

The “True Words” of the Buddha: *Mantra* and *Dhāraṇī* in Relation to Fugen Enmei in Ritual Context

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Anyone researching any aspect of esoteric Buddhism—even art and art history in my case—cannot avoid encountering various mystical (somewhat magical) utterances, such as *mantra* and *dhāraṇī*. Many researchers who have tried to give a sound definition of either of those, unfortunately, could only determine some aspects of their meaning after thorough investigation. Perhaps we will never know the origins of *mantra* or *dhāraṇī*, so we have to settle for what has already been said about their characteristics and meaning.

As far as definitions go, *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* are barely distinguishable. According to Peter Harvey’s definition, “mantras are sacred words of powers, mostly meaningless syllables or strings of syllables, which give an arrangement of sound of great potency.”¹ Similarly, when defining *dhāraṇī*, scholars usually describe it as a spell, an incantation or a mnemonic device, comprised of a string of meaningless syllables or words.² No one has been brave enough so far to declare a confident definition of either of the two terms. I do not aim to solve the problem of defining *mantra* or *dhāraṇī*, especially after so many renowned Buddhist and Indian scholars (Jan Gonda, André Padoux, Harvey Alper and Paul Copp, among others) could not succeed in this task. Padoux asks, “Should one try to define mantras at all?” and he answers, “I am not sure.”³ So I would rather give an overview of why *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* are still such a mystery and then discuss how they are represented in Japanese esoteric traditions.

Mantra and *dhāraṇī* have been studied by many scholars during the previous and present centuries, and it is important that we understand the current state of scholarship. Since F. Max Müller’s work on one of the incantations

¹ Harvey 1990: 260-261.

² Copp 2014: 1.

³ Padoux 2008: 300.

(*Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī*) in 1884 (Müller and Nanjio 1884 [1972]), we know that these spells have been part of the Buddhist traditions since at least the early centuries CE.⁴ But the earlier scholars of Buddhism were fairly dismissive of incantations and did not pay too much attention to their nature and meaning, regarding them as meaningless mumbo-jumbo. Müller was not at all gentle when he wrote the following:

Most of these Dharanis are prayers so utterly devoid of sense and grammar that they hardly admit and still less are deserving of a translation, however important they may be palaeographically, and, in one sense, historically also, as marking the lowest degradation of one of the most perfect religions, at least as conceived originally in the mind of its founder. Here we have in mere gibberish a prayer for a long life, addressed to Buddha, who taught that deliverance from life was the greatest of all blessings.⁵

In the twentieth century, this attitude seemed to change, since an abundant number of books became basic material for the study of Buddhist incantations. However, only in recent years can we see fruitful results, especially in the field of esoteric Buddhism. Of particular note is the long-awaited comprehensive work, *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, edited by Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sorensen and Richard K. Payne (2011), which gives us a broad picture of esoteric Buddhism. The topics discussed in the book include doctrines, practices, rituals and art in China, Korea and Japan.

There are ample articles and books about *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs*, and almost all the authors emphasize the similarities between the two. They argue that formulas such as *mantras*, *dhāraṇīs* (or *vidyā*, *paritta*, etc.) are not to be understood, they are to be *pronounced correctly*. This is the reason, I may presume, why the Chinese translations are not really translations but rather transliterations of the original Sanskrit, because in a translation these auspicious pronunciations would be lost. (In any event, throughout most eras of Buddhist history Chinese and Japanese monks studied only the sounds of Sanskrit, not the grammar.) The sounds are more important than the meaning, since they are mainly used—chanted—in esoteric rituals. For *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* as well, the ritual context is very significant. As Padoux writes, “(Mantras) are part of a ritual performance outside of which they cannot really be understood.”⁶ The only differences that we can see between the two are:

⁴ Copp 2014: 1.

⁵ Müller and Nanjio 1884: 31.

⁶ Padoux 2008: 301.

1. *Mantras* are shorter than *dhāraṇīs*.
2. *Mantras* were in use in India long before Buddhism, and they had Vedic roots, such as the *Rigveda* or *Atharvaveda*.
3. *Dhāraṇīs* have appeared only in the Mahāyāna Buddhist context.

Mantras

In the study of *mantras*, first of all, we have to differentiate between Hindu (or Vedic) *mantras* and Buddhist *mantras*. The *mantras* were originally used to communicate with the gods, to pray to a god and wish for something. The Vedas were recited in rituals, therefore *mantras* also can be regarded as ritual language. The word *mantra* derives from the Sanskrit root *man* (“to think/consider”) with the suffix *tra* (“tool”), meaning “instrument of thought” or “speech.” The definition in the Sanskrit dictionary is also *Vedic hymn, sacred formula, mystical verse*.

