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TĀNTRIC BUDDHISM AND SHINGON BUDDHISM

That Buddhism having a heavy, secretive, or esoteric coloring is here termed "Esoteric Buddhism." Recently, however, it has become common practice to refer to this tradition of Buddhism as Tāntric Buddhism, Buddhist Tāntrism, or Vajrayāna.

Tāntric Buddhism is so termed because of this tradition's emphasis on *tāntras*, religious texts developed within Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism after the eighth century, and which came to replace the literary genre of *sūtra* which had been previously the major literary form of the Buddhist scriptures. *Sūtras* laid great stress upon a philosophical or theoretical narrative, but the *tāntras* came to include many rules and rituals concerned with the practice of the religious teachings. Etymologically, *sūtra* meant "thread," and *tāntra* meant "warp." As a piece of fabric is made up of both "thread" and "warp," it is likewise taught that Enlightenment is attained through the carrying out of certain practices, certain rituals based also upon sound doctrine, and from this combination of both theory and its practice the *tāntras* were produced.

Vajrayāna is that teaching or vehicle (*yāna*) which is as firm as a diamond (*vajra*) and which cannot be destroyed. In later Buddhist texts and commentaries, this term Vajrayāna is used to signify a third major teaching within Buddhism, a teaching placed beyond the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna.

It was during the years of the first century before the Christian era and the first century of the Christian era that Buddhism first began to reveal its magical, ceremonial side, an era roughly identical to that during which the Mahāyāna first appeared. During the second century simple ceremonies developed during which incense,

flowers, and lights were offered before an image of the Buddha, and *dhāraṇī* were chanted. These tendencies and their developments can be seen in those Buddhist scriptures translated in China and today preserved in Chinese; the period in question stretches from the Later Han Dynasty through the Three Kingdoms Period (— ca. 265).[1]

The avoiding of misfortune and the requesting of blessing by means of reciting scriptural passages, and even the performance of religious ceremonies were forbidden to the early members of the Saṃgha, as these practices were considered to be inimical to the eventual liberation of the bhikṣu. Yet even in the early period of Buddhist history, simple religious ceremonies and even the recitation of magical spells were permitted for bhikṣus only for their own protection. It is even recorded that the Dharmaguptakas (a branch of the Sthaviravādin) which appeared approximately three hundred years after the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha possessed a canonical collection of *dhāraṇīs*, a *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka*.[2]

The magical and ceremonial tendencies within the lay community of Buddhism began to be evident in the rise of the Mahāyāna, and gradually came to possess great significance for the Mahāyāna. From the third century on, the scriptures of the Mahāyāna came little by little to have *dhāraṇī* appended to them, until finally *dhāraṇī* came to form one of the topics of study of the Mahāyāna bodhisattva, along with *adhiśīla* (higher morality), *adhicitta* (higher meditation), and *adhiprajñā* (higher wisdom).[3] Along with the reverence paid to the Mahāyāna scriptures themselves, as seen in such devotional practices as the reciting and the copying down of these texts, *dhāraṇī* — which now were thought to abbreviate and to concentrate the more voluminous works into a few short sentences — came to be recited as a devotion to avoid evil or misfortune, and

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[1] See the *Hua-chi t'o-lo-ni shen-chu ching* 華手陀羅尼神呪經 T. XXI, p. 875a, and the *Ch'eng Fa-hua ching* 正法華經 T. IX, p. 130c.

[2] See the *I-pu tsung-lin-lun shu-chi* 異部宗輪論述記 Manji Zoku-zōkyō I, 83. 3, p. 220.

[3] See the *Ta-fang-teng ta-chi ching* 大方等大集經 T. XIII, p. 5c–6a.

as a consequence, their number increased greatly.

