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# The Ruler's Realization: State Protection Buddhism and Shingon Ritual

George Finch

A Thesis in the Field of Religion

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Japanese Buddhist state protection ritual, the *Goshichinichi no mishuhō* (*Mishuhō)*, introduced by the ninth century Buddhist monk Kūkai. Specifically, I propose that Kūkai nested within the ritual a practice based on the *Ninnōkyō* sutra, as a means of transforming the emperor in conformity with Buddhist philosophical aims as the proper means of protecting the state. My analysis focuses on Shingon Buddhist school's ritual theory to explain why Kūkai suggested an additional ritual from those in use in Japan at the time. As part of that analysis, I draw from Kūkai's work, *Himitsu Mandara jūjūshinron* (*Jūjūshinron*), to explain how Kūkai perceived the various texts utilized for state protection practices. Utilizing Kūkai's own writings I explore Shingon ritual practice and theory relevant to the *Mishuhō.* Through these sources I consider the intended purpose of ritual meditation, its mechanism, and enunciated ideals relevant to the concept of conferring the benefits of ritual practice experientially upon another, in this case the emperor.

An aspect of Kūkai's theory holds that the efficacy of the ritual results not only in divine protection, but also a transformation of the ruler, in conformity with the goals of the underlying sutra. The later portion of this thesis considers the degree to which modern clinical studies demonstrate the efficacy of Buddhist practice and whether they parallel the goals of state protection texts. My analysis considers how Buddhist studies can benefit from considering the intended experience for, and benefit to, individual practitioners and society for the practice under consideration.

Frontispiece

Umbrella carried over the chief officiant of the *Mishuhō*. (Photo by author)

## Author's Biographical Sketch

George Finch received a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations from Michigan State University, James Madison College, where he also studied East Asian Languages. He received a Juris Doctorate from Willamette University College of Law. He completed training with the Koyasan Shingon Buddhist lineage receiving *Denpo Kanjo*, final ordination. He later served as assistant minister with the Shingon Mission of Hawaii, and currently serves as head minister of *Henjyoji* Shingon Buddhist Temple in Portland, Oregon.

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I would like to thank both, Archbishop Zenryu Hidaka of *Sanboin* Temple, *Koyasan*, who currently serves as the 257th Head Priest of (*Kyoogokokuji*) *Toji* temple in Kyoto, and Bishop Zenkyu Watanabe of the Shingon Mission of Hawaii, Honomu *Henjyoji* Temple, for their assistance in helping me gain entry to *Kanjo-in* on the grounds of *Toji* to observe the practice space for the *Mishuhō* performed January 2023. I would like to thank Rev. Seicho Asahi of *Risoin* Temple, Hiroshima, for introducing me to the Shingon teachings and guiding me through my Shingon studies. Finally, I would like to thank my family for their patience and encouragement during my academic studies.

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Table of Contents

Frontispiece ..... iv

Author's Biographical Sketch ..... v

Acknowledgments ..... vi

List of Tables ..... xii

List of Figures ..... xiii

Chapter I. Introduction: State Protection Buddhism, a Brief Background ..... 1

A. An Indian Example ..... 6

B. The Chinese Experience ..... 7

Daoist Questions in China Addressed by Buddhist Philosophy ..... 11

*Mantra* and *Dhāraṇī* ..... 12

C. The Establishment of the *Ritsuryō* State ..... 14

Soga Interest in Buddhism ..... 15

The Need for More ..... 16

*Onmyōdō*, the Japanese State, and Buddhist Resources ..... 19

Buddhist Linkages with *Onmyōdō* ..... 20

D. Kūkai's Redesign of State Protection ..... 21

State Protection Buddhism in Japan ..... 21

Buddhist Philosophical Concepts Relevant to State Protection ..... 22

The *Cakravartin* Ideal ..... 22

The Bodhisattva Ideal .....22

*Tathāgata-garbha*, Buddha Nature .....23

Three Bodies of the Buddha .....25

*Prajñāpāramitā* Literature Generally .....25

The Dialectic of *Prajñāpāramitā* .....27

Locating *Prajñāpāramitā* .....28

*Prajñāpāramitā* in Japan Generally .....30

State Protection Texts .....30

E. The Golden Light Sutra .....31

Cosmology of the Golden Light Sutra .....32

The Sutra's Instruction for Rulers .....33

The Benefits of the Sutra .....35

F. The Sutra of Humane Kings .....36

Outline of the Sutra .....36

Cosmology of the Sutra .....39

The Method in the Sutra .....39

The Text's Esoteric Elements .....40

The Benefits of the Sutra .....41

Use of the Sutra .....42

G. Nara Period Schools and Textual Taxonomies .....42

H. Conclusions .....43

Chapter II: Kūkai's Thinking Regarding the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō* Relative to the *Mishuhō* .....44

A. The *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō* in the Kūkai's Writings Generally .....44

B. Kukai's Commentaries on the *Konkōmyōkyō and Ninnōkyō* .....45

Kūkai's Commentary on the *Konkōmyōkyō* .....45

Kūkai's Commentary on the *Ninnōkyō* .....46

C. Kūkai's References to the *Ninnōkyō* in the *Jūjūshinron* .....50

Kūkai's Conception of Buddhist of Texts, *Himitsu Mandara Jūjūshinron* .....53

*Prajñāpāramitā* Literature within the Shingon School .....56

D. Shingon Theory .....56

Mantra and *Dhāraṇī* in Shingon .....58

Shingon Ritual Components: Visual and Material .....58

Space, Theory, Practice, and Identification .....60

The Petition for the Ritual .....60

The Ritual Space .....63

The *Godai Myōō* .....68

Ritual Commentaries .....69

Karma Mandala .....71

Shingon Practice .....73

Experience in Shingon Ritual .....75

Shingon Ritual Identification .....77

Dual Objectives .....80

E. Conclusions .....82

Chapter III. A Modern Consideration of Kūkai's Theory .....86

A. Buddhist Practice and Measurable States .....89

Refined Awareness from Mindfulness.....90

Mindfulness Foundation .....90

Buddhist Compassion Meditation.....92

Applying Compassion.....93

The Value of Forbearance.....94

Shingon in Clinical Settings .....94

B. Mutuality in Transformative Experiences.....95

The Case of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) .....95

Mutually Beneficial .....97

C. Self and Society.....97

Buddhist Notions of Self in Psychology.....98

The Narcissism of the Imperial Self .....99

The Emperor's Myth of Self.....99

The Buddhist Sense of Self Meets the King .....100

Transforming Self.....100

D. Transformative Experiences .....101

The Variety of Transformative Experience .....103

Conditions for Transformative Experiences .....103

Impact of Transformative Experience .....104

Transformative Locations .....106

Ritual as Transformative Experience.....107

*Kaji* as Transformative Experience.....108

F. Conclusions .....110

References.....113

List of Tables

Table 1. Correspondences between Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and *Myōō* .....71

List of Figures

Figure 1. *Mishuhō* Officiants. .....65

Figure 2. Gates of *Kanjo-in*. .....66

Figure 3. *Mishuhō* Ritual Space.....67

# Chapter I.

## Introduction: State Protection Buddhism, a Brief Background

East Asian Buddhist institutions were tightly integrated with the national political system in part through a regime known as 護國, *gokoku*, State Protection Buddhism. Specific temples, texts, and practices were established and designated by the state for such practical purposes as combatting unrest, averting calamity, and praying for the ruler's long life. State Protection Buddhism was transmitted to Japan, initially from Korea, and later as part of the importation and implementation of Chinese style government and legal systems. This new administrative state system provided Japan with a structured philosophy of rule, and specific Buddhist institutions to legitimize the authority of that the new state structure.

The Buddhist institutions of *Nara* period Japan were largely established to serve the needs of the state. The result of this model of Buddhist engagement saw the establishment of temples, printing of texts, and designation of courses of study and practice, by imperial decree. These actions were motivated by an understanding that Buddhism served both as a means of protecting the state and legitimizing the emperor's rule. The resulting Buddhism of the *Heian* era was often focused on scholarly study, and practices directed toward the benefit of the state and the emperor.

In the ninth century, the Japanese Buddhist monk Kūkai, proposed an addition to the existing regime of state protection practices. In this thesis I propose that Kūkai's purpose was two-fold. First Kūkai's changes to state protection rituals shifted the goal of

state protection from being one of only supernatural protection, to a system more in line with Buddhist spiritual goals. Through Buddhist theories outlined in the Shingon school, Kūkai supplemented the state protection practices in a way that aligned them with the framework of Buddhist spiritual practice while maintaining the existing interests of state protection. Second, the practice that Kūkai introduced directly involved the participation of the emperor with the intent to provide them with a transformative experience in accordance with Buddhist philosophical goals.

Kūkai's innovation was the introduction of the *Mishuhō* ritual. The ritual brings together more than five separate ritual practices, wrapped together for the purpose of state protection from different perspectives. The core practice within the ritual is based on the Sutra of Golden Light. This thesis focuses on a component of the ritual, based on the Sutra of Humane Kings, and how the text and associated ritual practice shift the ritual away from solely state's interests to those interests and goals announced in the Buddhist texts themselves. Most importantly, the goal of this thesis is to shed light on the ritual's effect of imparting to the emperor the intended transformative experience to evoke within them the virtues announced in the sutra. Those virtues include practical teaching and instruction for heads of state, as well as specifics on the ruler's ideal spiritual practice. The later portion of this thesis includes a consideration of the modern psychological and clinical data related to Buddhist practice methods to consider whether experiences like that of the *Mishuhō* could be efficacious, and as a means of broadening the consideration of Buddhist ritual practices.

State Protection Buddhism generally focused on a variety of Buddhist texts, primarily the, 金光明最勝王經, *Konkōmyōkyō saishōōkyō,* Sutra of Golden Light, 仁王

般若波羅蜜經, *Ninnō hanya haramitsu kyō*, Sutra of Humane Kings, and the 妙法蓮華經, *Myōhō renge kyō*, Lotus Sutra. Kūkai, founder of the Shingon school of Buddhism in Japan, proposed an addition to the existing system of state protection rituals then in use. In this thesis I examine the hypothesis that the ritual proposed by Kūkai had a dual character and had at its core the *Ninnōkyō* rather than the *Konkōmyōkyō*. While both texts provide instruction and teaching specific to rulers, I will argue that the *Ninnōkyō*, both fit with the textual taxonomy established by Kūkai, and the ritual meditation practices introduced by him from China. My thesis considers this argument through Kūkai's own writings, esoteric Buddhist ritual structure, oral transmission withing the Shingon lineage, and artistic representations included as part of the ritual. I argue that Kūkai's intent in introducing this new ritual practice was twofold; the practical goal of protection of the state by means outlined in both the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō,* and the transformation of the emperor's mind through the ritual experience in conformity with the Buddhist philosophical principles outlined in the *Ninnōkyō*.

The thesis begins with some background on government interest in Buddhism generally, and Japan in particular. This includes background on Buddhist philosophy and practice becoming part of Chinese political philosophy. I also consider how Chinese philosophical thinking ultimately brought Buddhist state protection practices into Chinese government circles. This background is offered to better contextualize Kūkai's proposed changes.

In the second part of this thesis, I provide a brief discussion of the Buddhist philosophical concepts relevant to State Protection Buddhism, and the Buddhist practice concepts contained in the relevant texts. Relevant terms and concepts will be introduced

as they relate to the two texts under consideration. I then provide an outline of both sutras, comparing the teaching provided by each, and the Buddhist cosmology of rulers and states outlined therein. Finally, I consider how each text purports to "protect" the state.

Next, I consider Kūkai's consideration of both texts. Kūkai's magnum opus, 秘密曼荼羅十住心論, *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*, provides an analysis of the Buddhist teaching through a textual taxonomy. While this work is commonly analyzed as a statement from Kūkai regarding the superiority of Shingon over other Buddhist schools, it is more properly read in the 判教 *pànjiào* tradition, whereby various Buddhist schools historically located their core texts and teachings within the totality of Buddhist literature, or the major texts and teachings of other schools. The *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron* provides a framework for understanding the Shingon approach to the Buddhist teaching, and insights into Kūkai's thinking regarding the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō.* While the specifics of the *Mishuhō* ritual are not public, and the ritual is not performed publicly, I will examine four aspects for evidence regarding the ritual's basis in the *Ninnōkyō.*

First, I consider Kūkai's writings regarding the ritual generally. Beginning with Kūkai's petition to the emperor for the performance of the ritual, and the texts specifically mentioned therein. Next, I consider whether these texts and practices were imported by Kūkai or were texts and practices previously existing in Japan, by reference to Kūkai's 請來目錄, *Shōrai mokuroku*, List of Newly Imported Items.

Second, I consider Kūkai's own writings regarding both the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō*. Here I look at Kūkai's commentaries on the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō.* Consideration is given to the way Kūkai treats each text, the reason for writing the

commentaries, and the points he makes regarding the texts. These are considered within the textual framework presented within the *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*, and later in the thesis, the esoteric Buddhist ritual meditation framework.

Third, I look at the ritual meditation structure introduced by Kūkai. Esoteric Buddhist ritual meditation methods include theories whereby practitioners approach and experience aspects of consciousness associated with philosophical ideals outlined in Buddhist texts. These are often mediated through imagery and environmental arrangements specific to esoteric Buddhist theories. Accordingly, I consider the ritual environment and statuary present as part of the *Mishuhō*, to determine whether they provide insight into the texts from which they are drawn.

Fourth, I consider the ritual intent. Here I analyze esoteric Buddhist ritual practice, and its purported ability to effect practical and spiritual benefits. Esoteric Buddhist rituals purport to provide the dual benefit of practical benefit in this world, and spiritual benefit in conformity with Buddhist philosophy. Specifically, these practices are designed to align the consciousness of the practitioners with the insight and ethical outlook of Buddhism. Setting aside the purported spiritual protection afforded the state and ruler, I consider the second benefit, that the ritual serves as a transformative teaching for rulers. Here I will argue that the *Mishuhō* offers a spiritual practice based on ideas in the *Ninnōkyō* that adhere to the structure established by Kūkai in the *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron*.

State protection practices bring religious practice into social and political life in unique ways. Sociological studies of religion often draw distinctions between religious rites and magical rites. State protection practices could be understood to blur this line;

however, I will argue that Kūkai's efforts in this space shift the practice away from the magical and into a more nuanced means of social change.

The state protection practice proposed by Kūkai was primarily applicable to government and rulers rather than monastics. As such, the final part of this thesis considers the modern clinical and psychological data regarding the application of Buddhist practice generally, the underlying philosophical goals, and methods contained in the *Ninnōkyō* as mediated through the *Mishuhō.* Kūkai's ritual meditation practices are a means by which the teaching contained in the sutras is internalized within the partitioner, and in some cases, conferred upon participants through ritual practice. The concepts of the transformative experience will be considered as a possible means by which the goals of the *Mishuhō* could be imparted. Relevant research is considered to show that transformative experiences can confer upon participants goals like those outlined in Buddhist sutras generally, and the *Ninnōkyō* specifically. Psychological and sociological contexts will be briefly considered with an eye toward expanding the consideration of Buddhist studies to include the intended philosophical efficacy of Buddhist ritual practice.

A. An Indian Example

The state interest in Buddhism begins rather early. King *Ashoka* of the *Mauryan* empire came to rule over modern day Afghanistan and South Asia beginning approximately 331 C.E. His own interest in the religion appears to have developed from a sincere remorse for violence perpetrated during the consolidation of his rule (Lahiri, 2015, p. 280). An encounter with a Buddhist monk is said to have inspired *Ashoka's* conversion. The monks countenance tranquility and fearlessness are said to have spurred

him to become a lay Buddhist, and begun his support and patronage of the monastic community (Lahiri, 2015, p. 109). As a result, *Ashoka* distributed a series of stone inscribed edicts around the nation. Among the first of these recounts his own conversion as a model to be emulated (Lahiri, 2015, p. 132). In the thirteenth rock edict, *Ashoka* recounts his remorse for killing the *Kalinga* people in his pursuit of empire (Smith, 1909, p. 18). *Ashoka's* conversation to Buddhism is explained in this proclamation where he provides insight into how the killing of one, impacts others in the community. Specifically, *Ashoka* recounts how the taking of life undermines the Buddhis teaching of the *Brahma Viharas*, or four immeasurable minds, enunciated in the edict as "security, self-control, peace of mind, and joyousness" (Smith, 1909, p. 20). The other edicts of *Ashoka* promulgate a variety of Buddhist inspired guidance for government officials and the nation. As will be illustrated later, these bear significant similarity to the articles of Prince *Shotoku's* constitution developed in Japan some thousand or more years later. *Ashoka* partially viewed Buddhism as a universal ideology for the unification of disparate peoples and territories (Ch'en, 1964, p. 16).

B. The Chinese Experience

The Buddhist story in China begins with the legendary dream of Emperor *Ming* of the *Han* Dynasty. He is said to have dreamed of a golden deity flying before his palace. When he consulted his ministers about the dream, he was advised that a great sage would come from a foreign land. Soon after the dream, two Buddhist monks arrived from India, and translated a selection of texts into Chinese (S. W. Jones, 1959, p. 35). Emperor *Ming* is said to have had the 白馬寺, *Báimǎsì* temple in 洛阳市, *Luòyáng* constructed for the

two monks, *Kasyapa Matanga* and *Dharmaratna*. The two monks are further credited with the translation of the 四十二章經, *Shijūnishō kyō*, Sutra in Forty-two Chapters (Lopez, 2018, p. 419). While the historical accuracy of these stories cannot be adequately verified, it is however, likely that they reflect that Buddhism was present in China during the *Han* dynasty and that Chinese envoys to Western regions encountered Buddhism (Ch'en, 1964, p. 33).

Rather than a single ruler taking up the faith and declaring it the national religion, the introduction of Buddhism to China came largely through trade routes and diplomatic missions. This resulted in individuals within society wrestling with the implications of this new religion and puzzling it out for themselves. A critical example of this is 牟子理惑論, *Móuzǐ lǐ huò lùn*, Master *Li's* Treatise Dispelling Doubts, a second century Chinese Buddhist texts that cites Confucian sources in favor of Buddhist beliefs (Zürcher, 2007, p. 13). The author provides a literary fictional debate arguing that his Buddhist faith is not contrary to the indigenous Confucian social values (Barrett et al., 2020, p. 25). The *Móuzǐ lǐ huò lùn*, is also notable as a *Han* dynasty refutation of Buddhist linkages with Daoism, signaling an independent understanding and acceptance of Buddhism (Ch'en, 1964, p. 53).

The 東晋, Eastern *Jin* Dynasty (317-420) marks a turning point between private interest in Buddhism, and larger state interest. Until this point, those adhering to Buddhism found themselves, like *Mouzi*, arguing for the legitimacy of their belief against Confucian filial piety criticism, and existing Daoist ideas. The Eastern *Jin* represented a period within the 六朝, *Liù Cháo*, Six Dynasties period (approx. 220—589) that witnessed the simultaneous rise of an aristocratic class during a time of great internal

turmoil (Wilkinson, 2000, p. 11). Aristocratic supporters of the Eastern *Jin*, many of whom were Buddhist, had an interest in reestablishing Chinese culture in regions lost through successive conflict (Ch‘en, 1964, p. 57). With a weak state, monastic institutions in the south were able to exert influence, and appeal to the literati’s cultural interests (Chang, 2007, p. 63). Monastic institutions in the north by contrast remained largely under state control or appealed to state interests. Monks versed in advising rulers, and performance of magical feats found support (Ch‘en, 1964, p. 58).

These magical feats came to the attention of 王導, *Wang Dao*, advisor to several emperors, including 司馬睿, *Sima Rui* and future 晋元帝, Emperor *Yuan*, ensuring the stabilization of the early Eastern *Jin*. *Wang Dao* encountered a former prince turned Buddhist Monk 高座, *GaoZuo*, *Śrīmitra*, from the *Kucha* kingdom soon after his arrival in the capital 建康, *Jiànkāng* sometimes between 307-312 (Zürcher, 2007, p. 103). *Śrīmitra* gained popularity among the aristocrats of the time and was known for his engaging company, and introduction of 陀羅尼, *dhāraṇī* practice. *Dhāraṇī* are generally longer form mantras, understood to support the religious practice of the reciter, or impart the meaning or benefit of a text (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 44). The chanting or recitation of which was understood to provide effective practical benefit (Zürcher, 2007, p. 104). *Śrīmitra* is also credited with the translation of the *Mahāmāyūrī Vidyārājñī*, Peacock King Sutra, a text of interest to national figures due to purported practical efficaciousness (Kieschnick, 1997, p. 84). The Peacock King Sutra is associated with the removal of illness, obstructions, demonic influences, and rainmaking, among other purported benefits. As we will see later, texts purporting influence over rainmaking especially, and practical benefits generally, become entwined with the state’s interest in

Buddhism. These practices became of special interest in Japan, becoming entwined with State Protection Buddhism there.

By 340, the independence of the Buddhist monastic community was called into question. A member of the *Yu* family, opposed as they were to the *Wang* clan who had shown interest in Buddhism, questioned why monks should not pay respects to the emperor. 庾冰, *Yu Bing*, then acting as regent for the young Emperor 成 *Cheng*, issued an edict stating that monks should revere the emperor (Ch‘en, 1973, p. 69). The conflict highlights the tension between a centralized Confucian state, and an independent clerical group organized around principles foreign to the Chinese experience. The conflict also likely revealed tensions between rival clans in a factious political era.

The Eastern *Jin* faced numerous challenges to its rule. One of the most illustrious generals of the era, 劉裕, *Liú Yù* gained fame through his Northern Expeditions. This series of military incursions into the north, successfully retook large swathes of territory and key cities (Dien & Knapp, 2019, p. 117). *Liú Yù* utilized Buddhism to cement power and assist his military expeditions. During his expeditions he hosted members of the *Sangha* from southern regions and newly taken territory in the north (Y. Liu, 2019, p. 177). *Liú* supported Buddhist leaders, created Buddhist imagery, and invited members of the sangha to court for feasts.

Buddhist influence on imperial thought is difficult to measure during this period. Many historical sources describing imperial piety are unreliable or were composed hundreds of years after the fact (Zürcher, 2007, p. 105). However, individual familial connections with Buddhism likely created tensions for the religious community when during this period the *Wang* family adhered to Buddhism, and the rebellious *Yu* family

took a more pragmatic approach (Zürcher, 2007, p. 106). Beginning in 397, the Eastern *Jin* dynasty would further experience a series of Daoist religious rebellions. One in particular captured the interest of the emperor with the potential that members of the rebellions had perfected arcane arts for prolonging life (Dien & Knapp, 2019, p. 114).

