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THE HUAYAN/KEGON/HWAŌM PAINTINGS IN EAST ASIA

Introduction

Huayan (J. Kegon; K. Hwaŏm) Buddhism, whose teachings are based on the *Huayan jing*, the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* or *Flower Garland Sūtra*, is one of the most important schools of East Asian Buddhism.¹ The *Huayan jing* has provided inspiration for the creation of numerous artworks, ritual objects, and architectural complexes.² We are familiar with the portrayals of Vairocana (Ch. Darirulai 大日如來, or Piluzhenafu 毘盧遮那佛), Mañjuśrī (Ch. Wenshu 文殊), and Samantabhadra (Ch. Puxian 普賢) – the “Three Holy Ones” of Huayan Buddhism. The *Gaṇḍavyūha*, or *Rufajiepin* 入法界品, the last chapter of the Tang translation of the *Huayan jing*, recounts the young boy Sudhana’s (Ch. Shancai tongzi 善財童子) pilgrimage to visit fifty-three spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitra*) in search of enlightenment. This originally independent text has inspired a variety of popular pictorial narratives and sculptural reliefs.

In this study I discuss a group of Huayan paintings that hitherto has received relatively little attention. These are the so-called *Huayan bian* 華嚴變, or “transformation tableaux” (referring to *bian* 變, *bianxiang* 變相, or *jingbian* 經變), that are intended to embody, or make manifest, the entirety of the *sūtra*’s teaching in a pictorial format. I examine the Chinese examples from Dunhuang, of ninth- to eleventh-century dates, and the slightly later Japanese ones dating to the Kamakura

1 Early versions of this chapter were presented at the 2004 Association for Asian Studies annual meeting in San Diego, and at the Chinese Buddhism Conference held at Hsi Lai Temple, Los Angeles, in June 2005. I am grateful for the comments from Robert Gimello, the discussant of the 2004 AAS panel, and from Deborah Klimburg-Salter, who has read early drafts of this essay. I would also like to acknowledge the support of a small grant from the Carl H. and Martha S. Lindner Center for Art History, University of Virginia, toward preparation of this essay for publication. The *Avatamsaka-sūtra* was first translated into Chinese by the Indian monk Buddhābhadrā in 420 (T 278, 60 fascicles), and again by the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda in 699 (T 279, 80 fascicles). For more details, see Hamar’s chapter, “The History of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*,” in this volume.

2 Ono 1937, Matsumoto 1937, Fontein 1967, Gómez and Woodward 1981, Ishida 1988.

period (1185–1333). Although most early Hwaom paintings from Korea have not survived, some later examples are included for discussion. These three groups of Huayan/Kegon/Hwaom paintings share similarities, but they also differ in other ways. This essay is a preliminary attempt to explore and interpret these paintings as a group. Furthermore, an examination of the use of these paintings in ritual contexts, both in East Asia and elsewhere, may shed light on the meanings of these paintings and the emerging esoteric context within which they can be interpreted.

Huayan Paintings in China

The most flourishing period of Huayan Buddhism in East Asia was in the seventh and eighth centuries, when the school's teachings were intertwined with state ideology. Empress Wu Zetian 武則天皇后 (624–705) of Tang dynasty (618–907) China and Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (701–756) of Nara period (710–794) Japan were both important imperial patrons of Huayan/Kegon Buddhism. It was also during the High Tang period (705–780) that we first read about paintings entitled *Huayan bian*. Zhang Yanyuan's 張彥遠 *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 [Record of Famous Painters of All Dynasties] mentions such mural depictions in Yidesi 懿德寺 and Jing'ai 敬愛寺, Buddhist temples in Chang'an and Luoyang, respectively.³ In Japan, Monk Dōji 道慈 (d. 744) commissioned an embroidery of *Kegon hen* (*Huayan bian*) for Daianji 大安寺 in 742, suggesting that the new kinds of Buddhist paintings developed in China were closely followed in Japan.⁴ The embroidery's title, *Avatamsaka's Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* (Ch. *Qichu jiuhui*, J. *Shichisho kyūkai* 七處九會), confirms that its contents were based on the Tang translation of the *sūtra*. (The fifth-century translation of the *Huayan jing* mentions only eight assemblies.) The majority of Huayan paintings at Dunhuang also portray the same subject, and it is to this group that we turn our attention.

Unlike the more alluring, splendid Pure Land paintings, or the captivating narratives of the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* (Ch. *Weimojie jing* 維摩詰經) and the like, the Huayan paintings at Dunhuang have largely been seen as dry and monotonous, lacking in visual appeal that merits study. Most of them depict the Buddha's magical appearances in seven mythical locations where he expounds the Huayan teachings in nine gatherings. The assemblies are more or less identical, static with minimal details about place and narrative contents. Most art historians ascribe this lack of visual interest to the difficulty of representing the abstract, abstruse philosophical doctrine of a text

3 Zhang 847: *juan* 3, 61, 68–69, respectively.

4 In “Daianji garan engi narabini ryūki shizaichō 大安寺伽藍緣起并流記資財帳 [A history of the founding of Daianji and a record of its properties] (747),” in Hanawa Hokinoichi 塙保已一 (1746–1821), 1983 ed., *Gunsho ruijū* 群書類從 [A compendium of categorized texts], vol. 24, p. 381. Dōji was one of the Japanese monks who traveled to Tang China during the heyday of Huayan Buddhism.

as long and complex as the *Huayan jing*. Because of such aesthetic judgments, full illustrations of these murals are seldom included in major publications of Dunhuang art. For example, the Dunhuang Academy records a total of twenty-nine murals of *Huayan bian* in the Dunhuang cave-chapels, yet not a single mural was featured in the five-volume series published in the early 1980s.⁵

The recent rediscovery and publication of two large, portable Huayan paintings in the Pelliot Collection, which until recently have been neglected in storage at the Musée Guimet, present new materials for re-evaluation.⁶ These two silk paintings are among the largest portable paintings from Dunhuang – one almost 2 meters and the other almost 3 meters in height. Based on their stylistic characteristics, they have been dated to the Five Dynasties (907–960) or Song (960–1279) period, in the tenth century. Their impressive size and fine quality indicate that the Huayan doctrine was of central importance to the Buddhist community at Dunhuang. Probably intended for hanging in temples, they served important liturgical functions.

The first painting portrays the *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* (194 × 179 cm), while the second depicts the *Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood* (286 × 189 cm), based on the *Daśabhūmika*, or *Shidipin* 十地品, chapter of the *Huayan jing* (figs. 1, 2). Like the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the *Daśabhūmika* was originally an independent text that became incorporated into the larger body of the Avataṃsaka literature.

The painting of *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* belongs to the type that originated in the High Tang period and was subsequently transmitted to Korea and Japan. According to the Huayan tradition, after the Buddha achieved enlightenment at Bodhgayā he remained in a trance, in a state of ecstatic beatitude, for a period of four times seven days. During this period of deep meditation, and upon Brahmā's intercession, the Buddha manifested himself in seven mystical locations and preached to the assemblies gathered for his teachings (the total number of assemblies was eight or nine according to the fifth- or seventh-century translations of the *Huayan jing*, respectively.) The Buddha's manifestations are thus magical apparitions, and the mystical locations delineate a movement beginning from the site of the Buddha's enlightenment in the terrestrial realm, then ascending to the heavens, and finally finding a resolution back in the terrestrial domain. This temporal-spatial scheme in

5 Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo 敦煌文物研究所 1982: 227–28. In the *Tonkō Bakkōkutsu* 敦煌莫高窟 series (1980–82), there are only views of the ceilings of Cave 9 and 55, which include *Huayan bian*, but the photographs are not of the quality that one can study. The *Dunhuang shiku xishu* 敦煌石窟藝術 series (from 1993) that published individual cave-temples began to include *Huayan bian* for study; but prior to this publication one still had to rely on Pelliot 1914–24, or Matsumoto's study in 1937. At the 2004 AAS meeting, Robert Gimello commented that a common phenomenon in the reception of religious art is that beatitude is difficult to portray, whereas depictions of the lower realms of spirituality, such as hells scenes in Christian art or the many pictorial narratives in Buddhist art, are much more engaging and are often the first to draw the attention not only of viewers but of scholars as well.

6 Giès 1994, 1996.

the Buddha's apparitions corresponds to the Avatamsaka cosmology, a variant of the many conceptions of Buddhist cosmology.

In Buddhist cosmology one generally distinguishes between the single-world system, also known as the triple world system, of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmology and the multiple-world system, or the cosmology of innumerable, of Mahāyāna cosmology; the latter includes the Pure Land cosmology of Amitābha/Amitāyus (Ch. Amituo/Wuliangshoufo 阿彌陀/無量壽佛) and various buddha-fields (*buddhakṣetra*; Ch. *fotu* 佛土). The Avatamsaka cosmology, or the Lotus Repository World (Ch. *Lianhuazang shijie* 蓮華藏世界) of Vairocana Buddha, however, incorporates the earlier single-world system but transforms it into a fantastic, miraculous realm.⁷ The triple world system is divided into three spheres: the *kāmadhātu* (the realm of desire; Ch. *yujie* 欲界), *rūpadhātu* (realm of form; Ch. *sejie* 色界), and *ārūpyadhātu* (realm of formlessness; Ch. *wusejie* 無色界). The seven mystical locations of Vairocana's assemblies all occur within the *kāmadhātu*, the lowest sphere in the triple world system. In the Dunhuang painting, the nine assemblies are neatly arranged in a grid plan of three rows and three columns (fig. 1a). These are, from left to right:

Top register:

- 5th assembly (Tuṣita Heaven; Ch. Doushuai tian 兜率天)
- 4th assembly (Suyama Heaven; Ch. Yemo tian 夜摩天)
- 6th assembly (Paranirmitavaśavartin Heaven; Ch. Tahuazizai tian 他化自在天)

Middle register:

- 7th assembly (Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance, in Magadha; Ch. Puguangfang tang 普光法堂)
- 3rd assembly (Trāyastriṃśa, summit of Mt. Meru; Ch. Daoli tian 仞利天)
- 8th assembly (Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance, in Magadha)

Bottom register:

- 2nd assembly (Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance, in Magadha)
- 1st assembly (Bodhgayā, in Magadha; Ch. Puti daochang 菩提道場)
- 9th assembly (Jetavana Groves, in Kosalas; Ch. Shiduo yuanlin 逝多園林)

The *kāmadhātu* is further divided into the heavens, earth (Jambudvīpa; Ch. Zhanbuzhou 瞻部洲), and hells. In the Huayan scheme, the Buddha preaches the first assembly at Bodhgayā, in the kingdom of Magadha, where he achieved enlightenment, in the bottom center, followed by the second assembly, which takes place in the Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance, also in Magadha. The subsequent assemblies take place in the heavenly abodes of gods; the most significant one, the third assembly, shown in the center, occurs at Trāyastriṃśa, the abode of Indra on the summit of Mt. Meru (or Sumeru, Ch. Xumishan 須彌山). The fourth, fifth, and sixth assemblies that follow take place in the upper levels of heaven and are shown in the upper register. The seventh and eighth assemblies, also at the Palace of the

7 Kloetzli 1983, 1987; Sadakata 1997: 143–157; Wong forthcoming.

Dharma of Universal Radiance, flank the third assembly in the middle register. The last or ninth assembly, during which the *Gaṇḍavyūha* chapter is taught, occurs at the Jetavana Groves, in the Kosalas kingdom in Jambudvīpa, the site of the Buddha's first sermon. It is shown to the right of the first assembly, thus concluding the sequence of mystical visions in a kind of ascending and descending path.

