A. Acceptance of *mantra* and *dhāraṇī* in East Asia

Now we have to shift our search to East Asia. In India, this Mantrayāna is considered "to be the introductory stage of Tāntric Buddhism, from which all other offshoots, like Vajra-yāna, Kālacakrā-yāna, Sahaja-yāna, etc. arose in later times."(80) In other words, the groups of Cāryā-Tantra (*Mahāvairocana-sūtra*) and Yoga-Tantra (*Tattvasaṅgraha, Śrīparamadāya*, etc.) develop into the group of Uttara-yoga-Tantra (*Guhyasamāja, Sambhara, Hevajra, Kālacakra*, etc.)(81)

Tāntric Buddhism, so called by European scholars, usually indicates the Buddhism based on the group of Uttara-yoga-Tantra. However, it has no direct relation to our Shingon Buddhism, because the Buddhism which was introduced to the Far Eastern countries (China, Korea, and Japan) was, generally speaking, the Buddhism up to the time of Mantra-yāna, and Shingon Buddhism is based on the Mantrayāna introduced to China between the seventh and eighth century A.D.

Concerning the acceptance of the spells of Buddhism in China, Hajime Nakamura, in his book *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* says,

... Indian Buddhism was generally a metaphysical teaching about the past and future worlds of man, but the Buddhism which spread among the common Chinese was often a Buddhism of spells and prayers ...  
... As the Chinese highly esteemed the employment of spells and

(80) Cf. S. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 17; also see my Introduction.
charms, they did not accept any sect of Buddhism which prohibited spells and charms in its doctrine. Therefore, they rejected the traditional and conservative Buddhism which prohibited spells and prayers, and called it “Hīnayāna Buddhism.” On the whole, they accepted Mahāyāna Buddhism, which permitted charms and prayers to some extent ...(82)

In the history of Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures, the appearance of scriptures which contain mainly spells and prayers, i.e. the dhāraṇī scriptures, occurred in the Epoch of the Three Kingdoms (222–280 A.D.). In this period, for instance, the Mātaṅga-sūtra (the Mo-teng-ch’ieh ching) was translated by Chu-Lü-yen and Chih Ch’ieh (d. after 253 A.D.) in 230 A.D. This sūtra contains the famous Gāyatri mantra mentioned in Rig Veda; the so-called three-vidyās; ‘Om bhur bhuvah svah;’ the vidyā cast by the Candala woman; the vidyā preached by the Buddha for the rescue of Ānanda; and six dhāraṇīs which all begin with the word om and end with svāhā.(83) Buddhism in this period was not popular among the people; therefore, these mantras and dhāraṇīs were just translated and introduced into China by the above priests.

In the Western Tsin Dynasty (A.D. 265–316) Indu-Dharmarakṣa (d. after 313 A.D.) translated the Hai-lung-wang ching etc.(84)

In the Eastern Tsin Dynasty (A.D. 317–420), Fo-t’u-ch’eng (d. 348 A.D.), Śrī-mitra (d. between 335 and 342), Dharma-rakṣa (381–396), and Dharmakṣena (T’ān-wu-ch’ān) (d. 433 A.D.) appeared. They were all proficient in mantras

(83) Taishō., vol. 21, no. 1300.
(84) Taishō., vol. 14, no. 428, no. 1301.
and dhāraṇīs and performed various miracles. By their possession of magic-religious power and the magic-soteriological acceptance by the people, they became famous and a Buddhism of spells and prayers was diffused throughout southern and northern China.\(^{(85)}\)

In the Epoch of Division Between North and South (420–589), T’an-yao, Bodhiruci, etc. appeared, and the Ta-chi-i shên-chou ching,\(^{(86)}\) the Mou-li-man-t’u-lo-chou ching,\(^{(87)}\) and the Mo-li-chih-t’ien ching,\(^{(88)}\) etc. were translated. These scriptures contain not only mantras and dhāraṇīs, but also mudrās, maṇḍalas (altar) etc. Abundant mantra and dhāraṇī were universally used, and by Chi-tsang (549–623), the founder of San-lun-tsung, they were classified into three types.\(^{(89)}\) Also in this period, there were the persons who had the title ching-shih, teacher of sūtra, who popularized Buddhism through the recitation of sūtras and dhāraṇīs.\(^{(90)}\)

In the early T’ang Dynasty (618–907), some of the important dhāraṇī scriptures were translated by Chih-t’ung and Atikūta.\(^{(91)}\)

In these scriptures, mantras and dhāraṇī were explained not only for mundane purposes but for the supra-mundane one. In the T’o-lo-ni chi-ching translated by Atikūta in 653–654 A. D., dhāraṇī were classified into those of tathāgatas, bodhisattvas, devas, and miscellaneous.\(^{(92)}\) Then, by Śubhakarasimha (637–735), I-hsing (683–727), Vajrabodhi (671–741) and Amoghavajra (705–741), Mantra-yāna was introduced into China and it became the foundation for Chên-yen or Mi-tsung. This type of Buddhism was transmitted through Hui-kou (746–805), a disciple of Amoghavajra, to a Japanese monk, Kūkai (774–835), and Shingon Buddhism was founded in Japan by Kūkai.