As for their history, we know from Vedic sources that *mantras* had been in use long before Buddhism was established. *Mantras* were part of the Vedas, where they were used as tools for personal gain or against enemies. It was perhaps for this reason that the historical Buddha banned all kinds of magic. The legitimization of *mantras* comes in a later period, when the *Adamantine Peak Sūtra* (Jp. *Kongōchōkyō* 金剛頂經, Sk. *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha Sūtra*),⁷ one of the fundamental scriptures of the esoteric tradition dated to the seventh century, reworks the life story of the Buddha.⁸ The scripture begins with the story of Sarvarthasiddhi (the esoteric name of Siddhartha Gautama, in Japanese called the Bodhisattva All-Attained or All Wishes Realized 一切義成就菩薩), which tells us that he reached enlightenment because the Tathāgatas visited him under the Bodhi tree and gave him a number of *mantras*, among which was the one that produced *bodhicitta*, or aspiration for enlightenment.

In Japanese, there is more than one word for *mantra*, the two most fundamental being *ju* 呪 and *shingon* 真言. The former word is why *mantras* are regarded as spells, because *ju* means precisely a spell. The latter word, which became the name of the esoteric tradition in China and Japan, literally means “true words.” Here it refers to the true teachings of the Buddha.

There are also different kinds of *mantras*, for example the seed *mantra* or seed-syllable (or germ-letter, Jp. *shu* 種 or *shuji* 種子, Sk. *bīja*), which is the essence of the buddha, bodhisattva or any kind of deity it belongs to. It is

⁷ The shorter version is 金剛頂一切如來真實攝大乘現證大教王經 (T 865.18), translated by Amoghavajra 不空. The longer version is 佛說一切如來真實攝大乘現證三昧大教王經 (T 882.18), translated by Dānapāla 施護.

⁸ Williams and Tribe 2000: 222.

considered a “seed containing supernatural powers.”⁹ Then there is also the heart *mantra* (Jp. *shinju* 心呪), the heart-of-heart *mantra* (Jp. *shinjū shinju* 心中心呪), and so forth.

Dhāraṇīs

There is still disagreement about the meaning of the word *dhāraṇī*, with opinions generally falling into two camps. One side, mostly followers of Étienne Lamotte,¹⁰ insists that *dhāraṇī* means “memory” or “mnemonic device.” The other side consists of scholars who still maintain the idea that a *dhāraṇī* is mainly a “spell” or “magical word” (these are followers of the writings of L. Augustine Waddell or Giuseppe Tucci).¹¹ Essentially both groups are correct.

The word *dhāraṇī* derives from the Sanskrit root *dhr*, meaning “to support,” “to maintain” or “to hold” (the word *dharma* has the same root). This suggests that the basic meaning of *dhāraṇī* can be summarized as “holding the scriptures.”¹² So the mnemonic function is given, although it does not mean “memorizing the scriptures” but rather keeping in mind their essence, i.e., the essence of the Buddha’s teachings, more clearly, the Buddha’s words. Also, their ritual usage suggests more than just a contemplative function, since in Buddhism chanting usually produces some kind of protective power,¹³ and since *dhāraṇīs* are chanted in rituals, they possess something mystical, something ungraspable, a power of protection. Here comes the paradox that Copp has highlighted in his very detailed study of *dhāraṇī*: a proper grasp (*chi*) of reality shows it to be ungraspable, the true grasp is of that which cannot be grasped; the true meaning is that there is no meaning.¹⁴

The Japanese word for *dhāraṇī* is the term that was transliterated into Chinese as 陀羅尼 (Jp. *darani*, Ch. *tuoluoni*). In Chinese, there are other translated words for *dhāraṇī* (such as *ji/chi* 持 “to grasp/hold,” *sōji/zongchi* 總持 “encompassing grasp,” or *mitsugon/miyan* 密言 “mystic word”). Although there is no seed *dhāraṇī*, there is a mention of the fundamental *dhāraṇī* 根本陀羅尼, heart *dhāraṇī* 心陀羅尼 and follow-the-heart *dhāraṇī* 随心陀羅尼 in, for example, the *Sutra of the Secret Dhāraṇī of Vipulagrabhe Maniprabhe Tathāgata* 大宝廣博樓閣善住秘密陀羅尼經 (T 1005A), translated by Amoghavajra (Jp. Fukū, Ch. Bukong 不空, an Indian priest active in eighth-century Tang China).

⁹ Soothill and Hodous 2005: 426.

¹⁰ McBride 2005: 86.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Copp 2014: 3.

¹³ Harvey 1990: 180.

¹⁴ Copp 2014: 15.

These *dhāraṇīs* begin with the same *oṃ* 唵 sound as *mantras* usually do, so here we see again the interchangeability of the two.

