

# A Comparative Study of the Concept of Dharmakāya Buddha: Vairocana in Hua-yen and Mahāvairocana in Shingon Buddhism

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*The concept of Dharmakāya is the central theme in both the Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhist literatures. Hua-yen Buddhism adopts Dharmakāya Vairocana Buddha as the main Buddha. Shingon Buddhism, on the other hand, claims that their secret doctrine is the direct teaching of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana Buddha. Even though these two schools are based on the same idea of Dharmakāya Buddha, the concepts of Vairocana in Hua-yen and Mahāvairocana in Shingon are different in their doctrinal formulation. Hua-yen Buddhist literature elaborates the function of Dharmakāya Vairocana in the context of the three Buddha-body theory; the Shingon Buddhist literature elaborates Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana in the context of the five Buddha Body theory. Shingon literature emphasizes the direct communication between Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana and sentient beings, and expands his direct salvation of sentient beings in saṃsāra. This process of salvation by Mahāvairocana is based on compassion which is a fundamental merit of Mahāvairocana. Compassion is the basic element of enlightening and saving sentient beings.*

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## I. Preface

The concept of Dharmakāya is the central theme in both the Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhist literatures. Hua-yen(J. Kegon; K. Hwaōm) Buddhism adopts Dharmakāya Vairocana Buddha as the main Buddha. Shingon Buddhism,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, claims that their secret doctrine is the direct teaching of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana Buddha.<sup>2</sup>

Even though these two schools are based on the same idea of Dharmakāya Buddha, the concepts of Vairocana in Hua-yen and Mahāvairocana in Shingon are different in their doctrinal formulation. The ideas of Dharmakāya in Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism have been developed in connection with the concepts of two, three, or multiple Buddha-bodies. Hua-yen Buddhist literature elaborates the function of Dharmakāya Vairocana in the context of the three Buddha-body theory; the Shingon Buddhist literature elaborates Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana in the context of the five Buddha Body theory. Also, compassion is essential to the descending process of both Vairocana and Mahāvairocana whereby sentient beings are saved. Although their function for salvation is elaborated somewhat differently, the process of salvation is basically shared among their traditions.

Hua-yen Buddhism in particular developed the idea of *dharmadhātu* in connection with the idea of *pratītyasamutpāda*. *Dharmadhātu-pratītyasamutpāda* (C. Fa-chiai-yüan-ch'i: 'interdependent arising of the universe') is the world of Vairocana. *dharmadhātu* as the realm of Vairocana Buddha embodies all phenomena, knows no

1 The term "Shingon" is a Japanese term derived from the Chinese Chen-yen (*mantra*, literally means the 'true word.'). The term "Mikkyo" means literally 'secret teaching,' and it is used in contradiction to "Kengyō," which literally means 'revealed teaching.'

2 The names Vairocana and Mahāvairocana Buddha appear in various Buddhist scriptures. The terms 'Vairocana' and 'Mahāvairocana' are associated with Light, or Sun, and they are derived from the same root *viro* in Sanskrit and *vero* in Pāli, which literally means "shining upon, brightening, illuminating." Gautama Vajracharya, a Sanskrit scholar, makes a distinction between *vairocana* and *virocana*: the term *vairocana* means "associated with light" and it refers to "sun, fire"; on the other hand, the term *virocana* literally means "one who has the light" and it is also used to mean the name of 'transcendent' Buddha. The term *vairocana*, rather than *virocana*, is used continuously in the Sanskrit *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the last chapter of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*. For reference, see, Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, Vol. 2 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1953), 498a, 512a.

obstruction and is infinite in its scope and space. The theory of *pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu* has become a fundamental theme for the Hua-yen tradition. For soteriological aspect, both Hua-yen philosophy and Shingon Buddhism provide a theoretical basis that shares the same quality of Buddha Nature and its relationship to the Dharmakāya and to all phenomena. In doing this, they emphasize the worshipping of a personified Dharmakāya Buddha. Using both a historical and doctrinal approach, this paper will look comparatively at the doctrine of Vairocana as found in Hua-yen and the doctrine of Mahāvairocana as found in Shingon.

## II. The Development of Dharmakāya Buddha Theory

Hua-yen Buddhism is based on the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*<sup>3</sup> (ATS). Chinese commentators on this sutra systematized Hua-yen philosophy. Tu-shun(557-640 A.D.)<sup>4</sup> and Chih-yen(602-668)<sup>5</sup> are regarded as the first and second patriarch in the Hua-yen school. Fatsang(643-712),<sup>6</sup>

3 The word Avatamsaka is derived from the Sanskrit root *tams*, to decorate oneself, prefixed with *ava*, which etymologically means a small garland, a ring-shaped ornament. The Hua-yen School is based on the *Avatamsaka-sutra*. The Ch'an School was also greatly influenced by the ATS. There are three Chinese translations: the 60-chapter version of 420 C.E. by Buddhahadra (359- 429), T.9, 395, 788, which is the standard text; the 80-chapter version of 699 C.E. by Sikshananda (652-710), T.10, 1, 444; and the 40-chapter version of 798 C.E. by Prajna (date unknown), T. 10, 661, 851. The last version is but one of the 40 sections of the former two scriptures, and of which only the Sanskrit original is extant, called the *Gandavyūha* (Entering into the Realm of Dharma). See, *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, vol.2, 432.

4 Tu-shun (557-640), or Fa Shun of the Chung-nan Mountain School in the Sui dynasty, wrote profound commentaries on the Hua-yen *Ching* and he was considered to be the first patriarch of the Hua-yen school. He is regarded as the author of *Hua-yen-wu-chiao-chih-kuan* (*Contemplation of Five Doctrines Based on Hua-yen*) and *Hua-yen-fa-chiai-kuan-men* (*On the Meditation of dharmadhātu Based on Hua-yen*).

5 Chi-yen (602-668) of the Chih-hsiang monastery, the successor of Tu Shun, developed his master's idea and he was regarded as the second patriarch of the Hua-yen school. Perhaps the most important contribution of Chih Yen was his proposal of the ten mysteries. Though most of the content of these mysteries was included in the *Shih-shih wu-ai dharmadhātu* of *Fa Chieh Kuan*, this concept of the "balanced" ten mysteries was indeed novel and refreshing from the viewpoint of the literature of his time. See, Garma C. C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hua Yen Buddhism*, (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 234-37.

6 Fa-tsang (643-712) was also known as Hsien-shou. He was the third patriarch and systematizer of the Hua-yen school. He is regarded as the most prolific writer among the Hua-yen masters. It is said that he wrote one hundred volumes (*Chüan*) of books and essays. See, Mircea Eliade, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, "Fa-tsang."

Ch'eng-kuan (ca. 738-838)<sup>7</sup> and others further and profoundly systematized the Hua-yen philosophy. The Hua-yen philosophy was also influential in the formation of Ch'an Buddhist practice and doctrine.