During the early Gupta period (ca. 320–470), inspired perhaps by the revival of Hinduism, more logical and systematic Buddhist dogmatic systems were developed under the aegis of thinkers such as Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu. On the other hand, however, Buddhism incorporated much of Hindu ceremonial; it embraced the Hindu gods and goddesses, and so came to take on a heavy theistic coloring. Ceremonies for the worship or *pāja* of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas came to be written down in minute detail.[1] Ceremonies and rituals for rain, and for the stopping of rain were taken into Buddhism,[2] and scriptures which purport to be medical works which effect cures through *dhāraṇī* recitations and various other spells and formulas were now composed.[3] In responding to the simple needs of the people, Buddhism came more and more to develop along the lines of such ritual formulas and spells. The *Agnihoma* or fire ceremony which was the core of Vedic religion took on a Buddhist aspect, and began in the third and fourth century to appear as a Buddhist ceremony.[4]

Various Hindu gods were placed in positions subordinate to the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas, either as followers of the Buddhist divinities or as creatures subjugated by them. Also, some Hindu gods were taken into Buddhism; the whole process causing the number of gods to increase dramatically. In the period just preceeding and just following the start of the Christian era, images of the Buddha made in the Gandhāra region already are shown in various hand gestures or poses (*mudrā*), but within the Buddhist scriptures themselves, the rules and regulations concerning these *mudrā* were not written down until the fifth or sixth century.[5] The movement

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[1] See the *Ta-chi-yi shen-chu ching* 大吉義神呪経 T. XXI, p. 579b–580b.

[2] See the *Ta-fang-teng wu-hsiang ta-yün ching* 大方等無相大雲経 T. XII, no. 387.

[3] See the *Chu-ch'ih ching* 呪齒経 T. XXI, no. 1327.

[4] Śrīmitra (c. 260–340) translated one scripture entitled the *K'ung ch'iu wang ching* 孔雀王経, which however is now lost; we are able to get a partial knowledge of its contents by a remark made at the end of Saṅghavarman's translation of the *K'ung-ch'iu wang chu ching* 孔雀王呪経 T. XIX, p. 458c.

[5] See the *Mu-li man-t'o-lo chu ching* 牟梨曼陀羅呪経 T. XIX, p. 658b–664c.

to unify these numerous gods and these complex ceremonies into some sort of fixed order began to be apparent in the seventh century.

Within those Esoteric scriptures dating from the very earliest period, there are many texts which request practical, earthly benefits solely through simple spells or through religious ceremonies. Even though such texts have the form of Buddhist scriptures, in contents they have rules for religious practice (*vidhi* or *kalpa*) which greatly resemble those of Brahmanism or Hinduism. In distinction to this, in the seventh century Buddhist philosophy became appended to these spells and ceremonies, and scriptures perfectly Buddhist in both doctrine and practice began to appear. As an example of this, the *T'o-lo-ni chi ching* (陀羅尼集経), a text whose Chinese translation by Atigupta dates from the middle of the seventh century, has within it many religious practices the ostensible goal of which is to avoid calamity, but scattered throughout the text the non-substantiality of all forms of existence and the *pāramitās* are taught, and methods for the attainment of the unsurpassed wisdom of the Buddhas are described.[1] Also, by way of example, there is the *Ch'ien-yen ch'ien-pi ching* 千眼千臂経, translated into Chinese in roughly the same period which states that the ultimate goal of all religious practices (ceremonies, spells, etc.) is the attainment of Buddhahood.[2] These texts are thus emerging from simple ritual or liturgical texts which aim for some concrete, this-worldly goal to an orthodox, Esoteric scripture whose underlying philosophy is traditional Buddhist philosophy.

The *T'o-lo-ni chi ching* and the *I-chi'eh fa-ting-lin wang ching* 一字仏頂輪王経 translated by Bodhiruci attempt to systematize the the vast number of divinities up to this time into Buddhism, and it is also at this time that foundation is laid for the *maṇḍala*, the pictorial, and hence systematic, presentation of the full pantheon of esoteric deities.