Subtly interwoven into this diagrammatic composition we can interpret the Huayan concepts of the *triloka* (three worlds) and the *trikāya* (three bodies; Ch. *sanshen* 三身). For example, the locations occur both at Jambudvīpa and in the heavens of gods. While the historical locations provide the settings for the *nirmāṇakāya* (transformation body; Ch. *huashen* 化身, or *yingshen* 應身) of the Buddha, the mystical places furnish the environments for the apparitions of the Buddha's *sambhogakāya* (enjoyment body; Ch. *baoshen* 報身). The Huayan doctrine also describes the Buddha in absolute terms as the *dharmakāya* (truth body; Ch. 法身), embodied by Vairocana, the supreme Buddha of the universe. As the abstract, cosmic form of Śākyamuni, Vairocana is omniscient and omnipresent, and the *sūtra* emphasizes his multiplicity and all-pervading presence. His world is the *dharmadhātu*, the realm of absolute truth, described in the *sūtra* with the metaphor of the lotus, and it is one of ineffable immensity and wonders, embracing countless world systems. This Lotus Repository World is depicted in the bottom part of the painting, separated from the assemblies by an arc of five-colored clouds (fig. 1b). A large lotus emerges from the oceans of fragrant water, supported by two *nāga* kings. Flowers refer to the practice and deeds, which produce fruits and seeds. The ocean of fragrant water symbolizes the "repository consciousness," a storehouse for experiential impressions. The walled enclosures depicted within the lotus refer to the infinity of world systems it contains. The *sūtra* speaks of each atom of the Lotus Repository World as containing the universe of elemental cosmos, countless as the sands of the Ganges.⁸

One of the most well-known representations of the Lotus Repository World is the colossal bronze statue of Vairocana at Tōdaiji 東大寺 first cast in the eighth century, although this iconography is based on the earlier *Brahmajāla-sūtra* (Ch. *Fanwang jing* 梵網經; c. third century C.E.)⁹ rather than on the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (figs. 3, 3a).¹⁰ Vairocana sits upon a thousand-petaled lotus, each petal of which supports a world. The Buddha incarnates into one thousand Śākyamuni Buddhas, one for each of the worlds. On each petal, in each world, there are ten billion Mt. Meru worlds. The Śākyamuni Buddhas each incarnate into ten billion Śākyamuni bodhi-sattvas, who dwell within each of these Mt. Meru worlds. Thus there are altogether one Vairocana Buddha, one thousand Śākyamuni Buddhas, and ten trillion Śākyamuni

8 Cleary 1984: 204.

9 T 1484.

10 For a distinction between the two descriptions of the Lotus Repository World based on the *Brahmajāla-sūtra* and the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, see Sadakata 1997: 143–157. The *Brahmajāla-sūtra* is generally thought to be an apocryphal text. At Dunhuang and Yulin there are also mural illustrations of this text; see Huo 1990.

bodhisattvas. On the original petals of this Tōdaiji statue are engravings that depict a simplified version of the Mt. Meru world, with layers of wind circles, and numerous buddhas as Vairocana's incarnations in innumerable worlds. A Chinese depiction of the Lotus Repository World (*Huazang zhuangyan shijiehai tu* 華藏莊嚴世界海圖) has also been preserved on a stele in the Da Kaiyuansi 大開元寺 in Xi'an, dating to the fourteenth century.¹¹ In this case, the depiction is based on the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* and focuses on the giant lotus supporting the Mt. Meru world rather than on Vairocana Buddha (fig. 4).

The Dunhuang silk painting is almost identical to the mural from Cave 61 in composition and in the spatial-temporal arrangement of the assemblies (fig. 5). Other Huayan murals are depicted on the sloped walls of ceilings, with the whole composition either fitted into the trapezoidal shape or divided into three slopes, each showing three assemblies. Mt. Meru is prominently displayed in the mural of Cave 55 (fig. 6). Pictorial depictions of Sudhana's pilgrimage are included in some examples, either as framed panels in the bottom of the mural (Cave 12, figs. 7, 7a) or at the sides or bottom section of the mural if the *bianxiang* is depicted on the ceiling, such as the ceiling murals of Caves 9, 85, and 156 (figs. 8, 8a). Compared with the well-known Song printed illustration of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (the *Wenshu zhinan tuzan* 文殊指南圖讚, of Southern Song date),¹² the narrative vignettes in the Dunhuang murals seem rudimentary in iconography, usually showing a youth together with a couple of figures with very few other distinguishing details. Some are discernible when the accompanying cartouches have legible inscriptions. A cartouche from the ceiling mural of Cave 85 mentions Mañjuśrī extending his hand from across a long distance to touch the head of Sudhana, shortly before the youth's last visit to Samantabhadra (fig. 8a).¹³ Although *Huayan bian* of High Tang and Mid-Tang (781–848) dates are not yet available for examination, the presence of the depiction of Sudhana's pilgrimage in Late Tang (848–907) cave-temples represents the earliest such examples (see fig. 7, and later discussion of eleventh-century depictions of Sudhana's pilgrimage in the Tabo Monastery in the Western Himalayas).

The iconographic programs of Dunhuang cave-chapels also deserve some attention. From Zhang Yanyuan's and others' descriptions, we know that the Buddhist temples in the Tang capitals are decorated with multiple *bianxiang* murals and other Buddhist subject matter. The Chan hall (*chanyuan* 禪院) of Jing'aiisi that contains a mural of *Huayan bian* also includes murals of Amitābha's Pure Land and Maitreya's Paradise, among others.¹⁴ The inclusion of several *bianxiang* within a temple hall is consistent with the practice at Dunhuang beginning in the Tang dynasty. During the

11 Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定 and Sekino Tadashi 関野貞 1975–1976: plates vol. 9, pl. 40; text vol. 2, pp. 38–39.

12 Fontein 1967: 23–40.

13 The full list of *Huayan bian* at Dunhuang includes Caves 6, 9, 12, 25, 44, 45, 53, 55, 61, 76, 85, 98, 108, 127, 138, 144, 146, 156, 159, 196, 231, 232, 237, 261, 431, 449, 454, 471, and 472. They include one mural dating to High Tang, but the rest from Mid-Tang to the Song.

14 Zhang 847: 68.

Early Tang (618–704) and High Tang periods, Pure Land paintings were the most popular, often with Amitābha's and Maitreya's Pure Lands juxtaposed to each other on opposite walls. *Huayan bian* began to be popular at Dunhuang in the Mid-Tang.¹⁵ From that time on and until the Song dynasty, the number of *bianxiang* murals painted within a given cave-chapel increased steadily, from six to more than a dozen. Furthermore, a fair consistency in the pairing of subject matter emerged. In examining the almost thirty murals of *Huayan bian*, almost all of them are depicted on the north wall or the north slope of the ceiling. When one is depicted on the north wall, it invariably faces a *bianxiang* of the *Lotus Sūtra* on the south wall (see appendix 1). The number of *bianxiang* depicted within a cave-chapel gradually increased: the Five Dynasties Cave 98 includes 13, and the Song dynasty Cave 55 has 19 (see appendix 2). These later *bianxiang* paintings become formulaic in expression, and the same regularity in the pairing of certain subject matters persists. Other *bianxiang* subjects that became popular in the ninth and tenth centuries include those associated with Chan and other schools.

By including the transformation tableaux of many *sūtras* within a cave-chapel in some regular arrangement, the entire program reads like a compendium of canonical texts that encompasses the teachings of the different schools of Buddhism. At the minimum level of interpretation, one can concede that these *bianxiang* subjects attest to the popularity of certain *sūtras* or the significance of certain schools of Buddhism at Dunhuang at the time: Jingtu 淨土, Tiantai 天台, Huayan 華嚴, Chan 禪, and so on. Increasingly esoteric subject matters also made their presence known – some by being incorporated into the predominantly Mahāyāna program, others by asserting themselves in more independent programs.

The second silk painting illustrates the *Daśabhūmika* chapter of the *Huayan jing*, enumerating the ten stages of bodhisattvahood (fig. 2). The only known depiction of this subject, the painting is divided into four registers, consisting of twelve scenes. The ten transcendent assemblies symbolic of the ten stages are shown from left to right, top to bottom. In the bottom register, the two extra squares show Samantabhadra in the lower left and Mañjuśrī in the lower right, flanking the assembly of Vairocana in the center. The presence of the boy Sudhana among the entourages of Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī makes reference to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, suggesting that the painting embodies the teachings of both the *Daśabhūmika* and *Gaṇḍavyūha* chapters of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*. In doctrinal terms, the painting is an exposition of the path of spiritual advancement, from a description of the progressive stages of bodhisattvahood to Sudhana's pilgrimage and realization of enlightenment under the guidance of the two great bodhisattvas.

The two Huayan paintings on silk are similar in composition in the use of a grid pattern to arrange the assemblies. They also share similar iconographic details and

15 The Dunhuang Academy records that the only extant example of *Huayan bian* of High Tang date, in Cave 44, is depicted within the east-facing niche of the central pillar, but this mural is not yet published. Dunhuang Academy 1982: 15.

stylistic characteristics, suggesting that they were made about the same time. The French scholar Giès suggests that these two liturgical paintings are related to each other dialectically. Perhaps hung on temple walls facing each other as a ritual presentation, they set up a visual hierarchy analogous to the scholastic exposition of both a general theory and a scheme of practice.¹⁶

If there remains doubt as to the value of interpreting the meaning and function of the icons and murals at the Dunhuang cave-chapels due to the fact that their interiors were almost completely dark, then one must remember that these cave-chapels come close to simulating the interiors of temple halls, probably both in layout and in subject matter.¹⁷ Copious records of Buddhist temples of Tang and Song times mention the same kind of sculptures and *bianxiang* murals adorning the temple halls.¹⁸ Furthermore, the silk painting depicting *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* (fig. 1) is virtually identical to the mural in Cave 61 (see fig. 5), while other Huayan murals bear only minor variations. This similarity between portable paintings and cave-temple murals suggests that they shared the same designs/models and may have been executed by the same workshops and artists. The large format of the two *Huayan bian* silk paintings indicates that they were likely hung in temples. Called *zhenghua* 幀畫, they were hung behind the main image(s) on the altars in temple halls, on side walls, or, in later times, even outside the temples (such as the large thangka paintings hung outside Tibetan monasteries). Some extant, though later, portable Hwaom *zhenghua* (K. *t'aenghwa*) in Korea that are still hung in temples confirm the ritual use and visual practice of displaying such paintings (see discussion below).