Imperial interest in spiritual matters often waxed and waned between interest in Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucian outlooks (Chang, 2007, p. 62). A prime example of this is Emperor *Ai*, who at age 24, died after ingesting a supposed elixir of immortality (Ho, 2000, p. 184). Buddhism experienced a significant revival at court under Emperor *Ai*, perhaps in part because of his interest in spiritual matters (Zürcher, 2007, p. 158). Continued upheaval around the country and displacement of citizens and monastics led to a comingling of Northern and Southern Buddhist influences, each reflecting the realities of their interactions with patrons and their varied interests. Of these interests, the study of 玄學, *Xuánxué* or "investigations of the dark," the philosophical inquiry into the mysterious working of the *Dao,* cannot be understated (Chai, 2021, p. 99). These practice perspectives are indicative of the varied Chinese interest in Buddhist offerings.

Daoist Questions in China Addressed by Buddhist Philosophy

Two strands of Daoist practice predominated during this period of the *Jin* dynasty. Interest generally bent toward practices seeking longevity and immortality, or else the more philosophical inquiry represented by the *Xuánxué* philosophers. Earlier Daoist works were almost exclusively associated with longevity practices. Many such texts further characterized the fruit of such practices as obtaining immortality at best, or spiritual government posts in the afterlife at the very least. Primary among these was the 抱樸子, *Bàopǔzǐ,* by 葛洪, *Gě Hóng*, a scholar of the Eastern *Jin* Dynasty, composed an

alchemical text primarily focused on practices for gaining immortality (Cheung et al., 1999, p. 80). Of note, *Gě Hóng*'s spiritual text, reflects the politics of the time. Unable to obtain appointments in the earthly plane due to the whims of the ruling class, the *Bàopǔzǐ,* delineates spiritual appointments available through spiritual attainments (Cheung et al., 1999, p. 86).

Interest in Buddhism diverged regionally, with those in the north displaying an interest in moral precepts and meditation, and southern Buddhism responding to an interest in metaphysical concerns (Chang, 2007, p. 68). The southern schools, operating outside of official imperial oversight, were freer to circulate Buddhist wisdom literature, specifically 般若波羅蜜, *hannya haramitsu*, *prajñāpāramitā* texts (Ch'en, 1964, p. 58). The mix of new Buddhist ontological literature entering China, comingled with an existing interest in *Xuánxué* streams of Daoist thought, took root within the minds of the Chinese aristocracy (Zürcher, 2007, p. 114). The similarities between the concepts of 道, *Dào* and the Buddhist concepts of emptiness within *Xuánxué* and the *prajñāpāramitā,* likely account for the initial interest by the aristocracy in both. The influx of established *prajñāpāramitā* Buddhist texts also likely contributed to the shift away from philosophical Daoism and account for the prevalence of Buddhism and religious Daoism in later centuries (A. Chan, 2019). The ability of *prajñāpāramitā* literature to answer may of the questions raised within *Xuánxué* further cemented Buddhism in the Chinese philosophical circles.

*Mantra* and *Dhāraṇī*

With the introduction of *prajñāpāramitā* texts and philosophical ideas also came aspects of esoteric Buddhism. As noted above, the Buddhist monk *Śrīmitra* introduced several new ideas and texts to China, including a translation of the Peacock King Sutra. This text is notable for the inclusion of *mantra* and *dhāraṇī.* These texts are notably often found within collections of texts and instructions promising practical benefit. As a result, their understanding is often conflated with incantatory practices. This is not to suggest that Buddhist monks did not engage in displays of seemingly miraculous events. In fact histories of the time are filled with stories of monks arriving from India capable of healing the sick and even more miraculous feats (Kieschnick, 1997, p. 84).

While the purpose of *mantra* and *dhāraṇī* extend beyond seemingly magical effects, the people of the time showed an interest in employing these methods for existing social needs. Among these were brining rain and seasonable weather (Kieschnick, 1997, p. 85). While their purpose was not limited to seemingly magical abilities, the descriptions of those monks, versed in *mantra* and *dhāraṇī*, were nearly entirely focused on such feats. The *Tang* Dynasty Buddhist patriarchs that compose the Chinese lineage of teachers who are understood to have transmitted the lineage that would become the Shingon school in Japan, are almost entirely described based on their fame for magical abilities (R. Sharf, 2005, p. 270). While the underlying Buddhist meditative and philosophical knowledge was known, they are almost universally praised for the practical benefits of their ritual activity (R. Sharf, 2005).

Mantra use for practical purposes nested easily with existing Chinese religious practices. This was especially true for rainmaking rituals which have a long history in

South Asia prior to the rise of Buddhism (Hidas, 2019, p. 11). These practices merged with Daoist practices in China, where rainmaking was also of interest to agriculturally dependent societies (Meinert, 2013, p. 40). Mantra practice for rainmaking became a core practice of state interest in Buddhism (Kieschnick, 1997, p. 77). One of the core texts used for this practice was the Peacock King Sutra, which, as observed above, appears in early Shingon practice for state protection in Japan (Kieschnick, 1997, p. 77).

Teachers of esoteric Buddhism in China, brought with them, from India, additional skills that proved useful to the state. Buddhist texts on astrology and divination were of special interest to the state. Indian Buddhist astrological texts such as the 宿曜経, *Sukuyōkyō*, address calendrical, divination, and related rituals, and became associated with esoteric Buddhism's fame in China (C. D. Orzech et al., 2011, p. 684). Skills in these areas would become a structured department of government in Japan and hasten interest in esoteric Buddhism there (C. D. Orzech et al., 2011, p. 686). These connections with state protection Buddhism will be explored further below.

C. The Establishment of the *Ritsuryō* State

Prince *Shotoku* established Buddhism as a moral code for government to support the harmoniousness he announces at the outset of his constitution. Such a concept was required both to unite disparate clans across the nation and integrate new systems of thought then being imported to the nation. Prince *Shotoku's* constitution announces the importation of Chinese style government ranks, and collaborative and inclusive leadership (Chib et al., 2011, p. 58). The ideals announced in Prince *Shotoku's* constitution advise ministers and officials to govern impartially and avoid self-interest.

While the Seventeen Articles announce ideals regarding society, the nation implemented concrete reforms in 603, with the adoption of the 冠位, *kani*, caps and ranks modeled on the Korean *Gogureyo* system (Brown, 1993, p. 177). These ideals soon confronted the reality of the entrenched aristocratic rule among members of the *Soga* clan (Jany, 2020, p. 377).

Prince *Shotoku's* Seventeen Article Constitution announces a centralized state government with power concentrated in the emperor and announcing Buddhism as the state religion. The emperor was both temporal leader and chief officiant over Shinto religious rites. The importation of Buddhism, and Prince *Shotoku's* pronouncement that it would be the state religion, seemingly supplanting existing forms of worship, created further tension between clan power and perceived concentration of power located with the emperor (Brown, 1993, p. 375). It may be that the religion itself was not the problem, but rather the hoped-for benefits. Early Buddhist rites in Japan were used for and directed at the same goals as had Shinto rites (Brown, 1993, p. 385). State sponsored Buddhism largely focused on practical benefits and avoidance of calamitous events. The tension between the shifting locus of power, and who would wield the perceived spiritual power of the new religion of Buddhism, culminated in the 乙巳の変, *Isshi*, incident (Brown, 1993, pp. 387–388). The primary clan with the potential to oppose the concentration of Buddhist spiritual and temporal power with the emperor, the *Soga* clan, was destroyed, paving the way for the *Taika* reform of 646 (Murray, 1993, p. 31).

Soga Interest in Buddhism

Accounts differ on what led members of the *Soga* clan to develop an interest in Buddhism. However, the *Nihongi* records that members of the *Soga* clan encountered

Buddhism in 584, and thereafter enshrined an image of *Miroku* Bodhisattva. Their faith was established after testing a Buddhist relic likely brought to Japan by three nuns. The *Nihongi* suggests that when presented with the Buddhist relic, *Soga no Mumako no Sukune* tested it by striking it with an iron hammer as it rested upon an anvil. The relic remained unscathed while the anvil and hammer were shattered. This began his faith and the establishment of Buddhism in Japan (*Nihongi*, 2005, p. 102). Thus, the beginnings of Buddhism in Japan were not associated with intellectual engagement with Buddhism, but rather practical or the miraculous observed benefits. That same beginning would prove unstable as a foundation, when not long after the nation experienced a pestilence, and those at court suggested that the preference of this foreign religion was the cause. Less than a year later the same statue and relic venerated by *Mumako no Sukune*, would be burnt and the remains deposited in a canal in modern day Osaka. Following this, the pestilence abated (*Nihongi*, 2005, p. 103).

The inclusion of this episode in the *Nihongi*, suggests its import extends beyond the recounting of a personal religious interest, but rather suggests its political significance. The *Soga* interest in Buddhism was likely a reflection of their connection with a broader pan-East Asian awareness of the cultural and religious influences outside of Japan (Walley, 2015, p. 110). Relating the story of the appearance of the relic and its discovered indestructibility reflects a typological narrative similar to that of Emperor *Wu's* acceptance of Buddhism during the *Liang* dynasty. (Walley, 2015, p. 113). Recounting the appearance of the relic, reflecting the story recorded regarding Emperor *Wu*, likely symbolizes the transmission of the Buddhist teaching to Japan.

<u>The Need for More</u>

Given the existence of an indigenous religious practice, what need had Japan for importing a new faith? In the context of the indigenous faith, Shinto, the emperor was not only divine, but also the leader of annual rites on behalf of the nation. What need had the spiritual and temporal leader for a new faith? Historically, power is accepted only once sacralized (Ooms, 2009, p. 28). The interest in one clan, or the emperor themselves, in adding an additional layer of sacralization, suggests this status was not generally agreed upon.

The Japanese indigenous religion, 神道, *Shintō* is rendered in the Chinese characters of 神, god, denoting the *kami*, and 道, way or path. The "way of the gods" is then the way of the *kami*, the indigenous spiritual forces of the Japanese archipelago. An interesting feature of *Shintō* is its lack of liturgy or teaching (Kitagawa, 2021, p. 149). While *Shintō* imparts guidance for social norms and clan affiliation through the study and recounting of mythological stories, it lacks an overt teaching or guidance for living (Kitagawa, 2021, p. 142). Its primary practice manifests as prayers to the *kami* to avert misfortune, disaster, and to ensure harvest and fertility. Therefore, one reason to look to Buddhism may be the more overt and efficacious rainmaking, and thereby harvest assurance role of the emperor. More formal liturgical Buddhist State Protection rituals would thereby buoy the Emperor's power (C. D. Orzech, 2002).

Prince Shotoku's 17 Article Constitution evidences the existence of Confucian thought within Japan. Confucian structures and ethical teachings underpinned Chinese dynastic rule. An important component of the Chinese ruling Confucian structure was the proper observance of rites, 禮, *Lǐ.* The concept of *Lǐ* extends beyond the mere performance of rites or rituals, and suggests a principle of putting things in order (W.

Chan, 1969, p. 260). Oversight of rites for ancestral spirts and ritual observances for the various needs of the nation were included in the Confucian structure to support Confucian social ideals. The ruler's virtue, in part demonstrated by their maintenance of rites, which by extension ensured proper order in society, secured for them the Mandate of Heaven (W. Chan, 1969, p. 7).

The Confucian system made the ruler's maintenance of virtue central to the securing the Mandate of Heaven (W. Chan, 1969, p. 8). As previously observed, the maintenance of rites was both an obligation of the virtuous ruler, and how rule was demonstrated. For a host of complex reasons, likely related to the way Confucian ideas were imported and utilized within the country, the elaborate Chinese state ritual apparatus was not implemented in Japan (Paramore, 2016, p. 695). Rather than the state structured rites of the Confucian model, Japan substituted indigenous ritual forms (Paramore, 2016, p. 698). The conception of Confucianism enshrined in the Japanese *ritsuryō* system, drew from especially religiously pluralistic aspects of Chinese history. As such the resulting system of state ritual did not position the emperor as the preeminent pivot for government operation and maintenance (Paramore, 2016, p. 704).

The Chinese system of rites outlined a system of ritual with the intent that the rituals be replicated nationally. The Japanese implementation of this concept reflected the indigenous conceptions of *kami* as largely local deities, limiting ritual or festival observances to largely local concerns (Paramore, 2016, p. 711). The implementation of the *ritsuryō* legal codes in Japan, furthermore, placed the Japanese emperor as transcending terrestrial law, rather than representing the ultimate legal authority, as in the Chinese model (Inoue, 2014, p. 42).

While a relatively weak ritual form of Confucianism became enshrined with the establishment of the *ritsuryō* state, Japan by contrast adopted a deeper sense of a State Protection Buddhism. The Chinese legal system's conception of Buddhism was one of state protection, and this understanding was adapted to the new *ritsuryō* state (Inoue, 2014, p. 44). That Buddhism was previously introduced to Japan, allowed for the continental conception of Buddhism as a component of the centralized state to permeate the creation of the *ritsuryō* state more easily in Japan.

*Onmyōdō*, the Japanese State, and Buddhist Resources

Government structures formalized with the *ritsuryō* system provide additional insight into the needs, operation, and interest in Buddhism of Japanese government at the time. Notably, this system formalized the bureaus of divination, astrology, calendrical studies, and time keeping. The medieval Japanese government required the reporting of auspicious and inauspicious omens to the central government. Of special interest was the understanding, enshrined within *ritsuryō* code, that omens arise in response to the actions of the ruler (Bender, 2013, p. 61). Initially omens were reported to the 治部省, *Jibushō* Ministry of Civil Administration. Later under Prince *Shotoku's* reign, that was changed to 陰陽寮, *Onmyōryō*, an office under the administration of the 中務省, *Nakatsukasa-shō*, Ministry of Central Affairs (Shinʾichirō et al., 2013, p. 22). The *Onmyōryō* included official positions for masters of 陰陽師, *onmyoji*, yin and yang, who performed duties as varied as divination, and the selection of sites for rituals. Additional scholars and officials were charged with development of calendars, astrology related omens, and official time keeping (Shinʾichirō et al., 2013, p. 22).

While institutionalized as a distinct government apparatus, the underlying divinatory, and calendrical systems were largely imported by, or flowed into Japan through, Buddhist sources (Shinʾichirō et al., 2013, p. 23). The *onmyoji* employed withing the *Onmyōryō*, were often recruited from the Buddhist clergy. The government forbade anyone outside of the *Onmyōryō* from engaging in divinatory activities, specifically members of the Buddhist clergy. As a result, monks with these skills were often commanded to return to lay life in order to work for the *Onmyōryō* (Shinʾichirō et al., 2013, p. 23). When inauspicious omens or portents were encountered, the *onmyoji* were called upon to conduct rites to address the issue. Such 厭, *en*, quelling rites, tended to suggest that the rites were relied upon to repress the source of the omen. At times the *Onmyōryō* would call upon Buddhist monks to conduct such rites (Bender, 2013, p. 62).

Buddhist Linkages with *Onmyōdō*

*Onmyōdō* provides both another avenue for considering state interest in Buddhism, and Buddhist service to the state. The interest in the services of *onmyoji* in all manner of activity related to astrological portents, omens, and responses to them are reflected onto state interest in Buddhism. Overtime the state became aware that Buddhist monks had responses to many of the omens that *onmyoji* were charged with responding to. Rites of exorcism were generally the domain of Buddhist monks. The chief experts in these areas were 密教, *mikkyō*, esoteric Buddhist practitioners (C. Orzech et al., 2010, p. 686). Kūkai is credited with the importation of texts and practices relevant to cementing this association (B. O. Ruppert, 2002, p. 145). The quality of esoteric Buddhist rituals to provide for spiritual and worldly benefits became especially relevant to New Year's rituals for the nation (C. D. Orzech et al., 2011, p. 686). Part of Kūkai's design with the

*Mishuhō* was a reorientation of the state's interest in Buddhism, away from a purely magical conception.

D. Kūkai's Redesign of State Protection

State Protection Buddhism in Japan

Kūkai was birthed into a Japan with a tradition of yearly Buddhist rituals. Many, such as the 維摩會, *Yuimaie*, also known as the *Yumakyō*, focused on the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sutra*, a text focused on the great display of wisdom and insight by the layman *Vimalakīrti*. This ritual, largely of 法相宗, *Hossō*, design, was initiated by members of the *Fujiwara* clan and performed in *Nara* at 興福寺, *Kofukuji* temple (Visser, 1928a, p. 443). Another significant yearly ritual system existed in *Nara*, performed by the Six *Nara* Schools, as part of the 御齋會, *Gosaie*. In this practice the 金光明最勝王經, *Konkōmyōkyō saishōō-kyō*, Sutra of Golden Light, was recited at the Imperial Palace. The 最勝會, Sa*ishō-e* was likewise performed in Nara, this time at 薬師寺, *Yakushiji* temple, and focused on the recitation of the Sutra of Golden Light. Collectively these three rituals were known as, 南京三會, *nankyō no sane*, the Three Festivals of the Southern Capital. Additionally, the 天台宗, *Tendai* school fostered additional ritual sutra recitation in Kyoto known as the 北京三會, *Hokkyō no sanne*, Three Festivals of the Northern Capital. These consisted of the 法華會, *Hokke-e*, performed at 圓宗寺, *Enshūji,* the 最勝會, *Saishō-e*, and the 大乘會, *Daijō-e* performed at 法勝寺, *Hosshōji* (Visser, 1928a, pp. 444–445). Existing State Protection Rituals utilized several different sutra

texts in largely the same manner: public recitation, lecture, and accompanying monastic assemblies.

Buddhist Philosophical Concepts Relevant to State Protection

Buddhist state protection practices and Shingon ritual rely on specific Buddhist philosophical concepts. In some cases, these concepts are often combined and interpreted in novel ways through a state protection or Shingon ritual lens. The *Mishuhō* offers an opportunity to consider Kūkai's religious theories, and new methods of practice in relation to these ideas. The following relevant concepts are explained below, the *cakravartin*, the bodhisattva, *tathāgata-garbha*, and *trikāya* doctrine. These ideas are developed in unique ways in the *Ninnōkyō* and *Konkōmyōkyō* sutras discussed later.

The *Cakravartin* Ideal

The Buddhist teaching includes a conception for an ideal ruler. Referred to as the *cakravartin*, 轉輪王, *zhuǎnlún* wáng, *tenrinō*, or wheel turning king (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 317). Such a monarch rules in accordance with the Buddhist teaching, and is distinguished by the wheel of divine power symbolizing their divine attributes (Lopez & Buswell, 2013, p. 163). The *cakravartin* obtains their royal position through exemplarily ethical conduct, and support of Buddhist monastics, which transforms them into this Buddhist ideal. The term is often synonymous with the Buddha, as their secular counterpart.

The Bodhisattva Ideal

Mahayana Buddhism upholds the ideal of the 菩薩, *bosatsu*, Bodhisattva as the archetype of spiritual development. The Bodhisattva is one who is progressing toward the goal of enlightenment. As part of that journey, they embrace a vision of spiritual

development that is inclusive of all others. That inclusivity is expanded into an understanding of interdependence such that the Bodhisattva sees their spiritual journey as connected with, and dependent upon, that of all other beings. Given that the Bodhisattva's aspirations include others, the Bodhisattva relies on such concepts as compassion, skillful means, and emptiness in support of their endeavor.

The Bodhisattva's realization is spurred through a quality known as *bodhicitta*, 菩提心, *pútíxīn, bodaishin*, an insight which arouses the inherent mind of enlightenment and aspiration toward Buddhahood (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 19). That *bodhicitta* operates both inwardly toward one's own enlightenment, and simultaneously outwardly for the purpose of assisting all other beings to the same goal. The recognition of the struggles of others in turn invigorates the Bodhisattva's resolve to work for the liberation of self and others (Anālayo, 2013, p. 276). Importantly, the esoteric Buddhist perspective is that the Bodhisattva's aspiration for enlightenment, is synonymous with the next concept for consideration, one's inherent mind of enlightenment, the *tathāgata-garbha* (Miyata et al., 2015, p. 111).

*Tathāgata-garbha*, Buddha Nature

Within the Mahayana Buddhist framework, awakening is not sought outside of oneself, rather it is something that is rediscovered. This concept is explained in a body of texts referred to as the *tathāgata-garbha* literature. In these texts the Buddha and Buddhist commenters, explain that latent within each person is a potentiality referred to as the 如來藏, *nyorai zō, tathāgata-garbha* (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 225). Much of Buddhist practice is predicated on this concept, which differs significantly from Western religious models which look outside of the individual for

salvation or realization. These texts explain that beings have mistaken their true nature, and that this *tathāgata-garbha,* is obscured. The famous restatement of this idea, as outlined in the 大乘起信論, *Daijō kishin ron*, Awakening of Faith, attributed to the Indian Monk, *Aśvaghoṣa*. The Awakening of Faith famously describes this idea as the one mind with two aspects, "依一心法. 有二種門" (Aśvaghoṣa, 2005, p. 11). The concept, generally stated as, 一心二門, *isshin nimon*, announces a mind composed of enlightened and unenlightened components or insights.

The Awakening of Faith also announces the concepts relevant to the ritual practices I will discuss below. In explaining the seeming dichotomy between the unenlightened mind, and the enlightened mind, the Awakening of Faith provides the simile of permeation. Here the mind is originally pure and is only permeated by defilement. A mind similarly permeated by the ultimate nature of things, *tathatā*, can be freed of ignorance, and realize awakening (Aśvaghoṣa, 2005, p. 56). *Tathatā* then is the ultimate truth undifferentiated, and synonymous, with both of the seemingly contradictory aspects of ignorance and awakening, and samsara and nirvana (Xing, 2018, p. 133). From this perspective, an individual can engage in practices that immerse themselves in *tathatā* and thereby experience gradual or sudden shifts. By the same logic, the realm of enlightenment, when permeated by *tathatā*, "will come to have a purifying influence" (Aśvaghoṣa, 2005, p. 56).