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\(^{(86)}\) *Taishō*, vol. 55, p. 838b.

\(^{(87)}\) *Taishō*, vol. 19, p. 657.

\(^{(88)}\) *Taishō*, vol. 21, p. 262.


\(^{(91)}\) E.g., *Taishō*, vol. 20, p. 463.

\(^{(92)}\) *Taishō*, vol. 18, p. 785b
In China the term mantra was translated as chou (spell), mi-chou (secret spell), shên-chou (divine spell), and after the translation made by Hsüan-chung (600–664), it was translated as chên-yen (true word). The transliteration of mantra was used only in the case of referring to its Sanskrit etymology. The term mantra by itself had a strong influence in India, because it was regarded in connection with the authority of Veda. In China, however, Veda had no power whatsoever. These translated terms themselves show, to some extent, a denial of that which is Hindu.

... The Chinese made complete translations of the Buddhist scriptures into their own language. They did not use Sanskrit or Prakrt as the sacred language of the Buddhist church.

On the contrary, the term dharani was transliterated as t'o-lo-ni. The translation tsung-chih (entire support) was used only when asking what dhāraṇī means in Chinese. It is a notable fact that the Chinese translations, on one hand, expunged the term mantra, and on the other, retained the term dhāraṇī. It could be the reason for the term dhāraṇī becoming a particular Buddhistic term.

The Chinese version of vidyā is ming or ming-chou. The term ming literally means “bright,” “clear” and it connotes knowledge and wisdom. Both the terms vidyā and its translation ming are qualitative names for spell.

The entire passages of the dhāraṇīs and mantras were the Chinese transliteration of Sanskrit or Prakrt, except for the translation made by Indu-Dharmarakṣa. For instance, there is a mantra in the last part of the Prajñāpāramitāāyavasūtra, “gate gate pāragate pārasaṃgate bodhi svāhā,” meaning: “gone, gone, gone to the other shore, landed at the other shore, enlightenment! So may it be!” This literary phrase was fully understood by the Indian people. In China, it was transliterated as chieh-ti chieh-ti pan-lo-chieh-ti pan-lo-sëng-chieh-ti p’u-t’i so-ho. Therefore, for the Chinese people who have no knowledge of Sanskrit, this phrase

(93) See page 79
(94) Nakamura, op. cit., p. 175.
(96) In Japanese, it runs: “gya-te, gya-te, hara-gyate, hara-sō-gyate, bōji-sowaka.”
became completely incomprehensible. It was a spell kept from the knowledge of the people and was known only by a small group of people who could comprehend the meaning. In short, spells (mantras, dhārānīs) which were transliterated into Chinese were looked upon by the Chinese people as being “secret” and “esoteric.” Here is the one reason why Mantrayāna in China was popularly called Mi-tsung (Esoteric School) and Mi-chian (Esoteric Teaching) besides the name of Chên-yen.

In India, the terms rahasya and guhya have been used to indicate “secret” and “esoteric.” Generally speaking, the former is used in Brāhmanism and Hinduism, meaning “deep” and “hidden,” and the latter is used in Buddhism emphasizing the meaning “deep.”\(^{(97)}\) However, in India, no religious doctrine or school has ever openly used the name rahasya or guhya-yāna.

No matter what the intention of transliterates of mantras or dhārānīs might have been, the transliterated chên-yen (in Japanese shingon) and t’o-lo-ni (in Japanese darani) have been regarded as having a magico-soteriological function by East Asian people. On this account, the recitation of the tone “na-mo-a-mi-ta-fo” (in Japanese “namu amida butsu” or “nammandabu”) meaning “Adoration to Amita Buddha” has had a great popularity among the people in East Asia.

Dr. Nakamura states as follows:

\(O\text{-}mi\text{-}t’o\ \text{Fo}\) is the transliteration of the Sanskrit term Amitayur Buddha which connotes the meaning “Buddha who possesses infinite life.”... Up to the Sui dynasty [589–618 A. D.], the Chinese translated name “Wu-liang-shou-fo” (Buddha of Infinite Life) was used. After the T’ang dynasty, however, the Pure Land teachings spread widely, and the transliterated name “\(O\text{-}mi\text{-}t’o\ \text{Fo}\)” came to be adopted. One reason was that the tone “Na-mo-a-mi-ta-fo” (Adoration to Amita Buddha!) sounded better than “Na-mo-wu-liang-shou-fo” (Adoration to the Buddha who possesses the infinite life) when chanted, and another is that the transliteration of the