Kegon Paintings in Japan

In Japan, Kegon Buddhism was one of the old schools of Nara Buddhism, with its headquarters at the Tōdaiji, but it declined after the move of the capital to Kyoto and the destruction of Tōdaiji during the civil war. The embroidered *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* that Monk Dōji commissioned for Daianji in 742, which we assume

16 Giès 1996: 45–46.

17 At the AAS meeting and elsewhere, Robert Sharf raised the issue (and is not the first one to do so) that since the interiors of Dunhuang cave-chapels were so dark, no rituals or other practices, such as meditation or visualization, could have taken place inside them. While this is true, and the cave-chapels may indeed have commemorative or other functions, this does not diminish the value of studying these murals and icons – or the iconographic program as a whole – for understanding contemporary practices that took place in the halls of monasteries. One must, of course, distinguish between the temple and the cave-chapel contexts.

18 In addition to Zhang Yanyuan's *Lidai Minghua ji*, and Duan Chengshi's 段成式 “Sita ji 寺塔記,” which record the many temples of Tang Chang'an and Luoyang, we also have records of major temples such as the Xiangguosi 相國寺 in the Northern Song capital of Kaifeng. The Xiangguosi, for example, includes a Lushena dian 盧舍那殿 (Hall of Vairocana) that houses a life-sized Buddha statue, flanked by Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra in side towers; lining the connecting corridors are tall steles engraved with the *Huayan jing*. See Soper 1948: 24–26.

closely followed the iconography and composition developed in Tang China and was similar to examples at Dunhuang, also did not survive. The record in *Daianji garan engi narabini shizaichō* 大安寺伽藍縁起并流記資財帳 (747), however, notes that the embroidered painting is 20 *shaku* 尺 high and 18 *shaku* wide (approximately 6.6 meters × 6 meters), indicating that the portable painting was of impressive size.¹⁹ Even if the dimension given is figurative rather than literal, there are indications that the portable painting was probably of impressive size, for known Shingon mandaras can be as tall as 4 to 5 meters high.²⁰

In the Kamakura period, Rōben 良辨 (1173–1232), or Myōe Shōnin 明恵上人, sought to revive Kegon Buddhism, and Kōzanji 高山寺, where he served as abbot, became the new center of the Kegon school.²¹ The next group of Kegon paintings in Japan, dating from the thirteenth century, are all associated with Myōe in one way or another. Major studies by Jan Fontein and ISHIDA Hisatoyo 石田尚豊, among others, have given us a detailed genealogy and analysis of this group of Kegon paintings.²² Three are associated with Sudhana's Pilgrimage: *Zenzai dōji emaki* 善財童子絵巻 [Handscroll of Sudhana's pilgrimage], in handscroll format; *Kegon gojūgo sho-e* 華嚴五十五所絵 [The Fifty-five Visits (of Sudhana) as Narrated in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*], a set of paintings mounted on wooden frames; and *Kegon kai-e zenchishiki mandara* 華嚴海会善知識曼荼羅 [The Good Friends of the Avatamsaka Ocean Assembly]. Two others are: *Kegon kai-e sho shōju mandara* 華嚴海会諸聖眾曼荼羅 [The Congregation of Holy Beings of the Avatamsaka Ocean Assembly]; and *Kegon engi emaki* 華嚴縁起絵巻 [Handscroll of the Founding of Avatamsaka Buddhism], which narrates the founding of Avatamsaka Buddhism in the Korean kingdom of Silla by the monks Gishō 義湘 (K. Ūisang; 625–702) and Gangyō 元曉 (K. Wōnhyo; 617–686), whose disciples propagated the Avatamsaka doctrine in Japan. The narrative handscrolls and the mounted panels are not discussed below; instead I focus on the *Kegon kai-e zenchishiki mandara* and the *Kegon kai-e sho shōju mandara*, both of which are iconic portrayals of the Kegon Ocean Assembly similar to the Huayan paintings at Dunhuang. Yet these two Japanese paintings already show divergence from the Dunhuang examples.

19 The same entry in “*Daianji garan engi narabini shizaichō*” mentions another embroidered painting of the same size, depicting the *Dai hannya shijūjūrokkai* 大般若四重十六会 [Four Locations and Sixteen Assemblies of Mahāprajñāpāramitā]. The title suggests that the painting might share a similar composition of depicting a number of Buddha's assemblies, like the Huayan paintings at Dunhuang. Dōji is known for introducing the Mahāprajñāpāramitā ritual (called *hannyakai* 般若会), which is still practiced today. A third embroidered painting that he commissioned for Daianji depicted the Buddha flanked by bodhisattvas and the eight classes of beings, and was taller, though narrower, than the other two that were based on the Kegon and Hannya texts. See *Daianji garan engi narabini shizaichō* 747: 379.

20 I thank J. Edward Kidder, Jr., for sharing his knowledge of interpreting these measurements mentioned in historical records in relation to actual paintings and sculptures.

21 For a discussion of Myōe's Kegon beliefs, see Tanabe 1992: 122–158.

22 Fontein 1967: 78–115; Ishida 1988. See also Brock 1988; Myōe Shōnin to Kōzanji iinkai 明恵上人と高山寺委員会 1981: 290–343.

The *Kegon kai-e zenchishiki mandara*, in the collection of Tōdaiji, was painted by Raien 頼圓 in the late thirteenth century (fig. 9). Occupying the top center is Vairocana, while the fifty-four small squares show the sequence of Sudhana's visit to the sages from top left (Mañjuśrī) to bottom right (Samantabhadra) in a zigzagging fashion. The placement of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra at the beginning and end of the sequence reiterates the two bodhisattvas' pivotal roles in guiding Sudhana's spiritual journey. In tracing the pedigree of this painting, Fontein concludes that it is probably a later copy of one originally commissioned by Myōe. Myōe had long expressed his desire to travel to China, though he was dissuaded from doing so because of his dream revelations. However, because of the renewed traffic between Kamakura Japan and Song China, Myōe apparently had access to models or sketches of Song Buddhist paintings (*karahon* 唐本) and had copied sketches of Sudhana's pilgrimage. When his aunt commissioned the painting of a *zenchishiki mandara*, Myōe's sketches were dispatched to the Kyoto monk painter Shunga 俊賀 in 1201 as the model. The *mandara* that Shunga painted was in turn given to Sonshōin 尊勝院 of Tōdaiji. Some time later several copies of this *mandara* were painted, and Raien copied one for the Kōzanji in 1294 (which also included one by Shunga). Thus if this painting has any reference to Chinese models, it is at best a thirdhand copy.

Since this *Kegon mandara* portrays the spiritual teachers of Sudhana, the textual source is the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. Nevertheless, with the choice of an iconic rather than a narrative mode of presentation, the emphasis has shifted from capturing Sudhana's experience to portraying the holy congregation of Sudhana's teachers. Fontein suggests that this painting derived its iconographic details from Song works such as the *Wenshu zhinan tuzan* prints (fig. 10). The main differences are that individual scenes have been stripped down to minimal details and then arranged into a diagrammatic, *mandara*-like arrangement. The unusual preaching *mudrā* of Vairocana, with both hands facing outward, is the same as that in a sketch in Myōe's dream diary and in the sculptural relief of the Huayan assembly at Feilai Feng 飛來峰 in Hangzhou (dated 1022), indicating Myōe's exposure to new iconographic features in Song Buddhist art (figs. 11, 12). Note that in these images Vairocana is shown in esoteric form as a crowned, bejeweled Buddha.

The use of the term *mandara* for the painting's title is noteworthy, and can be further explored in conjunction with the *Kegon kai-e sho shōju* [The Congregation of Holy Beings of the Avatamsaka Ocean Assembly] dated c. 1300 (fig. 13). The painting shows sixty-one bodhisattvas, *devas*, and members of the eight classes of heavenly beings, each painted within a rectangle. In the top center is Vairocana accompanied by the great bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin, J. Kannon 觀音) and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Ch. Dashizhi, J. Daiseishi 大勢至), and the heavenly kings. Like the previous painting, the figures are statically arranged in a grid pattern. In its delicate style and iconography, the painting also shows strong Chinese influence, such as the portrayal of the King of Tuṣita Heaven as a Chinese official. In particular, the figural style is associated with that of the Song figure painter Li Gonglin 李公麟 (c. 1047–1106), who is known to have painted the subject of Avatamsaka

scenes.²³ *Kōzanji engi* 高山寺縁起 mentions two paintings of this type, one of which was by Shunga. Thus both of the Kegon paintings just discussed have connections to Myōe and to the painter Shunga, and some connection to Song Buddhist paintings or prints.²⁴

Ritual and Visual Practice

The fact that these two Kegon paintings employ the same compositional formula suggests that such paintings were used as pairs in a ritual setting. In the Dunhuang pair, the ten stages of bodhisattvahood, with implicit reference made to Sudhana's pilgrimage, were juxtaposed to Vairocana's nine assemblies in seven locations. In the Japanese pair, Sudhana's pilgrimage was juxtaposed to the congregation of the Kegon assembly. In both these examples, the representation of Vairocana's assembly in conjunction with the delineation of the path of spiritual advancement came to embody both the essence and the entirety of the Avataṃsaka doctrine.

The Dunhuang Huayan paintings drew on prototypes of an earlier tradition first developed in the eighth century. The Kamakura paintings apparently incorporated new iconographic details and styles from Song China that had not yet been reflected at Dunhuang. These included the emphasis on the *Gaṇḍavyūha* made popular by the wood-block printing of *Wenshu zhinan tuzan*, a much enlarged Avataṃsaka congregation, the esoteric portrayal of Vairocana, and the new figural styles developed by painters such as Li Gonglin. Furthermore, the Japanese Kegon paintings show additional departures from their Chinese prototypes. First, instead of full assemblies, the figures are shown individually. In the *zenchishiki mandara*, the descriptive and narrative details in the Chinese models are reduced to one or two figures frozen in time, thus transforming the narrative mode into the iconic mode (compare fig. 9a with fig. 10, as both show Sudhana's visits to the night goddesses). Second, the arrangement of the fifty-three sagely figures becomes temporal and directional. In the ritual setting, perhaps this composition is essential and appropriate to the exposition of the Kegon doctrine, reinforced by the presence of the Kegon assembly in the accompanying painting. Members of the congregation are shown in their hierarchical order, with the important ones shown in the top and center, in accordance with the general principle of illustrating the Buddhist iconic group.