The developments mentioned above, i.e., the gradual and then the greater increment of esoteric and ritualistic elements in the

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[1] See T. XVIII, p. 787c, p. 811b, p. 813b.

[2] See T. XX, p. 87a.

Mahāyāna can all be rather clearly traced by reference to the accurately recorded dates of these texts' translation into Chinese; notwithstanding any future advances in Indian historiography and archaeology, the importance of these Chinese translations for ascertaining a definitive chronology of Indian literary history will never be lost.

In both Indian and in her bordering regions, the seventh and eighth centuries saw the Golden Age of Esoteric Buddhism. During this time the *dhāraṇis*, the *yoga*, the magic and the ceremonies which had hithertofore been developing within Mahāyāna became fully systematized. Along with this, mystical tendencies within the Mahāyāna more and more came to the fore.

The religious practices of Esoteric Buddhism, based as they are upon a mystical teaching, became the necessary practical undergirding of all Mahāyāna theoretical philosophy. Later Mahāyāna thinkers were theoretically either Mādhyamika, Vijñānavāda, or Mādhyamika-Yogācāra, but all of them employed a mystical meditative yoga based on the esoteric tradition as a means to attain their religious goals.

It is not helpful to try to trace a line of theoretical development of the Mahāyāna from within Esoteric scriptures. The outstanding characteristic of Esoteric Buddhism is not philosophy; rather it is the ability to experientially grasp, by means of complicated rituals and practices, the abstract philosophical concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. A belief in spells, nurtured since ancient times in India, and religious ceremonies intimately bound up with the round of daily life, joined together with the theoretical philosophy of Mahāyāna Buddhism and produced the actual religious practices of Esoteric Buddhism. A faith in spells which has firm roots in all layers of Indian society, the structuring of Buddhist ceremonies, and the detailed philosophical system of Mahāyāna thought, produced scriptures which systematically fused these various currents together, namely the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* and the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra*.

According to the traditional theology of Shingon Buddhism, the Esoteric Buddhism as taught by these two scriptures is termed

Saijun-mikkyō, or *Junmitsu*, "Pure Esotericism," signifying that the Esoteric Buddhism taught therein is a correct and faithful transmission of Mahāyāna principles. In opposition to this the phrase *Zōku-mikkyō*, or *Zōmitsu*, "Miscellaneous Esotericism" refers to all other Esoteric texts outside the systematization schemes of the above two main scriptures. If we follow the scriptural classification generic to Indian Esoteric Buddhism and now followed in Tibet, the "Miscellaneous Esoteric" texts correspond roughly to *Kriyā-tantra*.[1] The *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* corresponds to *Cārya-tantra*, and the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra* to the category of *Yoga-tantra*; no texts belonging to the *Anuttarayoga-tantra* were introduced into Japan, becoming part of its tradition.

The transition from Miscellaneous Esoteric Buddhism to Pure Esotericism was a gradual one, and indeed it is difficult to separate clearly the division between the two, but the following consideration may be relevant here. Scriptures of the Miscellaneous Esoteric tradition generally take the form of sermons preached by the Buddha Sākyamuni, and concern magic and ceremonies designed to avert evil and bring about blessings. There is no unitary religious practice involving *dhāraṇī*, *mudrā*, or meditation, nor are the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas systematized into the scheme of a *maṇḍala*. The scriptures of the Pure Esoteric tradition are preached by Vairocana Tathāgata; in the practice of the teachings set forth in these scriptures, meditation is combined with *mudrā* and *dhāraṇī* (*mantras*), and the interrelationship between these three — which now have as their goal the attainment of the full illumination which is Buddhahood — is strongly stressed. Also a variety of *maṇḍalas* are depicted in these Pure Esoteric scriptures.