\(^{(97)}\) Cf. Yamada, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 146, 147.
Sanskṛt term possesses the strong power of a charm when chanted repeatedly. Moreover, the Sanskrit name which was especially sanctified and could not be understood by the Chinese was easily accepted by the Chinese Buddhists. They felt an exotic and mystical connotation in the name which could not be understood ... Tan-luan [(476–542), the first of five patriarchs of the Pure Land School,] thought that the name “O-mi-t'o Fo" itself was identified with the actual Buddha just as the words of Dhāraṇī cast a spell. He said that this name possessed inconceivable powers like that of a spell or charm. In this sense, the Pure Land teachings which originally rejected the elements of spells and charms spread in China [and Japan] among the people only through their magical nature.(98)

Chinese Buddhism was, in a sense, a religion of documents, so that scriptures were highly esteemed, and as a matter of course the copying of sūtras came to be regarded as having a magico-soteriological function.(99)

The recitation of spells and the copying of sūtras have the same religious function, though the former is through speaking, and the latter through writing. In the transplanted Buddhism from China to Japan, this function was continued.

In the old documents of the Shōsoin, the treasure-house of Tōdaiji,(100) there are many records of numerous Buddhist Tantras which were transcribed by the people. According to these records, about 130 sections, 266 volumes of Buddhist Tantras, which corresponds to one-fourth of the whole Buddhist Tantras contained in the Taishō-tripitaka, were transcribed.(101) The astonishing thing is that the majority of these transcribed scriptures are dhāraṇī scriptures.

(98) Cf. Nakamura, op. cit., p. 239.
(99) Cf. ibid., p. 224.
(100) It was built in 756 A.D. by Empress Kōmyō in order to store Emperor Shōmu’s property.
The person who wanted to be a monk in those days was under an obligation to study and memorize certain Buddhist scriptures, among which dhāraṇī scriptures were necessarily included.

A famous monk Ryōben (689-773) lectured on the meaning of dhāraṇī at Tōdaiji and his disciple Dōkyō (d. 770) borrowed several dhāraṇī scriptures from Tōdaiji which he required to cure Empress Kōken’s illness.(102) Empress Kōken (reigned 749-758) ordered her craftsmen to produce many of the three-storied small stūpas, called Hyakuman-tō (one-million stūpas) and in 767 A.D. printings of Mukū-jōkō-dai-dhāraṇī (The Great Dhāraṇī of Stainless Pure Light), which is considered the oldest example of printing in Japan, were put inside these stūpas and distributed to the ten big temples of Nara.(103)

In the Nihon-ryō-i-ki (Japanese Mysterious Records), the first Buddhist legendary literature, compiled in the early ninth century, there is this story: When a millionaire of Iga-yamada invited a monk and asked for a lecture on the Lotus Sūtra, the monk answered, “I know nothing about the Lotus Sūtra, but what I know is only dhāraṇī by which I beg food and sustain life.”(104) The magico-soteriological function of dhāraṇī appealed strongly to the people in Japan.

B. Dhāraṇīs and shingons in East Asia

1. The selection of dhāraṇīs

An abundance of dhāraṇīs were produced in India, however, all of them were not actually used in East Asia. After all, they were imported articles from India, and along with the historical development of Buddhism, they have undergone the process of what is called selection.

The dhāraṇīs which have been widely used in East Asia are those of Amitābhā-buddha, Bhaisajya-guru (the Buddha of Healing), Maitreyana-bodhisattva, Cintāmani-cakra-avalokiteśvara (The Bodhisattva of Compassion with the Gem of Satisfaction),


(104) Kushida, op. cit., p. 23.
Usnisavijaya (The Distinguishing Crown of the Buddha’s Head), Mahāpratisarā (The Great Pratisara Bodhisattva, literally the “Bodhisattva According to Prayer”), Karanda-mudrā (the Sign of Precious Box), etc.\textsuperscript{(105)} In the course of time these selections had been made by priests and by people as well.

2. The criteria for the selection

Each dhāraṇī has its own dhāraṇī-scripture source, in which a particular merit attained by reciting its dhāraṇī is described. It was quite natural that some dhāraṇīs which described a more powerful merit in its dhāraṇī-scripture, such as Usnisavijaya-dhāraṇī and Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī, were chosen.\textsuperscript{(106)} Also, according to circumstance or occasion, some dhāraṇīs were selected as the most adequate and effective ones. For instance, dhāraṇīs of Maitreyana and of the Buddha of Healing were considered suitable for the worship of Maitreyana and the Buddha of Healing.\textsuperscript{(107)}

These selected dhāraṇīs, being connected with legends in which certain Masters or certain noble men had met with some mysterious experience or success by reciting them, were popular with the people. For instance, in the case of the Amida-buddha dhāraṇī, there existed a legend: A monk called Taochen of the Liang Dynasty (502–556), seeking the Western Paradise, recited the O-mi-t’o-ching (the Sukhāvatī-vyūha), but he could not attain his final goal. However, through the recitation of the dhāraṇī of Amida-buddha, he achieved his purpose.\textsuperscript{(108)} Through this kind of legend and through the repeated usage of dhāraṇīs based on popular belief and worship of a certain Buddha and Bodhisattvas, the above dhāraṇīs had become very popular and have endured to present day.