In Japanese Buddhism, *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* are considered to be almost, if not completely, the same. Even Sawa’s dictionary of esoteric Buddhism defines them as synonymous (along with other words for “spell,” e.g., *vidyā* [Jp. *myō* 明]).¹⁵ But we have to take into consideration that Japanese Buddhism is based on the scriptures translated into, and the commentaries written in, Chinese, so the Japanese adoption of these terms relates to the Chinese translations and usage.

Mantras and Dhāraṇīs in (Con) text

There is almost no esoteric scripture without a *mantra* or a *dhāraṇī*. The translated sutras, especially ones explaining a deity or a ritual (i.e., ritual manuals [Jp. *giki* 儀軌, *gisoku* 儀則 or *gihō* 儀法; Sk. *kalpa* [used only in esoteric traditions with this meaning, otherwise meaning *eon*]), contain many of these formulas relating to that deity, or the central divinity (Jp. *honzon* 本尊) of that ritual. Usually the *mantra* or *dhāraṇī* is written only in the transliterated form, with Chinese characters and pronunciation aids, but sometimes special Sanskrit characters, called *siddham* (Jp. *shittan* 悉曇 or *bonji* 梵字, Fig. 1), also appear.¹⁶

These characters were brought to Japan with the scriptures, and so was their academic study, in the first half of the eighth century, in the Nara period. Before that, we have no evidence of a Japanese interest in anything Indian, until Japanese monks went to China during the Tang period, where they met Indian Buddhist monks. Since Chinese monks generally did not learn Sanskrit, the Japanese acquired this attitude from their teachers as well.¹⁷

Many famous scholars of the Shingon and some of the Tendai traditions, however, became known as masters of the *siddham* script. Even the founders of the schools, Kūkai 空海 and Saichō 最澄, were fascinated by these letters, and their writings in *siddham* script have survived (Fig. 2).¹⁸ Kūkai’s major work on the letters and their proper transliteration is *Siddham Mother-letters*



Fig. 1. The “Mystic Words” of the Four Characters

¹⁵ Sawa 1975: 407.

¹⁶ See T 2701-2731, texts devoted to Sanskrit letters.

¹⁷ van Gulik 1980: 119.

¹⁸ van Gulik 1980: 113-115.

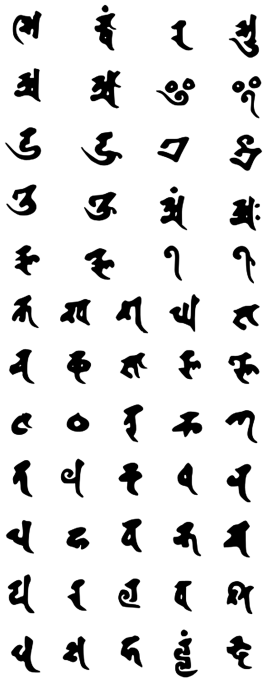


Fig. 2. Siddham written by Kūkai

[*mātrkā*] with Explanation of their Meaning 梵字悉曇字母并釋義 (T 2701).¹⁹ In this text, he also writes about *dhāraṇīs* and the meanings of the main *siddham* characters. It is widely believed in Japan that the table of these characters is the origin of the Japanese *kana* syllabary, the Table of the Fifty Sounds 五十音圖 (and probably that is how the legend was started that Kūkai created the *kana* system).

Commentaries written by Japanese monks also use the *siddham* characters sometimes. For example, the “Scripture of Fugen Enmei Bodhisattva” 普賢延命菩薩 includes only the transliterated form of the *dhāraṇī* of this deity. But in the *Annotation of the Practices in the Forest* 行林抄 (T 2409), a text written by the Tendai monk Jōnen 靜然 in 1154, *siddham* letters are also included. The only problem is that they are slightly different from the ones in the original scripture.

Shingon and *dhāraṇī* seem to be interchangeable in the scriptures. Many terms are used in Chinese characters; the most common ones are *ju* 呪, *shingon* 真言, *mitsugon* 密言, *darani* 陀羅尼. We can also notice a kind of development, a timeline of which

word was used when. For example, in earlier texts relating to the long-life formula, such as the *Sutra of the Dhāraṇī of the Fine Means of Access, Preached by the Buddha* 仏說善法方便陀羅尼經,²⁰ or the *Sutra of the Dhāraṇī of the Assembly of the Buddhas* 諸仏集会陀羅尼經,²¹ although the titles say *dhāraṇī* (or *dhāraṇī-mantra* 陀羅尼呪), in the text the word *dhāraṇī* appears only in the explanations, while the actual formulas use the terms *ju* or *daraniju*.

