exposed, such as the various books by Western scholars on the *Kālacakra*, the Dalai Lama's written and oral accounts relate to this discrepancy in a way that can be seen to have been evolving over the years.

In the Dalai Lama's written presentation of the *Kālacakra* prepared for the first *Kālacakra* initiation he gave in the West, in Madison, Wisconsin in 1981, the Dalai Lama related to this discrepancy, but gave precedence to the traditional version (my emphases):

Then in the forms of various mandala deities embodying the inseparable union of method and wisdom he taught the highest yoga tantras.

Because these teachings were given in mystical manifestations of the Buddha to those in transcendental states of purified karma and perception, *it does not matter much* whether or not any specific tantra was expounded during the lifetime of the historical Buddha himself.

*However, in fact, the Kalacakra Root Tantra was set forth by Buddha Shakyamuni himself during his very lifetime.*²²

In 1988 the Dalai Lama gave a series of lectures in London dealing with various aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. These were translated, transcribed, and then edited into what later became a best-selling book titled *The World of Tibetan Buddhism*. On this occasion the Dalai Lama began to present his own version of authorship, a version that takes into account both the Tibetan traditional points of view on the one hand, and Western notions of time and place on the other (as well as Western scholarship that is based on these notions). It is from this point onwards that the Dalai Lama's own synthesis regarding these different standpoints can be seen to be expressed.²³ In the part devoted to the Vajrayāna Buddhism of Tibet, the Dalai Lama said:

There are some chronological issues concerning the evolution of Buddhist tantra, questions of when and where the Buddha taught

the various tantras.²⁴ However, we need not presume that all of the teachings of tantra were propounded by the Buddha during his historical lifetime. Rather, I think that the teachings of tantra could have also emerged through the extraordinary insights of highly realized individuals who were able to explore to the fullest extent the physical elements and the potential within the human body and mind. As a result of such investigation, a practitioner can attain very high realizations and visions, thus enabling him or her to receive tantric teachings at a mystical level. Therefore, when we reflect on tantric teachings, we should not limit our perspective by rigid notions of time and space.²⁵

A further development in the Dalai Lama's standpoint was evident in his teaching of *Kālacakra* as given in August 1999, during the Bloomington *Kālacakra* initiation. Relating to the issue of the source of the *Kālacakra* teachings the Dalai Lama said (my emphases):

I think it is important to bear in mind that our understanding of the authenticity of the *Kālacakra* as a Buddhist *tantra* should not be dependent upon the fact that ... it could be empirically proven that the *Kālacakra* was spoken by the historical Buddha.... I don't think that this question of the *Kālacakra*'s authenticity and its connection with the historical Śākyamuni needs to be a fact that lends itself to the conventional historical perspective, to historical analysis. And there is no need for the *Kālacakra* to have been spoken by the Buddha in the conventional sense that we understand it. For example, [in] many of the sutras that are attributed to the Buddha, it is evident they were not literally spoken by the Buddha in the conventional sense to a large public gathering. What can be attributed to the Buddha historically, in the conventional way, are those [teachings] which have been compiled and edited during the councils of the arhats following the death of the Buddha. These are compiled and edited in the Tripiṭaka. However, the Mahayana sutras, and also the *tantra*-s, and the *Kālacakra*, these evolved as a result of the Buddha teaching only to a selected few, whose mentality was appropriate, and conducive, and receptive to these teachings. So these teachings, including the Mahayana sutras, need not necessarily be able to be traced to the historical Buddha in the conventional sense.

I speculate, for example, if you look at the condensed *Kālacakratāntra* we have now, although the *Kālacakra* teaching must have come originally from the Buddha to King Suchandra, later it was one of the Kalki kings who actually composed the condensed *Kālacakratāntra*, and if you look at the composition style of this condensed *tantra*, it

may reflect particular temperament and also a convention of style that was contemporary to this Kalki king, *although the essence of the subject matter, the condensed tantra, was taught by the Buddha.*

And this is also quite similar to the situation with revealed texts in the Tibetan tradition. Although the original texts may have been hidden by great masters such as Padmasambhava at the time of reign of Trisong Detsen²⁶ and so on, and great masters such as the twenty-five realized masters, but later when the revealed texts were conceived and experienced several generations before, because they were revealed by great masters a couple of generations later, the actual composition, the wording of the text would reflect the particularity of that new situation. If you look at this carefully, *this is something understandable, since the main intent of these texts was to be of benefit to others, in order to benefit it has to reflect that particularity of the new situation, the new environment and therefore the same goes for the Perfection of Wisdom sutras.*

In fact, some people try to dispute the authenticity of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras by saying that the Perfection of Wisdom sutras contain language and style conventions which were current only many centuries after the Buddha's death, which may be true, but that does not negate the fact that the Perfection of Wisdom sutra[s] can be attributed to the Buddha. So in any case, *the basic fact is, as we discussed earlier, that the form body, the physical embodiment of the Buddha, is used exclusively and only in relation to the needs of other sentient beings and the principle beings for which buddhas, fully enlightened beings, engage in activities or help others, is their speech and the speech has to reflect the needs and concerns of a given society and a given time.*²⁷

The Dalai Lama set off by taking a philological approach, maintaining that the style and language do indeed make it impossible to attribute various teachings to the Buddha. However, using the basis of the bodhisatva ideals and the buddha-bodies theory, he built his argument to show why indeed speech was used in the way that it actually was. In this way, the Dalai Lama created a version that would seem plausible to a Western audience while at the same time remaining Buddhist in its presuppositions.

The Dalai Lama started his argument with the premise:

The scriptures' (relating to: Kālacakra, gTer-ma and Prajñāpāramitā) wording and style reflect a time that is much later than the lifetime of the Buddha.

This premise can lead to two conclusions:

Conclusion One: the scriptures are not authentic.

Conclusion Two: (yet still) the scriptures are authentic (i.e., the fact that the wording and style are much later does not mean they were not spoken by the Buddha).

The underlying logic that allows the move from the premise to Conclusion One can be either reflecting inner Buddhist opposition to the *Kālacakra* (given the context: not likely) or Western (given the context: likely). The underlying basis for Conclusion Two is a Mahayanic and Vajrayānic one. This basis maintains that there is a *cause*, an aim, and that is the bodhisattva's aim.

It is interesting to note how the Dalai Lama expanded his argument of authenticity to include not only the *Kālacakra*, but also the revealed texts and the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. As has been pointed out by Makransky, this has become a very pressing question, mostly for Western followers of Mahayana Buddhism, as well as for Western teachers of Mahayana Buddhism. Nowadays, still, many of the most learned Asian teachers continue to speak as if the historical Buddha actually taught the Mahayana scriptures in person, in spite of much evidence to the contrary.²⁸

Another line of argument used by the Dalai Lama is a practical one. His practical argument states, plainly, that the authoritative nature of the teachings need not necessarily come from them being taught by the historical Buddha, but rather from their practical aspect. The Dalai Lama argues: the teachings work, therefore they are valid. The practical aspect works in three levels: the level of the great masters of the past, the level of a contemporary great master, and the level of oneself:

Questions have also been raised regarding the authenticity of the *Kālacakratāntra*.... Perhaps the most important thing is that many great masters of the past in India and Tibet, as a result of undertaking intensive practices of the *Kālacakratāntra*, particularly the six yogas of the completion stage of the *Kālacakra*, they have gained deep and profound realizations, and so this fact that great masters have gained great realizations on the basis of the *Kālacakra* practice, particularly the six yogas of the *Kālacakra*, is a proof that not only is the *Kālacakratāntra* authentic, but also is a *tantra* that has very profound qualities....

In the final analysis, the ultimate determining factor really is one's own practice. If as a result of one's sustained and continued practice, if there is any benefit, or if one can gain any spiritual realization, of course we are not talking just in a matter of days or months, but over a prolonged sustained period of time, if there is a result of one's practice, if one can gain benefit from such a

practice, then such a practice can be regarded as authentic. If, on the other hand, in spite of sustained prolonged practice, if there [are] no results forthcoming, then that practice is not authentic so far as you yourself [are] concerned.²⁹

The Dalai Lama's interpretations on the question of authorship can be viewed through Geoffrey Samuel's terminology, what he calls the "shamanic current" and the "clerical current" within Tibetan Buddhism, and Robert Mayer's subsequent analysis of these terms vis-à-vis questions of authenticity.³⁰ According to Mayer, the clerical view, as typically exemplified by the dGe-lugs-pas, emphasizes the role of the historical Buddha as the source of the *tantra*-s. In contrast, the shamanic view, typical of the rNying-ma-pas, attributes the *tantra*-s to utterances of various transcendent buddhas, not confined to a specific time and place.³¹ As a member of the clerical strand, not to say, "the" member of the clerical strand, the Dalai Lama, in presenting these views, is not only making himself more accessible to his Western audience, but also taking on board the shamanic views, thus incorporating them into mainstream Tibetan Buddhism.

In terms of his positions vis-à-vis *gter-mas*, the Dalai Lama is in fact entirely accepting of the rNying-ma defense of *gter-ma* as little or no different from earlier Buddhist scriptural revelation, and thus distances himself from the scholastic perspective, which rejected the *gter-mas* as well as other rNying-ma tantric texts.³² The Dalai Lama's incorporation of views that have been more prevalent in non-dGe-lugs strands within Tibetan Buddhism can be seen as deriving from the institutional place taken by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in exile, not just as a head of the dGe-lugs-pa school, but as a head of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism.³³

MEDIA AND MESSAGES

Much has been written both in support of, as well as in opposition to, Walter Ong's characterization of oral cultures as conservative when compared with cultures that employ writing, which are seen as being more innovative.³⁴ Orality and writing may vary in the way that they innovate. While oral cultures can indeed preserve "traditions" with little change, it is possible for an oral tradition to innovate without necessarily explicitly recognizing any change, thus allowing for adaptation to specific circumstances while denying change. In the history of the Jewish tradition, for example, the lines of oral transmission were where innovations took place.³⁵ In the Jewish experience of exile, the need to adapt old teachings to new circumstances in order to survive was ever-present.

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, who on many occasions has related to the Jewish experience of preserving culture in exile as a source of inspiration for him, is clearly using the mode of speech as an avenue for innovation and reform. He engages the texts that he teaches in an active way, creating an opportunity for re-search in its very basic meaning: *searching again* for new meanings in territories already known. In this sense the Dalai Lama is actively engaging in the Vajrayānic hermeneutics principle of treating a teaching as an “open text,” allowing for a number of equally valid interpretations, depending on the disciples he is addressing.

The theoretical and methodological questions that arise from contemporary modes of orality have other dimensions as well. In today’s world, oral teachings are recorded, sometimes transcribed, sometimes subsequently edited and published as books. Oral teachings are also transmitted as audio and/or video internet-based cyber-casts that can be downloaded and saved into one’s computer. These blurred boundaries between different media raise new theoretical issues, which concern the significance of orality separated from an event, separated from a certain temporal flow and a fixed place. In the tantric environment, these questions are especially intriguing in the context of the initiation.³⁶

According to the *Vimalaprabhā*, the *Kālacakra* has been, is, and will be taught throughout the three times by countless buddhas. It is this premise that lets the Dalai Lama argue for the benefit of his Western audiences that it is indeed not important whether the historical Buddha *really* taught the *Kālacakra*. His innovative line of presentation can, in fact, also be seen to comply with the verse from Bu-ston attributed to the *Kālacakramulatantra* quoted above. While most commentators have taken these lines to imply that the Buddha taught the *Kālacakra* and *tantra-s* in general at the same *time* he was teaching the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, the Dalai Lama is emphasizing the interpretation that the Buddha taught the *tantra-s* in the same *way* that he taught the Perfection of Wisdom sutras, or in other words: that he *did not* teach the *tantra-s* in the same way that he *did not* teach the Perfection of Wisdom sutras (as well as the revealed texts), but that the historical element of it is not the important one.

What becomes evident when analyzing the differences between the ways in which the Dalai Lama constructs his arguments for a mostly Tibetan versus a mostly Western audience are the different ways in which “reason” is constructed in both contexts, i.e., the different presuppositions that back up the Dalai Lama’s reasoning in both contexts.

In addition to the differences in reasoning, in a mostly Tibetan context one also finds greater emphasis on *faith*. In the present time, when Tibetan Buddhism is becoming a global religion,³⁷ I think the interactions that are developing between these different strands of Tibetan Buddhism are and will be fascinating to observe.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Cathy Cantwell, Dan Martin, and Vesna Wallace for their comments on a previous version of this paper. I would also like to thank the International Center for Semiotic and Cognitive Studies, Richard Payne, Fabio Rambelli, and all the participants of this conference for a truly inspiring and pleasant exchange of ideas.
2. On this issue see also Ronald M. Davidson, "An Introduction to the Standards of Scriptural Authenticity in Indian Buddhism," in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1990); Matthew Kapstein, "The Purificatory Gem and Its Cleaning: A Late Tibetan Polemical Discussion of Apocryphal Texts," *History of Religions* 28, no. 3 (1989): pp. 217–244; Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Robert Mayer, *A Scripture of the Ancient Tantra Collection: The Phur-pa bcu-gnyis* (Oxford: Kiscadale Publications, 1996), chaps. 1 and 4; Janet Gyatso, "The Logic of Legitimation in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition," *History of Religions* 33, no. 2 (1993): pp. 97–134; and Dale Wright, *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 110–111. Much has been written on this issue with respect to Mahayana literature. See, for instance, Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 30.
3. In the *Pradīpoddīyotānā* (Tib. *sGron ma gsal bar byed pa*). This text, which is part of the *Guhyasamāja* commentarial literature, deals with principles of teaching the *tantra*-s. For Steinkellner's analysis of the text see E. Steinkellner, "Remarks on Tantric Hermeneutics," in *Proceedings of the 1976 Csoma de Körös Memorial Symposium*, ed. L. Ligeti (Budapest: Bibliotheca Orientalia Hungarica, no. 23, 1978).
4. Tsong-kha-pa, *rGyud bshad thabs kyi man ngag gsal ba bstan pa* (Tibetan Tripiṭika [TTP], Peking edition, #6198). See also Robert Thurman, "Vajra Hermeneutics," in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald Lopez (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press and the Kuroda Institute, 1988), pp. 135–136.
5. Vesna Wallace, *The Inner Kālacakratantra: A Buddhist Tantric View of the Individual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 8.
6. Roger Jackson, "Kalachakra in Context," in *The Wheel of Time: The Kalachakra in Context*, ed. Beth Simon (Madison: Deer Park Books, 1985), p. 4.
7. TPP, Peking edition, #2068.
8. TPP, Peking edition, #2117.

9. TPP, Peking edition, #2310.

10. ston pas bya rgod phung po ru | shes rab pha rol phyin tshul bzhin |
chos bstan dpal ldan 'bras spungs su | de bzhin gsang sngags tshul rab
gsungs |

gang la gang gnas ston pa ni | su yis rgyud kyang ci zhig bstan |

gnas ni gang du 'jig rten ba'i | 'khor ni su yis rgyu ci yis |

bya rgod phung po ri chen por | theg pa chen po bla na med |

she rab pha rol phyin pa'i tshul |

byang chub sems dpa' rnam la bstan | de nas gcig sku mchod rten cher |

chos kyi dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor du | byang chub sems dpa' sogs rnam kyi |

thabs cig de bzhin [6] gshegs pa bzhugs | nam mkha' bem [rlung] min shin
[me] tu dang |

go [chu] skabs med par rab tu gsal | |

sna tshogs rdo rje'i khang pa gnas | chos kyi dbyings dang yid 'ong bar |

rgyud bstan skyes bu rnam kyi ni |

bsod nams ye shes dgos pa 'o | | shes gsungs so

Bu-ston, *Dus 'khor chos 'byung rgyud sde'u zab don sgo 'byed rin chen 'ces pa'i lde mig ces bya ba*, in *The Collected Works of Bu-ston*, Part 4 (nga), ed. Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1965), fol. 12b, lines 3–6. For Hoffmann's translations of these verses as quoted in the *Sekoddeśatikā*, see Helmut Hoffmann, "Buddha's Preaching of the Kālacakra Tantra at the Stūpa of Dhānyakataka" in *German Scholars on India: Contributions to Indian Studies*, Vol. 1 (Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1973).

11. As explained by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, they are to be seen as different manifestations of the same entity: "The ādibuddha and Buddha Śākyamuni are to be seen as manifestations of the same entity, or manifestations of one another. Sometimes the Buddha would assume the aspect of a saffron clad monk [Buddha Śākyamuni] and sometimes he would assume a different aspect, especially when tantric teachings were given. As for Mañjuśrī, he should be understood to be present when the original teachings were given in two levels: in one level he appeared in the audience and received the empowerment and the commentary as part of the eight close Bodhisattvas. On another level, he was part of [the omniscience of] the Buddha who bestowed the empowerment." Kirti Tsenshab, personal communication, Delhi, 2002.

12. *Vimalaprabhā*, chap. 1, second brief account. Bu-ston, ed. fol. 336. In Newman's translation, John Newman, "The Outer Wheel of Time: Vajrayana Buddhist Cosmology in the Kālacakra Tantra" (PhD diss, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987), p. 276.

13. mKhas-grub Nor-bzang rgya-mtsho (1423–1513) [Tutor of the Second Dalai Lama dGe-'dun rgya-mtsho (1476–1542)].

