Performing the Jeweled Pagoda Mandalas: Relics, Reliquaries, and a Realm of Text

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Halle O’Neal

At first glance, the characters swirl around, haphazard and tiny (Fig. 1–3). Picking out a few familiar words provides temporary stability, but a moment later the viewer is lost again in a sea of shining script at once accessible and remote. Neither legible nor completely illegible, these discombobulating and intriguing characters are specifically alegible. This vision of a luxurious realm constructed of golden text gleaming against the deep blue background evokes the idea that the Sanskrit letter A begat the world. Experienced these paintings known as the jeweled pagoda mandalas (Kinji hō mandara) is like entering a state of captivating and, at times, bewildering visions, a world shaped by the artistic union of individual words. These mandalas form a category of highly textual paintings produced during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries whose inventive format unifies on a single visual plane the written transcription of sacred text with the painted vignettes of the chosen scripture’s stories. Furthermore, by utterly dissolving the distinction between the two media in the central icon of the paintings, their combinatorial composition embodies a new relation between text and image. Word becomes picture as characters from the sacred scriptures replace architectural line, marking the start of a progressively more popular visual trend.

Three complete sets, each of eight or ten paintings, of the jeweled pagoda mandalas remain: those from the temple Ryūhōnjī in Kyoto (Fig. 4), Tanzan Shrine in Nara (Fig. 5), and Chuṣonjī, a temple in Hiraizumi (Fig. 6), along with three other mandalas separated from their original sets. On average, each painting transcribes two to four chapters of a particular scripture, either the Lotus Sutra or the Golden Light Sutra, into the shape of a pagoda with associated narrative vignettes positioned along the sides and bottom of the mandala. How exactly these particular religious establishments came to transcribe and pictorialize the scriptures in this format is not known. The origin of this style can be traced back to the earliest related example in China: a tenth-century textual pagoda composed of the Heart Sutra but lacking the encircling vignettes.

Previous scholarship has been primarily concerned with the formal analysis and iconographic study of the narrative vignettes surrounding the central icon. In this regard, the mandalas have been successfully and thoroughly explained. By far the most extensive examination of the mandalas to date has been written by Miya Tsugio. He was the first to identify possible prototypes in China and Korea. Miya also conducted an illuminating visual study of the narrative vignettes surrounding the central pagoda. While quite strong, the scholarship in English on the jeweled pagoda mandalas is sparse: only Willa Tanabe and Mimi Yiengpruksawan have discussed the mandalas in any real detail. In her book Paintings of the Lotus Sutra, Tanabe considered the Tanzan Shrine and Ryūhōnjī mandalas as examples of the twelfth-century trend that emphasized narrative description of sutra content in the art of the Lotus Sutra. She saw the jeweled pagoda mandalas as transitional works bridging conventional blue and gold illustrated sutras and the pictorial transformation tableaux (Japanese: hensō, Chinese: bianxiang), or visualizations of miraculous transformations occurring in scripture. Yiengpruksawan examined the Chuṣonjī jeweled pagoda mandalas in Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan. She offers an elegant and contextualized study of the mandalas, interweaving the importance of the Golden Light Sutra to the authoritative aims of the Ōshō Fujiwara and the intimate illustrations of the narrative vignettes that reveal the anxieties of the ruling family. However, scholarship in both Japanese and English has largely neglected the critical role the central pagoda plays in the construction of the paintings’ meaning.

In pursuit of this subject, we must, therefore, concentrate on the superficial, on the craft and design essential to the creation of elaborate textual images whose central icon is a reliquary composed almost entirely of scriptural characters. And through this, we arrive at how the very production of the surface asks a certain level of engagement from its viewers. The recent revival of attention paid to art’s surface rejoices in the sometimes beautiful and always compelling artistic qualities of the object and asks not only what it takes to engage the surface but also how such encounters complicate the putatively straightforward activity of viewing. Approaching the jeweled pagoda mandalas from this point of view expands our thinking about the demands of viewing as the progenitor of meaning and complicates the discourse on word and image that often presupposes an ontological divide. Furthermore, because of the lacunae in the records concerning the paintings’ patronage, potential ritualistic function, and transferal history between locations, the jeweled pagoda mandalas are well suited for such a methodology that finds meaning in the surface.

Explorations of the surface, including the transcription of the textual pagoda and the process of production for such innovative and expensive sets of paintings, underscore the inherent performativity of the design and the effects of that on the viewer. The intertextual community of sutra transcriptions from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries demonstrates the broader trend toward more complicated interactions of text and image and, through comparison, highlights the augmented roles of the two media in the
mandalas. These complexities of collaboration require a performative viewing on the part of the audience that exposes two fundamental juxtapositions: accessibility and legibility, and visibility and invisibility. Decoded through experiential engagement, the ultimate indivisibility of word and picture, sutra and pagoda, and relic and reliquary is apprehended as a profound visualization of the multiplicity of the Buddha body.

Nomenclature and Historical Issues

A short philological discussion is necessary in order to explore issues of terminology and present the elusive historical circumstances of the paintings. Unfortunately, but not uncommonly, scant textual records remain to cast low light on the shadowy history of the production and reception of the mandalas. And, as is typical of premodern paintings, the extant records exhibit flexible nomenclature.

Ryûhonji’s jeweled pagoda mandalas of the early thirteenth century capture in eight paintings the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. The earliest textual evidence of the Japanese jeweled pagoda mandalas’ existence comes in the form of an inscription on the back of each of the Ryûhonji scrolls. These black ink inscriptions document the mandalas’ location in Hôryû-ji, a Nara temple, at the time of their first recorded restoration in the seventh month of 1362. However, they illuminate little about the paintings’ function and commission. Indeed, since formally and stylistically the paintings correspond to the early thirteenth century, it is uncertain even if Hôryû-ji is the original home of the set.

In order to continue tracking the paintings, records associated with the temple must be consulted. A list of Hôryû-ji’s treasures found in volume nineteen of the mid-fifteenth-century Taishiden gyokurin sho documents eight Lotus Sutra pagodas (Hokke hattô) housed in a box. Slightly later, the record of temple effects, Hôryû-ji shariden hîmotsu chûmon, still locates the mandalas at Hôryû-ji during the inventory checks of 1550 and 1591. In these two entries, the mandalas carry a description similar to that in the Taishiden gyokurin sho. Both entries list them as eight Lotus Sutra pagodas (Hokke no hattô). Based on these findings, it is apparent that Hôryû-ji was in possession of the mandalas from the mid-fourteenth century until the late sixteenth century. Returning to the objects themselves for information, a later inscription on the paintings testifies to another restoration in 1681 in Edo.
2 Jeweled pagoda mandala, painting one, detail of the middle section showing transcription of the Lotus Sutra. Ryūkōji, Kyoto, and Collection of Nara National Museum (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Nara National Museum)

3 Jeweled pagoda mandala, painting one, detail of the lower section showing transcription of the Lotus Sutra. Ryūkōji, Kyoto, and Collection of Nara National Museum (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Nara National Museum)
The Tanzan Shrine version also transcribes the Lotus Sutra into the jeweled pagoda mandala format, but with the addition of two bracketing scriptures—the Innumerable Meanings Sutra as the prologue and the Contemplation of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva Sutra as the epilogue—to form a set of ten mandalas dating from the twelfth century. A tantalizing inscription written in 1655 on the outer lid of the box containing the paintings ambiguously mentions a temple roughly a third of a mile (half a kilometer) northwest of Tanzan Shrine called Shigaiji. The records of Tanzan Shrine rarely refer to Shigaiji, and when the temple appears in the literature, it is only in records far closer to the present day than the twelfth century. According to the mid-sixteenth-century *A Record of the Deeds of the Monk Zōga at Tōnomine Temples, Yamato (Washū Tōnomineji Zōga shōnin gyōgishiki)*, Shigaiji was founded as a mortuary temple in 1187 to honor the Tendai monk Zōga (917–1003), whose devotion to the Lotus Sutra was renowned. It is conceivable that the Tanzan Shrine’s jeweled pagoda mandala set was commissioned for the founding of the temple to memorialize his dedication to the scripture. If so, that would add a commemorative function to the paintings and stresses the transfer of merit through the copying of the sutra, the adorning of the body of the Buddha with precious materials, and the construction of pagodas—a karmic confluence particular to this rare type of project. Both the techniques and style of the mandalas confirm a late twelfth-century production date. The inscriptions on the boxes also reveal that in the mid-seventeenth century the paintings were designated as Lotus mandalas (*Hokke mandara*). Such a categorization suggests that at this time, the paintings were positioned within the context of Buddhist visual narrative traditions, perhaps in line with transformation tableaux, which pictorialized the content of the Lotus Sutra in the form of vignettes encircling the textual pagoda.

