

**Zeitschrift:** Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie  
**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft  
**Band:** 67 (2013)  
**Heft:** 1

**Artikel:** Hermeneutics of acrostics : from Kkai to Tsurayuki  
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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-391466>

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# HERMENEUTICS OF ACROSTICS: FROM KŪKAI TO TSURAYUKI

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## *Abstract*

This study is an attempt to show how the poetic figure of the acrostic was constructed in ninth-century Japan as a tantric semiological implement in a poetic discourse, in which poets working in Sino-Japanese or *kanabun* constructed *kami* cultic ritual in various forms and contexts within the broad framework of Kūkai's tantric Buddhist semiology. Three poetic texts, a Sino-Japanese poem by Kūkai and two prose-poem texts from *Kokin wakashū* and/or *Ise monogatari*, all of which contain an acrostic, are analysed and interpreted, and evidence from several of Kūkai's expositions on semiology (philosophy of language) and hermeneutics, is adduced in support. The suggestion is that the acrostic was construed as an articulation of Kūkai's metaphor for the limitlessness of meanings of the mantra syllables, the intersection of vertical and horizontal meanings, which was associated with the experience of *nyūga ganyū* 入我我入 (Skt. *ahamkāra*).

## Introduction

At what point in Japanese intellectual history did the idea that (some) *waka* 和歌 were *darani* (Skt. *dhāraṇī*) or *shingon* 真言 (mantra), gain creative ideological force? If one is after explicit expositions, it was undoubtedly during the Mediaeval Period.<sup>1</sup> That is, several centuries after Kūkai 空海 (774–835) had established mantra, the semiological constructs of single syllables or syllabic

Thanks are due to two anonymous reviewers for suggesting improvements and pointing out errors in an earlier version. The errors that remain are mine.

- 1 For instance, Jien 慈圓 (1155–1225) identified the five lines (句) of *waka* with the five elements (*godai* 五大) and the five phases (*gogyō* 五行), the vehicle of conventional truth and ultimate truth, respectively, and also remarked on the similarity of the *kana* graphs and the graphs of Sanskrit (*bongo*) in which the Buddha's mantra (*shingon*) were articulated (ISHIKAWA / YAMAMOTO, 2011: 253–254); Mujū 無住 (1226–1312) equated *waka* with *dhāraṇī* on the basis of the universalist view that all languages had equal capacity to induce awakening (*Shasekishū*, NKBT 85: 222–225). On the “*waka*-mantra” theory, see also ABÉ, 1999: 2–3. On *dhāraṇī* and mantra in Mahāyāna literature, see, for instance, PAGEL, 2007: 59 note 50, 82ff.

signs of limitless meaning,<sup>2</sup> at the core of his central tenet *hosshin seppō* 法身説法 (Dharmakāya's preaching of the Dharma). Some Mediaeval claims do take the origin of *waka*-mantra links back to Kūkai, but they rest on assumptions disputed by modern linguistic scholarship, namely, that Kūkai established *kana* writing or authored *Iroha-uta*.<sup>3</sup> It is, I suggest, important to be clear that even if there are no explicit expositions of *waka*-mantra links in *kana* texts (*wabun*) of the ninth-tenth centuries, this should not be taken to mean that such links must *a priori* be ruled out. In fact, it would have been wholly consistent with the inferential dialectic that characterized many of the *kana* texts to construct "mantra-*waka*" articulations without making explicit the semiological function or, for that matter, their meditative or ritual context. Also, the influence of Kūkai's semiology on intellectual discourse<sup>4</sup> and the development of *jindō* 神道 cultic frameworks at the time<sup>5</sup> point in the direction that *waka*-mantra links could have found their way into early *kana* texts. There are therefore good reasons for critically examining these texts with a view to defining Kūkai's semiology and hermeneutics of mantra within the wider non-sectarian debate and, by the same token, to repositioning (some) early *kana* texts ideologically.

It is with these possibilities in mind that I wish to consider three of the earliest specimens of acrostic poetry in Japan, two well-known *waka* by Ariwara no Narihira 在原業平 (825–880) and Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 (ca. 868–ca. 945), and one – hitherto unnoticed – acrostic in *Elation of entering the mountain* 入山興, a *kanshi* 漢詩 by Kūkai. The three will be briefly introduced and analysed in relation to acrostics from the Heian-Kamakura periods (section 1–1.1). Of the poems, *Elation* was plainly constructed as a tantric ritual, *nyūga ganyū* 入我我入 (Skt. *ahamkāra*), "the ritual act in which the practitioner becomes one with the deity invoked"<sup>6</sup>, where the position of the acrostic coincided with the culmination of the poem's epistemic journey.<sup>7</sup> My proposition, that the acrostics represented a mapping into sinograms and *kana* of the diagrammatical iconic

2 On *dhāraṇī* and *mantra* in Kūkai's work, see the glossary in TAKAGI / DREITLEIN, 2010.

3 See ABÉ, 1999, Chapter Nine, and especially p. 391ff.

4 E.g. ABÉ, 2007.

5 On *jindō*, see TEEUWEN, 2007.

6 PAYNE, 2006: 9. Cf. also PAYNE, 1991: 90–92, 165–166, 252–254, 280–281; VAN DER VEERE, 2000: 100; FUJII, 2008: 361ff, 364.

7 *Elation* seems a rare experiential illustration of what might in a theoretical (con)text be termed *sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏 'the realization of enlightenment in this very body'. On experiential illustrations, see FUJII, 2008: 264. For Kūkai's exposition of *sokushin jōbutsu*, see *Sokushin jōbutsu-gi* 即身成仏義, TKZ 3: 17–31.



construction at the core of Kūkai's Siddham based mantra hermeneutics, turns on the interpretation of *Elation*. First, it is considered that the intersection of vertical and horizontal planes, the core metaphor used by Kūkai to describe esoteric deep meaning, could have functioned as a conceptual basis for the construction of the acrostic (section 2). Second, it is argued that *Elation*'s overall spatial structure and the particular form of the acrostic represented a conceptual mapping of Kūkai's three-step hermeneutics of the Siddham mantra syllable *hūm* (section 3). Finally, the two *kana* acrostics are reconsidered in the light of the proposed understanding of *Elation* (section 4).

## 1. Acrostics

The rhetorical figure of the acrostic is defined as a “poem or other composition in which the initial (single), the initial and final (double [acrostic]), or the initial, middle and final (triple [acrostic]) letters of the lines make words; word-puzzle so made.”<sup>8</sup> The broadly equivalent Japanese term, *oriku* 折句, first appeared in the poetics of Kyōgoku Tamekane 京極為兼 (1254–1332), who also dated the emergence of (*kana*) acrostics to around the Kanpyō era (889–898).<sup>9</sup> There is nothing in the acrostic form as such that determines the understanding of it. It can be practiced and appraised as trifling wordplay, obsession with turgid linguistic patterns, or as a magic formula. Tamekane, for example, while seemingly unimpressed by the acrostics of the Kanpyō era poets, nevertheless during an exile on Sado Island went on to address Shirayamahime 白山比咩神/the Eleven-headed Kannon of Hakusan by inscribing the twenty-one syllables of his prayer for his return to the capital on a vertical-horizontal grid.<sup>10</sup>

8 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1983.

9 *Tamekane-kyō waka-shō* 為兼卿和歌抄, *NKBT* 65: 157–158. The *NKBT* commentator defines *oriku* narrowly as formed from the first syllable of each of the five lines of a *tanka*, in contrast to *kutsu-kōburi* 脊冠 formed from initial and final syllables (p. 274, note 26). YAMAGISHI 1971 (1951): 282ff proposed that acrostics developed under influence of Chinese verse where metrical patterns and graphical manipulation combined often in enumerations of numinous or significant semantic fields, e.g. the hexagrams from *Yijing* 易經 or the twenty eight stellar lodges. On acrostics as an old Indo-European phenomenon in Vedic and Greek metrical structures, see WATKINS, 1995: 39–40.

10 *SGR* 431 16.1: 613–614, IWASA, 1987: 194–206, esp. 199–200. Tamekane's acrostics were brought to my attention by TERADA, 2004.



Generally speaking, the acrostic, like any other figure conditioned by meter or parallel structure, depends on a perception of sameness in difference, requiring metrical scanning to produce the patterned meaning that is its defining trait. In some of the better-known examples from the second half of the tenth century and later, that patterning was clearly perceived in terms of a vertical-horizontal layout. Apart from Tamekane's example just mentioned, this was the case with the double-acrostics of the *Ametsuchi no kotoba* in the forty-eight poems in the poetry collection of Minamoto no Shitagō 源順 (911–983),<sup>11</sup> as well as the forty-two double-acrostics in *kanshi* in *Hie hongei* 日吉本記 (the middle of the thirteenth century or slightly later) that have been discussed by Allan Grapard.<sup>12</sup> The vertical-horizontal pattern was overtly manifest in the acrostic version of the *Iroha-uta*, that Komatsu Hideo discovered in *Konkōmyō saishōōkyō ongi* 金光明最勝王經音義 from 1079,<sup>13</sup> however, without its presence being explicitly acknowledged in the manuscript. These acrostics all instantiated a horizontal dimension inscribing a message associated with (beings of) superior cognition. In the syllabary acrostics, the fact that one dimension or the other of the construction was made up of the complete set of syllabic symbols, added an extra level of iconic signs that were per definition without inherent semantic content.

By comparison, the two early *kana* acrostics were inscribed seemingly without any conceptualization of vertical-horizontal patterning or semantic condensation, as the acrostic was simply explained in the prose foretext in terms of the position of the graphs in the lines. Ariwara Narihira's poem on *kakitupata* (or *kakitubata*) 'iris' in both the *Kokin wakashū* version and in section 9 (*Azumakudari*) of *Ise monogatari*,<sup>14</sup> essentially asserted the length of the poet's journey and by the same token, the flower-wife's attractiveness. The version quoted here is from *Ise monogatari*,

むかし、おとこありけり。そのおとこ、身をえうなき物に思なして、京にはあらじ、あづまの方に住むべき国求めにとて行きけり。もとより友とする人ひとりふたりしていきけり。道知れる人もなくて、まどひいきけり。三河の国、八橋といふ所にいたりぬ。そこを八橋といひけるは、水ゆく河の蜘蛛手なれば、橋を八つわたせるによりてなむ、八橋といひける。その沢のほとりの木のかげに下りゐて、乾飯食ひけり。その沢にかきつばたいとおもしろく咲きたり。それを見て、ある人のい

11 GR 249 14: 626–641; KOMATSU, 1979: 95ff.

12 GRAPARD, 1987: 227–231; SGR 1.2: 708–749.

13 KOMATSU, 1979, Chapter Two and esp. p. 44, see also ABÉ, 1999: 535 note 95. The line-final acrostic itself とかなくてしす interpreted as *toga nakute si-su* 'Dying without sin' suggested a magical desiderative dimension.