This interpretation can likewise be applied to the two Dunhuang silk paintings in their liturgical use, namely, with the delineation of the ten stages of bodhisattvahood shown in conjunction with the apparition of the Buddha's assemblies in their mythical locations, structurally arranged according to their relative positions in the Buddhist cosmos. A viewer/practitioner in the presence of these paintings would be reminded

23 Fontein 1967: 24.

24 Fontein 1967: 110.

of – and would thus enact, through ritualistic and performative actions – the spiritual journey toward enlightenment (see further discussion below).

In regard to the term *mandara* (*maṇḍala*), we know that the Japanese have used it rather loosely, from Pure Land paintings (such as the *Taima mandara*) to shrine *mandaras* and the map-like configurations of esoteric deities in the Tantric tradition.²⁵ The two Kegon paintings are also called *mandaras*. Considering their similarities, the Dunhuang Huayan paintings can be considered predecessors of the Japanese Kegon *mandaras*. In these examples, the description of physical settings for assemblies is reduced to an abstract, structural order, while the path of spiritual progression is rendered in the temporal, lineal direction. Huayan teachings have sometimes been called proto-Tantric, and the abstract, diagrammatic character of these *Huayan bian* further affiliates them with later esoteric *mandaras*. In Song China, Huayan Buddhism interacted with Chan. In Japan, Kegon further amalgamated with both Zen and Shingon Buddhism, and Myōe was a pivotal figure in this development, to the extent that Myōe has sometimes been called the first patriarch of Esoteric Kegon.²⁶

The placement of the paintings and sculptures in both the Buddha Hall and the three-storied pagoda of Kōzanji attests to Myōe's amalgamation of Kegon with esoteric teachings late in his career.²⁷ In the three-storied pagoda, for example, the center of the space is occupied by statues of the five holy deities of Kegon, which now include Vairocana, Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, Avalokiteśvara (Ch. Guanyin, J. Kannon 觀音), and Maitreya (Ch. Mile, J. Miroku 彌勒; fig. 14). A painting of the same configuration, called *Kegon gosei mandara* 華嚴五聖曼荼羅, is also associated with Myōe; this grouping is part of the Garbhadhātu *maṇḍala*, or Womb World *mandara* (J. Taizōka mandara 胎藏界曼荼羅). The painting on the north depicts the Gohimitsu 五秘密: Vajrasattva (J. Kongōsatta 金剛薩埵) and four other esoteric bodhisattvas; the *Gohimitsu mandara* represents one of the nine assemblies of the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala*, or Diamond World *mandara* (J. Kongōkai mandara 金剛界曼荼羅). Thus the juxtaposition of the sculptural *Kegon gosei mandara* and the painting of the *Gohimitsu mandara* represents, at one level, the union/non-duality of the Garbhadhātu and Vajradhātu *maṇḍalas*. Furthermore, since the *Kegon kai-e zenchishiki mandara* is placed directly behind the *Gohimitsu mandara*, Sudhana's fifty-three spiritual teachers are made part of the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala*, whereas the holy figures and the eight classes of heavenly beings of the Kegon Ocean Assembly depicted on the four pillars and the side walls become aligned with the Garbhadhātu *maṇḍala*. The two pictorial Kegon paintings have thus been integrated into the dual *maṇḍala* system of Shingon 真言 Buddhism.²⁸

25 ten Grotenhuis 1999.

26 Tanabe 1992: 140.

27 Ishida 1988: 53–55. In the Shimen jibutsu dō 四面持仏堂, the configuration includes the two Kegon *mandaras*, *Gohimitsu*, as well as the Womb World and Diamond World *mandaras*.

28 Ishida 1988: 54.

Myōe also advocates the practice of *kōmyō shingon* 光明真言 to achieve insight into the Kegon doctrine of interpenetration made visible by light and radiance. In a work on the ritual meditation on one of the good friends of Sudhana (Śilābhijña, from whom Sudhana learns a forty-two-character *mantra* at his forty-fifth visit), Myōe notes how one should prepare for the ritual with “proper posture, purification, prayer, incense offerings, and mantra recitations. Then the meditation hall must be visualized as Magadha, and the participant must become Sudhana himself. The Kegon vision of interpenetration of all things with all things and of the dharma realm with the ordinary world of dust is conjured, followed by more mantras. The practitioner is then called upon to identify with Mañjuśrī and each of the *kalyāṇamītras*.”²⁹ Myōe also instructs the practitioner to meditate on a wheel of the *mantra*’s letters and on the recitation of the *mantra*, which dispels the darkness of ignorance with a vision of light and radiance.

While this discussion by no means addresses the contents of Myōe’s complex teachings, I hope it has demonstrated the continuities as well as divergences between the Chinese and the Japanese Huayan/Kegon paintings, and how these paintings were continuously engaged with doctrinal developments of their time and place. At Dunhuang, *Huayan bian*, in conjunction with the cultic deities of the Avataṃsaka triad, remained an important theme in medieval Chinese Buddhist practice. At Kōzanji, Myōe’s personal vision had an enormous impact, both in terms of the synthesis of Kegon with esoteric teachings and in the artistic production and ritual use of these paintings.

Hwaŏm Paintings in Korea

The Avataṃsaka school was one of the most prominent schools of Buddhism in Korea. Ŭisang and Wōnhyo brought Avataṃsaka Buddhism to Korea from China, and their disciples disseminated the doctrine in Japan. Unfortunately, Hideyoshi’s campaign in the sixteenth century destroyed many Buddhist establishments in Korea. Most early Hwaŏm pictorial art in Korea has not survived, except for some examples of frontispiece illustrations of illuminated *sūtras*. Several recently discovered fragments belong to the frontispiece illustration to a copy of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* dated to 754 (figs. 15, 15a).³⁰ Delineated in “thin iron wire” lines in gold and silver on thick, purple-dyed mulberry paper, the scene shows an Avataṃsaka assembly. Seated on a lion throne under a tree canopy and in front of a two-story pavilion, Vairocana is accompanied by Mañjuśrī on the right. Both the figure style and the composition are consistent with High Tang depictions of Buddha’s assemblies, except for the lack of symmetry in balancing Mañjuśrī with another great bodhisattva. In his reconstruction of these fragments, Kang Woobang also notes the armband of Vairocana (much

29 Tanabe 1992: 140.

30 Pak 1987/88: 360–362, fig. 5; Kang 1989: 4–7, figs. 1.1–1.5; See Kang 2003: 176–177.

of the image is damaged), and concludes that Vairocana is presented in the esoteric bodhisattva form, probably with hands held in the wisdom fist *mudrā*.³¹

Several Hwaōm paintings in the *zhenghua* (K. *t'aenghwa*) format, of eighteenth-century dates, are relevant to the present discussion. The three extant Hwaōm paintings are found in: Songgwangsa 松廣寺, Hall of Hwaōm, in Chogye Mt. (dated 1770, 281 × 255 cm); Sōnamsa 仙巖寺, Hall of the Eight Phases, in South Cholla Province (dated 1780, 279 × 248 cm); and Sanggyesa 雙溪寺, Hall of the Great Hero, in Chiri Mt. (dated 1790).³² All of them are paintings in color on hemp with silk gauze, and these large banner-like paintings are similar in height to the second of the two Dunhuang silk paintings (*Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood*, fig. 2), though larger than the first one (*Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies*, fig. 1). All three Hwaōm paintings depict the subject of seven locations and nine assemblies, and bear resemblance to the Chinese ones. In the example at Songgwangsa, the painting is divided into four horizontal registers: the top three registers are for the seven locations (of Vairocana's nine assemblies), and the bottom register depicts the Lotus Repository World (figs. 16, 16a).³³ Unlike the more regular grid plans of the two Dunhuang paintings, the arrangement of assemblies in the Songgwangsa painting is less rigid. The second register shows the first assembly in the center, the second, seventh, and eighth assemblies to the right (as they all take place at the Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance), and the ninth assembly to the left. The third and fifth assemblies are depicted in the third register, while the fourth and sixth assemblies are in the top register. Thus the number of units is determined by the number of locations rather than the number of assemblies (the 2–2–3 arrangement looks less regular than the 3–3–3 grid of the Dunhuang examples), giving greater emphasis to spatial than to temporal concerns. Nonetheless, the Songgwangsa painting preserves the hierarchical structure of these locations in correspondence to their vertical placement within the *kāmadhātu*, namely, those assemblies taking place at Jambudvīpa occur at the lower (second) register, while those taking place in the heavens are shown in the upper registers.

31 Kang 1992: fig. 1.5; Kang 2003: 176–177. Since this is the earliest extant example of the esoteric bodhisattva form of Vairocana, Kang concludes: “From the eighth to ninth century Unified Silla and Japan followed separate paths in the practice of Buddhism, the former receiving Avatamsaka and Zen from China and the latter, Esoteric Buddhism. Korean Buddhism of that time combined Avatamsaka and Zen, and Vairocana with the wisdom fist was an object of devotion outside the Avatamsaka and Zen temples as well. In other words, Korean Buddhism, revealing Zen influence, was not rigidly sect-divided, whereas Japanese Buddhism emphasized ritual and sectarian distinction, as prescribed by Esoteric Buddhism.” Kang 2003: 177. I would like to thank YI Jongbok for interpreting Kang's essay (1992, in Korean) for me.

32 I am grateful to KANG Woobang, PAK Youngsook, and Robert Gimello for the information and references on Hwaōm art in Korea.

33 Sorensen 1988; the Hwaōm painting at Sōnamsa is identical in composition, in Mun 1984: pls. 85–89. One of the photographs in Sorensen's article (fig. 2) shows the painting hung against the wall behind the icons on the altar in the temple hall, and points to how the Dunhuang silk paintings might have been used.