Chōsonji’s set of ten mandalas, visual translations of the Golden Light Sutra, were likely commissioned about 1170 by Fujiwara Hidehira (d. 1189). But extant documents from the time of production until the early eighteenth century neglect to mention the paintings. And while little is known concerning the patronage of the three sets of jeweled pagoda mandalas in question, the Chōsonji version offers the clearest view of the commission circumstances. During the Ōshū Fujiwara rule, Hiraizumi rivaled the Kyoto court in artistic commissions in terms of precious materials and the sheer scope of single projects. Documents like *Petition of the Bunji Era (Bunji no chūmon)*, composed in 1189 for Minamoto Yoritomo (1147–1199) by Chōsonji monks, yield a glimpse of twelfth-century Hiraizumi and the extensive building campaigns of this three-generation family of northern rulers. The Ōshū Fujiwara during this time enjoyed great financial success, which in turn funded expensive and laborious artistic productions, including a center for sutra copying known as Chōsonjikyō. The rarity of such sumptuous transcription projects like the Buddhist canon composed on blue paper in alternating lines of gold and silver inks commissioned by the patriarch, Fujiwara Kiyohira (1056–1128), not to mention the many other sutra transcriptions undertaken by the family, indicates that copying the scriptures was an important ritual conveying the Ōshū Fujiwara’s political and salvific ambitions.
In 1170 Fujiwara Hidehira was promoted to the constabulary position of General of the North (chinjufu shōgun); I agree with Yiengpruksawan and Miya that Hidehira’s appointment to chinjufu shōgun is the most likely occasion for the production of the mandalas, given the Golden Light Sutra’s strong message of righteous authoritarian rule. Additionally, the ceremony for Hidehira’s surprising elevation took place at the imperial palace during the annual saishōkō, an imperially sanctioned ceremony reaffirming the Golden Light Sutra as guardian of the nation and legitimizer of imperial authority, a symmetry that Yiengpruksawan highlights as additional confirmation of Hidehira as the patron of the Chūsonji jeweled pagoda mandalas. Therefore, these paintings proclaim the righteous authority of the patron in an avant-garde style.

In 1705, ten black lacquer boxes were gifted to house the Chūsonji paintings. An inscription on the boxes records the early eighteenth-century title: Ten World Jeweled Pagoda Mandala (jikkai hōto e mandara). In 1968, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs categorized the paintings as a National Treasure of Japan and gave them the official appellation Konshi chakushoku konkōmyōsaishōkō kōji hōto mandara zu (a title that translates somewhat awkwardly into English as Jeweled Pagoda Mandala of the Golden Light Sutra in Gold Letters with Polychrome on Blue Paper), establishing the standardized title for this set of paintings.

My decision to use the term “jeweled pagoda mandalas” stems from three considerations. The first is that to use the titles “pagoda sutra” or “transformation tableaux” risks minimizing the complexity of the composition. These mandalas are a far more complicated visual and conceptual affair. I therefore include the term “mandala,” which is supported by some of the earliest textual references to the paintings, in order to acknowledge the composition in its entirety. As Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis notes, the categorical fashion of applying the term “mandala” to paintings outside the definitional sphere of standard Esoteric mandalas began in the early eleventh century. The jeweled pagoda mandalas were clearly part of this trend.

The second consideration involves my use of the term “pagoda.” The word originates from the early sixteenth-century Portuguese pagode, a term of uncertain derivation traced to Dravidian (via Sanskrit) as well as Persian beginnings. Despite these etymological issues, “pagoda” has become part of the art historical lexicon for its ability to acknowledge the visual discrepancies between the towerlike architectural structures of East Asia and the reliquarial mounds of India called stupas. I also use “reliquary” to refer to the central icon of the jeweled pagoda mandalas, and in doing so, I intended for this term to signify the function of the pagoda as an architectural reliquary housing the relics of the Buddha. It is a shorthand that stresses the somatic connections of this type of structure and is not meant to flatten the multidimensionality of pagodas, which also served as beacons of Buddhist power, or to visually conflate it with the various smaller types of reliquaries so popular in Japan during the premodern period.

The third nomenclatural hurdle is the application of “jeweled” or “treasure” pagoda (hōto) to the mandalas, occurring for the first time in the early eighteenth century with the
inscription on the box housing the Chuṣonji set. The appellation has since been applied with some consistency to both the Chuṣonji and Ryuhonji sets and less frequently to the Tanzan Shrine set. It is a curious choice to make because a jeweled pagoda typically refers to a specific style of one-storied pagoda characterized by a rounded core and a four-sided roof with a finial. These pagodas are associated with the eleventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in which a past Buddha Prabhūtaratna (Japanese: Taho nyorai; Chinese: Duobao rulai) miraculously appears in a flying jeweled pagoda during Śākyamuni’s lecture of the sutra. Śākyamuni ascends to the pagoda and continues preaching while seated next to Prabhūtaratna.

Practically speaking, a one-storied pagoda would not provide sufficient space for the transcription of the sutras. However, the mandalas of Ryuhonji make a clear reference to this moment by featuring the double Buddha imagery, which neither the Chuṣonji nor Tanzan Shrine versions do. The vision of an opened pagoda with one or two seated Buddhas was perhaps a strong enough allusion to this momentous occasion to warrant the jeweled pagoda appellation. Another possible explanation is that the central icon of the mandalas might be considered a jeweled pagoda because of the golden luminosity of the characters building the body of the reliquaries. Pushing this further, these golden apparitions are actually characters, which are in turn the dharma relics of the Buddha (or the written teachings of the Buddha venerated as sacred relics), and therefore, in essence treasure. I continue this nomenclatural tradition because it has become a standard part of modern art historical writing.

Diagramming the Pagoda

Without intimate knowledge of the design, the exact choreography of the transcription of text into pagoda can seem impenetrable. Where does one start? Understanding the exacting construction of the reliquary by mapping the textual pagoda of Ryūhonji’s first fascicle (Fig. 4), so chosen because of the painting’s excellent preservation and clear transcription, forms the foundation crucial for interpreting the mandalas. Experiencing the textual acrobatics encourages a performative viewing and sparks contemplations of the utter indivisibility of word and picture from which the paintings make their ultimate statement of signification. The associated digital project (available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2015.1009326) mapping the sequence of the text animates the possible transcription process.

Much of the transcription follows the typical conventions of Japanese script, moving from right to left and top to bottom. From the start, the copyists privilege the accuracy of the pagoda’s shape and inclusion of key architectural components over the legibility of the scriptural characters. The pagoda begins with the title and opening passages of the sutra running vertically down the long spine of the finial (Fig. 1). The transcription winds its way down the nine floors of the reliquary and in general moves from right to left (Figs. 2, 3). It concludes on the bottommost step of the platform. Even with this adherence to copying convention, reading the characters presents multiple challenges, and in tracking the text, the adventurous reader continually experiences location and dislocation.

Take, for example, the transcription of the complex bracketing system supporting the floors of the pagoda and the ornamental decorations projecting from the corners of each
roof (Fig. 2). Starting on the right side in the apparatuses supporting the roof, the axes of the textual tail rafters are realigned horizontally so that the characters rest on their sides and dangle out into the surrounding blue. The抄ists then transcribe the bells hanging from the edge of the caves, including the clapper, adding a sonorous dimension to the visual. The next string of scripture relocates to a somewhat surprising position, as the reader must leap over the already transcribed tail rafters and bell in order to reconnect with the text at the brackets as they move across the pagoda from right to left. The architecturally accurate three-on-one bracket system supporting the roof structure features the fundamental components of the large bearing block, on which the bracket arm rests, and the three smaller bearing blocks atop the bracket arm. At multiple points in constructing the brackets, single characters stand alone in order to function as architectural design rather than as part of a sequence of text. The transcription continues across the breadth of the pagoda body, to the three tail rafters sweeping to the left and on their sides, and finally to the scripted bell waiting to sound.

Throughout the copying of the pagoda, characters are repeatedly written on their sides, forced into contortions to fit small spaces, and represented as solitary components unconnected to the characteristics of a coherent text. Perhaps most challenging are the abrupt switches in direction and leaps about the pagoda to different architectural spots, making it difficult to discover the next string of scripture. Any intrepid viewer who chose to encounter the mandalas on such a detailed and intimate level might well be motivated by a curiosity to solve the word puzzle. And in diagramming these maneuvers, it becomes clear that the audience of the jeweled pagoda mandalas was not intended to read large sections of the scripture for content. Confronting the very untextlike nature of this highly textual composition solidifies the need to consider the type of viewing obliged by such a creative design, along with alternative interpretations of the function of scripture in this context and what that can reveal about texts’ premodern condition.

Process of Production
The persons responsible for the design of the jeweled pagoda mandalas were probably aware of Chinese prototypes in the form of circulated prints of textual pagodas, which, being made of paper and ink, have not survived to testify to their influence. However, the addition of the narratives seems to be a uniquely Japanese creation. Certainly in the case of the jeweled pagoda mandalas, extensive planning would have been critical, not only in the selection of narrative vignettes but also, and especially, in the dramatic transcription of the sutra into a pagoda. Rough sketches mapping out the transcription would have been vital to figure out such things as the appropriate number of lines and the spacing between them as well as the approximate end of the transcription. Because more than one copyist worked on the sets of eight to ten paintings, these sketches likely served as crucial references available for frequent consultation. It should be noted that these sketches did not always ensure complete accuracy. An attempt was made to end each pagoda in the Ryūhonji set with the last characters of the scripture, followed by the explanatory attachment indicating the title of the sutra and the volume number. Scrolls one and two end much as planned. For the further volumes, the transcription becomes more complicated. Because volumes three, five, seven, and eight lack the length required to construct the large reliquary, verses are attached to the conclusion of the last chapter, which is then followed by the sutra title and volume number. Volume four makes do with an abridged title of the sutra added to the end of the eleventh chapter. Battling the opposite transcription challenge, volume six is too long to fit completely, so the remainder is omitted and concluded with the same formula of sutra title and volume number. These adjustments that do not uphold the accuracy of the text demonstrate the primacy of the pagoda graphic and reinforce the interpretation that the scripture was not meant to be read in its entirety. Instead, such modifications and pictorial manipulations speak to the wealth of premodern scriptures’ functions beyond the exegetical.