14 The transliteration of Early Middle Japanese (EMJ) follows FRELLESVIG, 2010.

はく、「かきつばたといふ五文字を句の上にすへて、旅の心をよめ」といひければ、よめる。

唐衣着つつなれにしつましあればはるばるきぬる旅をしぞおもふ  
とよめりければ、皆人、乾飯のうへに涙落としてほとびにけり。

*Mukasi, otoko arikeri. sono otoko, mi wo eu naki mono ni omopi nasite, kyau ni pa arazi, aduma no kata ni sumubeki kunimotome ni tote yukikeri. Moto yori tomo to suru pito pitori putari site ikikeri. Miti sireru pito mo nakute, madopi ikikeri. Mikapa no kuni, Yatupasi to ipu tokoro ni itarinu. Soko wo Yatupasi to ipikeru pa, midu yuku kapa no kumode nareba, pasi wo yatu wataseru ni yorite namu, Yatupasi to ipikeru. Sono sapa no pitori no ki no kage ni ori wite, kareipi kupikeri. Sono sapa ni kakitubata ito omosiroku sakitari. Sore wo mite, aru pito no ipaku, "Kakitubata to ipu itu-mozi wo ku no kami ni supete, tabi no kokoro wo yome" to ipikereba, yomeru.*

*karakoromo kitutu narenisi tuma si areba parubaru kinuru tabi wo si zo omopu to yomerikereba, mina pito, kareipi no upe ni namida otosite potobinikeri.*

Once there was a man. Imagining himself to be irrelevant, he decided he would not stay in the capital, but go in search of a province in the East where he could live, and so he went. He went with a couple of people who were his companions from way back. As none of them knew the way, they traced a random route. In Mikawa Province, they arrived at a place called Yatsunashi. As for the name 'Eight Bridges', it was so called, because the river streams ran like a spider's eight legs, and bridges had been built across all eight. Dismounting to sit down in the shade of the trees near the marsh there, they ate their parched rice. The irises were blooming beautifully in the marsh. Seeing them, someone said, "Make a poem on the meaning of travel placing the five letters かきつはた each at the beginning of a line" and [the man] composed,

Chinese robe, the more I wore it the more it suited (me), and because it has its seam (as I have a wife), stretching and stretching, I have come far – that is travel to my mind!<sup>15</sup>

All shed tears onto their parched rice so it was soaked.<sup>16</sup>

In *Ise monogatari*, the thematic links between sections accentuated an understanding of the acrostic as *wotoko*'s showing off of his skill in an artful expression of the attraction he felt towards his wife (*tuma*). Set the task of expressing

15 *Tuma* referred to closely aligned yet separable elements, whether a pair of animals/humans ('spouse, mate') or the vertical seams below the hips at the front of a kimono/jacket-like garment.

16 *Ise monogatari*, section 9, *SNKBT* 17: 87–90. *Kokin wakashū* 410, *SNKBT* 5: 134–135, has *kopi* 'longing' instead of *tabi*, [...] かきつばたと言ふ五文字を、句の頭に据へて、恋の心をよまむとて、[...] [...] *kakitubata to ipu itu-mozi wo, ku no kasira ni supete, kopi no kokoro wo yomamu tote* [...] "[...] intending to make a poem on the meaning of longing, placing [one of each of] the five syllables/graphs of *kakitubata* at the beginning of [each] line/verse, [...]."



what travel meant to him (*tabi no kokoro*) in a poem that incorporated the name of the *kakitupata* flower in front of him, he famously chose *karagoromo* ‘Chinese robe’ as the poetic theme on which to weave a two-tiered semantic structure [TRAVEL = WEARING GARMENT]. The poem thereby fitted an intersectional romantic reading, but the detailed prose description of Yatsunashi stood out as strangely irrelevant to the narrative.

Ki no Tsurayuki’s acrostic poem on *wominapesi* ‘maiden flower’ was from Book Ten (*mono no na*) in *Kokin wakashū*,

朱雀院女郎花合の時に、女郎花と言ふ五文字を、句の頭に置きて、よめる。  
小倉山みね立ちならし鳴く鹿の経にけむ秋をしる人ぞなき

*Suzaku-win no wominapesi-apase no toki ni, wominapesi to ipu itu-mozi wo, ku no kasira ni  
wokite, yomeru*

*wogurayama mine tati narasi naku sika no penikemu aki wo siru pito zo naki*

Composed on the occasion of the poem competition on *wominapesi* in Suzaku-in, placing the five syllables of *wominapesi* in line-initial position,

No one knows the autumns the crying deer passed treading flat the peak of Ogura Mountain<sup>17</sup>

The acrostic was inscribed on a narrative line describing the crying deer (*sika*), a poetic figure of lust and longing, passing unknown space(s) (*penikemu*). Although it is not obvious that the acrostics in the two poems were intended as anything but virtuoso wordplay, a couple of similarities between *kakitupata* and *wominapesi* seem worthy of note. As pentasyllabic nouns, both fitted the metrical template of *tanka*, and both were also already in the eighth century established metaphors for a coveted woman.<sup>18</sup> In their metaphorical sense, both constructed with two actants, the coveted object, and the subject disposed to moving – as far as it takes – towards that object. As it turns out, the trope of uncompromising or relentless movement, was shared with *Elation*.

17 *Kokin wakashū* 439, *SNKBT* 5: 144.

18 Allegorical poems (譬喩歌) about the two flowers were juxtaposed in *Man'yōshū* 7: 1345–1346, SATAKE, 1963: 171. On *kakitupata* in *Man'yōshū* and on other acrostics, see ISHIDA, 2004: 136ff.



1.1 *The acrostic in Elation*

*Elation of entering the mountain* 入山興<sup>19</sup> is one of several poems that Kūkai sent to Yoshimine Yasuyo 良岑安世 (785–830).<sup>20</sup> Its dialogic form is usually understood to suggest that it was intended by Kūkai as a clarification of his own philosophical position for an audience whose existential views were perhaps not primarily Buddhist. It must have been written between 818 (Kōnin 9), when Kūkai entered Kōyasan for the first time,<sup>21</sup> and 827 (Tenchō 4), the year of the compilation of *Keikokushū* 経国集 (*Anthology of poems about governing the country*), in the Sanskrit Section (*bonmon* 梵門) of which it appeared.<sup>22</sup> On the basis of the analysis of the poem's argument, there seems nothing to hinder dating it to the years between 821–827, when Kūkai is said to have developed significant ideas for his doctrinal taxonomy *Himitsu mandara jūjūshinron* 秘密曼荼羅十住心論 (hereafter *Jūjūshinron*).<sup>23</sup> The English translation of *Elation* with the major text blocks indicated is intended to enable easy reference and to give an overview of the argument structure.

- 19 *Henjō hakki seireishū* (or *Shōryōshū*) 遍照發揮性靈集 1.6, TKZ 8: 15–17, *Keikokushū* (63), NKBT 71: 172–174. The poem consists of 43 lines of 6 or 7 syllables. For extensive commentary-cum-analysis, see KOJIMA, 1986: 2758–2778, for an English translation, see ROUZER, 2004: 450–453.
- 20 On Yasuyo, see e.g. GRONER, 1987: 139–40, ABÉ, 1999: 305–309. FUJII, 2008: 404 notes that Kūkai and Yasuyo were close. On the basis of Yasuyo's involvement in implementing royal cross-sectarian support for Buddhist institutions, cf. GRONER, *op.cit.* and NISHIMOTO, 2007: 3. Kūkai could presumably have expected a certain intellectual understanding for his argument from Yasuyo.
- 21 Kūkai had been given Kōyasan by Saga tennō two years earlier. On the consecration of the ground, see GARDINER, 1996: 253–254.
- 22 KOJIMA, 1986: 2744, 2758–2759, see also IJITSU, 2005: 19–20. FUJII, 2008: 404 links the intellectual developments in Buddhist philosophy to the compilation of three imperial anthologies of Sino-Japanese poetry between 817 and 827.
- 23 ABÉ, 1999: 1 translates the title as *Ten abiding stages of mind according to the secret Mandalas*, cf. also GARDINER, 1996: 254, GIEBEL, 2004: 11. FUJII, 2008: 411–414 has estimated that the doctrinal profiling vis-à-vis the Tendai and Kegon schools was very much on Kūkai's mind in the years between 821–826 and that the broad structure of *Jūjūshinron* was in place by 827. Fujii also estimates on intertextual grounds within Kūkai's oeuvre that *Jūjūshinron* was written around 830 (Tenchō 7) (FUJII 2008, 405).

## 入山興

雜言

*Elation of entering the mountain*

Mixed meter.

- (Q1) 問. 師何意入深寒. [You] ask. "What does the master intend, entering the deep and cold?"
- (Q2) 深嶽崎嶇太不安. The deep peaks are cliff-like and steep and it is not so easy.
- (Q3) 上也苦下時難. To ascend is painful, and to descend is troublesome.
- (Q4) 山神木魅是爲藩. It is the mountain spirits and the tree demons that make their home there."
- (A1) 君不見君不見. Don't you see? Don't you see?
- (A2) 京城御苑桃季紅. In the fortress of the capital in the royal garden, the peaches and plums are crimson.
- (A3) 灼灼芬芬顏色同. Bright and fragrant, the same as the hue of faces.
- (A4) 一開雨一散風. Either opening in the rain, or scattering in the wind.
- (A5) 飄上飄下落園中. Fluttering up or fluttering down, [the blossoms] fall into the garden.
- (A6) 春女群來一手折. Spring maidens in groups come and break off handfuls [of flowers]
- (A7) 春鸞翔集啄飛空. Spring warblers soar gathering them in their beaks as they fly through the air.
- (B1) 君不見君不見. Don't you see? Don't you see?
- (B2) 王城城裏神泉水. In the fortress of the king, within that fortress, the water of the numinous fount.
- (B3) 一沸一流速相似. Now gushes forth, now flows away with a speed that makes it all look alike.
- (B4) 前沸後流幾許千. Barely has it gushed forth in front, before it flows away to the rear for many thousands [of paces].
- (B5) 流之流之入深淵. Flowing along, flowing along, entering the deep gorges.
- (B6) 入深淵 轉轉去. Entering the deep gorges, metamorphosing and drifting away.
- (B7) 何日何時更竭矣. How many days, how much time, before this [= metamorphosing drift] will be exhausted?
- (C1) 君不見君不見. Don't you see? Don't you see?
- (C2) 九州八嶋無量人, The innumerable people in the Nine Provinces (=China) and the Eight Islands (=Japan),
- (C3) 自古今來無常身, The impermanent bodies from of old until now,
- (C4) 堯舜禹湯与桀肘, Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, and Jie and Zhou,

- (C5) 八元十乱将五臣, The Eight leaders, the Ten governors, and the Five ministers,  
 (C6) 西嬌嫫母支離體, Xishi, Maoqiang, Momu, Zhilidi/[the one] whose limbs are separated from the body,  
 (C7) 誰能保得万年春. Who has been able to retain and attain ten thousand springs?  
 (D1) 貴人賤人摠死去. Those on high, and the lowly ones all die and go away.  
 (D2) 死去死去作灰塵. Dying and going away, dying and going away, they become ash and dust.  
 (D3) 歌堂舞閣野狐里, Halls of singing, pavilions of dancing, [become] villages of foxes of the plain,  
 (D4) 如夢如泡電影賓. Like a dream, like froth, the flash of lightening, a guest.  
 (D5) 君知不君知不. Do you know or don't you? Do you know or don't you?  
 (D6) 人如此汝何長. If others are like this, how long can you last?  
 (D7) 朝夕思思堪斷腸. Morning and evening thinking and thinking, you suffer mind-numbing sorrow.  
 (D8) 汝日西山半死士. Your day is into the western mountains, and you are halfway a dead man.  
 (D9) 汝年過半若尸起. Your years are past the half, it is as if the cadaver is already there.  
 (E1) 住也住也 一無益. Might one abide? Might one abide? It absolutely won't do.  
 (E2) 行矣行矣 不須止. So, go on! So, go on! There can be no stop.  
 (E3) 去來去來 大空師. Come on! Come on! Great-Void-Master!  
 (E4) 莫住莫住 乳海子. Don't abide! Don't abide! Milk-Ocean-Disciple!  
 (F1) 南山松石看不厭. On the southern mountain, rocks with pines, one sees without disgust.  
 (F2) 南嶽清流憐不已. On the southern sacred peak, clear streams, one feels pity without end.  
 (G1) 莫慢浮花名利毒. Don't wallow in the poison of ephemeral and flashy reputation or profit.  
 (G2) 莫燒三界火宅裏. Don't burn in the burning house of the Three Realms.  
 (G3) 斗藪早入法身里. Like the *dhūta* (J. *sotō*) quickly enter the village of *dharmakāya* (J. *hosshin*).