14. Chos-grags-rgya-mtsho; probably the seventh Karmapa (1454–1506).
15. Phug pa lhun grub rgya mtsho; he wrote his famous astrological work in 1447.
16. Nor-bzang rgya mtsho says, “Therefore, the first year of the six hundred years mentioned in the prophecy of king Manjushri Yashas would be four years before Wood Monkey year. This is Iron Dragon year and in this the year on the full moon of the *chaitra* month the Buddha taught the *Root Tantra*. In the Wisdom Chapter of *The Great Commentary*, in the Supreme Unchanging Wisdom summary, it says, ‘Manjushri, six hundred years after I have passed away, in the land of Shambhala, from the womb of Vijayadevi of Shakya lineage, the lineage bearer Manjushri Yashas, son of Sureshana will appear.’ In the same text it states that Manjushri Yashas will appear six hundred years after our Teacher taught the *Root Tantra*. Therefore, the *Root Tantra* was taught in the year of Buddha’s passing. This means that the Iron Dragon year was the year in which our Teacher taught the *Root Tantra* and was also the year in which he passed away.” G. Kilty, trans., mkhas-grub Nor-bzang rgya-mtsho, *Phyi-nang-gzhan-gsum gsal-bar byed-pa dri-med ‘od-gyi rgyan* (Dolanji, India: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1975; translation forthcoming).
17. Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, oral teachings of *Kālacakra*, trans. Peter Roberts (London: Jamyang Buddhist Centre, June 1996).
18. Serkong Rinpoche, oral teachings of *Kālacakra*, trans. Alex Berzin (Madison, WI, July 1982). Hopkins, quoting a similar version relating the teachings to the Buddha’s thirty-sixth year, is basing himself on Geshe Thupten Gyatso of the Go-mang College of ‘Bras spungs (Drepung). Hopkins adds: “According to another version, the Kālacakra Tantra was set forth a year before his death, but the first version seems to be favored.” The Fourteenth Dalai Lama and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Kalachakra Tantra Rite of Initiation For the Stage of Generation: A Commentary on the text of Kay-drup Geleg-bel-sang-bo by Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Text Itself*, trans. and ed. Jeffrey Hopkins (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999 [1985]), pp. 59 and 482, note 58.
19. Fourteenth Dalai Lama, oral teachings (Bodhgaya, 1985).
20. Fourteenth Dalai Lama, oral teachings (Spiti, 2000). These four points of validity are also very similar to the Tshad-ma bzhi, or the “Four Truth-tests” as described by Dan Martin, *Unearthing Bon Treasures: Life and Contested Legacy of a Tibetan Scripture Revealer* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 157–158, 171–177. The four points are: (1) The truth-test of scriptural authorities, (2) the truth-test of the experience of the Vajra Master, (3) the truth-test of history-interdependent origination, and (4) the truth-test of the yogin’s own experiences. This formulation originated in the Lam-‘bras tradition and was later used by the bKa’-brgyud tradition and in Bon teachings.

21. *Vimalaprabhā*, first chapter, fourth section; Bu-ston, ed. fol. 377; Newman, "The Outer Wheel of Time," pp. 338–339.
22. Fourteenth Dalai Lama, "Concerning the Kalacakra Initiation in America," *The Tibetan Review* (April, 1981).
23. In the preface to the book, Geshe Thubten Jinpa, who was translating the talks at the time and later also edited and annotated the transcriptions into the book, notes: "Looking back, I feel that those lectures marked an important turning point in His Holiness's method of teaching Buddhism to a modern audience." Thubten Jinpa, preface to *The World of Tibetan Buddhism: An Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice*, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. ix.
24. Here Geshe Thubten Jinpa adds a note regarding the two versions of the traditional historical accounts of the teaching of *Kālacakra*. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
26. Khri srong lde'u bstan.
27. Fourteenth Dalai Lama, oral teachings (Bloomington, 1999).
28. John J. Makransky, "Historical Consciousness as an Offering to the Trans-Historical Buddha," in *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*, eds. R. Jackson and J. Makransky (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2000), p. 11.
29. Fourteenth Dalai Lama, oral teachings, 1999.
30. Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993); Mayer, *A Scripture of Ancient Tantra*.
31. See Mayer, *A Scripture of Ancient Tantra*, chap. 1. It is interesting to note, however, that in the context of the contemporary rNying-ma oral *Kālacakra* teachings, Penor Rinpoche simply takes a conventional traditional dGe-lugs-pa view and attributes the teachings of *Kālacakra* to the historical Buddha. Penor Rinpoche, oral teachings (Halifax, May 1995).
32. I thank Cathy Cantwell for pointing out this to me.
33. As a manifested statement, this was evident by the positioning of the heads of the Buddhist schools on the lower thrones during the *Kālacakra* initiation, situated on both sides on the Dalai Lama. It is interesting to note that these included heads of the dGe-lugs-pa, Sa-kya, rNying-ma, bKa'-rgyu, and also, Bon.
34. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982). For some responses to Ong, see David Olson and Nancy Torrance, eds., *Literacy and Orality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). With respect to Buddhism, especially as relating to the transition into Mahayana, see David McMahan, "Orality, Writing, and

Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahāyāna," *History of Religions* 37, no. 3 (1998).

35. For an illuminating collection of articles on this issue, see Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni, *Translating Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

36. I related to this issue in Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, "The Kālacakra Initiation as Conducted in Exile by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche" (paper presented at the UK Association of Buddhist Studies Annual Conference, London, July, 2001).

37. Geoffrey Samuel, "Tibetan Buddhism as a World Religion: Global Networking and Its Consequences" (paper presented at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College, University of London, 1995), available online at <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/departments/so/samuel/global.htm>

The Provocative Character of the “Mystical” Discourses on the Absolute Body in Indian Tantric Buddhism

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IN THIS PAPER I wish to shed some light on the interpretative framework through which Indian tantric Buddhism fashions its esoteric identity in relation to its construction of the notion of the embodied ultimate truth. The main goal of this analytical endeavor is to demonstrate that in Indian esoteric Buddhism, two analytical categories that are central to the discourse of scholars of religion—the category of the “absolute body” and the category of the “esoteric” or “mystical” tradition—are brought together in the conception of the “gnostic body,” or the “body of gnosis” (*jñāna-kāya*). I also hope to illuminate the degree to which the Buddhist esoteric discourse on the “absolute body” is related to its exoteric Mahayana milieu. Before I embark on the analysis of the constructions of the “absolute body” in Indian tantric Buddhism, I would like to give a brief historical overview of the earlier Mahayana model of the embodiment of ultimate reality.

In Indian Mahayana Buddhism, the category of the “absolute body” is discussed in terms of the “dharma-body” (*dharma-kāya*), invariably equated with spiritual awakening. In the earliest Mahayana literature, specifically in the *Perfection of Wisdom* literature, the dharma-body is the Buddha’s spiritual body, which is distinct from the Buddha’s physical body (*rūpa-kāya*). It is the nature of buddhahood, the true reality (*dharmatā*), or suchness (*tathatā*), of all phenomena. But it is also the perfection of wisdom (*prajñā-pāramitā*) that realizes that true reality. Thus, it is both the object and subject of knowledge. The dharma-body is the realm of phenomena (*dharma-dhātu*), the cosmic domain, from which nothing is separate. Its ultimate nature is emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which is not something other than form (*rūpa*). Thus, all forms are of the same nature as the dharma-body, including linguistic ones. The dharma-body is also the body of the Buddha’s teaching, his doctrine (dharma), which expresses and embodies the true nature of phenomena. It knows itself as it is—as being empty of inherent existence and non-dual from all things. Therefore, it is called the “knowledge of all aspects” (*sarvākāra-jñatā*). In early Mahayana literature,

the emptiness of the dharma-body is discussed in terms of its existence by mere conceptual designation and its equality with all phenomena in terms of their common emptiness. As we shall see later, this early Mahayana conception of the “absolute body” serves as a basis for the elaborate theory of the gnostic body in esoteric Buddhism. However, Indian esoteric Buddhism interprets the emptiness of the gnostic body primarily in terms of its lack of atomic matter and the infinitude of its aspects, and not in terms of its existence by mere conceptual designation.¹ Likewise, it identifies the gnostic body with all phenomena not only in terms of their shared emptiness but in terms of bliss.

In the later Mahayana works of the Mind-Only school (*citta-mātra*), the dharma-body also became known as the self-contained “essential body” (*svābhāvika-kāya*). Although the terms “dharma-body” and “essential body” designate the same ultimate reality (non-dual, enlightened awareness), they specify two of its aspects. The dharma-body represents the support of all the qualities of buddhahood, whereas the essential body refers to its stainless, unconditioned nature, which is the suchness of all phenomena. As in the earlier Mahayana literature, here too, the dharma-body is the undifferentiated reality, which is the domain of all phenomena (*dharma-dhātu*). In this later Mahayana tradition, we encounter a threefold classification of the Buddha’s body, according to which the other two bodies—namely, the “enjoyment-body” (*saṃbhoga-kāya*) and “emanation-body” (*nirmāṇa-kāya*)—are in fact the dharma-body manifesting in different planes of existence. This threefold classification of the Buddha’s body and the introduction of the concept of the essential body prepared the way for the later fourfold classification of the Buddha’s body in Indian esoteric Buddhism, where the fourth body, the gnostic body, is at times also referred to as the essential body.

The later Mahayana literature that is concerned with the buddha-nature (*buddha-dhātu*) present in all sentient beings introduced a new mode of discourse on the “absolute body.” In this body of literature, the non-duality of the dharma-body and all sentient beings is discussed here *via positiva*, that is, in terms of the omnipresence of buddha-nature or the Buddha’s gnosis (*buddha-jñāna*), instead of in terms of their emptiness of inherent existence. Buddha-nature is said to be the cause of the purity of the dharma-body and the domain of sentient beings (*sattva-dhātu*). This conception of the naturally pure, unitary, and blissful buddha-nature, which due to being inherent to all sentient beings is the source and the result of their spiritual aspirations, shows the closest resemblance to the Buddhist tantric conception of the gnostic body as the innate bliss of all sentient beings.

In Mahayana literature, the discourse on the “absolute body” is primarily focused on the inexpressible transcendence of the dharma-body.

Consequently, the Mahayana resorts exclusively to analogical descriptions of the dharma-body, comparing it to a dream, an illusion, the sun covered by the clouds, and so on. However, Indian Buddhist *tantra*-s, specifically, the *Unexcelled Yoga* tantras (*anuttara-yoga-tantra*), are concerned with the gnostic body in both of its aspects—ultimate and phenomenal. In lieu of this, they talk about it not only by analogies but also in terms of the correspondences of its ultimate and multileveled phenomenal manifestations. According to the *Unexcelled Yoga* tantras, it is imperative to know the correspondences between the ultimate and conventional aspects of the gnostic body to conceptually understand the unitary nature of ultimate reality. Although Mahayana discourses on the dharma-body either implicitly or explicitly point to the all-pervasiveness of the “absolute body,” their characterizations of the “absolute body” as a domain of phenomena are not concerned with its multileveled, phenomenal aspects.

In Indian esoteric Buddhism, the “absolute body” is classified into ultimate and phenomenal bodies in accordance with the Mahayana theory of two realities—the ultimate and conventional. The ultimate gnostic body is a luminous, non-material, empty form, identified with ultimate reality itself. Hence, it is the ultimate source of all the other buddha-bodies. It is a single, unitary reality, which manifests on the multiple planes of existence. All the phenomenal bodies—cosmic, human, social, and others—correspond to the domain of conventional reality and are presented as phenomenal manifestations of the gnostic body. This view of the multifaceted gnostic body allows the Indian Buddhist *tantra*-s to speak about it not only in terms of the indescribable ultimate reality but also in cosmological, psycho-physiological, and social terms. In this respect, the Buddhist tantric formulations that pertain to the nature of the gnostic body, its manners of manifestation, and even some general methods of its realization bear features that correspond more to those of the non-Buddhist esoteric systems than to those of the Mahayana tradition.

Nevertheless, as Buddhist scholars are becoming more familiar with Indian esoteric Buddhism, they are discovering that although Indian Buddhist exoteric and esoteric traditions operate within differing theoretical and practical frameworks, they are not of a radically different nature, since they are rooted in similar religious, social, and cultural contexts. Furthermore, internal evidence shows that esoteric Buddhism in India did not see itself as utterly separated from its exoteric milieu. Rather, it saw itself as an integrative tradition, encompassing both exoteric and esoteric systems—that is, the system of perfections (*pāramitā-naya*) and the system of mantras (*mantra-naya*).² In the *Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī* (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*), which associates itself with the *Māyājālatantra*, it is said that the esoteric being Vajrasattva ascends the system of Mahayana and is the highest in that system.³ This assertion indicates that Indian esoteric

Buddhism understood itself as an expansion of the Mahayana system, as an implementation of a certain paradigm shift within the Mahayana tradition, which gave a new esoteric dimension to the Mahayana.

Before I venture into the discussion of the “mystical” discourse of the gnostic body in esoteric Buddhism, I would like first to turn to the Buddhist tantric interpretation of the notion of “mystical” or “esoteric.” Our prevalent usage of the term “esoteric” as an attribute to the set of ideas and practices that are secretly or privately taught to a group of the selected initiates in some degree corresponds to the way in which the Indian Buddhist tantric tradition defined itself. According to the *Stainless Light* (*Vimalaprabhā*) commentary on the *Kālacakratāntra*, a secret (*guhya*), or a mystery (*rahasya*), is the Vajrayāna, and the master (*adhipati*) of that secret is a *vajra*-being (*vajra-sattva*), known also as a *vajrī* (one who has a *vajra*), *vajra*-holder (*vajra-dhara*), or the bearer of secrets (*guhya-dhṛk*).⁴ To fully understand this self-definition of the Buddhist esoteric tradition, we must first look at its interpretations of the terms *vajra* and *vajrī*. The *vajra* is defined in the *Unexcelled Yoga* tantras as the non-emitted gnosis (*acyuta-jñāna*) of indivisible, supreme, and imperishable bliss. It is called “non-emitted” because it is associated with bliss that is not generated through sexual emission. One who has this gnosis of bliss is called a *vajrī*, or a *vajra*-holder;⁵ however, the *vajrī* is not something other than this immutable bliss that is self-aware. It is said to abide concealed in the womb of the *vajra*-lady (*vajra-yoṣit*), which is the body, speech, and mind of all the buddhas, also referred to as the three secret collections (*guhya-saṃhāra*).⁶ These three secret collections that constitute the *vajra*-holder are referred to as a womb of the *vajra*-lady because they are considered to be a source of all phenomena (*dharmodaya*). In the *Hevajratāntra*,⁷ this *vajra*-holder is said to be the most secret of all secrets (*guhyātiguhyatara*) for several reasons: it is the inconceivable non-duality, the inconceivable form of the Buddha, and it does not reveal itself to those who do not follow the path of *tantra*.⁸

Already in the early as well as in the later Mahayana literature, the dharma-body is compared to a *vajra* since it is the non-dual and indestructible reality.⁹ Since the time of the *Vedas*, according to which the god Indra slayed with a *vajra* (thunderbolt) the demon of darkness, called Vṛtra, the *vajra* has been understood as a symbol of unobstructed power in the indigenous religious traditions of South Asia. According to this Vedic mythological account, the demon Vṛtra, taking possession of clouds, obstructed the clarity of the sky and prevented the waters of life from falling on earth until he was struck by Indra’s *vajra*.¹⁰ As we shall see soon, there is no doubt that Indian esoteric Buddhism borrowed this symbol of a *vajra* as the symbol of the unhindered power and in part built on it its own interpretation of the qualities of enlightened awareness. In Indian esoteric Buddhism, a *vajra*, or a *vajrī*, is given different names. It is called the “*vajra*-

being," since it is unobstructed, authentic, and invincible awareness. It is unobstructed because it has the unlimited power to fully penetrate and eliminate one's afflictive and cognitive obscurations (*āvaraṇa*), which, like clouds, hinder the innate luminosity of one's own mind. For this reason, mental obscurations are often referred to as one's own internal demons, or Māras ("death"). I believe it is not incidental that both Sanskrit words, the demon's name *Vṛtra* ("coverer") and the word *āvaraṇa* ("obscurations")—which are etymologically related, as derived from the same Sanskrit verbal root *√vr̥*, meaning "to cover" or "to obscure"—are used in these two analogous contexts. Both the demon *Vṛtra* and one's mental obscurations, or Māras, represent the forces of death that can be destroyed only by an invincible *vajra*. Since this invincible *vajra* destroys mental obscurations, it is also called the *bhagavan*, "one who has the victory" (*bhaga*). Likewise, the Sanskrit word *saṃvṛti*, which designates provisional, conventional reality, is related to the same verbal root *√vr̥*, and its literal meaning is "covering" or "concealment." Its literal meaning implies that the conventional reality is that which obscures the true, ultimate reality, and therefore the goal is to eliminate it by the *vajra* of gnosis so that ultimate reality may be revealed.

Furthermore, according to Indian Buddhist *tantra*-s, although the *vajra*-being is the authentic basis of both phenomenal existence (*samsara*) and spiritual liberation (*nirvana*), it remains unaltered by them. Therefore, it is considered invincible and immutable. It is also regarded indivisible on the basis that it cannot be attained through debate because it is the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all phenomena (*dharma*),¹¹ and that emptiness is also called *vajra* due to its indestructibility, indivisibility, and inability to be consumed. Likewise, this *vajra*-being is referred to as the "innate body" (*sahaja-kāya*), because the gnosis of innate bliss is said to be inherent to all sentient beings. It is also known as the gnostic body or a gnostic being (*jñāna-sattva*) on the ground that it is the self-produced, formless body of unobstructed gnosis. Moreover, it is called the "pure body" (*viśuddha-kāya*) on the ground that it is radiant by nature, incorruptible, and invulnerable to karma, mental afflictions (*kleśa*), and their habitual propensities (*vāsanā*). It is also termed the "great seal" (*mahā-mudrā*), for there is nothing beyond it that one could achieve. It is the assurance of one's ultimate spiritual achievement. Lastly, just like the *dharma*-body in the early Mahayana literature, it is called the "perfection of wisdom," for it is the state of perfected gnosis.