The Bodhisattva's spiritual inclusivity is given greatest expression in a corpus of Buddhist literature known as the *prajñāpāramitā*. *Prajñā,* meaning wisdom, specifically the wisdom of the enlightened being that sees ultimate reality, *tathatā*, or suchness. *Pāramitā*, refers to perfections, both the culmination of practices to arrive at the wisdom

of the Buddha, and the specific skills that are practiced or perfected in that quest (M. Abe, 1982, p. 46). Mahayana Buddhism contains an entire corpus of literature specifically focused on the explication of this concept, and development of these perfections.

Three Bodies of the Buddha

A further concept mentioned in the sutras under consideration is the 三身, *sanjin*, *trikāya* theory. In this Mahāyāna Buddhist conception, the enlightened consciousness of a Buddha is expressed in three ways. The 法身, *hosshin*, dharma body, is often described as the Buddha's truth body, or the true nature of reality, possessing none of the aspects of conditioned existence or awareness that sentient beings experience. The 報身, *hōshin*, reward body, is variously understood as that physical body of the Buddha perceived by sentient beings, and the body that experiences the reward of enlightenment after accomplishing the Bodhisattva path. The 化身, *keshin*, transformation body, is that which responds to people to teach, guide, of manifest in response to requests (Soothill, 1977, pp. 77, 142).

*Prajñāpāramitā* Literature Generally

The Sutra of Humane Kings is classified as part of the *prajñāpāramitā* literature within the corpus of Buddhist teachings. The *prajñāpāramitā* translates as "perfection of wisdom" or perfect wisdom. It suggests both the training required by the practitioner to realize the wisdom of the Buddha, and the Buddha's wisdom, encapsulated by the term *śūnyatā* (Buswell, 2013, p. 656). *Śūnyatā*, generally translated as "emptiness," refers to an insight or capability of the enlightened being to cognize the interconnectedness of all

phenomena, as contrasted with the unenlightened view that cognizes events, qualities, and phenomena as having a separate independent existence. Within the Mahayana Buddhist philosophical outlook, *śūnyatā* represents the lack of an intrinsic nature of all phenomena (Buswell, 2013, p. 872). The *prajñāpāramitā* literature is then aimed at addressing both the psychological factors described in Buddhist philosophy that lead away from enlightenment, and insight into the enlightened mind.

The *prajñāpāramitā* literature diverged from existing Buddhist attempts to describe and categorize phenomena and experience. Instead of attempting to observe phenomena coming into, and the going out of existence, the *prajñāpāramitā* postulated that this approach was misplaced as there was no production or destruction. Instead, *prajñāpāramitā* announced the nonproduction of phenomena, or stated differently, their mutual interdependence (Conze, 1978, p. 7). *The prajñāpāramitā* here announces a vision of existence where everything, everyone, and all phenomena, mental and physical are in a state of mutual dependence.

Philosophically, *prajñāpāramitā* provides a means to avoid the intellectual pitfalls of Buddhist philosophers taking the approach of cataloging phenomena into *dharmas*, or discreet elements. These were alternately conceived of as components from which all other phenomena were constructed, and the most concise phenomenal components of experience (Buswell, 2013, p. 242). *Prajñāpāramitā* avoided the debate over what may comprise the definitive set of dharmas, and their interplay to produce the commonly experienced existence. Further, *prajñāpāramitā* offers a means of addressing the potential disconnects between philosophy and practice, while connecting with concepts announced by the Mahayana. Specifically, the specific compassionate action announced by the

Mahayana, and how that compassionate action is implemented. The *prajñāpāramitā* shifts focus from the philosophical inquiry of cataloging and attempting to quantify the nature of existence and phenomena, to refocus on the practices outlined in the Mahayana (Conze, 1978, p. 7). Specifically, the application of skillful means, *upāya*, announced in the Lotus Sutra, is how the Bodhisattva's compassion is exercised and embodied.

The *prajñāpāramitā* literature concerns itself with the concept of *śūnyatā,* generally translated or rendered in English as "emptiness." As will be seen, this concept is better understood as interdependence. Relevant to esoteric Buddhist ritual, *śūnyatā* is expressed in terms of the many interrelated connections between the practitioner and the world around them. Insight into this teaching leads to the bodhisattva's compassion discussed above.

The Dialectic of *Prajñāpāramitā*

The content of *prajñāpāramitā* texts can seem paradoxical, as these texts are replete with statements that initially appear contradictory. Where the *prajñāpāramitā* announces something, it generally announces the negation of the same. This is perhaps best illustrated by the text of the 般若波羅蜜多心經, *Hannya haramitta shingyō*, *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya-sutra*, Heart Sutra, the shortest of the *prajñāpāramitā* texts, and recited daily in Buddhist practice. "Form is emptiness; emptiness is form" (Lopez, 1988, p. 19). With great economy of language, the Heart Sutra announces a type of radical embrace of seemingly opposing concepts. Rather than postulate a polarity of existence, sacred/profane, good/evil, or pure/impure, the *prajñāpāramitā* highlights that it is our attachment to these concepts that obstructs understanding that there is no actual separation. Adopting this nondual perspective is the core wisdom the *prajñāpāramitā*

intends for practitioners. The *prajñāpāramitā* takes the core Buddhist teaching of 縁起, *engi*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, co-dependent origination, and clarifies that emptiness applies to the Buddhist explanation of the arising of phenomena (M. Abe, 1983, p. 56).

The implications for this insight are the realization and apprehension of reality without attachment or projection. Conceptualizing a world that is interdependent, rather than one composed of separateness, is the core of *śūnyatā* announced in the *prajñāpāramitā* (Khalesi Moghaddam, 2018, p. 370). The perspective of the *prajñāpāramitā* furthers the overall Buddhist concept of introspection and analysis. Rather than seeking the blessing or grace of the divine, the Buddhist design is one of personal transformation. Moreover, the *prajñāpāramitā,* as will be explained below especially in Kūkai's conception, requires a method of understanding because its apprehension is only possible outside language and conceptualization (Khalesi Moghaddam, 2018, p. 370). The perspective the *prajñāpāramitā* is addressing is how we apprehend the world around us, as compared with the truth of that reality (Nhất Hạnh, 1992, p. 52). This dialectical approach of balancing seemingly opposite ideas, concepts, and imagery will be addressed further in the later discussions of Shingon ritual, and Buddhist psychology.

Locating *Prajñāpāramitā*

As a body of literature, the *prajñāpāramitā* represents an evolution of earlier ideas announced by the Buddha. As Buddhism spread from India into China, texts were often received either in a rather haphazard manner, or as the result of massive translation projects. During the fifth through eighth centuries, monks in China worked to create doctrinal classifications of the various sutra texts. These doctrinal taxonomies, 教相判釋

, *jiàoxiāng pànshì*, generally formulated by those writing commentarial literature on the sutras, attempted to order or classify texts around a variety of categories such as time or theme (Buswell, 2013, p. 385).

This taxonomy structure, generally referred to by the term 判教 *pànjiào*, provided Chinese Buddhists with a means to compare and analyze not only Buddhist texts, but Confucian, Daoist, and other philosophical ideas (Asakura, 2014, p. 453). Arguably the two most common classification methods focused on the relative profundity of teachings and their chronological order. Both systems provide a means to address or analyze the place of various sutras as they relate to various philosophical questions within Buddhism.

Famous systematizers include such notable Chinese monks and commentators as 玄奘 *XuánZàng*, 法雲 *FǎYún*, and 智顗, *Zhìyǐ* (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 602). *Zhìyǐ*, was the first to elaborate a completely new *pànjiào* system making a break with previous Indian systems of classification. Building on *FǎYún's* theories, *Zhìyǐ* developed the 五時八教, *wǔshí bājiào,* Five Periods and Eight Teachings. In the *wǔshí bājiào* schema, the Buddha's teachings are divided into five time periods and eight types of doctrine. The five periods correspond to years in the Buddha's life, during which various texts or classes of teachings were given.

*Zhìyǐ*'s classification became particularly influential and prototypical (Irons, 2008, p. 384). In this classification he divided the Buddha's teaching career into the first seven days after the Buddha's enlightenment, twelve years of teaching the *agamas*, eight years teaching transitional teachings straddling the Hinayana and Mahayana, twenty-two years during which the *prajñāpāramitā* teachings were explained, and the final eight years

wherein the Lotus Sutra and Nirvana Sutra were preached (Soothill, 1977, p. 119). The eight types of doctrine are divided into two categories, first being the four types of teachings given in accordance with the capacity of the audience, and the second being the four methods of instruction (Soothill, 1977, p. 37). While *Zhìyǐ's* formulation gained tremendous popularity in Japan through the influential 天台 *Tendai* school, this *pànjiào* system is highlighted here only to give context to the *Shingon* school's own taxonomy for the Buddhist teaching.

*Prajñāpāramitā* in Japan Generally

In Japan, *prajñāpāramitā* literature was utilized in a multitude of schools for the purpose of averting calamity. Texts used included the 大般若經, *Daihannyakyō*, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra,* or Large Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, which was both read, and used performatively for this purpose. Also, among the *prajñāpāramitā* texts for averting calamities was the 仁王經, *Ninnōkyō*, Sutra for Humane Kings. Furthermore, *prajñāpāramitā* texts were also rendered ichnographically into the mandalas of the Shingon school. (Conze, 1978, p. 27)

State Protection Texts

State protection practices in Eighth century Japan generally focused on three texts. These were known as the 鎮護國家三部經, *chingo kokka sanbukyō*, the Three Scriptures for Protecting the State (Visser, 1928b, p. 446). Included in this set of three were, the 法華經, *Hokkekyō*, Lotus Sutra, 仁王經, *Ninnōkyō*, Sutra of Humane Kings, and the 金光明經, *Konkōmyōkyō*, Sutra of Golden Light (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 3629).

Given that the Lotus Sutra does not primarily address state protection concerns, only the Sutra of Golden Light and Sutra of Humane Kings will be considered.

E. The Golden Light Sutra

The 金光明経, *Konkōmyōkyō, Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, Sutra of Golden Light, obtained early popularity in India due in large part to the promise that that the Four Great Kings, would ensure the continued governance and prosperity of the ruler who upholds the sutra (Rohlman, 2011, p. 147). Based on extant sources, the preaching of the Sutra of Golden Light was popular for this purpose as early as the first century (Rohlman, 2011, p. 151). The sutra likely became popular in China following the return of the monk *YiJing* from India when he completed a translation of the text in 703.

The Sutra of Golden Light represented the primary state protection text utilized in Japan, as early as 680 (Visser, 1928b, p. 14). Several translations from Sanskrit to Chinese exist. Two chapters from the text are of special importance to the idea of State Protection Buddhism, the chapter on the Four Great Kings who Protect the State,[1] and chapter 20, The Correct Theory for the King's Governing the Nation.[2] Various editions of the sutra exist in Sanskrit, Chinese, Khotanese, and Tibetan (Emmerick, 1970, p. x). Over the course of history, the chapters have been reordered as part of translations from Sanskrit.

The Golden Light Sutra includes two chapters relevant to the idea of Buddhism. The chapter on the Four Great Kings who Protect the State, and the chapter on the

[1] 四天王護國品第十二, T0665_.16.0427b19
[2] 王法正論品第二十, T0665_.16.0442a14

Instruction Concerning Divine Kings (Emmerick, 1970, p. v). The two chapters provide a theological and cosmological outline for the connection between the divine and the earthly order and provide direct instruction for the ruler.

Cosmology of the Golden Light Sutra

The two relevant chapters of the sutra establish a connection between the heavenly realms, beings residing therein, and those born as kings. The chapter of 四天王，*sìtiānwáng*, the Four Great Kings, introduce these four heavenly kings, who are the four external generals of the god Indra (Soothill, 1977, p. 173). Indra, 帝釋天, *Dìshìtiān*, *Taishaku-ten*, while a Vedic god, is king of the gods of the 三十三天, *sānshísān tiān*, *trāyastriṃśa*, heaven of the thirty-three, and can be found in Buddhist texts in various roles (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 311). The heaven of the thirty-three, is the second of the desire heavens (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 255). These Four Heavenly Kings, one for each of the cardinal directions, inhabits the first of the desire heavens, guarding Indra's heaven, and straddling the space between the physical realms inhabited by humanity, and the heavenly realms. In the Sutra of Golden Light, the role of the Four Heavenly Kings, evolve from their primary role guarding celestial rulers in the heavens from malevolent influences from lesser demi-gods, into providing protection to the terrestrial rulers. When read together the two chapters inform the logic of the other.

The sutra teaches that kings should commit to developing minds of peace and love, and not engage in harmful activities. By focusing on the mutual welfare of people in the kingdom the ruler obtains the numerous benefits outlined in the sutra. These include rebirth in the heavenly realms as a god, thereby increasing the number of gods in the

heavens (Emmerick, 1970, p. 29). This benefit connects with a cosmological component of the Chapter on the Instruction Concerning Divine Kings.

In the later, Chapter on the Instruction Concerning Divine Kings, the text explains why it refers to kings a "divine." Here an idea begun in the Chapter on the Four Great Kings, is completed. The Chapter on the Four Great Kings promises rebirth in the heavenly realms to kings. In the Chapter on the Instruction Concerning Divine Kings, we learn that kings are descended from the heavenly realms and obtain rebirth as kings due to their connection with the celestial kings of the *trāyastriṃśa* heavens (Emmerick, 1970, p. 58) .The sutra further announces that ensuring order in accordance with the principles announced in the sutra, is the purpose of the king's rule, such that beings in that kingdom may attain rebirth in the heavenly realms.

The Sutra's Instruction for Rulers

In the Chapter of the Four Great Kings, we are told that the Buddhas have prized the Sutra of Golden Light, and that it is esteemed by the gods. The text expresses the miraculous benefits of the sutra for aiding beings in a variety of ways, and nations including repelling "foreign armies." Included in the list of benefits is ending negative omens and portents (Emmerick, 1970, p. 23). This benefit was no doubt of interest to *Onmyōdō* interests as observed above. To obtain these benefits and the protection of the Four Heavenly Kings, the text instructs that the sutra be recited, such that the Four Heavenly Kings can hear it, which reportedly brings them joy. The text announces a series of interconnected relationships emanating from the recitation of the text, and adherence to its instructions. The first of these is that the terrestrial recitation of the sutra, induces the production of "prowess, strength and energy" on the part of the Four

Heavenly Kings. These attributes are then placed into service in defense of nations where the sutra is recited (Emmerick, 1970, p. 24). The sutra establishes a reciprocal relationship of a duty of worship, in exchange for heavenly blessings.

The first of these connections between humanity and the Four Heavenly Kings comes as the result of kings providing protection to monks and nuns who recite and uphold the sutra. To obtain the protection for the nation, the sutra explains that the ruler should, "give salvation…assistance, defense from all their enemies" for those monastics (Emmerick, 1970, p. 25). In return, the Four Heavenly Kings pledge support to the ruler. That support includes "salvation, assistance, defense, peace, welfare" to the nation. The sutra further establishes a reciprocal benefit system whereby the ruler who provides for the material benefit of their citizens, may gain the heavenly support for those materials needs of citizens as well.

Next, rulers who follow these instructions are assured fame for their virtue. Specifically, their virtue is demonstrated by sponsoring the recitation of the sutra. In turn, the Four Heavenly Kings' protection of those nations where the sutra is recited, lends support for the dissemination of the Buddhist teaching. Here the sutra unveils an additional set of interconnected dependencies. The longevity of the teaching is dependent on monks and nuns who preach the sutra, which obtains the protection for people and kingdom. The strength of the Four Heavenly Kings for their primary responsibility in safeguarding the heavenly kingdom, is magnified by the earthly recitation of the text. In return, the Four Heavenly Kings extend their protection to terrestrial kingdoms. The sutra announces that this benefit is evident by the lack of astrological portents. The sutra announces that the Four Heavenly Kings are exercise their authority in a just and

appropriate manner as the result of honoring the Buddhist teaching and community. By emulating this behavior human kings obtain the blessings of the heavenly kings. Similarly, by maintaining the Buddhist teaching and Buddhist community, the Four Heavenly Kings extend their "protection…assistance…defense, peace, [and] welfare" to the monastic and lay Buddhist community (Emmerick, 1970, p. 25-27).

The Benefits of the Sutra

The sutra outlines specifics regarding the protection given to terrestrial kingdoms. Protection is provided in the form of the supernatural intervention by the celestial armies commanded by the Four Heavenly Kings. These armies are presses into service to defend against hostile powers in the human realm. Of note, and in accordance with Buddhist teaching prohibiting killing, those armies defend by confusing the attackers, establishing obstacles and various obstructions, such that the hostile force cannot enter the protected kingdom (Emmerick, 1970, p. 27).

The sutra states that the king's purpose is demonstrating virtue and ensuring harmony by addressing behavior that could disrupt harmony in their societies. Reflecting the harmony in the heavenly realms, the king's responsibility is to ensure the just application of law in the kingdom. Addressing injustice ensures harmony in the kingdom and pleases the gods. Failing to address violations of law, and behavior that undermines harmony, leads to the destruction of the kingdom (Emmerick, 1970, p. 59). Here the sutra goes into detail regarding how such downfalls manifest. "If he overlooks an evil act, a king does not exercise his kingship according to the duty for which he was consecrated by the lords of the gods" (Emmerick, 1970, p. 61). The sutra is clear that such rule should be exercised in a neutral manner, exercising authority in accordance with the Buddhist

teaching. As such the king should remain impartial toward all in the realm, even at the cost of his life (Emmerick, 1970, p. 61).

F. The Sutra of Humane Kings

The Sutra of Humane Kings exists in Chinese translation in two versions. The earliest, 仁王般若波羅蜜經, *Rénwáng bōrě bōluómì jīng, Ninnō hanya haramitsu kyō*,[3] and a latter translation 仁王護國般若波羅蜜經 *Rénwáng hùguó bōrě bōluómì jīng*, *Ninnō gokoku hannya haramitsu kyō*.[4] The earlier version, translated into Chinese during the Later Qin dynasty (384-417) by the Buddhist monk 鳩摩羅什, *Kumarajū*, *Kumārajīva*, became influential with state protection practices (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 220). The second, later translation made by the Buddhist monk 不空金剛, *Bùkōng Jīngāng*, *Fukū Kongō*, *Amoghavajra*, which became influential in Chinese esoteric Buddhist practice (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 63). This is noteworthy as the lineage of practice represented by *Amoghavajra*, is later transmitted to Japan, where it is established as the Shingon school. While there are differences between the two translations, the differences are largely not relevant to this consideration, other than to note the inclusion of esoteric elements such as mantra. For simplicity, the sutra will be referred to by the shortened name, 仁王經 *Ninnōkyō*.

<u>Outline of the Sutra</u>

The *Ninnōkyō*, differs from the Sutra of Golden Light in several notable ways. First, the Sutra of Golden Light has numerous chapters dealing with a variety of subjects,

[3] T 245.8.825—834
[4] T 246.8.834—845

unrelated to the topic of state protection. The *Ninnōkyō*, but comparison provides a succinct explanation of the Buddhis teaching intended for rulers and state protection. The text begins by announcing the location of the sutra's preaching, which is 靈鷲山, *Grdhrakūtaparvata*, *Ryōjusen* ,Vulture Peak, a location where the Buddha taught the *prajñāpāramitā* literature and other notable and influential texts in East Asian Buddhism such as the Lotus Sutra (Buswell, 2013, p. 327).

Present for the teaching is King *Prasenajit*, to whom the Buddha explains that this teaching, the *Ninnōkyō*, is entrusted to the rulers of nations for the benefit of their kingdoms and their populace. Buddhist teachings are generally given in response to questions, and in the *Ninnōkyō,* the Buddha understands that the kings of nations desire to protect their states and responds by providing the teaching (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 215). State protection in the *Ninnōkyō,* is a more expansive concept than in the Sutra of Golden Light. The Buddha notes that "protection" in this teaching encompasses the protection and development of their individual spiritual attainments foremost. The spiritual practice explained therein follows the stages of the bodhisattva path, developing insight into *śūnyatā* as synonymous with the path (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 216). The Buddha begins the explanation of state protection by juxtaposing the seemingly contradictory concepts of worldly truth of common experience and ultimate truth of the enlightened insight. Here the Buddha is hinting at the breadth of the *Ninnōkyō,* which aims to transform the worldly aspiration of kings seeking to protect the nation, as having the potential for higher insight if transformed through insight into *prajñāpāramitā*. Mirroring the seemingly contradictory language of *prajñāpāramitā*, the Buddha states that there is "…neither pure, nor impure…" which King *Prasenajit* understands in the moment and requests from

the Buddha, instruction on how this insight can be taught to others (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 217).

In chapter three of the *Ninnōkyō* the Buddha provides the method by which kings can protect their state in the *prajñāpāramitā* context. The core teaching is the, 四忍, *sì rěn*, *shi nin*, four forbearances, or four kinds of patient endurance. At one level these are skills of fortitude, to overcome delusion, develop faith, remain flexible in following the path, and patient acceptance when contemplating the nonarising of *dharmas* (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 751). Forbearance for the nonarising of *dharmas* is the practitioner's ability to remain steadfast, and accept the true nature of reality, which is impermanence.

The Buddha explains that kings seeking to protect their states should focus on 布施, *bùshī, fuse*, giving or charity, also known as *dāna pāramitā* (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 228). *Dāna* in the Buddhist context means giving or charity generally (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 65). In the context of the *prajñāpāramitā* scriptures, it also refers to the ten stages of the Bodhisattva path, of which *dāna pāramitā*, the perfection of giving, is the first (Buswell, 2013, p. 624). In the language of the *prajñāpāramitā,* the Buddha then instructs kings to enter the Bodhisattva path themselves, as a means of safeguarding the state. For a ruler to practice giving, would suggest spiritual practice through the free giving of material without thought of gain. *Dāna* is explained in various ways in the Buddhist teaching. A common examination divides *dāna* into three types, giving of material wealth, giving the Buddhist teaching, and giving of fearlessness (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 258). *Dāna*, giving or generosity, is also conceptualized as the highest expression of enlightened wisdom expressed by

*prajñāpāramitā*. The *prajñāpāramitā* applied in the sense of, removing fear, is an apt skill for the king for securing the state (Nhất Hạnh, 1992, p. 50).

Cosmology of the Sutra

In the *Ninnōkyō,* the place of the king is transformed from that presented in the Sutra of Golden Light. Rather than only descended from the heavenly realms and being destined to return by virtue of the practice outlined in the text, the *Ninnōkyō* elevates kings to Bodhisattvas in training (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 235). King *Prasenajit* is revealed to be a bodhisattva who previously practiced with the Buddha in a previous incarnation. Having supported the Buddha's spiritual development, that role continues as a ruler protecting the nation through the practice, sharing, and safeguarding of the teaching. The sutra elevates kings from a cycle of heavenly affinity, to bodhisattvas in training who safeguard their nations through their own practice and realization (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 268).