汝今諦聽當爲汝說善法方便陀羅尼呪。爾時世尊即說呪曰

“Now you should listen to the (clear) truth, for you, I will expound

¹⁹ *Mātrkā* is a goddess and the mother (source) of all *mantras*. For further reading, see Törzsök, Judit, *The Alphabet Goddess Mātrkā in Some Early Śaiva Tantras*, Second International Workshop on Early Tantras, 2009, Pondicherry, India.

²⁰ T 1137.20, translated during the Eastern Jin dynasty, 317-420, although the translator’s name is lost. But the catalogue of Nanjō Bun’yū 南条文雄 (*A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka*, 1883) attributes the translation to Jñānagupta of the Sui dynasty (589-618).

²¹ T 1346.21, translated by Devaprajñā 提雲般若, a monk from Khotan, and others, c. 689-691.

the *dhāraṇī*-spell [*mantra*] of the Fine Means of Access (to the teachings).” At that time, the World Honored One then expounded the spell [*mantra*] that said (. . .)²²

In the later texts of eighth-century Tang China, when the three main propagators and translators (Śubhakarasiṃha 善無畏, Vajrabodhi 金剛智 and Amoghavajra) worked, the terms *mantra* and *dhāraṇī* are generally expressed by *shingon*, *mitsugon* and *darani*.

As mentioned before, most of these formulas are just meaningless sounds, especially in the transliterated Chinese characters. But if we have the *siddham* Sanskrit letters as well, some words make sense, while others sometimes are just sounds included to give some kind of musicality to the verse (scholars also have examined and compared *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* to Sanskrit poems, because sometimes the sounds are there to make it whole, although grammatically and semantically they have no place there). For example, the *mantra* (or *dhāraṇī*) of the Adamantine Life-span says,

ॐ वज्रयुषे वृक्ष 唵 嚩日囉二合論囉 娑嚩二合賀 *oṃ vajrāyuse svāhā*
(*oṃ* adamantine life-span *svāhā*).

Here, the beginning and end cannot be translated, but as esoteric monks explain it, *oṃ* is like praise, and *svāhā* is generally added at the end (also like *phat*), and even though its literal meaning is “well said” or “so be it,” it is never translated. Though *oṃ* and *svāhā* do not mean anything in the context of the incantation formulas, they have important functions in the sense that they give the formula an emphasized beginning and end. But there are many *mantras* that have only additional sounds, like the *dhāraṇī* of Kōmokuten 広目天 (Sk. Virūpākṣa), one of the guardians of the Four Heavenly Kings (Jp. *shitennō* 四天王, Sk. *caturmahārāja* or *lokapāla*), which says,

मल्लिं म म म 末臨麼麼麼 *malim ma ma ma* (holding *ma ma ma*).²³

Here, the *ma ma ma* has no meaning. It is merely added to provide a kind of rhythm when it is chanted during a ritual.

Another problem of the translated works is that in many cases the transliterated Chinese characters vary for the same Sanskrit words. In the case of the aforementioned *dhāraṇī* of the Adamantine Life-span, the following character-variations are used:

²² T 1137.20: 580b9-11.

²³ T 2409.76: 145a20-21.

- 唵 嚩日囉二合喻囉 娑嚩二合 (T 1133.20 金剛壽命陀羅尼念誦法)
 唵 嚩日囉二合喻灑 娑嚩二合 賀 (T 1134A.20 金剛壽命陀羅尼經法)
 唵 嚩日囉二合喻囉 薩嚩二合 訶 引 (T 1134B.20 金剛壽命陀羅尼經)
 唵 二十五 麼折囉論師某甲二十六 薩嚩訶 (T 1135.20 仏説一切如來金剛壽命陀羅尼經)²⁴
 唵 嚩日囉二合論囉 娑嚩二合賀 (T 1136.20 仏説一切諸如來心光明加持普賢菩薩延命金剛最勝陀羅尼經)

There is one question remaining that I would like to address here: do these mystical (magical) formulas work? In this matter, I agree with Padoux, who surmises that the efficacy of *mantras*, *dhāraṇīs* or any kind of ritual incantation with alleged magical power cannot be proven.²⁵ It is ascribed to them, it is believed they possess it, because that is what the Buddhist scriptures say.

The *Fugen Enmei Scripture*

There is an ambiguous short scripture in the twentieth volume of the *Taishō* canon, which tells the story of how Fugen Bodhisattva became Fugen, the Prolonger of Life. The earliest mention of the scripture indicates that in 865 it was brought back to Japan from China by Shūei 宗叡 (809-884), one of the most prominent Shingon monks of the ninth century.²⁶ The full title of the scripture is: *Sutra of the Most Excellent Adamantine Dhāraṇī of Samantabhadra, Empowered by the Light of all the Tathāgatas, Preached by the Buddha*.²⁷

It is a perfect example of a *dhāraṇī sūtra* as defined by Paul Copp: a “Buddhist text that centers on the presentation and means to actualize the incantations known as *dhāraṇī*.”²⁸ The text describes how the Buddha expounded the adamantine life-span *dhāraṇī*, the conditions and implements for the ritual, and all the benefits for the practitioners.