*Elation* has already been discussed extensively, and the reading here therefore concentrates on the acrostic and aspects relevant to it.<sup>24</sup> The poem traced a journey from a royal fortress through a low-lying waterscape in a garden to the mountains. An important semantic dimension of the first four text blocks (A–D) was the epistemic augmentation of the space into a “cosmology of innumerable.”<sup>25</sup> It was a reduction of perceptual range in space and time that was also a diminution to the typical innumerable, dust (D2) and its equivalent similes of phenomena of short duration (one of which, lightning, was a metaphor for enlightenment) (D4). Kojima Noriyuki has suggested that the similes represented an allusion to the final *gāthā* of *The Diamond sūtra*,<sup>26</sup>

一切有為法、	All conditioned dharma,
如夢幻泡影、	As a dream, a miasma, froth, a shadow,
如露亦如電、	As a dewdrop, and also as a flash of lightning,
応作如是觀	Respond as seeing them like this.

The allusion in D4 coincided with a shift in the poem’s dialogical form. The figure of the 賓 ‘guest,’ which by way of rhyme was linked to 塵 ‘dust’ (D2), stood out as the only animate element among the similes. It was also the only one absent in the *sūtra* quotation and therefore presumably close to Kūkai’s own argument. It appeared to introduce a new actant into the communication. Kojima takes ‘guest’ as a synecdoche of the ephemeral human being. As I see it, it was (also) an intimation of a tantric ritual framework.<sup>27</sup> In any case, a new direct tone made the identity of the parties in the poem’s dialogue hard(er) to discern. The use of the second person pronoun 汝 (D6, D9) furthers the assumption that

24 The poem’s esoteric viewpoint is in a general way implied in the *NKBT* commentary, KOJIMA, 1986, and ROUZER, 2004: 450. Cf. also IJITSU, 2005: 18; KÖZEN, 2006: 11ff. For a political reading, see ABÉ, 1999: 305–309.

25 KLOETZLI, 1983.

26 KOJIMA, 1986: 2771–2772, *Vajracchedikā prajñāpāramitā sūtra* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 T 235 8: 752.b. See also LEHNERT, 1999: 283–284; PINE, 2001: 429ff. On Kūkai’s claim for The Diamond Sūtra’s potential for revealing esoteric meaning, *Kongō hannya haramitsukyō kaidai* 金剛般若波羅蜜經開題 TKZ 4: 260–261; ABÉ, 1999: 201. The allusion could have associated to the *sūtra*’s central assertion that truly grasping even a single line of verse was dearer than anything, which was consonant with the articulation of *nyūga ganyū* in the acrostic that followed in *Elation* (E3–E4).

27 On Shingon tantric ritual as a guest-host paradigm, see PAYNE, 1991: 90–92, on complexities of that paradigm, see SHARF, 2003: 58, 72–74; for a general account, see STRICKMANN, 2002: 201–202.

someone else, such as the guest – visualized by the poet, hence in some sense himself, – was the voice pressing the existential question and urging him not to dwell, but to go on in a featureless space (E1–E4).<sup>28</sup> The acrostic structure came at the culmination of these exhortations.

The acrostic appeared in the two last of four lines of bi-clausal parallel constructions (E3–E4). It can be set out in a vertical right-to-left graphic layout, which is also the assumed format in references to “horizontal” and “vertical” below,

乳大  
海空  
子師

The acrostic poses considerable problems of interpretation. The interpretation that follows does not claim to be exhaustive or definite, it is mainly based on the surface semantics of the elements and the information on them that can be gathered in the standard Buddhist dictionaries.

Vertically, the two terms, 大空師 and 乳海子, would seem to belong to the sphere of spiritual exercises or rituals described elsewhere in Kūkai’s work or in esoteric Buddhist texts. “Great void” 大空 referred to perception of the principle of *honpushō* 本不生 (“originally non-arising”) of the syllable *a* in *Mahāvairocana sūtra*;<sup>29</sup> while “milk ocean” 乳海 referred to someone who drank the milky fluid of the syllable *vaṃ* 釁. The syllable *vaṃ* symbolized wisdom (智) and correlated to the expanse of water that in at least one visualization of the double *maṇḍala* (*ryōbu mandara*), was found at the level above earth, but below several layers of mountains.<sup>30</sup> In essence, the two terms constituted an evocation of the

28 The possibility that the complex configuration of movements, 住, 行, 止, 去来, might allude to the *The Diamond Sūtra* or other scriptures has not been explored. See also KOJIMA, 1986: 2774.

29 *Jūjūshinron* Stage Nine, TKZ 2: 295, NST 5: 272, based on *Mahāvairocana sūtra* T 848 18: 14–17. KBD, 1108 defines *daikū no shi* “Great-Void-Master” as the one who perceives the principle of *honpushō* 本不生 of the syllable/sign *a* on the basis of the present example. On “originally non-arising”, see ABÉ, 1999: 280, 288ff, and VAN DER VEERE, 2000: 85.

30 *Nyūkai* occurs in many tantric texts, e.g. in reference to the space in which appears a lotus flower that next is visualized as *Kanjizaiō nyorai* 觀自在王如來 in *Jingangding jing guan-zizaiwang rulai xiuxing fa* 金剛頂經觀自在王如來修行法 (T 931 19: 74a), a tantric text listed in *Goshōrai mokuroku* 御請來目錄 (TKZ 1: 15); cf. also *Vajrasekhara sūtra*, GIEBEL, 2001: 39ff. On *nyūkai* in relation to the visualization of the syllable *vaṃ*, see also *Hizōki* 秘藏記, TKZ 5: 121ff.



Mahāvairocana's seed syllable of the Womb World (Skt. *a*), and Mahāvairocana's seed syllable of the Diamond World (Skt. *vaṃ*).<sup>31</sup> As such, they agreed with the understanding of the poem as an experience of a tantric ritual. Tellingly, the final elements, “master” 師 and “disciple” 子 indicating agency, were probably Kūkai's creation *and* also essential to the reading of the horizontal dimension, as we shall see. They could be understood as interdependent and interpenetrating opposites, a semantic property they shared with the qualifying elements, “great void” 大空 and “milk ocean” 乳海, if interpreted as emptiness vs. fullness. Both pairs (師 and 子, 大空 and 乳海) allowed interpretation in terms of taking the result as the cause (Skt. *phalayāna*), the ritual form of which was *nyūga ganyū*.<sup>32</sup>

Horizontally, the element in the middle was the most obvious, the name Kūkai 空海 or *kūkai* ‘empty ocean’. The element below, 師子, was a variant form of 獅子 ‘lion’, a common metaphor for Buddha<sup>33</sup> and used in the phrase 獅子吼 ‘lion's roar’, to refer to Mahāvairocana's (and the initiate's) manifestation of mantra.<sup>34</sup> Third, 大乳 clearly belonged grammatically on the vertical dimension of the acrostic configuration, but it is difficult to be sure about the exact horizontal significance.<sup>35</sup> On the basis of the context, it seems natural to understand the qualifying ‘great’ in 大乳 in analogy with, for instance, *daijihi* 大慈悲 vs. *jihi* 慈悲, as an indirect reference to Buddhas, bodhisattvas or, more generally, someone of superior insight. That is, 大乳 would appear to be a variant expression of 佛乳 ‘milk of Buddha,’ a metaphor for wisdom that in a tantric Buddhist context, at least, could have associated to a female aspect or deity. Assuming a definite referent, both Buddhalocanā (Butsugenbutsumo 佛眼佛

31 Kūkai used these two seed syllables to characterize *ryōbu mandara* in his petition to make new copies of them, “Having grasped the syllable/sign *a* as such as the very beginning, one perceives the Three Jewels as/in the Three Secrets. Having analysed the (graphically) complex syllable of *vaṃ* as what is limitless, one understands the Five Senses as the Five Wisdoms [of Mahāvairocana].” 悟阿字於本初。覺三寶於三密。解鑠文乎無終。知五界於五智。(Seireishū 7 奉爲四恩造二部大曼荼羅願文, TKZ 8: 110). On the transmission of *ryōbu mandara* in Japan, see GRONER, 1984: 52ff.

32 Cf. PAYNE, 2011: 1045.

33 On the zoological correspondence of Mahāvairocana in the *go-bu* 五部 ‘Five Families’ of the Diamond Realm *kongōkai* 金剛界 (Skt. *vajradhātu*), see KBD, 650.

34 Cf. *Jūjūshinron*, Stage Ten, TKZ 2.310, TODARO, 1984: 90 (quoting *Mahāvairocana sūtra* T 848 18: 40.c; GIEBEL, 2005: 196), TKZ 2: 316; TODARO, 1984: 84 (*Commentary to Mahāvairocana sūtra* T 1796 39: 583.b).

35 There are fifteen examples of 大乳 in *Taizōkyō*, more than half of 大乳海 in the context of visualization.



母)<sup>36</sup> and Cundī (Jundei 準提/准提)<sup>37</sup> were female deities with a presence in the Hall of Universal Knowledge 遍智院 directly above (i.e. east of) the central hall of the Womb World *maṇḍala* 胎藏界 (Skt. Garbhadhātu *maṇḍala*). Alternatively, Mañjuśrī (J. Monju[shiri] 文殊[師利]) was also at times referred to as “mother of Buddha” 佛母, i.e. the source of wisdom.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Mañjuśrī’s position on the central vertical line of the *maṇḍala* above the central image of Mahāvairocana and the Seal of Universal Knowledge (*issai nyorai chiin* 一切如来智印, or the Flaming Triangle 三角智火) in the Hall of Universal Knowledge, supports an iconographic correlation between 大乳, 空海, and 師子 of the acrostic and three figures on the central vertical line in the *maṇḍala*. As will be discussed in section 3., it is possible to understand the three horizontal elements as referring to a ritual described in *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi sūtra* (= *Mahāvairocana sūtra* hereafter).<sup>39</sup>

The two parallel lines after the acrostic (F1–F2) summed up, it seems, the achievement of *nyūga ganyū*. They juxtaposed the evocation of Kōyasan as a minimally binary (literally *sansui* 山水) landscape, viz. “on the southern mountain, rocks with pines” 南山松石 and “on the southern sacred peak, clear streams” 南嶽清流, that hinted at Kūkai’s symbolic layout of the mountain as the double *maṇḍala*,<sup>40</sup> with the two bodhisattva-like emotional qualities, “seeing without disgust” 看不厭 and “feeling pity without end” 憐不已, apparently alternative expressions for the more common *ji* 慈 (Ch. *cī*) ‘loving care’ and *hi*

36 Butsugenbutsumo is placed to the right of Śākyamuni, *T* 848 18: 7.c, GIEBEL, 2005: 36; HODGE, 2003: 114. The only reference to her in the *TKZ* index is to *Kongōkai nenju shidai* 金剛界念誦次第 (*TKZ* 5: 267–268), where Butsugenbutsumo seisha (佛眼佛母聖者) occurs in a passage entitled *butsumo*, preceding that of *nyūga ganyū*.

37 On the Sanskrit forms, see *MD* 1106. Cundī’s epithet Shichikuteibutsumo 七俱胝佛母 (C. Qijuzhifomu) ‘Buddha mother of the seventy millions’ suggested infinity (GIMELLO, 2004: 250–251, note 2–3). Cundī was the embodiment of the *dhāraṇī* in *Foshuo qijudi fomu da Zhunti tuoluoni jing* 仏説七俱胝佛母大准提陀羅尼經 (*T* 1077), recorded in Japan already in 733 (BEGHI, 2011: 666).

38 STEIN, 1975: 486.

39 Besides, 大乳 might have been associated with *Huayen jing* (J. *Kegonkyō*), which was known as *nyūkyō* 乳經 in Tendai tradition, in the Lotus *sūtra* exegesis, for instance, in Zhanran’s 湛然 (711–782) *Fahua xuanyo shiqian* 法華玄義釋籤 *T* 1717 (= 法華玄義一部十卷), a text brought back from China by Kūkai (*Goshōrai mokuroku*, *TKZ* 1: 27).