Copying itself is by nature an alegible activity, regardless of the form the final scripture takes. Even in the composition of conventional sutra scrolls of tidily spaced lines of seventeen characters, writing and reading for content do not go hand in hand. While the activity that produced the jeweled pagoda mandalas is fundamentally the same, they retain the alegibility that went into their production. When the characters are viewed individually, they are crisp and clear, but as the text was not meant to be read synoptically, this legibility morphs into alegibility for the greater composition. Therefore, simply casting them as illegible disregards the inherent quality of the characters and the overall purpose of a text that never sought readability. Of course, the priority of calligraphed characters often concentrated on the pictorial nature of the written word. Considerations such as balance, spacing, form, weight, and hue of the individual characters can even preempt the semantic content. In this way, the very appreciation of calligraphy for its aesthetic attributes can cast them as largely alegible, too.

The wealth invested in each set dictated careful preparatory precision and execution to prevent the waste of such precious materials as gold and silver inks and rich indigo dye, which, although not uncommon in illuminated sutra transcriptions, would nonetheless have imparted the mark of material value. Even the paper on which the transcription was copied was a valuable commodity. A description of the assembly process of the complicated pagoda and its many compositional components indicates the scale of skill, labor, and funding required. Given the demands of such a vast copying project, a traceable pattern based on the preliminary sketches would have ensured consistency of shape and size across all mandalas of a particular set. Close scrutiny of the paintings identifies grooved marks left by an iron stylus that sketched out the complete design and provided the copyists a path for their brush.

A formal analysis of the three sets of mandalas suggests that the pagoda form was executed first in the process of production. This idea is supported by the entrance of the narrative vignette edges into the space of the pagoda, many times encroaching quite close to the architecture and thus necessitating that the pagoda be finalized before the narrative vignettes were completed. Yet in view of the multiple sheets of paper used in the construction of the large composition,
contemporaneous production of both the pagoda and narratives is possible, with the final touches to the scenes being added later, after the sheets were joined. It is also possible that the surrounding narratives were not painted until all the papers of the mandala were joined, although this seems unlikely, considering the extra care such a sequence would require. The development and construction of the paintings point to a workshop setting where multiple trained painters of Buddhist subjects and copyists of Buddhist texts executed a consistent style.

Another possible scenario for production can also be considered. Since sketches and predetermined grooves based on the traceable pattern marked the path for transcription, perhaps the patrons themselves copied the scripture in order to earn karmic merit. As multiple sheets of paper were used in the construction of the large mandalas, the patrons could have completed the copying portion of the project, after which the narrative vignettes painted by professional artists would be attached. Such significant participation from patrons has precedence. The *Tale of Flowering Fortunes* (*Eiga monogatari*), an eleventh-century epic story centered on the life and career of the powerful regent Fujiwara Michinaga (966–1028), describes an elaborate scene of courtly copying. During a particularly melancholic time in the ninth month of 1021, the ladies-in-waiting of Empress Kenshi (994–1027) proposed an ambitious transcription project: each of the attendants along with close relatives would produce a sumptuous scroll dedicated to one chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. The resulting scrolls were quite extravagant. Some composed the sutra in gold on a blue background; others incorporated illustrations either above or below the text or as a frontispiece. Most of the scrolls were lavishly decorated with the seven treasures (*shippō*: gold, silver, agate, lapis lazuli, coral, crystal, and pearl), and the sutra rollers and boxes were bejeweled.

Apart from the practical considerations of the surface’s production and who exactly brushed these radiant characters, personal and conceptual changes are also at work, for the jeweled pagoda mandalas depart from conventional copying methods. How does this style of transcription alter the copyists’ relation to the scripture itself? How does the copyist respond to a reencounter with a section of text that he has shaped into a finial or spread out to form an eave bracket? For the viewer of the mandalas, the relation to the text is complicated by its graphic manipulation. Because few would have been shown the road map of the pagoda or granted the amount of time needed to discover it on their own, the complex assemblage of characters allows the viewers to experience the sutra in their own highly personal ways.

**Intertextuality of the Jeweled Pagoda Mandalas**

Whether text is uttered aloud, committed to writing, or even inscribed within the mind, its nature and quality have inspired volumes of philosophical discourse. Clearly, the ubiquity of text across cultures and history has made it a constant companion, yet the mutable borders of text confound strict definitions and challenge interpretations seeking to limit its breadth. The Japanese jeweled pagoda mandalas were singular among their contemporaries for their extensive use of textual images. But the textualized stage, as it were, was set for the paintings’ production.

The structural divide between text and image in Buddhist art, which often assigns picture to the frontispiece of the scroll and word to the subsequent lengths, began to break down around the time of the mandalas’ production. The following examples describe the intertextual scene at the time of their manufacture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Scrolls such as the *One Character, One Buddha Lotus Sutra* (*Ichiji ichibutsu hokekyō*, Fig. 7), the section of “The Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound” of the *Lotus Sutra*, with pagoda decoration (Fig. 8) in the format of *One Character, One Jeweled Pagoda Lotus Sutra* (*Ichiji ichihō hokekyō*), and the segment of “Peaceful Practices,” with canopy and pedestal decoration (Fig. 9) in the format of *One Character, Canopy, and Lotus Pedestal Lotus Sutra* (*Ichiji tengai rendai hokekyō*) pair the sacred characters with accompaniments such as adjacently seated Buddhas, enshrining pagodas, and crowning canopies and supporting lotus pedestals, thereby bridging the chasm between text and image. These scrolls demonstrate a heightened but still limited interaction. Nonetheless they are particularly relevant to the jeweled pagoda mandalas, in that they, too, visually expound the nonduality of the Buddha and his word, which casts scriptures as dharma relics. The fundamental difference between these scrolls and the jeweled pagoda mandalas is that in the mandalas, the nonduality of the Buddha and his teachings reaches new expressive heights by achieving a visual format that mirrors the conceptual indivisibility. This conflated central icon of the
mandalas encourages experiential viewing, whereas the designs of the handscrolls do not require performative engagement.

The twelfth-century Lotus Sutra fans such as those in the temple collection of Shitennoji in Nara combine the graphic styles associated with illustrated scrolls like The Tale of Genji Scrolls (Genji monogatari emaki) with the recognizable writing and structural style of typical sutra copies and, in doing so, visualize the interpenetration of sacred writing with images of the mundane world (Fig. 10). As Komatsu Shigemi observes, the fans and related booklets are visual testaments to the coupling of Heian-period (794–1185) aristocratic belief in the Lotus Sutra and the pious expression of that faith.53 Instead of segregating image from text, scenes of daily court life along with visions from the world of commoners show through from behind the superimposed scripture. Such layering represents a joining of two distinct media previously forced to inhabit different spatial realms of visual culture. Although text and image are combined into one visual plane of the product—and this on its own constitutes an important marker in the increasingly complicated visual relation of text and image—word and picture still enact their own roles and maintain their functional and visual independence to a large extent.

The Eyeless Sutra (Menashikyō) refers to an intriguing set of sutra scrolls associated with Retired Emperor Goshirakawa (1127–1192), wherein scriptural text is copied over a black ink underdrawing of pictures of interior court life, with the curious exception that most of the figures are left without facial features (Fig. 11). The style of the pictures follows typical Heian-period narrative illustrations, but the content of the underdrawing has yet to be firmly linked to a particular story. While the exact circumstances of the scrolls’ production in 1192 remain elusive,54 what seems likely is that Goshirakawa died before the completion of the picture scroll. As a memorial act intended to grant repose for the departed, the scroll was left unfinished and sutra text was copied over the object closely related to the emperor, establishing a karmic bond between the deceased and the redemptive powers of the sutras. The interpenetration of word and picture in this context reveals a commemorative effort.

Increasing collaboration between word and picture is also evident in the practice of “reed-hand script” (ashide), a type of disguised script often found in marshlike landscapes where Chinese characters and Japanese phonetic script form simple images such as rocks, reeds, coastlines, and birds in flight. Komatsu Shigemi provides a rich analysis of the motifs assumed by reed-hand script in his study of the Heike monogatari, an extravagant project featuring thirty-three scrolls transcribing multiple sutras, commissioned in 1164 by Taira Kiyomori (1118–1181) for dedication at Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima. He observes that certain phonetic characters were routinely chosen to construct particular and specific pictures because their shape lends them naturally to common forms.55 One finds here the visualization of the world as text, a revelation that the scripture penetrates all manner of things. The practice of ashide extended broadly into many different formats and contexts of writing. While the script crafted by ashide often could be constructed into meaningful passages of sutra text or popular verses of poetry (waka), ashide also had a purely decorative function.

One more development in the text and image relations of early premodern Buddhist painting merits our attention: the empowered inscriptions.56 These emphasize the utter abandonment of graphic image and the assumption of strictly textualized compositions where word alone paints the picture that graphic image once captured. The Great Mandala of Nichiren Shōnin (1222–1282) exemplifies this phenomenon.57 In the Great Mandala (Fig. 12), text through calligraphic expression becomes the image. Both celebrated and reviled, Nichiren was a fervent proponent of the Lotus Sutra as the supreme Buddhist authority subsuming all other doctrines and praxis.58 Nichiren’s advocacy of the Lotus Sutra as the ultimate authority and the sutra’s emphasis on text and language-oriented practice are reflected in his promotion of the sutra’s title (daimoku) as the mantra namu myōhā rengekyō (homage to the Lotus Sutra).59 According to Nichiren, the title of the scripture contained within its five characters the power to imminently realize buddhahood (sokushin jōbutsu).60 In an essay written in 1260, Nichiren responded to a question about the appropriate object of worship for those who are dedicated to the Lotus Sutra: “First of all, as to the object of worship, you may use the eight rolls of the Lotus
Sutra, or a single roll, or one chapter, or you may inscribe the title and make it the object of worship.” The passage reflects the germinating seed for the Great Mandala, a textual composition depicting the venerated title of the scripture in calligraphic script running vertically down the center of the scroll. The names of Śakyamuni and Prabhuśrūtra as well as those of other deities populating the ten realms flank the central Lotus Sutra title, calligraphically re-creating the assembly at Vulture Peak, the famed location of Śakyamuni’s delivery of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren’s mandala presents yet another twist in the relation of text and image. Graphic image, in conventionalized form, is completely abandoned in the Great Mandala. We find no anthropomorphic Buddha figures, no text restructured to create an image. Instead, Nichiren and his followers have fashioned a calligraphic inscription, itself an image of exceptional fluidity and grace. What emerges after brush has left paper is not just written word but a portrait of the infinite soteriological powers of the Lotus Sutra—in effect, a textual image. The Great Mandala manifests an increased textualized dynamic between word and picture. Rather than the cohabitation of text and image, the Great Mandala displays a complete usurpation of picture by text in a realm traditionally dominated by graphic image. Other examples of empowered inscriptions in which text is privileged occur with increasing frequency in the fourteenth through nineteenth centuries.