3. Dhāraṇī is an epitome of sūtra

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\textsuperscript{(106) Sakata, op. cit., p. 91; Toganoo, op. cit., p. 89; and Mikkyō Jiten, or the Dictionary of the Esoteric Buddhism (Kyoto: Naigai, 1938), vol. 2, p. 1481 b&c.}
\textsuperscript{(107) Toganoo, op. cit., pp. 85, 86.}
\textsuperscript{(108) Toganoo, op. cit., pp. 85, 86.}
\end{flushright}
In East Asia, dhāraṇī was generally looked upon as an epitome of Buddhist teaching.

... The dhāraṇīs are used to epitomize sūtra, vinaya, and śāstra; they are the short-cut to enlightenment ... The illumination of (Buddha’s) intelligence bequeathed only one (source of) light. (but) it was forever and everywhere sufficient to meet the needs of diversified human nature. Therefore there have been innumerable Buddhas, and meditations as numerous as grains of sand. A bodhisattva, having epitomized all the meditations in one string (i.e. dhāraṇī), would suddenly be elevated in rank and approach supreme enlightenment ... (109)

Therefore, theoretically speaking, to use a dhāraṇī as a substitute for a sūtra is the true usage of dhāraṇī. For instance, when man recites the dhāraṇī of Amitābha before the image of Amitābha-buddha, this dhāraṇī is used instead of the Amitābhasūtra.

4. The differentiation between darani and shingon

At present we cannot differentiate between darani (dhāraṇī) and shingon (mantra) from their connotations, however, generally speaking, a dhāraṇī is usually longer than a shingon; and a dhāraṇī is used on certain occasions as substitute for certain sūtras; and it is generally for exclusive use by priests.

5. Two classifications of shingons

Numerous shingons are used in Shingon Buddhism. These shingons can be classified into two groups: one is for priests only, and the other for both priests and laymen. In other words, the former is Mantra-yānic (or Hinduistic) and the latter is Sino-Nipponic.

a) Mantrayānic Shingons

By the early Kamakura Period (1192–1333), a practice called shido-kegyō (the four kinds of preliminary practice), (110) and a ceremony called denbō-kanjō.

(109) Chou Yi-Liang, op. cit., p. 258.

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(abhiseka for Transmitting Law)\(^{(111)}\) had been developed. Even now, they exist just as they were, and to be a Shingon priest, knowledge of this practice and ceremony are necessarily required as a formal procedure. Based on the five Mantra-yāna texts translated by Amoghavajra (705–774), Šubhākara-sīṁha (637–735), and Vajrabodhi (671–741) in China, they were formulated in Japan.\(^{(112)}\)

Over five hundred different shingons are contained in this practice and ceremony, and Shingon-priests-to-be should recite each shingon with its corresponding mudrā (hand gesture) and samādhi (contemplation). These are shingons for Shingon priests and they belong to the Mantrāyanic class of shingon.

b) Sino-Nipponic shingons

(i) “Kōmyō-shingon”

From around 880 A.D. Kōmyō-shingon, the “Light-sningon” has been recited. This shingon was originally described in the *Pu-k’ung-chüan-su shên-bien chên-yen ching*\(^{(113)}\) translated by Bodhiruci and in the *Pu-k’ung-chuan-su p’i-lu-shē-na-fo ta-kuan-ting-chên-yen*\(^{(114)}\) translated by Amoghavajra, and in China the merit of this shingon was enhanced.\(^{(115)}\) In the early Kamakura Period, the merit of this shingon, being emphasized by Koben (1173–1232),\(^{(116)}\) became widely believed in, and the recitation of this shingon was popularized among both priests and laymen. It is believed that if this shingon is recited while sand is sprinkled on the body of a dead person, the spirit of the dead will be reborn in the Western Paradise. Concurrent with the belief of the Pure Land, this shingon was considered to be of great worth by the people. Now this shingon is recited on all occasions by priests and by laymen as well.\(^{(117)}\)


\(^{(113)}\) *Taisho.*, vol. 20, p. 227 ff.

\(^{(114)}\) *Taisho.*, vol. 19, p. 606 ff.