One may rightly ask here, why does Indian tantric Buddhism consider the *vajra*, or gnosis of imperishable bliss, as secret, or esoteric? I see several possible answers to this question. First, it is stated in the Buddhist esoteric literature that the *vajra*, or the gnosis of sublime bliss, dwells hidden everywhere—not only within every sentient being, but also in sentient beings' natural and social environments, and in the *maṇḍala*.¹² Being concealed there by the elements, sense-faculties, sense-objects, and symbolic

representations, its true nature remains imperceptible, unknowable, and therefore secret. Second, it transcends all conceptual classifications such as “existence” and “non-existence.” Being self-awareness, it transcends the duality of subject and object, for it is simultaneously both knowledge and the object of knowledge. In this way, it is free of conceptualizations and inaccessible to the conceptual minds of others. Thirdly, since the gnostic body is devoid of atomic particles, it does not have a perceptible form; but it is not characterized by formlessness either, because its form is emptiness. Thus, transcending the duality of form and formlessness, it is hidden from ordinary visual and mental faculties. Consequently, as in the case of the dharma-body in the literature of Mahayana, its ultimate aspect can be talked about only in similes, being compared to space, an illusion, a dream, an illusory city, or a reflection in a prognostic mirror. All that one can say about its ultimate, empty form is that it is self-arisen from space and therefore similar to space in its all-pervasiveness and eternity. Since the gnostic body is an empty, immaterial form, it can assume all aspects, shapes, and colors. It can have an appearance of fire although it is not fire; it can appear with a liquid aspect, while not being water; or it can appear as being of the color white, despite the fact that it is devoid of any color due to its absence of matter. Thus, even though the gnostic body manifests in all aspects, forms, and colors everywhere, it remains hidden from those who are not trained in Buddhist esoteric yoga. However, it does not remain a mystery to those who are engaged in Buddhist tantric yoga, particularly in the six-phased yoga (*ṣaḍ-aṅga-yoga*). Due to the purificatory power of that yoga, the signs of its emergence spontaneously appear to the mind of the *yogī*, marking a gradual transformation of his or her psycho-physical constituents into the blissful and immaterial body of gnosis. Thus, the gnostic body can be directly realized only by fully awakened adepts who know the secret of the methods of achieving it and the accompanying signs of its emergence.

In Mahayana literature, the dharma-body is conceived as consisting of emptiness, or the liberating wisdom (*prajñā*) that sees the true nature of all phenomena, and of compassion (*karuṇā*) for all sentient beings. In contrast, in Indian Buddhist *tantra*-s, even though the gnostic body is represented as the indivisible unity of emptiness and compassion, these two facets of enlightened awareness are interpreted in a different way. The gnostic body is described as embodying the mutual absorption of wisdom and compassion, and is therefore said to be neither wisdom nor compassion. Furthermore, as we have already seen, in the *Unexcelled Yoga* tantras, emptiness is understood to be the form of the gnostic body, and compassion is said to be its mind of indestructible bliss. This non-dual empty form and blissful mind are figuratively described as a couple, as the primordial father and mother, whose union is the indestructible, androgynous state, the *vajra*-being, who is not only present in all things but is also their origin. This tantric conception of

the non-dual ultimate reality as androgynous, male-and-female, provides the basis for an androgynous model of humanity, of the social order, and of the cosmos as a whole. Scriptural evidence¹³ indicates that the neuter noun *vajra*-being is intentionally used here as a synonym for the gnostic body to reflect this androgynous image of ultimate reality. The mother and the father are the wisdom and method aspects of the gnostic body. A sign of the wisdom aspect is a lotus, symbolizing space, which is a support (*ādhāra*) of gnosis; and a sign of the method aspect is a *vajra*, symbolizing the gnosis of bliss, which arises in space and is therefore supported (*ādheya*) by space. Their indestructible unity is called the “imperishable *vajra-yoga*,” or the “*vajra*-being.” The term “*vajra*-being” itself is seen as the expression of the non-duality of the gnostic body, since the term “*vajra*” designates gnosis, or the knowledge of all aspects, and “being” (*sattva*) designates the body of knowledge of all aspects, the object of knowledge. The unity of these two is established as the *vajra*-being.¹⁴

Indian esoteric Buddhism does not reserve this imagery of a lotus and a *vajra* for the description of the unitary nature of the gnostic body in its ultimate aspect alone. It also applies this figurative language to the cosmic and human domains, where the lotus and the *vajra* represent the sun and the moon or the female and male sexual organs. Indian Buddhist *tantra*-s employ the same figurative language in their characterizations of ultimate and conventional realities for heuristic purposes, namely, to reveal that even the multifaceted phenomenal reality is unitary in itself and non-dual from the gnostic body.

In the context of esoteric Buddhism, the gnostic body differs from the dharma-body also in that it is the attainment of its own well-being and self-aware bliss, whereas the dharma-body, along with the enjoyment-body and the emanation-body, is the aspect in which the gnostic body appears for the sake of the well-being of others. For the benefit of highly realized bodhisattvas, it does not remain the self-aware bliss but appropriates the sign of the dharma-body, consisting of both gnosis (*jñāna*), or the non-conceptual apprehending mind, and consciousness (*vijñāna*), or the knowledge of someone else’s conceptual mind, which is the object of gnosis. These two—gnosis and consciousness—are seen as the wisdom and method aspect of the dharma-body. Thus, in Indian esoteric Buddhism, the conception of the wisdom and method aspects of the dharma-body does not directly correspond to that in Mahayana, where the dharma-body is said to be accessible only to the fully realized buddhas. Moreover, in the exoteric Mahayana tradition the dharma-body is the ultimate attainment of one’s own well-being, and the other two bodies are for the sake of others.

Furthermore, in the Mahayana discourse on the “absolute body,” the Buddha’s non-abiding in samsara or in nirvana is explained in terms of his invulnerability to samsaric suffering and his compassion for sentient be-

ings, out of which he remains engaged in the world. In Mahayana literature, although the Buddha engages in the world and shares the same emptiness of inherent existence with the world, the world is not his phenomenal body. According to Indian esoteric Buddhism, the gnostic body, which is the source of both nirvana and samsara, does not abide in either one of these, because in its empty aspect it is devoid of nirvana, and in its blissful aspect, it transcends the phenomenal world. Nevertheless, it is called samsara when it appears to sentient beings as the cosmos and its inhabitants. Thus, every domain of human experience is the misperceived gnostic body, which appears to ordinary sentient beings as impermanent, material forms, and in this way its true nature remains secret. The phenomenal aspects of the gnostic body—whether cosmic, social, or individual—are reflections of one's own spiritual ignorance whereby an ordinary person perceives a material form where actually there is none and identifies it as "I" or "mine."

The gnostic body also expresses itself in linguistic forms, although it itself is unutterable and has abandoned all verbal expression. As the sublime breath, it is recognized as the source of all utterances and as the progenitor of all the meanings of mantras. It is identified as the *vajra*-word, which is characterized by the absence of syllables, and as the omniscient language having two aspects—phenomenal and ultimate. In its phenomenal aspect, namely, in the form of syllables and mantras, the *vajra*-word grants mundane accomplishments (*siddhi*); and in its ultimate aspect, devoid of syllables, it brings about the ultimate accomplishment, or spiritual awakening. In accordance with this dual aspect of the *vajra*-word, Indian esoteric Buddhism distinguishes two types of articulated signs (*saṃketaka*): the mantra-sign and the suchness-sign (*tathatā-saṃketaka*). The mantra-signs, which are articulated through the pronunciation of the vowels and consonants by means of the throat, palate, tongue, and lips, are considered mundane (*laukika*), whereas the suchness-sign, or the letter "a," stands for suchness, or ultimate reality, since it is devoid of oral pronunciation and is thus primordially unborn. It is the insignia of the beginningless gnostic body, inherent in all of existence. Already in the early Mahayana literature, the vowel "a," due to being the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet and inherent in every Sanskrit consonant, represents the all-pervasive emptiness and the perfection of wisdom. In Indian Buddhist esoteric writings, this insignia of the unoriginated sound, the primary cause of all expressions, is referred to as a "mystery" (*rahasya*) and a "secret" (*guhya*). It symbolizes the space-element, the abode of sublime bliss, which is the source of all phenomena (*dharmodaya*). We are told in the Buddhist tantric literature that due to signifying the locus of the gnosis of immutable bliss, the letter "a" is put in the locative case; thus, in conjunction with the added locative suffix "i," it becomes the letter "e."¹⁵ The gnosis of immutable bliss, which abides in space as its *vajra*-throne,

is represented by the syllable *vaṃ*. The unity of these two, the space and gnosis of imperishable bliss, or the letter “e” and the syllable *vaṃ*, is expressed in the term *evaṃ*, which in Sanskrit literally means “thus,” “so,” or “in this way.” Thus, this two-syllable word *evaṃ* is a linguistic symbol of the androgynous gnostic body, of the non-dual yoga of the gnosis and its empty form. Its two emblems are a lotus and a *vajra*. In terms of its phenomenal manifestations in the forms of the cosmic and human bodies, the vowel “e,” having a lotus as its emblem, represents the sun and the female sexual organ; and the syllable *vaṃ*, having a *vajra* as its emblem, is the moon and the male sexual organ. Due to the unutterable nature of its ultimate referent, this linguistic contraction of the *vajra*-yoga, or the gnostic body, is considered not to be a term.

With the exception of the *Kālacakratāntra*, *evaṃ* is the beginning of all Indian Buddhist tantric discourses, which begin with the phrase that is common to Buddhist sutras and *tantra*-s: “Thus I have heard” (*evaṃ mayā śrutam*). “*Evaṃ*” expresses the source and the epitome of all Buddhist esoteric discourses. Even the *Kālacakratāntra*, which does not begin with the word *evaṃ*, sees *evaṃ* as the synthesis of the essence of its entire discourse. It interprets its own body of discourse as the linguistic representation of the *vajra*-yoga, which is without partiality, as the gnosis of the Buddha, embodied in language, whose empty form is represented by vowels, and its gnosis of sublime bliss by consonants. In light of this view, the structural organization of this tantric treatise corresponds to its conceptual construction of the gnostic body. Comprised of the five chapters dealing with the cosmic, human, social, visually imagined, and ultimate aspects of the gnostic body respectively, it reflects the structure of the path of the discovery of the unitary gnostic body, hidden in various forms.

The identification of the linguistic discourse with its content and primary origin, namely, the “absolute body,” is not invented by or unique to esoteric Buddhism. It is also characteristic of many Mahayana sutras, which identify the content and meaning of their discourse with the primary teacher, the dharma-body of the Buddha, seeing it as an expression of the qualities of buddhahood and as a primary condition for one’s spiritual awakening.¹⁶

In the context of esoteric Buddhism, even though the gnosis of immutable bliss is embodied in the esoteric discourse and is revealed through its linguistic representations, its true meaning remains an impenetrable mystery to those who are not initiated into the semantic alternatives of Buddhist tantric discourse. Its accurate meaning is comprehensible only to those who know the distinction between literal (*ruta*) and non-literal utterances (*aruta*), between intentional language (*saṃdhyā-bhāṣā*) and that which is not, and between definitive (*nītārtha*) and provisional meanings (*neyārtha*), as revealed through the oral instructions of a spiritual mentor.

The discovery of the meaning, which is derived from the esoteric discourse and spiritual mentor's instruction, is indispensable but insufficient as the sole condition for the complete penetration into the mystery of the gnostic body. It must be accompanied by subsequent insights into the meaning of the signs that appear in the meditation on a *maṇḍala* and the signs arising to the non-conceptual mind engaged in esoteric yoga. A *maṇḍala*, which is a blueprint of the multifaceted gnostic body and its universal form, is a more subtle sign than the linguistic one, as it corroborates the linguistic signs in the experience of a mental vision. The visual signs of the gnostic body appearing to the mind in meditation on a *maṇḍala* accord with its linguistic signs employed in a tantric discourse in the content, structure, and in the nature of being conceptual constructs. In esoteric Buddhism, all symbols are recognized as conceptual constructs, which are powerful and efficacious in constructing one's reality. Therefore, they are implemented on the Buddhist tantric path as epistemological tools, by means of which one deconstructs one's own unchallenged preconceptions and misperceptions of the world and constructs a new model of the world, envisioned as a spiritual reality. However, Indian esoteric Buddhism recognizes that due to being conceptually and socially constructed, symbols give rise only to mediated, or dependently arisen, knowledge, which is the domain of the limited sense-faculties. Therefore, despite their immense ability to transform one's experience of reality, their qualities and functions are ascertained as limited. Contemplation of one symbol can bring about only the result that corresponds to that symbol. Confining oneself to the world of symbols, one remains bound by conceptual fabrications and is unable to see ultimate reality as it truly is. In lieu of this, those who seek the full realization of the gnostic body, which evades all conceptual constructs, are advised eventually to abandon all symbols and to engage in yogic non-conceptual practices. In contrast to the meditation on symbols, in the non-conceptual esoteric yoga the signs of the genuine realization of the gnostic body arise spontaneously as the reflections of one's own purified mind until there is the final emergence of the gnostic body as the signless ultimate reality.

There is no doubt that Indian tantric Buddhism developed its own system of semiotics, by means of which it problematizes its own modes of the presentation of the gnostic body and points to the methods of searching for what is hidden beneath the obvious presentations. Its claim to the knowledge of the soteriologically significant meanings of the particular signs of the gnostic body and to the knowledge of the ways of controlling and transcending those signs into the signless reality is what fashions it as an esoteric tradition. Its secret knowledge is the body of gnosis, which is both the signifier and the signified, and yet transcends all the systems of signification. Thus, according to the semiotics of Indian esoteric

Buddhism, there is an escape from signs, and that deliverance marks the final liberation from the world of mental constructs and its accompanying suffering and is termed here as the gnostic body. Perhaps this particular semiotical theory can help us more accurately assess the category of the “esoteric tradition” and the category of the “absolute body,” since it brings them together in a unique way. Its emphasis on the possibility and soteriological necessity of knowing things independently of their signs and penetrating into unmediated reality shows that any reality built on sign-systems can be challenged and transcended. In this way, it invites scholars of contemporary semiotics to reassess their view that although things may exist independently from signs, they can be known only through the mediation of signs. Likewise, its two-part method of transcending signs, which consists of collapsing all signs into a single sign and dissolving that one sign into signlessness, brings a new kind of discourse to the field of semiotics.

Furthermore, the investigation of the multileveled constructions of the gnostic body can shed new light on the categories and models of embodiment. Indian esoteric Buddhist discourse on the “absolute body,” as in the Mahayana, can contribute to contemporary studies of the body in philosophy by extending recent critiques of the hierarchical dichotomies fostered by Cartesian dualism—spirit/matter, mind/body, subject/object. However, the Buddhist esoteric discourse on the “absolute body” is even more relevant for the broader spectrum of the contemporary discourses on the body than such discourses in the Mahayana. Its androgynous model of the “absolute body” and its phenomenal reflections is relevant to certain trends of analysis in gender studies, which are focused on dismantling the gendered dualism of mind/body and male/female that sustains asymmetrical relations of power. Likewise, its discourses on the absolute body as manifesting in society can contribute to theories of the body in the social sciences by positing a reconstituted social body that is based on gnosis rather than on gender and class distinctions. These particular facets of the Buddhist esoteric discourse on the “absolute body,” which are not only absent in Mahayana literature, but also undermine some of the traditional readings of Mahayana scriptures, are the salient features of its esotericism.

NOTES

1. The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, eds. Vrajavallabh Dwivedi and S. S. Bahulkar, *Rare Buddhist Texts Series Vol. 2, Nos. 12 and 13* (Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994), chap. 5, v. 120.
2. The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, ed. Jagannatha Upadhyaya, *Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series Vol. 1, No. 11* (Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986), chap. 1.
3. The *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*, v. 41, line b: *mahāyānārūḍho mahāyānanayottama*.
4. The *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*, v. 14.
5. The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, Vrajavallabh Dwivedi and S. S. Bahulkar, *Rare Buddhist Texts Series*, chap. 5, v. 127.
6. The *Yogaratanmālā* commentary on the *Hevajratantra*, chap. 1, v. 1.
7. D. L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study*, Vols. 1–2, London Oriental Series, Vol. 6. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), chap. 1, v. 2.
8. The *Yogaratanmālā* commentary on the *Hevajratantra*, chap. 1, v. 2.
9. Edward Conze, trans. and ed., *The Large Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom: With the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 494 (*tathāgatasya vajrakāyaḥ*).
10. See the *Ṛg-Veda*, 3.33, where the Rivers speak to Viśvamitra in this way: “Īndra who wields the *vajra* dug our channels: he killed Vṛtra, who blocked our streams. . . .(6) That heroic act of Īndra should be eternally praised; he tore Ahi [“snake”] into pieces. He destroyed the obstructions with his *vajra*, and the waters flowed in the directions they desired.(7)”
11. The *Yogaratanmālā* commentary on the *Hevajratantra*, chap. 1, v. 4.
12. The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, Vrajavallabh Dwivedi and S. S. Bahulkar, *Rare Buddhist Texts Series*, chap. 5.
13. Ibid.
14. The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, Jagannatha Upadhyaya, *Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series*, chap. 1, v. 2.
15. Ibid., chap. 1. See also the *Yogaratanmālā* commentary on the *Hevajratantra*, part 1, chap. 1.
16. The *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, and so on.

The Transmission of All Powers: Sarvāmnāya Śākta Tantra and the Semiotics of Power in Nepāla-Manḍala

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ON SEPTEMBER 20, 1997—the final day of Indra Jātra, the Festival of King Indra—the former king of Nepal, Śrī Pañc Mahārāja Birendra Śāh Deva, visited the home of the virgin Kumārī Ghār in Indra Chowk, the site of the old royal palace in Kathmandu. His purpose was to receive *prasāda*, or divine blessing, from Nepal’s living goddess, the virgin Kumārī. While a crowd of several thousand Nepalis and tourists waited outside the seventeenth-century Newar temple that houses the young virgin Kumārī, King Birendra was escorted into the inner chamber that serves as the goddess’s living quarters and site of worship. Although only the king’s closest aides and the Kumārī herself can verify exactly what happened at that point, there is one tangible barometer that is used to judge the success of such an encounter: the continuation of the king in his position as symbolic head of the nation. The textual and oral traditions of Nepalese Śākta Tantra claim that the king’s reappearance from the *sanctum sanctorum* of the living goddess indicates that he has been bestowed with the power (*śakti-pāta*) to continue his rule. Texts like the eighteenth-century *Kumārīpūjā-Paddhati*¹ maintain that if the Kumārī disfavors the king during this critical annual meeting, he will fall from power. Conversely, by favoring the king, the Kumārī empowers him to reign over the kingdom of Nepal for another year—a “transcendent” bestowal of governance inseparably linked with the social institutions and practices constructed by Nepal’s kings over the last millennium.