The *Ninnōkyō* repeats the core teaching of *prajñāpāramitā* wisdom, likening it to the mother of all Buddhas, given that the insights of *prajñāpāramitā* are essential for entering the Bodhisattva path. "It is the birthplace of every distinctive [form of] merit and spiritual penetration" (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 252). Reflecting similar language in the Awakening of Faith, the permeation of wisdom capable of transforming individuals, is here described as, "One flower entered countless flowers and countless flowers entered one flower" (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 252).

The Method in the Sutra

As with many Mahayana Buddhist Sutras, readers or hearers are exhorted to read, recite, copy, and share the sutra with others (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 243). In addition, as

with the Sutra of Golden Light, the text encourages the making of offerings. These include flowers, incense, and invitations to Buddhist teachers to read, recite, and explain the text (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 246). The sutra adds a new means of practice. In chapter seven, Receiving and Keeping this Scripture, the *Ninnōkyō*, exhorts kings to make offerings to masters of the teaching. Kings are exhorted to treat such masters of the teaching as Buddhas and make offerings to them with that perspective in mind (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 256). This is a new angle of approach for state protection texts. The remainder of chapter seven explains the specific insights and attainments of such masters of the teaching, be they monk, nun, or layperson. The interaction between the master of the teaching and the ruler, produces in the teacher compassion and empathy for all beings. They obtain insight into the Buddhist teaching of impermanence. This insight into the teaching allows them to benefit people with abundance, peace, and joy. They excel at monastic harmony and utilize skillful means to teach. Finally, their spiritual practice allows them to transform beings in line with the *prajñāpāramitā* teachings (C. D. Orzech, 1998b).

The Text's Esoteric Elements

As observed above, the second translation of the sutra prepared by Amoghavajra contains additions not found in Kumarajiva's translation. Most notably, chapter seven includes a *dhāraṇī*. Like a mantra, a *dhāraṇī* expresses the intrinsic nature or character of a teaching (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 45). Its inclusion here suggests another method by which the teaching can be understood and can benefit others. While mantra and *dhāraṇī*, are generally considered to be beyond translation, the themes included therein can be outlined. The *dhāraṇī* here include such ideas as the

inexhaustibility of the Buddha's wisdom, the Buddha as an ocean of the true Dharma, the benefit to people of the Buddha's compassion, the benefit of hearing the teachings, and realization through the empowerment of the Buddhas. The *dhāraṇī* ends by expressing its power to end strife, doubts, and bring peace (Hatta, 1985, p. 246).

The Benefits of the Sutra

Beyond the benefits noted by the recitation of the *dhāraṇī*, the sutra provides a detailed list of the benefits of its recitation, copying, and teaching. The sutra announces that it is entrusted to kings, rather than monastics, due to their "august strength" capable of establishing the text (Orzech, 1998, pp. 265-266). As a result of establishing the sutra in their states, kings can overcome seven specific difficulties. These are, astrological portents of the sun and moon; portents of stars, comets, and planets; actual fires, and metaphorical fires among people; unseasonable weather; winds capable of obscuring the sun and moon; excessive heat leading to drought; and rebels and invasion (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 266).

While the *Konkōmyōkyō* focuses on the protection provided by the Four Heavenly Kings, the *Ninnōkyō* shifts the protection schema to five bodhisattvas. Instead of the Four Heavenly Kings, so named for their responsibilities for protection from the four cardinal directions, the *Ninnōkyō* names the great bodhisattvas of the five directions as protectors of the state. From the east, south, west, north, and center, following the mandala structure outlined in the 金剛頂経, *Kongōchōkyō*, *Vajraśekhara* Sūtra and 大日經 *Dainichikyō*, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* Sūtra. Here the cardinal directions are ascribed to the bodhisattvas representative of the five buddha families (Kiyota, 1968, p. 41). In place of the Four Heavenly Kings, the *Ninnōkyō* explains that protection is provided by the five

Bodhisattvas, Vajrapāṇi, Vajraratna, Vajratīkṣṇa, Vajrayakṣa, and Vajrapāramitā. This arrangement shows a discreet esoteric Buddhist framework that will be elaborated below.

Use of the Sutra

Prior to Kūkai's innovations around the *Ninnōkyō* with the advent of the *Mishuhō*, the sutra was primarily read or lectured upon in Japan. These were generally grand imperially sponsored gatherings where the text was recited (Visser, 1928b). In 729, Emperor *Shōmu* sponsored lectures on the text in the palace, and in various temples throughout the nation (Visser, 1928b, p. 177). Later these rites were expanded to include ceremonies focused on the text within various buildings of the palace complex, around the capital, and throughout the nation (Visser, 1928b, p. 178). The Buddhist images established for these rites, and the manner of making offerings to the text and at the ceremonies largely reflect the instructions in the *Ninnōkyō* (Visser, 1928b, p. 179). As will be explained later, Kūkai's proposal for the *Mishuhō*, dramatically departs from the scriptural source, relying instead on esoteric Buddhist texts for ritual design and intent.

G. Nara Period Schools and Textual Taxonomies

Buddhism was initially introduced to Japan from Korea. The manner of introduction led to a largely nonsectarian Buddhism during the *Nara* period. As part of the establishment of the new capital in *Nara*, the government established temples representative of the major schools of Buddhism in China at the time. Six schools were eventually established in *Nara* and came to be referred to as the 六宗 *rokushū*. These six represented the 三論宗 *sānlùn*, (Three Treatises), 法相宗 *fǎxiāng* (Vijñaptimātra, consciousness only), 華嚴宗 *huāyán* (Flower Ornament), 律 *lǜ* (Vinaya), 成實 *chéngshí*

(Satyasiddhi), and, 倶舎宗 *jùshè* (Abhidharma) lineages then extant in China and Korea (Soothill, 1977, p. 134). Each school brought with it a separate taxonomy of sutras or concentration upon a set of texts within the corpus of Buddhist teachings. While other schools existed in Japan during this time, they largely represented aspects of these six established scholarly schools sited in the new capital (Matsunaga, 1974, p. 27). Their place in the capital reflected their purpose within the *ritsuryō* government, that being to represent the scholastic aspect of their schools, to conduct rites for the protection of the nation, and act as an academic resource for members of the imperial family and aristocracy (Matsunaga, 1974, p. 28).

H. Conclusions

The *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō* have generally the same goal, protection of the state. Both texts explain that the protection is afforded to the state through the ruler's insight into the *dharma*, putting those teachings into practice, and the subsequent delight of various celestials and Buddhist deities who are thereby moved to exert their influence toward the benefit of the state. The texts announce different cosmological positioning for kings, and critically, from a Shingon perspective, different degrees of engagement with the teaching. The reason for these variations, and their meaning, from Kukai's Shingon perspective, will be explored below.

## Chapter II:

## Kūkai's Thinking Regarding the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō* Relative to the *Mishuhō*

While not an exhaustive survey, Kūkai's writings provide insights into his thinking regarding the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō*. Four areas will be considered in this section. First, the place of the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō* in Kūkai's writing generally. Kūkai's commentaries on both sutras will be examined. Kūkai's references to each sutra in his treatise the *Jujushinron* will be considered next. Finally, the ritual and visual elements of the *Mishuhō* will be analyzed for evidence of their textual basis, and ritual intent.

### A. The *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō* in the Kūkai's Writings Generally

As noted above the *Jūjūshinron* was the longest and most detailed treatment of the entirety of the Buddhist teaching by Kūkai. In the work he gives numerous examples from various sutras to illustrate the esoteric elements within seemingly exoteric texts. He also quotes from a variety of sutras to demonstrate the aspect of the Buddhist teaching that they address. Kūkai's quotes from the *Konkōmyōkyō and Ninnōkyō* within the *Jūjūshinron*. The relative placement of the texts within the ten stages that Kūkai categorizes the teaching into, affords additional insight into his thinking regarding the purpose of each text.

Kūkai cites a host of Buddhist, Confucian, and other Chinese classics throughout his writings. He refers to the *Konkōmyōkyō* in some of his earliest writings, including in his first, the 三教指帰 *Sangō Shiiki*, Indication of the Goals of the Three Teachings. In

the text Kūkai discusses the merits of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. The works cited therein largely omit any esoteric perspective, suggesting that at age 24, when he composed the work, he had not yet encountered the esoteric teaching (R. Abe, 1999, p. 95).

## B. Kukai's Commentaries on the *Konkōmyōkyō and Ninnōkyō*

Kūkai composed commentaries to both the *Konkōmyōkyō and Ninnōkyō.* His treatment of these texts individually is illustrative of his thinking regarding their esoteric elements. Further, when compared with the framework established in the *Jūjūshinron* they provide a guide to their relative value to Shingon ritual theory and structure.

### Kūkai's Commentary on the *Konkōmyōkyō*

In twelfth month of 813, Kūkai composed a commentary to the *Konkōmyōkyō.* The commentary was in response to a request from a monk set to lecture at the *Gosai-e* in the first month of 814 (Takagi, 2010, p. 247). In this short work, Kūkai prepared an essay explaining the esoteric aspects of the *Konkōmyōkyō*, entitled 金勝王經秘密伽陀, *Konshōō-kyō himitsu kada*, Secret Gathas on the *Suvarṇabhāsottama sūtra* (Takagi, 2010, p. 245). Kūkai's commentary reflects ideas from the Awakening of Faith and perspectives developed by *Amoghavajra*, that Buddhist teachings have spiritual and practical benefit, especially to the state (Takagi, 2010, p. 257). Later in this paper, the description of Shingon ritual practice for state protection acquired by Kūkai in China that reflect this dual benefit, is further explained. The first portion of the commentary discuss

the structure of the sutra, the importance of confession, the development of wisdom, and insight into the cycle of rebirth (Takagi, 2010, pp. 258–259). Kūkai goes on to discuss how the sutra expounds the core practice ideas of Mahayana Buddhism including, removing karmic hindrances, expressing joy, transferring merit, requesting the Buddha to remain in the world, raising *bodhicitta*, and how those practices reveal the three bodies of the Buddha (Takagi, 2010, pp. 259–260). Kūkai goes on to praise the Buddha's preaching of the sutra, mentioning the provisional terms used by the Buddha in the sutra to teach emptiness. Kūkai uses the mantra of the sutra to illustrate how it can be used to gain insight into the five *skandhas*, or aggregates, to which living beings cling, and thereby remain in the cycle of rebirth (Takagi, 2010, pp. 261–262).

The latter portion of Kūkai's analysis focuses on the Four Kings who protect the state as explained in the *Konkōmyōkyō.* Here Kūkai equates the Buddhist path to the path of leadership for a ruler. Kūkai notes that both paths require a mastery of mind, and that remembering the *Dharma* is as essential as remembering the people. The ruler perfects the teaching of the sutra through the mantras given therein. Through that practice the ruler comes to see that dealing with mental afflictions is the same as dealing with evil doers in society. Kūkai in effect, explains that the state's administration is a reflection of the ruler's mind (Takagi, 2010, pp. 261–266). This perspective on state protection likely reflects his view of the text's teaching perspective.

Kūkai's Commentary on the *Ninnōkyō*

Kūkai's commentary on the *Ninnōkyō* is divided into three sections (T.2200_.56.0827a13). In the first section of the commentary, Kūkai, distinguishes the

text as a *prajñāpāramitā* sutra, and therefore part of the second turning of the wheel of the dharma, as commonly distinguished in the *pànjiào* classification system. Kūkai compares the text to the three periods of the *Dharma* textual taxonomy, noting that it can be understood through the 三時, *sānshí* or, 三時教, *sānshí jiào*, three periods of teaching classification. In this understanding the *Ninnōkyō*, could be equated to the highest of the Buddha's teachings. The relative classification of the two texts will become apparent further in this discussion. Kūkai notes that the *Ninnōkyō* is an expedient teaching, as it represents or contains the teaching of the three kinds of 三般若, *sān bōrě*, *prajñā,* wisdom (T.2200_.56.0827a28). Those three being, wisdom of actual reality, contemplative wisdom, and wisdom of skillful means (Soothill, 1977, p. 75). These wisdoms can reveal 一实谛, *yī shí dì, tathatā*, suchness, or the true nature of things.

Kūkai recaps the Buddha's teaching in the *Ninnōkyō*, the celestial audience for the sutra, and their celebration of the teaching, to introduce one of the core teachings, that being the 四忍, *sì rěn*, four kinds of forbearance (T.2200_.56.0827a31). Kūkai notes that these insights, and the merit from these practices, are what avoid the seven calamities. The *sì rěn*, are those practices or attainments that allow access to the 三觀, *sānguân*, three contemplations (Soothill, 1977, p. 76). These contemplations are understood as the proper Mahayana insight into emptiness, between the extremes of misunderstanding relative truth, and extreme understandings of emptiness that can lead to nihilism.

In later commentaries mentioning the *Ninnōkyō*, Kūkai will provide additional explanation regarding the importance of the 四忍, *sì rěn*. The merit of practice and the insights of wisdom stand as a wall that protect the state against darkness. Given that it is

the wisdom insight from *prajñā*, it is the five bodhisattvas that protect the state in the *Ninnōkyō*. The insight and power of these bodhisattvas can eliminate untold hindrances from countless past lives. Kūkai, echoing the text of the *Ninnōkyō*, and a common formulation of Buddhist sutras, exhorts people to read, recite, explain, and make offerings to the text to secure these benefits.

In the second section of the commentary, Kūkai explains that the Buddha taught the *Ninnōkyō*, and provides an overview of the Buddhist teaching from the perspective of four preeminent philosophers and translators (T.2200_.56.0827b08). The first is that explained by the Buddhist translator *Dharmarakṣa*, who explained the Dharma in terms of the three baskets, *Tripitaka* (*vinaya*, *sutta*, and *abhidharma*) (T.2200_.56.0827b11). Second, the Dharma distinguished by *Kumārajīva*, who explained the teachings in terms of the *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *bodhisattva* vehicles (T.2200_.56.0827b11—b12). Third, is the division of the teaching explained by *Paramartha*, which includes the teaching of *tathāgatagarbha*, buddha nature (T.2200_.56.0827b12). Fourth, Kūkai lists the teachings explained by *Amoghavajra*, which include those teaching that became the Shingon school in Japan (T.2200_.56.0827b13). Kūkai's explanation continues to include the 三覺, *sānjué*, three kinds of enlightenment, and 四辯, *sìbiàn*, four abilities (T.2200_.56.0827b16). Here Kūkai clarifies that the practice is for oneself, others, and the development of one's inherent enlightenment through a method reminiscent of the 四忍, *sì rěn*, four forbearances and 三觀, *sānguân*, three contemplations mentioned earlier. Here the four abilities are how the practitioner obtains unobstructed knowledge of the teaching, unobstructed understanding and access to the teaching, unobstructed abilities in languages, and unobstructed ease in explaining the teaching (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 761).

Echoing the sutra's instruction, the nature of this insight or teaching is such that only the august power of the ruler can establish this *prajñāpāramitā* teaching in the land. Likewise, the ruler's reverence and respect for the teaching secures the nation (T.2200_.56.0827b16—b23).

In the third section of the commentary, Kūkai expounds on the reason for the teaching, with reference to its structure (T.2200_.56.0827b24). Here he highlights three means of understanding or seeing through delusion, with reference to the text in three ways. First, the basic points and summary of the text, second the title of the text, and third the passages of the text itself (T.2200_.56.0827b28—b29). A summary of the text explains that *prajñāpāramitā* is the teaching that protects the nation. By lecturing the sutra, the nation is protected by *Indra's* armies. Second, the explanation of the title, indicates that this is the Buddha's teaching for protecting the state. Here Kūkai explains the error of sentient beings' relationship to their environment, and how the wisdom, *prajñā*, of the Buddhas, provides the real protection for the nation. This wisdom insight is what averts calamities and protects the nation. Third, the text includes the exhortation to maintain, revere, and uphold the teachings, which secures the protection of the *Dharma* protectors (T.2200_.56.0827c01—c15).

Kukai's commentary is pointing toward the practice and cultivation of insight, as the protective method for the state, as opposed to an understanding of state projection that is overtly supernatural. The wisdom insight of *prajñāpāramitā* is that which corrects sentient being's relationship to the world, and averts the calamities discussed in the sutra. The ruler who gains this insight and can establish the teaching in their nations averts calamity.

C. Kūkai's References to the *Ninnōkyō* in the *Jūjūshinron*

Kūkai's *Jūjūshinron* is distinguished from his commentary on the *Konkōmyōkyō* in several ways. First, the *Jūjūshinron* is an effort to demonstrate the existence of esoteric elements in seemingly exoteric texts. He necessarily draws from well-known texts or those representatives of established Buddhist schools in Japan to make this case, both to appeal to those schools, and to distinguish *Mikkyō.* Second, the *Jūjūshinron* provides an ordering of texts based on the Buddhist practitioner's inner experience, or stated another way, the degree to which enlightened beings describe their experience of enlightenment. As such, the texts that Kūkai uses to illustrate points, make comparisons regarding how texts are utilized, and can provide some insight into Kūkai's thinking regarding those texts.

Kūkai largely does not make mention of the *Konkōmyōkyō* in the *Jūjūshinron.* However, he uses the *Ninnōkyō* extensively in section six of the *Jūjūshinron*, 他縁大乗心*, tā yuan dàshèng xīn*, the "Mahayana Mind concerned for others" (Jurkovic, 2006, p. 1232). As observed above, Kūkai discussed the philosophical positions and merits of Confucian, Daoist, and general Buddhist teachings in the 三教指帰 *Sangō Shiiki*, Indication of the Goals of the Three Teachings. The first five sections of the *Jūjūshinron* address, in order, Confucian, Daoist, and the Hinayana stages of the *śrāvaka* and *pratekyabuddha* paths. These are similarly reiterated in summary form in Kūkai's later shorter work, 秘蔵寶鑰 *Hizō hōyaku,* Jeweled Key to the Secret Treasury, which largely summarizes the *Jūjūshinron.* Here Kūkai equates insight into the five *skandas*, and meditation on the twelve links of dependent causation, with *Hinayana* practices (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 159).

Beginning with the sixth section of the *Jūjūshinron*, Kūkai begins an explanation of the Mahayana mind concerned with others. Here Kūkai shifts focus from practices focused solely on one's personal individual spiritual development, to the Bodhisattva perspective of seeing one's own practice as indelibly bound with that of others. As observed above, 菩提心, *bodaishin*, *bodhicitta*, is a foundational component of Mahayana Buddhism, and Shingon practice.

While the sixth section of the *Jūjūshinron* distinguishes the teaching of the 法相, *fǎxiàng*, *hossō*, school, Kūkai draws heavily from the *Ninnōkyō* for this discussion (Jurkovic, 2006, p. 1233). Here Kūkai provides an overview of the ten stages of the Bodhisattva path, but does not draw from the core texts of East Asian Yogācāra which generally include 十地經 *Jūji kyō*, *Daśabhūmika sūtra*, and the 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經, *Ryōga abatsutara hō kyō*, *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* (Lopez & Buswell, 2013, p. 1033). Instead, the Bodhisattva path is explained through the 華厳経, *Kegon Kyō*, *Avatamsaka Sutra*, and the *Ninnōkyō*. Kūkai uses the third section of the *Ninnōkyō*, The Bodhisattva Path, to illustrate and equate the Buddhist teaching relevant to the *Hossō* school's teaching.

Each of the ten stages of the Bodhisattva are examined by Kūkai, and are accompanied by passages from the *Ninnōkyō*, which describe the Boddhisattva path. In so doing, Kūkai provides a version of the Bodhisattva path that equates each stage with a corresponding heavenly stage or attainment, culminating with the practitioner achieving the third of the ten paramitas, which equate to the ten stages of the bodhisattva, 忍辱, *ninniku*, *kṣānti*, understood as patience or forbearance (Lopez & Buswell, 2013, p. 446).

As observed above, this quality of forbearance is a crucial quality for the ideal ruler described in the *Ninnōkyō*.

Kūkai's use of the *Ninnōkyō* here, references the 五忍, *gonin*, five types of patience or forbearance, mentioned at the outset of the chapter explaining the Bodhisattva path (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 233). This formulation of *kṣānti* is unique to the *Ninnōkyō*, and which the text explains, is the foundational practice for bodhisattvas, and the practice which is the result of past good actions (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 224). As noted above, this teaching is both entrusted to kings, and kings have their positions due to past good actions. The *gonin*, five type of forbearance formulation is a 別教, *bekkyō*, distinctive teaching. The 五時八教, *wǔshí bājiào,* Five Periods and Eight Teachings, taxonomy discussed above includes the *bekkyō* category. As previously observed, various Buddhist schools formulated their own taxonomy, or *pànjiào* systems. The *pànjiào* of the 華厳宗 *Kegon Shū*, Flower Ornament School, includes this *bekkyō* in its *pànjiào* system (M. Liu, 1981, p. 15). *Kūkai's* explanation of the bodhisattva path in the *Jūjūshinron* is combined with quotes from the *Kegon Kyō*. In Kūkai's *Jūjūshinron*, the teaching of *Kegon Kyō*, is placed at stage nine, just below the teaching of Shingon at stage ten (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 160). The *bekkyō* of the *gonin*, five types of patience or forbearance, mentioned in the *Ninnōkyō*, is a means of announcing that the *Ninnōkyō* is a one vehicle teaching, comparable to the *Kegon Kyō* (M. Liu, 1981, p. 17). These five forbearances are further transformed as a Bodhisattva lineage specifically for kings (C. D. Orzech, 2002, p. 66). Where the *Ninnōkyō* provides some overtly esoteric elements and is classified as a *prajñāpāramitā* text, the *Konkōmyōkyō* provides comparatively foundational Buddhist

insights such as teachings on the five skandhas and ethics. As will be explored below, Kūkai's textual taxonomy considers these aspects of texts in his system.