Shingon Buddhism is based on Chinese scriptures such as the Mahāvairocana-sūtra<sup>8</sup> (MS), its commentary *Ta-jih-ching-su*<sup>9</sup> (MS Commentary), the *Tattovasamgraha-sūtra*<sup>10</sup> (TS, T.18,857), the *Bodhicitta-sastra* (BS, T.32,1665)<sup>11</sup>, and others. The Shingon doctrine was systematized by Kūkai (774-835 A.D.)<sup>12</sup>, a Japanese monk who wrote several extensive commentaries (i.e., *Hizo-hoyaku*, T.77,2426; *Sokushin-jobutsu-gi*, (SJG, T.77,2428). Kūkai systematized the Shingon doctrine synthetically based on both the MVS and the TS.

In its development, the concept of Dharmakāya took on a thoroughly soteriological perspective. In the early Buddhist scriptures such as Pāli Nikāyas, the Buddha Śākyamuni is described both as a human being and as a superhuman being. Although the Buddha Śākyamuni has magical or divine powers, he, as a human being, experienced the sufferings of birth, age, sickness, and death.<sup>13</sup> The early

7 Ch'ing-Kuan (738-840)'s surname was Hisa-Hou. He was a native of Yueh Chou. He lived a hundred and two years and was well known to the Imperial Master of six successive T'ang Emperors. Though it is not possible that he studied under Fa-Tsang, the orthodox Hua-yen Buddhists nevertheless considered him the fourth patriarch of the Hua-yen school. (Garma C. C. Chang, 1971: 238-40.)

8 The full title of the Mahāvairocana-sūtra is Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi-vikurvāṭadhi-stanavaipulya-sūtra (C. *Ta-p'i-lu-che-na-ch'eng-fo-shen-pien-chia-ch'ih-ching*) (7 *Chüan*). T.18,848. The Mahāvairocana-sūtra was translated by Śubhakarasiṃha and I Hsing at the Ta-fu-hsien Monastery, Tung-tu during the T'ang dynasty (725 C.E.).

9 The full title of the *Ta-jih-ching-sutra* (J. *Dainichi-kyōsho*) is *Ta-p'i-lu-che-na-ch'eng-fo-shen-pien-chia-ch'ih-ching-su* (T.39,1796.) written by I Hsing during the T'ang dynasty.

10 The full name of the *Tattovasamgraha-sūtra* is *Sarvatathōgata-tattva-samgraha-Mahōyōnabhisamayā-mahakalpa-rajā-sūtra* (C. *Chin-kang-ting-i-ch'ieh ju-lai-chen-shih-she-ta-ch'eng-hsien-sheng-ta-chiao-wang-ching*, 3 *Chüan*, T.18,865). It was translated by Amoghavajra during the T'ang dynasty (753). There are three versions in the Chinese Tripitaka: the first translated by Vajrabodhi into four *Chüan*, the second by Amoghavajra into three, and the third by Danapāla (late tenth century) into thirty *Chüan*.

11 The full Chinese title of the *Bodhicitta-sastra* is the *Chin-kang-ting-yu-ch'ien-chung-fa-a-nou-to-lo-san-miao-san-p'u-t'i-hsin-lun*, T.32, 1665.

Its probable Sanskrit title is *Varasekhara-yoga-anuttara-samyaksambodhi-cittopada-sastra*. Minoru Kiyota considers that the *Bodhicitta-sastra* is an apocryphal text, allegedly composed by the Tantric Nāgārjuna and translated by Amoghavajra.

12 Kūkai is the founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism. He studied under Hui-ko (746-805), a Chinese monk who studied under Hsuan-ch'ao, a disciple of Śubhakarasiṃha. Kūkai's Shingon is called Tōmitsu, while the Tantric Buddhist tradition incorporated within T'ien-dai is called Taimitsu.

Buddhist literatures also describe the difficult reality that it is extremely rare for a human being to encounter the Buddha and listen to his teachings. Consequently most people will never be able to accumulate the good karma that comes as the result. However, after the disciples of the Buddha experienced the Buddha's death, they looked toward the Three Jewels (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) as objects of refuge. Moreover, Buddhism expanded the idea of 'the Buddha' as an object of refuge to not only refer to the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, but also to an everlasting, omniscient being that constantly responds to the sufferings of the sentient beings. This idea was systematically developed into the complex concept of Dharmakāya (Dharma-body, or the body of reality). The Dharmakāya is described as the formless, unchanging, transcendental, inconceivable being. It is also described as the cosmic body of the Buddha.

As to the historical perspective, it is often suggested that the Mahāyāna Buddhist, in seeking an omniscient and omnipresent being to continually and immediately respond to the suffering of people, constructed the idea of Dharmakāya. But we must consider that the idea of Dharmakāya already existed in early Buddhism. In the early Buddhist scriptures the term Dharmakāya was already seen in relationship to the physical Buddha body. According to the Pāli Nikayas, the concept of the Buddha in relation to the Dharma is stated in very different ways. The term 'Buddha' denotes both the Physical Body and the Mind of the Buddha. The Mind of the Buddha refers to the undefiled Dharma that the Buddha attained at the time of enlightenment. The Pāli *Samyutta-nikāya* explains that one who sees the Dharma will see the Buddha, and conversely, one who sees the Buddha will see the Dharma: When the Buddha was staying near Rājagaha in Great Grove, he visited and told Vakkali who was sick, afflicted, stricken with a sore disease: 'He who seeth the Norm, Vakkali, he seeth me; he who seeth me, he seeth the Norm. Verily, seeing the Norm, one sees me: seeing me, one sees the Norm.(SN. vol. III (XXII, 87), 103.)

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13 For example, when the Buddha was once staying at Rājagaha, in the Maddakuc-chi Deer Park, the Buddha felt his pain in his foot, but he endured pain with his right contemplative concentration. (SN, 38, 138).

Furthermore, there are descriptions of the historical Buddha as a transitional figure and the undefiled Dharma as a permanent basis of the Buddha's enlightenment. The *Dīgha-nikāya*(DN) describes the constant existence of the Dharma(*dhamma-sarana*) in contrast to the historical Buddha who is transient but lives in this temporary world. (DN, vol. II, 101.) In the *Anguttara-nikāya*(AN), the passage '*saddhammo ciraṭṭhitiko hoti*' refers to the fact that the true dharma remains forever after the Buddha. (AN, V, 201 & III, 274; AN, VI, 40 & III, 340; AN, VII, 56 & IV, 84.) In this way, Dharmakāya is explained in relation to *brahmakāya*, *dharmabhūta*, and *brahma-bhūta* which are regarded as synonymous (*adhivacana*) with *tathāgata*. (DN, III, 84.)

Even though the distinction between Dharmakāya and the historical Buddha is not clearly described, there are some brief descriptions about Dharmakāya in Chinese *Āgamas*. According to *Āgamas*, the purpose of 'self accomplishment' is explained in the description of 14 dharmas. The explanation uses the context of numerous illustrations of dharmas.(T.1, 234b.) The qualities of Dharmakāya are also explained: Dharmakāya reveals his marks, his life is infinite, his auspicious marks are clear. He achieves the Way of the Buddha with the 32 marks and 10 powers. (T.2, 855b.) In this passage, the qualities of Dharmakāya are personified and are identified with the Tathags marks and powers. On the other hand, in both the Pāli *Nikāyas* and Chinese *Āgamas*, the term "Dharmakāya" is generally understood as a group of dharmas or the fundamental source of the Buddha's enlightenment.