Arising out of a long tradition of virgin worship, the *Kumārīpūjā-Paddhati* and other esoteric texts proclaim that the Kumārī is actually the living embodiment of *śakti*, divine power. While to the uninformed the Kumārī may seem to be only a seven-year-old Nepalese girl, a tantric initiate—such as the king—sees in her an instantiation of that very power that is the source of all creation and whose ultimate seat resides in his own heart as his inner Self (*antarātman*) and inherent nature (*svabhāva*). From the perspective of Śākta Tantra, the king visits the Kumārī for a vision (*darśana*) of the goddess and direct contact with the supreme power that grants both worldly gain (*bhukti, artha*) and final emancipation (*mukti*). A blessing from her bestows both political legitimation—in that it publicly proclaims divine ratification

of the king's sovereignty—and spiritual legitimation. This mystico-political relationship between the king and the virgin goddess highlights an ancient and deeply imbedded tradition of religious ideology that informs the Nepalese sociopolitical complex and reveals the inseparable connection between divine and political power in Nepal. In this Hindu nation the powers of state derive directly from a goddess who, although transcendent in her essential nature, reveals herself most prominently in the flesh, bone, and—most importantly—clan fluids (*kulāmṛta*) of young virgin girls.

Understanding that power resides most potently in secrecy, Nepal's regal *tāntrika*-s have taken a cue from Abhinavagupta and have veiled their esoteric practices behind the façade of mainstream Hindu devotionism. Like his predecessors, Birendra Śāh Deva publicly proclaimed himself to be an incarnation (*avatāra*) of the god Viṣṇu. However, like the founder of the Śāh dynasty, Pṛthivī Nārāyan Śāh, he was an initiate of Śrī Vidyā Śākta Tantra. Although politically displaced by the upheavals and transformations that resulted from the People's Movement in the early 1990s, King Śrī Birendra Śāh Deva still stood at the center of an elaborate ideological and ritual complex—informed predominantly by Śākta Tantra—that linked the divine body to the king's body to the immediate social body, which has been constructed and maintained as the goddess's universal form (*Devī-viśvarūpa*). In this realm, densely coded tantric ritual is the catalyst that transforms civic space into a vibrant seat of power.

NEPALESE SARVĀMNĀYA ŚĀKTA TANTRA

The relationship between king and Kumārī catalyzes from the political center a complex matrix of mystico-political power rooted in a Nepalese form of Kaula Śākta Tantra called Sarvāmnāya. Sarvāmnāya Śākta *tāntrika*-s utilize multiple forms of Devī—particularly Bhuvaneśvarī, Dakṣiṇakālī, Kubjikā, Ugra Tāra, Guhyakālī, and Tripurasundarī—to construct a dyadic semiotics of power. Employed on a primary and esoteric level within this system, Devī, the goddess, signifies that singular consciousness-power (*cit-śakti*) that manifests creation through the flashing forth of her phonemic self (*mātrkātmaka*) into a vibrant circle of power, *śakti-cakra*. On a secondary and exoteric level, Devī functions as a sign of the politico-military power of Nepalese kings. This paper investigates the interplay between these two levels through a study of the correlation of Sarvāmnāya theology, ritual, and yogic practice to the variety of cultural productions in Nepal—including architecture, paintings, music, and public ritual—which function as signs of the king's right to abide at the center of Nepāla-Manḍala.

At the esoteric level the Nepalese Sarvāmnāya system represents itself as the culminating synthesis of all (*sarva*) tantric transmissions (*āmnāya*-s). By the twelfth century Śrī Vidyā had established itself at the heart of Nepal's

Sarvāmnāya system, which at this point was in its incipient stages. The term *āmnāya* encompasses a polysemantic field that lends itself to a diversity of translations, including “transmission,” “sacred tradition,” “sacred text,” “family or national custom,” “instruction,” and “family.”² The contemporary Nepalese Sarvāmnāya system represents itself as the culminating synthesis of all (*sarvā*) the transmissions (*āmnāya*-s) preserved by clans (*kula*-s) of practitioners united through the seminal wisdom of tantric adepts. In particular, the Sarvāmnāya system incorporates the six streams of Āgamic revelation, or six transmission schools (*ṣaḍ-āmnāya*-s): the eastern (Purvāmnāya), southern (Dakṣiṇāmnāya), western (Pāścimāmnāya), northern (Uttarāmnāya), lower (Adhāmnāya), and upper (Urdhvāmnāya) transmissions. In the esoteric interpretation of the Sarvāmnāya system, each of the six *āmnāya*-s is associated with a particular goddess, who in turn is correlated with one of the six *cakra*-s, or energy centers, in the subtle physiology. The Sarvāmnāya path involves sequential initiation, stage by stage, in each of the six transmission schools in order to awaken the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, the serpentine power at the base of the spine, and activate in turn each of the *cakra*-s along with the corresponding goddesses who are mistresses of the *cakra*-s (*cakreśvarī*). The final stage of the Sarvāmnāya path involves initiation into the upper transmission school (Urdhvāmnāya), which is associated with Tripurasundarī, the supreme goddess of the Śrī Vidyā *kula*. Through this final initiation the *ajñā-cakra*, situated between the eyebrows, is activated, and the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* rises up to the *sahasrāra-cakra* at the crown of the head, culminating in a state of full empowerment in which the tantric practitioner (*sādhaka*) realizes his or her identity with Tripurasundarī, “the beautiful goddess of the three cities.” The foundation of this process of ascension is *yantra* practice. A *yantra* (lit., “instrument”) is an aniconic depiction of a respective goddess’s emanation as both light and sound. Through training in Sarvāmnāya *yantra* practice, which includes external worship, *mantra* installation, visualization, and meditation, the *yogin* transforms his own body into a conduit through which each of the multiple forms of the goddess is awakened and united in an encompassing totality of power, represented by the Śrī Cakra, the *yantra* of the highest and final transmission, Urdhvāmnāya.

At the exoteric level, this semiotics of internal mystical ascendance is transfigured into a semiotics of governmental power and sociocultural cohesion via the symbolism of the *maṇḍala*. A careful reading of Nepalese mythico-historical texts like the *Nepālāmāhātmya* suggests that a king’s capacity to rule is directly proportional to his attainment as a *sādhaka*, a tantric adept. It is for this reason that such texts describe the geopolitical landscape of Nepal as a divine territory, *maṇḍala*, with temples and *śākta-pīṭha*-s strategically constructed for the channeling of power through and beyond the king’s body into his extended body, the body politic. Tantric Nepalese kings, such as Pṛthivī Nārāyan Śāh (eighteenth century), thus imagined their dominion over the mesocosmic *maṇḍala* to be a direct reflec-

tion of their ability to harness the divine energies of Devī within the *maṇḍala* of their own bodies. Through a dyadic semiotics that linked internal spaces to public domains, the Devī-power cultivated through mystical practice could be inscribed into those sociocultural products—temples, paintings, and festivals—which functioned as public signs of the Devī’s power to maintain order within the kingdom.

THE KING AND ŚĀKTA TANTRA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The identification of *maṇḍala*-s, and more specifically tantric *yantra*-s, with the sociopolitical territory of kings reflects important historical links between Śākta Tantra and Nepalese kingship. By at least the twelfth century (Malla period)—and probably as early as the eighth century (Licchavi period)—Nepal’s kings were becoming initiates of Hindu Tantra. For them the *maṇḍala* was both a template of their kingdom and a spiritual device for identifying themselves with the body of their chosen goddess. In this way, the *maṇḍala* has functioned dyadically as an instrument for obtaining both mundane and transcendent modes of power.

The dyadic employment of the *maṇḍala* has roots in the Veda where the term denotes a division or book of mantric *hymns* within the *Ṛg Veda*. As such, the term, even in its earliest sense, suggested a rich interplay between potent sound (*mantra*), the human vessel of that potency (*ṛṣi*), the deities (*deva*-s) invoked and equivocated with those sonic potencies, and the related worlds/territories (*bhuvana*) that were the spatial extensions thereof. As liturgies for ritual, these *maṇḍala*-s, ten in total, linked divine sound and space to the bodies of the ritual officiants. By the time of the *Purāṇas*, epics, and *śāstra* literature this term interwove a polysemantic field: the *maṇḍala* was the universal kingdom with Mount Meru at its center (*Matsya Purāṇa* 114.56); it was a regal administrative unit or “territory” (*Arthaśāstra* 6.1–2); it was a palace modeled on the Mount Meru *maṇḍala* (*Matsya Purāṇa* 269.36, 49); it was the celestial space of the sun, planets, stars, and moon (*Vāyu Purāṇa* 53.28); it was a sacred zone near Prayāgā protected by Hari (*Matsya Purāṇa* 104.9); and it was a seat (*pīṭha*) for sacred images (*Matsya Purāṇa* 262.6, 9, 17). Within the genitive compound *maṇḍala-īśvara*, “ruler of the territory,” the term indicates the provincial ruler or regent of a political zone (*Brāhmaṇḍa* 3.38.30, *Arthaśāstra* 6.1–2).

These interrelated meanings arose from a classical vision of correspondences (*bandha*-s) between the multiple levels of a hierarchical, multi-leveled universe. Adopting a structural grid used effectively by David White, we can place these meanings within a tri-cosmic conception of interrelationality that correlates a “big universe” (macrocosm) with a “little universe” (microcosm) through an “intermediating universe” (mesocosm).³

At the macrocosmic level the *maṇḍala* is the cosmic emanation of the universal king, Nārāyaṇa, who brings the universe into being through the god Brahmā, who arises on a lotus from Nārāyaṇa's navel. This universe is the Jambudvīpa-maṇḍala, with Mount Meru as its *axis mundi*. Situated within the regal palace on Mount Meru, the creator god Brahmā rules as the lord of the territory, *maṇḍaleśvara*. As a regent of Nārāyaṇa, Brahmā governs horizontally through a conquest of the four directions and also vertically as ruler of all the beings in the three worlds (*trailokya*): earth, heaven, and sky. Closest to him are those who, due to their ritual purity, have a position of high authority. These are his administrators, political and spiritual advisors, and priests. At the peripheries of this cosmic territory, one finds protector deities, those who are "less pure," but nonetheless powerful and critically important to the protection of the *maṇḍala*.⁴

At the microcosmic level, the *maṇḍala* is the sociopolitical zone of the human king. The *Arthaśāstra* and its commentarial texts contain a detailed description of the internal structure of the earthly kingdom. Within this system there is a hierarchy of kings spiraling out from the Rājādhirāja, or king of kings. The Rājādhirāja is the equivalent of a Cakravartin (literally, "wheel turner"), whose domain contains multiple domains within itself, each with its own lesser king, just as Nārāyaṇa—with whom the Rājādhirāja is classically equated—is the supreme ruler of a cosmic *maṇḍala* that contains multiple regions and sub-rulers within it. To be precise, the earthly *maṇḍala* contains twelve sub-kings, each with distinct political functions. Not all of these kings are allies. Rather, the *maṇḍala* vision incorporates enemy kings whose antagonistic intentions are seen as integral to the *maṇḍala*-system. These twelve kings are each linked to an emanational power, or *prakṛti*, which in turn each emanate five *prakṛti*-s: (1) administrators/advisors, (2) territory, (3) forts, (4) treasury, and (5) army. In all, then, there are seventy-two *prakṛti*-s: the original twelve plus the five emanations of each. These seventy-two emanational powers comprise the *rāja-maṇḍala*,⁵ predicated on a complex political theory of "mathematically balanced diplomacy."⁶

The center of this microcosmic *maṇḍala* is the king's palace, modeled on Mount Meru. Mirroring its macrocosmic template, the *rāja-maṇḍala* embodies a hierarchical arrangement that positions those of purity closest to the king and those impure but powerful at the peripheries where the *maṇḍala* needs protection. In between, the division of the classes (*varṇa*-s) are arranged such that they radiate out from the center, with brahmin communities being closest to the palace and lower-class communities being furthest away. In this way, the king sat as the hub of a "cosmo-moral" order. Ronald Inden writes,

The Cosmic Overlord [Rājādhirāja] encompassed the cosmos—his domain [*maṇḍala*], consisting not only of the earth and the nether

regions below, but also of the heavens above—in the specific and total sense that he could create order, and destroy without in any way diminishing himself, either his power or his substance. Like the Cosmic Overlord [Nārāyaṇa], the overlord of the earth encompassed these kings of the four quarters of the earth. Those who worshipped the image or sing of the Cosmic Overlord, who ‘shared in’ his being, were called his *bhaktas*. Those who assembled around the lion-throne to do homage to the overlord of the earth were also ... his *bhaktas*, those who shared in his kingship, those who were, as we would say, ‘loyal’ to him. The idea of the king of kings as a hypostasis of cosmo-moral order on earth was, thus, no figure of speech. He did indeed embrace within his persona, himself together with his domains, the entire earth as an ordered, integrated totality.⁷

As a “cosmo-moral order,” the earthly *maṇḍala* serves as a “protected-field” (*kṣetra-pāla*) in which citizens pursue the four aims of life—dharma, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*—according to their position within society. To nuance our understanding of the relationship of citizen to state we now have to complexify our usage of the term “microcosmic.” Operating in a way that parallels contemporary Western theories of the hologram, *maṇḍala*-logic allows for multiple reduplications of the same template within itself such that the categories of micro- and macrocosmic have to be understood as relative to the one positioned within the field of *maṇḍala*-s. In other words, the king’s territory is a microcosm of the Jambudvīpa-*maṇḍala*, and yet at the same time it is a macrocosm for the citizen within that kingdom, who is him- or herself the absolute microcosm, the *aṇu*, or smallest divisible unit within the political matrix. Yet the citizen is not simply a part of a whole. According to *maṇḍala*-logic, the citizen, as a microcosm, is by definition potentially co-substantial with the macrocosm. The line of thinking we are now tracing takes us into the domain of Tantra, which by the seventh century had risen to the status of a state ideology in several regions of the subcontinent. As White has argued, the foundational feature of Tantra is the use of the *maṇḍala* as a polysemantic ritual grid that interweaves divine and human communities (*kula*-s) through the harnessing of bodily fluids and powers at multiple levels within the self-replicating Hindu cosmos.⁸ To understand the sophistication of the tantric *maṇḍala* we now turn to an analysis of the *maṇḍala* as a mesocosm, or intermediating sphere that makes possible the recognition of the identity of the microcosm with the macrocosm.

As a number of scholars have argued—most recently, Ronald Davidson⁹—the tantric notion of the *maṇḍala* clearly arises out of preexisting political and ritual uses of the term. In the *Arthaśāstra*, the king’s earthly *maṇḍala* is a field of sacrifice (*yajña-kṣetra*) in which the king functions as the sacrificial

patron (*yajamāna*). The origins of this notion trace back to Vedic ritual practice in which the sacrificial arena is constructed as a replica of the cosmos itself. The rituals enacted within that sanctified space carry the power to establish or destroy balance, throughout all the worlds. Done correctly, Vedic ritual establishes order (*ṛta*), truth (*sat*), and righteousness (dharma) over their opposites. The core of this process is sacrifice. As described in *R̥g Veda* 10.90 the victim is the “cosmic person” whose microcosmic representative was the patron of the sacrifice, the *yajamāna*, who gains immortality through a symbolic sacrifice in which an animal or ritualized object comes to represent the sacrificed *puruṣa*. Through sacrifice, the person—whether cosmic or human—becomes the embodied universe and “extended beyond.”

Within this discourse of ritual cosmogony abides a powerful theology of immanence and transcendence that translates directly into sociopolitical structures. In this context the ritual domain is the extended body of the sacrificer. It is a mediating universe (mesocosm), the purpose of which is to link the microcosmic body of the sacrificer to the macrocosmic body of the supreme person. As such, Vedic sacrifice logically functions as the paradigmatic ritual grid for establishing royal territory. In great regal sacrifices like the *rājyasūya* and *aśvamedha* the king assumes the equivalent of the *yajamāna*, giving rise to his political *maṇḍala* as a sacrificial sphere, non-distinct from his own being, and, inevitably, non-distinct from the ultimate sacrificial *maṇḍala*, which was the universe itself.

As a *yajamāna*, the king’s body is the equivalent of his sacrificial domain, which is the entirety of his kingdom. Like the Jambudvīpa-*maṇḍala* arising from and residing within Nārāyaṇa’s body, so the earthly *maṇḍala*, through sacrifice, arises from and is contained within the ritualized notion of the king’s body. In this way, the *maṇḍala* links center to periphery, ritual to body, godhead to society, politics to liberation. And in each self-replication of itself, the *maṇḍala* contains its own fullness.¹⁰

The political implication of this process of identification is clear: the king’s authority and power springs from a divine source. However, Tantra declares that the king is not the only individual capable of divine-recognition (*īśvara-pratyabhijñā*). Ultimately, anyone who receives the requisite initiation from the qualified teacher is theoretically capable of partaking in the full potency of the wisdom and potency of the *maṇḍala*, be s/he upper class or lower class, male or female. Interpreting the *maṇḍala* as an all-pervasive, self-replicating power-grid, Tantra announces the possibility for empowerment at all levels of the cosmos, at all levels of society, and within all people.¹¹ As central pivot of the *maṇḍala*, the king, like the Vedic *yajamāna*, is, in White’s words, the prototypical “Everyman.”¹² He functions in place of and on behalf of all those in his kingdom. By participating in the ritual structures of the kingdom, the individual citizen is linked directly to the divine. Additionally, individuals model kingly rituals through the private

rituals that are the heart of tantric practice. The king's dharma then is to insure that his citizens are safe to pursue their own respective practices. In this regard, he must conquer the enemies of the state (*asura*-s) through the ritual of warfare. It is through this ritualized engagement in the protection of his territory that the king attains his liberation, a point articulated with force in the *Mahābhārata* and further clarified in the *Devīmāhātmya* and a vast number of subsequent tantric texts.