Kūkai's Conception of Buddhist of Texts, *Himitsu Mandara Jūjūshinron*

Kūkai provides an alternative ordering of texts based on his analysis of the Dharma through a Shingon lens. That ordering is announced in the longest of his works, the 秘密曼荼羅十住心論, *Himitsu Mandara jūjūshinron, The Abiding Ten Stages of Mind of the Secret Mandala (*hereinafter *Jūjūshinron)* (Buswell, 2013, p. 350). The *Jūjūshinron* can be understood in many ways, as an ordering of the various Buddhist teachings, as schools of thought, and as practice perspectives. Fundamentally, the text represents Kūkai's presentation of the Buddha's teaching through an esoteric lens. Rather than proclaiming the superiority of esoteric teachings over exoteric teachings, as it is often misunderstood, Kūkai is instead making a more nuanced distinction (Kūkai, 2004, p. 4).

Kūkai distinguishes between the various Buddhist teachings based on the specific aspect of the Buddha that provided the teaching. In his work, 辯顯密二教論, *Benkenmitsu nikyōron*, The Difference Between Exoteric and Esoteric, Kūkai explains the difference between teachings offered by the Buddha out of compassion for sentient beings, and the inner experience of the Buddha (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, pp. 151–157). Rather than a taxonomy based only on time or theme, Kūkai compares what aspect of the enlightened mind transmitted the teaching contained therein. In this structure, the teaching is divided into that expressed by the *Dharmakāya* Buddha, and that expressed by

*Nirmānakāya* Buddha (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 151). The 化身 *huashen*; *keshin*, *nirmānakāya*, is the emanation body of a Buddha, or that body, or form of the Buddha that appears to ordinary people (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 258). This body emanated from the *dharmakāya* out of compassion for sentient beings, to provide them with the teaching in a form they can understand. Generally, this represents teachings linguistically preserved in the sutras. The term is generally applied to the historical Shakyamuni Buddha (Buswell, 2013, p. 587). By contrast, the 法身, fǎshēn, *hosshin*, *Dharmakāya*, or dharma body, represents the Buddha unmanifested. In this aspect the Buddha is replete with the fully enlightened qualities of wisdom, compassion, various enlightened abilities, and the fullness of the teaching (Buswell, 2013, p. 246).

For Kūkai, the difference between esoteric and exoteric, and the reason for dividing the texts in this manner, is the degree of insight or access the text or teaching provides to the inner realization of enlightenment. For Kūkai this would include whether the practitioner can contact the teaching activity of the *Dharmakāya*. Where exoteric texts provide direct instruction regarding ethics, morality, and philosophical ideas, the esoteric texts are pointing to, and providing a method by which, the practitioner can grasp the inner realization of the Buddha. The exoteric teachings are those the Buddha taught based on the inclinations and capacities of the various people he encountered. The esoteric teaching by contrast reveals the inner experience through language in a separate set of texts (Takagi, 2010, p. 18). Kūkai provides an overview of the differences between exoteric and esoteric in his text, 辯顯密二教論, *Benkenmitsu nikyōron*, Distinguishing the Two Teachings of Exoteric and Esoteric. Here, Kūkai presents this idea writing, “The sermons of the *Tathagata* were delivered in accordance with the particular diseases in the

minds of his audience…The sermons thus adapted to the capacity of his listeners were in many cases provisional and seldom final" (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 154). Kūkai suggests that these provisional, exoteric teachings were given by the *Nirmānakāya* of the Buddha, that form the Buddha presents in order to teach normal people in the world (Buswell, 2013, p. 587). The *Dharmakāya* by contrast refers both to the entirety of the Buddha's teaching, and also the Buddha's wisdom (Buswell, 2013, p. 246). Kuaki writes that by contrast, the esoteric teachings contain the "innermost experience of the ultimate *Dharmakāya* Buddha" (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 157).

The core difference between these two sets of teachings is how they are accessed. The *Nirmānakāya* provides the teachings to sentient beings in a manner they can understand. To varying degrees of need and capacity these are expressed in the sutras. By contrast, sentient beings must utilize the Three Mysteries to access the teaching of the *Dharmakāya* (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 152). The Three Mysteries here refer to the actions of body, speech, and mind, of the *Dharmakāya* Buddha *Mahavairocana* (Miyata, 1998a, p. 21). Here Kūkai explains that the *Dharmakāya* Buddha has an inner experience of enlightenment that is free of the need to adapt the teaching to the listener and is free of the constraints and limitations of language.

As will be explained below, Kūkai is not ranking texts, rather he is ordering texts based on the degree to which they reveal either, the inner experience of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, or provide a method whereby the practitioner is provided instruction leading to that same inner experience. The textual taxonomy of the *Jūjūshinron* is therefore not a quantitative ordering, but rather a qualitative comparison. Texts are ordered and

compared not with the suggestion that one negates or supersedes another, but rather the access they provide to the experience of enlightenment.

*Prajñāpāramitā* Literature within the Shingon School

Kūkai provides additional textual taxonomy in the *Benkenmitsu nikyōron,* where he writes:

> Taken together, these [teachings] can be divided into five types. First, the sutras, second the vinaya, third, the abhidharma; fourth, the prajnaparamita; fifth, the dhāraṇī. These five storehouses instruct sentient beings, and it is for the purpose of their crossing over that this is taught. (White, 2005, p. 296).

Kūkai observes that the various categories of teachings appeal to different inclinations of practitioners. Those seeking a thorough understanding of the Mahayana and wishing "to remove themselves from the dichotomous state of clinging to the self or the dharma—for these, the *prajñāpāramitā* storehouse is expounded" (White, 2005, p. 297). If sentient beings have difficulty grasping the teachings or are obstructed by their past karma, the *dhāraṇī* method is provided. This dharma method allows the practitioner to "quickly attain liberation, such that they can enter into the *nirvana* of abrupt understanding…" (White, 2005, p. 298). Kūkai establishes the *prajñāpāramitā* as the gateway to understanding the nondual teaching of the Buddha. He also recognizes potential obstacles to Buddhist cultivation, thereby adding an additional practice perspective that overcomes these obstacles and offers a faster method to realization.

## D. Shingon Theory

Kūkai's *Jūjūshinron* provides the theoretical framework for the practice focus that primarily distinguishes the Shingon school from other schools of Buddhism. Kūkai's longest work developing this idea, the *Jūjūshinron,* explained that out of compassion the Buddha provided numerous teachings depending on the capacity of students. However, one who knows or practices with mantra and *dhāraṇī* can experience the insight of the Buddha (Dreitlein, 2023, p. 172).

In the *Jūjūshinron*, Kūkai, drawing from one of the foundational texts in Shingon, the 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經, *Dai Birushana jōbutsu jinben kaji kyō*, *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sūtra*, hereinafter *Dainichikyō*, equates the stages of the abodes of mind, with the then existing schools of Buddhism in Japan (Dreitlein, 2023, pp. 171–170). These stages are drawn directly from the sutra, wherein it is said that the mantra path is enumerated such that the practitioner may progress through all the stages of the teaching in a single lifetime (Giebel, 2005, p. 4). As the sutra explains early on, enlightenment is sought in one's own mind, because the nature of mind is originally pure (Giebel, 2005, p. 6). The method is the 三密, *sanmitsu*, Three Mysteries practice, whereby the practitioners' actions of body, speech, and mind, are united in ritual meditation with the activities of body, speech, and mind, of the buddha, bodhisattva, or object of meditation (Payne, 2018, p. 12). A benefit of this practice is the purported speed of realization, when compared with other Buddhist practice traditions (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 225).

Mantra and *Dhāraṇī* in Shingon

The practice of mantra and *dhāraṇī* go beyond reciting a verbal formula. As part of Kūkai's introduction of the Shingon teachings to Japan, he made this clear in several works explaining this newly imported school of thought. As observed above, the commandment to kings was to practice, *dāna pāramitā,* a sort of wise radical giving, the first state of the bodhisattva path (White, 2005, p. 429). Kūkai's elaborated on this further in his text 三昧耶戒序, *Sanmayakai jo*, the Introduction to the Samaya Commitments. In this text, Kūkai explains a practice both preliminary and foundation for Shingon ritual practice. Giving, *dāna pāramitā,* is the giving of the teaching for the benefit of beings. As such it is a compassionate action, compassion being the basis of the Buddhist practice. The underlying theory of *bodhicitta* in Kūkai's conception is working to see sentient beings "exactly as one's own body" (Dreitlein, 2015, p. 205). Kūkai's practice perspective is elevating the bodhicitta inherent in *dāna pāramitā*, into a practice method.

Shingon Ritual Components: Visual and Material

In many ways, the culmination of Kūkai's religious thought and work is the ritual based on the Sutra of Human Kings, the *Mishuhō*. Initiated near the end of his life, the *Mishuhō*, announces Kūkai's state protection theories. In December of 834, Kūkai sent a letter to the court seeking permission to initiate a new ritual on behalf of the nation (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 59). After contrasting the exoteric and esoteric teachings, Kūkai announces in the letter that the "esoteric ritual of mystic formulas, like concoctions of medicine used, is ingested to overcome illness…" The current recitation of the Sutra of Humane Kings is insufficient because "it is [merely] read and its meaning is emptily

discussed." Kūkai seeks to supplement the *Misaie* practice, with a ritual in the palace that would include "lining up images of deities, setting up implements for worship, and reciting mantras" (B. D. Ruppert, 2000a, pp. 103–104). This outline of the ritual is Kūkai announcing the creation of a ritual space, for the purpose of conferring upon the emperor the experience obtained through the practice of the three mysteries.

"The many postures and the many mudras [depicted in those diagrams and paintings] arise from the universal compassion [of the *Dharmakāya*]. Through a single glimpse [of a mandala], Buddhahood is attained" (Takagi, 2010, p. 12). Kūkai's petition to the court contrasting the then existing practices around the Sutra of Humane Kings, with the ritual practice he proposed, suggests the introduction of an entirely new means of engaging with the teaching. Kūkai announces the transformative quality of the arranged ritual space for the first time soon after his own experience with it. "Their limitless virtues and brilliant light were a return to the ancient appearance of the secret-adorned world. By looking at or prostrating to any one of them, wrongdoings are eradicated and merits accumulated" (Takagi, 2010, p. 12). Kūkai's first encounter with this transformative method was with his dharma transmission, 伝法灌頂, *denpō kanjō*, *abhiṣeka* (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 45). 灌頂, *Kanjō*, is derived from the Sanskrit, *abhiṣeka*, and suggests the sprinkling of water, or consecration (Vidyalankar, 2002, p. 26). As part of the *denpō kanjō* ritual, water from five vases is poured over the head of the recipient, symbolizing the five kinds of wisdom of *Mahavairocana* Buddha (Watanabe, 2008, p. 231).

Seeing and viewing the images arranged is one means of practice and an approach to understanding the Buddhist teaching. An extension of the general idea of 觀 *kan*,

meaning generally to see, view, or observe, Buddhist practices can substitute objects of meditation to challenge the practitioner's ingrained viewpoints. Religious imagery in the Shingon context, is often combined with , 観想 *kansō*, visualization practice (Bogel, 2009, p. 190). Such visualization practices involve the ritual identification of the practitioner with the object of meditation, oftentimes a Buddha, Bodhisattva, or concept. The *kansō* is generally a guided contemplation upon the deity and ritual space wherein the practitioner combines specific mudras and mantras (R. H. Sharf, 2003, p. 60).

Space, Theory, Practice, and Identification

Shingon ritual practice is a mosaic of art, interweaving connections between texts, oral instruction, and correspondences with physical postures and mantras. Meanings and symbolism fold back upon themselves in layers often creating new correspondences with aspects of mind and actions of deities. Practitioners engage in merging identities outside, within, and surrounding themselves, through methods aligned with the philosophy outlined in Buddhist sutras. Understanding components of the *Mishuhō* require some analysis of these various aspects.

The Petition for the Ritual

The specifics of the *Mishuhō* are largely known only to the officiants. However, aspects of the ritual are known, and some aspects can be deduced from the arrangement of the ritual space and Kūkai's own writings. Kūkai's rationale for the ritual that would become the *Mishuhō,* is understood to be based on rituals he observed while in China (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 56). In his petition for the establishment of the ritual Kūkai observes that the state protection rituals then existing focused only on the exoteric

practice of reciting the sutras (空海, 1968, pp. 518–519). He elaborates further that the ritual he proposes includes esoteric elements such as the arrangement of statuary and display of mandalas. Kūkai refers to several texts in his petition to the court for the initiation of the ritual, each for slightly different aspects of the protection of the state. Included among these are the *Ninnōkyō*, specifically the *Ninnō hanya haramitsu kyō*. Kūkai goes on to write that the the ritual was given to him by his teacher *Huiguo* in China, but that he had not yet had the opportunity to perform the ritual in Japan (Yamamoto, 1993, p. 392).

The rituals based on the *Ninnōkyō* used in China, established a model whereby the aspiration for enlightenment and the practical benefits for the nation were interwoven (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 175). In this model, which mirrors the text, the ritual benefits the state and sovereign, which in turn supports the *Dharma* and the practitioner's spiritual aspirations. Reference to the Chinese models for these rituals is retained in Japanese ritual manuals within the Shingon school (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 176).

Kūkai submitted a petition to the court to introduce this new ritual, 奉為國家請修法表, Request for a Services to Pray for the Wellbeing of the Nation (Vol. 3 空海 1978, p. 453). In the petition, Kūkai lists several texts that would comprise the proposed new ritual. Three texts are specifically mentioned in the petition, the 仁王經, *Ninnōkyō,* Sutra for Human Kings, the 守護國界主經, *Shugo kokkaishu darani kyō*, Dhāraṇīs for Safeguarding the Nation, the Realm and Rulers, and the 佛母明王經, *Butsumo myoo kyō,* which is a reference to the 佛母大孔雀明王經, *Butsumo daikujaku myoo kyō, Buddha Mother Great Peackock Vidyaraja Sutra*. As was previously mentioned,

practices associated with *Daikujaku Myōō*, the Peacock King, have a long history related to state protection and rainmaking. These same texts are listed in Kūkai's 請來目錄 *Shōrai mokuroku*, List of Newly Imported Items (空海, 1978, p. 69). Kūkai submitted this petition to the emperor in 804 following his early return from China (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 140). The texts listed by Kūkai in the *Shōrai mokuroku*, are those not previously existing in Japan prior to Kūkai's importation.

The ritual space designed by Kūkai, and his own writings, provide additional guidance regarding the ritual design and purpose (Mack, 2008, p. 85). In modern times, the ritual space of the *Mishuo*, is viewable following the completion of the seven-day ritual. Included in the ritual space are the two mandalas of Shingon, 胎藏界曼荼羅, *Taizōkai* Mandala, and 金剛界曼荼羅, *Kongōkai* Mandala. The ritual performance alternates by year with either the *Taizōkai* or *Kongōkai*, as the focus of the ritual (Shōun, 1935, p. 261). Also included in the ritual space are *Goma* fire ritual offering altars, images of the 五大明王, *Godai Myōō*, Five *Vidyārājas*, and as scroll depicting the 孔雀明王, *Kujaku Myōō, Mahāmāyūrī Vidyārājñī*. In addition, the hall is adorned with scroll of the 十二天, *jūni ten*, Twelves *Devas*, commonly found in *Shingon* practice (Mack, 2008, pp. 86–87). By comparison, the 御齋會, *Gosaie*, generally enshrined a different arrangement of statuary, including the 四天王, *Shitennō*, Four Heavenly Kings (Mack, 2008, p. 87). Additional ritual elements and components comprise the *Mishuhō*, including the 息災護摩, *Sokusai goma*, *Goma* for averting calamities (Payne, 2009, p. 425).

The 仁王般若波羅蜜經, *Ninnō hanya haramitsu kyō*, is included in Kūkai's 御請来目錄 *Shorai mokuroku*, Memorial Presenting a List of Newly Imported Sutras and

Others Items (空海 & Kūkai, 3). Evidence of additional ritual components are mentioned by Kūkai in the petition, which can be found ichnographically in the *Mishuhō*, specifically *Kujaku Myōō* (Mack, 2008, p. 88). The ritual has numerous components and officiants, as can be observed by the seating platforms before the numerous altars inside the hall, and space for those reciting sutras during the performance of the ritual (哲雄, 1985, p. 377). The ritual was first performed with Kūkai as the chief officiant, with 14 co-officiants, and 14 novices in attendance (Shōun, 1935, p. 260).

The Ritual Space

> The scale of a ritual can be judged by the number of practitioners, from one up to twenty or thirty, and by the number of altar platforms (dan), each with its complicated array of ritual implements for specific purposes. (Yamasaki, 1988a, p. 152)

The *Mishuhō* is currently performed in the 灌頂院, *Kanjo-in* hall, on the grounds of 東寺 *Tōji* temple in Kyoto. Each day during the seven days the ritual is performed, the chief officiant, additional officiants, and assistants process from the 本坊 *Hombo*, Abbot's Quarters, to the *Kanjo-in* hall. The chief officiant leads the procession along with the relic stupa containing relics of the Buddha brought back from China by Kūkai. A second assistant carries the robe of the emperor which is present for each day of the ritual. The officiants process into the *Kanjo-in* whereupon the gates are close to the public. On the final day of the ritual, some members of the public, generally clergy, and temple supporters, are allowed to tour the ritual space. These and the following observations come from my own tour of the ritual space in January 2023.

Just outside the main ritual space, there is a raised platform for assistants, presumably the space from which sutras are recited during the ritual. Inside the hall

proper, the space is divided into an inner and outer chamber. In this outer chamber on the west wall are hung the portraits of the 真言八祖, *Shingon Hasso,* eight patriarchs of the Shingon lineage. On the east wall are scrolls denoting the 十二天. *jūni ten*, 12 *Devas*. The placement of the various altars is denoted in the figure three below. In the southwest corner is one of two *goma* altars. The second is in the northwest corner. In the northeast corner is an altar dedicated to the deity 聖天, *Shoten*.

The inner court of the hall contains three seats. One officiant is seated facing the scrolls of the *Godai Myōō*, each with a small offering table prepared before them. On the western wall the *Kongōkai* mandala is displayed. The *Taizōkai* mandala is displayed on the eastern wall. During the January 2023 performance of the *Mishuhō*, the relic stupa was placed on the altar before the *Taizōkai* mandala. The box containing the emperors robe was placed before the *Kongōkai* Mandala.

Figure 1. *Mishuhō* Officiants.

*Chief officiant for the Mishuhō, and attendants carrying the relic stupa, and robes of the emperor. (Photo by author)*

Figure 2. Gates of *Kanjo-in*.

*Officiants entering Kanjo-in to begin the ritual practice. (Photo by author)*

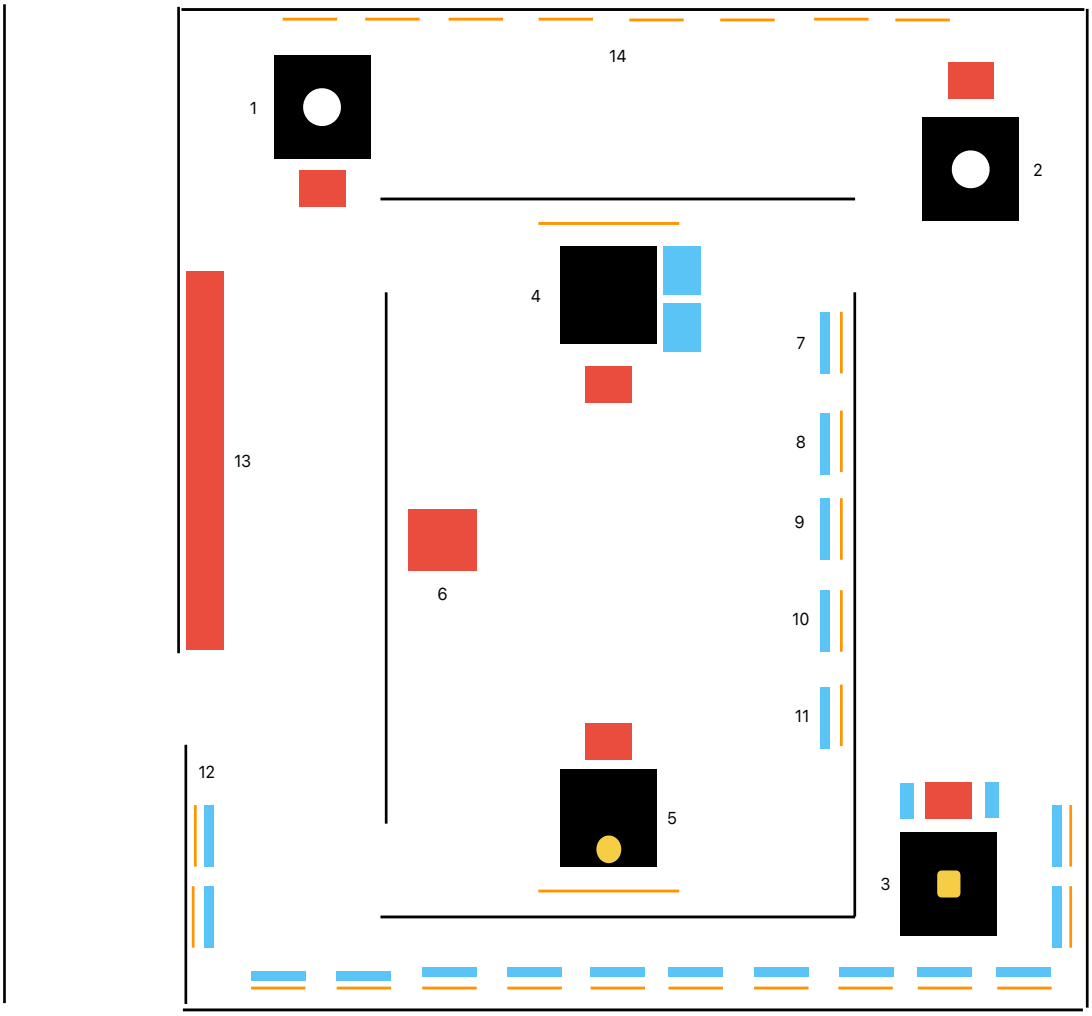


Figure 3. *Mishuhō* Ritual Space

*Diagram of the ritual space inside Kanjo-in where the Mishuhō is performed. (Diagram based on authors observation). Ritual altars are depicted in black. The* goma *hearths in white, stupa and image enclosers in gold. Seating platforms are depicted by red require or wide rectangles. Offerings tables are depicted in blue. Handing scrolls or mandalas and deity images are depicted by red lines.*