The concept of permanence of the Dharmakāya was also discussed in the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* (MPS) (S.;C. *Ta-pan-nieh-p'an-ching*, T.12,374; C. *Ta-panni-yuan-ching*, T.12,376). In connection with this, the *Dharmaśārīra-sūtra* (*Fo-shuo-fa-shen-cheng*, T.17,766.)<sup>14</sup> explains the concepts of Dharmakāya and Nirmāṇakāya (Hajime Nakamura, 1980; 214f.).

The theories of two, three, or multiple Buddha Bodies later developed, especially in Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the early Mahāyāna Buddhist Scriptures, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and the

14 Translated into Chinese by Fa-hsien alias Dharmadeva. The Sanskrit title *Dharmaśārīra-sūtra* was tentatively given by U. Wogihara in the Index to Nanjio Catalogue, 119; Hajime Nakamura, 1987; 214f.

*Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra*, the two Buddha Bodies are categorized as Dharmakāya and Rūpakāya. In the theory of three Buddha-body, Dharmakāya is Dharma-body and it refers to the 'Purity' of a transcendental body, which embodies the highest Buddhist truth and which is the absolute and unconditional Buddha-nature. Rūpakāya refers to the physical body of the historical Buddha. The term Rūpakāya is later used as Nirmāṇakāya. The other Buddha-body is called Saṃbhogakāya. In the early Buddhist literatures, including the early Mahāyāna sutras such as the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra*, the two Buddha bodies are categorized as Dharmakāya and Rūpakāya.

According to the views of Buddhologists like Nagao, Nakamura, Takasaki, and Kiyota,<sup>15</sup> the two Buddha Body theory developed into the three Buddha Body theory with its elaboration upon the intermediary agent Saṃbhogakāya, which literally means a 'rewarded-body' or 'reward-body.' Thus Saṃbhogakāya is one who is 'rewarded' with the fruits of enlightenment as the result of having perfected bodhisattva practices. Saṃbhogakāya also acts toward others as 'reward-body,' because he is also active in saving sentient beings.

Saṃbhogakāya is central to the understanding of the organic relationship between the two other Buddha Bodies. It functions as a 'bridge' between Dharmakāya and Nirmāṇāya. Because Saṃbhogakāya is the instrument through which the historical person realizes Dharmakāya, it is symbolic of the perfection of bodhisattva practice, and it is the instrument through which the Dharma of Dharmakāya Vairocana penetrates the realm of sentient beings in Hua-yen philosophy. (T. 9, 293 · 845c.; Garma Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, pp. 193-4.) The three Buddha-body theory provides the doctrinal basis for the salvation of all sentient beings. Through the

15 Gadjin M. Nagao. "On the Theory of Buddha-Body (Buddha-kaya)." *The Eastern Buddhist* 6.1 (May 1973): 25-53; Jikido Takasaki. "Dharmata, *dharmadhātu*, Dharmakāya and Buddhadhātu." *Journal of Indian And Buddhist Studies*. XIV.2 (March 1966): 919-903; Minoru Kiyota. "The Doctrine of the Buddha-nature in the Mahāyāna MPS." *JIBAS*. 5.2 (1982); Kiyota. *Tantric Concept of Bodhicitta: A Buddhist Experiential Philosophy*. Madison, Wisconsin. 1982; Kiyota. "Tathāgatagarbha Thought: A Basis of Buddhist Devotionalism in East Asia," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 12.2 (1985): 207-231.

Dharmakāya's penetration or transformation into Nirmāṅkāya by way of the Saṃbhogakāya, the Buddha is able to offer salvation to the universe.

### III. Parallels in Hua-yen and Shingon's Dharmakāya Theories

With this general background about Dharmakāya theory we can now look more particularly to Hua-yen and Shingon doctrine. I will compare and contrast the two doctrines, showing the many commonalities and differences these two traditions contain.

First, in relation to the Buddha-body theory, both Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism adopted a multiple Buddha-body theory to explain their soteriological stance. Hua-yen Buddhism elaborates on the function of Dharmakāya Vairocana in the context of the traditional three Buddha-body theory. On the other hand, Shingon Buddhism explains Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana in the context of a five Buddha-body theory.

In the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the last chapter of the ATS, Vairocana is identified as Dharmakāya who upon his enlightenment indirectly shows the Realm of Dharma (*dharmadhātu*) to the bodhisattvas and other heavenly beings. When the bodhisattvas and other great beings asked Vairocana Buddha to explain the magnificent light of his meditation and his Realm of Dharma, light came out from between his front teeth, and from his eyebrows. It shone in the direction of a bodhisattva, showing his immeasurable, wonderful marks. In this example, Vairocana Buddha as Dharmakāya does not communicate with sentient beings directly, but uses a mediator, Saṃbhogakāya, to teach his Dharma. It seems here that the ATS has inherited the three Buddha-body theory. Even though the ATS does not explain the three Buddha-body theory directly, the fact that Vairocana Buddha preaches his Dharma and shows his magnificence to the bodhisattvas and the sentient beings through a major bodhisattva indicates that the ATS adopted the three Buddha-body theory.



Shingon texts describe compassion through five Dharmakāyas: *Svabhāva-Dharmakāya*, *Nirmaṇā-Dharmakāya*, *Niṣyanda-Dharmakāya*, and *Sambhoga-Dharmakāya* which contains two Dharmakāyas, *Svasāmbhoga-Dharmakāya* and *Parasāmbhoga-Dharmakāya*. Kiyota claims that the purpose of adding the term *svabhāva* to Dharmakāya is an attempt to conceive a larger horizon to encompass the traditional three Buddha-body theory.

First, whereas the traditional theory distinguishes the three bodies, Shingon conceives of the three bodies as organic entities of a larger body, *Svabhāva-Dharmakāya*. Second, whereas the traditional theory conceives of Dharmakāya ontologically (emptiness/co-arising), Shingon conceives of it soteriologically (Mahāvairocana), a creator. And third, this creative force is revealed through three "wisdom-manifesting compassion dharma-bodies," or simply compassion-bodies.<sup>16</sup>

Mahāvairocana as Dharmakāya is inherent in the essence of both *Sambhogakāya* and *Nirmāṇakāya*, and hence there is no essential distinction. Shingon thus uses the term 'Dharmakāya' rather than '*kaya*' to emphasize the attributional aspect of Dharmakāya. *Nirmaṇā-Dharmakāya* is a historically enlightened one, of which Śākyamuni is one example. This dharma-body expounds the Dharma to bodhisattvas, sravakas, and pratyeka-buddhas through the flow of skillful means. As stated, Shingon Buddhism divides the function of *Sambhoga-Dharmakāya* into two types: *Svasāmbhoga-Dharmakāya*, one who enjoys the fruits of one's own enlightenment; and *Parasāmbhoga-Dharmakāya*, one who not only enjoys the fruits of one's own enlightenment but is endowed with skill-in-means that shares these fruits with others. *Niṣyanda-Dharmakāya* refers to the personified Mahāvairocana who makes the 'flow' of skillful means possible. Shingon Buddhism holds that the *Niṣyanda-Dharmakāya* transforms itself into various forms and enters into the six destinies to enlighten sentient beings. Lastly, there is *Svabhāva-Dharmakāya*. Among the five Buddha-bodies, *Svabhāva-Dharmakāya* represents the major aspect

16 Minoru Kiyota, *Shingon Buddhism: Man-Buddha Integration Theory* (Manuscript, 1991), 90.

of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana. The other four Dharmakāyas are the simply the attributes of Mahāvairocana. The transformations of Mahāvairocana into the four other Buddha-bodies explains the compassion of Mahāvairocana towards saving all sentient beings.