In the ninth assembly, which occurs at the Jetavana Groves, the pictorial content is considerably more complex than that depicted at Dunhuang. In addition to Vairocana's assembly and the accompaniment of Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī is shown twice: once as a youth, seated inside a pagoda-like structure (referring to Maitreya's magical *kūṭāgāra*) with Maitreya standing to the right, and again seated inside the city in a scene to the left. The two scenes refer to Sudhana's fifty-first and fifty-second visits; below the pagoda, all fifty-three teachers of Sudhana are shown in rows. In all nine assemblies, Vairocana Buddha is shown in the same form as in Japan's *Kegon kai-e zenchishiki mandara*, that is, as a crowned and bejeweled Buddha with hands in the unique teaching gesture. The bottom register depicts the Lotus Repository World, with a giant lotus spanning the whole width of the painting. This Lotus World, the sum total of the Buddha's universal and perfect enlightenment, emanates the Worlds of the Ten Directions, each of which gives rise to ten lesser satellite worlds; these are shown in larger and smaller circles schematically.³⁴

When comparing this Hwaŏm painting with the tenth-century Dunhuang examples and the thirteenth-century Japanese examples, it seems that the Korean tradition closely follows the Chinese lineage established in the Tang dynasty by giving weight to Vairocana's nine assemblies. At the same time, the new iconographic form of Vairocana, the full depiction of Sudhana's fifty-three teachers in the ninth assembly, and the diagrammatic representation of the Lotus Repository World and its satellite worlds show the Korean artists' awareness of later iconographic developments in both China and Japan.

Beyond East Asia

Thus far the discussion of this group of Avatamsaka paintings has focused on their iconography, composition, aspects of their stylistic character, and, to some extent, the placement and visual practice of these paintings in temple settings. If complete understanding of the ritual use of these paintings remains elusive, perhaps a consideration of other monuments and contexts outside of East Asia will shed additional light. Deborah Klimburg-Salter recently drew my attention to the presence of a complete mural cycle depicting the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the Tabo Monastery in the Western Himalayas.³⁵ The monastery was founded in 996, while the assembly hall of the Main Temple, where the *Gaṇḍavyūha* murals are located, dates to the second artistic phase of the temple's renovation in the eleventh century. Since the depictions of Sudhana's pilgrimage in Dunhuang murals date to as early as the ninth and tenth centuries (see fig. 7a), they may provide a missing link between those in the Western Himalayas and the Song and Kamakura examples with twelfth- and thirteenth-century dates. The Main Temple at Tabo consists of an entry hall, an assembly hall, a cella, and an

34 Sorensen 1988: 97.

35 Klimburg-Salter 1997.

ambulatory (fig. 17). The temple is dedicated to Vairocana, including the original Vairocana image in the cella and a four-bodied Mahāvairocana added in front of the cella during the renovation. Protector figures and guardians of the directions are depicted inside the entry hall, while the entrance wall to the assembly hall is decorated with a wheel of life on the left juxtaposed with a cosmological picture on the right. This follows an ancient tradition of temple building in India, for early monastic regulations stipulate that a wheel of life/existence, the *bhavacakra*, should be represented in the entrance hall of each monastery.³⁶ The wheel of life, which portrays the six realms of human existence, emphasizes the endless cycles of birth and rebirth and the goal of reaching ever higher levels of existence until achieving ultimate release, or *nirvāṇa*, from the chain of causation.

The entire program of the assembly hall, carried out during the renovation in the eleventh century, has been preserved intact. The four walls are each divided into three horizontal registers. The lower section depicts two narrative cycles. Upon entering the assembly hall, the murals begin with the south side of the east wall and continue, in a clockwise direction, through the four walls to conclude on the north side of the east wall: the *Gaṇḍavyūha* appears on the south side, and the Life of the Buddha on the north side (figs. 18, 18a). Sudhana's pilgrimage commences with his meeting with Mañjuśrī and ends with Sudhana in the palace of Samantabhadra, while the narrative of Life of the Buddha begins with the Future Śākyamuni in Tuṣita Heaven and concludes with Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*.

The middle section contains sculpted deities of the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala*, with thirty-two life-sized clay sculptures bonded to the four walls, along with the free-standing four-bodied Mahāvairocana seated on a lotus throne in front of the cella that allows for circumambulation (figs. 19, 19a). Evenly spaced among the bodhisattvas of the *maṇḍala* are the Buddhas of the Four Directions: Akṣobhya (east) and Ratnasambhava (south) on the south wall, and Amitābha (west) and Amoghasiddhi (north) on the north wall. The upper section, whose murals have suffered more damage, portrays the Buddhas of the Ten Directions with attendant bodhisattvas as well as other Buddha realms, including a triad of the Buddha with Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra above the entrance on the east wall and the Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara-Mañjuśrī *maṇḍala* on the north side of the west wall.

The three-tier program of the assembly thus presents not only an iconographic unity but also a theory and a practice not unlike the Avataṃsaka art that we have been examining. This program corresponds to a vision of the cosmic geography and a path of attaining enlightenment, which can be experienced and enacted by the

36 One of the earliest extant examples is a fresco in the porch section of Cave 17 at Ajañṭā, which dates to the late fifth or early sixth century. Thus the Tabo Monastery has preserved this ancient Indian tradition of monastery building and iconographic program. The earliest example of the wheel of life image in China is found in the Baodingshan site in Sichuan, dating to Song times. Howard 2001: 6–10, Fig. 9. A tenth-century example is also depicted at Yulin Cave 19; see Zhang Boyuan 張伯元, 1998: 20–23. I'm grateful to Stephen Teiser for pointing out that there is also a wheel of life depicted in Kumtara Cave 75; see Teiser's forthcoming book (2006) on the topic.

practitioner during the ritual performance of circumambulation (*pradakṣina*) inside the assembly hall. Through ritual circumambulation and meditation, the practitioner enters into the *maṇḍala* and unites with the deities who reside there. By contemplating the paths undertaken by Sudhana and Siddhārtha, the practitioner also enacts this path toward gaining enlightenment. Klimburg-Salter writes:

Traditionally the practitioner would circumambulate at least three times around the main Vairocana image. In Tabo he progresses through the spiritual geography of the mandala and simultaneously identifies with the spiritual pilgrimage accomplished in the narratives, first by Sudhana and then by Siddhārtha, the Buddha Śākyamuni. Thus through meditation and ritual circumambulation he performs a symbolic pilgrimage which also leads to successively higher levels of consciousness.³⁷

The ritual practice described here bears remarkable similarity to that advocated by Myōe discussed earlier. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* had been in popular currency for some centuries before its depiction at the Tabo Monastery, yet the unusual arrangement there of individual scenes accompanied by panels of text comes more from the Chinese than the Indian tradition (note the extensive use of cartouches to identify scenes in Dunhuang murals). Furthermore, the narrative's lucidity in a linear, temporal arrangement reinforces the interpretation that a viewer "activates" the narrative by physically moving through the space of the narrative.³⁸

An even earlier narrative cycle of Sudhana's pilgrimage can be found in the sculptural reliefs of Borobudur, dating possibly to the eighth century (figs. 20, 20a).³⁹ The interpretation of the complex of Borobudur has spawned many theories (ranging from the monument as a *prāsāda* or terraced building to a *stūpa*, an architectural *maṇḍala*, or a commemorative monument),⁴⁰ but one of the commonly agreed-upon perceptions is that of the milieu of esoteric Buddhism during which this monument was built.⁴¹ The identities of the Buddha images on the upper galleries and of the unfinished Buddha within the central *stūpa* remain unclear, yet the textual sources of sculptural reliefs on the lower galleries include the *Mahākarmavibha*, *Lalitavistara*, *jātakas*, *avadānas*, and the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. Despite their differences, Klimburg-Salter

37 Klimburg-Salter 1997: 108.

38 Klimburg-Salter 1997: 132–133. Klimburg-Salter also notes that this viewing experience is somewhat similar to the viewing of narrative *sūtra* scrolls in East Asia, although in this case the viewer is stationary but activates the narrative through the unfolding and viewing of the scroll; see Klimburg-Salter 1997: 133.

39 Fontein 1967: 116–174. For a discussion of the scholarship on Borobudur, see Gómez and Woodward 1981: 1–14.

40 The intended function of Borobudur as a commemorative monument does not conflict with its other possible meanings, the same way that, if a specific Dunhuang cave-chapel's primary function was commemorative, this does not preclude interpretation of the iconographic program of the cave-chapel, since most monuments can have multiple levels of meanings.

41 That the two Indian monks who introduced esoteric Buddhism to China, Vajrabodhi (670–741) and Amoghavajra (719–774), both passed through Java before reaching Chang'an was not irrelevant. From Chang'an Kūkai (774–835) in turn introduced this tradition to Japan, founding the Shingon school.

draws a parallel between the theory and practice at Borobudur and at the Tabo Monastery. She writes:

The existence of Borobudur in Java is particularly interesting from our point of view for several reasons. 1) We have the fusion of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala with an architectural space. 2) The elements of the iconographic program are the same as those at Tabo: the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala, and the narratives from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the life of the Buddha. The viewer begins with the previous Lives of the Buddha and then, through the ritual circumambulation of the stupa, he progresses from terrace to terrace upward through the Life of the Buddha Śākyamuni, followed by the Pilgrimage of Sudhana and then, as he circumambulates through the mandala, he ascends through successive layers of realizations.⁴²

The group of Avatamsaka paintings examined here is connected to Borobudur and the Tabo Monastery because of the subject of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. While it can be seen that the Dunhuang *Huayan bian* (and to a large extent the Korean ones) are truthful to the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* in the exoteric or mainstream Mahāyāna context, those in Japan evolved toward an esoteric understanding, in tandem with the new esoteric movement that spread in different geographical regions of Asia. Thus Sudhana's visit to the fifty-three sages became an enduring metaphor of the prototypical pilgrimage central to the Buddhist concept of soteriology, rivaling or paired with none other than the journey of the Life of the Buddha.

At the fundamental level, a *maṇḍala* is understood to be a cosmic diagram that portrays deities in a schematic fashion. A mandalic arrangement can be expressed in painting, sculpture, in temple layout, interiors of main halls, or in the movement of rituals.⁴³ In her examination of the Ellora cave-temple site in India as an early expression of esoteric, mandalic structures in the seventh and eighth centuries, Geri H. Malandra notes:

The conception of the *maṇḍala* as a diagram is extended into a visualization of concrete architectural space, and was transformed into actual temple architecture and sculpture. The universe-in-the-*maṇḍala* is thus described and represented as a palace and, at the same time, the *maṇḍala* as a whole is conceived as being located in a *kūṭāgāra*, a three-storied eaved palace resting on top of Mount Sumeru. ... Such *maṇḍalas* as these include layers, or galleries in which reside numerous manifestations of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other deities.⁴⁴

In spatial terms, a *maṇḍala* is a sacred space that the initiates approach in carefully orchestrated steps, and into which the gods are invited to descend. As Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis observes, it “lays out a sacred territory or realm in microcosm, showing the relations among the various powers active in that realm and offering deities a sacred precinct where enlightenment takes place.”⁴⁵ Robert Sharf likewise notes that a Shingon *mandara* “is not so much a representation of the divine as it is the locus of the divine – the ground upon which the deity is made manifest.”⁴⁶

42 Klimburg-Salter 1997: 105.

43 Malandra 1993: 17–21. For a discussion of the definitions of *maṇḍalas*, see Saunders 1987: 155–158.

44 Malandra 1993: 18.

45 ten Grotenhuis 1999: 2.