Inventive collaborations trend toward a greater role of text within the visual space of paintings, from the limited forays seen in the scrolls enshrining each character with a pagoda, to the layering of text on image as in the Lotus Sutra fans, to word masquerading as picture in the Heike no kyo scrolls and, on a much grander scale, the jeweled pagoda mandalas, to the usurpation of image by text in the Great Mandala. The intertextuality of the mandalas with earlier and contemporary paintings discussed here and between the sets themselves creates a referential system of emergent, acquired, and sustained understandings about how objects should look and what they mean.

Role Reversals of Text and Image

While emerging from a coherent copying tradition, the jeweled pagoda mandalas nevertheless represent the vanguard of innovative text and image interactions in the way that they challenge the conventional functions associated with the works’ constituent parts through deliberate role reversals of word and picture. As demonstrated in the diagramming of the pagoda, the sutra text relinquishes its discursive properties. The vignettes must now assume the role of transmitting content through graphic visualizations of the scripture’s didactic episodes. However, they are assisted by cartouches that do not participate in the role reversals at work in the mandalas. The cartouches furnish a clear instance of highly legible writing in a painting known for its iconic manifestation of text. In the Ryōbonji scrolls, the cartouches are mostly brief quotations from the Lotus Sutra corresponding to the associated narrative vignette. Given the sporadic assemblage of the vignettes, preventing an easy, sequential trail, cartouches could serve as helpful signposts. Most scenes are accompanied by a short cartouche. At their minimal, only a few words are written. In light of their abbreviated nature,
the cartouches likely worked in tandem with the vignettes in the communication of content, serving as reminders rather than bearing the weight of full narrative expression. Many of the scenes employ preestablished iconography, so the pre-modern viewer would perhaps recognize the scenes. For the vignettes unknown to the viewer, cartouches might give just enough to jog the recollection of the story.

The analysis of a few episodes from the twenty-third chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King," as depicted in the seventh scroll of the Ryu-honji set (Fig. 13), provides an example of such graphic reading, explaining how the narrative vignettes are read for their doctrinal content. The chapter begins by describing the extraordinary devotion of the Medicine King Bodhisattva (Japanese: Yakuo bosatsu; Chinese: Yaowang pusa; Sanskrit: Bhaïṣajya-arâja bodhisattva) to the Lotus Sutra and his promise to commit self-immolation in gratification. The Buddha reconstitutes the Medicine King Bodhisattva, who immediately returns to the presence of the Buddha, bowing in obeisance and prayer. The Buddha informs the bodhisattva of his decision to enter parinirvāṇa, the physical death of the body and the passage into nirvāṇa, that same night.

The scene of parinirvāṇa is found in the lower left corner of the mandala (Fig. 14); this episode illustrates the Buddha lying prone on a raised dais, surrounded and worshipped by his disciples, heavenly deities, and mythical animals. The vignette above the parinirvāna scene shows the Buddha’s instructions to the Medicine King Bodhisattva to build 84,000 reliquaries for the dissemination of his relics: "'After my passage into extinction, whatever śarīra [corporeal relics] there may be I entrust to you also. You are to spread them about and broadly arrange for offerings to them. You are to erect several thousand stupas.'" Following the pictorial illustrations in a clockwise path, the next episode describes the creation of corporeal relics (Fig. 15): the cremation of the Buddha on the funeral pyre. Along the right side of the mandala and in the middle of the long, narrow band of pictorial illustrations are located two more episodes detailing the past life of the Medicine King Bodhisattva. After completing his task, the bodhisattva submits his forearms to the fire because he remains unsatisfied by his donations of the reliquaries. In the illustration, the Medicine King Bodhisattva extends his forearms, engulfed in flames, toward three pagodas in a passionate gift of his body (Fig. 16). Below this scene, viewers find the bodhisattva seated in the lotus position, moments after his offering has been made, with slender wisps of smoke trailing from his truncated arms. Worshippers gather around his figure, marking the conclusion of the illustrated scenes from the twenty-third chapter of the Lotus Sutra.
The role assumed by image here is not unlike that of other Buddhist visual narratives. But in a context where narrative text is included, it is unusual that so much of the task falls to the responsibility of visual imagery alone. In order for the viewer to encounter the many parables and episodes within the scripture, the design compels the viewer to confront the Lotus Sutra tales not through discursive textual examination but visually, by decoding the system of signs at work, many of which refer to the particular tale and others that refer beyond it—in effect, by reading the pictures. In this way, image in the form of pictorial vignettes assumes the role of visual text.

Yet there is also image in the form of the pagoda, as imagined through actual text. And from a distance, the pagoda succeeds in becoming that picture. Such a perspective is fleeting and inevitably ruptured once the viewer draws closer, for this is no normal text. The sutra jettisons its expository role by virtue of the incredibly small size of the characters and its structural manipulation into a graphic image. The text continues in order, and the copyists take care to avoid transcription errors, which, when they occur, usually amount to little more than an added or missed character. The alegible text is in fact utterly legible, character by character. When choreographing the pagoda’s construction, the copyists separated characters that when combined form words, undercutting their semantic function. The choice to downplay the ease of reading by separating these compound characters is made despite the freedom of the copyists to extend the line and maintain the integrity of the word, because even

12 Nichiren Shōnin, *Great Mandala*, 1276, gold, silver, ink, and slight colors on paper, 19¼ × 12¾ in. (49 × 30.9 cm). Honmonji, Kyoto (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Kyoto National Museum)

13 Jeweled pagoda mandala, painting seven, illustrating episodes from “Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,” 13th century, gold, silver, and slight color on indigo paper, 43⅛ × 29⅞ in. (111 × 75.7 cm). Ryōthonji, Kyoto, and Collection of Nara National Museum (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Nara National Museum)
though the pagoda is roughly symmetrical along the vertical axis, mirrored lines do not necessarily contain the same number of characters. As a result, while text is sequentially connected, copied with few errors, and retains its legibility in a fashion, reading the scripture for content becomes infeasible. No longer for exegetical analysis, text instead becomes an artistic device and an emblem of redemptive and soteriological power.

The mandalas manifest a further transformation of text: the intensification of the visual properties of word. The scripture of the written reliquary experiences a reversal of the conventional role of text, transcending that of typical sutra copies: the textual pagoda becomes graphic image in function and appearance. The jeweled pagoda mandala format is a discovery of text, both in the pagoda and in the narrative vignettes, because nothing remains what it seems: word is picture and picture is word. As Mimi Yengpruksawan asserts, “doctrine and image at once reinforce and subvert one another, and . . . the friction so generated enriches readings of all Buddhist objects be they words or pictures.” As such, it is possible to interpret the role reversals evinced in the jeweled pagoda mandalas as a subversion of text by image and vice versa. The mandalas expose the intertwined roles of two previously distinct media, creating a vacillating, surreptitious relation between written word and pictorial image. When the combined visual effects of the boundary-pushing mandalas are considered, we realize the full consequence of the role reversals occurring and reoccurring in a single painting and the rarity of this sort of combinatory composition.

Viewing as Performance
Exploring the mechanics of viewing the mandalas’ surface, that is, the operations performed by the audience as obliged by the design, uncovers the paintings’ inherent performativity, which provides the viewer with the opportunity to experimentally encounter the multiplicity of the Buddha’s body. In the context of Japanese Buddhist art, such an exploration must contend with the issue of hidden objects. Even if the viewership is restricted to the artisans who made it and a patron with a small circle of intimates, this exclusive audience does not negate the visuality of the object. As discussed above, the likely audience for these objects at the time of production would have been the clergy of Shigaiji and Hōryūji, if indeed these were the original temple homes, and members of the Ōshū Fujiwara family and clergy of Chūsonji. As the display history of the mandalas is nonexistent, the frequency with which they were seen is unclear. In the cultural context of premodern Japan, limited access was the standard; precious works of exquisite production were rarely seen. Yet this does not diminish the intentionality of the design and the meaning extrapolated, nor the careful craftsmanship and the performativity the surface compels.