\(^{(117)}\) Sakata, *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 110.
Typical Sino-Nipponic shingons are the so-called "Jū-san-butsu-shingon" 
(the shingons of thirteen Enlightened Ones). From Muromachi Period (1338-
1573) onwards, the belief in jū-san-butsu became accepted. This belief consists 
of assignment of the thirteen Butsu (Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Vidyārājā) to 
the thirteen memorial days of the dead in the following way:

1st 7th day ....................... Fudō (skt. Acala)
2nd 7th day ....................... Shaka (Śākya-muni-buddha)
3rd 7th day ....................... Monju (Manjuśri-bodhisattva)
4th 7th day ....................... Fugen (Samanta-bhadra-
bodhisattva)
5th 7th day ....................... Jizō (Ksitigarbha-bodhisattva)
6th 7th day ....................... Miroku (Maitreya-bodhisattva)
7th 7th day ....................... Yakushi (Bhaisajya-guru-
bodhisattva)
the 100th day .................... Kan-non (Avalokiteśvara-
bodhisattva)
the day of the 1st year .......... Sei-shi (Mahāsthānaprāpta-
bodhisattva)
the day of the 3rd year .......... Amida (Amitābha-buddha)
the day of the 7th year .......... Ashuku (Aksobhya-buddha)
the day of the 13th year ....... Dainichi (Mahāvairocana-buddha)
the day of 33rd year .......... Kokūzō (Ākāśagarbha-bodhisattva)

The belief in the thirteen Butsu is considered to have a deep relationship 
to the belief of the Ten Rulers (shih-wang) presiding over the ten departments of 
purgatory and to the ten functions of the Fasting of Ten Rulers (shih-wang chai), 
which is based on a folk-belief which had been amalgamated by Buddhism,

The shingon runs thus: Om amogha-vairocana-mahā-mudrā mani-padma-jvala 
pravartaya hūṃ (Om! Great Seal of Powerful Vairocana! The Jewel! The Lotus! 
The Shining! Turn the Wheel! Hum!)

Taoism, and Confucianism, and which was widely performed in the middle of the T'ang Dynasty.\(^{119}\) The thirteen *Butsu* covers all the objects of worship in Muromachi Period, and as to the assignment of these Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Vidyārāja, the influence of Shingon Buddhism has been acknowledged. In short, these *shingons* of thirteen *Butsu* are recited on every occasion especially by Shingon followers.

c. The sound-theory of mantra

1. The Study of Siddham

In East Asia, from the time of Hsuan-chung (600–664) onwards, the study of Siddhām, which is a medieval style of Sanskrit orthography as opposed to the present used Devanāgarī, has been pursued by priests.\(^{120}\) And during the golden age of Mi-tsung, translators of Mantra-yāna texts transcribed *mantras*, especially their *bīja-mantras*, using Siddhām-letters (*siddhām-mātrkā*) beside their transliterations with Chinese characters. Consequently existing *shingons* are written in Siddhām and in Chinese characters, and the majority of *bīja-mantra* (*shuji-shingons*) are written with Siddhām letters. The study of Siddhām was pursued in three areas, that is, the study of Siddhām formation, that of sounding, and that of meaning. The first is the study of the writing of Siddhām-mātrkā, the second is the study of linking-sound, i.e., *sāṃdhi-rule* (e.g., the rule such as *devah-vadati* meaning ‘the god speaks’ becoming *devo-vadati*), the third is the study of *artha*, that is, the so-called “gate of letter.”

2. Two main concerns of the study

a) The writing of Siddhām

Among these three branches, the first and the second were studied mainly by priests. How does one write *chen-yen*, especially *bīja-mantra*, correctly in Siddhām? What is the significance of a letter written in Siddhām? These were primary concerns to the priests. *Bīja-mantras* written in Siddhām were representatives of the symbols of Buddhism, and the letters were comprehended by the


\(^{120}\) Cf. Mochizuki, *Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 1937a-1944b.
people as having a magico-soteriological function. For instance, ह्रि (hṝ) is a bija-mantra of Amitābha Buddha, हृ (hūm) is that of Acala (the Unmover), सत्त्व (sattva) is that of Five secrets, etc. These letters were completely strange to the people and their bizarre figures attracted them strongly.

b) The gate of letter

As I have already mentioned, bija-mantras such as om have been commented upon from the time of the Upaniṣads, and in Buddhism, the gates of letters such as the gates of forty-two letters and of fifty-letters have a long history. "This system of bija-mantra is very common in the Hindu Tantras also, and they are even now prevalent in all the Hindu systems including Śāktaism, Śaivism, Viṣṇuvism, etc." Mantra-yāna concurs with this system of bija-mantra and explains it by focusing on the letters "a" and "hūm."