Second, in the historical perspective, the major scriptures of Shingon Buddhism make it unambiguous that Mahāvairocana is the main Buddha. In Shingon, Mahāvairocana is placed at the center of all doctrinal systems. But in Hua-yen it is not so unambiguous. Hua-yen's appointing of Vairocana as the main Buddha, was gradual and subtler. Although the Vairocana Buddha came to be regarded as the main Buddha in the Hua-yen School, it is not clear whether the ATS itself considers Vairocana as the main Buddha. It seems that later Hua-yen masters amplified the role of Vairocana.

The Hua-yen commentators began to elaborate on the conception of Vairocana and its functions beginning from the late sixth century. After the late seventh century, it appears that the Hua-yen school firmly established Dharmakāya Vairocana as the main Buddha. Yet the name of Vairocana appears only in a few chapters of the ATS. For example, in the first chapter of the ATS (60 Chüan of Hua-yen Ching), the Chapter of the Pure Eye in the World, the name of Vairocana Buddha appears only once. This chapter describes the bodhisattvas who surround the Buddha in Kushinagara of Magadha country. These bodhisattvas, including Samantabhadra, are denoted as the "Good Friends of Vairocana Buddha in previous lives." (T.9, 395b) Vairocana Buddha primarily appears in the second chapter, the Chapter of Vairocana Buddha (60 Chüan Hua-yen Ching, but the sixth Chapter in the 80 Chüan). In the subsequent chapters, Vairocana Buddha is rarely mentioned.

Tu-shun (557-640 A.D.) and Chih-yen (602-668), the first and second patriarchs in the Hua-yen school, do not mention Vairocana Buddha as the main Buddha in the ATS. Tu-shun never mentions Vairocana Buddha in his one and only treatise, the *Hua-yen-fa-chiai-kuan-men* (On the meditation on the *dharmadhātu*). Chih-yen also does not mention Vairocana Buddha in his major work

the *Hua-yen-shou-hsüan-chi* (Records of Probing the Depth). He does, in the context of the *Trikāya*, elaborate upon the meanings of Buddha and *Tathāgata* in the ten Buddhas, including Vairocana. Of the other of Chi Yen's writings, Vairocana is only mentioned in one sentence of the *Hua-yen-k'ung-mu-chang* (Notes and Commentaries on the Various Chapters), as follows: "Rocana (Vairocana) Buddha is the Cause of the Samantabhadra's practice, accomplishes [his] Cause and Effect." (T. 45, 540a.) Based on Chi Yen's writings, Kōshiro Tamaki asserts that Chi Yen's explanation of Buddha is actually of the ten Buddha names, not of Vairocana Buddha.<sup>17</sup> For that reason, Kōshiro Tamaki does not consider Vairocana Buddha as the main Buddha in the ATS.

Yet Fa-tsang (643-712) and Ch'eng-kuan (ca. 738-838) describe Vairocana as the main Buddha in the ATS. Earlier on, in the *Hua-yen-ching-t'a-hsüan-chi* (*Records of Searching the Depth of Hua-yen*),<sup>18</sup> Fa-tsang elaborated upon the concept of Buddha and regarded all the 10 Buddhas as main Buddhas. It seems that Fa-tsang only later developed the idea of Vairocana as the main Buddha in the *Hua-yen-ching-chih-kuei* (*The Tenets of Hua-yen Pointed Out*), where he explained the ten features of Non-obstruction. (T. 45, 1871, 1a). In the *T'a-hsüan-chi*, we can only find a few quotations about Vairocana Buddha. In fact, when Fa-tsang explains the Original Vow, he uses the expression, "the *Tathāgata's* fundamental Vow," rather than "Vairocana's fundamental Vow." (T.35, 108a.) Fa-tsang's work, *Hua-yen-wu-chiao-chang* (*The Five Doctrines on the Hua-yen Ching*), adopted the main tenets of Chi Yen's *Hua-yen-i-ch'eng-shih-hsüan-men* (*The Ten Mysteries of the One Vehicle of the Avatamsaka*) (T.45,1868, 514a-518c.). In the preface of the *T'a-hsüan-chi* he mentions the ten Buddhas' Bodies<sup>19</sup> of Vairocana

17 Some Chinese terms are used to denote Vairocana Buddha in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* such as Vairocana, Rocana, and Cana. The question arises whether these Chinese terms have the same meaning. T'ien-tai School divides these Chinese terms: Vairocana as Dharmakāya, Rocana and Cana as Sambhogakāya, Sakamuni Buddha as Nirmanakāya. See, T. 34, 128a; P'u-sa-ying-lo-pen-ye-ching (T.24, 1485, 1010b-1023a); Tamaki Kōshiro, "The Views on the Buddha in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*," in the Kegoan Shiso, ed., Takasaki Jikido, (1983), 181-187; Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *The Korean Approach to Zen: The Collected Works of Chinul* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1983), 230-231.

18 *Hua-yen-ching-t'a-hsüan-chi* (*Records of Searching the Depth of Hua-yen*) is written by Fa-tsang. T. 1733 (20 *Chüan*).

as follow:

Devotion to the ocean of the great *prajñā*,/ which is the Ten Buddhas' Bodies of Vairocana./ Which are permeated throughout all *dharmadhātu*,/ is the supreme Buddha of great Charity./ Dharma which is permeated in all directions and is beyond impurity,/ is the perfect Wheel of emancipation (S. vimukti) (T. 35, 107a.)

Fa-tsang surely acknowledges Vairocana Buddha, but he gives no clear intention that he regarded Vairocana Buddha as the main Buddha in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*.

It is not until the *Hua-yen-ching-chih-kuei* when we find Fa-tsang's emphasizing Vairocana as the main Buddha. As mentioned, Fa-tsang clearly indicates that Vairocana Buddha is the main Buddha of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* when he explains the ten features of Non-Obstruction in the *Hua-yen-ching-chih-kuei*.

Ch'eng-kuan, the fourth patriarch in the Hua-yen school, explained the concept of Vairocana Buddha in his *Ta-fang-kung-fo Hua-yen-ching-sui-su-yen-i-ch'ao* (Ta-sui-ch'ao: An Extended Commentary on Commentaries on the ATS): "Because [of] Vairocana Buddha's Great Fundamental Vow, [which] encompasses all places of *dharmadhātu*, he always turns the Supreme Wheel [Dharma]."<sup>20</sup> It seems that Ch'eng-kuan is the primary patriarch to emphasize Vairocana Buddha as the main Buddha, and it is highly probable that his emphasis was generally accepted in the Hua-yen School.