40 On the Kōyasan landscape and its symbolic layout, see GARDINER, 1996; TEN GROTENHUIS, 1999: 79–80; MOERMAN, 2005: 77–78; BOGEL, 2009: 250. Coming after the experience of Shinsen’en, a space Kūkai evoked elsewhere as binary (see 3), this might also be taken as a highlighting of the essential geophysical identity of cultic – non-Buddhist and Buddhist – landscapes.

悲 (Ch. *bei*) ‘compassion’.<sup>41</sup> The concluding lines (G1–G3) consisted of hortative re-phrasings of the Lotus Sūtra and other texts, essentially articulating the apotropaic significance of the tantric ritual.<sup>42</sup>

## 2. Kūkai’s esoteric meaning and its metaphors

Compared to the acrostics discussed in section 1, the one in *Elation* was truly hidden. There was neither explanation of the pattern as in the early *waka*, nor, it seems, an overt vertical-horizontal layout as in the later examples. Noticing it depended entirely on taking a clue from a parallel construction that was not as such warranted, given the definition of the poem’s meter as “mixed meter” 雜言. Without explicit mention, it is impossible to know for sure whether Kūkai or anybody else in the poem’s initial creation-reception was aware of the acrostic. It has, as far as I can ascertain, gone unnoticed by modern commentators.<sup>43</sup> Once, however, its existence is acknowledged and it is also recognized that its occurrence in the poem coincided precisely with the poet’s cognition of semiological and spatial limitlessness, the question of how the acrostic related to Kūkai’s doctrinal views takes on some importance. Above all, the question is whether there is any basis in his work elsewhere for an understanding of the acrostic form as an articulation of *nyūga ganyū*?

It was Kūkai’s stated view that “diagrams” 圖, “paintings” 畫, or “images” 像 could be useful tools in grasping difficult textual meaning,<sup>44</sup> and Takagi Shingen and Thomas Eijō Dreitlein have recently offered an example of what diagrammatic arrangement of texts as a cognitive aid might have meant in practice. They note that Kūkai appears to have experimented with the layout of

41 E.g. “In everyone with sentiments, it produces a great capacity for elation and freeing from pain. Those with Buddha heart-mind, never shy away in disgust.” 於緒有情起大慈悲。於菩提心永不厭離。 *Jingangding yujia zhonglue chuniansong jing* 金剛頂瑜伽中略出念誦經 T 866 18: 224.a (mentioned in *Goshōrai mokuroku*, TKZ 1: 20).

42 On the scriptural quotations, see KOJIMA, 1986: 2776–2777. Their position following the ritual climax would seem to make them comparable to the “dispersed invocations” (散念誦) in the Shingon ritual discussed by Robert H. SHARF, 2003: 74–84; see, in particular, the interpretations, pp. 89–81.

43 Note that Shinzei 真濟 (800–860) in his preface to *Seireishū* emphasized the importance of “linguistic artifice” in Kūkai’s poetic exchange with Chinese fellow poets (TKZ 8: 4–5). For an account of Kūkai’s connections with contemporaneous Chinese poets, see KONISHI, 1985.

44 TAKAGI / DREITLEIN, 2010: 216–217, *Go-shōrai mokuroku*, TKZ 1: 31.



Amoghavajra/Bukong's 不空 (705–774) translation of a *gāthā*, a rite in praise of the Dharmakāya spoken by Mañjuśrī to the Buddha, in order to try to discover its deep meaning.<sup>45</sup> According to Takagi and Dreitlein, a rearranged version that has been transmitted in Kūkai's own manuscript version, has the poem's forty (+ one) verses, each consisting of four pentasyllabic lines, laid out in forty columns, one verse (i.e. four x five syllables) in each column.<sup>46</sup> It is assumed that each of the four pentasyllabic lines was conceived as a continuous horizontal band that could be read across.<sup>47</sup> From the perspective of *Elation*, it is noteworthy that Kūkai apparently came up with a diagrammatic layout that, however he might have referred to its structure, allowed an understanding in terms of horizontal-vertical meanings. The question remains why Kūkai chose precisely this *gāthā* to take stock of (and promote) his cognitive ability at forty, making it the basis for his own two poems on that occasion? The obvious answer is the relevance of the *gāthā*'s combination of five and eight to Kūkai's age.<sup>48</sup> A deeper reason could have been that by highlighting its numerology Kūkai wished to draw attention to his own knowledge – textual and ritual – of yogic or mantra texts focused on Mañjuśrī, several of which were brought back from China by Kūkai himself.<sup>49</sup> As we shall see, the interpretation of the acrostic in *Elation* points to a similar association between textual deep meaning and ritual references.

There is no evidence that Kūkai ever defined the acrostic as an aesthetic figure, let alone in terms of intersection of the vertical and horizontal.<sup>50</sup> What is, however, repeatedly stated in Kūkai's works, is that the “deep and secret” 深秘 textual meaning (義), which he contrasted to the “shallow and summary” 浅略 meaning, was characterized by horizontal and vertical textual dimensions or

45 *Chūjū kankyō no shi oyobi jo* 中壽感興詩并序 (A poem and introduction in reflection on my fortieth birthday), TKZ 8: 44, TAKAGI / DREITLEIN, 2010: 234–243. The *gāthā* was *Dasheng Wenshushili pusa zan fofashen li* 大聖文殊師利菩薩讚佛法身禮 (T 1195 20: 936–938), a text Kūkai had brought back from China (TKZ 1: 12).

46 Its manuscript form is transmitted in *Sanjūjō sasshi/sakushi* 三十帖冊子 (TAKAGI / DREITLEIN, 2010: 237 note 6). I have not been able to track down a reproduction of it.

47 TAKAGI / DREITLEIN, 2010: 239 note 9.

48 Kūkai's own poems, written for the occasion, consisted of five octosyllabic lines, and eight pentasyllabic lines, respectively.

49 For instance, *Jin'gangding chaosheng sanjie jing shuo Wenshushili wuzi zhenyan xiang* 金剛頂超勝三界經說文殊五字真言勝相 T 1172, TKZ 1: 13, *Wenshushili tongzi pusa wuzi yuga fa* 曼殊室利童子菩薩五字瑜伽法 T 1176, TKZ 1: 14. On Amoghavajra's promotion of a cult of Mañjuśrī in China, see BIRNBAUM, 1983: 36ff.

50 Kūkai used the terms horizontal/vertical reading or scanning (横読/豎読) in phonological (rhyme) analysis in *Bunkyō hifuron* (KÖZEN, 1986: 21ff).



meanings (*yoko-tate no gi*), and that the cognition of their intersection coincided with the cognition of total limitlessness.<sup>51</sup> It seems likely that Kūkai (and others?) adopted the terms *ōju/ōshu* ‘horizontal and vertical’ 横豎, from exoteric Mahāyāna scriptures where they were used as coterminous with the cosmology of innumerable, referring to the infinite intersections of lines of the phenomenal world, cf. also *jippō* ‘ten directions’ 十方. In discourse on deep meaning, the intersection of vertical and horizontal dimensions was used as a metaphor for spatial limitlessness, homological with semiological limitlessness, whether applied to the maximal “world-text” or the minimal mantra. From a doctrinal point of view, it is important that the metaphor was anchored at both the simplest and the supreme semiological and ritual level. Thus, at the simplest level, the concrete drawing of the intersection of the primary directions was the primordial act of signification and the initial marking of a *maṇḍala* according to *Mahāvairocana sūtra*.<sup>52</sup> At the supreme level, in a passage from Stage Ten of *Jūjūshinron* (*Abiding mind adorned with secrets* 秘密莊嚴住心), the experience of the limitlessness of phenomena/spaces, i.e. the definition of *bodai* ‘enlightenment’, was described as the whole text constituting one intersection of the vertical and the horizontal, beginning with the vertical meaning,

經云. 云何菩提謂如實知自心. 此是一句含無量義. 豎顯十重之淺深. 橫示塵數之廣多.

The sūtra states: ‘What is enlightenment? It is to know one’s own mind as it really is.’ This single phrase encompasses countless meanings. Vertically it expresses ten kinds of shallow and profound meanings. Horizontally it indicates an enormous quantity like that of dust.<sup>53</sup>

- 51 Cf. “As for the overt/exoteric meanings of the verses [quoted], they are like the interpretations of the house of the Commentary [to *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi sūtra* = *Da Piluzhena chengfo jing shu* 大毘盧遮那成佛經疏 (= *Dainichikyōsho* 大日經疏 hereafter), T 1796 39: 649a–650a]. In the hidden/esoteric meanings, there are further layer upon layer, horizontal and vertical, deep meanings.” 顯句義者如疏家釋。密義中又有重々横豎深意 (*Shōjijissō-gi* 聲字實相義, TKZ 3: 37, for a slightly different translation, see GIEBEL, 2004: 88, see also TAKAGI / DREITLEIN, 2010: 94). TAKAGI / DREITLEIN, 2010: 369–370, on *tatezama* and *yoko-zama*, see VAN DER VEERE, 2000: 68.
- 52 T 848 18: 6.b, HODGE, 2003: 102. On a non-Buddhist cosmological use of the terms, see *Bunkyō bifuron* 文鏡秘府論, KŌZEN, 1986: 835–836, referring to the horizon-vertical cosmology that *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (28th year of Shaogong 昭公) used in reference to the ruler, “Character of which heaven and earth are the warp and the woof is called ‘accomplished.’” 經緯天地曰文 (LEGGE, 1872: 725, 727).
- 53 TKZ 2: 307, translation from TODARO, 1984: 94. The passage is a quote from *Mahāvairocana sūtra* T 848 18.1.c. On performance of the ten directions, e.g. pointing a sword in the ten directions in *nyūga ganyū* in the transmitted Shingon rituals, see PAYNE, 1991: 165–166.

This introduction of the vertical meaning as encompassing all the previous nine Stages of *Jūjūshinron*, was followed by an adaptation of a passage from *Mahāvairocana sūtra*<sup>54</sup> describing the Bhagavān's "Great Knowledge" 大智 and "Great Awareness" 大覺, the stage at which one "sees oneself on the phrases of the Three Samayas" 自見住於三三昧耶句,<sup>55</sup> as the horizontal dimension of the grand conception of the vertical-horizontal intersection,

復次志求三藐句。以知心無量故知身無量。知身無量故知智無量。知智無量故即智衆生無量。知衆生無量故即知虛空無量。此即橫義。衆生自心其數無量。

'Also next, one determined to investigate the phrase "supreme enlightenment", by knowing the infinity of the mind, will thus know the infinity of the body. By knowing the infinity of the body one will understand the infinity of knowledge. By knowing the infinity of knowledge one will then know the infinity of sentient beings. By knowing the infinity of sentient beings one will then understand the infinity of space.' This is the horizontal meaning. The minds of living beings are infinite.<sup>56</sup>

The three *samayas* were subsequently defined in the text as the unification (or equality) of the Three Secrets (*sanmitsu* 三密), the Dharmakāya's immanent manifestation of mantra syllables, metaphorically explained as the "lion's roar" 獅子吼.<sup>57</sup> The above quotation, then, constructed the cognition of limitlessness as a vertical-horizontal intersection of the whole text of *Jūjūshinron*, i.e. the "world-text." As discussed in section 3, this conception had a close analogue in the acrostic and indeed the whole structure of *Elation*.