3. The gate of letter of Mantra-yāna in East Asia

Mantra-yāna texts of Mi-tsun and Shingon Buddhism are classified into two groups: one is that of the Mahā-vairocana-sūtra (the Great Sun Sūtra) and the other is that of the Vajrāśekhara-sūtra (the Diamond Crown Sūtra). In the former group, "a" is the bija-mantra of Mahāvairocana Buddha and "hūm" is that of Vajra-sattva; contrariwise, in the latter, "hūm" is the bija-mantra of Mahāvairocana Buddha and "a" is that of Vajra-sattva. Therefore, both "a" and "hūm" are representative bija-mantra or the gate of letter of Mi-tsun and Shingon Buddhism.

a) "A" to I-hsing

"A" is explained by I-hsing (683-727) in the volume seven of the Commentary of Mahāvairocana-sūtra as having threefold significance. "A" is the

(122) See page 21
(123) Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 64.
first letter of the alphabet and therefore it is āḍī (at first; primacy). If there is āḍī, it is the essence of conditional arising (pratīṣṭhāna-samutpāda), therefore, it is is-ness (sat-tva). "A" is a prefix having a negative sense, therefore, according to the essence of conditional arising, it is a-svabhāva (nothing own nature), that is, śūnyatā (nothingness). "A" is an-utpāda (non-origination), that is, the middle (madhya) between is-ness and nothingness.\(^{(126)}\)

b) "Hūm" to Kūkai

"Hum" is fully discussed by Kūkai in his book, the *Significance of the Letter "Hūm"* (Un-ji-gi).\(^{(127)}\) In the first place, Kūkai explains "hūm" by dividing it into four parts: "ha", "a", "ū", and "ma". "Ha" represents hetva (causation, or hetu-pratyaya), "a" adi-anutpāda (primarily non-origination), "ū" śūna (minus, or (śūnyatā), and "ma" ātman (Self, or sattva=is-ness); then, he, combining these four letters into the letter "hūm", discusses its significance. According to him, all teachings of Buddhism, such as T'ien-tai (Tendai), Hua-yen (Kegon), Chên-yen (Shingon) are contained in the letter "hūm".\(^{(128)}\)

4. The sound-theory of mantra in India

a) The gate of letter is originally an art of memory

The explanations of the letters "a" and "hūm" made by I-hsing and Kūkai are both quite philosophical and emphasize their significance (*artha*). In India, however, the *artha* of bija-mantra is not separated from the sound. The gate of letter was originally an art of assisting one's memory. In India, when children start to learn the Sanskrit alphabet, they memorize the alphabet in this manner: "A" like anutpāda, "ba" like bala (power), "n" like aṅga (a limb), "da" like dāna (giving), etc.\(^{(129)}\) "A" and "anutpāda" and such were basically connected by the sound. Even in Mantra-yāna, although the stress is put on its *artha*, the importance of the sound is not deprived of its *artha*. In the *Mahā-

\(^{(126)}\) *Taisho.*, vol. 39, p. 649b.


vairocana-sūtra\(^{(130)}\) and in a sūtra of the Vajraśekhara-sūtra group,\(^{(131)}\) tathatā (suchness) is explained through the gates of letters, “A”, “Va”, “Ra”, “Ha”, “Kha”, in this manner: Tathatā is an-utpāda (non-origination), it is beyond vāc (voice, sound), it is pure and no rajas (dust), it is far apart from hetu (causation), and it is equal to kha (empty space). All these explanations, that is, “a” = anutpada, “va” = vāc, “ra” = rajas, “ha” = hetu, “kha” = kha, are adoptions of an art of memory which have been used from ancient times in India.

b) The importance of sound-theory of mantra

The term sanskrit is, as its etymology saṃ-skṛta shows, a perfectly created phonetic sign. The mantra attaches special importance to its sound. In other words, “the mantra-element contains all the secrecy of the potency of sound.”\(^{(132)}\)

Sir John Woodroffe says,

A mantra is composed of certain letters arranged in definite sequence of sounds of which the letters are the representative signs. To produce the designed effect mantra must be intoned in the proper way, according to svara (rhythm), and varna (sound).\(^{(133)}\)

Therefore, the meaningless mantras, such as “iti mīṭi kīṭi vikṣānti padhāni svāhā,”\(^{(134)}\) or “hili mili mili ilile katale kutumule” \(^{(135)}\) or “kṛim kṛim kṛim hrim hrim phat”\(^{(136)}\) have their strong phonetic functions in India. It may safely be said that a connection between Mantra and mantra is its sound-theory.

c) The sound-theory of mantra in Tantric Buddhism

Surendranath Dasgupta, after taking a brief review of the Mīmāṃsa doctrine of sound, says,

... The Tantra assumes that the movement which has produced the

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\(^{(130)}\) Taisho., vol. 18, p. 9a.
\(^{(131)}\) Taisho., vol. 18, p. 331a.
\(^{(132)}\) Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 69.
\(^{(134)}\) Taisho., vol. 30, p. 543a.
\(^{(135)}\) Taisho., vol. 19, p. 434a.
\(^{(136)}\) Bharati, op. cit., p. 130.
world shows itself or is represented in us in miniature in the production of the sound. The process of the production of the sound is the epitome of the notion as it were of the cosmic process of creation. The same process which underlies the cosmic creation manifests itself in us in every case of the productions of sounds, so that the genesis of sounds is not to be taken as imaginary but a real symbol of the creative process. The Mimāmsakas regarded ābda and artha as mere inanimate or acetana. So the eternality there, was without any notion; but the Tantra asserted that it is the spirit or intelligence which realizes itself as the abda and artha, mind and matter...\(^{(137)}\)