46 Sharf 2001: 189.

In a more general sense, if a *maṇḍala* is understood as a congregation of deities, then the commonality of the Avataṃsaka paintings in East Asia is apparent: they all portray a gathering of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other heavenly beings, whether these are the mystical apparitions of Vairocana in various assemblies, the fifty-three teachers of Sudhana (*Kegon kai-e zenchishiki mandara*), or the congregation of all classes of holy beings of the Avataṃsaka assembly (*Kegon kai-e sho shōju*). But whereas the presentation of the Huayan paintings at Dunhuang and elsewhere in China remains couched in the mainstream Mahāyāna visual practice, in which *Huayan bian* were but one of many types of *bianxiang* associated with popular canonical Mahāyāna *sūtras*, in Kamakura Japan, under the guidance of Myōe, the arrangement of paintings and sculptures within the three-storied pagoda and inside the Buddha Hall of Kōzanji realizes the establishment of a mandalic ritual space in three-dimensional, architectural space. The study of these Avataṃsaka paintings of East Asia thus provides a window to understanding several strands of developments that occurred in the Buddhist world between the eighth and thirteenth century: (1) the central role of Avataṃsaka teachings in shaping visual and ritual practice in both exoteric and esoteric contexts (evidenced by the significance of the cultic status of Vairocana and the popularity of the theme of Sudhana's pilgrimage); (2) the development of earlier iconography into diagrammatic, schematic arrangements of presenting deities in cosmic, geographical spaces that are now called *maṇḍalas*; and (3) the formulation of a clearly delineated soteriology that encompasses the theories of the three bodies and the three realms. Furthermore, the significance of Avataṃsaka teachings and the associated visual practice can be put into sharper focus when considering contemporary developments in the Buddhist world beyond East Asia.

In artistic terms, we've seen the deployment of both conventional narrative and iconic modes for representation. In traditional Buddhist imagery, such as the representation of a Buddha triad, the sacred figures are portrayed in a transfixed, timeless manner. But stories that involve the protagonist's actions that occur at specific time and locations, such as Sudhana's pilgrimage or the Buddha's life events, are often depicted with the techniques of pictorial narratives. Underlying the distinction between these two modes of representation is also the implied separation of the sacred realm from the world of the mundane, or, in Buddhist terminology, the Buddha's realm versus the *sahāloka* or Jambudvīpa. In more developed Mahāyāna teachings, such as the Avataṃsaka or esoteric doctrine, it seems that the abstract, diagrammatic mode is the preferred mode for portraying happenings in the Buddha's realm that also involve temporal and spatial/cosmological dimensions. That the *Huayan bian*, as preserved in the Dunhuang silk paintings, were superseded by the popular narratives of Sudhana's pilgrimage in China while being preserved in Korea or transformed into *mandaras* in Japan can only be accounted for by the reception of the Huayan doctrine in those places – and its subsequent trajectories in the diverse cultures of East Asia.

Appendix 1

Cave 12, Late Tang

Main chamber

Ceiling

Thousand Buddhas

West wall

Recessed niche: Statues of seated Buddha flanked by disciples, bodhisattvas, and heavenly kings (Qing), framed panels depicting Legends of Buddha's Life, Buddha images above and donor images below

S: 普賢 Samantabhadra

N: 交殊 Mañjuśrī

South wall (from west)

法華經變 (*Lotus Sūtra*)

觀無量壽經變 (*Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*)

天請問經變 (*Devata-sūtra*)

Below: narratives of various *sūtras* in panels

North wall (from west)

華嚴經變 (*Avataṃsaka-sūtra*)

藥師經變 (*Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra*)

彌勒經變 (*Maitreya-sūtra*)

Below: narratives of various *sūtras* in panels

East wall

S: 報恩經變 (*Bao'en Sūtra*)

N: 維摩詰經變 (*Vimalakīrti-sūtra*)

Appendix 2

Dunhuang Cave 55, Song Dynasty

Main chamber:

Central platform: Statues of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, disciples, and lokapalas

Ceiling:

W: 彌勒經變 (*Maitreya-sūtra*)
 S: 法華經變 (*Lotus Sūtra*)
 E: 楞伽經變 (*Lankāvātara-sūtra*)
 N: 華嚴經變 (*Avataṃsaka-sūtra*)
 Four Heavenly Kings in corners

South wall (from west):

觀音經變 (*Avalokiteśvara-sūtra*)
 報恩經變 (*Bao'en Sūtra*)
 觀無量壽經變 (*Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*)
 彌勒經變 (*Maitreya-sūtra*)
 Below: 賢愚經諸品 (*Damamūka-nidāna-sūtra*), *jātakas*, *avadānas*

West wall:

勞度叉鬥聖變 (*Contest between Raudrākṣa and Śāriputra*)
 Below: 賢愚經諸品 (*Damamūka-nidāna-sūtra*), *jātakas*, *avadānas*

North wall (from west):

佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經變 (*Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī-sūtra*)
 思益梵天問經變 (*Viśeṣacīnta-brahma-paripṛccha-sūtra*)
 藥師經變 (*Bhaiṣajyaguru-sūtra*)
 天請問經變 (*Devata-sūtra*)
 Below: 賢愚經諸品 (*Damamūka-nidāna-sūtra*), *jātakas*, *avadānas*

East wall:

Seven Buddhas
 S: 金光明經變 (*Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*)
 N: 密嚴經變 (*Ghanavyūha*)

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Figure 1: *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies*.

Dunhuang, 10th century, Chinese, Ink and colors on Silk, H. 194 cm, W. 179 cm,

Musée des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris, France,

Photograph courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux /Art Resource, NY, ART192660

兜率天宮會 第五會	夜摩天宮會 第四會	他化自在天宮會 第六會
普光法堂會 第七會	忉利天宮會 第三會	普光法堂會 第八會
普光法堂會 第二會	菩提道場會 第一會	逝多園林會 第九會

圖4 七處九會

Figure 1a: Diagram of *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* in Fig. 1.
From Giès and Akiyama, eds., *The Arts of Central Asia: the Pelliot Collection in the Musée Guimet* (Japanese ed.), p. 50, fig. 4



Figure 1b: Lotus Repository World, detail of Fig. 1.



Figure 2: *Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood*.

Dunhuang, 10th century, Chinese, Ink, gold and colors on silk, H. 286 cm, W. 189 cm,
Musée des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris, France,
Photograph courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux /Art Resource, NY, ART161979

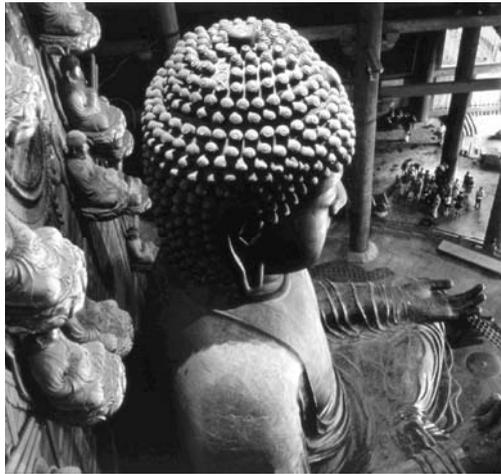


Figure 3: Vairocana Buddha and interior of Daibutsu-den, Tōdai-ji, Nara. Mid 8th century (recast in late 17th century), Japan, Bronze, H. 14.73 m, From Rosenfield, *et al*, *The Great Eastern Temple: Treasures of Buddhist Art from Tōdaiji*, p. 19, fig. 4



Figure 3a: Engraving of Lotus Repository World, on lotus pedestal of bronze Buddha statue Tōdaiji, Nara. Late Nara period, 756–757, Japanese, Bronze, H. of petal 200 cm, From Rosenfield, *et al*, *The Great Eastern Temple: Treasures of Buddhist Art from Tōdaiji*, p. 24, fig. 8

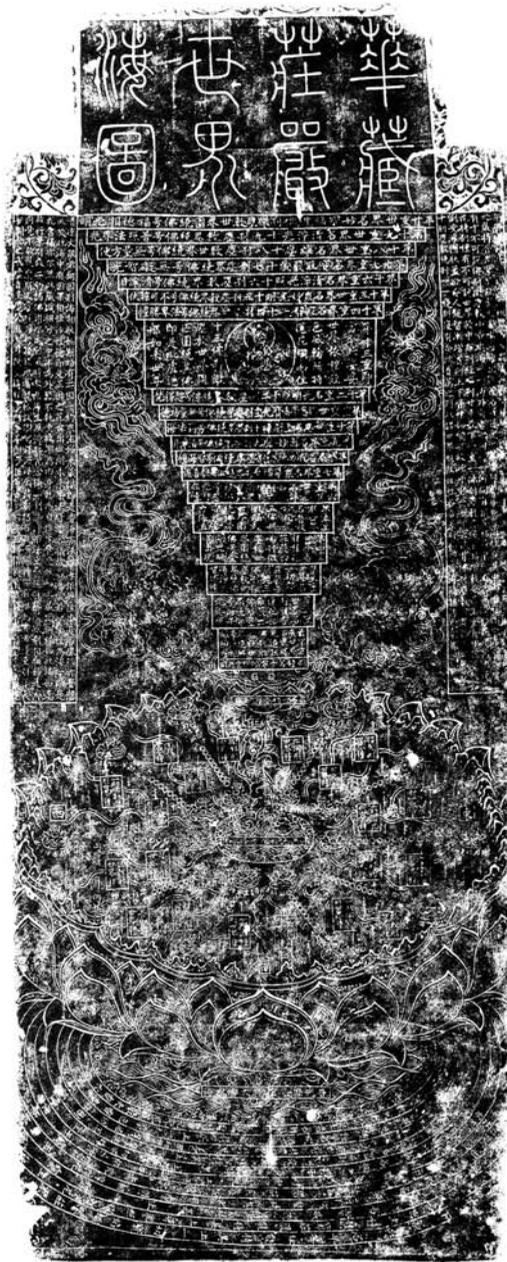


Figure 4: *Lotus Repository World*, engraving on reverse of *Da Kaiyuansi xingzhi bei* Da Kaiyuansi, Xi'an. Yuan dynasty, dated 1319, Chinese, Rubbing.
From Tokiwa Daijō and Sekino Tadashi, *Chūgoku bunka shiseki*, vol. 9, pl. 40, no. 1