Because of their overall size and combinations of textuality and encircling narrative vignettes, the jeweled pagoda mandalas oblige a performance on the part of the viewer. Originally produced as either hanging scrolls or as panels of a folding screen, the paintings were perhaps meant to be viewed in their entirety. Once unfurled, the large sets of eight or ten paintings would dominate a room in suffusions of blue and gold. From a distance, the viewer does not register the pagoda’s profound textuality. But these paintings pack a hidden punch. What appears from afar as inert or slightly fuzzy linework constructing the image of a pagoda deconstructs on closer examination, vitiating the solidity and continuity of our initial perception. Indeed, the fuzzy quality hints of something more, beckoning viewers close. With this greater intimacy, the icon reveals itself to be both pagoda and sutra. The disaggregation of the shape into textual characters from the scriptures occurs in multiple steps, announcing the inherent dynamism of the mandala. An overall transformation occurs during the initial approach, in which line dissolves into tiny, individualized characters forming the body of the pagoda, establishing that this central icon is in fact a textual reliquary erected of dharma, or the teachings of the Buddha. On more intimate inspection, the dynamic arrangement and twisting movements of the characters emerge as the eye attempts to trace a line of text, stumbling on characters that flip and turn and dangle over deep blue space. It is at this point that the pagoda relinquishes much of its pictorial quality and becomes instead lines of character stacked on character: an emergent text. In an oscillating, fluid, and
wholly inventive transformation, on close scrutiny the image of the pagoda dissolves into text; when distance is established, it reemerges as picture.

With paintings of such elaborate and interconnected word and image forms, viewers must negotiate the viewing experience. Claude Gandelman offers interesting observations on the function of text within paintings: “Inscriptions can also be said to represent the ‘performative’ aspect of the work of art in the literal meaning of this word; that is they are used to direct the gaze of the observer to specific spots within the painting and are part of the manipulative strategy of the painter.” Working from the theories of J. L. Austin, Gandelman describes a form of kinetic subversion, meaning that the inscriptions cause a perlocutionary effect, which forces the viewer to perform some action or confront the paintings in a prescribed way. Text in the jeweled pagoda mandalas is much more than inscription. It dominates picture in a new way, thereby requiring something different from the viewer. The particular production of the surface induces a performance on the part of the audience because seeing and reading the visually complex textual image necessitates an exchange of vantage points. The bodily mechanics involved in experiencing the paintings, which manifest as delving into text and zooming out to pagoda, are enacted by the viewer’s body. Word and picture, indivisible, become an architectual icon that forces the viewer to both see the pictorial pagoda and nonsynoptically read its textuality. Such a reading is born of a curiosity that acknowledges the presence of the text and apprehends the meaning of a few characters or lines but does not reach a holistic comprehension.

Even as the audience is led to see the pagoda as image and text, the simultaneous vision of the whole of both is precluded by the very conflation of text and image. Seeing the whole of the reliquary demands a distance that excludes the ability to read the sutra. From the vantage point of several paces from the painting, the pagoda stands, nine floors complete with brackets and bells. Only in stepping closer and leaning in does the audience recognize that text is building the pagoda, at which point it is impossible to appraise the pagoda as a whole. Such an interchange of distance and proximity performed in viewing the paintings suggests a fluidity between seeing and reading. Through the performance of the viewer’s body, the ability to fluctuate between the two realms eventually blurs the distinction of either. The performativity obliged by the mandalas engenders a rare viewing experience, although not completely unique. A comparable example is the miraculous presence of the Buddha and optical illusionism in the legendary Shadow Cave. According to the lore, Sakyamuni entered the grotto home of a subdued dragon king and leaped into the cave’s wall, all the while continuing to project his image. Because “only those who looked from afar could see him, for close by he was invisible,” seeing the shadow depicted in Chinese murals called for a bodily negotiation between the material surface of the painting and the illusionistic depth engendered only by distance. In this way, similar openings and closings of space between the object and the viewer are encouraged.
Although reading even a brief portion of the jeweled pagoda mandalas’ text is optional, the actions resulting from that choice are not. Subtler movements are obligatory; heads tilt sharply from right to left while attempting to read sections of the text in which the axis flips horizontally, as occurs in all horizontal supporting beams, portions of the platform and railings, and other architectural details. The text itself cannot be reoriented and read, so viewers must renegotiate their position before the painting. Even after a closeness to the painting is established, the tiny text might still invite the urge to squint in hopes of sharpening the lines of the characters and summoning forth greater legibility. From this intimate perspective, the viewer might mouth the words of a line of text, accordingly acknowledging the interior voice marking the orality ever present in text’s materiality.\textsuperscript{77} Given the bodily demands, reading as such would have been limited. The paintings’ very format provokes these subconscious and conscious bodily performances on the part of the viewer. In this way, the macro and micro motions transcend mere movement. Whereas they are innately flexible and accommodate an individualized approach unbound by a specific sequence, the movements are the result of the surface’s perlocutionary effect, marking it as a performance.

Two perplexing juxtapositions operate at the heart of this transcription style. The first is the alegibility of textual characters. Despite being clearly written, the characters are persistently challenging to read. As previously demonstrated, the unpredictability of a sequence that jumps around to unconnected parts of the architecture prevents any easy or direct reading. Characters flip their axes of alignment, hang from roof eaves, and jump over large areas so that the sutra text can be formed into a complicated shape. Combined with the minuteness of the characters themselves and regardless of how discernible the individual characters may be on close scrutiny, this basic feature makes the scripture exceedingly difficult to read.

The second, elegant juxtaposition is that in the jeweled pagoda mandalas, the invisible constructs the visible. The alegibility of the text is a necessary condition for the visual gestalt to resolve. The vision of the pagoda depends on the invisibility of the very properties of text that we associate with its function as an object to be read: mainly, the legibility of words and their amenability to semantic interpretation. This erasure of function is the very creative force that erects the reliquary. The text rendered invisible from a distance manifests not only a vision of a pagoda but also a highly legible and architecturally accurate reliquary composed of alegible script. Indeed, the text itself remains inaccessible in its projection of the pagoda, even though the pagoda is conversely more accessible than most architecturally constructed versions: the doors are open, affording rare access to an interior sanctum complete with two corporeally rendered Buddhas. Only one, pagoda or sutra, fully manifests in a single moment, but the blending of the two summons contemplations of indivisibility.

The juxtaposition of the invisible rendering the visible is further complicated by the fact that it represents another role reversal of the conventional functions and expectations surrounding relics and reliquaries. Where once reliquary contained relic, guarding and hiding it from sight, it is only through the activation of relic as sutra transcription that the structure that once housed it is revealed, thereby conflating the two. The design’s deeper significance lies in the act of viewing performed by the audience. Within the paintings exists a precarious balance of alegible and accessible, of invisible and visible, of exclusive and inclusive distance—and the combination of these defining characteristics is the singular hallmark of the jeweled pagoda mandalas.

Indivisibility

The jeweled pagoda mandalas, although the product of elaborate commissions involving great skill, time, and resources, were nonetheless augmented sutra transcription projects in both function and intention. The mandalas served little
documented ritualistic function, were probably never the main icon of veneration for long, and were likely displayed infrequently. Despite this lack of secure ritualistic function, the mandalas, like many other copying projects, were embedded in a system of meaning in which the semiotic expression of sacred word carried its own contextually specific connotations and the visual combinations of text and image manifested different Buddhist philosophies.

The transcription of sacred text was a ubiquitous practice in the premodern period. It was also an amalgamated one, in which the copying of sutra was often not the sole pursuit. Devotees frequently paired sutras with pagodas in a variety of ways. In this context, the jeweled pagoda mandalas embody a particularly creative format of sutra transcription: their central icon carries meaning and marks a new iteration in the long history of the combination of sutra and pagoda in visual culture, religious practice, and doctrine. As many scholars have discussed, the desire to combine sutras and pagodas in one project stemmed in great part from the benefits derived from the conflation of the two highly meritorious forms of devotion. Sutras commanded copying and promised great rewards for doing so. Komatsu Shigemi calculates that the Lotus Sutra accounts for approximately 90 percent of all surviving scriptures from the Heian period. This is owing in part to the several instances within the sutra that instruct devotees to copy its text and disseminate the dharma, resulting in abundance for the practitioner:

[If a good man or good woman shall receive and keep, read and recite, explain, or copy in writing a single phrase of the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom, or otherwise and in a variety of ways make offerings to the scriptural roll with flower perfume, necklaces, powdered incense, perfumed paste, burned incense, silk banners and canopies, garments, or music or join palms in reverent worship, that person is to be looked up to and exalted by all the worlds, showered with offerings fit for a Thus Come One [a Buddha].]

Hence, the redemptive power of the Lotus Sutra is so great that to copy or intone even one phrase is to gain the status of the Buddha. Ishida Mosaku explains that four merit-generating methods have characterized Buddhism: making banners, constructing pagodas, copying scriptures, and carving sculptures. Ishida notes that from the Heian period on, attempts were made to combine some of the four types of activities in one project: banners with the image of a Buddha, sutras placed within sculptures, sutra copies of alternating lines of script and images of Buddhas, and pagoda-sutras. The merit is thereby doubled, and with only marginal effort and expense expended compared to the commission of individual projects. Building off Ishida, Miya Tsudo claims that the jeweled pagoda mandalas manifest the meritorious activities of building pagodas, copying sutras, and interpretation of the dharma.

Though not alone in their combination of text and reliquary, the jeweled pagoda mandalas represent a striking solution to the command to construct pagodas and copy sutras. Not only do the mandalas fulfill the injunction to honor, revere, and copy the scriptures, thereby reaping considerable salvific benefit, they also respect the injunction to erect pagodas. This perhaps embodies a more economical fulfillment of the order to build architectural reliquaries—not always a financially feasible option. The Lotus Sutra is celebrated for its unifying perspective on both the cult of the pagoda and the cult of the book, and, as it is the most commonly used sutra in the jeweled pagoda mandalas format, this rather equitable confirmation of both devotional practices probably did not go unnoticed. At multiple points the sutra proclaims the transcendent value of both devotional activities, comparing the merit and rewards so generated and suggesting a nondual parallel between the two. Therefore, we can understand the mandalas as the result of conflating the cult of relics and the cult of the books. They reflect a merging of devotional practices on the painted surface that mirrored the blended religious practices of premodern Japan.