SIGNIFICANT ŚĀKTA SITES

The temple of Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa, situated atop Dolādri Hill some thirteen kilometers outside of Bhaktapur, is an important site for focusing this discussion of the historical roots of the relationship of Nepalese kingship to Śākta Tantra traditions. Under the reign of the Licchavi kings, Kathmandu architects had by the fifth century developed a unique style of pagoda architecture. As the earliest example of that unique style, Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇ was crafted in the fifth century to mark the eastern gate of the Kathmandu valley *maṇḍala*.¹³ Strategically situated atop Dolādri Hill some eight kilometers outside Bhaktapur, the temple embodied several paradigmatic elements that help us solidify the link of kingship to Tantra in Nepal. First, there is the temple's founding myth, re-counted in the seventeenth-century *Nepālāmāhātmya*. Clearly modeled on the *Devīmāhātmya*, this text describes Doladri Hill as the site of a great battle between the gods and *asura*-s. In the early stages of the battle, the gods, led by Nārāyaṇa, are being overwhelmed. In a climactic moment Nārāyaṇa is beheaded, and from his decapitated body arises Chinnamastā, a beheaded tantric form of Devī who quickly makes piecemeal of the demons. According to the tantric priest of the Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇ complex, Chinnamastā is the *śakti* of this particular form of Nārāyaṇ, who has, since his inception, been a tantric deity and was crafted in a headless form to match the accounts of the *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa* 14.1.1.8 in which Viṣṇu beheads himself and becomes the "pure essence."¹⁴

At the southwest edge of the temple complex stands a small shrine to Chinnamastā encircled by a family of female powers (*kula-śakti*). While they are commonly referred to as the Daśamahāvidyā, these divinities more likely originated as the Navadurgā, or Nine Durgās, who function as protector goddesses in the valley. In this context, they function as the protective emanational powers of Nārāyaṇ, the king of gods, with whom the fifth century Licchavi King Mānadeva so clearly identified himself, as evidenced from his self-portrait as a kneeling *garuda* before the western temple wall as well as by his famous pillar inscription in which he ascribes to himself the powers of divinity, including superhuman beauty and the capacity to slay enemies by assuming the form of a lion. The relationship

of these goddesses to the central image of Nārāyaṇa epitomizes the status of Śākta Tantra in the lives of Nepal's kings. The Kumārī is worshiped as the secret power of the king, who is commonly identified with Nārāyaṇa. Similarly, at the Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa complex, Chinnamastā is worshiped as Nārāyaṇa's secret power (*rahasya-śakti*) and the vehicle through which he exhibits his universal body (*viśvarūpa-deha*).¹⁵ Here, as in many sites in Nepal, while the male god is front and center, female power is the secret core of divine power.

The *Gopālarāj-Vaṃśāvalī* states that King Mānadeva (ca. fifth century) took as his *iṣṭa-devatā* the goddess Māneśvarī.¹⁶ This goddess, whose name means "mistress of the mind," was regarded as a form of Durgā and later came to be identified with Taleju, the tutelary deity (*kula-devatā*) of the Malla kings.¹⁷ The fact that Mānadeva appropriated a form of the goddess as his personal deity suggests that the association of kings with powerful goddesses is one that spans nearly fifteen hundred years of Nepalese history. It is not unreasonable to think that this Māneśvarī was linked with traditions of proto-tantrism. Mukunda Aryal posits that Mānadeva also constructed the temple to the headless goddess Chinnamastā at Cāṅgu Nārāyaṇa.¹⁸

With respect to other historical evidence, an important inscription from the Mānadeva era (464–507)¹⁹ describes the Mātṛkā Sārvānī surrounded by a circle of other mother goddesses. This description indicates strongly that early Śākta traditions had established themselves in the Kathmandu Valley by as early as the fifth century. By the eleventh century, Sārvānī figures prominently in the Krama-Kaula traditions of Kashmir.²⁰

The circa seventh-century temple to Jaya Vāgīśvarī in Deopatan presents another historical instance of an early tantric presence in the Kathmandu Valley. An important section of chapter 4 of the *Nityāṣoḍaśikāṛṇava*²¹ identifies Vāgīśvarī with Tripurasundarī, an identification confirmed by many of my informants. Vāgīśvarī is more specifically identified as the goddess of the *vāgbhava* section of the fifteen-syllable (*pañca-daśākṣarī*) *mantra* of the Kādi tradition of Śrī Vidyā. Consisting of the five seed-syllables (*bījākṣara-s*) *ka*, *e*, *ī*, *la*, and *hrīm*, this particular *kuṭa* or section of the *mantra* is said to reside in the lowest *cakra* of the body.²² It is for this reason that contemporary Śrī Vidyā *tāntrika-s* identify Vāgīśvarī, the "mistress of speech," as divine sound to be harnessed within the body. In interpreting Kathmandu city as a *maṇḍala*, *tāntrika-s* understand this Vāgīśvarī Temple to be complemented by other shrines embodying the other two sections of the fifteen-syllable *mantra*.

The issue of the Vāgīśvarī Temple's antiquity is of particular interest in our attempt to reconstruct the history of the relationship between Śākta traditions and kingship in Nepāla-Manḍala. At first glance, the small temple to the mistress (*iśvarī*) of speech (*vāc*), located at the Chabahil crossroad in Deopatan, appears to be only "an ordinary Malla Period Newar-style

temple.”²³ However, as Slusser aptly notes, there is more to this temple than first meets the eye. “[A] closer look,” Slusser writes, “reveals antique foundations incorporating thresholds decorated with lions peering out from rocky caves. The worn doorstep is the halved plinth of a Licchavi *caitya*.... Peering through the latticed doorway into the dim cellar, one can discern the cult image itself, worshipped there since the late fifth or early sixth century, when it was ‘commissioned by Guhasomā....’”²⁴ It is important here to take note of the name Guhasomā, which means “elixir (*soma*) of the secret place (*guha*).” In tantric circles, *guha-soma* is one of many appellates for the clan fluids, called *kula-dravya*-s, that are exchanged and consumed during the course of esoteric rituals. At a microcosmic level *kula-dravya* is the serpentine power of the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, whose awakening and ascent is the medium by which the *tāntrika* is united with the godhead. At a mesocosmic level, *kula-dravya* takes the form of the bodily discharges that are exchanged in the context of the secret ritual in which initiates of the same clan consume fluids for the purpose of empowerment. At the macrocosmic level, *kula-dravya* is the unending flow of Devī’s divine bliss. At the level of absolute reality, *kula-dravya* is the undifferentiated I-awareness, residing equally at all times, in all places, and all people.²⁵ Was the Guhasomā who commissioned the Jaya Vāgīśvarī aware of the multiple meanings of her name? Was she an initiate of one of the many proto-tantric cults that by even the fifth century were engaged in the cultivation and exchange of secret elixirs (*guha-soma*) for the purpose of cultivating various psychophysical powers (*siddhi*-s) such as magical flight? Was she a tantric messenger (*dūtī*) for the king? Did King Aṃśuvarman, referred to in the inscription, erect the Vāgīśvarī shrine as a testimony to his associations with these cults? While the partially damaged inscription itself does not answer these questions, the nearby temple of Guhyeśvarī provides strong evidence that Śāktism has long held a favored place among the kings of Nepal.

Guhyeśvarī Temple is located on the left bank of the Bāgmatī River, at the northeastern edge of the Paśupatināth Temple complex. In his study done in collaboration with Nutan Sharma, the German anthropologist Axel Michaels has uncovered significant information about this important temple and the goddess who abides at its center.²⁶ As Michaels’s study documents, the Guhyeśvarī complex is replete with material testimony to the devotion of Nepalese kings to this “goddess of the secret.” The temple itself is rather recent, having been established by King Pratāp Malla (1641–1671) in the year 1645 C.E.²⁷ However, the present form of the temple is but a more modern marking for an ancient power-seat (*śākta-pīṭha*). The fourteenth-century *Gopālarāj-Vaṃśāvalī* points to the early history of the goddess Guhyeśvarī:

In the course of time, with the advent of the Kali Yuga, in the kingdom of Yuddhiṣṭhira ... the main deity Śrī Bhṛṅgāreśvarī Bhāṭṭārikā

emerged in the land.... Situated in the lap of the Himālaya, it was at first covered with a dense forest. Thereafter, Gautama and other sages came to live here.... In the meantime, when Śrī Bhṛṅgāreśvarī Bhaṭṭārikā was roaming about the Śleṣmāntaka Forest, the Gopālas [= first kings] came [to the valley]. A brown cow, Bahuri by name, belonging to the cowherd named Nepa, went daily to the bank of the river Vāgmati to worship at a hole by letting her milk flow. The cowherd saw the spot where his cow worshiped with milk. On digging at the spot, Śrī Paśupati Bhaṭṭārikā emerged.²⁸

As Michaels has demonstrated,²⁹ Śrī Bhṛṅgāreśvarī (“goddess in a flask”) is an early epithet for Guhyeśvarī. If this is indeed the case, then the chronicle suggests that it was not Śiva, Viṣṇu, or any of the other male deities, but the goddess who first came to the valley. After her arrival, Lord Śiva (Śrī Paśupati Bhaṭṭārikā) emerges in the same Śleṣmāntaka Forest that now houses both the Paśupatinātha and Guhyeśvarī Temple complexes. An important verse in the circa eighth-century *Niśiṣaṅcāra-Tantra*³⁰ links these two divinities together as national deities: “I seek the lord of beasts [Paśupati], the god seated in Nepal, united with the mistress of the secret.”³¹

Another important early reference to Guhyeśvarī comes from the *Kālikulakramārcana* of Vimalaprabodha. In a personal communication to Michaels, Sanderson cites a manuscript dated 1002 C.E. that mentions Guhyeśvarī and concludes that “The tradition of Guhyeśvarī as ‘*rāṣṭra-Devī*’ is then definitely pre-1000 A.D.”³² Sanderson’s conclusion coincides with that of Divakar Acarya, who maintains that the traditions of Guhyeśvarī were established in the first millennium C.E.

In Nepal the goddess Guhyeśvarī assumes multiple identities and is known by many names. Some Hindus call her Satī, the wife of Śiva. Hindu *sādhaka*-s know her as Durgā, Kālī, Kālikā, Guhyakālī, Kubjikā, and Taleju, all epithets for the chosen deities of Nepalese kings. Buddhist *sādhaka*-s identify her as Nairātmyā, the consort of Hevajra.³³ With respect to Guhyeśvarī’s identification with Satī, the *Nepālamāhātmya* identifies the current site of the Guhyeśvarī Temple as the place where Satī’s “secret part” (*guhya*) fell to earth after she had committed *sati*.³⁴ What is the secret part? It is the genitalia of the goddess, the lower mouth (*adhavaktra*), and womb (*yonī*) from which flows the highest power (*paramaśakti*) of divinity. As the site of Devī’s secret part the Guhyeśvarī *śākta-pīṭha* is regarded by many Nepalese *tāntrika*-s to be a power seat of the highest order. At this site, where the goddess is represented by a hole in the ground, *tāntrika*-s worship divinity in its full potency as the ultimate sexuality of the godhead.³⁵

The various epithets of Guhyeśvarī point to her identification with Tripurasundarī, the goddess who infuses the king with her secret power. The *Tripurasundarī-Paddhati*, an important ritual text housed at Nepal’s National

Archives that is dated 1089 C.E.³⁶ contains the earliest known reference to Tripurasundarī in Nepal. The *paddhati* is bound together with a manuscript of the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava* dated 1388 C.E., which strongly suggests that the Tripurasundarī worshiped in the *paddhati* is the same goddess who was already being worshiped at that time by Śrī Vidyā Kaulikas from Kashmir and Tamil Nadu.

TALEJU: THE GODDESS ON HIGH

In order to understand more fully the semiotic richness of the identity of Tripurasundarī with Guhyeśvarī, we must turn to an examination of another goddess with whom she is at times identified: Taleju, the mysterious “goddess on high,” and the proclaimed *iṣṭa-devatā* of many Nepalese kings. The importance of this goddess is captured by Anne Vergati:

Before 1768, the three towns of Kathmandu Valley had separate kings [and] each ruler had the same tutelary divinity: Taleju. It is only after the arrival of Taleju, in the fourteenth century, that a blueprint for the organization and hierarchization of the entire society of his kingdom—Buddhist as well as Hindu—was drawn up by Jayasthiti Malla. If Taleju occupies a position close to or within the Royal Palace in each of the three towns, the caste hierarchy is reflected in the settlement pattern which encircles the palace: the higher castes live closest to the palace, the others further away in roughly concentric circles. The divinity occupies, so to speak, the central position in a social *maṇḍala*.³⁷

Why did the kings of the three cities of the valley—Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Patan—all take Taleju as the their chosen deity? Vergati suggests that the answer is linked, at least in part, to the “historical context in which Newar society evolved into its present form.”³⁸ In the Newar pantheon, the only divinity constantly linked with royalty is Taleju. According to Newar oral tradition, this divinity came from India to Nepal in the middle of the fourteenth century with Harisimha Deva, who was a king of the Karnatak dynasty that originated from Ayodhya. He reigned in the Terai, as Simraongarh, not far from present-day Simra. After a battle between Harisimha Deva and Ghiyas-ud din Tughlaq, the former had to flee into the mountains where he entered Nepal. He brought with him a new form of Devī.³⁹

This “new form of Devī” brought with her to Nepal a rich history of secrecy, reflected most immediately in the multiple obscure forms of her name, which has been rendered in different contexts as Tulasī, Tulajā, Talagu, and, of course, Taleju.⁴⁰ One common account of the goddess’s origins

traces her back to the events narrated in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is said that the goddess was captured by the demon Rāvaṇa but eventually escaped and was later found by King Rāma, who installed her at Ayodhya. From there, the goddess made her way to Simraongarh and became the tutelary divinity of King Harisimhadeva. A competing account, noted by Vergati, states that Taleju was the secret deity of Rāvaṇa, worshiped by him because she bestowed such great power. Knowing that Taleju was the source of Rāvaṇa's strength, Rāma captured the image of this goddess and drowned it in the Saryu River. Hundreds of years later, a prince of Simraongarh named Nānya Deva was advised by his astrologer that at the Saryu riverbank he would find an object that would empower him to establish a kingdom north of Simraongarh. Following this advice, he found the image and carried it with him until he reached the site of Bhaktapur, which at that time was covered with jungle. There he established a kingdom and built a temple for Taleju. Neither of these two accounts is accepted by most historians. Rather, historians are generally in agreement with the *Gopālarāj-Vaṃśāvalī*, which states that King Harisimhadeva died on his way to Bhaktapur from Dolakha, east of the Kathmandu Valley. Whatever the case may be, by the time of Jayasthiti Malla (1382–1395 C.E.), Taleju, the mysterious goddess on high, had been selected as the king's personal protectress and object of worship. Her power was so great that a Tibetan militia even sought to take her by force.⁴¹

The question remains: who is this goddess? Brown Bledsoe remarks, "There is still no definitive answer to this question, at least none openly spoken."⁴² In his devotional public poem, *Sarvāparādhastotra*, King Pratāp Malla addresses her as Caṇḍikā, Ambikā, Durgā, and Bhavānī.⁴³ However, she has other identities that link her with goddesses whose names were once uttered only behind closed doors in sanctified ritual domains that not only allowed but encouraged the transgression of the sacred codes of moral conduct. Such transgressions were seen as the means to awakening a divine power capable of granting all desires, mundane and transmundane. In these circles, Taleju's name was rich with multiple nuances. The Newari *tale*, meaning "higher or upper," combined with the honorific *ju* renders Taleju the "goddess on high," perhaps referring to the high temple. Or, in a domestic context, Taleju can refer to the family goddess situated on the upper floor of the traditional Newar house in its *āganchem*, or shrine room. In Sanskrit *tal* has the opposite meaning of "bottom, lower, or foundation," and is related to *adhas*, as in Adhāmnāya, the "transmission of the base." And *eju*, based on *vej*, means "to tremble, vibrate, or stir." Rendered in this way, Taleju is the "goddess who trembles/stirs at the foundation." As such, Taleju recalls Kubjikā, the "coiled one," whose serpentine form as the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* resides at the foundation of the microcosm, coiled three and one-half times, replete with liberating potentiality.

The association of Taleju and Kubjikā, as Dyczkowski points out, links Taleju to the traditions of the western transmission (Paścimāmnāya) and such central texts as the *Kubjikā-Mata*.⁴⁴ However, the goddess does not always stay rooted in the foundation. Upon initiation from a competent teacher (*ādhikārīguru*), a *sādhaka's* *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* awakens and rises through the body's central artery until established at the top (*tale*), where the goddess of the foundation, Kubjikā-Devī, reveals her form as the goddess of the heights (*tale-ju*). Situated in the *sahasrāra-cakra*, at the upper reaches of the tri-cosmos, Taleju assumes the transcendent form of Parā, whose name literally means "beyond, above." It is for this reason that Taleju is addressed by Pratāp Malla as *sarvā-parā-adha*, the "goddess who is both the supreme height (*parā*) and foundation (*adha*) of all things (*sarvā*)."⁴⁵ As Parāśakti, Taleju is linked with the upper transmission (Urdhvāmnāya) and with its clan deity (*kula-devī*), Tripurasundarī; its authoritative text, the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava*; and its central aniconic symbol, the Śrī Yantra.

In sum, Taleju is the embodiment of all goddesses. Although a deity shaped strongly by geospecific histories, Taleju functions as Nepāla-Maṇḍala's Mahādevī, the feminine embodiment of absolute, non-dual, consciousness. The symbolism and rituals connected with her synthesize each of the six transmissions and fuse them into a centralized, all-encompassing system, the Sarvāmnāya, whose function is to link Nepāla-Maṇḍala directly to the *maṇḍala* of liberating energies within the microcosm and in turn their ultimate source, the Devī herself, who is both within and beyond the *maṇḍala*.

The disclosure of the location of the treasure is meaningless without a map detailing the means to access it. We may know the identity—or at least partial identity—of Taleju, but such disclosure leads nowhere if it is devoid of a description of the means by which disclosed secrets become sources of liberating illumination. As the goddess of the secret, Taleju functions as a metaphor for heightened states of awakened consciousness linked with the highest, non-verbal modes of speech, *parā-vāc*.