In order to distinguish themselves from the other Buddhist schools, it was necessary for the Hua-yen School to adopt Vairocana Buddha as *Avatamsaka-sūtra's* main Buddha. The Hua-yen masters considered their doctrines to be the direct teachings of Dharmakāya Vairocana Buddha

19 Many schools have their own version of the Ten Buddhas, but those of the Hua-yen Sutra are: Kasyapa, Kanakamuni, Krakucchanda, Visvabhu, Sikhin, Vipasyin, Tisya (or Pusya), Tissa, Padma, and Dipankara. Another school is that of the Amitabha cult, who name one Buddha for each of the ten directions. See, Willaim Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987 (1st ed., 1937), 45a.

20 Tamaki Kōshiro, "The Views on the Buddha in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*" in the *Kegon Shisō*, ed., Jikido Takasaki (1983), 186; S.1.8.196. My translation.

rather than the teachings of Gautama Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha. There was a systematic attempt on the part of the Hua-yen School to indicate that their teachings were superior to the other schools' teachings.

Third, Hua-yen scriptures show the syncretic elements of adopting Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra thought in explaining the wisdom of Vairocana. The ATS identifies Vairocana as Mind Only, which is Purity itself. Even the activities and manifestation of Vairocana Buddha are depicted as nothing but Mind Only. For example, according to the ATS, "In all dharmas of the world, Mind Only is the Major [Principle or Essence]"(T.9, 590b). The Dasabhumi Chapter describes that "The three Realms are illusion, they are produced by Mind Only. All the twelve links of *pratītyasamutpāda* are dependent on the Mind." (T.9, 558c.) This passage shows that Mind Only is the true reality encompassing all phenomena. Mind Only projects phenomena in the three Realms and thus they are regarded as illusion.

Hua-yen masters explored the relationship between Mind Only and phenomena in the three Realms by using the metaphors of mirrors, gold, the ocean and waves. Fa-tsang used a metaphor of gold to explain the two functions of Dharmakāya: emptiness and its manifestations. A gold ring has no existence apart from the gold, so it is identical with gold. On the other hand, the gold can be manifested in various other forms, therefore it is said that the essence of gold is empty. It seems that Fa-tsang adopted the term *sunyatā*, but it is different than in its Madhyamika sense. He presupposes that there is an essence of gold, which is eternal. Fa-tsang explains that the mutable nature of gold's form is considered as *sunyatā*, not the gold's essence. In another metaphor, the dust is equated with Nirvāṇa: "the dust is identical with the *Nirvāṇa* of quiescence and extinction and is without nature [of its own] and is revealed by the perfect wisdom of the Buddha" (Wing-tsit Chan, 1963; 418). The dust is a metaphor for *klesa* or *samskṛa*, but, according to the ATS, it is not different from Nirvāṇa. The defiled *klesa* or *samskṛa* is regarded as the basis of the wisdom of the Buddha. Therefore, the Buddha's resolve to achieve perfect wisdom and to

cultivate the deeds of the bodhisattva can be seen as the wisdom of all living beings. That wisdom is inherent in all sentient beings and is not different from Dharmakāya. This inherent wisdom is also explained as the Pure Mind, One Mind, or Tathāgatagarbha.

Though he is described as a Being who is omniscient and omnipresent, Vairocana Buddha in Hua-yen Buddhism does not appear as the Creator. H. Cook critically points out that it is a serious error "to conceive of Vairocana as a substance, a corollary tendency to see Hua-yen as teaching a kind of emanationism, in which the universe is considered to be the efflux or emanation of a pure, solitary, unmoved prior Being"(Francis H. Cook, 1977: 94). Generally, Christian orthodoxy thinks that the nature of God is omniscient and omnipresent. The omniscience of God refers to the omniscient power to create all existence in the universe and the universe itself, therefore God has the Great Power to control and destroy all existence. Francis H. Cook insists that the concept of Vairocana Buddha is not similar to God, or Brahman of the Upanisads.

Whatever Vairocana is, he is not a god, nor has he any of the functions of a god such as conceived by the main Western monotheistic religions (or even Indian religions). He is not the creator of the universe, he does not judge either the living or the dead, nor is he a stern but just father who governs the activities of his children. One cannot bargain with Vairocana or petition him for special favors, since nothing can transgress the law that what is going to be is going to be(Francis H. Cook, 1977: 91-2).

Vairocana is not only the whole of existence, but it is also each single unit of existence. Even though there are some descriptions of Vairocana similar to the Yogācāra view, the concept of Vairocana Buddha is more consistent with Tathāgatagarbha thought because it is presupposed that all phenomena are the manifestation of Vairocana as Tathāta, Tathāgata, or Mind Only. Metaphors such as wind and waves in the ocean, mirrors, gold, and others are used to explain the identification of Vairocana Buddha with individual existence. Vairocana Buddha is the whole entity encompassing countless existences in the

immeasurable and infinite *dharmadhātu* (Realm of Dharma). The *dharmadhātu* is the world or realm of Dharmakāya in which all sentient beings and phenomena exist.

The ATS is the main source of inspiration for the Hua-yen's systematic exposition of *dharmadhātu*. Kang-nam Oh points out that although the term *dharmadhātu* frequently appears in the ATS, there is no place in the sutra itself where the idea of *dharmadhātu* is separately or systematically dealt with or philosophically defined. "The primary meaning of *dharmadhātu* is almost always set forth in the context of the bodhisattva's career as the goal of spiritual attainment"(Kang-Nam Oh, 1979:78). For example, Sudhana, who is a practitioner in the *Gaṇḍavyū-sūtra* of the ATS, enters into *dharmadhātu*, which is a universe of perfect harmony where all things interpenetrate one another without obstruction. Sudhana realizes that "in each particle of dust throughout the universe there is the *dharmadhātu*" (T.10, 293, 840a). In this case, *dharmadhātu* is the realm of enlightenment, which is the essence of all elements. *dharmadhātu* also becomes an object of meditation.

Tu-shun's short treatise, *On the Meditation of dharmadhātu Based on Hua-yen* (C. *Hua-yen-fa-chieh-kuan-men*)<sup>21</sup> focuses on the mystical insight into *dharmadhātu* in which one can experience the realization of the truth that each particle of dust, even though its characteristic is not expansive, can embrace the boundless *dharmadhātu* (T.45,653c). Fa-tsang succeeded Tu-shun's theory and developed the theory of the 'Perfect Interpenetration of the Six Characteristics' (T.45,1868,507c.), which is divided into three major parts in his *The Golden Lion*. Fa-tsang asserts that every single phenomenon equally has these six different characteristics at the same time. Based on this theory of 'Six Characteristics,' the theory of *pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu* is explained in the Hua-yen School.

Hua-yen commentators developed the theory of *pratītyasamutpāda* in relationship to *dharmadhātu*, the realm of Dharma, which is identified with Vairocana Buddha. This theory becomes one of the main themes

21 *Hua-yen-fa-chieh-kuan-men* is not found separately in the Taisho, but is contained in the commentaries of *Ch'eng-kuan* and *Tsung-mi* (T. 45, 672a-684b; 684b-692b).

in the Chinese commentaries on the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*. The Hua-yen followers called this theory *pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu*, codependent arising of the Dharma-realm. While the phrase "*pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu*" itself is not used in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, the theory behind *pratītyasamutpāda* is used heavily in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* to explain the contents of *dharmadhātu*. The theory of *pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu* is the theory of universal causation, co-dependency and co-arising and states that the universe is universally co-relative, interdependent and mutually originating, the dependence being both temporal and spatial. The second patriarch Chih-yen in his *Hua-yen-i-ch'eng-shih-hsüan-men* details the theory of *pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu* as the 'ten mysteries'.