But explanations for the central reliquary of the jeweled pagoda mandalas have yet to venture beyond the conclusion that the mandalas are simply another incarnation of this long tradition of combinatory practice based on the merit of both constructing pagodas and copying sutras in one unified project. Although this is certainly a sound and secure interpretation, I believe that the mandalas embody more than the search for the combination of multiple merits in one manifestation. The mandalas are undoubtedly a transcription project—but they are more than that. They exceed conventional transcriptions because of the novel twist of a written pagoda and the inclusion of multiple narrative episodes, rather than the single vignette of typical frontispieces. Most significant, the format of the jeweled pagoda mandalas is both the conveyor of meaning and the meaning itself. Exploring the site of this collusion uncovers Buddhist depths revealed only by an analysis of the interaction of the two media merged to create a new textual image that is neither strictly word nor purely picture.

Sutra text as relic originates in the conflation of the Buddha with the dharma or his teachings, becoming known as the dharma body; Japanese: hoshin; Chinese: fashen. Even in early texts we find evidence of the nonduality of the Buddha and the dharma. Particularly relevant to the study at hand are the characterizations by the Lotus Sutra of the equivalence of the Buddha and his teachings.

O Medicine King! Wherever it may be preached, or read, or recited, or written, or whatever place a roll of this scripture may occupy, in all those places one is to erect a stūpa of the seven jewels, building it high and wide with impressive decoration. There is no need even to lodge šārīra in it, what is the reason? Within it there is already a whole body of the Thus Come One.

Again, the scripture equates the sutra with the Buddha, saying, “If there is anyone who can hold [the Lotus Sutra], / Then he holds the Buddha body” and “if there is a man . . . who shall look with veneration on a roll of this scripture as if it were the Buddha himself.” The nonduality of the sutra and the body of the Buddha as scriptural text represent the ultimate conflation of dharma and relic, constituting the dharma relic category of relic veneration.

Pagodas are also embodied monuments. As John S. Strong has noted, the “apparent functional equivalence of stūpa and...
buddha” stems from the conviction that “a stūpa ‘is’ the living buddha.” The corporealization of the stupa/pagoda as another manifestation of the dharmaśākāya is a consistent theme across many texts and schools of Buddhism. Particularly rich are the Esoteric Buddhist conflations of pagodas as the dharmaśākāya of the cosmic buddha, Mahāvairocana (Japanese: Dainichi; Chinese: Dari Rulai). Again, the Lotus Sutra proves an important source for understanding the conceptual mechanics of the mandalas: in the chapter “Apparition of the Jeweled Stupa,” the Buddha instructs his disciple in the proper post-parinirvāṇa methods of veneration, saying, “After my passage into extinction, anyone who wishes to make offerings to my whole body must erect a great stūpa.”

The mechanism revealing the architectural icon in the jeweled pagoda mandalas is scriptural text. And because scripture is not just recorded teachings but actively partakes in the essence of the Buddha as a dharma relic, it is no mere signal. The central image deconstructs to reveal body building body. Ultimately, the textual pagoda is more than a single image of body; the central icon is an embodied projection of the somaticity of the Buddha composed of his relics. By closing the gap between reference and referent, the jeweled pagoda mandalas challenge the assumption that only partial signification is possible. This undifferentiated yoking of sutra and pagoda provides the viewer with a visual path to contemplations of the multiplicity of Buddha bodies. It is through the macro movements of opening and closing the space between the viewer and the object encouraged by the perlocutionary effect of the surface that the viewer becomes a crucial part of the expressive creation of this somatic profusion. The viewer experientially constitutes the revealing and dissolving of the bodies into one. Ultimately, through this conflation, the icon manifests an amalgamated form of the Buddha, including the anthropomorphic appearances of the Buddha seated within the pagoda. The paintings collapse distinction with indivisibility, and the constant slippage of dharma into sutra and sutra into pagoda escapes rigid duality, and the concepts of body, relic, text, and reliquary are allowed to exist in a dynamic visual relation. Rather than merely reinforcing what is already known, these objects reveal the potential of visualization by mirroring the conceptual fluidity of these identities in an indivisible format.

In this way, the jeweled pagoda mandalas eschew the perceived gulf between word and image. According to Michel Foucault, there exists an untranslatable and eternal chasm separating the two. He believes written word and graphic image run parallel to one another, that what is expressed in writing cannot be given visual form and simultaneously retain the original meaning of the text. The same fractured communication exists when visual form is described by word. The divide prevents full expression of one by the other. However, Foucault finds hope in calligrams (pictures composed of words), believing that they bring “a text and a shape as close together as possible” by simultaneously invoking and conflating written and visual modes of communication. Foucault writes, “Pursuing its quarry by two paths, the calligram sets the most perfect trap. By its double function, it guarantees capture, as neither discourse alone nor a pure drawing could do.” Embedded even within his optimistic analysis of the calligram’s abilities is the assumption of word and picture’s ontological divide. While a Foucauldian lens can carry a reading of the jeweled pagoda mandalas further by focusing on the indivisibility of the media constructing the central icon, an analysis of these paintings need not accept such a break between text and image.

Rather than proceed from a presupposition of unbridgeable distance, the mandalas offer a dynamic bond between the two media that comes closer to a nondual relation resulting from text’s sacred ontology as relic, and even as world progenitor. Sutra therefore constructs the pagoda and illustrates through indivisibility their fundamental unity as bodies of the Buddha. Through a Buddhist interpretation of the paintings, text and image are both icons of body that depend on one another in a visual conflation that challenges any reading that would attempt to divide them.

**Text in Premodern Japan**

Having burrowed into the surface to explicate the connections between the indivisibility of word and picture and the performative viewing that manifests the simultaneous expressions of the dharmaśākāya of the Buddha, telescoping out from the jeweled pagoda mandalas to the cultural context of sacred word in premodern Japan allows us to understand how such an innovative composition came into existence. As demonstrated in the investigations of the role of written word in the central icon of the mandalas, text jettisons its discursive function. It ceases to be reading material but, in this regard, directly corresponds to the openness of sacred text in the early premodern period. Ultimately, it is the ability of text to break hermeneutical strictures that enables written word to project an embodied icon. The countless explications and manifestations of sacred word in art, literature, and poetry of premodern Japan suggest that scriptures are open texts capable of potentially endless re-creation and reinterpretation. They necessitate constant pious reconstruction, as claimed by Shingon monk and polymath Kūkai (774–835). Ryūichi Abé explains: “Kūkai approaches the text as a yet-to-be bound—or, perhaps more appropriately, never-to-be bound—constantly reworked manuscript. For Kūkai, the text is not a book but a writing that remains open-ended.” The centrality of text’s ritualistic performance within Japanese Buddhism is difficult to overemphasize. Indeed, early premodern Japan was penetrated by textuality. Whether through the Shingon insistence on the ritualistic performance of both esoteric and exoteric texts to unlock their meanings; the chanting of sutra text or title widely popularized by Amidist, Lotus, and Pure Land schools; the enshrining of sacred writings within icons for ritualistic vivification; the practice of sutra burials; or the pious transcription of scripture, the enactment of sacred texts was woven into the religious and social fabric of the age.

Various techniques of reading and chanting were employed to access the power of scripture. The particular technique of tendoku, whose general meaning is the vocalization of the sutra but usually refers to briefly chanting the title along with selected lines of scripture, certainly does not involve a sustained or deep engagement with the full text of the sutra, but it remains incredibly potent. The ritualistic handling of written sutra known as tenpōn is an active process that involves holding the text with both hands and moving it in such a way...
that it mimics the flapping of a bird’s wings, three times to the right, three times to the left, and once more in front. This dynamic treatment usually occurs during chants of the sutra. These abbreviated techniques stand in great contrast to the actual reading of scripture for content, known as a "true reading" (shindoku). Flipping through a sacred text, albeit ritualistically, granted the participant great merit. Textual encounters—even fleeting or frivolous ones—had the ability to convey tremendous apotropaic and salvific power as well as to satisfy more earthly ambitions associated with the authoritative and social value of the texts.

One such example comes from the eighth-century Miraculous Episodes of Good and Evil Karmic Effects in the Nation of Japan (Nihonkoku genpō zen’aku yūgōki), in which a devoted reciter of the Heart Sutra and copier of other scriptures was summoned to the court of King Enma after her death (painlessly, we are assured) so that she might chant sutras before him, allowing him to witness and revel in the beauty of her celebrated voice. After three days, she is allowed to return to life. She then notices three men in yellow robes standing by the gate, who explain to her that this encounter is not their first and that at the Nara east market in three days’ time, they will meet again. It is at the market that the woman purchases two scrolls of the Brahma Net Sutra and one scroll of the Heart Sutra and afterward realizes that these scriptures are in fact her own copies made years before on yellow paper. Furthermore, she discovers the sutras to be none other than the three men of yellow robes.