In the Tantric Buddhism based on the Uttara-yoga-tantra group,

... ābda being of the nature of varṇa, the fifty varṇas from ‘a’ to ‘h’ are taken to be the totality of the presiding force over the abda. The different varṇas ... are ... connected with corresponding physiological centres, which form the physiological data of these psychological functions. This seems to be the metaphysical ground on which this Mantra theory as the varṇas is based, ... whatever word proceeds from the mouth of man should be regarded as a Mantra, the sound (nāda) is the Mantra...\(^{(138)}\)

5. The sound-theory of mantra in East Asia

a) The under-valuation of the sound-theory

In East Asia, this important phonetic construction of mantra was hardly accepted. The first clear reason is that the majority of the mantras were transliterated with Chinese characters, the second is that Chinese and Sino-Japanese characters are far apart from that of Hindu, and the third reason that the way of thinking influenced by the language structure looked down on the phonetic importance of mantra.

b) Different language structure

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\(^{(138)}\) Dasgupta, S. B. *op. cit.*, p. 68.
Chinese and Sino-Japanese characters are primarily hieroglyphic and ideographic. Accordingly, what man acquires from a letter is its form and meaning. As we have seen, on the studies of Siddhām in East Asia, the primary concern was the studies of its significance. In the case of Kūkai’s “hūṁ”, it is not an interpretation of the sound “hūṁ”, but that of a written letter “hūṁ” in Siddhām. In Siddhām “hūṁ” is written ṛ. His parsing is (ma), (ha) and (ū).

c) The transformation from the sound-theory to the meaning-theory

In the volume seven of the *Commentary of Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, I-hsing says: Even children can memorize Siddhām-mātrkā by repeating. *Homa-pūja* (the offering of fire) and such can be performed even by genii (ṛṣī) of Veda. Nevertheless, man can attain Buddhahood through the gate of mantra by the enforcement (adhiṣṭhāna) of the mantra by its true significance.

We can notice here that it is a departure from the Hindu religion and a feature of East Asian religion; and that a value judgement was shifted from the sound-theory of mantra to the significance (artha) of mantra. In Japan, over five hundred shingons are used in practices and ceremonies, but whenever they are used, they must be contemplated (samādhi) with their meanings, therefore, none of them are ‘meaningless’ shingons.

Then, if the sound-theory of mantra is not so important, what is the relationship between Mantra and mantra? What is Mantra in Japan? Now, we must shift our search to Shingon.

D. Shingon in Shingon Buddhism

The *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* states that Mantratā (Mantra itself) is Dharmatā (Dharma itself). Kūkai expresses it in a verse: “Shingon (True Words) - Mikkyō

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(140) *Taishō*, vol. 39, p. 657c.
(141) *Mantra* is called gigo (the word of meaning) contrast to bungo (the word of letters). *Taishō*, vol. 9, p. 371a.
(Secret Doctrine) is the Preaching of Dharma-kāya. In order to clarify Shingon let us discuss this verse in a reverse order under the three subject: 1. Dharma-kāya, 2. the preaching of Dharma-kāya and 3. Shingon (=Mikkyō).

1. Dharma-kāya

a) Tri-kāya system in Buddhism: Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tāntre Buddhism

The theory of the three bodies of Buddha, that is, Dharma-kāya, Sambhoga-kāya, and Nirmana-kāya, is a departure of Mahayana Buddhism from Hinayāna Buddhism. In Hinayāna Buddhism, the Buddha is conceived as a historical Buddha, Śākyamuni Gotama, while, Mahāyāna Buddhism, in the course of its evolution, first developed the theory of Buddhology, then gradually added a cosmological and ontological signification to it.

Tri-kāya as Buddhology is mentioned, to Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, in this manner:

The quintessence of Buddha is Pure Enlightenment (bodhi) or perfect Wisdom (prajñā-pāramitā), or knowledge of the Law (dharma), i.e., the absolute truth. By attaining this knowledge nirvāṇa is also attained; the Dharma-kaya Buddha is the Buddha in nirvāṇa (Samādhi-kāya). Again, before he is merged into nirvāṇa he possesses and enjoys, for his own sake and for other’s welfare, the fruit of his charitable behaviour as a Bodhisattva, and this is the Body of Enjoyment or the Beatific Body (Sambhoga-kāya). Again, human beings known as the Buddhas, who are created by the magical contrivances represent the Created Body (Nirmana-kāya). [After an cosmological and ontological signification is joined with the above] Dharma-kāya means the void and permanent reality underlying the things (dharma), or in other words, the uncharacterized pure consciousness (vijñapti-mātra). Sambhoga-kāya means the Dharma-kāya evolved as Being, Bliss, Charity, Radiance, or the Intellect, individualized as the Bodhisattva. Nirmana-kāya is the Transformation Body, which is the same as consciousness.