The meaning of *pratītyasamutpāda* in the Ekayana, which is the essence of *dharmadhātu*, is not the same as the *pratītyasamutpāda* of the Two Wheels of Mahayāna. ...Now, ...by elaborating the meaning of the *pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu*, [we see that] it is nothing but the essence of Cause and Effect (T.45,1868, 214a).

Chih-yen divides Cause and Effect into Samantabhadra as Cause and the Ten Buddhas and the Perfection as Effect. Here Chih-yen enumerates the ten categories of dharmas. These ten categories of dharma function in their infinite number of interrelationships. *dharmadhātu* manifests itself in every phenomenon, and conversely, each single phenomenon implies all *dharmadhātu*. *dharmadhātu-pratītyasamutpāda* is a universe of perfect harmony in which all things interpenetrate one another without obstruction. Every phenomenon arises, functions, and penetrates each other in a relationship of interdependency. In that sense, although sentient beings are the objects of salvation by Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the karmic world of *saṃsāra*, they are also regarded as the manifestation of Dharmakāya Vairocana Buddha. Therefore they are nothing but Dharmakāya itself. Vairocana Buddha in the ATS is denoted as the omniscient and omnipresent Being. However, Vairocana Buddha appears not as the Creator, but as the Cosmic Being who



communicates and interpenetrates with each single existence, establishing a relationship of interdependency.

On the other hand, Mahāvairocana in Shingon Buddhism is identified as a Creator similar to the Hindu Brahman, Purusa, or God in Christianity. Because Mahāvairocana creates all phenomena and controls them with his omniscience and omnipresence, Kūkai emphasizes the creative power of Mahāvairocana:

The Great Space [emptiness], boundless and silent, encompasses ten thousand [phenomena] in its vital forces;/The Great Sea [emptiness], deep and still, embraces ten thousand elements in its single drop;/The all-embracing Mahāvairocana [the personification of emptiness] is the mother of all things(Mircea Eliade, 1987; 274).

Kiyota explains that Kūkai's concept of truth is dynamic; "it has the power both to encompass and create all things and to communicate truth by creating, nurturing, and regulating all phenomena."(Mircea Eliade, 1987: 274) Shingon Buddhism focuses on the creative force of Mahāvairocana and explains all phenomena as the manifestation of Mahāvairocana. Shingon Buddhism requires the unconditional acceptance of this kind of Dharmakāya Buddha.

Shingon Buddhism explains the theory of *jñāna* in relationship with the functions of Dharmakāya. Shingon is conceived of five categories between *vijñāna* (discriminating consciousness) and *jñāna* (wisdom, non-discriminating consciousness), and are based on Yogācāra's four categories of *vijñāna* and *jñāna*. In the Yogācāra tradition, the eight discriminating consciousnesses are divided into four categories: the five *sense-vijñānas*, *mano-vijñāna*, *manas-vijñāna*, and *ālaya-vijñāna*. These eight discriminating consciousnesses transform into *jñāna* (wisdom or non-discriminating consciousness) through practice. *Ālaya-vijñāna* transforms into *ādarsa-jñāna* (purified mirror mind), *manas-vijñāna* into *samatā-jñāna* (non-discriminating mind, equality), *mano-vijñāna* into *pratyavekṣaṇā-jñāna* (insight to deal with the problems of the world, that is, compassion), and five *sense-vijñānas* into *krtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna*

(skill-in-means).

In Shingon, the all-encompassing wisdom of Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana is identified with *dharmadhātu*, or what Shingon calls *svabhāva-jñāna*. This is obtained through the transformation of the ninth consciousness, *āmala-vijñāna*. The wisdom of Mahāvairocana, *dharmadhātu-svabhāva-jñāna*, is the fundamental consciousness encompassing the other wisdoms. The theory of transformation from *vijñāna* to *jñāna* is based on the function of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* (or *āśraya-parivṛtti*), 'transmutation of the basis'.

The doctrine of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* is an attempt to clarify the process of enlightenment. A sentient being can transform one's discriminative consciousness into the wisdom of the Buddha through the conditioning of practice. In *āśraya-parāvṛtti*, there are two paths ascending and descending process. Gadjin M. Nagao in his book *Madhyamika and Yogācāra* explains the term *āśraya-parāvṛtti* in connection with 'ascent' and 'descent.' 'Ascent' is an activity or movement from this world to the world yonder, or from this human personal existence to the impersonal *dharmadhātu*, and 'descent' is the reverse (G.M. Nagao, 1991: 201). In the ascending process, one is to acquire nirvāṇa or bodhi by getting rid of the seeds of the illusion-hindrances in the eight consciousnesses (Daito Shuppansha, 1965; 317).

The Yogācāra school explains the process of sentient beings ascending to attain enlightenment with this theory. *Āśraya-parāvṛtti*, "transmutation of the basis," functions only with the Yogic or bodhisattva practice. In the descending process, the theory of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* shows the path of the Buddha or bodhisattvas in response to the sufferings in the samsaric world.

This leads us to the fourth point. Both Vairocana and Mahāvairocana are the personified Dharmakāyas in Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism. But, their roles are different. Shingon Buddhist literature gives no passage showing Mahāvairocana as a practitioner. Although *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* describes the methods of practice to integrate man and Mahāvairocana, Shingon Buddhist scriptures amplify the descending process of Mahāvairocana as a Creator to save beings

from suffering.

The concept and function of Vairocana in the ATS is complicated. For example, Vairocana in the ATS is depicted both as a personal being who is a practitioner in the process of enlightenment and as a cosmic being such as Dharmakāya. However, Hua-yen scriptures amplify the ascending process of Vairocana Buddha in attaining nirvāṇa or Buddhahood.

Vairocana Buddha, in the ATS, is depicted as a practitioner who is in the process of becoming an enlightened being. Vairocana achieved his enlightenment by accumulating all merits, serving Buddhas and sentient beings, learning dharmas from Buddhas, and practicing deep meditation. The practitioner Vairocana becomes Dharmakāya Vairocana by realizing the essence within himself, so that seeing and being become identical.

Clearly know that all dharmas/ Are without any self-essence at all;/ To understand the nature of dharmas in this way/ Is to see Vairocana.<sup>22</sup>

The *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the last chapter of the ATS, also describes the practitioner Vairocana.

The Tathāgata Vairocana of this Saha-World, who from the outset when he made the vow to attain Buddhahood exerted Himself in practicing the Bodhisattva's acts. ... He spared no energy in His ascetic deeds, self-sacrifice, and spiritual endeavors until He attained the Supreme Enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree. Thereupon He displayed many miracles and wondrous conjuration and presided over numerous assemblies, ... (T. 9, 293, 845c).