These states are produced through the highly secretive yogic disciplines detailed in the primary texts of each of the *āmnāya-s*.⁴⁶ The *paddhati-s* apply the doctrines and techniques of these primary texts and translate them into the personal, civic, and state rituals that invigorate Nepāla-Maṇḍala with the powers of Taleju, she whose secret identity encompasses the triad Guhyeśvarī, Kubjikā, and Tripurasundarī as well as the deities encompassed by them.

The project of interpreting Taleju requires a multi-leveled investigation. First, one must read the root classical texts (*mūla-śāstra-s*) connected with the various goddesses that she encompasses. Second, one must read the colophons of these goddesses' respective *paddhati-s*. Third, one must understand Taleju's relationship to the king's patron god, Bhairava, and this deity's

associated texts. Fourth, one must understand that as a national goddess, Taleju derives her power from the esoteric practices, linked to the fluids and subtle energies of the *mūlādhāra-cakra*—at the base of whose vibratory lotus sits Kubjikā, the coiled one, wrapped around her lord's supreme form as *para-liṅga*. This rich imagery is etched in stone at the Paśupatināth complex where the Vasukinātha Temple represents the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* as a material image (*arca*) at the feet of the central image of Lord Śiva as *paraliṅgaṃ*.

In the Taleju Temple complex at the site of the old Malla royal palace in Kathmandu, Taleju is depicted as the eighteen-armed slayer of the buffalo demon, Mahiṣāsura-mārdinī. Taleju's iconic form suggests that hers is a body of total power—royal and yogic alike—linked simultaneously to the root, center, and apex of each of the tri-cosmos. As Kathmandu's civic *bindu*, the city's esoteric heart, Taleju—she whose transcendent aspect (*parā-kalā*) is embodied in Śrī Vidyā and whose foundational aspect (*mūla-kalā*) is embodied in the Kubjikā Vidyā⁴⁷—is the ultimate goal of any quest to track Nepal's Devī. In her awesome supreme form she is the eighteen-armed slayer of all the enemies of the tri-cosmos: those microcosmic enemies who cause illness and hinder spiritual growth; those mesocosmic enemies who might attempt to dethrone the king either from within or without Nepāla-Maṇḍala, and those macrocosmic forces who would seek to cause harm to Devī and her infinite universe. Ultimately Taleju conquers death, granting eternal liberation to those who awaken her from her divine slumber and excite her to leave the foundation—the *mūlādhāra-cakra*—in search of Bhairava at the transcendent heights of the cranial-vault—the *sahasrāra-cakra*—which is Mount Meru's sacred peak, situated at the transcendent center-point of the universe.

Of course, from the perspective of post-structuralist critical theory, such discourse of a transcendent center-point of the lord of the *maṇḍala* (*maṇḍaleśa*) points to the earthly ruler who propagates such discourse for the purpose of self-legitimation. Taleju, in this perspective, shines as another icon of institutional bondage, reflecting those discursive strategies by which a nation becomes bound to its own geospecific constructions of nation and selfhood. And so we return to where we started: face-to-face with paradox. Taleju is the bottom and Taleju is the top—the beginning, the means, and the end. From the emic perspective of the *tāntrika*, she embodies the subcontinent's great quest for freedom from all forms of bondage, even the bondage of the cycle of birth and death. From the etic perspective of the critical theorist, she is inseparable from the causes of bondage. She is the epistemic icon whose state-sponsored discursive formations⁴⁸ become *habitus* through the network of rituals that transmit the logic of practice. Can these two apparently opposite perspectives be reconciled? Can Taleju, who is the supremely powerful (*anuttama-śakti*) Mahādevī, be at once the cause of bondage and the means to its transcendence? Can Śākta Tantra

ideologies and practices perpetuate the institutions that are characteristic of any political system while also serving as a means for release from all shackles (*sarva-pāśa-muktopāya*)?

To answer this question, I turn to an examination of the institution of the Kumārī, that ritualized government-sponsored worship of pubescent girls as the virginal yet sexually-charged embodiment of Parāśakti. The fascinating history and intricate complexities of this institution reflect the nuances of Nepalese constructions of selfhood and the relationship of these constructions to the multiple dynamics of power operating simultaneously at the individual, civic, and national levels of Nepāla-Maṇḍala.

THE KING AND THE KUMĀRĪ: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"The Kumārī institution," writes Slusser, "is of special interest.... It underscores the remarkable religious syncretism characterizing the Valley."⁴⁹ To probe into the institution of the Kumārī is to probe into the soul of the complex multi-ethnic nation of Nepal. Just as the current Kumārī spends most of her days in the dark, sequestered Newar home built especially for the Kumārī in the seventeenth century, so the institution's history is largely veiled. However, just as the Kumārī occasionally reveals herself even to non-Hindus, so there are critical junctures in Nepal's history in which the Kumārī institution has stepped onto the national stage and revealed the multi-leveled structures of power that sustain it. If the institution of the Kumārī dies, then the idealized vision of Nepāla-Maṇḍala will die with her. Hers is the microcosmic body through which the entire sociopolitical system orients and regenerates itself. Kings bow before her. A nation awaits her every gesture, seeking in each a sign of fortunes to come.

The Kumārī is celebrated as the Viśvarūpa Devī of the *paddhati*-s, the goddess of the universal form, in whose virginal body is contained the entirety of being. In her inner courtyard, to the Hevajra shrine where Kumārī reveals her identity as Nairātmya Yoginī, the selfless *yoginī* whose ultimate form transcends description resides in the space of realization, where words dissolve into the stillness of a mind trained in the arts of conquering the inner enemies. The Kumārī is often identified with Kālī, the warrior goddess who is capable of killing any enemy that threatens her power-wheel. And so too she is Kālī's secret self, Guhyakālī, Kālī of the hidden place, which is the *yonī*, the seat of sexual and spiritual power, worshiped on the Kumārī as a Śrī Yantra. As Guhyakālī, the Kumārī is ultimately identified with Tripurasundarī, the goddess of the three cities, patroness of the Trika Śāstra, which has been cultivated in Nepāla-Maṇḍala since at least the twelfth century, the date of the earliest *Vāmakeśvara-Tantra* manuscripts.⁵⁰

The links between the institution of the Kumārī and Nepalese kings can be traced back to as early as the beginning of the twelfth century. According to the *Gopālarāj-Vaṃśāvalī*, in 1192 C.E., King Lakṣmīkāmadeva, “thinking that his grandfather had acquired so much wealth and conquered the four quarters of the world through the aid of the Kumārīs, resolved to do the same. With this intention he went to the ... [palace] of Lakṣmī-barman, [where] he erected an image of Kumārī and established the Kumārī-pūjā.”⁵¹ This important passage from the Nepalese dynastic chronicles highlights three important aspects of the relationship between the king and the Kumārī. First, the Kumārī is to be worshiped for the acquisition of material gain (*artha*). Second, King Lakṣmīkāmadeva, a king of Hindu descent, strategically selected a girl from a Buddhist Newar case to be his Kumārī. Third, worship of the Kumārī empowers the king to conquer the “four quarters of the world.” With respect to the first point, that a king would worship the Kumārī for the procurement of wealth, clearly points to the association of the Kumārīs with the attainment of material ends. With respect to the second point, from a certain perspective the king’s choice of a Buddhist girl was an effective political strategy since the majority of his subjects were Buddhist. The institutionalized relationship between an elite-Indian-Hindu-male-king and a lower caste-Newar-Buddhist-female-virgin-girl clearly exemplifies what Catherine Bell calls “redemptive hegemony” in that such an institution serves to perpetuate asymmetrical relations of power.⁵² The Kumārī thus serves as the locus for social productions of power. However, in her links to the esoteric traditions of Tantra she also becomes, for the adept, the instantiation of transcendent power. This aspect of the Kumārī’s role is highlighted in Lakṣmīkāmadeva’s proclamation that the Kumārī is to be worshiped in order to conquer the four quarters of the world. This important statement conveys a double entendre that alludes to both political and spiritual aims. The metaphor is clearly drawn from political conquest. Yet Lakṣmīkāmadeva’s grandfather, although successful, was no Alexander the Great—his conquered domain was only the relatively small territory of Nepāla-Maṇḍala. This statement also alludes to the spiritual conquests attained through worshiping the goddess, which enable the *sādhaka* to conquer the four quarters of the world in internalized visualizations.⁵³ Śākta texts such as the *Devī-Māhātmya* often use the metaphor of conquest to describe kings who are both world emperors (*cakravartin*) and spiritually awakened (Buddha/Siddha).⁵⁴

After the reign of King Lakṣmīkāmadeva we continue to find inscriptions mentioning the worship of Kumārīs by kings. Both the *Kaumārī-Pūjā* (1280 C.E.) and the *Kumārī-Pūjā-Vidhana* (1285 C.E.) describe the worship of the Kumārī by the king⁵⁵ and equate the Kumārī with the king’s *iṣṭa-devatā*.⁵⁶ This equation of the Kumārī with king’s “chosen deity” is critical, as it reveals that the Kumārī was both the king’s political servant and his revered deity.

Trailokya Malla, who reigned in the independent kingdom of Bhaktapur from 1562–1610, is credited with establishing the institution of the Kumārī in each of the three Malla kingdoms. The accounts of this historical event are illuminating, as they highlight the institution's links to mystico-erotic traditions of Tantra, which view sexual union (*maithuna*) as an integral aspect of the tantric path. Paralleling the classical mythology of Śiva and Pārvatī, we are told that Trailokya and the goddess were playing dice. The king longed for intimate contact with his *iṣṭa-devī*, who consequently scolded him and said that he could only communicate with her through a girl of low caste.⁵⁷

Perhaps the most significant historical example is King Pṛthivī Nārāyan Śāh (1723–1775). In the historical accounts of his life, we find the intimate relationship of Tantra to kingship and the ways in which the institution of the Kumārī, while clearly embodying an anthropo-contingent power dimension, also comes to symbolize theo-contingent power. While king of Gorkha, a region in western Nepal, Pṛthivī Nārāyan arduously practiced the tantric yoga of Bālā Tripurasundarī. After he had practiced tantric *sādhana* for twenty-five years, this child goddess appeared to him and granted him the boon that he would conquer and unite the Kathmandu Valley.⁵⁸ Pṛthivī Nārāyan and his troops entered Kathmandu on the day of Indra Jātra, the occasion when the Kumārī bestows her divine approval upon the king. At the time of Pṛthivī Nārāyan's surprise attack, the then-king of Kathmandu, Jayaprakāś Malla, was preparing to receive the Kumārī's blessing. Swiftly, and unexpectedly, Pṛthivī Nārāyan rode into the royal courtyard and bowed before the Kumārī, who unhesitatingly blessed him. In that moment, popular legend goes, the king of Gorkha became king of Nepal in a swift act of power that was the result of both political strategy and divine grace won through years of arduous devotion to the goddess.

Turning to an examination of the events that preceded this historic event, we again find elements that suggest a conjoining of anthropo-contingent and theo-contingent forms of power. As king of Gorkha, Pṛthivī Nārāyan placed himself under the protection of the eponymous saint Gorakhnāth, who was held to be an incarnation of Śiva and founder of the Kānpaṭā sect.⁵⁹ In addition to taking refuge in a powerful semi-divine being, Pṛthivī Nārāyan also sought the assistance of a living member of Kānpaṭā tradition. This was Bhagavantānāth, whose yogic prowess is described in the *Yogī-Vaṃśāvalī*.⁶⁰ Bhagavantānāth was recognized as a *siddha*, or perfected master of tantric yoga, who was endowed with psychophysical powers (*siddhi-s*).⁶¹ In this way, Bhagavantānāth placed his spiritual powers in the service of his king's political agendas. Bouillier writes:

We see Bhagavantānāth using the prestige proper to a holy man, the magical powers gained through his practice of Haṭha Yoga, and

his strategic knowledge, in support of, or even as a means to inciting the conquests of Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ. He represents the spiritual element in the quest for power, and is thus a guru whose field is *artha*. He does not follow the dharma of the brahmin or the Sannyāsi renouncer, but acts in accordance with the aim of *artha*, of power and worldly success.⁶²

By aligning himself with a tantric *siddha* and appointing Bhagavantānāth his political advisor and tantric *guru*, Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ sought to realize both spiritual and worldly pursuits. Even before his meeting with the powerful, mysterious Bhagavantānāth, there were signs that Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ was no ordinary king. His father was considered to be a great *siddha*, and his mother Kauśalyavatī was held to be an incarnation of the goddess Mānakāmanā.⁶³ As a young boy, Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ was visited by the great *siddha* Gorakhnāth, who gave him initiation by dropping curds onto his feet and claiming that he would become a great ruler of all lands that he walked on.⁶⁴ As a young man, Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ spent time in Bhaktapur. Even then his tantric *sādhana* was already bearing fruit, as one day, instead of blessing the king, the Kumārī gave *prasāda* to Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ—an event that was later interpreted to be an indication that Pṛthivī would one day conquer the Kathmandu Valley.⁶⁵

Through his final conquest of the valley Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ demonstrated that his twenty-five years of internalized worship of the Kumārī through tantric yoga was the means to conquering and uniting Nepal. In his historical account of Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ, Śrī Prasād Ghirmire writes, “Conquering the world within through internalized union with his chosen deity, he was thereby empowered by her to transform this mystical power directly into the political domain.”⁶⁶ In the moment that he entered the royal courtyard of Jayaprakāś Malla and bowed before the Kumārī, thereby usurping the throne, Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ became the locus for the conjoining of anthropo-contingent and theo-contingent power—for in that pivotal Janus-faced moment, marking as it did both death and birth, the goddess Tripurasundarī bestowed her grace in the context of a sociopolitical conquest that had been so carefully constructed by this tantric king.

KUMĀRĪ AS A CONTRADICTIONARY SYMBOL OF POWER

Although functioning ideologically as immortals, Kumārīs inevitably return to the realm of mortals. On an average, Kumārīs serve their post for approximately eight years, from about age four until their menses. During this time, the Kumārī is considered the multi-leveled embodiment of Devī. Before and after this time she is simply a female human being from the Bud-

dhist Newar Śākya caste. Her brief term as the goddess does not eradicate the reality of her humanness. And, from a certain perspective, she remains human even while divine. In this light, the Kumārī, although a goddess, has always been little more than a servant to the king. She is a citizen in his kingdom, a young girl of Newar descent in a position of subservience to an elder Hindu man of Indian descent.

The process of selecting a Kumārī is extensive. The selection committee is composed of the royal astrologer (*rāj-jyotiṣa*), the king's religious adviser (*rāj-guru*), and several Newar Buddhist and Hindu priests. Their function is to ensure that the humanity of the selected girl will not be a hindrance to her functioning as a divinity for the king and his subjects. Her body must be in perfect condition. All parts are examined. A single blemish can result in the dismissal of an otherwise worthy candidate. The present Kumārī was chosen in 1991 at the age of two. At that time the royal committee investigated her to ensure that she had the thirty-two physical perfections of a goddess, which include everything from clear skin to perfectly formed genitalia.

Apart from her family, the little girl goddess has lived over two years in isolation in the ornate, recently restored eighteenth century Kumārī *Ghar*. Her daily schedule varies little. Attendants set her hair in a ritual bun, her eyes are rimmed with kohl, extending like a Zen painter's stroke to her temples, while her forehead is distinctively painted with a vermillion red, black, and golden all-seeing "fire-eye," and each day she sits on her lion throne for two or three hours. At this time a priest from the nearby Taleju Temple performs a purification rite using objects said to cleanse each of the five sensory organs: flour for the ears, rice for the mouth, incense for the nose, a lamp for the eyes, and red powder for touch. The Kumārī receives up to a dozen faithful devotees every day. "Many people come to see the Kumārī," the Kumārīma, a small elderly woman explained. "Some come with medical problems, especially illnesses related to bleeding. Many government officials visit, hoping her blessings will ensure promotion."

She must remain solemn and silent, sitting cross-legged in her gilt-canopied lion throne while the line of worshippers shuffles through her private chamber, each person touching the floor with his or her hand and laying down offerings of money, fruit, and flowers. To her followers, every movement the child makes is deemed a sign from the goddess Taleju. If she receives a petition in unmoved silence, it will be fulfilled; should she laugh, cry, or rub her eyes, the supplicant will fall ill or even die. Anita Sakya, now in her early twenties, was the royal Kumārī seven years ago. Shy and reserved, as most ex-Kumārīs are known to be, she told me a sad story. "I was just a little girl. Once a sick man came to be blessed. He was so sick he coughed and a touch of spit landed on my toe. My attendants gasped. He died the next day. I felt very sad. I believed I was responsible for his death."⁶⁷

This revealing testimony by an ex-Kumārī reveals the human element beneath the façade of the institution, while also pointing to a kind of transmundane power that is often spoken of in association with the living Kumārīs. The living Kumārīs are a paradox. They are servants of the state, filling an institutional position whose function is to provide a focal point for the legitimation of state power. As such, they are encoded with the elaborate symbol systems of Śākta Tantra. They become servants to a state-sponsored ritual structure that transforms them from little Śākya-caste girls into the living repository of the king's chosen deity. Their mortal frames become the sight of the joining of both horizontal and vertical axes of power. Herein lies a paradox and a conflict.

In her daily *pūjā* the Kumārī's body is worshiped as the abode of all the worlds. In her reside all gods and goddesses. She is the receptacle of all, the infinite being of time (*ananta-kāla-rūpinī*) in whom all beings meet their end, the place where sky meets the earth, beyond all opposites as the ultimate source of existence.⁶⁸ As such, she is the king's *iṣṭa-devatā*, his chosen divinity, the supreme form of Taleju, who is the object of his longing for all forms of power and enlightenment.⁶⁹ In this context she inverts the hegemonic order and turns the king into a servant of the goddess (*devī-dāsa*), just as the Kumārī chose Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ Śāh to be her royal servant and thereby initiated him into the center of Nepāla-Manḍala.