It should be noted in the history of Esoteric Buddhism that the scriptures of the Pure Esoteric tradition treat the problem of Enlightenment. These texts do not have as their main aim the quest

[1] According to Dr. H. von Glasenapp (*Buddhistische Mysterien*, Stuttgart, 1940, p. 41), the *Junmitsu* is the right handed school which has no *śakta* inclinations, while the *Zōmitsu* is the left handed school which has *śakta* elements. The latter part of this statement is not right. The *Zōmitsu* is *Kriyā*, and has no *śakta* element.

for secular or worldly benefits. When one by means of his individual or indeed by his personal ascetic regimen advances (*parāvṛtti*) from the realm of phenomena to the realm of the Absolute, he is able to become enlightened to the Ultimate Truth. In this realm, magic or occult powers take a subordinate position, and are relevant only insofar as they reflect one's unity or absorption into the greater, cosmic life of the universe.

The ascetic regimens or practices by which one is able to attain to a perception of the Highest Truth are many and varied according to the scripture consulted. But it is a general rule that the various scriptures that do teach these practices do attempt basically to unify one's actions of the physical plane, of the verbal plane, and of the spiritual or mental plane. Specifically, one forms a *mudrā* with his hands (the physical plane), recites a *mantra* or *dhāraṇi* (the verbal plane) and attempts at the same time to concentrate his mind in one spot.

According to the view of Esoteric Buddhism, the Absolute is the life of the universe, and this is understood as an entity with human personality; when one realized that his bodily actions, his speech, and his mental functions are of one substance with that of the Buddha, he has then become of one body or of one essence with the life of the universe, the Ultimate Truth.

The *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* is preached by the Tathāgata Vairocana in response to the questioning of Vajradhara-guhyapati — the Vajra-Holder, the Master of Mysteries — and it is in this scripture that the methods for the attainment of the Highest Truth is taught as well as its theological basis. Its theology is centered in the phrase, "*bodhicitta* is the cause (of Enlightenment), *mahā-karuṇā* is its basis, and *upāya* is its termination . . . ."[1] Here we see that *upāya* is no longer regarded as merely a means to achieve a certain goal, but rather now in the Esoteric tradition, it is regarded as the Ultimate goal. In sum, it is through the joint practice of *prajñā* and *upāya* that attainment of the Ultimate is made possible. In the *Mahā-*

[1] See T. XVIII, p. 1b.

Vairocana sūtra, it is taught that awareness of one's own mind is *bodhi*, and that this is Ultimate Wisdom or the Highest Truth; following upon this, this scripture goes into greater detail in describing the mind in its progress from attachment to Self, through gradual involvement with morality, until one eventually comes to understand oneself as *śūnyatā* and as essentially pure.

There are a variety of ascetic practices taught in the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra*, but a representative meditation is the one that employs five letters, the letters *a*, *va*, *ra*, *ha*, *kha* to symbolize the five constituent elements that make up the universe, *earth*, *water*, *fire*, *air*, *and space* (空); One visualizes these five letters as being placed in five spots on his body, from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. These five letters and the five elements are symbols of the universe, and by means of visualizing them with regard to one's own body, a union of microcosm and macrocosm can be achieved.

The *maṇḍala* as depicted in the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* is called the *Mahā-karuṇā-garbhodbhava-maṇḍala*. Its name signifies the *maṇḍala* of great compassion which is generated out of a mother's womb, and this *maṇḍala* is believed to present in a graphic form the body, the speech, and the mental activity of the Buddha.

In this *maṇḍala* Vairocana Tathāgata is directly in the center, surrounded by four Buddhas, surrounding whom in turn are a large number of bodhisattvas and lesser deities, all of whom are divided into various groups. In this way, the *Mahā-karuṇā-garbhodbhava-maṇḍala* is regarded as symbolizing the realm of the Absolute. One meditates by the aid of this *maṇḍala* and so attempts to facilitate his absorption into the life of the universe.