Sutra transcriptions like the mandalas represent a type of copying known as kechienkyō, or sutras that establish kechien, a karmically beneficial connection between the Buddha and the copyists and patrons. The earliest mention of the term kechienkyō comes from an entry in the diary of the Heian-period courtier Fujivara Sanesuke (957–1046), in the ninth month and tenth day of 1021. The term occurs frequently after this point. For example, the Hyakurensho, a thirteenth-century anthology of various records and tales, records that on the fourth day of the third month in 1142, a ceremony utilizing a copy of the Buddhist canon was held at the Byōdō-in in Uji in order to establish kechien for the benefit of Emperor Toba. Fabio Rambelli notes that “texts were endowed with all the characteristics of sacred objects,” were “not essentially different from relics, icons, and talismans,” and that “[a]s soteriological tools…[t]hey acquired a magical and mystical dimension as sorts of ‘relics’ of past masters (and ultimately, of the Buddha).” Sutras were more than just symbols of the Buddha’s presence: they were embodiments of the Buddha. Therefore, the commissioning of transcriptions, the ornamentation of scriptures, the inclusion of bodily material, and the labors of hand copying were all thought to build personal and lasting connections with the numinosity of the dharma. Kevin Carr recently articulated the concept of iconarratives in his study on the functions of Buddhist visual narratives. Iconarratives sacralize space and provide an outlet for the establishment of karmic connections between the iconized object and the audience. Although the graphic vignettes in the jeweled pagoda mandalas create the option for visual reading, their presence does not necessarily mean that viewership was always so targeted and interactive. The projection of the somatic multiplicity of the central pagoda and the visual narratives in the mandalas continue to generate karmic connective possibilities for audiences as an icon of the Buddha in word and picture.

Insofar as the very materiality of texts is a signifier, ownership of the written word carries great social and authoritative value. The ubiquitous practice of shōgon, the elaborate adornment of Buddhist ritual objects, stresses the importance of materiality. Expensive and laborious commissions can signify a desire to manifest not only extreme piety but also wealth and social prestige. With the jeweled pagoda mandalas, beautifully dyed blue paper furnishes an exquisite backdrop on which golden characters erect the central icon. Narrative images of gold and silver—and bright reds, greens, blues, and yellows, in the case of the Chūsonji set—surround the dharma reliquary. And, of course, the large size of the individual mandalas and the scale of the sets as a whole further augment the projects.

The various interpretations and variety of uses of Buddhist texts reflect their polysemic nature. They were valued for their performative qualities and for their material manifestation of the immaterial, the physical expression of which constituted various systems of value, from economic to symbolic and religious currency. Understanding texts reductively only through their hermeneutic properties ignores the many dimensions of their lives. Moreover, texts create pluralities through diverse visual expression. As Richard Payne has noted, it is impossible to characterize Buddhism as employing just one view of language’s potential. It is the plurality and flexibility of sacred texts that make them distinctively suitable for artistic engagement. Their visual manifestations reflect established meanings and create new interpretations of the signified and the nature and plurality of the written word. “[E]very reading is always a rewriting,” and every visual manifestation expounds and explores the possibilities of sacred text, opening up new perspectives through the works’ very materiality.

That sacred scripture was not always meant to be consumed character by character testifies to its diverse functions and values. The purpose of the jeweled pagoda mandalas was realized in part through the act of copying itself, engendering karmic, material, and social cachet. Scriptures were valued for their materiality, their salvific, apotropaic, and prophylactic power, and, indeed, for their sheer presence, which enfolds such things as pagodas and sculptures regardless of their visibility. In the jeweled pagoda mandalas, text assumes roles beyond the borders of exegetical reading; their graphically copied scriptures expand our relation to text and our interactive experiences, inducing new ways of performative engagement. The sum of such scriptural incarnations is far greater than their constitutive parts. They offer a vision of indivisibility that surpasses doctrinal and ritual manifestations of sutra and pagoda by performing both simultaneously and without ontological distinction, and they therein challenge the presupposed gap between word and image. They are visual treatises on the potentialities of text that challenge all restrictions placed on Buddhist scriptures. After all, text created the world.

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Appendix

Japanese Characters for Select Terms Given in the Text

ten

Notes

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23. For a thorough analysis, see Miya, *Kinji hōō mandara*, 81–85.

24. For a transcription of the inscription, see ibid., 86 n. 1. As Miya Tsugio (ibid., 39–42) points out, the term “lotus mandala” carries connotations unrelated to the Tanzan Shrine mandalas. By examining several premodern texts, he determines two broad categories of lotus mandalas.

The more schematically arranged lotus mandala associated with Esoteric Buddhism and often used in the Lotus Sutra rites (hokkekyō) features Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna sitting side by side within a jeweled pagoda framed by an eight-petalled lotus, a reference to the eleventh chapter of the Sutra, “Apparition of the Jeweled Pagoda.” The other category is the narrativization of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra (Hokkekyō nijūhachi bon daisei, often shortened to daisei). However, if the historical entry is sufficiently ambiguous, as often they are, then it becomes difficult to ascertain whether the “lotus mandala” in the passage refers to the esoterized version or the transformation tableaux type; certainty is possible only if the mandala is described visually, or if the full categorical title is used for the paintings of the twenty-eight chapters.


28. For example, Kiyohira’s son Fujiwara Motomori (1105–1157) and grandson Fujiwara Hidetame (1122–1187) continued the practice of elaborate sutra transcription. Motomori commissioned a set of ornate Lotus Sutra scrolls, and Hidetame followed the tradition of his grandfather and ordered a blue and gold Buddhist canon. For more on the artistic commissions of Motomori and Hidetame, see Yenigurupkwan, *Hiraizumi*, 89–120.

29. Ibid., 174; and Miya, *Kinjō hōō mandara*, 33, 122. Miya also entertains the possibility of Motomori as patron.

30. Significant passages are dedicated to extolling the Four Guardian Kings’ (jishenshū; C: sitansang S: vajarāni) and other tutelary deities’ protection for those who hold and keep the sutras. Specifically, the twelfth chapter of the sutra in the translation by Yijing, a Chinese monk who translated Buddhist scriptures, “The Protection of the Nation by the Four Guardian Kings,” details the vast rewards offered to those—in particular, kings and monks—who revere the sutras. The chapter begins with the promise of protection from encroaching enemies, freedom from sordid afflictions, and salvation from the bitterness of famine and epidemics for those who follow the Golden Light Sutra (in T., no. 665, vol. 16, 427c–1–6). The Four Guardian Kings swear an oath to smite and subdue oppressors and to destroy evil and disease by the great power and authority bestowed on them as defenders of the righteous followers of the scripture (427c–9–28). The promises of such sought-after blessings often focus on the eradication of enemies, with long passages of strong rhetoric detailing the utter annihilation of adversaries and their lands (427c–20–27).


32. Hamada (ibid., 265) characterizes the “ten worlds (jikkai) of the title as a reference to the ten levels of the mandalas’ pagoda—including the first story’s false or pent roof. Kamedza Tsutsumi (“Jōbun saishōkyōki jikkai hōō mandara,” 68) advances a similar argument, explaining that the nine floors plus the pent roof, collectively called jikkai, or ten stories, came to be known as jikkai, a phrase he notes is completely unrelated to the Golden Light Sutra. Presumably, the homophonous quality of the words is responsible for the transference. However, neither author provides support for this supposition, and, given the lack of textual records for the jeweled pagoda mandalas, perhaps it is equally possible to suggest that the “ten worlds” refers to the ten scrolls of the set rather than to the ten stories of the pagoda, which is itself an inaccurate count. Takahashi Tomio also finds this particular explanation weak and suggests instead that jikkai refers to the number of scrolls, cumulating in a statement about the transformation of all things into the lands of the Buddha: one scroll, one pagoda, one world, and, thus, ten scrolls, ten pagodas, and the worlds of the ten directions (jōpō sōdai; C: shijing shìjī; S: daī daigaku obshi), symbolizing the infinite expanse and all-encompassing nature of the Buddha realm. Takahashi Tomio, “Chōsonjō to hokkekyō Chōsonji konkyō no kokoro,” *Tōiku daigaku kyōden* kōryū 33 (1981): 39.

33. The Sanskrit word mandala was transliterated into the Chinese term *mantuluo* and the Japanese term *mandara*. The term connotes the essence of enlightenment and is often spatially connected to the location of the Buddha’s spiritual awakening. Esoteric mandalas typically configure deities according to geometric schemata that render a cosmological map of the realms. However, in Japan the term expanded to include a variety of artistic depictions, such as visualizations of sanctified spaces like those of the Pure Land paradises and Shinto kuni and their shrines. The term is also applied to images that portray tales from the scriptures. For thorough treatments of Japanese mandalas, see Ishida Hisato, *Mandara no kenkyū*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Tōkyō Bijutsu, 1975); and ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*.


36. “Stupa” has been used as an umbrella term for all Buddhist reliquaries, of which there is a great variety. Xuanzang (602–664), a Chinese Buddhist monk whose travels in India were recorded in the *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* (*Da Tang yinyao*), advocated for this terminological unification. He declared the Chinese term for stupa, *tubó* (J: *sotō*), to be the accurate term for the architectural reliquaries he encountered. I would like to thank Tracy Miller for pointing this out in her talk “Perfecting the Mountain: On the Morphology of Towering Temples in East Asia,” for the “Seniors Academics Forum on Ancient Chinese Architectural History” (December 7–8, 2013) at Kinki University, Osaka. For Xuanzang’s passage, see T., no. 2087, vol. 51, 872a25–25. For a concise yet thorough summary of the historical origins of stupas and the word’s etymological derivation, see Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravāda Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 32–39.

37. Excluding minor differences, the structure of transcription is markedly consistent across all the examples.

38. For a complete map of the pagoda’s composition from sacred characters, refer to the associated digital project that animates the sequential construction, viewable on Taylor & Francis’s Website for the *Art Bulletin*, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/000403709.2015.1009326. It is also hosted on “Jeweled Pagoda Mandala,” under the Digital Projects tab at www.haleon.com. This marks the first time the complete sequence of the textual pagoda has been diagrammed and disseminated. Ishida Mosaku (“Kokushō saishōkyōki kyōten mandara,” 5) gave an early but cursory diagram of the Chōsonjō transcription.