As Taleju's incarnate-form (*avatārisvarūpinī*), the Kumārī is linked at all levels to the daily events and annual rituals of the king.⁷⁰ As Kubjikā she wears a serpent necklace symbolizing the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*. As Guhyeśvarī she receives worship of her genitalia, the site of her lower-mouth and the medium of divine wisdom. The fact that the Kumārī's *yonī* is worshiped as Śrī Yantra reveals that the place of secrecy is a virgin's sexual organs, the microcosmic site of purity and its transcendence inscribed with a nation's self-identity.

In this function, the Kumārī becomes the king's lover, Rājarājeśvarī, who unites with him for the purpose of shattering the illusions of duality and exchanging the liberating fluids born of union. Secrecy is the abode of power. The secret of the virgin's relationship to the king is that she is his consort and lover. What makes the Kumārī powerful is that her virginity is blended with the raw sexuality of the goddess. It is for this reason that she wears the passionate colors of red. How ironic, then, that Kumārīs are removed from their position at the time of their menses.

In the final analysis, the symbolism of the Kumārī as the king's goddess and the symbolism of the Kumārī as the king's consort are intimately connected, for the king himself is viewed as a divinity and hence the Kumārī is his female divine counterpart, his consort. The king and Kumārī unite as a god uniting with his goddess. The sexual imagery associated with this relationship, in which the king receives *prasāda* from the worship of

the Kumārī's *yonī*, evokes the multi-layered history of sexual imagery and sexual transactions that characterize tantric traditions.

The final stage of the king's *sādhana* is his permanent cognition (*nityāvṛtti*) that the Kumārī is his inner self (*antarātman*, *antarsvabhāva*, *svarūpinī-devī*). In addition to his extensive training in Western institutions,⁷¹ the current king of Nepal, Birendra Bīr Śāh Deva, is a Śrī Vidyā Śākta *tāntrika*. It is for this reason that he daily receives the *prasāda* generated from the construction of a Śrī Yantra on top of the uppermost face of the central *liṅga* at Paśupatināth Temple. And this is also the reason that his wife, Queen Lakṣmī Devī, has the Śrī Yantra as her regal insignia. The wisdom (*vidyā*) of the *Vāmakeśvara-Tantra* informs his political, social, and religious activities. It is for this reason also that Sthanesvar, a Parbatīyā Brāhmaṇa and initiate of Śrī Vidyā, holds the chair of Tantra Studies at Balmiki Sanskrit College. In Nepāla-Manḍala, Tripurasundarī, the goddess of the three cities, stands at the elevated center of a cultural power web that derives its life breath from the ideologies and practices of Śākta Tantra. In Nepal Śrī Vidyā maintains the position of the most revered school of esoteric knowledge. Nepalese Śākta *tāntrikā*-s regard the Śrī Yantra as the totality of tantric revelation and the Kathmandu Valley as the "field of the three cities" (*tripura-kṣetra*), that is, the instantiation of the Śrī Yantra.

This does not mean that the Kubjikā and Guhyeśvarī *sampradāya* are any less significant than that of Tripurasundarī. The interlocking triangles of the Śrī Yantra all equally embody the power and wisdom (*śakti-vidyā-sa-masta-rūpinī*) of the supreme godhead, and each of these triangles is linked to a particular goddess with her own name and attributes.⁷² For this reason, contemporary *sādhaka*-s often laugh when asked whether Tripurasundarī, Kubjikā, Guhyeśvarī, Kālī, or Durgā is in reality Taleju. At the end of my last stay in Nepal in 1997, Siddhi Gopal Vaidya referred again to his discourse on Taleju.

Listen, when you first asked me about Śrī Vidyā I told you that you were like a climber who wanted to reach the summit without actually ever making the earlier stages of the journey. In the meantime, I've demanded that you study the scriptures and spend time with Sthanesvar. Your time here is limited. So although you are not ready, I am going to tell you a great secret. Its true meaning will not come to you until you are finished with this project, which, as you have noted in previous conversations, will be several years from now.⁷³ Even then you won't really understand. If you want to understand as Sthanesvar understands, then you will have to return and you will have to live here, with this land, her people, and her gods and goddesses. Until then your understanding of Nepāla-Manḍala will be limited. Nevertheless, I will tell you the secret: all *āmnāya*-s are

united. Just as the base of Mount Everest is united with its peak, so Bhīvaneśvarī [in the *mūlādhāra*] is united with Tripurasundarī [in the *sahasrāra*]. The foundation and the summit are one. Both are pervaded by the energy of the supreme goddess (*parāśakti*), who has been called by many names....

Listen little brother [*hernos bhai*], I call god Mā Kālī. This is because I am an initiate of Kālī Vidyā. However, Sthanesvar is an initiate of Śrī Vidyā, and so he calls god Mahātripurasundarī. Kālī and Tripurasundarī are not distinct. The lineages are distinct, but the being who is the focus of these traditions is not different. Many different trekking expeditions climb Mount Everest. But for all of them the goal is the same, the mountain is the same. They may take different routes. They may call the mountain by different names, but the mountain still is what it is. So Devī is one. Taleju is Devī. Taleju is Kālī. Taleju is Kubjikā. Taleju is Guhyeśvarī. Taleju is Siddhīlakṣmī. Taleju is Tripurasundarī. Taleju is Parāśakti. All of these are names for that one reality that is, as Śaṅkarācārya so beautifully states, beyond all names. Those so-called pandits who quibble over the “true identity” are missing the point. They are lost in political tensions and don’t understand what our own *pad-dhati*-s make so evident: all of these belong together in one system because all of these goddesses are ultimately the same.... And there is one more thing to say. You and Sthanesvar talked to me about the perfect I-consciousness (*pūrṇa-ahantā*), which is mentioned in the *Nityāṣoḍaśikāṛṇava*. This term captures the secret of our Sarvāmnāya system. Think about this deeply. And remember, the Kumārī lies at the heart of this secret.⁷⁴

The Kumārī is Taleju; she is considered the human embodiment of the king’s chosen goddess. Taleju has been the patron deity of Nepalese kings since the time of Jayasthiti Malla in the thirteenth century. Architectural, epigraphical, and textual evidence demonstrate that this goddess is identified with Tripurasundarī, Kālī, Durgā, Tārā, and the other goddesses of non-dual Śākta Tantra. She is then a meta-symbol comprising the multiple discursive representations that constitute these other goddess traditions. In Nepal Taleju is an ocean of meaning fed simultaneously by the multiple streams of the Sarvāmnāya. As Nepalese *tāntrika*-s have historically favored practice over discourse, there is an absence of philosophical treatises housed at Nepal’s National Archives. However, paradoxically, this fact demonstrates precisely the opposite of what it appears to indicate. The absence of such texts is a cultural display of dissemblance: in Nepal *tāntrika*-s have veiled their knowledge of non-dual Śākta traditions behind the ritualized institutional structures that are themselves the culmination of such a discourse.

The evidence for this claim lies in at least two significant places: the oral traditions of contemporary Śākta *tāntrika*-s, and the numerous versions of the *Nityāṣoḍaśikāṛṇava* and related non-dual Śākta texts found throughout the Kathmandu Valley, many of which date back to the thirteenth century. Several Nepalese brahmin *tāntrika*-s expressed to me that Devī is perfect I-consciousness. Each of them made this assertion to me on separate occasions. And for each of them this understanding is rooted in the classical textual sources that inform their practices.

Nepal was largely unscathed by the Muslim invasions that spread across the subcontinent from as early as the eleventh century, and Nepāla-Maṇḍala thus offered a safe haven for the numerous cultural and religious traditions of the inhabitants of its borders. Kashmir, Benares, and Bengal were the primary entry points through which Śākta traditions were carried into Nepal in the form of texts, deities, and the traditions of worship associated with them. The very presence of these traditions in Nepal, particularly in the form of the institution of the Kumārī, testifies to the presence of the doctrine of perfect I-consciousness (*pūrṇa-ahantā*) that is central to Śākta Tantra theology and practice. As Lakoff and Johnson have powerfully articulated, when the symbol is embodied, the philosophical system is inherently implied.⁷⁵ We would be mistaken to conclude that Nepalese *tāntrika*-s are unaware of the subtle metaphysics developed by the exegetes of Kashmir and other regions of India. Instead, we must read these metaphysics back into the symbol system that is so intricately mapped out within Nepāla-Maṇḍala.

Doing so, we return to our focus on the institution of deifying virgin girls and the rich web of ritual practices—at the heart of Nepāla-Maṇḍala—that daily demonstrate the divinity of these girls to the king and his people. This cultural nexus is, at its esoteric core, the ritual demonstration of the apex of Śākta Tantra theology: namely, the radical claim made so eloquently by Abhinavagupta that all of existence is the internal projection of I-consciousness within the infinite body of the godhead. The final stage in the tantric King's *sādhana* is the realization that the Kumārī whom he worships as Taleju ultimately resides within him as his innermost Self, the continuum of perfect I-consciousness. Perfect I-consciousness is the culmination of non-dual Śākta tantric practice. As the *Nityāṣoḍaśikāṛṇava* explains, when the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is established in the *sahasrāra* at the apex of the central channel, the *sādhaka*'s mind becomes permanently established in the awareness that there is only one subject, the goddess of the three cities, whose infinite Self is present everywhere, in all things and at all times. Perfect I-consciousness is the *sādhaka*'s realization of his or her identity with the goddess, the *mantra* that is her vibratory essence, the *yantra* that embodies her, the teacher who awakened this realization, and the universe at large, which are all seen as the Self. Having encoded the semiosis of *kuṇḍalinī*'s ascent, having returned all symbols to their ultimate source, the realized *sādhaka* has encoded himself

as the locus for the transmission of all powers (*sarvāmnāya-śakti-śthāna*). In this condition of embodied liberation (*jīvanmukti*), he or she views the multiple levels of reality dissolving and reemerging within the continuum of Devī's ever-present *maṇḍala*.

CONCLUSION: WORSHIPING THE UNIVERSAL FORM OF THE VIRGIN

The current Ha Bāhā Kumārī comes from a lineage of Kumārīs who once served as royal mistresses for the kings of Patan. Although no longer recognized as a royal Kumārī, the Ha Bāhā Kumārī carries tremendous symbolic power as the Taleju of Patan. On the day I visited the Patan Kumārī, I was, thanks to Mukunda Aryal, able to witness, photograph, and record the daily worship (*kanyā-nityā-pūjā*) performed to her by the Ha Bāhā Kumārī priest, Bajracarya Sharma. During the thirty-minute ceremony Mr. Sharma read from his own copy of *Kumārīpūja-Paddhati*. This text, which he let me see but not photograph or copy, was filled with important textual references that linked Taleju to Tripurasundarī and Vajrayoginī and a host of other Hindu and Buddhist equivalents of Parāśakti, the feminine embodiment of supreme power who is the ritual lifeblood of Nepāla-Maṇḍala. All of these deities were equated with Kumārī, this seven-year-old girl, as the living embodiment of the Viśvarūpa-Devī. In the inner sanctum of Ha Bāhā, Bajracarya did as he had done every day for nearly all of his adult years: he worshiped a prepubescent girl he understands to be the microcosmic embodiment of the universal form of the goddess.

From the moment that he rang his Tibetan bell (*ghaṇṭa*) and formed a *mudrā* with the *vajra*—a Tibetan Buddhist symbol of the adamant yet empty self—Bajracarya was in the presence of the supreme form of the goddess, according to his own testimony. “To the eyes of the non-initiated,” he explained, “she still looks like just a girl; but, to us [referring to himself and Mukunda Aryal] she becomes Viśvarūpa-Devī.”⁷⁶ In other words, the ritual is the medium of transformation. Through ritual a human girl becomes the microcosmic embodiment of the goddess. However, the veil of illusion, the façade that makes her seem like just a girl, is removed only if the ritual is linked to initiation (*dīkṣā*). In this way, as Sanderson has noted, ritual makes the impossible possible.⁷⁷

The Tantras, Āgamas, and *paddhati*-s that constitute the Nepalese Sarvāmnāya Śākta Tantra canon all emphasize that without ritual practice there is no possibility for production of knowledge and power. Such production is body-based. Without inscribing the body with the ritual mechanisms that disseminate Śākta Tantra wisdom (*vidyā*), there is no way for the *maṇḍala* to encode itself within the individual. The *maṇḍala* is

the synthesis of Nepalese cultural values, which have been developed and transformed over centuries of fermentation and exchange with the multiple Asian cultural traditions that have passed into the Kathmandu Valley from one of the many intersecting routes of the Silk Road. The *maṇḍala* is at once Newar and Parbatiyā, Hindu and Buddhist, folk and classical. Despite strict caste restrictions that have preserved distinct ethnic and racial identities, the bodies of the inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley have been inscribed with multiple value systems that are synthesized, organized, and hierarchized by the *maṇḍala*—a symbol of the esoteric traditions of Tantra that has been preserved and disseminated by the royal and religious elite in the valley for at least the last twelve-hundred years.

When Bajracarya worshiped the Kumārī that day, as he had on every other day for more than twenty years, he affirmed through ritual that he acknowledges this tantric discourse, that he lives in it as it lives in him. Through the symbolic power of ritual he brought into the microcosmic body of a virgin the macrocosmic Śakti for deployment at a mesocosmic level. The Kumārī is a medium through which Taleju disseminates herself throughout Nepāla-Maṇḍala, which is her body writ large as geopolitical space. For the *tāntrika* who has been initiated into the system of the *maṇḍala*, the entire country of Nepal is Devī's body. This is because Nepalese *tāntrika*-s operate according to a kind of inside-out logic that situates the origin-point of "objective" space within the consciousness of the witnessing subject. Consequently, the initiated *sādhaka* does not have to wait for the Devī to reveal herself within the body of the Kumārī. Rather, projecting onto the Kumārī the *maṇḍala* constructed within his own mind during elaborate stages of ritualized meditation, the *tāntrika* wields the power to see the Kumārī at all times as the cosmic embodiment of the Śrī Yantra—the very image the virgin sits upon during her daily worship.

For this purpose, Bajracarya—established in correct posture (*āsana*), breath controlled through the proper breathing regimen (*prāṇāyāma*)—began his daily worship of the Kumārī with the construction of an internalized image (*dhāraṇā*) and meditation (*dhyāna*). The image he constructed in his mind was the Śrī Yantra. Once constructed, he meditated on the *bindu* in its center, witnessing *śakti* flow out from each of the points of the triangle and fill the entire *maṇḍala* with grace. Then, through *nyāsa*, he began to instill the beings and powers of this internalized *maṇḍala* in his own limbs, inscribing himself with the wisdom of the *maṇḍala* (*maṇḍala-vidyā*) and making himself a worthy vessel to worship the goddess. After thus encoding his body, he opened his eyes and received the *darśana* of the Kumārī as Taleju-Mahiṣāsura-mārdinī-Tripurasundarī-Kālasaṃkarṣinī, the beautiful one who is the supreme power of the three cities. In this moment the flow of transformation was bi-directional. The ritual agent projected onto the Kumārī his own ritually transformed vision, and in the same moment she

was possessed (*āveśa*) by Taleju and thus transformed. Her transformation, made possible through the ritual, was considered real. Yet the priest had constructed it through the regimen of an internalized vision that he controlled entirely.

From that point the priest Bajracarya proceeded to worship the feet of the goddess, receiving from them the *prasāda* that was once carried daily directly to the Patan king for his consumption. Here the tradition of transmitting sexual fluids, at the basis of tantric practice for at least twelve-hundred years, has been displaced onto an eating ritual that links ingestion to a supreme power whose source is identified as the vulva of Nepal's virgin goddess. After visually mapping the Śrī Yantra across the entire body of the Kumārī, the priest then, without disrobing her, focused this image specifically on the genital area. This is the site of secrecy, the place of ultimate feminine power, where Taleju reveals herself as Guhyeśvarī, the mistress of the secret place. And here, as the place of supreme power, the goddess's *maṇḍala*-body is the Śrī Yantra—the preeminent symbol of Śākta tantric traditions, the emblem of Nepal's queen, and the model of territorial organization and spatial construction that links Nepalese citizens directly to a transcendent goddess whose ultimate abiding place is within their own bodies. Having transformed the Kumārī into Taleju by projecting his internalized vision of the Śrī Yantra onto her microcosmic form, the tantric priest received the blessings of her transformed divine presence. The consumption of *prasāda* in the form of eggs, sweets, and other food items was the ritual documentation that this reciprocal transformation had indeed occurred.⁷⁸ Through this blessed food, the power generated by this inside-projected-outside transformation of perceptual space is disseminated into social space as the mesocosmic conduit of a power rooted in the yogic realization that the "objective" world is simply an external projection of the internal continuum of consciousness.

Through this process of ritual consumption the goddess creates a stirring, or vibration, within the microcosmic bodies of the ritual participants as well as within the mesocosmic plane of social space. This stir is her *spanda*, the subtle vibratory pulse that is manifested as the acoustic body of the *maṇḍala*. As the power of cosmic emission (*visarga-śakti*), this pulse makes possible the projection of the goddess onto her own screen as the Śrī Yantra. As the power of individual-awakening (*śakti-pāta*), this pulse stirs the dormant *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* and brings about the internal ascent of the goddess within the body of the *yogin*. As the power that stabilizes and invigorates the social-*maṇḍala*, this pulse stirs through the various ritual performances and musical traditions that serve as conduits for disseminating the goddess's acoustic body. This is why Bajracarya sings his ritual litany with the accompaniment of a small drum. This is why all of Nepal's festivals are accompanied by music. This is why classical musicians play in

the court of the king and why their musical tradition is guarded through initiation and secrecy. This is why Tantras are not philosophical treatises but rather guides for instilling *mantra*-s within the body. Finally, this is why Taleju is the patron goddess of the Kathmandu Valley, for it is through her subtle vibratory pulsations that she transmits her supreme power, awakening and enlivening simultaneously the tri-cosmos, causing all aspects of the *maṇḍala* to tremble with the rhythms of her innate bliss-power. Through her rhythmic sound body, the goddess enlivens the *maṇḍala*.