According to the received view of the Esoteric tradition in both China and Japan, the *Vajroṣṇīṣa sūtra* is a collection of scriptures or sermons preached on 18 different occasions and in as many different locations, in all made up of 100,000 *ślokas*; the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra* is the first scripture among these eighteen. The Sanskrit text of the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra* and its Tibetan translation

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[1a] See T. XVIII, no. 882; Tōhoku no. 479.

correspond to the Chinese translation (today extant in 30 *chüan*) made by Shih-huo (施護).[1a] The three *chüan* translation of Amoghavajra corresponds to but one part of this expanded text.[1]

An outline of all 18 sections of the *Vajroṣṇīṣa sūtra* is given in the *Shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*[2], a work translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra. It has been traditionally held in China and Japan that of the 18 sections of the *Vajroṣṇīṣa sūtra*, the sixth section corresponds to the *Li-ch'ü kuang ching*[3] (Skt. *Paramādya*) translated by Fa-hsien, and the fifteenth section corresponds to the *Chin-k'ang san-yeh pi-mi ching*[4] (Skt. *Guhya-samāja-tantra*) translated by Shih-huo. But if we compare the narration as given in Amoghavajra's *Shih-pa-hui chih-kuei* with the present contents of these two extant scriptures, we find that the former work, the *Chih-kuei*, merely narrates what appears to be a very early form of these works, and so it becomes difficult to imagine that by the time of Amoghavajra the *Vajroṣṇīṣa sūtra* was in as complete a form as we possess today.

The *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra* takes the form of a dialogue between Mahā Vairocana Tathāgata who answers the questions of the bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi, and in this scripture five stages of religious practice are taught by which one may come to know the Buddhahood in his own body, and by which he may attain Absolute Wisdom,[5] and the pictorial representation of the realm of illumination achieved through this practice is the *Vajradhātu-maṇḍala*.

In the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra*, the first chapter is devoted to theoretical teachings, and all of the following chapters teach its religious practice; in the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra*, however, the reli-

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[1] See T. XVIII, no. 865.

[2] 十八会指帰 *Chin-k'ang ting yü-chia shih-pa-hui chih-kuei* (金剛頂瑜伽十八会指帰) See T. XVIII, no. 869.

[3] 最上根本大楽金剛不空三昧大教王経 *Tsui-shang ken-pen ta-lo chin-k'ang pu-k'ung san-mei ta chiao wang ching* (最上根本大楽金剛不空三昧大教王経) See T. XVIII, no. 244; Tōhoku nos. 487 and 488.

[4] 金剛三業最上秘密大教王経 *I-ch'ieh ju-lai chin-k'ang san-yeh tsui-shang pi-mi ta chiao wang ching.* (一切如来金剛三業最上秘密大教王経) See T. XVIII, no. 885; Tōhoku no. 442, G. O. S. Vol. LIII.

[5] See Prof. G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Vol. I, pp. 225–226; "Journal of Kōyasan University," Vol. III, pp. 41–43 for the Sanskrit text.

gious practice is taught and within the description of these practices Mahāyāna thought is skillfully woven in.

The five stages of religious practice are as follows ; first, in order to correctly understand one's own mind, one should visualize one's mind as the shape of a full moon, and further visualize that this moon has sixteen mystical letters written on it. These letters represent the fact that all existing things have no substantial existence. Secondly, in order to attain to the Highest Truth, one should visualize a lotus within this same moon, a practice which leads to the removal of impurities from one's mind. Thirdly, in order to strengthen one's mind of Enlightenment, one is to visualize a five-branched *vajra* within this same moon within one's mind ; this five-branched *vajra* symbolizes the Highest Truth, personified as the five Buddhas and their five wisdoms. Fourthly, one should visualize one's body, speech, and mind as being identical with the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha. Fifthly, one should visualize that oneself is identical in nature with the *Dharmakāya* of the Buddha. Each of these five stages has its own *mantras* to be recited during these meditations.