1. 息災 護摩壇 *Sokusai Goma* Altar (altar for preventing calamity, avoidance of misfortune, and alleviating suffering)
2. 増益護摩壇 *Zoyaku Goma* Altar (altar for increasing prosperity, good fortune, and political power)

3. Altar to 聖天 *Shoten*, also known as 歡喜天, *Kangiten*, an esoteric form of *Gaṇeśa*
4. Ritual altar facing *Taizōkai* Mandala, with the emperors robe
5. Ritual altar facing *Kongōkai* Mandala, with relic stupa
6. Seat for attendant who will make offerings to the *Godai Myōō*
7. Hanging scrolls of the *Godai Myōō*: 軍荼利明王 *Gundari Myōō*
8. Hanging scrolls of the *Godai Myōō*: 大威德明王 *Daiitoku Myōō*
9. Hanging scrolls of the *Godai Myōō*: 不動明王 *Fudō myōō*
10. Hanging scrolls of the *Godai Myōō*: 金剛夜叉明王 *Kongō Yaksha Myōō*
11. Hanging scrolls of the *Godai Myōō*: 降三世明王, *Gōzanze Myōō*
12. Hanging scrolls of the 十二天. *Jūni ten* 12 devas: *Brahmā/Bonten*, *Indra/Taishakuten* 帝釋天梵天; *Pṛthivī/Jiten* 地天; *Candra/Gatten* 月天; *Āditya/Nitten* 日天; *Agni/Katen* 火天; *Yama/Enmaten* 焰摩天; *Raksasa/Rasetuten* 羅刹天; *Varuṇa/Suiten* 水; *Vāyu/Futen* 風天; *Vaiśravaṇa/Bishamonten* 毘沙門, and *Mahêśvara/Ishnaten* 伊舍那天.
13. Raised platform for additional officiants, ostensibly the location from which the sutra is recited.
14. Portraits of the 真言八祖, *Shingon Hasso*, Eight patriarchs of Shingon lineage

<u>The *Godai Myōō*</u>

As observed above, the arrangement of the hall in which the *Mishuhō* is performed offers additional direction regarding the textual foundation for the ritual. There are multiple officiants, but the raised dais for the one of the officiants faces the scrolls of the *Godai Myōō.* The presence of the *Godai Myōō* further suggest the ritual design common to Shingon rituals based on the 金剛頂經 *Kongōchōkyō*, *Vajraśekhara-sūtra*, and used here for the purpose of subduing various obstructions (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 178). The *Godai Myōō* correspond to the five directional bodhisattvas mentioned in the *Ninnōkyō* who are said to protect the state (Mack, 2008, p. 88). As previously above, the sutra lists *Vajrapāṇi*, *Vajraratna*, *Vajratīkṣṇa*, *Vajrayakṣa*, *Vajrapāramitā*, as the Bodhisattvas who protect the state wherein the sovereign establishes the *Dharma* and protects the Buddhist teaching and Buddhist clergy (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 268). While the *Ninnōkyō* features the Five Bodhisattvas, the 仁王念誦儀軌 *Ninnōkyō nenju giki*

ritual manual upon which the *Mishuhō* is based, feature the *Godai Myōō* (Bogel, 2009, p. 319). The *Ninnōkyō nenju giki* further explain that the Five Bodhisattvas have fierce forms that equate to the *Godai Myōō.* Each equate to one of the Five Bodhisattvas mentioned in the sutra. The correspondence between the *Godai Myōō* and the Five Bodhisattvas of the *Ninnōky* is found in ritual commentary composed by *Amoghavajra*. In 新譯仁王般若經陀羅尼念誦儀軌序, *Xīnyì rénwáng bōrě jīng tuóluóní niànsòng yíguǐ xù*, Commentary on the *Dhāraṇī* Practice of the Human Kings *Prajnaparamita* Sutra, *Amoghavajra* highlights the work of the Five Bodhisattvas in protecting the nation (T0994_.19.0513c24). Early in the text, *Amoghavajra* refers to one of 三輪身, *sānlúnshēn*, the three cakra-bodies of a Buddha or Bodhisattva (T0994._19.0154a27). The 三輪身 *sānlúnshēn* refer to the concept that *Mahvairocana* manifests in several ways to teach and guide living beings (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 669). These manifestations take one of three forms, the 自性輪身, *zìxìng lúnshēn*, *cakra* body of intrinsic nature, 正法輪身, *zhèngfǎ lún shēn*, *cakra* of the true dharma, and 教令輪身, *jiāolìng lún shēn*, *cakra* body of instruction and command.

These three concepts are the esoteric counterpart of the theory of the three bodies of the Buddha discussed above (R. Sharf, 2005, p. 270). In this formulation, the 教令輪身, *jiāolìng lún shēn,* refer to the 明王, *myōō*, who manifest in wrathful forms to remove, obstacles to the practice, obstacles within the practitioner, and encourage continued practice in the face of those obstacles. One aspect of this formulation of the *myōō,* is their role in removing obstacles, specifically demonic forces. Here we find a mirroring of the action of the Five Bodhisattvas mentioned in the *Ninnōkyō*.

<u>Ritual Commentaries</u>

As explained above the Five Bodhisattvas mentioned in the *Ninnōkyō* correspond to the *Godai Myōō*. This correspondence is further elaborated in 次第, *shidai*, ritual manuals of the Shingon school. Ritual manuals are generally accompanied by oral explanation, which are sometimes recorded (Miyata, 1998b, p. 5). Recorded oral transmission or explanation are generally contained in 儀軌, *giki*, from the Sanskrit, *vidhi*, referring to the specific use of ritual elements and instruction (Miyata, 1998b, p. 2). *Giki* are often greatly abbreviated documents that include ritual instruction, which is accompanied by oral transmission. They are written in such a way that presume a specific training and background knowledge in ritual theory and performance (R. H. Sharf, 2003).

The correspondences between the *Godai Myōō* and the Five Bodhisattvas that protect the state in the *Ninnōky* are contained in the Shingon *Giki* (上田, 2002, p. 195). Understanding that the *Giki* were accompanied by oral instruction, the written portion is brief, providing references to relevant rituals. While the specific instructions for their visualization and transformation from their Bodhisattva forms to their form as *Myōō* are likely part of the oral transmission within the lineage, the general correspondence is recorded in the transmitted *Giki* of the lineage.

Table 1. Correspondences between Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and *Myōō*

| Buddha | Bodhisattva | 教令輪身, *Jiāolìng lún shēn*, *cakra* body of command |
|---|---|---|
| 大日<br>Mahāvairocana | 般若波羅蜜多菩薩<br>*Hannya haramitta bosatsu*<br>Prajñāpāramitā Bodhisattva | 不動明王<br>*Fudō Myōō* |
| 阿閦佛<br>Akshobhya | 金剛薩埵菩薩<br>*Kongōsatta Bosatsu*<br>Vajrasattva Bodhisattva | 降三世明王<br>*Gōzanze Myōō* |
| 寶生如來<br>Ratnasambhava | 金剛藏菩薩<br>*Kongōzō Bosatsu*<br>Vajragarbha Bodhisattva | 軍荼利明王<br>*Gundari Myōō* |
| 阿弥陀佛<br>Amitāyus | 文殊菩薩<br>*Monju Bosatsu*<br>Manjusri Bodhisattva | 大威德明王<br>*Daiitoku Myōō* |
| 不空成就佛<br>Amoghasiddhi | 金剛業<br>*Kongōgō Bosatsu*<br>Vajrakarma Bodhisattva | 金剛夜叉明王<br>*Kongō Yaksha Myōō* |

*Table of correspondences based on oral transmission within the Shingon tradition. (上田, 2002, p. 195)*

In this ordering, the wisdom and insight of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is personified through Bodhisattvas (Lopez & Buswell, 2013, p. 657). Their specific activites in certain aspects are transmuted into *Myōō*. The ritual arrangement of *Godai Myōō* was unknown prior to texts and ritual knowledge imported by Kūkai (Bogel, 2009, p. 318). A similar arrangement is visible in the altar design of the main hall of *Tōji* designed by Kūkai (Bogel, 2009, p. 319).

Karma Mandala

> At present, for the lecture offered on the *Victorious Kings Sūtra*, only the text is read and the contents explained. However, images have not been painted, the altar built, or a ritual performed according to the doctrine ... I request permission that hereafter, wholly according to the doctrine of the scriptures, the scriptures may be read for a period of seven days, twenty-one senior monks and twenty-one junior monks selected, an independent

> room adorned, images of the various deities arrayed, offering-implements arranged, and *shingon* intoned. (Mack, 2008, p. 86).

Kūkai's petition to the court for approval to perform the *Mishuhō* makes several observations regarding how services were performed. He first notes that up to that time that the *Ninnōkyō* was only recited. Then somewhat less obviously he points out a deficiency regarding the lack of created and arranged images "according to the doctrine." In Kūkai's text, 即身成仏義, *Sokushin jōbutsugi*, he provides a detailed explanation regarding the Shingon theory of attaining enlightenment in one's current lifetime. As part of that explanation, Kūkai provides an outline of the use of imagery as it relates to the realization within Shingon theory. In this text, Kūkai explains the four types of mandalas, the *Mahā-maṇḍala*, *Samaya maṇḍala*, *Dharma maṇḍala*, and *Karama maṇḍala* (八田幸雄 & Hatta, 1994, p. 121).

"The six elements are mutually unhindered, everlasting and in harmony (with Reality) [essence] The four kinds of Maṇḍalas are not separate from each other [form]" (Inagaki, 1972, p. 199). The physical representation of the statuary in the hall where the *Mishuhō* is performed represents a *Karama maṇḍala*. This term refers not to action, but the physical three-dimensional form of statuary arranged for the ritual. The other *maṇḍala* mentioned here by Kūkai include the *Samaya maṇḍala*, referring to the symbols or implements held by deities. The *Dharma maṇḍala*, refers to the mantra of the deity. The *Mahā-maṇḍala*, refers either to the physical bodies of the deities or paintings of them (Kūkai, 2004, p. 74). When united, these various *maṇḍala* form the 智印 *chiin, jñāna-mudrā,* or wisdom seal of the Buddha. In the *Sokushin jōbutsugi*, Kūkai quotes the *Mahavairocana* Sutra in explaining that these four types of *maṇḍala* "are not sperate

from one another" and that this idea of lacking separation is synonymous with the word "very" 即, *soku*, in the title of his book (Kūkai, 2004, p. 75). More specific to the artistic representation of the deities, the 羯磨曼荼羅, *Katsuma mandara*, *Karma maṇḍala*, represents the activity of *Mahāvairocana* (Bogel, 2009, p. 118).

For Kūkai's theory of Buddhist practice, the use of various forms of imagery, are synonymous with the deities themselves. Those very same elements are likewise synonymous with the individual practitioner. Shingon theory postulates that contact with the images can trigger the enlightenment experience within the practitioner. Rather than only objects of veneration, the various types of mandalas in Shingon ritual express a different activity and likewise vow of those deities. The *Karma-maṇḍala* is the physical representation of the *Mahā-maṇḍala* with which the practitioner realizes meditative unification with during the ritual practice (Bogel, 2009, p. 208).

Shingon Practice

The proper preparatory training and initiations of the officiants for the *Mishuhō*, are further indications from Kūkai of the proposed components of the *Mishuhō*. While authorship, or revisions are sometimes in dispute, Kūkai's 二十五箇条遺告, *Nijugokajo Yuigo*, Last Testament in 25 Articles, provides additional insight into the *Mishuhō* (孝善, 2007). The text includes the purported instruction from Kūkai to later generations for the clerical assignments for the *Mishuhō.* The ritual required 15 officiants, and 12 additional attendants. Kūkai notes that the chief officiant should chose from those with the requites ritual proficiency (B. D. Ruppert, 2000b, p. 106). The importance of the ritual training is further emphasized by Kūkai, who in his petition mentions the need to initiate his own students into the ritual specifics prior to its performance (Mack, 2008, p. 88). Additional

intent regarding the ritual can be inferred from Kūkai here, which suggests that the *Mishuhō* is more complex than the reciting or lecturing on the sutra.

All Shingon rituals have some common structure but vary widely in complexity. The complexity can be determined in part by the number of participants, and the number of 壇, *dan*, altar platforms (Yamasaki, 1988a, p. 152). While training periods, and requirements vary, the minimum requirements for participating in such ritual practices include requisite initiations. The 伝法潅頂, *denbō kanjō*, lineage dharma initiation, is the minimum qualification. The *denbō kanjō* is preceded by specific ritual training which includes the 四度加行, *shido kegyō*, fourfold enlightenment practice (Yamasaki, 1988b, p. 153). The training requirements are briefly mentioned here to provide background on the officiant's ritual training before they are qualified to engage in a complex ritual such as the *Mishuhō*.

A combination of symbolism and purpose is present throughout Shingon ritual practice. The ritual space is purified and made acceptable for the invitation of the deity, wherein the practitioner engages in a kind of meditative ritual unification with the deity. In that meditative posture, the intent is the negation of mental defilements, rather than only the propitiation of mundane goals (Witzel & Payne, 2016, p. 129). The ritual practices are combined toward the goal of the practitioner entering the bodhisattva path, obtaining the wisdom of the Buddha, and realizing the unity of themselves, others, and the *Dharmakāya* (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 231). As such the ultimate intent of Shingon ritual practice is the removal of the practitioner's defiled nature rooted in ignorance. For Kūkai, this is possible because the ultimate nature of humanity is identical with the

*Dharmakāya* (Miyata, 1998b). Realization of the essential interdependence of the individual, the Buddha, and all surroundings, is then the core of Shingon ritual.

Experience in Shingon Ritual

"The sutras, which are not hidden, contain the essence of the *mikkyō* teachings, but the esoteric tradition stresses that these can be fully understood only through experience" (Yamasaki, 1988b, p. 56). As originally designed, Kūkai's intent was that the *Mishuhō* be performed inside the imperial palace. A chapel was designed and constructed in the imperial palace and named, 真言院, *Shingon-in*. Erected in 834, the *Shingon-in*, was constructed inside the inner palace, 内裏, *Dairi* (Hall, 1974, p. 13). Placement of *Shingon-in* within the imperial palace allowed the *Mishuhō's* officiant access to the emperor. As designed, the *Mishuhō* would include *abhiseka* for the emperor. Taking place in the emperor's quarters, the officiant would pour "the scented consecration water" (B. D. Ruppert, 2000a, p. 105).

This *abhiseka* for the emperor implies an experience beyond the simple physical action of pouring of water. In Kūkai's work, 即身成佛義, *Sokushin jōbutsugi*, Attaining Enlightenment in this Body, he explains this experience and its benefits in more detail (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 307). The experience of the Three Mysteries occurs in a process termed, 加持, *kaji*, *adhiṣṭhāna*. "When the grace of the three mysteries is retained, [our inborn three mysteries will] quickly manifest" (Hakeda & Kūkai, 1972, p. 232). *Kaji*, here translated as "grace," suggests that the experience of connection with a Buddha or Bodhisattva can effect a change in the practitioner such that they realize their original enlightened nature. Here we find a Shingon method of practice focused on the *tathāgata-garbha* theories explained above. Kūkai often pointed to other

sources when discussing *kaji*, noting that such works as the 菩提心論, *Bodhicitta*-sastra, *Bodaishin-ron*, *Pútíxīn lùn*, announces a similar idea (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 19). The text similarly announces the transformation possible when someone partakes "in the *adhiṣṭhāna* power of the Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*" (White, 2005, p. 217). Such *kaji*, suggest the 加, bestowal of compassion by the Buddha which, and the responsibility of the receiver to 持, hold, through belief or faith, the Buddha's compassion (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 157). The experience of ritual is, in many ways, guiding the individual back to their original nature, thereby accomplishing the practice objectives announced in the sutras.

This interactive component of Shingon ritual between the practitioner and the wisdom of the deity contacted, is further elaborated in Kūkai's work, 三昧耶戒序, *Sanmayakaijo*, Introduction to the Samaya Commitments (Dreitlein, 2015, p. 208). 三昧耶 *sanmaiya*, refer to the vow of buddhas and bodhisattvas derived from their compassionate response to the needs of sentient beings (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 1679). Here Kūkai gives a Shingon interpretation of the 三昧耶戒, *sanmaiya kai*, or precepts that join the wisdom of the three times, or those commitments observed before full ordination in esoteric lineages (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 1608). As a precept or vow of the practitioner, the goal is to embody the wisdom and compassion from the deity that is the focus of the practice, within the practitioner.

The *sanmaiya kai* are commitments that are actualized through practice. Kūkai makes clear that these are conferred on another through *abhiseka, kanjō* (Dreitlein, 2015, p. 203). As discussed above the intent of these practices is to uncover the inherently awakened mind. The experience of the ritual, even for a participant, can be

transformative. As Kūkai recounts of his own *kanjō* in China, "The grandeur of that scene with all the deities present made me feel as if the world of the lotus-treasury of *Vairocana* had just newly opened before my eyes…By looking at or prostrating to any one of them, wrongdoings are eradicated and merits accumulated" (Takagi, 2010, p. 12).

Shingon Ritual Identification

The arrangement of images, offerings, ritual practice, and purported benefit can easily be mistaken as a form of purely devotional request by the practitioner to the object of the ritual. Instead, Shingon ritual practice is not focused on an independent other, but instead a co-dependent Buddha, which pervades the being of the practitioner such that the distinction between separate identities is dissolved (Miyata, 1998b, p. 60). Through the practice of the three mysteries discussed above, the identity of the Buddha and the practitioner is confirmed (R. H. Sharf, 2003, p. 60). The practitioner, now completely identifying as the chief deity of the ritual, makes offerings, performs ritual actions, and engages in the teaching, as that ritually identified Buddha (Payne, 2022, p. 372).

As previously noted, the ritual hall for the performance of the *Mishuhō*, includes the dual mandalas of Shingon, *Taizōkai* and *Kongōkai*. Each year the ritual is performed, the focus of the ritual switches between the two mandalas (B. D. Ruppert, 2000b, p. 111). The chief officiant engages in the practice of ritual identification with the chief deity of the ritual. This process is known as 本尊加持 *honzon kaji*, or consecration of the chief deity (Miyata, 1998b, p. 66). While the specific method is provided by oral transmission within the tradition, the process involves the practitioner assuming the mudra, reciting the mantra, and engaging in a specific visualization sequence (Miyata, 1998b, p. 68). The

*honzon kaji*, is a means of evoking the practitioners own, inner as-yet unrealized, *tathāgata-garbha*, or buddha nature (R. H. Sharf, 2003, p. 70).

The chief deity invoked by the primary officiant in the *Mishuhō* is 宝生如来 *Hōshō Nyorai*, *Ratnasambhava* (R. Abe, 1999, p. 349). The *sanmaya* implementation of *Hōshō Nyorai*, the wish fulfilling jewel, is synonymous with the relics of the Buddha on the altar, and the vows of the practitioner. Transformative visualizations involving symbolic implements of deities is a common component of the practitioner's *honzon kaji*, especially in the component of the ritual known as the 道場觀, *dojo kan*, contemplation of the practice space (R. H. Sharf & Sharf, 2001, p. 164). The complexity of the *dojo kan* varies, but even in the initial rituals transmitted in the Shingon school, they generally involve components of mantra, and symbolic forms visualized changing into the chief deity of the ritual (Miyata, 1998b, p. 33).

Such ritual identification is not limited to the practitioner and the specific object of meditation during the three mysteries practice. The ritual identification can occur among aspects of ritual texts, imagery, and between Buddhas and Bodhisattvas depending on the aims of the ritual practice. Most notably, the deities in the 金剛界, *Kongōkai* Mandala, have dual identities as the *Godai Myōō* from the *Ninnōkyō* (Mack, 2011, p. 914). As observed above, the *Ninnōkyō* exhorts the ruler to make offering to the monastic officiant of the ritual involving the sutra. The officiant, ritually identified through Shingon ritual practice, would then be synonymous with the chief deity of the ritual (R. Abe, 1999, p. 349). The consecration of the ruler is then the component of the ritual explicitly drawn from the *Ninnōkyō*, whereby the wisdom of the *Godai Myōō* is

conferred upon the ruler, and the protection of the Bodhisattvas secured through the ruler's holding that perspective through the ritual theory of *kaji*.

Nested within the *Mishuhō*, is the ritual for the *Godai Myōō*, taken from the *Ninnōkyō*. As noted above, the ritual space is composed of at least five ritual platforms, with the addition of images of the *Godai Myōō*, and *Jūni ten*, 12 *Devas*. During the performance of the ritual, one of the officiants enters the hall to complete the separate ritual and offerings to the *Godai Myōō* (B. D. Ruppert, 2000b, p. 121).

The *Mishuhō* culminates with the officiants empowering fragrant water, 加持香水, *kaji kōsui*. The use of fragrant water, 香水, *kōsui*, is drawn from parallel concepts of the fragrant water used to bathe the Buddhas, and the *kaji*, discussed above (Mochizuki, 1911, p. 1063). Historically, that same water is taken by the officiants to the palace where the emperor is empowered. The mantra for empowering the water for *kaji kōsui* practice is usually that of 軍荼利明王, *Gundari Myōō*. (Miyata, 1998b, p. 25). As observed above, the Shingon *giki*, indicate that *Gundari Myōō* is a personification of the wisdom of *Hōshō nyorai*. For the emperor, the chief officiant uses the mantra of *Fudō myōō* (B. D. Ruppert, 2000b, p. 125). As observed above, the Shingon *giki*, indicate that *Fudō myōō* is a personification of the wisdom of *Mahāvairocana*. The water, that is the result of multiple layers of *kaji* is then ritually sprinkled over the emperor, empowering him as the culmination of the ritual practice. The *kaji kōsui* practice involves the outward empowerment of water. In this ritual practice, the practitioner visualizes that the water is without impurities, and that the nature of all phenomena is likewise without impurities. The water is then sprinkled on the object of meditation, the ritual space, and the practitioners, body, as they visualize the dissolution of the illusory barriers between these

objects of meditation through the Three Mysteries practice (Miyata, 1998b, p. 25). The ritual thus culminates with the merits of the practice being imparted to the emperor.