defiled and individualized as 'common people' (prthag-jana). Later on, this Buddhalogy, [sic], cosmology and ontology were all confusedly mixed up, — and we find the three Kāyas mentioned more often in their composite sense than either as pure Buddhalogy [sic] or as pure ontology.\(^{(144)}\)

Tāntric Buddhism approaches this tri-kāya theory using the concepts of Prajñā and Upāya in this manner:

Prajñā is the passive principle as the dharma-kāya or the 'thatness' (tathatā) with perfect purity and perfect knowledge in her; but the whole world (i.e., the sambhoga-kāya and the nirmāna-kāya) is a display of the Upāya, and the world-process itself in the form of the sambhoga and nirmāna-kāya is a means to lead all the sentient beings to the ultimate goal of perfect purification; this principle of passivity and the principle of activity are then the two aspects of the one absolute reality.\(^{(145)}\)

This one absolute reality is termed the svabhāva-kāya and later it is also called Sahaja-kāya, Vajra-kāya, or Mahāsukha-kāya by the Vajrayānists and Sahajiyas as the ultimate stage after the Dharma-kāya.\(^{(146)}\)

b) Dharma-kāya in Buddhism

In short, Dharma-kāya in Mahāyāna Buddhism is a quiescent (śānti), eternal (nitya), unconditional state (upāsama); which is the body of colorless, formless and speechless principle; and which is the Dharma in nirvāṇa completely beyond the phenomenal world. To Nagarjuna, it is "unspeakable, unchanging, all-void, quiescent and pure." In the Vijnānavāda doctrine of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, it is "the uncharacterized pure consciousness (vijñāpti-mātra),\(^{(147)}\) and is similar to the Vedantic concepts of "the ultimate reality as the Nirguṇa (qualityless) Brahman who transcends all knowledge, knower and the knowable."\(^{(148)}\) At any rate, the

\(^{(145)}\) Ibid., p. 106.
\(^{(146)}\) Cf. ibid., pp. 80, 90.
\(^{(147)}\) Ibid., p. 15.
\(^{(148)}\) Ibid., p. 37.
Dharma-kāya in Mahāyāna Buddhism is not expressed as a positive state of absolute bliss, however, in Tāntric Buddhism, “it is the immutable element which is beyond the reach of all [mentality]; it is all good, permanent, perfect bliss, — it is liberation — the substance itself.”(149) The terms Vajra-kāya, Sahaja-kāya, and of Mahāsukha-kāya, used in Tāntric Buddhism are all positive and monotheistic expressions of Dharma-kāya.

c) Dharma-kāya in Shingon Buddhism

Then, what about the Dharma-kāya in Shingon Buddhism? In Shingon Buddhism, the Dharma-kāya is not a static state of an abstract principle, but it is the Karma-kāya (the body of action)(150) and the personified Dharma, i.e., Mahāvairocana (the Great Illuminator). Mahāvairocana is the sole essence and the immeasurable manifestations as well. He is One and Many. Metaphorically speaking, he is rain and drippings of rain, and the lamp and the light.(151) Shingon Buddhism classifies this One and Many bodies of Mahāvairocana into four Dharma-kayas:(152) 1) Svabhava-dharma-kāya (The Dharma-kāya of its own nature), 2) Sambhoga-dharma-kāya (The Dharma-kāya of Bliss), which is subdivided: (a) Sva-sambhoga-dharma-kāya (The Dharma-kāya of one’s own Bliss) and (b) Parasambhoga-dharma-kāya (The Dharma-kāya that causes bliss to others),153 3) Nirmana-dharma-kāya (The Dharma-kāya of Transformation), and 4) Niyanda-dharma-kāya (The Dharma-kāya which equally outflowed according to the types of sentient beings.) These four classifications corresponding to the three-kāyas of Buddha

(149) Ibid., p. 148.
(150) Daishi., vol. 1, p. 511.
(151) Cf. Daishi., vol. 1, p. 545.
in Mahāyāna-Buddhism as shown in the following illustration: \(^{(154)}\)

1) Svabhāva-dharma-kāya\(\ldots\) Dharma-kāya

2) Sambho\(\)a Sva-sambho\(\)a dharm\(\)a-kāya\(\ldots\) Sambho\(\)a-kāya

Para-sambho\(\)a

3) Nirmāṇa-dharma-kāya

4) Nisya\(\)nda-dharma-kāya

The last kāya meaning literally “equally outflowing dharma-body” is called kukai-zuirui-shin, that is, the body which appears equally to types of living beings who reside in the nine realms, i.e., that of hell, hungry spirits, animals, asuras, men, heaven, śrāvakas, pratyeka-buddhas, and bodhisattvas. These realms are the worlds of illusions contrariwise to that of Buddhas, the tenth and the highest. In order to save these different types of living beings, which is called the Nisya\(\)nda-dharma-kāya.\(^{(155)}\)

\(^{(154)}\) Cf. Takagami, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 164, 165.