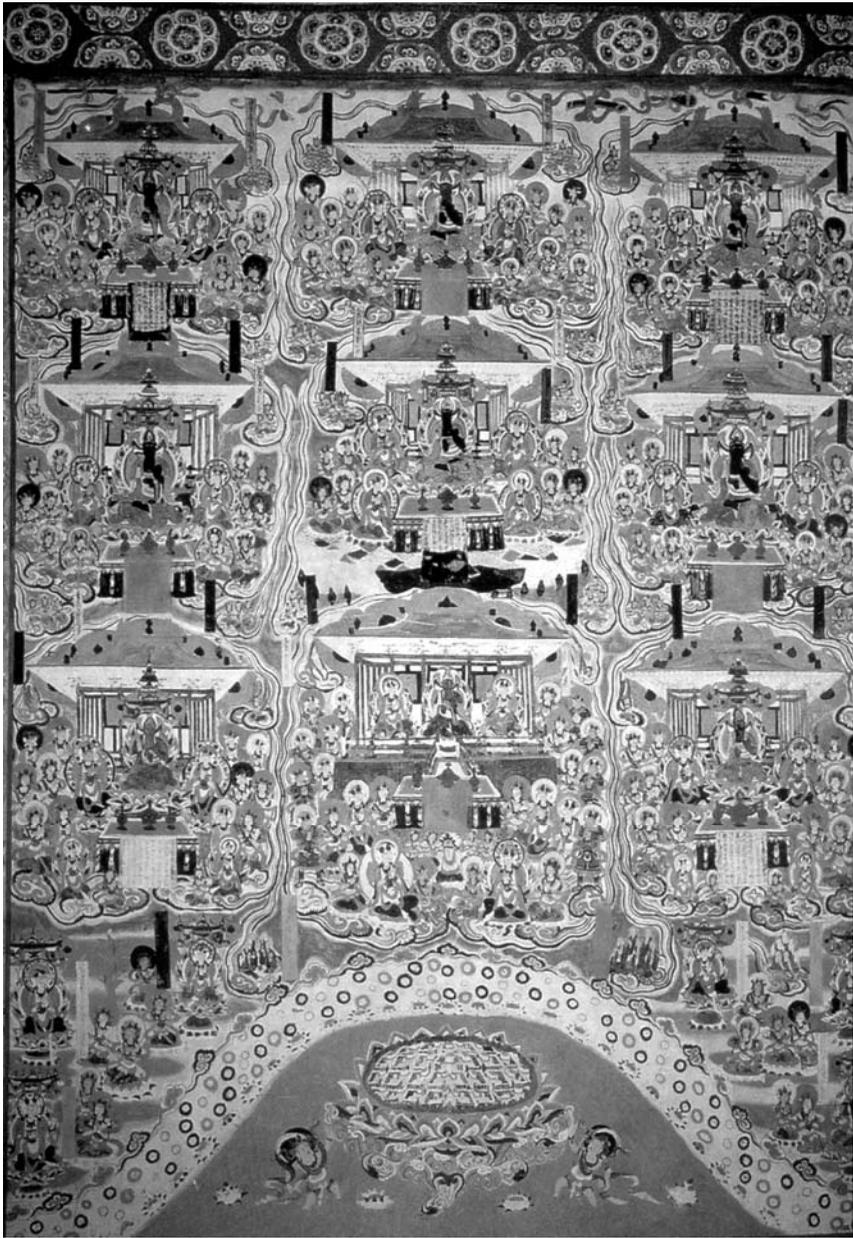


Figure 5: *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies*.
Dunhuang Cave 61, north wall, 10th century, Chinese, Mural painting,
Dunhuang yanjiu yuan, ed. *Dunhuang shiku yishu*, volume on Cave 61, pl. 100

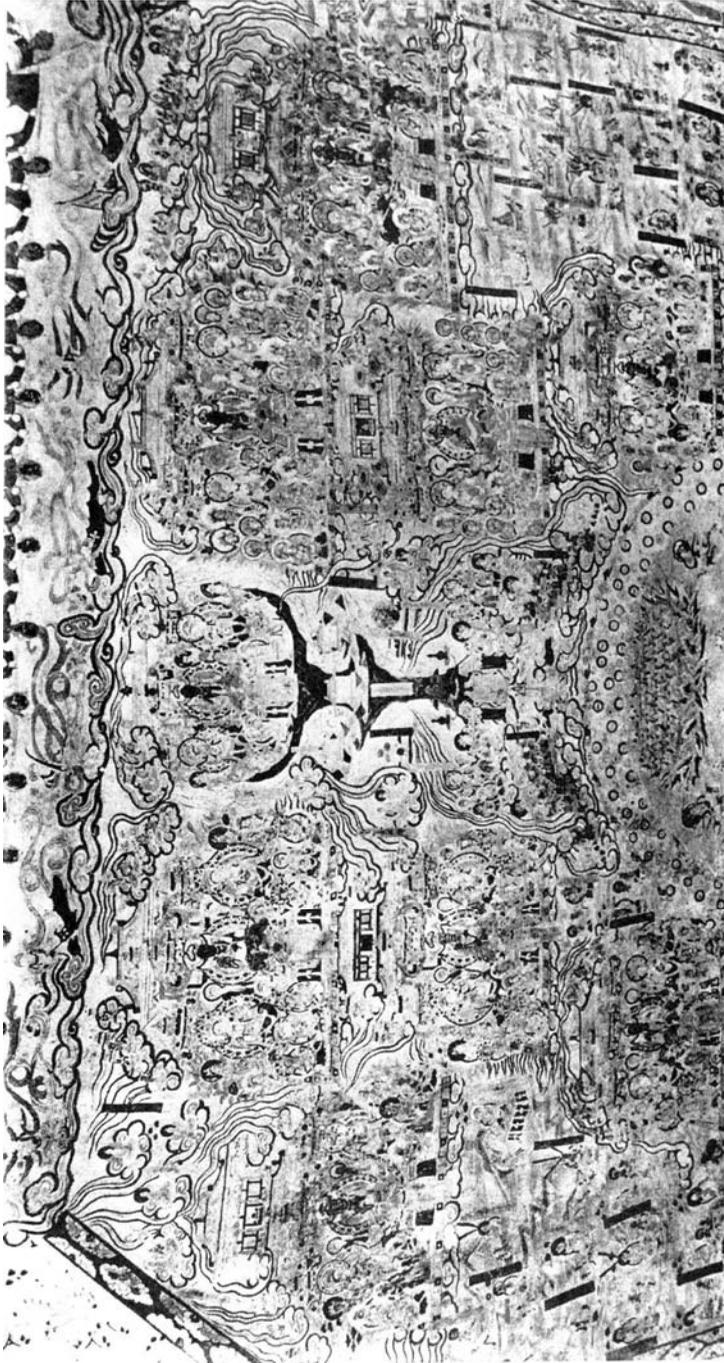


Figure 6: *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies*.
Dunhuang Cave 55, north slope of ceiling, 10th century, Chinese, Mural painting.
From Giès and Akiyama, eds., *The Arts of Central Asia: the Pelliot Collection*
in the *Musée Guimet* (Japanese ed.), p. 53, fig. 6

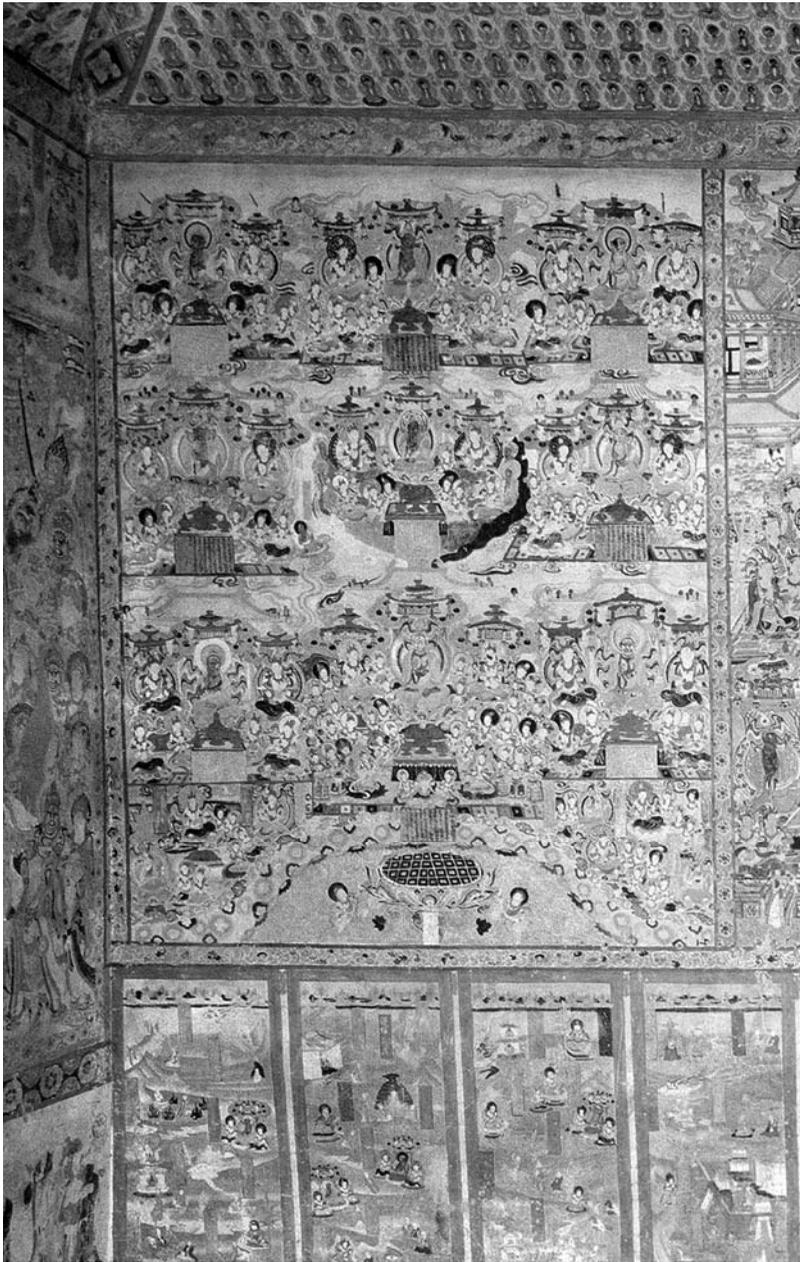


Figure 7: *Huayan bian*.