The vertical-horizontal intersection was not the only metaphor in Kūkai's discourse on deep meaning, although it was the ultimately defining one. Thus, in a number of texts that were important to Kūkai's doctrinal project, deep meaning was expounded as a complex metaphor, a combination of the directional metaphor with the defining metaphorical object of a particular text, e.g. "the wisdom vajra of the horizontal and the vertical" 橫豎智杵 in *Kongōchōgyō kaidai* 金剛頂經開題.<sup>58</sup> Weaving metaphory, however, stood out in that its use in homological discourse both before and after Kūkai went well beyond Buddhist contexts, cf. for instance, its role in the two *kana* acrostics (see section 4.). The cultural centrality of weaving was evident from the word for scripture, 經 (C. *jīng*, J. *kyō*), being coined on weaving metaphory. As the extensive element (or a

54 T 848 18: 40.b, GIEBEL, 2005: 196, HODGE, 2003: 351–352.

55 T 848 18: 40b, GIEBEL, 2005: 195, HODGE, 2003: 348.

56 TKZ 2: 307–308, the translation is from TODARO, 1984: 94–93.

57 GIEBEL, 2005: 196.

58 TKZ 4: 76. On Indra's net, see *Bonmōkyō kaidai* 梵網經開題 TKZ 4: 219–230.



kind of hypernym) of the oppositions “warp” 經 and “weft” 緯, “scripture, *sūtra*” (經) exemplified the common linguistic phenomenon of asymmetrical construction of logical oppositions.<sup>59</sup> Crucially, it could also be understood as demonstrating the conceptual construction of phenomena in Buddhist scriptures that is commonly termed emptiness or a-duality, cf. that 經 (i.e. “scripture”) was 經 (i.e. “waft”) and was not-經 (i.e. 緯 “weft”). I shall refer to this construction as supersession in the following.<sup>60</sup> It seems likely, although conclusive demonstration would require more systematic study, that weaving metaphors were applied to the whole range of Buddhist logical and epistemological arguments, from those concerning the ontological nature of phenomena or the emptiness of scriptures to the not so complex points, such as the changing nature of perceptions easily illustrated by the turning-around of a piece of weaving to see the other side, which could also have facilitated grasping the four propositions of the tetralemma, etc.<sup>61</sup> This broad conceptual scope correlated with the metaphor of the vertical-horizontal intersection. It suggests that the weaving metaphors were construed in relation to texts in the same way as the metaphor of the vertical-horizontal intersection was construed in relation to tantric ritual (see above). Indeed, it might historically have functioned as the conceptual template for the latter metaphor. If weaving metaphors were, then, already favoured as a defining emblem in a host of contexts that Kūkai would have regarded as exoteric meanings, he would have had both to acknowledge that metaphors as such and to make it his own, in order that his own doctrinal tenets could be recognized as all-encompassing. Arguably, by using the metaphors of weaving and brocade in combination with the vertical-horizontal metaphor precisely in relation to the *Mahāvairocana sūtra*, the one (ritual) text that was perhaps above all associated with his own doctrine, Kūkai achieved just that.<sup>62</sup>

59 On asymmetrical oppositions, see TAKEUCHI, 2009: 364–366.

60 The gradual dynamic character of the term supersession makes it a both ideologically neutral and appropriate term when it comes to analysing the narrative dialectic of tenth century *monogatari*.

61 WESTERHOFF, 2009, describes the tetralemma as an “argumentative figure,” the gateway to Buddhist semiology or semiotics.

62 *Dainichikyō kaidai* 大日經開題 (法界淨心), TKZ 4: 9. For a discussion, see ABÉ, 1999: 293–294. Weaving metaphors were also used in relation to the *Vajraśekhara sūtra* (*Kyōōkyō kaidai* 教王經開題, TKZ 4: 104), cf. also ABÉ, 1999: 303.

### 3. Kūkai's hermeneutics of mantra and *Elation*

The centrality of the vertical-horizontal intersection in Kūkai's metaphors of deep meaning in a general way makes it more likely that the acrostic in *Elation* was constructed as an icon of limitlessness relating to the tantric ritual, and also that it would have been recognizable as such to those familiar with Kūkai's use of metaphors. What it does not account for is the particular form of the acrostic. Was the triple line-final acrostic form accidental, or was there perhaps an association to specific texts or ritual techniques in the same way as seems likely in Kūkai's text on his fortieth birthday? There is also a broader question. If the acrostic instantiated *nyūga ganyū*, would Kūkai not also have wished to expend equal care on the rest of *Elation* so as to construct an exposition of the essentials of his semiology that could be propagated beyond the narrow circle of his disciples? The historical occasion for *Elation*'s production, of course, suggests as much.

In order to pursue these two questions, let us begin by considering the spatial structure in *Elation*. The general scholarly consensus is that there were three spaces, which were indirectly identified as Japanese. The court was identified on the basis of a traditional homological reading of the terms, “fortress in the capital” 京城 (A2) or “king's fortress” 王城 (B2). The identification of the binary landscape in F1–F2 as Kōyasan was given by the historical context for the poem's production, to which might be added, I suggest, the condensation of the poem's cognitive course in the movement, “entering” 入, whose EMJ form, *nipu*, was (segmentally) homophonous with the name of the protector *kami* of Kōyasan, Nifu myōjin 丹生明神.<sup>63</sup> Lastly, Shinsen'en, 神泉苑, the royal space of leisure (遊苑) to the south of the Heiankyō palace,<sup>64</sup> was introduced in blocks

63 ‘Entering’ 入 was the defining movement in the opening dialogue where the questioner expressed dread at entering the mountains (cf. 入深寒; Q1), further, as a mutating trope charting the continuous semiological drift of the poet's experience (e.g. 入深淵; B5), and finally, the entrance into “the village of *dharmakāya* (*hosshin*)” ([入]法身里; G3), where the last word just might hark back to the ephemeral space of “the village of foxes of the plain” (D3). On the importance of Nifu myōjin before the Heian period, see COMO, 2009: 63–64.

64 The earliest history of Shinsen'en as a ritual space is unclear. On Shinsen'en in comparison to other royal spaces, see IJITSU, 2002: 13–21. On the cultic significance of Shinsen'en and, specifically, the scented consecration water in the Latter-Seven-Day-Rite (*go-shichinichi-mishiho*), see RUPPERT, 2000: 103ff, 123ff. The conception of Shinsen'en in early Sino-Japanese poetry and the question whether it was constructed as a ritual platform with similarities to Yoshino, are topics that need to be examined, cf. Kūkai's *gumonjihō* in Yoshino



A and B in a roundabout identification with the elements of the name 神泉苑 separated and their order reversed, cf. 京城御苑桃季紅 (A2) and 王城城裏神泉水 (B2).

If it is provisionally assumed that *Elation* represented a kind of *précis* of Kūkai's semiology in which the tripartite spatial structure reproduced the central semiological dialectic,<sup>65</sup> the similarity to *Unjigishaku* 吽字義釋<sup>66</sup>, is easily appreciated. The exposition of mantra meaning exemplified by the syllable *hūm* was built as a three-step hermeneutics. The first step concerned 字相, feature(s) of signs (here understood as letter or syllable) that defined unreflecting or episodic cognition, and which has been rendered as "superficial meaning".<sup>67</sup> The second step, 字(實)義, has been rendered as "connotative meaning" (Giebel) or "profound meaning" (Takagi / Dreitlein), but "(real) meaning of signs" might, it seems to me, be a more precise rendering. While the argument in *Unjigishaku* involved cognition of emptiness of all phenomena and had ontological value, it seems possible that the logical supersession explained in terms of tetralemma at the core of 字(實)義, in theory, at least, accommodated even the straightforward linguistic based supersession, such as the example of 經 mentioned in section 2. That is, 字(實)義 encompassed supersession at (almost) all levels of cognition.

Third, "synthetic interpretation" (Giebel) or "integrated interpretation" (Takagi / Dreitlein) 合釋 explained limitless interdependence (cf. 合) (or emptiness of emptiness) as a vertical-horizontal configuration said to elucidate "how by means of this one sign/syllable [i.e. the Siddham graph *hūm*], the sutras and treatises are all viewed/grasped equally."<sup>68</sup> The syllable *hūm* was constituted by

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and his "discovery" of Kōyasan, see *Seireishū* (Book 9 於紀伊國伊都郡高野峯被請乞入定處表) TKZ 8: 170, WADA, 1995: 196. On *gumonjihō*, see ABÉ, 1999: 74–75, 151, WEINSTEIN, 1999: 474, and COMO, 2009: 18–20. On Yoshino, see COMO, 2009: 61ff.

65 ABÉ, 1999: 310 has proposed an interpretation of *Elation* that sees the poem and its semiological geography primarily as part of a political polemic setting the Confucian notions of the court including Shinsen'en in opposition to Kūkai's, cf. court/capital vs. mountain(s); culture vs. nature, and so on. That interpretation backgrounds the text-internal evidence that Shinsen'en, although a non-Buddhist space, inscribed as a semiologically distinct (from the court) and dialectically significant element/space in its own right.

66 On the title, see TKZ 3: 346. It is unclear when *Unjigishaku*/*Unjigi* was written (TKZ 3: 343). The suggested dates for *Sokushinjōbutsugi*, *Shōjijissōgi* and *Unjigishaku* taken together are 815–832.

67 "Aspects/features of signs" might be a translation more consistent with the use and translation of 相 in *Shōjijissō-gi* 聲字實相義.

68 次明以此一字通攝諸經等. TKZ 3: 70, for a different translation, see GIEBEL, 2004: 129.

three vertically arranged graphic elements, which in their designation as well as in the ritual-textual references that were used to explain their meaning, showed an impressive similarity to the three elements of the *Elation* acrostic. The syllable *ha* 訶 in the middle, the *samādhi* stroke (*sanmai-kaku* 三昧画) (*ū*) below, and the dot of great emptiness 大空点 (*m(a)*) (Skt. *anusvāra*) above, were said to represent the three essential propositions that exhausted all the teachings of *sūtras* and treatises,<sup>69</sup> and each element also had limitless horizontal meanings. In other words, the three parts of the graph *hūm* could be configured in much the same way as the elements 大乳, 空海, 獅子 of the acrostic. Furthermore, a central reference in *Unjigishaku*'s explanation of the esoteric meanings of the graph *hūm* extended the similarities. It described the Buddha's *samādhi*, the so-called "Observation from the High Peak of the Pure Dharma Banner"<sup>70</sup> and the manifestation of his "tongue faculty" 舌相 in Book Two (*Entering maṇḍala*) of *Mahāvairocana sūtra*, when, upon arising from his meditation, the Buddha "emitted a voice that pervaded the Dharma realm of all Tathāgatas, taking pity on the realms of beings without exception, and uttered this Vidyārājñī 'Very Powerful Great Protection'".<sup>71</sup> *Unjigishaku*, quoting the *Commentary to Mahāvairocana sūtra*, identified the dot of emptiness of the graph *hūm* in terms of a feminine aspect, "*vidyārājñī prajñā* (wisdom) mother of the Buddhas" 般若佛母明妃,<sup>72</sup> whose symbolism therefore appears in line with 大乳 in the acrostic. Furthermore, the *samādhi* stroke was understood as a reference to Mahāvairocana, thus corresponding to 獅子. All in all, I suggest that the synthetic interpretation of the graph *hūm* and the acrostic in *Elation* represented mantra configurations with broadly similar semiological structures, actant roles, and ritual event structure,

69 GIEBEL, 2004: 129, "[...] *bodhi* is the cause, great compassion is the root, and expedient means is the final aim." 菩提為因大悲為根方便為究竟, *TKZ* 3: 69–70, TAKAGI / DREIT-LEIN, 2010: 184.

70 清淨法幢高峯觀三昧 *T* 848 18: 12.c, GIEBEL 2005: 60, HODGE, 2003: 149.

71 Giebel's translation of 時佛從定起。爾時發遍一切如來法界哀慰無餘衆生界聲。說此大力大護明妃曰 (GIEBEL 2005: 60).

72 *TKZ* 3: 70, GIEBEL, 2004: 129, HODGE, 2003: 149, cf. *Commentary to Mahāvairocana sūtra* *T* 1796 39: 673b–674a.