²⁴ This formula is completely different from the others, for in this scripture the usual mantra is not to be found.

²⁵ Padoux 2008: 310-311.

²⁶ It is recorded in Shūei’s catalogue of imported scriptures: *Shinshosha shōrai hōmontō mukuroku* 新書寫請來法門等目錄 (2174A.55: 1108b06-07). Also repeated in Annen’s comprehensive catalogue of all the important monks, in which Annen included all the texts of the Longevity Ritual (Jp. Enmeihō 延命法): *Shoajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總錄 (T 2176.55: 1121b16-18).

²⁷ Jp. *Bussetsu issai sho nyorai shin kōmyō kaji Fugen bosatsu enmei kongō saishō darani kyō* 佛説一切諸如來心光明加持普賢菩薩延命金剛最勝陀羅尼經, T 1136.20.

²⁸ Sorensen, Payne and Orzech 2011: 176.

²⁹ *Bukkyō Daizōkyō* 仏教大藏經 (Buddhist Tripitaka), Vol. 58, Mikkyōbu 密教部 (Esoteric Teachings Section) 7, Taipei: Bukkyō Shuppansha, 1978.

The text can also be found in the *Bukkyō daizōkyō* 仏教大藏經²⁹ but nowhere else. Thus, together with the lack of an original Sanskrit text, we cannot help but be suspicious of its origins. We know that the *Taishō* canon is mainly based upon the printed Korean *Kōrai daizōkyō* 高麗大藏經, which does not include the Fugen Enmei scripture. Before the *Taishō*, this scripture had not been part of any Chinese Buddhist canon, but the Japanese editors also used the scriptures and writings from all the regions of Japan. In the *Bukkyō daizōkyō* the scripture is No. 1769 in Volume 58. The texts in these two canons (the *Taishō* and the *Bukkyō daizōkyō*) are identical. The *Buddhist Canon* follows the *Pinjia Canon* 頻伽大藏經 (Ch. *Pinjia da zangjing*),³⁰ and was compiled in the 1970s and 1980s, so this text was probably included as it was preserved in the *Taishō*. The *Fugen Enmei Sutra* is not a long scripture, taking up only one page in the *Taishō*, and three in the *Buddhist Canon*.

One of the reasons to include it in the *Taishōzō* may have been the fact that in Japan this scripture and its ritual had strong ties to the imperial family and ruling class through the two esoteric schools from the ninth century onward. Copies of this text, usually alongside the other adamantine life-span scriptures, are still part of the inventory of many Japanese esoteric temples, such as Kongōbuji, Tōji and Daigoji, which have been fairly influential temples since the beginning of the Heian period.³¹

No source has been recovered from either Dunhuang, which was one of the most prominent centers of esoteric Buddhism on the Silk Road, or Sri Lanka, where Amoghavajra spent years gathering hundreds of esoteric scriptures, which he took back to China by boat. The other sutras of the adamantine life-span group were most probably brought to China along the Silk Road, since the principal *mantra* “*Oṃ vajrāyūse svāhā*” appears on one of the *dhāraṇī* amulets associated with Amida Buddha 阿弥陀仏 (Sk. Amitābha) found in the Library Cave (or Cave 17) in Dunhuang.³²

It is not just the sutra that is missing from the Indian and Tibetan Buddhist collections; neither is the image found in the history of art of the two countries. Not one image or text or any other kind of source survives that mentions Fugen as a two- or twenty-armed life-prolonging bodhisattva, as represented in Japan. The only mention of a statue that might be the depiction of the canonical image is briefly described by the Tendai monk Ennin

³⁰ Full title: *The Kalaviṅka Hermitage Canon* (Ch. *Pinjia jingshe jiaokan da zangjing* 頻伽精舍校刊大藏經). This was the first letterpress edition of the Buddhist canon printed in China. Consisting of 8,416 volumes, it was first published from 1909 to 1913.

³¹ Unfortunately, it is very difficult to get permission to take a look at these documents, so I have not examined these firsthand yet.

³² See Hidas 2014.

円仁 (794-864), who was the first to bring the image³³ and the so-called Enmei *dhāraṇī* in Sanskrit³⁴ to Japan.