Dual Objectives

> During this time, our voices reciting the mantras aloud have not failed to recall and honor the Buddha's teachings, and the smoke from the *homa* fires has continued throughout the day and night.
>
> -A Memorial of Vows for Emperor Kōnin's Misfortune. (Salguero, 2017, p. 224)

The *Ninnōkyō*, presents practical benefits of interest to any sovereign, and spiritual goals more in keeping with Buddhist teaching. The ritual practice and theory in Shingon often include more than one objective. Temporal and spiritual objectives are often part of the ritual intent. The concept of *kaji*, explained above, is often extended to intercession between buddhas and *devas*, and humanity, for the purpose of practical benefit in the human realm. An example of this is Kūkai's own record of offering prayers for the alleviation of Emperor *Kōnin's* illness. In the memorial, Kūkai described that, as part of the ritual performance, water treated through *kaji*, was prepared on the emperor's behalf in hopes of alleviating his illness (Salguero, 2017, p. 224). Spiritual practice for practical benefits is further combined with medical interventions. Kūkai's expectation is for the *kaji* treated water, accompany standard medical treatment (Salguero, 2017, p. 225). The dual benefit is also dependent upon the receiver's actions and intent, in keeping with the underlying philosophical intent of *kaji* as explained above.

Similarly, Shingon ritual practice blurs the perceived line between the sacred and profane, providing a system where not only practical and spiritual goals are combined, but human and divine. In the above diagram establishing the ritual space or the *Mishuhō*, there are two altars for the Shingon 護摩, *goma*, or fire offering. Adapted from the *Vedic*

*homa*, burnt offerings to gods, the Shingon *goma,* offer an example of external and internal symbolism. While externally the ritual appears to involve the burning of physical offerings to propitiate practical benefits, internally the practitioner visualizes the transformation of obstacles to spiritual realization. The practice of layering meaning and intention is one drawn both from Shingon practice and symbolism, and from Chinese esoteric Buddhist practitioners that preceded Kūkai. The esoteric use of the *Ninnōkyō* in China included spiritual and temporal benefits. In this view, the achievement of enlightenment and the protection of the state were complimentary aims (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 170).

The *Ninnōkyō*, further presents a different model of interaction between the sovereign and the ritual performer performing the ritual. The 阿闍梨, *ajari*, *ācārya*, ritual performing expert, is distinguished from the monks described in the *Konkōmyōkyō*. (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary. Nichi-Ei Bukkyō Jiten*, 1965, p. 5) Where the sutra presents the sovereign as the source of power to establish, maintain, and protect the *Dharma* in the nation, the Chinese ritual manuals place the *acharya* as the primary ritual actor in the ritual mediating the protective forces (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 174). These Chinese ritual components show a striking resemblance with the later ritual manuals of the Shingon school (C. D. Orzech, 1998b). In the ritual component associated with the *Godai Myōō* the chief officiant visualizes themselves as *Hannya haramitta bosatsu*, *Prajñāpāramitā Bodhisattva* (C. D. Orzech, 1998a, p. 189). As demonstrated above, this visualization holds key correspondences within esoteric Buddhist thinking.

Shingon ritual involves mediating between the perceived sacred and profane, with the effect of ritual meditation leaving residual effects in the mind of the practitioner

(Witzel & Payne, 2016, p. 129). While the mundane goal is national protection, the ritual practice is designed to apply the insights of the Buddhist *prajñā* teachings within the practitioner, and those upon whom it is conferred. While the overarching goal of the *Mishuhō* is national protection, that goal is accomplished through several means. The *Mishuhō* has multiple nested rituals all with slightly different perspectives on the goal of state protection. These include *Sokusai Goma* for preventing calamity, avoidance of misfortune, and alleviating suffering; the *Zoyaku Goma* for increasing prosperity, good fortune, and political power; the *Kangiten* altar, for removing obstacles related to human destiny; the *Godai Myōō*, for securing the wisdoms of the Five Bodhisattvas and their protection of the nation; and the primary focus of the ritual, *Hōshō Nyorai*, with the Buddha identity in various ways with the wish fulfilling jewel. The practical benefits of the practice are the result of the practitioner dissolving, according to Buddhist philosophy, the illusory distinctions between individual, deity, and outside world. As a result, the undifferentiated unity of originally enlightened mind and all phenomena are realized.

## E. Conclusions

The French sociologist Émile Durkheim famously divided religion and magic, demarcating the boundary by their social function. In Durkheim's conception magic is the realm of necessity, while religion addresses the sacred (Otto & Stausberg, 2017). Kūkai makes a similar observation when explaining the title of the 大日經, *Dainichi kyō*, *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, where he observes that non-Buddhist practices can demonstrate magical transformations (Dreitlein, 2014). By contrast the "miraculous transformations"

exhibited as the result of Shingon practice are transformations of mind arising from meditation (Dreitlein, 2014, p. 21). In Kūkai's writings observed above, he continually elevates transformative practices above those promising only mundane benefit.

Kūkai's alterations to state protection rituals elevate their purpose from that desired solely by the state, and suiting the *Onmyōdō* needs of the *Jibushō*. His alternations to existing state protection regimes, suggest an interest in refocusing on the core purpose of the Buddhist teaching, rather than the ancillary benefits. Practical benefits are not marginalized but embraced, as seen with the inclusion of the rituals for overcoming obstacles, and rainmaking included in the *Mishuhō*. To these, Kūkai adds an additional layer of practice for instilling the wisdom taught by Buddhist sutras. In contrast to the lectures on the sutras that prior state protection rituals focused on, the ritual forms introduced by Kūkai purport to provide the participants, originally including the emperor, with an experience of the wisdom contained in the texts. As explained above, the underlying Buddhist philosophical theory postulates that contact with the ritual process, effecting *kaji*, appreciably transforms the participant.

Where imperial interests in state protection Buddhism were generally practical and concerned with the worldly benefits of the texts and ritual, namely averting calamity, and the emperor's long life, Kūkai's ritual innovations in this space shift the goals in line with Buddhist philosophy (R. Abe, 1999, p. 356). Practical worldly benefit is not denied, but rather understood a resulting feature of the primary spiritual practice and ritual communion between practitioner and deity. Kukai's efforts to import these teachings, write about these aspects to ensure they were highlighted, and establish new rituals for the state shows a commitment to realigning the state's relationship with the Buddhist

teaching as a philosophical means of guiding government officials as announced in Prince *Shotoku's* constitution.

As Abé has observed, part of Kūkai's goal with the *Mishuhō* is elevating the clergy over the government to remove them from the bureaucratic structure (R. Abe, 1999, p. 356). This perspective is evident in the *Ninnōkyō*, where the ruler is instructed to view the ritual officiant as equivalent to the Buddha and make offerings to them as such. The perspective of the *Ninnōkyō* is further evident in the ritual components of imparting the wisdom and merits of the ritual to the emperor in part through the *kaji kōsui*, ritual sprinkling of empowered water that marks the final stage of the ritual practice.

The *Mishuhō* represents the experiential component of the multiple layers of state protection practices. They are a necessary part, but not wholesale replacement for, the appropriate instruction provided by such lectures as the *Misaie*, *Yuimaie*, and others. This perspective is evident in Kukai's commentary on the *Konkōmyōkyō*, where his focus is ethics, insight into behavior, and the maintenance of order. By contrast, his commentary on the *Ninnōkyō* places emphasis on transcendent wisdom, and the ruler's insight into the true nature of reality, and the establishment of such practices in their lands as the means of safeguarding the nation. The transformative component intended by state protection texts, and Buddhist texts in general, in Kūkai's estimation, requires a method beyond lecture and offerings. Within the well understood regime of State Protection Buddhist practices, Kūkai  nests newly imported ritual and practice forms drawn from the *Ninnōkyō*. From his his writings regarding the text, the *Ninnōkyō* represents a practice perspective in line with Shingon theory, lacking in the *Konkōmyōkyō*. The requisite experience for the emperor's own realization, is provided through the ritual environment

and practices that are hallmarks of Kūkai's Shingon practice, and which are replete in the structure of the *Mishuhō*. The experience of the ritual for the emperor, provides that transformative opportunity, without their having to directly partake in the same sort of training and practice the officiant does.

## Chapter III.

## A Modern Consideration of Kūkai's Theory

Studies and research regarding the effects of meditation abound. The majority focus on mindfulness practices, which represent a small component of Buddhist practice. Despite the popularization of mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions, it remains largely divorced from traditional Buddhist practice and contexts. Less studied are the measurable effects of traditional practice, or the aims of those practices. Given the dual goal of the *Mishuhō* to not only provide divine protection, but also personal transformation of secular leaders, the last portion of this thesis considers the extent and mechanism of these transformative impacts.

I will first survey some relevant Western psychological practices aimed at retraining the mind to address challenging thoughts. Buddhist practice generally, and *Shingon* ritual specifically, prescribe practices intended to create lasting shifts in thinking and outlook. Rather than only announcing a philosophical perspective that the adherent should adopt, Buddhism provides practices intended to impart to the practitioner specific attributes and effect a shift in thinking. Western psychology has borrowed greatly from Buddhist traditions and contributed to the popularity of mindful practices. One deeply integrated example of Western psychology borrowing a Buddhist concept is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Inspired by Buddhist practice, it aims to address some of the most pernicious streams of thought such as suicidal ideation by creating a new framework of thinking. As a practice adopted to address psychiatric conditions in adults

and children, it provides a convenient comparator supported by peer reviewed clinical data for considering whether the seismic shifts in thinking postulated by Buddhism are possible. When considering a mystical tradition, generally considered shrouded in secrecy, a clinical system inspired from the same philosophical underpinnings provides some insight for the uninitiated into the mental shifts postulated.

Central to the ideas announced by Kūkai's in the *Jujushinron*, is the importance of experience in spiritual practice. Rather than rely on faith, or devotional works alone, Kūkai elevates practices that provide a means by which the practitioner, and those whom the practitioner intends to benefit from the practice, are afforded an experience approaching that of enlightenment. As such I will consider the recent research on transformative experiences, to determine whether experiences can trigger the changes discussed in Buddhist philosophy.

In the case of the *Mishuhō*, the ritual brings together a great number of intended practical benefits for the state and the ruler. Underlying the *Mishuhō*, and *Misaie* rituals, were the lecture components providing instruction regarding the philosophical teaching of Buddhism. Given that these were provided to the emperor and members of court, and not only Buddhist clergy, suggest that the sutra's teaching was important, not only its performative value. From the outlines of the *Konkōmyōkyō* and *Ninnōkyō* above, they both offer practical advice for the ruler and nation. Each provides instruction on ethical outlook, and philosophical perspectives supportive of harmonious governance.

In the case of the *Konkōmyōkyō*, it teaches that the ruler should provide for the material benefit of citizens. The spiritual protection of the Four Heavenly Kings is reciprocally secured when the people's material benefit is secure. Addressing income

inequality and providing for the common good generally lead to more stable political environments (Agnello et al., 2017, p. 503). This advice is couched in a deeper Buddhist teaching of *dāna pāramitā*, the perfection of giving. This goes beyond the mere suggestion to be generous, to include the development of a mind that understands the various permutations of giving, and the perfection, *pāramitā*, of this state. The *Konkōmyōkyō* of course lists this practice for its dual character as the beginning of the spiritual path, and for its practical benefit to the people. 波羅蜜, *haramitsu*, *pāramitā*, conveys an underlying Buddhist understanding of "crossing to the other shore" the transcendent enlightenment experience (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 100b). As Kūkai explains in his commentary on the *Konkōmyōkyō*, the mind of the ruler is reflected in the character of the state.

The *Ninnōkyō* repeats the importance of the practice of *dāna pāramitā*. To this practice is added the 四忍, *sì rěn*, *shi nin*, four forbearances, or four kinds of patient endurance. These are a more nuanced spiritual practice, both a type of insight into practice, and a practice method equivalent to some of the highest Buddhist insights. Similarly, as with his commentary on the *Konkōmyōkyō*, Kūkai in his commentary on the *Ninnōkyō* explained that this insight is what avoids the seven calamities. As explained in the sutra, these include, astrological portents, but also the metaphorical fires among people, rebellions, and invasion (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 266).

Kūkai's Buddhist practice innovation were the ritual meditation practices designed to evoke these insights within the practitioner, and as explored above, at times transmit these experiences to others. Such experiences were transmitted to others through rituals of consecration. In the case of the *Mishuhō*, this practice culminates with the consecration

of the emperor with the empowered water from ritual performance. As observed above in Kūkai's ritual to benefit the ailing Emperor *Kōnin*, the empowered water was intended to positively influence the recipient in a practical and tangible way. Rather than only consider these benefits as supranatural, I consider below whether this aspect of ritual practice can be measured, and how it may expand the consideration of Buddhist studies.

### A. Buddhist Practice and Measurable States

Much of the study of the benefits of Buddhist spiritual practice is focused on meditation, and the benefits of meditation on stress and similar health conditions. At its core, the *Mishuhō*, is aimed at effecting a change within an individual. While religious experience is not generally measurable, in recent years Western psychology has borrowed from Buddhist psychology and methods, employing them in a variety of settings from clinical, corporate, and educational. Perhaps most recognizably the Mindfulness Based Stress Reeducation (MBSR) program has found application in a variety of settings and applied to a wide variety of concerns. While it is unlikely that a clinical study would be formulated to measure whether religious practice was efficacious, a modern consideration of the *Mishuhō*, focused as it is on secular governance, seems incomplete without considering its potential success.

Most Western medical and psychological studies have focused on mindfulness practices. Several problems arise with this approach, namely the Western focus on goal oriented studies, as opposed to a focus on the outcomes these practices generally focus on (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006, p. 234). Studies are often devised that apply aspects of meditational practice to specific clinical concerns, and overlook studying whether the

outcomes sought by traditional practices are manifested. The primary focus of many studies is self-regulation (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006, p. 228). This is likely the result of clinicians looking for tools to address problematic client issues, but this generally limits the scope of inquiry. Mindfulness based studies however have succeeded in developing a means of quantifying practice techniques and predictable results. Unfortunately, Western considerations of these ideas are greatly limited by the tendency to draw only from similar cultural and linguistic sources for research and consideration (Hwang, 2011, p. 329).

## Refined Awareness from Mindfulness

One of the observed effects of mindfulness practice is described as "refined awareness" (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006, p. 231). The refining of one's awareness has carryover effects to other aspects of an individual's life. Mindfulness practices can create a variety of changes in awareness. These can include meta-awareness of ongoing mental processes (Deroche & Sheehy, 2022, p. 19). These changes in awareness have a variety of effects, including many of those sought by Buddhist meditators such as compassion (Jazaieri et al., 2016, p. 45).

## Mindfulness Foundation

While mindfulness meditation is often limited to an intervention for specific behaviors or health concerns, its value is beginning to be understood more broadly. A more recent development in mindfulness studies is the recognition of the formation of a more refined awareness (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006, p. 231). That refined sense of awareness can be extended to noticing things outside the individual. As such,

mindfulness practice is a starting point toward the development of other qualities (Tirch, 2016a, p. 107). Using mindfulness as a foundation, practitioners can progress to developing such skills as recognizing and addressing feeling of shame, and self-critical cognitions (Tirch, 2016b, p. 108). Such attention skills can be utilized toward the development of engagement and developing a willingness to work with suffering and less preferred activities. Without the ability to focus attention outside of the self, we become prone to self-focused tendencies that can build into neuroses and anxiety (Hoffman et al., 2009, p. 154). The Buddhist teaching prescribed the development of compassion to address these activities of the mind born from the reinforcement of a false narrative of the self.

An ego-centric view of self, is prone to separating from others (Adams, 2010, p. 41). The experience of meditation and awakening, by contrast lead to a greater feeling of connection and willingness to listen to others (Adams, 2010, p. 48). A similar concept is suggested for the king in the Sutra of Golden Light, which teaches that those who understand and respond to the needs of the people are rewarded (Emmerick, 1970, p. 25). The *Ninnōkyō* communicates similar instructions through a communication of *śūnyatā* through to the practice of generosity, *dāna pāramitā* (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 216).

There are various theories on the view of self. Psychological models have changed over time and begun to consider a model of the self that is more expansive, and dependent on social connections. An individual's sense of "self" is predictive of behavior tendencies and indicative of their potential for change. A socially constructed "self" is dependent on a homogenous social environment (Hoffman et al., 2009, p. 144). An individual's self-definition is deeply impacted by their social identity, which in turn

drives their outlook and responses to situations (Ellemers et al., 2002, p. 163). A stable sense of self is generally associated with a hero mentality, or willingness to embody the tragic figure who suffers for what they believe in (Hoffman et al., 2009, p. 145). Such personalities tend to pull away from others and are prone to extreme actions in the name of causes. Pairing practice with underlying theory or teaching is therefore important for avoiding alienating the individual from society, and magnifying the sense of self, and self-preservation (Gebauer et al., 2018, p. 1306).

## Buddhist Compassion Meditation

Subsumed within the *prajñāpāramitā* teachings is the full bodhisattva path, and Buddhist practice path. The basis of Buddhist meditation practice involves two components, 奢摩他, *Shamata*, *Śamatha*, and 修法觀, *shu hōkan*, *vipaśyanā*. *Śamatha* refers to the calming aspect of meditation, and *vipaśyanā*, to the insight or analysis of phenomena (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, pp. 271, 301). As a following step, practitioners undertake the 四無量心, *shi muryōshin*, *brahmavihārā*, practice, or four infinite virtues (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 280). Contained within the practice is compassion, and empathetic (distinguished from sympathetic) joy. These same qualities are understood as means of motivating prosocial behaviors, and as a base for moral development (Decety, 2011, p. 92). Buddhist philosophy is in agreement with the neuroscience which recognizes that the development of empathy is superior to sympathy to avoid developing vicarious emotional distress (Eisenberg & Eggum, 2011, p. 73). These qualities also combat the potential danger of alienation from others, discussed above.

Empathy is often understood as a sharing of affect between people (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987, p. 4). Problems arise in understanding empathy when it is confused with sympathy and the degree to which one need take on the emotional weight of another. People often avoid empathy due to the perceived cognitive cost of identifying and feeling the emotional burden of another (Cameron et al., 2019, p. 962). There is a mutuality of recognizing one's own experience in the experience of others, that elicits the empathic response (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987, p. 10). However, the more one identifies with others, the more prosocial behaviors develop (Ellemers et al., 2002, p. 180).

Applying Compassion

Meditational practices focused on compassion have proven effective for more than expanding views and understanding. Mindfulness and compassion meditation show promise for increasing prosocial behaviors including extending altruism to members of outside groups (Zheng et al., 2023, p. 2466). Even brief engagement with mindfulness practices can increase social concern for others (Berry et al., 2018, p. 107). Research has even shown physical changes in the brains of meditators in regions associated with caregiving and the sense of connection to one's own body (Tirch, 2016b, p. 113). A limitation of these studies is that secular mindfulness practice is generally not accompanied by any sort of ethical teaching or framework for the practice, as would be found in a contemplative tradition. Secular mindfulness can engender compassion, but generally not generosity (Berry et al., 2020, p. 1263). The addition of ethical instruction tended to increase generosity by contrast, and boost generosity in those predisposed to generous behavior (Chen & Jordan, 2020, p. 24).

## The Value of Forbearance

The other core teaching in the *Ninnōkyō* is the development of forbearance. Forbearance has benefits over tolerance, merely tolerating, as it suggests commitment to a peaceful response to conflicting beliefs, values, and practices (Verkuyten et al., 2022, p. 381). Forbearance was classically valued as a means of finding harmony between the desiring, emotional "self," and cultivated states (Shiah, 2021, p. 67). The perspective of forbearance stands in contrast to unwholesome qualities such as anger, and therefore supports efforts discouraging retaliation and violence (Wakefield, 2021, p. 296). While forbearance has benefits for such things as combatting depression, it is a quality that takes longer to develop, and is therefore harder to study (Noh et al., 1999, p. 200).

## Shingon in Clinical Settings

Application of scientific methods to the study of meditation is not limited to mindfulness alone. Shingon's unique practice methods are employed in clinical settings to address illness and discomfort. The use of Shingon meditation has recently expanded to hospital chaplaincy practice for the purpose of health and healing. In these practices, patients are taught methods to avoid confronting negative emotions and instead developing objective self-observation. The goal of these practices is countering trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (Arai et al., 2019, p. 198). These practices are drawn directly from core Buddhist practices that guide practitioners to see reality clearly.

Various stress reduction practices have been studied through Shingon meditation practices as well. Interestingly, studies have diverged from the classic silent sitting, or breath meditation practices common in MBSR, and have included mantra practice. The

Shingon 散念誦, *sannenju*, mantra recitation practice was studied. Rather than a static meditation posture, it involves physical movement of the prayer beads and visualization of the practitioner with the chief deity of the ritual. This practice is part of the dissociative practice in Shingon ritual between the practitioner and deity (Miyata, 1998b, p. 73). Despite the corresponding physical movement, and utterance of mantra, the practice demonstrated significantly greater levels of relaxation as measured by brain waves (Shukan & Kozen, 2017, p. 38). More relevant to the concept of transformative experiences, are guided Shingon practices where practitioners work with patients to assist them in giving voice to trauma and illness (Oshita et al., 2013, p. 16).

### B. Mutuality in Transformative Experiences

The *Mishuhō* and *Ninnōkyō*, suggest a connection between the officiant and the ruler that requires the officiant to have sufficient practice and grounding, to mediate the transformative experience of the ritual. A similar comparison is found in clinical practice where proper training is required to address the specific needs of the client. The clinician's own insight largely determines the client's outcome. Grounding transformative practice in the understanding of the interrelatedness of the clinician, client, and society, similar to the Buddhist notion of interdependence described above, provides transformative practice for the clinician as well (Robillard et al., 2022, p. 393).

## The Case of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Buddhist concepts have perhaps most deeply permeated Western psychology through Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Rather than only an adjunct intervention,

DBT was developed through the originator's study of Buddhist practice (Eeles & Walker, 2022, p. 1843). DBT was developed specifically to treat Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), the symptoms of which generally manifest as repetitive suicidal and self-harming behaviors (Swales, 2017a, p. 7). DBT was selected as an example here both due to its deep connection with Buddhist concepts, and its focus on some of the most pernicious psychological factors afflicting the individual. DBT addressed these concerns through a dialectical model of balancing the individual's view of self, and view of the external world. DBT is also unique in recognizing that the therapist requires support when working with clients facing such challenges (Swales, 2017b, p. 8). The model taught by DBT is therefore intended to be mutually supportive of therapist and client. This mutuality is important to address the potential downside of therapist empathy that could over identify with the struggles of the client (Swales, 2017b, p. 9). Interestingly, DBT recognizing that the clinician needs to have the proper training and capacity to guide individuals, and that not all are suited to such work (Barbara Stanley, 2013, p. 15). Engaging in DBT practice is shown to increase prosocial behaviors (Pederson, 2015, p. 101). Commitment to process is shown to have beneficial effects for the individual in community. DBT is an evidence based practice that integrated Buddhist principles and Western cognitive behavioral practice (Barbara Stanley, 2013, p. 64). I highlight it here because it is perhaps the leading example of a psychological intervention so tightly integrated with Buddhist concepts, it considers the unique interaction between clinician and client, and goes far beyond studies of mindfulness to provide deep and meaningful change in the individual's outlook on, and engagement with, society.