The *Vajradhatu mandala* has five Tathāgatas in its center : Vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi ; these are normally surrounded by 32 bodhisattvas, and a larger number of lesser deities are ranged on the outer rim of these Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In this instance, the five Tathāgatas symbolize the five wisdoms. The names of these five wisdoms are the same as the four wisdoms as taught in the Vijñānavāda tradition, with the addition of the wisdom of the nature of the Dharmadhātu (*Dharmadhatu-svabhava-jñana*) ; the teaching of *five* wisdoms as opposed to four wisdoms is one of the characteristics of *Yoga-tantra* and *Anuttarayoga-tantra*.

The doctrines of the Mahāyāna are interwoven with the religious practices of the *Yoga-tantra*; the rituals of the *tantras* transform abstract Mahāyāna doctrines into living psychological experience with the assistance of visual symbols, like *mandala*, and of psychical concentration. It is believed that in about the middle of the sev-

enth century the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* was composed in southern India. The Esoteric tradition which is based upon the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* was introduced into China by Śubhakarasiṃha, while that Esoteric tradition which is dependent on the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra* was introduced into China by both Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, and it was the Chinese Hui-kuo (惠果) who brought together in his own teachings both of these two Esoteric Buddhist traditions. The Japanese monk Kūkai (空海)—whose posthumous title is Kōbō-daishi (弘法大師) — studied in China under the *ācārya* Hui-kuo, and inheriting the unified Esoteric tradition, introduced it into Japan by his establishing the Shingon school 真言宗 of Buddhism. The teaching of Shingon Buddhism is therefore based upon both the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* and the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra* within the larger *Vajroṣṇīṣa sūtra*, and early had already become something a little different from its contemporary tradition in India. Further, after the eighth century Esoteric Buddhism of the *Anuttarayogatantra* developed in India, taking its inspiration largely from the gradually expanding *Tattvasaṃgraha sūtra*, so that present-day Shingon Buddhism and Tāntric Buddhism differ greatly both in their outer forms and in their inner doctrines.

Tāntric Buddhism has in doctrine transmitted the philosophy of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and in the area of religious practice has developed several unique forms. Generally speaking, Tāntric Buddhism has split into several different schools, each one practicing an ascetic regimen drawn up by a certain *siddha* — a person who has accomplished (*siddhi*) his religious quest — rather than relying for its primary inspiration upon the texts of *tantras*. Consequently the religious practices of Tāntric Buddhism differ according to the school, and are in no ways unified, but should we categorize Tāntric religious practices, we see that they fall into two basic types, *utpattikrama* and *utpannakrama* (or *sampannakrama*). *Utpattikrama* is a yogic meditation which traces the course of the Highest Truth as it unfolds into the actual, empirical world ; *utpannakrama* is a process by which one is led to absorption or union with this Truth. Religious practices of the *upāya-tantra* tradition, such as seen in the

Guhyasamāja-tantra and others, lay heavy emphasis upon the *utpattikrama* orientation, while the practices of the *prajñā-tantra* tradition, such as the *Hevajra-tantra*, the *Samvara-tantra* and others, lay heavy stress upon the *utpannakrama* approach. Both, however, reduce their basic areas of concern to two objects, the Absolute Truth and human beings, and both approaches attempt ultimately to unite these two entities.

Unlike Tāntric Buddhism, Shingon Buddhism, which was established and systematized according to the teachings of two scriptures, the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* and the abbreviated edition of one section of the *Vajroṣṇiṣa sūtra*, did not develop much more in the sphere of ascetic or religious practice, nor were more complicated rules or rituals written. Rather, Shingon Buddhism attempted to faithfully transmit the traditional Esoteric Buddhist teachings received from seventh century India. Shingon Buddhism was influenced often in its doctrines and philosophy by those Mahāyāna schools which developed or flourished in China, the Fa-hsiang (法相), the San-lun (三論), the T'ien-t'ai (天台), and the Hua-yen (華厳), and the teaching of Shingon has been especially colored by the religious experience of its founder, Kōbō-daishi.