This passage provides an important aspect of the ascending process in attaining Buddhahood, that of selfless practice. The ascending process of practice requires specific bodhisattva practices. The ATS describes bodhisattva practice that awakens and cultivates *bodhicitta*. *Bodhi* literally

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22 T.9,279. In the chapter "Peak of Sumeru."

means wisdom or enlightenment, and *citta* means human consciousness or thought. The root of *bodhi* is derived from *budh*, "to know", and *citta* is derived from *cit*, "to conceive." *Bodhicitta*, therefore, literally means "thought of enlightenment," or "wisdom" itself. But the term has different meanings according to the various schools of Buddhism. The term *bodhicitta* is employed in both Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism in connection with the term *prajñā* (wisdom) and *sarvajña-jñāna* (the knowledge of omniscience). *Bodhicitta* is inherently latent in all sentient beings, and it should be awakened and cultivated to attain enlightenment. However, the ATS emphasizes that the practitioner, in order to attain one's own enlightenment, should aspire others to awaken their *bodhicitta*, because one cannot successfully cultivate *bodhicitta* if one resolves to cultivate only one's own.

In the Hua-yen scriptures, *bodhicitta* is to be considered the cause of enlightenment. Later, it is identified as *Tathata*, *Buddhata*, or *Bhūtatathā*. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* describes *bodhicitta* in detail by using numerous metaphors and similes such as earth, water, father, mother, and others. Tagami Taishu lists 188 metaphors of *bodhicitta* in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (Tagami Taishu, 1979; 1-12). *Bodhicitta* is regarded as the cause of enlightenment. The function of *bodhicitta* is regarded the same as earth since it supports all worlds and affords protection to all beings; as water, it washes all defilements; as father, it protects all those who are intent on attaining Enlightenment; as mother, it nurses and cultivates the Pure Dharma of all sentient beings.

The Yogācāra school also emphasizes the function of *bodhicitta*. Vasubandhu, in his *Bodhicittotpada-sūtra-sastra* (BSS), compared *bodhicitta* to the ocean and emphasized that *bodhicitta* should be thought of as the store of gods, men, disciples, pratyekabuddhas, merits, meditation and wisdom. In later thought, as D.T. Suzuki claims, the term *bodhicitta* is also used as "the name given to a form of the Dharmakāya or *Bhūtatathā* (suchness of existence) as it manifests itself in the human heart, and its purification or negatively its liberation from all egoistic impurities constitutes the state of Nirvāṇa" (D.T. Suzuki, 1963; 299). The BSS enumerates ten qualities which should be cultivated by the

practitioner in order to invoke one's own enlightenment. One should gather friends, worship the Buddhas, acquire roots of merits, search the good laws, remain ever compassionate, bear all suffering that befalls one, stay kind and honest, remain even-minded, rejoice in Mahāyāna with faith, and search for the Buddha-wisdom. These ten merits are the prerequisites of attaining enlightenment.

Shingon Buddhism shares this aspect of the ATS and Yogācāra, and defines *bodhicitta* as the cause of enlightenment. Shingon Buddhism identifies *bodhicitta* as Mahāvairocana and elaborates on the methods of practice to integrate man and Mahāvairocana. Especially, Kūkai in the SJG elaborates on his theory of man-Buddha integration. Also, like in the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* and the BSS, the MVS describes *bodhicitta* as the cause of *prajñā* (wisdom). Mahāvairocana answers Vajrasattva's question about wisdom (*prajñā*). Minoru Kiyota translates the famous passage as "Bodhicitta (wisdom) is the cause (seed), compassion its roots, and skill-in-means its ultimate"(T. 18, 848, 1b-c.). *Prajñā* here is seen in three different aspects, *bodhicitta* as the cause of *prajñā*, compassion as its essence, and skill-in-means as its ultimate function. In the MVS, these three elements, i.e., *bodhicitta*, compassion, and skill-in-means, are referred to as the Mahāvairocana triad and are its central theme.

It is presupposed that *bodhicitta* is inherent in all sentient beings in the MVS. *Bodhicitta* as a cause of wisdom should be cultivated through the practice of compassion and be implemented through skill-in-means. In explaining the function of *bodhicitta*, Shingon Buddhism adopts the metaphor of *bīja* (seed). *Bodhicitta* is latent and inactive like a seed in itself. The seed is the cause which produces the sprout. In order to produce the sprout, however, the seed requires certain conditions, such as water, earth, good weather, nourishment, etc. The latent *bodhicitta* also requires certain conditions to sprout the final wisdom. In the process of ascending practice towards attaining enlightenment, compassion works as the primary condition evoking the *bodhicitta* enabling enlightenment. On the other hand, in the process of descending to save all sentient beings, Buddhas and bodhisattvas use skill-in-means based on compassion. Therefore, in MVS, compassion is

working both as the prerequisite condition for sentient beings to attain wisdom and as inherent in beings.

Shingon Buddhism emphasizes the direct communication of Mahāvairocana and sentient beings. There is no hindrance or gap between Mahāvairocana and sentient beings because Mahāvairocana permeates everything and instructs sentient beings directly with his secret power (*adhiṣṭhāna*). The term *adhiṣṭhāna* has several meanings such as "determination," or "resolution," and generally refers to the magical powers of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In Shingon, it refers to a Tantric Buddhist form of meditation that generates a "secret power." *Ahiṣṭhāna* is the instrument which brings about the integration of man and Buddha. This *adhiṣṭhāna* in the MVS refers to the three secret practices (*tri-guhyā*) and this secret power responds to the three practices (*tri-karma*) of the practitioner.<sup>23</sup> Mahāvairocana Buddha responds to the practitioner by means of his *tri-guhyā*, while on the other hand, the practitioner is required to practice 'threefold action' (*tri-karma*). Through the *tri-guhyā* and *three-karma* in the MVS, the practitioner achieves integration with Mahāvairocana.

*Tri-guhyā*, like *Tri-karma*, consists of physical, vocal, and mental practices of Mahāvairocana. Physical practice is represented by a mudra, a stylized hand gesture; vocal practice is represented by a mantra; and mental practice, by meditation. In the MVS, these *tri-guhyā* and *tri-karma* are the main methods of practice for attaining wisdom. The BS keeps the main theme of the MVS, but this commentary interprets the doctrine of Mikkyō (esoteric doctrine) by following the lineage of *Yogācāra* and *Tathāgatagarbha* thought. For example, the BS elaborates on the concept of *bodhicitta* in connection with *Tathāgatagarbha*.<sup>24</sup> This sastra further explains the inherent existence of the wisdom of the *tathāgata* in sentient beings by quoting the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*.

The BS also attempts to portray the practice in its particular

<sup>23</sup> See, for detailed discussion, Minoru Kiyota, *Tantric Concept of Bodhicitta: A Buddhist Experiential Philosophy* (Madison, Wisconsin), 1982.

<sup>24</sup> We can find the following passage in the BS: "The *mantra* practitioner should know that all sentient beings are endowed with *tathāgatagarbha* and are capable of dwelling peacefully in supreme enlightenment."