Mutually Beneficial

The "refined awareness" that is the product of meditation described above, is also observed to produced noticeable benefit to meditator/client, and clinician/teacher dynamics (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006, p. 233). Mindfulness practice is shown to create a stronger alliance between the clinician and client. Of particular interest here are the cultivation of mental qualities beneficial to the clinician. These include, improved attention, deepened capacity to address difficult emotions, deepened acceptance, compassion for others, and equanimity (Germer et al., 2005, p. 58). The development of these qualities have the added benefit of addressing the narcissistic tendency of wanting to be seen as competent or accomplished (Germer et al., 2005, p. 68). The cosmology of the *Ninnōkyō* suggests that the king's work with the monk lecturing the sutra provides benefits to both. The king's realization and insight bring benefit to the ruler and the nation. Similarly, the monk chosen to lecture on this occasion is benefitted by obtaining new insights and wisdom because of this interrelated practice with the ruler. The monk's practice results in the development of compassion and sympathy that brings benefit to all beings (C. D. Orzech, 1998b, p. 256).

## C. Self and Society

The *Ninnōkyō* addresses the king's sense of self. The text is both a teaching for the development of society, and the individual. Refocusing the king's attention outside of themselves, through the teaching lens of the text, reframes the king's attention on generosity or giving. The practice method outlined in the *Ninnōkyō* for the ruler is generosity. While the notion of self in Western psychology and Buddhist philosophy differ, self and compassion practice are two areas that have received significant attention

in clinical studies. While the *Konkōmyōkyō* and the *Ninnōkyō*, both provide a framework for locating the king cosmologically, the texts only tangentially address the king's sense of self. However generally speaking, the larger the sense of self, the larger the obstruction to insight and the benefits of meditation for the individual (Fatfouta & Heinze, 2023, p. 19802).

A political leader's ethical leadership motivates members of the political organization to further develop their own ethics (Sawitri et al., 2021, p. 85). Generosity is often dependent on status. Higher ranking people often focus on their own advancement over the needs of others (Hays & Blader, 2017, p. 19). However, when high ranking individuals are vested in a group, their generosity increases (Hays & Blader, 2017, p. 34). Generosity also tracks with the perceived legitimacy of power and status. Generosity is a key factor for successful leadership, along with efficiency, and against advantageous inequality, or maximizing personal monetary gain (Bruttel & Fischbacher, 2013, p. 148).

## Buddhist Notions of Self in Psychology

Buddhist explanations of self and mind suggest a process of moment to moment thought that humans mistakenly grasp at and label the self (Bradford, 2021, p. 111). The development of the idea of self is constructed from a misunderstanding of the pattern of perception in communication with experience (Gallagher et al., 2023). Buddhist practices show clinical efficacy in addressing misconceptions of self, and leading to a higher level of self-development (Xiao et al., 2017, p. 7).

## The Narcissism of the Imperial Self

Many of the psychological states addressed by mindfulness practice, and interventions integrating Buddhist concepts such as DBT, address an aspect of narcissism. They address the human tendency to limit engagement with the world and see only the individual self. The prosocial benefits from these practices, compassion, refined states of awareness, generosity, and others, work to realign the individual's understanding of themselves in relation to the world. Buddhist interventions in this sphere offer the opportunity to change the view of "self" from self-centered, to a "self" oriented within a sphere of relations (Adams, 2010).

### The Emperor's Myth of Self

The implementation of the *ritsuryō* brought with it an entirely new system of governance based on language. The *ritsuryō* legal code shifted focus from individual clan identity to a new broader national identity. With the importation of Chinese models of governance came a repositioning of the emperor and their identity within the country. While it may be impossible to determine an individual emperor's sense of self, it is possible to consider the position of the emperor in the *ritsuryō* state, as compared with that envisioned in the *Ninnōkyō*. While each announced or envisioned a responsibility for the performance of religious rites, those rites and their purpose vary greatly (Sango, 2015, p. 2). The establishment of the *ritsuryō* state included the importation of Chinese style symbolic associations between the emperor and heaven (Sango, 2015, p. 6). The Chinese imperial conception equated the emperor with embodying the heavenly pivot of the polestar (Ooms, 2009, p. xix). The new system elevated the emperor from a nation of local and clan gods, to 天皇, *tennō*, heavenly sovereign (Ooms, 2009). The language of

*tennō*, suggests an expanded right to exert rule of all under the heavens (B. D. Ruppert, 2000b, p. 394). The new *ritsuryō* system further expanded the imperial self with a regime of Buddhist state protection at its disposal.

The Buddhist Sense of Self Meets the King

The Buddhist conception of self is often difficult to grasp from the perspective of Western psychology. Only more recently has the established Western psychological notion of "self" come under scrutiny. With the inclusion of Eastern thought into Western psychology, Buddhist ideas of "self" have gained traction, resulting in new theories of the development, existence, and conception of "self" (Hoffman et al., 2009, p. 136).

The Buddhist theory of, 一心二門, *isshin nimon,* one mind with two aspects, is gaining increased Western psychological consideration. Where the west has largely magnified the sense of self socially and clinically, the Eastern and especially Buddhist approach was to see the "self" as illusory (Wang, 2021, p. 6). The *Ninnōkyō's* recommendation of generosity on the part of the ruler as a spiritual practice, necessarily implies that this lack of generosity, or lack of seeing beyond the "imperial-self" is the cause of insecurity for the state. The *Ninnōkyō* reorients the "imperial-self" into a broader framework of understanding self. The text does so by recommending *dāna pāramitā,* perfection of giving, as the entrance to the development of *bodhicitta*, which is synonymous with compassion. As observed above, compassion meditation has a wealth of clinical application and study. Modern clinical practice furthermore, recognizes that such insights require experiential practice (Adams, 2010, p. 49).

Transforming Self

Transforming one's sense of self requires that a person be "involved in a cause outside their own skins" (Maslow, 1971, p. 42). There is increasing clinical evidence that refocusing attention outside oneself, brings measurable benefit to the individual. As noted above, *Kūkai's Mishuhō* did not displace the *Misaie* lectures. Rather the formulation in the *Ninnōkyō* provides an experience of the underlying teaching. That teaching explicitly transforms the 王, *wang*, king, from the mundane, to one who practices 忍, *rěn*, forbearance (C. D. Orzech, 2002, p. 68). Through the practice of transcendent generosity, *dāna pāramitā*, as outlined in the *Ninnōkyō*, the king is elevated from 忍王, *rěnwáng*, a forbearing king, to a 仁王, *rénwáng*, humane king, who considers the needs of their people (C. D. Orzech, 2002, p. 68).

## D. Transformative Experiences

Most clinical studies of compassion, generosity, or meditative states, involve the direct experience of, or engagement in, meditation practice. The ritual practices discussed in esoteric Buddhist practice often include participants who are not themselves directly engaging in meditative practice, but who nonetheless have an experiential role in the ritual. Interdisciplinary definitions of transformative experiences exist. Transformative experiences are "conceived as phenomena able to engender long-lasting, irreversible, pervasive consequences on individuals' beliefs, perceptions, identity, and values" (Chirico et al., 2022, p. 2). Various academic disciplines have further refined their definitions to address the specific needs of their areas of research. In addition, transformational experiences can occur in a variety of ways, from intended, unintended, or spontaneously. Experiences can be transformative, come in a variety of forms, and find

their origin in a variety of sources. Perhaps unsurprisingly, deep engagement with Buddhist practice results in transformative experiences (Chancey et al., 2019, p. 35).

It is possible to divide religious experience into volitional experiences and self-surrender experiences (James, 1902, p. 206). In this model the individual gradually builds up to the experience of transformation through the religious experience. In the self-surrender example there is often some crisis that provides the tipping point for surrender of personal will (James, 1902, p. 208). While, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, is a pioneering study of transformative religious experience, its perspective is theistic and decidedly Christian. Consequently, studies of the confluence of religion and the mind often assume religious experience to be a state of mind separate from the normal waking mind (Rosch, 2002, p. 39).

The Buddhist approach to mind diverges from theistic theories of creation. It also diverges in terms of the individual's place in the world. How an individual sees or understands their place in the world has profound effects on their consciousness. An experience of interdependence can shift a person out of depression, guilt, or anxiety, and provide them an integrated understanding of themselves and their world (Rosch, 2002). Viewpoint and vision are key transformative concepts. Shifting the idea of vision from something outside the individual, to something within the individual is at the core of contemplative practice. As discussed above, Buddhist teaching is pointing toward an original existence, rather than something outside the individual. Where the two converge is the ability of religious experience to support the individual in moving beyond their limited self and perform compassionate acts (Rosch, 2002, p. 46).

## The Variety of Transformative Experience

Self-explorative experiences should be differentiated from self-transformative experiences generally, but they share a wide range of commonalties. Self-transformative experiences may include self-transcendent, peak experiences, emotionally complex experiences, and mystical experiences. Self-transcendent experiences can include mindfulness, flow, positive emotions of awe and love, peak experiences, and mystical experiences. Within and among these categories are further fine grained distinctions and subcategories (Yaden et al., 2017). Mindfulness includes moment to moment nonjudgmental awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Flow can be defined as a focused mental absorption in a single activity (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 277). Feelings of awe and love can be generated by contact with moral excellence (Algoe & Haidt, 2009, p. 107). Peak experiences are often characterized by a feeling of merging with the universe. Empirical evidence suggests that peak experiences correlate with empathic behavior, meaning in life, and a sense of well-being (Yaden et al., 2017, p. 5). Finally, the mystical experience can be described as the sense of self unity with more than oneself (Hood, 2002, p. 11).

## Conditions for Transformative Experiences

Meditation can bring about self-transcendent states. Self-transcendent can be defined as the ability to adjust or modify self-related processes (Dahl et al., 2015, p. 521). As a result these practices can bring about feelings of knowing, understanding, or gaining insight into things previously out of reach (Dahl et al., 2015, p. 515). Self-transcendence also has the character of annihilation unity, and relational unity (Hanley et al., 2020, p.

1195). These impart feelings of self-loss, and connection to people and things in the environment beyond the self, respectively.

Inducing self-transcendent states outside of religious experience is in a nascent state of research. Some research exits, but there is wide variation in what is measurable and what those experiencing self-transcendent experiences report. Research using EEG and fMRI can provide data regarding brain activity, however there is no way to objectively measure human experience in such states (Kitson & Riecke, 2018). More research exists in the creation of transformative social experiences. Given the long history of festivals in human history, and more recent history of unconventional lifestyle festivals, self-transformation appears possible within specific social settings. In recent times the self-transformation is observed to emerge in participants engaged in radical self-expression (Li & Zhang, 2023, p. 3). These modern self-transformation practices often involve individual self-expression. Such social festival environments offer an involvement in a transformative environment, but are generally vehicles for the individuals' personal self-exploration (Li & Zhang, 2023, p. 14). There is often no specific outcome sought as the result of such festival experiences. By contrast, ritual and ceremony often suggest a social component to the transformative experience. Rituals can function by changing the individual from the mundane or secular state, to the sacred state (Collins, 1969, p. 303).

## Impact of Transformative Experience

Feelings of awe predominate descriptions of religion. These are generally triggered when the individual contacts a higher power (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Religious practice if often designed to mediate, direct, and produce feelings of awe (Piff et al.,

2015, p. 897). An interesting character of awe is its seeming ability to produce prosocial effects in individuals (Piff et al., 2015, p. 885). One hypothesis for the resultant prosocial response, is that the individual self feels small in relation to the source that produced the awe. As a result the individual is pushed to reconfigure the self, in ways that trigger self-transformation (Perlin & Li, 2020, p. 303).

An individual's interpretation of profound aesthetic or mystical experience is generally guided by existing religious or philosophical schema (Stange & Taylor, 2008, p. 38). Whether an individual describes an experience as aesthetic or mystical is also informed by their religious education, or lack thereof. Religious ritual may lead to mystical experience for the religious, and aesthetic experience to the unreligious (Stange & Taylor, 2008). Interaction with, and suggestion from, others can elicit mystical experiences (Evans & Lynn, 2021, p. 14). One limitation in the study of mystical experience within Buddhist traditions is that most research, consideration, and categorization has focused on Abrahamic faiths. Such religious mystical experiences generally understand mystical experience as the feeling of a presence or union with the divine, which is further understood as outside and above the individual (Bailey, 2021, p. 125). Mystical experiences are also often studied from the perspective of an eternal or real "self" that contacts something external (Hood, 2002, p. 12). Defining that "self" is problematic give the psychological and religious variations in terms. Religious descriptions often implicate concepts that do not apply to the general Buddhist framework of spiritual practice.

As has been observed, a great deal of research surrounding Buddhist practice focuses on mindfulness practices. Research in this area shows that mindfulness practice is

capable of altering an individual's experience of self, and extending their frame of reference outside of the boundaries of the physical body (Hanley et al., 2020, p. 1201). This potential gives rise to prosocial perspectives and deeper consideration of others. While meditative experiences may seem wholly dissimilar from ceremonial rituals, their effect can be the same (Newberg & d'Aquili, 2000, p. 262).

## Transformative Locations

Site selection for ritual practice is an important component of Shingon practice. The 大日経, *Dainichikyō*, *Mahavairocana* Sutra, provides ritual site selection instructions. Appropriate sites include mountains, and monasteries, exquisite ponds and parks, temples of gods, and other places pleasing to the mind (Giebel, 2005, p. 19). In these places the altar should be established, and the practice engaged in. Kūkai emphasizes the importance of location in the selection of Koyasan as the ascetic practice place of Shingon (Bushelle, 2020, p. 44). The practice space is the equivalent to the 道場, *dōjō*, *bodhi-maṇḍa*, the seat of enlightenment (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 47b). Location is important but also nondual. A site is chosen that is pleasing to the mind, that reduced distractions, and which is conducive to bringing about the practitioner and participant's identification with the *dharmakāya*. One's buddha nature is synonymous with the 法界, *hokkai*, *dharmadhatu*, or realm of human experience (*Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 1979, p. 109b). This expansive understanding of space includes the identification of self with others (Bushelle, 2020, p. 72).

The experience of sacred space is often approached from an architectural perspective (L. Jones, 1993, p. 208). Those considerations often make grand

generalizations regarding the impact of architectural design on the individual. While place is important, for the *Mishuhō*, the architecture is of less concern than the arrangement of art and participants within the space. The combination of statuary, arts, their arrangement, and specified means of engagement with the surroundings are the primary concerns with Shingon ritual. The aesthetic value of the arranged art, and altar items, may be one component of the experience of Shingon ritual. Psychologically supportive environments are decidedly impactful on the outcome of the psychological endeavors engaged in (Geller, 2018, p. 204). Psychotherapy for instance has begun to take into consideration the texture, color, shape, and furniture placement, to create an environment supportive of the psychological change sought.

## Ritual as Transformative Experience

Throughout Kūkai's writings regarding Shingon ritual practice, is the notion that the experience of engaging in the ritual appreciably transforms the participant. Kūkai extends this understanding to include practice done on behalf of others, as seen through the multifarious understanding of *kaji*. The transformative component of ritual is more rarely considered. The performative nature of a spiritual activity can have transformative effects. Recognizing the locus of the sacred within the body can prioritize experience over space (Finlayson, 2015, p. 373). The performative nature of Shingon ritual prioritizes experience. The experience of confronting ethical ideals within ritual can produce the ethical outlook intended by the ritual design (Ladwig, 2012, p. 598). This would tend to support the idea that having a specific purpose for the outcome of a ritual better situates individuals for the intended transformative experience. Unmediated

transformative experiences run the risk of imparting an emotional experience that is not truly transformative (Lindström et al., 2022, p. 98).

The Buddhist program of ethics, wisdom, and responsiveness to the needs of others, is quite specific and at times complex. The need to lecture the sutras to members of court is therefore understandable. Instilling the virtues contained therein requires some method beyond merely discussing them. Specific methodologies must be developed for imparting the desired virtue. The modern workshop approach recognizes the importance of experiential components matched with a curriculum (Cheu et al., 2023, p. 405). The importance of lecture and practice cannot therefore be overlooked. Classical Confucian ethical training understood that the principles had to come into contact with the lived experience to actualize a particular virtue (Panza, 2006, p. 133). While Kūkai's *Jūjūshinron* would locate the Buddhist ideals above Confucian virtues, largely due to their more expansive inclusion of all begins, they both recognize ritual practice as a means of instilling concepts (Panza, 2006, p. 147). A similar system is present in Aristotelian moral improvement. One first reflects on the virtue to be instilled to create the proper mental state. That mental state is then cemented by contact with those situations that require their application (Webber, 2016, p. 150).

*Kaji* as Transformative Experience

Rather than considering only the clinical impacts of meditation practice, consideration should be expanded to include a view of Buddhist practice as a transformative experience. For Shingon ritual practice specifically, this requires numerous levels of consideration from underlying philosophical goals, ritual space,

engagement, and agency. Kūkai intended the experience of the ritual space, and engagement with the practice, to bring benefit. “The many postures and the many mudras [depicted in those diagrams and paintings] arise from the universal compassion [of the Dharmakāya] Through a single glimpse [of a mandala], Buddhahood is attained” (Takagi, 2010). While benefits are obtained through direct practice, the experiential quality of environment, art, and engagement, are scaffolding for the experience of practitioners and attendants to rituals.

As demonstrated by the brief survey of the measurable benefit of Buddhist practice, many of the objectives of Buddhist practice can be objectively observed in participants. Similarly, ritual and ceremony can produce transformative effects in participants. Many of these effects are in line with the intended purpose of Buddhist practice. Considering *kaji* as a means of religious agency, broadens the consideration of Shingon ritual, especially the *Mishuhō*, from only a practice for supernatural protection, to one of mediating the intended transformational impact within the ruler. Agency should not be limited to the idea of deity alone, but should include the practice and experience of mantra (Payne, 2018, p. 98). State protection Buddhism should be understood as more than only a means of magical protection whereby deities, whether the Four Heavenly Kings, or Five Bodhisattvas, exert their supranatural abilities in service to the state. The underlying ritual practice of the officiants, and conferral of *kaji* upon the emperor are mediated by mantra and meditation. The ritual practice, transformation, and visualizations, occur within the practitioner and are the means by which they come to realize their own inherently awakened nature (Kopf, 2019, p. 344). Similarly, it is also trough *kaji*, that the officiant, in line with the goals of the *Ninnōkyō*, confers that agency

and connection with the deity to establish them on the Bodhisattva path. The ruler's entry into the Bodhisattva path, the text tells us, is what secures the nation. The qualities of compassion, generosity, and forbearance are both the outcome of that practice, and the method the ruler utilizes to enter the lineage of the Buddhas. The *Mishuhō* presents an environment for the development of transformative experience, that has the intended added practical component of beneficial prosocial attitudes. Specifically, the intended prosocial attitude for the ruler is one of generosity, *dāna pāramitā*, toward all members of society.

## F. Conclusions

Buddhism is a world religion whose perspective on governance is rarely discussed. Within the historical context and theory of the *Goshichinichi Mishuhō* there are many considerations for the study of religion and its impact on law and politics, both as traditional Buddhist societies encounter Western legal and political structures, and as these states modify existing state structures and integrate traditional values into modern society. From the perspective of scholars of Buddhist studies, integrating textual, ritual, and philosophical perspectives, can provide greater insight into the meaning and purpose of ritual practice. While there are obvious difficulties in studying the postulated inner transformations of individuals, Buddhist studies can sharpen the lens through which texts are considered, translated, and understood within a tradition, by considering them in the context of the traditions' purpose in performing them. Modern Buddhist practitioners can benefit from a consideration of how these ideas might be adapted from their feudal origins and context and applied to modern government institutions. The explication of obscure rituals sheds light on the more complex political cosmology that exists within

Buddhism, but which is largely unknown outside of a small set of specialized practitioners.

The potential benefit for understanding a tradition's perspectives on ideal forms of governance have appeal beyond interest to practitioners. Successful social justice movements in modern times are largely based on the work of notable figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King and have drawn from largely *Vedic* and Christian roots. Buddhist sources are largely missing from this conversation. Given the success of these spiritually based movements, there may yet be space for additional religious perspectives on approaching social issues. These "state protection" Buddhist practices and texts, both prescribe elaborate rituals, and provide insight into the attributes, skills, and actions, Buddhists recommend for the ideal leader, which are in turn seen as conducive to a peaceful society. Beyond suggesting virtues, the rituals themselves are intended to imbue their participants with the requisite virtue, skill, and insight, to bring about the intended social change. As can be seen from the brief survey of modern studies in psychology, sociology, education, and even international law, not only can the specific virtues championed by state protection Buddhist ideals be developed in the individual, but those virtues also have beneficial social effects.

Positive research results have seen a rise in Buddhist inspired techniques in the treatment of a host of psychological disorders. While Western interest has largely focused on the psychological aspects of Buddhist philosophy, research continues in a host of areas. That these techniques can address difficult mental states suggests there is space to consider the transformative impacts of these ideas to groups and organizations. This in

turn has led to a proliferation of studies integrating aspects of Buddhist psychology into Western psychology. Application of these methods to various concerns continues.

Considering the *Mishuhō* from the perspective of a transformative experience, offers an opportunity to expand not only psychological consideration of such ritual performances, but also the intent and purpose of Buddhist ritual practice. The *Ninnōkyō* partially seeks to imbue the ruler with certain attributes surrounding the regard and concern for citizens, upholding order, and fueling the ruler's own spiritual journey. These hoped for outcomes address the practical reality that the rulers all too often do not have these concerns in mind, or worse, are openly hostile to all concerns other than their own. The teaching of the *Ninnōkyō*, mediated through the *Mishuhō*, also stands as an institutional statement regarding Buddhist perspectives on government control of clergy, and Buddhist perspectives on the role of freedom of religion. It is hoped that bringing these concepts into discussion can further the consideration of such ritual practices.

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