The Dhāraṇīs in the Text

There are six *dhāraṇīs* in this scripture. The first and longest one is called the adamantine life-span *dhāraṇī*. The other five are the long-life *dhāraṇīs* (Jp. *enmei darani* 延命陀羅尼). The first one reads:

恒儻也二合他一者隸者擺者隸二尾曩知三娑縛二合悉底二合計四斫羯囉二合誡爾五鉢囉二合捨
漫觀六陸轉路識引陸轉娑但囉二合南七阿曩 唵 八句曩 唵 九摩賀曩 唵 十者隸者隸十一係摩誤
僑二合反哩十二係摩儻薩禰十三係摩尸棄十四矯囉吠十五矯囉悌十六係俱囉吠十七俱囉 唵 十八
俱囉摩底十九微捨摩寧摩寧二十戌躡毘囉二合二十一阿者梨二十二微者梨二十三摩尾覽囉二合四
呼牟呼牟二十五唵囉日囉二合論囉囉娑囉二合賀

Unfortunately, the original *siddham* letters are not included here, only the Chinese transliterations, so it is difficult to translate and understand. These factors make it incredibly arduous to decode it and transliterate it back into Sanskrit, since there is no usable dictionary for the transliterated characters, which can differ with every translator. At the end of the 1960s, however, a Japanese scholar researching the esoteric teachings, Hatsuzaki Shōjun 初崎正純,³⁵ took on this huge task and produced not just a Sanskrit version but also an English translation, although he uses the Tibetan version of the *dhāraṇīs*. The adamantine life-span *dhāraṇī* says:

tadyathā cale calācale vinati svastike cakrāṅgānām. pracamantu sarva-rogam sarva-satvānām. ā naṭe kunaṭe mahānaṭe. care care hema-giri. hema-gaure, hema-niṣunte, hema-sikhi gaurave, gaurave, he kurare, kurare, kumatī, viśasa-maṇi-maṇi, śuṣi-vibhe acale vicale, mā vilamba humu humu.

What is called a goddess of destiny, which is immovable and yet movable, and which is humble, which possesses *cakrāṅgā*'s sacred aspects. Strike out all sicknesses of all beings. Oh *naṭi* (scented

³³ This is recorded in his catalogue of imported teachings, which he wrote during his eight-year sojourn in Tang China. The diary of Ennin, translated into English by Edwin O. Reischauer, refers to an unusual Fugen image on top of three elephants (Reischauer 1955: 255). This could be the prototype for the painting Ennin brought back to Japan (*Nittō shingu shōkyō mokuroku* 入唐新求聖教目錄, T 2167.55: 1084c02).

³⁴ It is recorded in the same catalogue: 梵字金剛延命真言一本 (T 2167.55: 1082a13).

³⁵ T 2409.76.

trees), *kunaṭi* (herbs), great *naṭi*. That which is full of life, that which is full of life, the summit of snow. White snow, that which possesses the glory of snow, the top of the snow, which is awe inspiring, awe inspiring. Oh *kurara* (medicine tree), *kurara*, *kumati*, that which possesses the supreme *maṇi*, that which possesses powerful light, that which is immovable, away from transitions, do not lean, *humu*, *humu*.³⁶

We can see that the last verse of the *dhāraṇī* in the *Fugen Enmei Sutra*, *oṃ vajrāyuse svāhā*, is missing, which, Hatsuzaki further adds, is only a part of the two sutras translated by Amoghavajra. (This is not quite true in this form, as we will see below.)

The Tendai iconography and ritual manual of Jōnen 静然,³⁷ the *Gyōrinshō* 行林抄 (T 2409), gives *siddham* letters to this *dhāraṇī*. We do not know, however, the origins of these letters, as Jōnen provides no explanation. The transliterations of three translators, Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra and Devaprajñā, are also given in the *Gyōrinshō*:

1. Vajrabodhi's text (*Bussetsu issai nyorai kongō jūmyō darani kyō*, T 1135.20)³⁸

折禮句一折羅折禮句二毘那借音即此字之上聲下有字傍注上去者皆做此微彌里反句三莎蘇枯反悉底都以反下同鷄句四斫迦爛揭時句五鉢羅舍漫都句六薩婆嚕依魯字本音而轉舌呼之其下口邊作梨犁麗皆做此伽句七阿那上蘇卓譜反句八俱那上蘇句九摩訶捺蘇句十折囉””句十一醯呼計反下句摩具嚕句十二醯摩爾產去地句十三醯摩室尸句十四吉囉上陞句十五吉囉上鞞句十六醯引聲俱囉上嚕句十七俱未底句十九毘奢麼謀跋反泥句二十戌暑輪矩反毘上婆句二十一阿折禮毘折禮句二十二摩毘濫婆句二十三呼去牟呼去牟句二十四