<i>ELATION</i>	THE GRAPH HŪM ( <i>UNJIGISHAKU</i> )	ACTANT ROLES ( <i>MAHĀVAIROCANA SŪTRA</i> )
大乳	大空点 the dot of great emptiness	mother of the Buddha
空海	訶 the syllable <i>ha</i>	practitioner/all tathāgatas
獅子	三昧画 the <i>samādhi</i> stroke	Mahāvairocana

From that perspective, the acrostic configuration can ultimately be understood as a totalistic interpenetration or limitless “equal view” of (and by) the actant(s) in the ritual of *Elation* on the vertical plane, and the mother of the Buddha, the practitioner-Kūkai and Mahāvairocana, the syllable *hūm*, on the horizontal plane.

This understanding of the *Elation* acrostic suggests that it might be possible to take the interpretation of the poem further and to establish correlations between the first two spaces in *Elation* and the semiological definitions of the first two steps in *Unjigishaku*. I shall return to that possibility below. First, however, I wish to consider the doctrinal taxonomy of the ten stages (“abiding minds” 住心) in *Jūjūshinron*<sup>73</sup> and, in particular, the construction of the non-mantra world, in order to appreciate the argument for the tripartite structure in *Elation*, not only its semiological dimension, but also correlating socio-political agency, spaces, and emotions. The non-mantra world described on Stages One to Three of *Jūjūshinron*, was essentially represented as a simple logical operation of supersession, viz. minimally between signlessness (Stage One), the making of a distinction or signification (Stage Two), and supersession on Stage Three. The three stages can be schematically represented as follows,<sup>74</sup>

73 The translation ‘stage’ should not be taken to mean a rigid vertical (gradualist) progression. Although the abiding mind of each of the ten stages worked within a logical progression having the potential to experience the insight of the next stage, the textual thrust was on ten arbitrarily chosen stops in a multi-dimensional infinite expanse. The significance of any minimal opposition (sign/ji 字) and its supersession was, in theory, the same, cf. FUJII, 2008: 294ff, and 297 in particular.

74 For the names of the three categories, see *Mahāvairocana sūtra* T 848 18: 1–2.

## BEINGS

SEMIOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING  
(ethical practice)

## Stage One:

signlessness (*jūaku* 十惡)*ishō teiyō jūshin* 異生羝羊住心“the abiding mind of the ordinary people  
like rams”

## Stage Two:

conventional linguistic system/  
distinctions (*jūzen* 十善)*gudō jisai jūshin* 愚童持齋住心“the abiding mind of the foolish,  
childlike, the rule-abiding”

## Stage Three:

supersession (*shinkui-gō* 身口意業)*yōdō mui jūshin* 嬰童無畏住心“the abiding mind, the immature,  
unafraid”

On this basis, the space of the court in *Elation*, although only briefly sketched, was easily defined as belonging semiologically on Stage Two, viz. that “spring maidens” 春女 (A6) and “spring warblers” 春鶯 (A7)<sup>75</sup> were conventional synecdoches for the (beginning of) calendar and the political order that connoted the transition from a signless stage/space to one ruled by conventional linguistic distinctions in terms of the semiology in *Jūjūshinron*. This identification also agreed with the king and his palace being the defining space on Stage Two.

The question of whether Shinsen'en was defined as semiologically identical to the court, i.e. belonged on Stage Two, or was different, i.e. belonged on Stage Three, is somewhat harder to answer. For one, *Jūjūshinron* operated with categorizations that made immediate comparison to *Elation* difficult. References on Stage Three were almost all generic and taken from Chinese or Indian traditions, viz. Daoist sages, transcendents, Hindu deities, dragons, heavenly kings, cosmic phenomena, and there was no specific mention of ‘spirits’ (神) or other terms that might suggest local Japanese ancestors or cults and bind the discourse to a Japanese realm where conventional naming prevailed and the political implications were obvious. That said, precisely because the essential classificatory criterion in *Jūjūshinron* was semiological and any analogy to Japan had to be

75 Perhaps not incidentally, the references to spring in Block A correlated with the direction east just like elements on the horizontal dimension of the acrostic.



made in terms of successful communication involving supersession, it was also a remarkably broad, one might say, doctrinally generous definition: all those in whose gift it was to communicate (successfully) with numinous beings, who had sensed the possibility of transcending causality and were unafraid to seek beyond the usual confines of the human realm, were in essence semiologically and cognitively on a par and belonged on Stage Three. What held true for the Vedic practitioner and the deities with whom he communicated, for the ritualist and the dragons he addressed, presumably by implication held equally for the practitioner – perhaps also a poet-official – in a *kami* ritual and the *kami* addressed.<sup>76</sup>

We are fortunate to have another poem about Shinsen'en by Kūkai, which he composed when invited there by the monarch.<sup>77</sup> In *Seeing Shinsen'en on an autumn day* 秋日觀神泉苑, Shinsen'en was described as a binary landscape which, although in reality quite limited, seemed to augment infinitely, as the poet felt the presence of the monarch and his ancestral spirits (神);<sup>78</sup> the space lost its binary features, and the poet was released, transcendent-like, into a cosmic space.<sup>79</sup> This conception of Shinsen'en as a space for transcending the bounds of ordinary mortal existence in the context of communication with ancestral spirits, clearly belonged on Stage Three. Equally clearly, it represented the established view of Shinsen'en, with which Kūkai as the monarch's guest

76 The fact that Kūkai at times used Daoist references to refer to himself in his communications with the monarch, suggests that he identified with the role of the numinous interlocutor of the type belonging on Stage Three, cf. SHIZUKA, 1994: 120, 131–142.

77 *Seireishū*, TKZ 8: 11, NKBT 71: 164–165, *Keikokushū* 14. This poem consists of twelve heptasyllabic lines. Its date is unknown. It is the only reference to Shinsen'en in the TKZ concordance apart from *Elation*.

78 Opening with the description of the landscape in a High vs. Low binary, "The divine structure of the lofty terrace is not [made] with human power, the mirror of the pond is wide and clear, it encompasses the light of the sun" 高臺神構非人力。池鏡泓澄含日暉。 These striking lines are quoted in Shinzei's preface to *Seireishū* (TKZ 8: 5, NKBT 71: 154).

79 一翔一住感君德      One moment flying, the next abiding, I feel my master's power  
秋月秋風空入扉      the autumn moon and the autumn wind enter the house as [if  
   entering] the void,  
銜草啄梁何不在      with grass in my mouth pecking at the millet, how can I not be?  
踳踳率舞在玄機      Staggeringly, going along, dancing, I exist mysteriously driven.  
Whether the terms 感君德 and 在玄機 supported a more precise definition of the poet's experience as transcendent-like (仙) matters less here. On the term 玄機, see KROLL, 2001: 61.

would have been obliged to comply, and on which basis he had to work, if he wished to incorporate it into a wider ideological framework.<sup>80</sup>

A suggestion how Kūkai might have used Shinsen'en within his overall semiology,<sup>81</sup> is found in *Jūjūshinron*'s description of the superior king's (*cakra-vartin*) interaction with the jade woman 玉女, which at once defined the semiology of Stage Three (i.e. supersession) and established an affinity between non-mantra/*kami* ritual and the Buddhist tantric ritual on Stage Ten.<sup>82</sup> The jade woman was described as one of the king's seven treasures, the possession of which was represented as the pre-condition for the optimal politico-cosmic order in the non-mantra realm.<sup>83</sup> Her particular importance was clear from the fact that the description of her body and her interaction with the monarch were accorded more space in the text than the six other treasures in the king's possession put together. Furthermore, the patterning of the terms 身口意/身語心 allows an understanding of the interaction as a ritual supersession of the Three Modes of Actions (*sangō* 三業) conceived in analogy to, or even as identical with the unification of the Three Secrets (*sanmitsu* 三密) of Stage Ten.<sup>84</sup> Also significant was the indication that some persons, although not kings themselves, could obtain king-like powers.<sup>85</sup> In sum, *Jūjūshinron* described the interaction of the king or the king-like person with the jade woman at the threshold of the cogni-

80 On conceptions of semiological continuities between Daoist transcendents and tantric Buddhism in Kūkai's work, e.g. the use of Daoist passages as scriptural evidence for realizing Buddhahood in this very body, see FUJII, 2008: 306, 658 note 102.

81 In a generalizable way, the Vedic tradition, presumably as all cultic paradigms on Stage Three, was held up as a preparatory paradigm to the Buddhist one, *TKZ* 2: 112.

82 *TKZ* 2: 104–106, *NST* 5: 101–102, 331, from *Shizhu piposha ron* 十住毘婆沙論 T 1521 26: 121.a–b.

83 The *kami*-like status of the jade woman was clear from the comparison of her to the consort of Taishaku (Skt. Indra) and an indication that the interaction belonged conceptually on Stage Three, “The pattern/her figure in painting is clear and manifest, she is like the consort of Taishaku Shaji wearing a robe and a hair ornament of heavenly pattern.” 画文炳現如帝釈夫人含脂著天文衣鬘 (*TKZ* 2: 106). As the text also made clear, heavenly kings did not have a consort in their Buddhist manifestations, cf. “The Bonten queen (*bontengō*) is the spirit (神) to whom all give offerings and respect. In the Buddhist dharma, however, Bon'ō (Skt. Brahman) is removed from lust and has no queen or consort.” 梵天后是世所奉尊神。然仏法中梵王離欲無有后妃 (*TKZ* 2: 111–112).

84 *TKZ* 2: 319–320, Todaro, 1984: 85. On the identification of Three Modes of Actions (三業) and the Three Secrets (三密) in esoteric Buddhism, see ORZECCH/SØRENSEN, 2011. The variation between 身口意 and 身語心, the latter of which seems to have been restricted to tantric texts or contexts, is not considered here.

85 *TKZ* 2: 75.



tion of emptiness and the space of mantra as essentially analogical, if not identical, to the experience or insight of limitlessness. It is my suggestion that this motif provided a ritual homology that was relevant to *Elation*, – and to the early *kana* acrostics (see section 4.).

Now, having defined Stage Three (1) semiologically by supersession and (2) ritually by homology to the Buddhist tantric ritual, the question is how that definition fits with the representation of Shinsen'en in *Elation*? Compared to the transcendent's space in *Seeing Shinsen'en*, the tropes of longevity or immortality in the Shinsen'en landscape of *Elation*, viz. "peach and plum crimson" 桃季紅 (A2)<sup>86</sup> and "numinous spring water" 神泉水 (B2) or streaming water ("flowing along, flowing along, entering the deep gorges" 流之流之入深淵), symbols of non-mundane existence,<sup>87</sup> offset the bleak watery landscape and its innumerable dead in Shinsen'en – up to a point. Likewise, the list of the infinite numbers of dead (神 'spirits') in block C emphasized famous individuals, who almost all had long lives, but were in the end unable to attain "ten thousand springs". In connection to *Jūjūshinron*'s ritual analogy between Stages Three and Ten, it is noteworthy that the poet's perception of women formed an integral part of the characterization of the spaces in *Elation*. Like everything else in Shinsen'en, the quartet that concluded the list of the dead, 西嬌嫫母支離體 "Xishi, Maoqiang, Momu, Zhilidi/[the one] whose limbs are separated from the body" (C6) of whom the first three referred to consorts of Chinese princes or emperors,<sup>88</sup> were more distinguished than the "spring maidens" in the king's fortress. It is unclear to whom the fourth figure 支離體 referred, but presumably to someone who, if not a woman, was lowly enough to be listed with women, or perhaps extraordinary enough to break the mould. Commentators have explained the fourth

86 Peaches and plums could (also) have been an allusion to the fruit Yasuyo had sent Kūkai. According to the preface in *Seireishū* (TKZ 8: 15), the sending was the occasion for *Elation* and other poems. See also ROUZER, 2004: 449–450.