40. The differences between the choice of narratives represented in the Ryōtōjō and Tanzan Shrine sets are likely the result of differing stylistic models. The Tanzan Shrine version adheres to earlier styles of visual narratives in which a larger selection of vignettes is depicted, while the Ryōtōjō set more closely matches the thirteenth century’s predilection for a reduced palette of scenes. See Miya, *Kinjō hōō mandara*, 120–48. This explanation is not to suggest that an argument could not be made for variations in doctrinal interpretations within the two sets; such an argument, however, is beyond the scope of the current study.

41. Different handwritings seen within the sets provide evidence of multiple copyists.

42. Miya, *Kinjō hōō mandara*, 91. For a transcription of the verse used, see 117 n. 6.

43. Ibid., 91.

44. Ibid.


46. In the case of the jeweled pagoda mandalas, the characters follow a scriptural style. I appreciate McNair’s sharing her calligraphic expertise with me through repeated email exchanges in which she patiently entertained my many questions.


48. For instance, Ishida Mosaku (“Kokushō saishōkyōki kyōten mandara,” 4) argues that Fujiwara Hidetame was inspired to copy the pagodas of the Chōsonjō mandalas.
Examples of other empowered inscriptions are the paintings known as 56. Stone,
Ibid., 261.

52. I would like to thank Sylvan Barnet and the late William Borto for their
kind hospitality and inexhaustible expertise during my trips to view their
collection and Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis for making it possible.


54. As Akiyama Terukazu notes, Komatsu Shigemi suggests that the identity of
the nun, sadly obscured by damage to the scroll, could be Goshirakawa’s consort, Takashina Eishi (d. 1216), the Lady of the
Tango Chamber. See Komatsu Shigemi, “Menashikyo to sono shu,” Museum 60 (1956): 24–26. Akiyama also points out that the Lady Kiki could be the mystery woman, in light of her strong connections with the monks associated with the scroll’s production and ownership and because she is referred to as “kii the nun” in some documents. See Akiyama Terukazu, “Women Painters at the Heian Court,” trans. Mari-

55. Komatsu Shigemi, Heke nōgyō no kenkyū, 3 vols. (Tokyo: 967, vol. 2, 819–29. For more on the interpretative readings of the
ashide in this scroll, see Julia Meech-Pekarik, “Disguised Scripts and Hidden Poems in an Illustrated Heian Sutra: Ashide and Usae in the Heke No Kyō,” Archives of Asian Art 31 (1977): 52–78; and Eubanks, Miracles of Book and Body, 167–71. Illustrations of the scroll can be found in these publications.

56. Examples of other empowered inscriptions are the paintings known as myōhō horon (the name of a Buddha or a powerful verse that is treated as an icon) and kibyō horon (sacred light inscriptions).

57. For more information on Nichiren, see Jacqueline I. Stone, Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 239–356.

58. Ibid., 261.


60. Stone, Original Enlightenment, 241.

61. Jacqueline I. Stone, “Chanting the August Title of the Lotus Sutra: Dai-

62. Esoteric mandalas composed of Sanskrit characters (Bonji mandara) are works of important text-image interactions representing the issue of embodiment bound up with language’s potential. However, these mandalas are outside the scope of this present study because of the differences in the linguistic systems.

63. For Wills Tanabe’s discussion on this subject, see Paintings of the Lotus Sutra, 98–108.

64. Mya Tsugio (Kingi bōna mandara, 1922) makes a similar observation.

65. Leon Hurvitz, trans., Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 270; in T., no. 262, vol. 9, 53b4–5. Encouragement for one to commit autocremation can also be found in Chinese texts, such as the Fanwuzheng (The Brahma Net Sutra). For more on the subject, see James A. Boren, Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007); and Jeremy Yu, Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence in Chinese Reli-


67. For more information on the gift of the body, see Reiko Ohnuma, Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

68. Very rarely, the copyists omitted phrases. These are most likely mistakes rather than intentional omissions, as transcription accuracy was paramount and the deletion of those phrases does not form new meanings.

69. Mimi Hall Yengurukawu, “Illuminating the Illuminator: Notes on a

70. The average size across the Ryūtonji set is 43.5 × 4/22.7 × 8 in. (111 × 58 cm). The Tanzen Shrine and Chōfusōji versions are roughly similar.

71. Claude Gandelman, “By Way of Introduction: Inscriptions as Sub-


73. Gandelman, “By Way of Introduction,” 146. For Austin’s discussion on perlocutionary acts, see in particular 109–92.

74. I routinely saw people, when viewing the paintings on display, step close and squint in a physical attempt to see the minute inscription and then step back to see the pagoda. This bodily engagement was repeated multiple times.

75. In his analysis of “Duck/Rabbit,” Ernst Gombrich explores issues of perception and the fundamental interdependence of shape and interpretation. Gombrich suggests that as viewers, we are incapable of pure seeing without the application of intellect, which implies that whether one sees the text or the architectural reliquary in the jeweled pagoda mandalas is perhaps a matter of attention. Gombrich, Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton Uni-

76. This quotation from the Sea Sutra (J: Kanbutsu sanmai kashū, C: Guanyin samun houyin, S: Buddha dhyanavamsa samudāya stotra) in T., no. 643, vol. 15, 645c4–647a10) is a translation by Wang, Shaping the Lotus Sutra, 246.

77. For more on the artist’s response to the Shadow Cave, see ibid., 245–55.

78. Rather than understand the material and oral expression of signs as two genres without overlap, Ruth Finnegan suggests that written and oral manifestations are not rigid categories but, often, genres with permeable borders. Finnegan, Oral Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 16–24.

79. Some of the earliest descriptions of this pairing come from interpid Chi-
inese monks. Both Faxian (357–422) and Xuanzang bear witness in their travel diaries to the practice of dhara reliqu stupas. In the text, Record of Buddhist Countries (J: Bukkoku kei C: Fuguoji in T., no. 2085, vol. 51, 859b18–19), Faxian records during his visit to India in 399–414 that stupas were constructed for the specific purpose of sutra veneration, creating sutra-stupas (J: kyōgō jyōzō, C: zingō). Xuanzang (in T., no. 2087, vol. 51, 920a21–26) likewise records the ubiquitous and related practice of enshrining sutra verses in mini-stupas as dhara relics.

80. Another contemporary example is that of the kōkobukyō (strips of wood in the shape of pagodas with inscriptions of sutra text). The earliest men-
tion of kōkobukyō comes from the Hyakurensō, a thirteenth-century anthology of various records and tales by an unknown compiler. In the tenth month and eleventh day of 1181, the Hyakurensō records that Taira Shigemori (1138–1179) told Goshirakawa of his dream in which one thousand volumes of the Heart Sutra were copied onto kōkobukyō in order to pacify the troubled spirits of the war dead. Learning of this dream, Goshirakawa commissioned twelve barrels of kōkobukyō, setting them adrift on the east and west seas. Kuroita Katsumi, ed., "Hyakurenshō" (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1974), 28.

81. Komatsu, Heke nōgyō no kenkyū, vol. 1, 47.

82. Mya, Kingi bōna mandara, 7.


85. Ibid.

86. For discussions on the trikā (three bodies of the Buddha) system, see Naoyuki Gadjin, “On the Problem of Buddha-bodies,” in The Trans
Mahāvijñāna Sūtra: Its Significance for the Study of Buddhist Development, "Eastern Buddhist 8 (1975): 46; and Robert H. Sharf. Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store House (Hono-
lulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 100–111.

87. An examination of the occurrences of dharmadhātu in early texts reveals that the uses of the term identified it as the "collection of teachings," or "body of teachings," and as the "collection of dharmas," in which fol-
lowers could seek refuge and access to the Buddha and his law after the parinirvāṇa, rather than the highly conceptual body of the dharmadhātu system. Over time, scholars have used the dharmadhātu body doctrine has corrected the tend-
ency in previous studies to nominalize the early uses of dharmadhātu and to ignore the plural forms of the term, which had resulted in what many scholars have described as an anachronistic reading of dharmadhātu as the fully developed transcendental body corresponding to the later dharmadhātu theory, effectively mischaracterizing the development of the doc-
trine as far too consistent and tidy. For more on this issue, see Paul Har-

89. Hurvitz, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, 176; in T., no. 262, vol. 9, 34b12.
92. For early Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan texts expounding stūpas as bodies of the Buddha, see Gustav Roth, "Symbolism of the Buddhist Stūpa according to the Tibetan Version of the Caiyāśīhāyāvinaṃdhūṣa-stūtra, the Sans-
krit Treatise Stūpa-kālayanā-kāṅkāvivaśeṣa, and a Corresponding Passage in Kaluṭatīta Kṛṣṇaṁghraḥ, in "In the Stūpa: Its Religious, Historical and Architec-
93. For more on this topic, see David Gardiner, "Manḍala, Mañḍala on the Wall: Variations of Usage in the Stūpa School," Journal of the Interna-
98. Michel Foucault, This Is Not a Pipe, trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 20–21. Also relevant here is Peter Wagner’s use of iconotext, in which words and pictures inter-
99. Foucault, This Is Not a Pipe, 22.
100. Abé, The Weaving of Mantra, 276.
101. This is not an exhaustive list, and the reader will likely be aware of fur-
ther examples.
102. Sasaki Kōkan, "So no jushika to 5 no saishika: Bukkyō to 5ei to no musubiuki ni kansuru ichi shiron," in Kokka to tenpō: Tenpōteki ideov-
103. Sasaki, "So no jushika to 5 no saishika," 52.
107. Fabio Rambelli, Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japa-
108. Ibid., 96.
111. I pursue this argument further in my book manuscript by developing what I term a "salvific matrix of text and body" to interpret the man-
dalas’ combinatory composition.
113. Rambelli, Buddhist Materiality, 88–90.
114. Richard K. Payne, “Awakening and Language: Indic Theories of Lan-