2. Devaprajñā's text (*Shobutsu jūe darani-kyō*, T 1346.21)³⁹

恒姪他一者犁二者擗者犁三彌那坻薩嚩二合薩底二合稽四斫訖浪二合藁南五鉢囉二合舍滿都薩婆路識六薩婆薩怛嚩二合南七阿娜蘇八俱那蘇摩訶娜蘇九遮隸””十係麼繞羊矯反哩十一係麼爾鎚尼十二係摩尸棄十三矯囉微十四矯囉迷十五係俱囉微十六俱羅犁十七俱摩尼十八微始麼泥””十九戌””毘嚩二十阿者犁二十一彌者犁二十二麼尾噯麼二十三戶毛””二十四唵二十五嚩折囉論(論)師某甲二十六娑縛訶

³⁶ Hatsuzaki 1968: 938-939.

³⁷ Tendai monk who lived in the twelfth century at Mudōji 無道寺. His master was Sōjitsu 相実 (1081–1165).

³⁸ T 2409.76: 143a06-16.

³⁹ T 2409.76: 143a17-27.

3. Amoghavajra's text (the *Fugen Enmei Scripture*, T 1136.20)⁴⁰

恒儻也二合他一者隸二者羅者隸三尾曩知娑嚩二合悉底二合計四折羯囉二合誡爾五鉢囉二合捨
 漫觀六薩嚩路誡引薩嚩娑但嚩二合南七阿曩嚩八句曩嚩九摩賀曩嚩十者隸」」十一係摩橋二
 合哩十二係摩爾鐘爾十三係摩尸棄十四嬌羅吠十五嬌囉梯十六係俱囉吠十七俱囉囉十八俱麼底
 十九微捨麼寧二十戌秣毘嚩二合二十一阿者梨微者梨二十二摩尾嚩二十三吽牟呼牟二十四唵嚩日
 囉二合論搏娑嚩二合賀引

Devaprajñā's is the earliest of the three (end of the seventh century), and from the transliteration we can see that it is close to the Tibetan version that Hatsuzaki translated into Sanskrit and English. Vajrabodhi's and Amoghavara's are almost identical, except for the *dhāraṇī* at the end: the Fugen Enmei text gives the usual adamantine life-span *dhāraṇī*, the other gives a different version, saying *om vajrāyusi svāhā*.⁴¹

The other five *dhāraṇīs* in the Fugen Enmei text, which are all called *enmei darani* 延命陀羅尼, or “*dhāraṇī* for longevity,” are expounded first by the *vajradharas* (vajra-holders) and then by the Four Heavenly Kings, one by one, with their oath to protect and help sentient beings.⁴² But the problem is that these *dhāraṇīs* for longevity are different from what the Shingon and Tendai ritual manuals designate as the *enmei darani* 延命陀羅尼 or “longevity *dhāraṇī*.” In the *Kakuzenshō* 覺禪鈔, compiled by the Shingon monk Kakuzen 覺禪 (1143-?), a *mantra* is given in the Enmei section, which is actually the last part of the long *dhāraṇī* above: 唵 嚩日囉 二合 論囉 娑嚩 引 賀.⁴³ The Tendai ritual manuals, such as the *Asabashō* of the thirteenth century, also give this *mantra* (although it is called there the adamantine life-span *dhāraṇī*).

Ritual Applications in the Scripture and the Fugen Enmei Ritual

There are different kinds of uses for the *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs*. The two most common are the recital of the utterances by themselves or as part of a complex ritualistic environment. For the first type of use, the earliest record is from Enchin 円珍, the prominent Tendai monk of the ninth century, who brought the adamantine life-span scriptures to Japan, and in his miscellaneous writings we find an entry about the recitation of the “longevity *mantra*” in 852 in the imperial palace: 延命真言十一萬九千四百遍 每日三百遍.⁴⁴ This

⁴⁰ T 2409.76: 143b01-13.

⁴¹ The end of the *Gyōrinshō* text says 論師, but this is a mistake; in the original scripture it is 論師, read as *yushi* in Japanese.

⁴² T 1136.20: 579c01-25.

⁴³ *Kakuzenshō* 70, TZ 5: 110b08.

⁴⁴ *Chishō daishi zenshū* 智証大師全集 1917-18: 1297.

record shows that this *mantra* was recited three hundred times every day for a whole year.