87 ROUZER, 2004: 450 speculates that Kūkai might have known Li Bai's (= Li Po) 李白 (701–762?) famous poem *Reply to a worldly fellow's question* (*Dasurenwen* 答俗人問), where the landscape appeared to constitute an allusion to the *Peach Blossom Fount* (*Taohuayuan-ji* 桃花源記) by Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427) (HIGHTOWER, 1970: 254–256.). Kroll, 1998: 65 characterizes Li Bai's poem as an example of a description of a mountainscape that articulates "[t]he primacy of the word – not the eye". See also KÖZEN, 2006: 13.

88 Xiqiang refers to Xishi 西施, bewitching beauty who as a consort to the prince of Wu distracted him from governing the country and Maoqiang 毛嬙, the beautiful consort of king Wu. Momu 嫫母 was the ugly, wise and powerful consort of the Yellow Emperor.

figure as one of the sages in *Zhuangzi*,<sup>89</sup> i.e. someone associated with transcendents' existence. In any case, the vagueness of the reference opened the exegesis at a crucial point of the journey. Lastly, just before the poet's perception was radically transformed, the trope of women appeared in a juxtaposition of the singing and dancing (of the living) in halls and pavilions,<sup>90</sup> and (of the dead) in the hamlets with foxes in (D3),<sup>91</sup>

(D3) 歌堂舞閣野狐里, Halls of singing, pavilions of dancing, [become] villages  
of foxes of the plain,

(D4) 如夢如泡電影賓. Like a dream, like froth, the flash of lightening, a guest.

It is my suggestion that when the text-internal and the text-external evidence is considered together, Shinsen'en emerges as a space of paradox or, more precisely, a superimposition of two different semiological definitions or contexts. As a low landscape, watery and with innumerable dead, Shinsen'en constituted a binary with the space of the court, viz. the court vs. Shinsen'en: High: Low; platform: water; life: death. It also had features of a space of immortality, as noted. The paradox of Shinsen'en can, then, be understood as the supersession or a-duality of 'death' and 'non-death' (i.e. Stage Three) within a ritual poetic articulation of the semiology of *Jūjūshinron*. It thereby also afforded a possibility for interpreting the overall structure of *Elation* as mapped on the hermeneutic method of *Unjigishaku*, where Shinsen'en represented the significant

89 KOJIMA, 1986: 2770 takes *zhilidi* 支離體 'the one/the body with separated (= misshapen?) limbs' as a reference to "Crippled Shu" *zhilishu* 支離疏 in *Zhuangzi* (Book Four 人間世篇, KANAYA, 1994 (1971), vol. I: 143, WATSON, 1968: 66). An equally good possibility is *yinchizhili wuchun* 閭跂支離无脣 ("Mr. Lame-Hunchback-No-Lips"), the sage who transcended (others' perceptions of) distinctions of outer and inner forms (*Zhuangzi*, Book Five (德充符), KANAYA, 1994 (1971) vol. I: 168–170, WATSON, 1968: 74–75. The ambiguity of the reference seems not dissimilar to that of the reference of 大乳 in the acrostic. It might also have been easier to access a more popular reading to a transcendent's "escape by means of a simulated corpse" (C. *shijie* 尸解), which sometimes involved separated limbs and head, cf. the hagiography of Ge Xuan 葛玄 in CAMPANY, 2002: 156.

90 That is, two of the three activities (*ka-bu* but not *ki* of 歌舞伎) that characterized the king and the jade woman interacting.

91 "Fox(es) of the plain" (D3), apart from connoting death, could have been associated to beings capable of changing their form or making others perceive their form variously, cf. for instance, the hagiography of Luan Ba 樂巴 driving out a "temple demon" in the form of a fox spirit (CAMPANY, 2002: 253). On foxes or jackals (Skt. *dākiṇī*) in tantric traditions, see STRICKMANN, 2002: 257–274.



stage between the cursory noticing and the supreme equal view. Thus, the meaning of Shinsen'en was death or – to put it in the terms of *Unjigishaku* – the “inapprehensibility” 不可得 of life, and the meaning of Shinsen'en was (also) immortality, the “inapprehensibility” of death. The space was, then, in essence constructed as an instance of “connotative meaning”. Given that the “superficial meaning” obviously matched the Confucian ordered world of spring at court in *Elation*, and that the horizontal structure of its acrostic was closely similar or even identical to the synthetic interpretation of the Siddham graph *hūm*, there exist, I suggest, rather precise semiological correlations between the three landscapes of *Elation* and the three levels of meanings in *Unjigishaku* as follows,

“superficial meaning”	字相	the court
“connotative meaning”	字(實)義	Shinsen'en
“synthetic interpretation”	合釋	Kōyasan

The above reading suggests that the tantric ritual poetry in a Japanese setting created by Kūkai in *Elation*, represented an application of his semiological and hermeneutic methods in *Unjigishaku*. The hermeneutics offered a full analogy to the three horizontal elements of the acrostic as well as a systematic hermeneutic backdrop to the spatial course of the journey in *Elation*.<sup>92</sup>

#### 4. Reconsidering the *kana* acrostics

The interpretation of the acrostic in *Elation* sets a new interpretational perspective for the early *kana* acrostics in section 1. Could Kūkai's construction of the sinographic acrostic as a kind of poetic implement in a tantric ritual in a Japanese space have been replicated in *waka* (perhaps in a different cultic context)? Such a conceptual mapping seemed envisaged by the ritual analogy made between Stage Three and Stage Ten in *Jūjūshinron* (see section 3). Furthermore, as esoteric methodology became a favoured vehicle for political empowerment during the ninth century, there would have been added incentive for *onmyōji*, poets, musicians, exorcists, *kami* priests and others who could communicate with numinous beings in a Japanese space, – not just monks like Kūkai – to make use of the homological possibilities within that Buddhist tantric vision. It would

92 Note the intriguing systemic similarities to the semantic condensation in *sannō* 山王, discussed by Allan G. GRAPARD, 1987: 221ff, 226–227.

have mattered less whether or not *Jūjūshinron* or *Seireishū* were widely read at the time, since the framework of ideas, such as the notion of the acrostic, could easily have been conveyed by word of mouth beyond narrow Buddhist circles. Some poets appreciating the *kana* syllabary that emerged apace in the early ninth century as a hermeneutic tool not unlike Siddham syllables, could have taken the implications of Kūkai's argument on mantra-like meaning one step further to *kana* and Japanese. There is no want of plausible lines of dissemination.<sup>93</sup>

On that basis, consider the early *kana* acrostics once more. Immediately striking is the interpretative possibility afforded by reading the *wominapesi* poem sequentially with the two preceding poems on the same theme as a stepwise demonstration parallel to Kūkai's three-step explanation of the meanings of the syllable *hūm*,

女郎花

- 437 しらつゆを珠に貫くとやささがにの花にも葉にも糸を皆へし  
 438 あさつゆを分けそほちつつ花見むと今ぞ野山をみな経しりぬる  
 朱雀院女郎花合の時に、女郎花と言ふ五文字を、句の頭に置来て、よめる  
 439 小倉山みね立ちならし鳴く鹿の経にけむ秋をしる人ぞなき

*Wominapesi*

- 437 *siratuyu wo tama ni nuku to ya sasagani no pana ni mo pa ni mo ito wo mina pesi*  
 438 *asatuyu wo wake sopotitutu pana mimu to ima zo no yama wo mina pe sirinuru*  
*Suzaku-win no wominapesi-apase no toki ni, wominapesi to ipu itu-mozi wo, ku no kasira*  
*ni wokite, yomeru*  
 439 *wogurayama mine tati narasi naku sika no penikemu aki wo siru pito zo naki*

Maiden flower

- 437 Was it to pierce white dew like pearls, that the spider strung all the threads to both flowers and leaves?  
 438 Wet from parting the morning dew, in my wish to see the flower(s), I have passed both plain and mountain and know all!

93 E.g. the poet Henjō 遍昭/遍照 (816?–890), Yasuyo's son, is said to have received the initiation of the Three Great Dharmas of the Diamond, the Womb and the wondrous attainment 金・胎・蘇悉地三部大法の伝法灌頂 from Enchin (SHINKAWA, 1997: 57–58), or Ki no Haseo 紀長谷雄 (845–912) wrote the biography of Shinzei, Kūkai's disciple and Haseo's relation, that we have in *Kikeshū* 紀家集 (*The collected writings of the Ki house*).



Composed on the occasion of the poem competition on *wominapesi* in Suzaku-in, placing the five syllables of *wominapesi* in line-initial position,

- 439      No one knows the autumns the crying deer passed treading flat the peak of Ogura Mountain.<sup>94</sup>

First, as the theme of 437–438, *wominapesi* was introduced as the name of the flower, a simplex metaphor for the coveted woman, the trigger of movement. Second, *wominapesi* was constructed as a double paronomasia or double supersession, featuring a transitive construction (437) as opposed to an intransitive construction (438) to do with weaving,

- |     |                              |     |                                       |            |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|------------|
| 437 | wo    mina   pesi            | 438 | wo    mina   pe                       | si(rinuru) |
|     | OBJ all    string smth.-PAST |     | OBJ all    pass through & know(-PERF) |            |

When it is taken into account that the poems were originally written exclusively in *kana*,<sup>95</sup> the syllables をみなへし would have appeared as two almost parallel, identical columns placed towards the end of the poems. The juxtaposition of a transitive event with an intransitive event could have associated to the central conception of *nyūga ganyū* 入我我入 of the Buddhist tantric ritual. Third, as for 439, a sequential reading furthers the understanding of *sika*, the deer that presumably passed through space(s) (*penikemu*) no one could know, as a figure spanning the entire ontological or soteriological spectrum. As a pun on ‘such as, like that’ hinting at ‘Tathāgata’/*nyorai* 如来, and as the crying deer referring back to the sexual metaphor *wominapesi*, the very origin of the whole semiological edifice and the theme 女郎花 of 437–438, *sika* constituted the vertical dimension to *wominapesi*’s horizontal dimension of what seemed to all intents and purposes constructed as an articulation of limitless cognition in the vein of Kūkai.<sup>96</sup>

94 SNKBT 5: 144. Poems 437–438 are by Ki no Tomonori 紀友則 (died after 905). There are two other runs of *wominapesi* poems in *Kokin wakashū*, in the Autumn section (226–238) (many in *utaawase* as noted by KAMENS, 1993: 420 note 58), and *haikai* poems (1016–1019). The interpretation of the latter is disputed. CRANSTON, 2006: 180 notes that the *haikai* effect was produced by combining the aesthetic vocabulary customarily referring to women, e.g. *namameku* ‘be refined,’ transitive verbs that usually had plants as objects, *woru* ‘to break off’ and *tumu* ‘to pick,’ cf. *wominapesi* being homophonous with *womina pesi* ‘pushed over a woman,’ cf. also the early logographic rendering 姫押 (*Man’yōshū* 7.1346).