The Thami shamans of Dolakha worship Tripurasundarī as Taleju, seeking possession by the goddess through the sounds generated by their drumming and the repetitive chanting of her many sacred names. The Ha Bāhā priest of Patan, Bajracarya, worships the Kumārī as Taleju, seeking the divine blessings of the goddess through the ritualized sounds of his litany accompanied by drumming. In this way, the priest at one of the three primary centers of Nepāla-Maṇḍala links himself with Thami shamans situated at the *maṇḍala*'s periphery. He links himself with people whose orientation towards Taleju is disassociated from the *Nityāṣoḍaśikāṇḍava* and the other canonical works of the Śākta Tantra canon. The link is a pan-Asian technology of producing deity-possession through the ritualized production of sound. In Nepāla-Maṇḍala the classical canonical traditions of Tantra intermingle with indigenous healing traditions, interconnected through technologies of deity-possession rooted in the ritual performances that harness the transformative power of sound.

In the end, then, Nepal's divine Kumārī is many things at once, a foundation in many senses. As a servant to the state, her work symbolizes commitment to the nation's institutional complex, embodied concretely by her master, King Gyānendra Śāh Deva, whose initiation into Sarvāmnāya Śākta Tantra qualifies him to channel, control, and distribute power from the center of the *maṇḍala*. For this end, the Kumārī instantiates a semiotics of power that links the symbolism of the Nepalese goddesses into Taleju, the goddess on high, who ultimately resides within the king himself as his innermost self, as that I-consciousness that underlies, constructs, and unites his world.

NOTES

1. Along with the *Ritual Guide to the Worship of the Kumārī* (*Kumārīpūjā-Paddhati*), Nepal's National Archives contains over several hundred *paddhati*-s dedicated to the worship of Kumārī, and thousands more that describe tantric ideology and practice. Primary among these are the *Kumārī-Tantra*, Nepal National Archives (Kathmandu, Nepal; hereafter, NNA) E 28/7; *Kumārītarpaṇātma*, NNA E 50/07; *Kumārī-dhyāna-Paddhati*, NNA E 2029/17; *Kumārīpūjāṇabalidānavidhi*, NNA E 2770/12; and the *Kumārī-Pūjā*, NNA D 31/35.
2. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), p. 147. See Mark Dyczkowski, *The Canon of the Śaivāgama and Kubjikā Tantras of the Western Kaula Tradition* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), p. 66.
3. David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 15–19.
4. Ronald Inden, "Hierarchies of Kings in Early Medieval India," *Contributions in Indian Sociology* XV (New Series): pp. 117–121.
5. Vishwanath Prasad Varma, *Studies in Hindu Political Thought and Its Metaphysical Foundations* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1954), p. 31, n. 2; see also G. P. Singh, *Political Thought in Ancient India: Emergence of the State, Evolution of Kingship and Inter-State Relations Based on the Saptāṅga Theory of State*, *Reconstructing Indian History & Culture*, no. 2 (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld [P] Ltd.), pp. 121–122.
6. Romila Thapar, *From Lineage to State: Social Formations in the First-Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 156.
7. Inden, "Hierarchies of Kings," p. 120.
8. White has argued convincingly that tantric ideology was imbedded in the political mainstream by the twelfth century. See David G. White, "Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition," in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David G. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 3–38.
9. Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).
10. Sthaneswhar Timalisina, "Time and Space in Tantric Art," in *Nepal: Old Images, New Insights*, ed. Pratyapaditya Pal (Bombay: Marg Publications, 2005), p. 24.
11. Far earlier than Foucault, Indian scholars had conceptualized their own version of an all-seeing panopticon, embedded at all places within the so-

ciopolitical matrix. As the king's body, inseparable from the governing unit that is its emanation, the omni-present *maṇḍala* instills the watchful eye of power within all levels of society. However, we should not be too quick to read the *maṇḍala* simply as an institution of power in a neo-Marxist sense. Rather, we should take seriously the emic position that the moral order (dharma) of a socio-political zone functions not solely for the maintenance of political power (*artha*) but also for the pleasure (*kāma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) of each and every citizen within that domain.

12. White, "Mapping a Tradition," p. 26.

13. Jeffrey S. Lidke, *Vishvarupa: A Study of Changu Narayan, Nepal's Most Ancient Temple* (New Delhi: Nirala Publications, 1996).

14. According to Mukunda Rāj Aryal, who has seen the inner image, the cut at the neck is too smooth to have been produced by some antecedent causes. He is certain that the image was designed in this way by King Haridatta Varma in the third century C.E. An inscription by Amśuvarman in 607 C.E. verifies with certainty that by this time the head was already severed. See Lidke, *Vishvarupa*, p. 188.

15. Lidke, *Vishvarupa*, pp. 134–138.

16. Fols. 20b–21a.

17. Mary Slusser, *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*, two vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 317.

18. This is a disputed assertion. However, Professor Aryal has done over twenty years of research on the Changu Narayan temple site and is confident that his dating is accurate.

19. Lidke, *Vishvarupa*, pp. 58–62.

20. Oral Communication, Kathmandu, Nepal, September 4, 1997.

21. *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava* (hereafter, NŚA) 4.17–18a:

Vāgīśvarī jñānaśaktirvāgbhave mokṣarūpiṇī |
Kāmarāje kāmakaḷā kāmārūpā kriyātmikā || 4.17 a–b ||
Śaktibīje parā sāktiricchaiva śivarūpiṇī | 4.18a. |

22. Douglas Renfrew Brooks, *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Srīvidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), p. 90.

23. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, p. 178.

24. Ibid. Slusser notes in footnote 86 on this page that the historian G. Vajracarya dates an important Licchavi inscription from this temple as early as 450 C.E. Both Mukunda and Sthanesvar assert that the central image is the original one and that it has, since its origin, been worshipped as Vāgīśvarī. The inscription itself only reveals that its patron was a woman who "desired no longer to bear the suffering of [being] a woman..."

(D.R. Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*, 3 vols. [New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1983], p. 8). As Slusser notes, this shrine was also one of the last stops for Satis who up until only a few decades ago made their way to the burning *ghāt*-s of Paśupatinātha Temple.

25. *Artharatnāvalī* on NṢA 1.8.

26. Axel Michaels, in collaboration with Nutan Sharma, “Goddess of the Secret: Guhyeśvarī in Nepal and Her Festival,” in *Wild Goddesses in India and Nepal: Proceedings of an International Symposium Berne and Zurich, November 1994*, eds. Axel Michaels, Cornelia Vogelsanger, and Annette Wilke (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 303–342.

27. An event that is described at some length in the chronicles. See Daniel Wright, *History of Nepal, With an Introductory Sketch of the Country and People of Nepal*, trans. from the *Pabatiya* by Munshi She Shunker Singh Pandit Shri Gunanand (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993), pp. 21–218.

28. *Gopālarāj-Vaṃśāvalī*, fos. 17a–b. Dhanavajra Vajrācārya and Kamal P. Malla, trans., *The Gopālarājavanṣāvalī*, Nepal Research Centre Publications 9 (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), p. 121.

29. While Dhanavajra and Malla’s edition of the *Gopālarāj-Vaṃśāvalī* reads *śrī bhr̥ṅgaśvara bhaṭṭāraka*, suggesting a male deity, Michaels argues that it should be read as *śrī bhr̥ṅgaśvarī bhaṭṭārikā*, meaning “goddess in a flask,” which is a common ritual vehicle for Guhyeśvarī. See Michaels and Sharma, “Goddess of the Secret,” p. 315.

30. As Michaels notes in footnote 17 on page 316 of “Goddess of the Secret,” Abhinavagupta makes several references to this important Tantra in his *Tantrāloka*.

31. *Niśiṣaṇcāra-Tantra*, ninth *paṭala*: fols. 31v–32r. Quoted by Michaels, “Goddess of the Secret,” p. 316:

Nepāla samsthitam devaṃ paśunāṃ patir iṣyate |
guhyeśvarīsāmāyuktam sthānapālasamavitam |

32. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

34. *Nepālamāhātmya* 1.38:

tavāṅgaṃ patitam guhyaṃ vāgmatītaṭinīṭate |
mṛgasthalyāṃ udīcyāṃ tu tat pīṭhaṃ paramaṃ mahat ||

35. Robert I. Levy, *Mesocosm, Hinduism and the Organization of Traditional Newar City in Nepal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 231.

36. NNA, Śaiva Tantra 164, reel no. B 28/2. 34 folios.

37. Anne Vergati, “Taleju, Sovereign Deity of Bhaktapur,” in *Gods, Men and Territory: Society and Culture in Kathmandu Valley* (New Delhi: Manohar

Centre de Sciences Humaines, 1995), p. 85. See also Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, pp. 316–320.

38. Vergati, “Taleju,” p. 86.

39. Ibid.

40. Sylvain Lévi, *Le Népal, Étude historique d'un royaume hindou*, Vol. I (Paris: E. Lerous, 1905), pp. 378–379. Quoted in Vergati, “Taleju,” p. 86.

41. Lévi, *Le Népal*, pp. 378–379.

42. Brownen Bledsoe, “An Advertised Secret: The Goddess Taleju and the King of Kathmandu,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 195–205.

43. *Sarvāparādhastotra*.

44. Mark Dyczkowski, *Kubjikā, Kālī, Tripurā, and Trika* (Kathmandu: Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 2000).

45. An interpretation not noted by Blesdoe.

46. Blesdoe, “An Advertised Secret,” p. 199.

47. Nepalese Śrī Vidyā *tāntrika*-s view Kubjikā and Tripurasundarī as the inseparable poles of the supreme goddess, Mahā Devī, linking Kubjikā with the power of initiation and Tripurasundarī with the power of realization. Personal communication with Dr. Sthaneshwar Timalsina, May 1998.

48. For *tāntrika*-s, no discursive formation is more powerful than the mantric proclamation that Self=Devī. In Tantra, the answer to the question, “Who am I?” is synonymous with the question, “Who is my deity?” Ultimately, the *tāntrika* is to learn that the vibratory essence of his deity is pure I-awareness, reverberating as that consciousness that pulsates within his initiation-*mantra*. In this context, Taleju, the chosen deity of Nepalese kings since at least the fourteenth century, is the esoteric identity of Nepal’s kings. As the king is the lord of his Nepāla-Maṇḍala, so his I-identity stamps and permeates all sections of his *maṇḍala*. From an esoteric perspective, all citizens within Nepāla-Maṇḍala are logically non-distinct from Taleju, she who is both the power of the foundation (*adhāśakti*) and of the transcendent heights (*parāśakti*).

49. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, p. 311.

50. These manuscripts form a central textual basis from which Nepalese Śākta *tāntrika*-s construct through praxis a triadic episteme on power. This triad links individual agents to an intermediary set of interconnected social spheres that are in turn linked to an overarching interpretation of reality that makes each of these realms mirrors and containers of each other. *Maṇḍala*-s within *maṇḍala*-s, replicas of a divine template, all contained within the principle of I-awareness, the power of self-identity invigorates the nation and its citizens through establishing an identity of transcendence

that can be actualized by any citizen who operates according to the means of wisdom (*vidyopāyaktā*) crafted by the architects of the *maṇḍala*.

51. Wright, *History*, p. 157.

52. See Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 114–117. Viewing Nepalese Tantra through the lens of social-constructivism, a culture-critical analyst like Bell could quickly and deftly identify the ritualistic procedures by which power relations are inscribed upon the bodies of not only the king and queen, but all those inhabiting the discursive fields in which the institution of Nepalese kingship plays itself out.

53. In the earliest literature on the Devī we find this term “conqueror of the four regions of the world,” highlighting an early connection between the goddess and the politics of warfare. See, for example, White, *Alchemical Body*, esp. pp. 15–23.

54. Thomas B. Coburn, “Devī: The Great Goddess,” in *Devī: Goddesses of India*, eds. John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 31–48.

55. Michael Allen, *The Cult of Kumārī* (Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University Press, 1975), p. 16.

56. Allen, *Cult of Kumari*, p. 16. See also Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, p. 311.

57. Several Malla kings equated their deity with the long-held tradition of Śākya Kumārī. According to this tradition, Jayaprakāś Malla built an official Kumārī residence in Basantapur and worshipped the goddess to fend off impending Gorkha attack. See Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*, p. 136, n. 28.

58. *Dibya Upadesh*. Translated by L. F. Stiller as *Prithvinarayan Shah in the Light of the Dibya Upadesh* (Kathmandu: Himalayan Book Centre, 1989), pp. 40–41.

59. Veronique Bouillier, “The King and His Yogī: Prithvi Nārāyaṇ Śāh, Bhagavantānāth and the Unification of Nepal in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Gender, Caste, and Power in South Asia* (Delhi: Manohar, 1991), pp. 3–21.

60. Bouillier, “The King and His Yogī,” p. 4.

61. Here, the relationship of tantric *yogin* to (tantric) king highlights a fusion of political and spiritual power not found in the classical model of king and brahmin priest in which the brahmin’s ritual purity stands in dialectical opposition to the king’s secular power. See Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System*, trans. Mark Sainsbury (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). See also J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

62. Bouillier, “The King and His Yogī,” p. 16.

63. The equation of queen with mother goddess is also found in South Indian traditions. See Dennis Hudson, "Madurai: The City as Goddess," in *Urban Form and Meaning in South Asia: The Shaping of Cities from Prehistoric to Precolonial Times*, eds. Howard Spodek and Doris Meth Srinivasan (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1993), pp. 125–142.
64. Śrī Prasād Ghimire, *The Life of Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ Śāh* (forthcoming). See also White, *The Alchemical Body*, pp. 310–311.
65. During his military outings Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ would consult the *Svarodaya*, a Tantric manual that correlates the rhythms of the king's breath with potential for military success. Understanding his own body to be inseparable from the body of his deity, and by extension, his army, Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ proceeded into battle according to the rhythms of his breath.
66. Ghimire, *Life and Rule*.
67. V. Carroll Dunham, "Nepal's Virgin Goddesses," in *Hinduism Today* (June 1997): p. 27.
68. *Kumārīpūjaṇabalidānavidhi*, NNA Reel no. E 1406/2, fol. 24–27.
69. *Bālasundarī-Kāvaca*, NNA Reel no. E 207/19, fol. 6.4–8.2.
70. Mukunda Aryal, *The Kumārī of Kathmandu* (Kathmandu: Heritage Research, 1991), pp. 23–35.
71. King Birendra's Oxford degree was a well-known fact among Nepalese literati. For some it was viewed as a sign of the King's betrayal of traditional values. Others interpreted it as an example of the warrior engaged in the skillful deployment of his art. For some *tāntrika*-s, King Birendra was regarded as the receptacle of power through which the goddess disseminates her seeds of power (*śaktibīja*). This same regard is rarely felt towards the current king.
72. Each line of the *yantra* resonates uniquely as a particular sound vibration. There is distinction. Yet, every line, intersection, pulsation, and vibration of this cosmogram is non-distinct from the center-point that generates it. Similarly, the high goddesses of Nepal's royal pantheon are all equal manifestation of the one, supreme consciousness that is the goal of Śākta Tantra practice.
73. *Timro pahile boleko re ki yesko kām siddhaunlai ailebāta dherai samāy lagcha*.
74. Oral Communication, Patan, Nepal, October 1997.
75. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
76. Oral Communication, Patan, Nepal, November 1997.
77. Alexis Sanderson, "Maṇḍala and Agamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir," in *Mantra et Diagrammes Rituels dans L'Hindouisme*, ed. Andre Padoux (Paris: CNRS, 1986), p. 210.

78. This “ritual documentation” states that the Nepalese *tāntrika*-s have understood clearly Abhinavagupta’s dictum that the stages of ritual mirror the stages of unfolding consciousness. For just as Parāśakti brings forth creation by projecting within herself the wheel of power that is her true being (*śakticakra-sadbhāva*), so the *tāntrika* internalizes himself to his own projection by viewing the Kumārī as the embodiment of the goddess-*maṇḍala* he worships and views within himself during the course of his own meditation practice.

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The Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research as well as the Editorial Committee of the BDK English Tripitaka Project look forward to continuing to publish volumes of the English Tripitaka Series. Through this work we hope to help to fulfill the dream of founder Reverend Dr. Yehan Numata to make the teaching of the Buddha available to the English-speaking world. *Gassho,*

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The *Pacific World*—Its History

Throughout my life, I have sincerely believed that Buddhism is a religion of peace and compassion, a teaching which will bring spiritual tranquillity to the individual, and contribute to the promotion of harmony and peace in society. My efforts to spread the Buddha's teachings began in 1925, while I was a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley. This beginning took the form of publishing the *Pacific World*, on a bi-monthly basis in 1925 and 1926, and then on a monthly basis in 1927 and 1928. Articles in the early issues concerned not only Buddhism, but also other cultural subjects such as art, poetry, and education, and then by 1928, the articles became primarily Buddhist. Included in the mailing list of the early issues were such addressees as the Cabinet members of the U.S. Government, Chambers of Commerce, political leaders, libraries, publishing houses, labor unions, and foreign cultural institutions.

After four years, we had to cease publication, primarily due to lack of funds. It was then that I vowed to become independently wealthy so that socially beneficial projects could be undertaken without financial dependence on others. After founding the privately held company, Mitutoyo Corporation, I was able to continue my lifelong commitment to disseminate the teachings of Buddha through various means.

As one of the vehicles, the *Pacific World* was again reactivated, this time in 1982, as the annual journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. For the opportunity to be able to contribute to the propagation of Buddhism and the betterment of humankind, I am eternally grateful. I also wish to thank the staff of the Institute of Buddhist Studies for helping me to advance my dream to spread the spirit of compassion among the peoples of the world through the publication of the *Pacific World*.

Yehan Numata
Founder, Mitutoyo Corporation

In Remembrance

In May of 1994, my father, Yehan Numata, aged 97 years, returned to the Pure Land after earnestly serving Buddhism throughout his lifetime. I pay homage to the fact that the *Pacific World* is again being printed and published, for in my father's youth, it was the passion to which he was wholeheartedly devoted.

I, too, share my father's dream of world peace and happiness for all peoples. It is my heartfelt desire that the *Pacific World* helps to promote spiritual culture throughout all humanity, and that the publication of the *Pacific World* be continued.

Toshihide Numata
Chairman, Mitutoyo Corporation