*maṇḍala*, which depicts thirty-seven deities. The BS is an iconographic representation of the essence of wisdom. In the first chapter of the BS, the practitioner vows "to perfect the bodies of bodhicitta through yoga [i.e., to realize union with bodhisattvas by meditating on the *maṇḍala*]. [This state of realization] is called the awakening of bodhicitta because these deities are all the same as the body of Buddha Mahāvairocana"(Minoru Kiyota, 1981; 81.). Even though the BS emphasizes the practice of meditation on the *maṇḍala*, it does not elaborate on the contents of *maṇḍala*.

Kūkai in the SJG further elaborates the practice of *maṇḍala* meditation. He describes four basic aspects Maha mandala, Samaya Mandala, Dharma Mmaṇḍala, and Karma Mmaṇḍala. He claims that the types of *maṇḍala* and *mudra* are innumerable, and each of the four *maṇḍala* is inseparable from the others like lights in space. The *maṇḍala* describes both the essence of wisdom, and its ascending and descending process of practitioner and Mahāvairocana Buddha.

Shingon Buddhism uses these visualizations and vocalizations in meditation for the purpose of attaining the highest wisdom. The practitioner in Shingon Buddhism arrives at vocal, mental, and physical unity with Mahāvairocana through the means of *mantra*, *maṇḍala*, and *mudra*. The symbols of *maṇḍala*, *mudra*, and *mantra* are not only the means of the practice for the Dharma-seeker, but they also represent the function of Mahāvairocana himself. Through these symbolic expressions, Mahāvairocana manifests himself in this world and responds to the practitioner. Therefore these symbols represent the real secret force of Mahāvairocana, provoking sentient beings to awaken their latent *bodhicitta* and to make them integrate with Mahāvairocana. Furthermore, Kūkai emphasizes this unity or integrity in one's very body.

## VI. Conclusion

Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism have systematized the concept of Mahāvairocana Buddha based on the idea of Dharmakāya Buddha. In

order to distinguish themselves from the other Buddhist schools, it was necessary for both Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism to adopt Dharmakāya Vairocana and Mahāvairocana respectively as their main Buddhas. They focused on a particular Buddha, (i.e., Vairocana and Mahāvairocana as Dharmakāya Buddha) in order to emphasize that their teachings were the direct teachings from Dharmakāya rather than the teachings of Gautama Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha. In doing this, they claim that their scriptures are the most profound, efficacious, and authentic teachings. Fa-tsang categorized the Buddhist doctrines into several groups, and he put the Hua-yen teaching as the last profound teaching of the Buddha. This doctrinal categorization is meant to emphasize one particular doctrine or sutra as the final teaching of the Buddha Śākyamuni. It is the same for Kūkai. In the Ben Kenmitsu Nikyō-ron, Kūkai distinguished Kengyō (Exoteric) and Mikkyō (Esoteric). According to Kūkai, Kengyō is the teaching of Śākyamuni (Nirmāṇakāya) Buddha; Mikkyō is the teaching of Dharmakāya. Kūkai claims that Mikkyō is the secret, profound, and final teaching of Dharmakāya. Even though Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism have different doctrinal systems to explain Vairocana and Mahāvairocana, they both share the same intention of emphasizing their doctrines as the foremost.

The ideas of Dharmakāya in Hua-yen and Shingon Buddhism have been developed in connection with the concepts of two, three, or multiple Buddha-bodies. Hua-yen Buddhist literature elaborates the function of Dharmakāya Vairocana in the context of the three Buddha-body theory; the Shingon Buddhist literature elaborates Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana in the context of the five Buddha Body theory. Shingon literature emphasizes the direct communication between Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana and sentient beings, and expands his direct salvation of sentient beings in *samsāra*. This process of salvation by Mahāvairocana is based on compassion which is a fundamental merit of Mahāvairocana. Compassion is the basic element of enlightening and saving sentient beings.

Compassion is essential to the descending process of both



Vairocana and Mahāvairocana whereby sentient beings are saved. Although their function for salvation is elaborated somewhat differently, *this* process of salvation is basically shared with Hua-yen Buddhism. The light of Vairocana and Mahāvairocana's wisdom eliminates darkness, illuminates all things, and encompasses *dharmadhātu*. It penetrates everywhere. Hua-yen Buddhism in particular developed the idea of *dharmadhātu* in connection with the idea of *pratītyasamutpāda*. *Dharmadhātu-pratītyasamutpāda* (C. *Fa-chiai-yüan-ch'i*: 'interdependent arising of the universe') is the world of Vairocana. *Dharmadhātu* as the realm of Vairocana Buddha embodies all phenomena, knows no obstruction and is infinite in its scope and space. Therefore it is immeasurable. The theory of *pratītyasamutpāda* of *dharmadhātu* has become a fundamental theme for the Hua-yen tradition.

For soteriological purposes, the Hua-yen and Shingon commentators systematized the idea of Vairocana and Mahāvairocana as the Dharmakāya in order to respond to the wishes of the Mahāyāna Buddhists who desired the Buddha's infinite yet simple refuge. Both Hua-yen philosophy and Shingon Buddhism provide a theoretical basis that shares the same quality of Buddha Nature and its relationship to the Dharmakāya and to all phenomena. In doing this, they emphasize the worshipping of a personified Dharmakāya Buddha.

## Glossary

Bodaishin no 118 so (Nyu ho kai bon) (J) 菩提心の 118 相 (入法界品)

Ch'an-yuan-chu-ch'uan-chi-tou-hsu (C) 禪源諸詮集都序

Ch'eng-kuan (C) 澄觀

Chih-tsang (C) 智藏

Chih-yen (C) 智儼

fa-chiai-yuan-ch'i (C) 法界緣起

fa-hsing (C; K. pōpsōng) 法性

Fa-tsang (C) 法藏

Hizo-hoyaku (J) 秘藏寶

Hua-yen Ching (C) 華嚴經

Hua-yen-ching-chih-kuei (C) 華嚴經旨歸

Hua-yen-ching-t'a-hsüan chi (C) 華嚴經 探玄記

- Hua-yen-fa-chiai-kuan-men (C) 華嚴法界觀門  
 Hua-yen-i-ch'eng-shih-hsüan-men (C) 華嚴一乘十玄門  
 Hua-yen-k'ung-mu-chang (C) 華嚴孔目章  
 Hua-yen-shou-hsüan-chi (C) 華嚴搜玄記  
 Hua-yen-wu-chiao-chang (C) 華嚴五教章  
 Hwa-yen (C, K. Hwaõm) 華嚴  
 Hyõnkyo (K) 顯教  
 Kūkai (J) 空海  
 Mikkyõ (J) 密教  
 Seng-chao (C) 僧肇  
 Sokushin-jobutsu-gi (J) 卽身成佛義  
 Ta-fang-kung-fo-Hua-yen-ching-sui-su-yen-i-ch'ao(C)大方廣佛華嚴經搜玄分齊通智方軌  
 Taisho shinshu daizokyo (J) 大正新脩大藏經  
 Ta-jih-ching-su (C) 大持經疏  
 Tan-yuan Ying-chen (C) 耽源 應眞  
 Tu-shun (C) 杜順  
 yin-yuan-fa (C) 因緣法  
 Yng-shan Hui-chi (C) 仰山 慧寂  
 yuan-ch'i-fa (C) 緣起法

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