According to the world view of Shingon Buddhism, the empirical universe is made up of six basic elements, earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. Of these, the first five — earth, water, fire, air, and space — are material elements, while the sixth — consciousness — is a spiritual, non-material element. It has traditionally been held that the first five are primarily taught in the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra*, while the element of consciousness is taught in the *Vajroṣṇiṣa sūtra*.

These six elements have fused into one another and thus form the empirical world ; furthermore these are outward expressions of the Absolute Truth, and are each one of them seen as the *Dharmakāya*.

Generally, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *Dharmakāya* is considered philosophically as the Highest, the Ultimate Truth, and highest state of existence. Consequently it is ultimately without form, or

any external appearance whatsoever ; there is no question but that it is not actively engaged in the preaching of the Dharma. The function of preaching the Dharma is left to the sphere of activity of either the *Sambhogakāya* or the *Nirmāṇakāya*. In Shingon Buddhism, however, the *Dharmakāya*, the Ultimate Truth, is conceived of in personal terms. In other words, all objects in this physical world are themselves the Dharmakāya — the personal, living aspect of the abstract Ultimate Truth. Thus the *Dharmakāya* which exists in this physical world under the aspect of a living creation, is taught to be constantly communing with us through the sounds made by the wind, the murmur of running water, the chirping of the birds, the colors of flowers in bloom — in short, through the medium of all things in this world.

In Shingon Buddhism, the object by which the Highest Truth, the *Dharmakāya*, symbolically communes with this material world is the *maṇḍala*. In appearance there are four major types of *maṇḍalas* — the *Mahā-maṇḍala*, the *Samaya-maṇḍala*, the *Dharma-maṇḍala*, and the *Karma-maṇḍala*. All phenomena in the universe are the external expression of the Highest Truth, but in order to facilitate the understanding of this teaching, the Absolute is often represented in sculpture and in art — this is the definition of the *Mahā-maṇḍala*. A visual representation of the Absolute by means of specific, concrete objects associated with divinity, such as a sword, a lotus, or by some possession of a Buddha, is termed a *Samaya-maṇḍala*. The Absolute as represented by speech, words, and letters is termed the *Dharma-maṇḍala*, and the Absolute represented through action is termed the *Karma-maṇḍala*.

The *Dharmakāya* possesses, according to Shingon teaching, three functional aspects — his body, his speech, and his mental activity — and these are called the "three mysteries" (三密). All human beings also have these three aspects to their existence. These "three mysteries" of the Buddha and these three aspects as pertain to all creatures are, in essence, the same. Hence it is by forming a *mudrā* with the hands, reciting a *mantra* or a *dhāraṇī*, and meditating on one specific object of concentration that one can

unite one's three activities of body, speech, and mind, with those "triple mysterious" aspects of the Buddha.

In Shingon Buddhism, the relationship between the Highest Truth and the material, physical world is divided into three categories — substance, nature, and function — and it is through a mystical and direct insight that one awakens to the essential fact of the unity of Buddhas and men.

It is generally believed that Shingon Buddhism, based as it is upon the *Mahā-Vairocana sūtra* and the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra*, and systematized in China and Japan, and Tāntric Buddhism, based primarily upon the *Tattva-saṃgraha sūtra* and having been perhaps more greatly influenced in its development by Hinduism, are two traditions of Esoteric Buddhism which are entirely different. But in their basic thought patterns there is not such a broad difference between them, for in both cases their origins were the same. In their respective courses of development they were subject to differing social conventions and manners as well as having received Mahāyāna doctrines which differed in their developments in both India and China, and hence they seem to be very different. A more elaborate and detailed comparison of Tāntric Buddhism and Shingon Buddhism awaits, however, further study.

(Translated by the author in collaboration with Leo Pruden.)