The second type of use of the utterances involves a multifaceted ritual that included, as countless registered accounts tell us, four major platforms, one head monk (Jp. *ajari* 阿闍梨, Sk. *ācārya*) with twenty assistants (Jp. *bansō* 伴僧), and usually lasted seven days. The Fugen Enmei scripture, however, gives only a brief description of one ritualistic usage, consisting of basic instructions:

若有衆生怖畏死難病苦夭橫。有如是苦。但書寫此經受持讀誦。或別持此陀羅尼。或畫普賢延命像。作此方法依月一日八日十五日。建立道場燒四十九燈。花香果藥各置十六器散於壇上。合掌禮拜高聲讚詠此陀羅尼。及懺悔往咎。不墮三惡道。捨此身獲得金剛壽命更不輪迴。

If there are sentient beings who fear the difficulty of death, suffering from illness or having unnatural death, and if they have these kinds of suffering, if they only copy this sutra, uphold and recite it, and in addition uphold this *dhāraṇī*, or draw the image of Samantabhadra, do this ritual on the first, eighth, fifteenth day of the month, build an altar and light forty-nine lanterns, put flowers, incense, fruits and medicine, each in sixteen bowls, and scatter them on the altar, put their hands together, do worship, praise out loud this *dhāraṇī*, and repent their faults in the past, then they will not be reborn in the three evil paths. If they renounce this body, they will obtain the adamant life span and will not be born again.

This is a very short and condensed version of the ritual that in Japan became one of the major rituals in the Tendai esoteric school. Although “Enmei hō” 延命法, or the “ritual for longevity,” has been recorded since the beginning of the tenth century, the first specific mention of the “Fugen Enmei hō” 普賢延命法 appears only in 1075 in Tendai accounts. It is recorded in the most extensive Tendai ritual manual written by Shōchō 承澄 (1205-1282), the *Asabashō* 阿婆縛抄:

承保二年十月九日。法性寺座主蒙二綸旨一。於二賀陽院內裏一。卒二於廿口伴僧一。被レ始二修普賢延命法一。⁴⁵

Jōhō 2nd year (1075) 10th month 9th day, the Hosshōji temple head (*zasu*), at the Kayanoin imperial palace first performed the *fugen enmeihō* with the assistance of twenty priests.

⁴⁵ *Asabashō* 220, TZ 9: 864c7-9.

The Shingon chronicles first mention the “Fugen Enmei hō” in 1099. The *Kakuzenshō* 覚禪鈔 records the ritual of Fugen Enmei being performed by Kakugyō *hosshinnō* 覚行法親王⁴⁶ (prince-priest, 1075-1105) for the cloistered former emperor Shirakawa 白河法皇 (1053-1129, r. 1073-1083).

From the many historical records, we know that a variety of *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* were recited during the rituals. For example, the *mantras* of the aforementioned ritual of 1099 are listed in the *Kakuzenshō* 覚禪鈔:⁴⁷

- Dainichi shingon 大日真言
- Butsugen shingon 佛眼真言
- Honzon (the Fugen Enmei image) 本尊
- Hachiji monju 八字文殊
- Kyōryōrin 教令輪
- Goma 護摩
- “Ichiji kinrin” 一字金輪⁴⁸

The Shingon and Tendai rituals that appeared in the tenth century are much more elaborate and complicated than the brief description in the scripture. We get the full picture from the numerous Shingon and Tendai ritual manuals, which include many explanations as well. In a future study, I will compare these manuals according to the schools and their streams, in the hope of understanding why the two names (Enmei and Fugen Enmei) of the basically the same ritual became common in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Concluding Remarks

Mantras and *dhāraṇīs* no doubt remain a mystery, but their usage gives us a glimpse into the ritual milieu of the early centuries in the history of esoteric teachings in Japan. The emphasis is on faith, not understanding, on believing that the recitation grants wonderful benefits and ultimately enlightenment. Even as early as the beginning of the “golden age” of esoteric Buddhism in eighth-century Tang China, these magical words were not well understood, as shown by the treatise written by Amoghavajra, *Encomia on*

⁴⁶ He was the second son of Emperor Shirakawa and became a priest at the age of ten at Ninnaji, becoming the third *monzeki* (Japanese Buddhist priest of imperial lineage) there. He was the first to proclaim the title of *hosshinnō*.

⁴⁷ There is another version of this in the *Dainihon shiryō* 大日本史料 (Vol. 3/5: 386), which also gives the number of times the *mantras* should be recited, but this is missing from the *Taishōzō zuzō* version.

⁴⁸ *Kakuzenshō* 70, TZ 5: 112b25-c02.

a *General Interpretation of the Meaning of Dhāraṇī* 総釈陀羅尼義讚.⁴⁹ It was written on imperial order to clarify the meaning of the term *dhāraṇī*. In his text—although he emphasizes the mnemonic nature of the *dhāraṇī*, not the magical one, never using the word “spell”—Amoghavajra surmises that all these terms (*dhāraṇī*, *mantra*, *vidyā*, mystic words) are just types of the true words of the secret teachings, whether they are one, two, three, one hundred, one thousand or ten thousand characters.

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