95 See, for instance, KOMATSU, 2000.

96 Could the three poems have had a meditative or ritual significance? HELDT, 2008: 99–100, 111f notes Uda tennō’s fondness for *wominapesi* as a topic at poetry matches. In that con-

As for the *kakitupata* acrostic, I wish to suggest that it might be possible to muster both text-internal and text-external evidence to support the hypothesis that it was constructed on a similar semiological basis to the *wominapesi* sequence. It may also be possible to define a *kami* ritual context for the Yatsushashi episode. It is, of course, not in itself surprising that かきつはた allowed for a variety of paronomastic readings or explanations of word meaning. There is early evidence for at least one of them in *Man'yōshū*, cf. that one of the common logographic renderings of *kakitupata* 垣津幡 ‘banner by the fence’ suggested or superimposed a morphemic analysis of かきつはた as *kaki tu pata*<sup>97</sup>, which could have connoted rituals at shrines or temples.<sup>98</sup> Along these lines, the identification of *pata* ‘banner’ ‘loom’<sup>99</sup> and the understanding of *kakitu* as a predicate form could in theory have produced multiple paronomastic readings as follows,

- |     |                     |   |
|-----|---------------------|---|
| (1) | <i>kaki tu pata</i> | ‘banner of/at the lattice fence’        |
| (2) | <i>kakitu pata</i>  | ‘I have/someone has set up – a loom!’   |
| (3) | <i>kakitu pata</i>  | ‘I have/someone has raised – a banner!’ |
| (4) | <i>kakitu pata</i>  | ‘I have/someone has written – loom!’    |
| (5) | <i>kakitu pata</i>  | ‘I have/someone has written – banner!’  |

(2)–(5) all exemplified a slightly irregular grammatical construction of a predicate (*kak-u* + perfective aspect suffix *-(i)tu*) in the Final Form (*shūshikei*) with an extraposed object, or alternatively, a noun phrase where the verb of the ad-

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nection, the narrative inscription in *Utsuho monogatari* (late tenth century) relating *wominapesi* to visualization (of a royal consort) seems worth noting. The Suzaku monarch chose *wominapesi* as a theme for a group of courtiers to compose a poem about his own consort, as he was interested to observe how the man he reckoned to be her lover would articulate that theme. On the same occasion, the protagonist Nakatada composed a poem whose supersession of the conventionally established existential categories for a royal consort, won the monarch over and persuaded him to let Nakatada marry the First Princess (*Naishi no kami*, *UMZ*: 397–398).

97 E.g. *Man'yōshū* 7.1345. On Ki no Tsurayuki’s use of the same logographic rendering, see *Tsurayuki-shū* 807–809, TANAKA / TANAKA, 1997: 580–582.

98 Although banners were sometimes termed *kanjō* 灌頂 or *kanjōban* 灌頂幡 in Nara sources, this, according to MISAKI, 1968: 67–68, did not mean that these rituals were esoteric Buddhist initiations. Cf. also GRONER, 1984: 66, note 7. Banners with the four directional animals surrounding the central *tennō* (and his symbol) were used in New Year’s audiences, e.g. OOMS, 2009: 168. On the banner in Shōsōin, see BOGEL, 2009: 247–249.

99 Were *pata* ‘loom’ and *pata* ‘banner’ etymologically the same word? On *pata* ‘banner, standard’ as a Sanskrit loan word Skt. *patākā*, see FRELLESVIG, 2010: 149.



nominal clause took the Final Form rather than the Adnominal Form (*rentai-kei*).<sup>100</sup> Of them, (2) would be naturally associated with *karagoromo*, the patterned woven theme of the poem, which might have been associated with spiritual qualities.<sup>101</sup> The easy assumption is that the pattern of the robe replicated or constituted a metaphor for the Yatsushashi (‘Eight bridges’) landscape and, in turn, for its simile, the spider’s web.<sup>102</sup> (3), more specifically, opened up the possibility that the episode at Yatsushashi was a ritual occasion. There seems to be no evidence for (4)–(5) here, although they, too, would be possible in ritual contexts, and could, indeed, turn out to be relevant.<sup>103</sup>

What puts the interpretation on a surer footing is, I suggest, the eighth century evidence for a similar set of metaphors of weaving functioning in a *kami* ritual context, provided by an account in *Hizen fudoki* 肥前風土記 about the propitiation of a female deity who used to kill wayfarers.<sup>104</sup> A man called Azeko identified the maleficent deity’s whereabouts and intent by raising a banner (舉幡) and was so able to discover that the deity was female (Akaruhime) from her appearance in his dream in the form of a dancing warp-controller cord (*kutubiki*)

100 The irregularity would disappear, if as Bjarke Frellesvig has suggested (p.c.) the Final Form could be taken as an archaic feature.

101 *Karagoromo* probably referred to an official robe worn by a woman of the highest rank or a monk. It may have been made of *karaaya*, i.e. twill damask or twill with Chinese designs (VON VERSCHUER, 1988: 56). On the *kesa* Kūkai received from Huiguo 惠果 (746–805), see BOGEL, 2009: 135ff.

102 *Kak-u* was also used about a spider’s nestmaking, viz. *kumo no su kakitaru matu no* [...] “the pine tree in which a spider has made her nest [...]” (*Utsuho monogatari*, Fujiwara no kimi, UMZ: 91).

103 For instance, the seven mountain masters (musicians from Tosotsu-ten 兜率天) in *Utsuho monogatari* named the ten *kin* 琴 that the protagonist Toshikage was to bring to Japan by inscribing the name of each with their own blood as an authentication of having taught him the tunes they knew (*Toshikage*, UMZ: 18).

104 *NKBT* 2: 382–385, for an English translation, see PALMER, 2001: 20. COMO, 2009: 40–41 sees Akaruhime as a weaving goddess and the story as a piece of evidence of immigrant weaving cults among the Munakata clans and others in the Nara period. Both Palmer and Como note Korean connections. The *NKBT* commentator (383, note 25) suggests that Azeko 阿是古 (in some versions of the text, Kazeko 珂是古) was identical to a historical person of the Mononobe family. Note incidentally how a weaving deity was instrumental in securing a lineage’s cultural capital in *Utsuho monogatari*. In making the *kin* belonging to Toshikage’s lineage, the central ancestor (天女) had two helpers Amewakamiko 天稚御子 who made the *kin*, and Tanabata 織女 who made the string (*Toshikage*, UMZ: 13).

and a niddy-noddy (or hand reel) (*tatari*).<sup>105</sup> Azeko then built a shrine and worshipped the deity, after which wayfarers were no longer killed. The *Hizen fudoki* narrative at once substantiates the double paronomasia of *kakitupata* (loom/banner) on a metaphorical level and also provides an overall interpretative framework for the Yatsunashi episode as a cultic communication with a female *kami*, i.e. the double paronomasia of loom and banner in the context of a spectacular waterscape constituted a reference to or a modification of an already established type of *kami* cultic event. The two actions of Azeko's raising the banner and Akaruhime's weaving, which perhaps significantly could both be conceived as representing vertical-horizontal intersections, were construed as connected. Together the two events brought an end to disruption. Finally, there was Azeko, the name of the numinous interlocutor. Taken as *a-seko* 'my man,' the name appears consistent with *Aduma* < *a-tuma*, the place name Azuma to which *wotoko* was travelling in section 9, and the pun *tuma* 褖 '(other) seam', 妻 'wife' in the *kakitupata* poem.<sup>106</sup> Both *aseko* and *aduma* might have had a wider perhaps generic ritual use at the time. Taken as *aze-ko* 'heddle boy,' the link was to weaving, cf. *aze* 綜 'heddle,' the looped cord or wire (*wo*) through which each warp thread was passed. The ambiguity might well have been intended. On the basis of this narrative, it seems plausible that the *kakitupata* acrostic, if understood within a *kami* cultic context, could have been interpreted as incorporating a double paronomasia made up of the following binary metaphorical strands,

raising of banner	setting up a loom/weaving
vertical(–horizontal) action	horizontal(–vertical) action
numinous interlocutor, cf. <i>Azeko</i>	wife = <i>tuma</i> /Aduma ( <i>a-duma</i> )

In this perspective, the semiological construction emerges as comparable to the *wominapesi* sequence. The vertical-horizontal intersection was constructed with the poet/*wotoko* on the vertical narrative and the flower on the horizontal of the acrostic. The double paronomasia constituted a superseding construction within the poem, corresponding to that in the two first poems (437–438) on *wominapesi*, and the prose foretext introduced the simple meaning of *kakitupata*.

105 *Kutubiki* 臥機 is the looped cord or string (*susoo*) that the weaver moves with the foot in order to control the position of the shed, the opening in the patterned warp threads that allows passage of the shuttle. It may not be coincidental that *tatari* 絡罫 was homophonous with 'divine maleficence' 祟り.

106 See note 15 above.



The *Hizen fudoki* narrative was largely conceived in binary terms with an implied concluding supersession. Edwina Palmer in her application of a Lévi-Straussian structural approach to a group of *fudoki* narratives has suggested that the narrative about Akaruhime and Azeko represents a variation of a common myth about the pacification of a female river deity, which can be interpreted as Japanese *nature* being vanquished by *culture* originating from the Korean peninsula, specifically, the technologies of irrigation and water control. Appropriately, Akaruhime's shrine was situated at 山道川 or 山途川 (Yamajikawa), a name that literally incorporated the minimally binary landscape at the centre of the environmental disorder in the other *fudoki* narratives. Judging from its name and description, the landscape at Yatsunashi, too, might have needed water control. Yet, there was no binary structuring of it. If it is assumed that the description of Yatsunashi was constructed like some other prose foretexts describing landscapes in *Ise monogatari*, namely, as tracing a path of associations that could lead towards an understanding of the poem as a revelatory articulation,<sup>107</sup> what stood out was the number eight underscoring the specific flower-like quality of the landscape. Given that the *kakitupata* flower was the central object in *wotoko*'s awareness and as such the natural centre of the Yatsunashi landscape, the spider-like waterscape of rivers and bridges presumably spread out from it (and *wotoko*) in eight directions. Further, if it is considered that *yatu-pasi* 'eight bridges' was near homophonous (at least in terms of segmental features) and homographic in *kana* writing with 'eight edges' (= directions, cf. *pasi* 端), and only one syllable away from a fit with a putative Japanese rendering (*yatu-pa*) of the established synecdoche of the lotus flower, 'eight-petal' 八葉, it seems not inconceivable that the Japanese landscape of Yatsunashi was constructed as an analogue of a lotus *maṇḍala* with the banner and the loom (*kakitupata*) on the central lotus seat of the landscape.<sup>108</sup> While it may ultimately not be possible to determine the precise circumstances of Narihira's poem or its narrative inscription, the evidence from the acrostic here suggests a ritual or meditative action or implement informed by an understanding of *shingon*/mantra that looks likely (ultimately) to have originated with Kūkai.

107 For instance, the master's poem at the Nunobiki Fall (section 87).

108 One of several possibilities for specific reference points would be the Hall of the Central Dais Eight Petals (Chūtai hachiyōin 中台(胎)八葉院) in the *genzu* Womb World *maṇḍala*: the lotus petals being the essential symbols of the Womb World, and the central Mahāvairocana seated in the central disk and the centripetal vajras wedged in between the petals, that of the Diamond World (see TEN GROTHENHUIS, 1999: 60–61).

## Conclusion

The analysis of the two *kana* acrostics supports the view that the most accomplished *waka* poets in the generations following Kūkai contributed to ritual techniques, engaging with metaphors and semiological structures that were at once similar and complex enough to warrant the assumption that they drew on understandings of semiology and mantra hermeneutics presented in *Jūjūshinron* or *Unjigishaku*, and of which already Kūkai had made poetic use in *Elation*. Thus, the *kana* acrostics point to revision and possible backdating of the mediaeval “waka-mantra” theory.

The comparison of the *Hizen fudoki* narrative and the Yatsunashi episode, and, in turn, of the *kana* acrostic texts and Kūkai’s works, allows some broad hypotheses about the historical developments of *kami* cultic models and ritual techniques. The *Hizen fudoki* narrative provides evidence that the Yin-Yang binary landscape, the binary cognitive categorization generally and, above all, the weaving-banner metaphors, were part of a cultic paradigm that predated Kūkai by at least a century. It seems natural that Kūkai in his construction of a non-mantra world would have wished at once to accommodate and encompass this older paradigm, which might, of course, itself have represented a development within a different Mahāyāna framework. The result could have been a new ritual technique defined by the perception of a homological (“*kami*–Buddhist”) landscape and the acrostic articulation of the insight of limitlessness by Japanese (*kana*) paronomastic means based on weaving metaphors, as seen in the Yatsunashi episode.

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