Dunhuang Cave 12, north wall, 9th century, Chinese, Mural painting,
Dunhuang yanjiu yuan, ed., *Dunhuang shiku yishu*, volume on Caves 9 and 12, pl. 170



Figure 7a: *Sudhana's Pilgrimage*, detail of *Huayan bian*.
Dunhuang yanjiu yuan, ed., *Dunhuang shiku yishu*, volume on Caves 9 and 12, pl. 190



Figure 8: *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies*.
Dunhuang Cave 85, north slope of ceiling, 9th century, Chinese, Mural painting,
Dunhuang yanjiu yuan, ed., *Dunhuang shiku yishu*, volume on Caves 85 and 196, pl. 28



Figure 8a: Mañjuśrī extending his hand to touch the head of Sudhana,
detail of *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* in Fig. 8.
Dunhuang yanjiu yuan, ed., *Dunhuang shiku yishu*, volume on Caves 85 and 196, pl. 32



Figure 9: *Kengon kai-e zenchishiki mandara* Tōdaiji, Nara.
 By Raien (act. late 13th century), Japanese, Ink and colors on silk, 184.5 × 118 cm,
 From *Nihon bijutsu zenshū*, vol. 9, pl. 44



Figure 9a: Sudhana's visits to the Night Goddesses, detail of *Kengon kai-e zenchishiki mandara* in Fig. 9.



Figure 10: *Wenshu zhinan tuzan*, detail showing Sudhana (Shancai tongzi) visiting the Night Goddesses.

12th century, Chinese, Woodblock print, Kyoto National Museum,
 From Jan Fontein, *The Pilgrimage of Sudhana: A Study of Gaṇḍhavyūha Illustrations in China, Japan and Java*, pl. 7b



Figure 11: Sketch of Vairocana in Myōe's dream diary.
By Myōe (1173–1232), Japanese, Ink on paper,
From Ishida Hisatoyo, *Kegonkyō e*, p. 41, fig. 42



Figure 12: Avatamsaka assembly.
Feilafeng, Hangzhou, Northern Song dynasty, dated 1022, Chinese, Stone relief,
From Paul Swart, "Sculptures at Feilai Feng: A Confrontation of Two Traditions," fig. 1

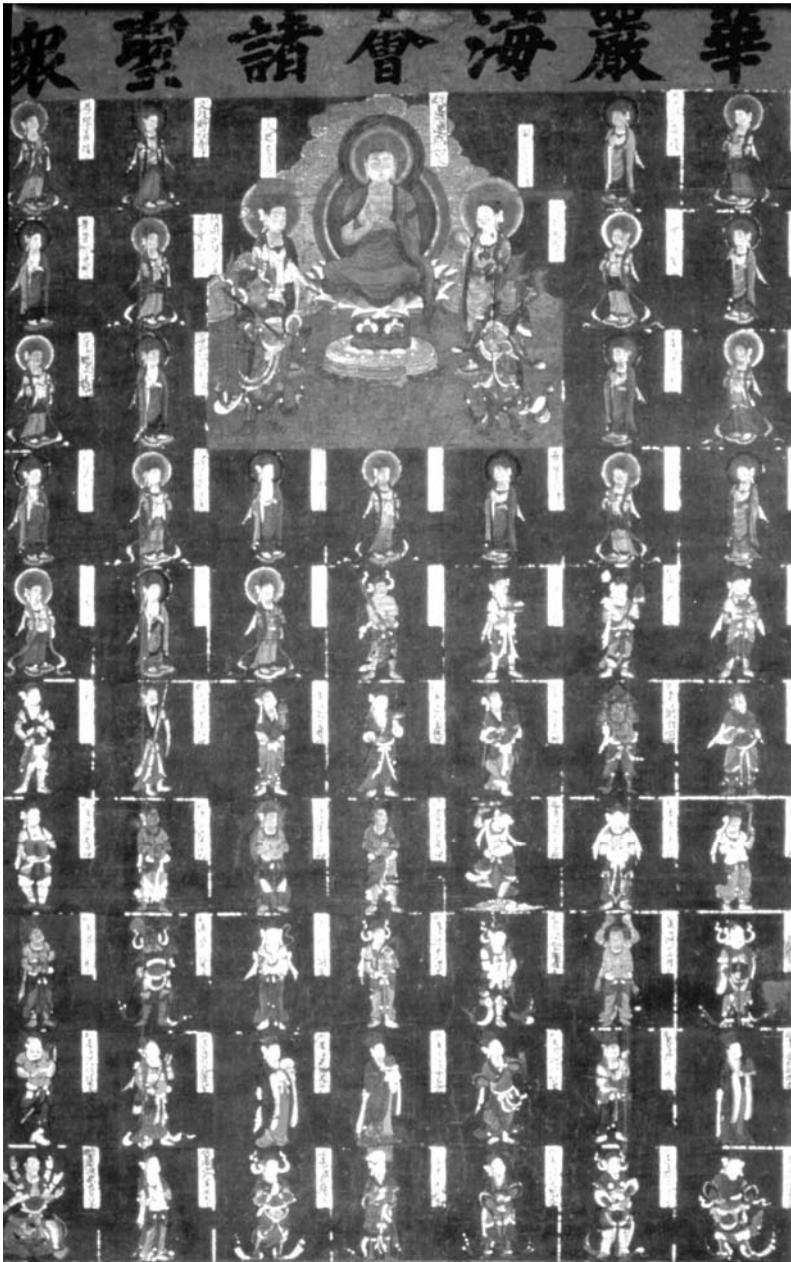


Figure 13: *Kegon kai-e sho shōju*.
 Kōzan-ji, Circa 1300, Japanese, Ink and colors on silk.
 From Ishida Hisatoyo, *Kegonkyō e*, p. 13, fig. 13

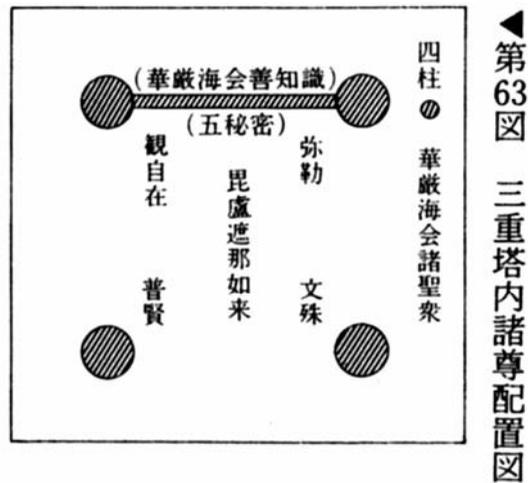


Figure 14: Diagram of iconographic program in pagoda, Kōzanji.
From Ishida Hisatoyo, *Kegonkyō e*, p. 55, fig. 63



Figure 15a: Fragment of Avatamsaka Assembly showing attendant bodhisattva, detail of Fig. 15.
Kang Woobang, “Han’guk Pirojana Pulsang-ui songnip-gwa chon’gae
– wonyung-ui tosang-jok sirhyon –,” fig. 1–3



Figure 15: Diagram of Avatamsaka Assembly.
 Dated 754, Korean, Illustrated frontispiece to *Avatamsaka-sūtra*,
 Gold and silver on purple paper, H. 21 cm, Ho-am Art Museum, Seoul,
 From Kang Woobang, “Han’guk Pirojana Pulsang-ui songnip-gwa chon’gae
 – wonyung-ui tosang-jok sirhyon –,” fig. 1–5



Figure 16: *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies*.
 Songgwangsa, Hall of Hwaom, Chogye Mt., Dated 1770, Korean,
 Ink and color on hemp and silk gauze, H. 281, W. 255 cm,
 Mun Myong-dae, ed., *Choson Purhwa*, in *Han'guk ūi mi*, vol. 16, pl. 85

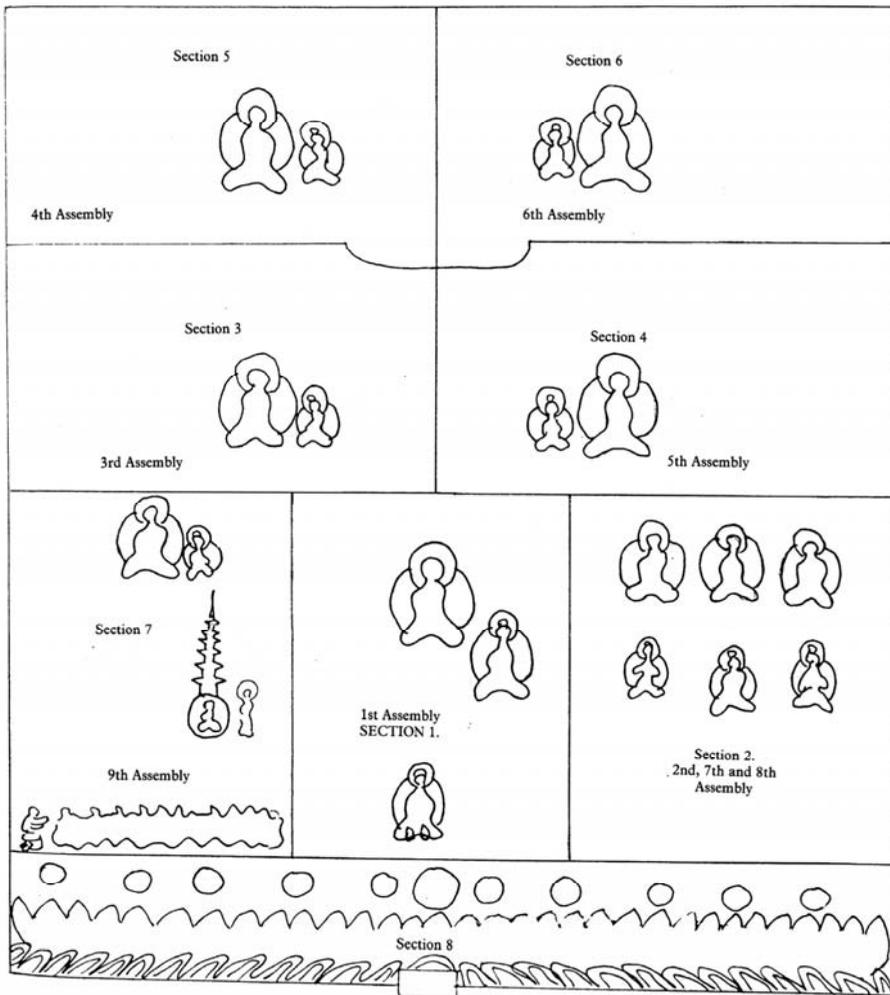


Figure 16a: Diagram of *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* in Fig. 16.
 From Sorensen, Henrik H.: "The *Hwaŏm kyŏng pyŏnsang to*:
 A Yi Dynasty Buddhist Painting of the Dharma Realm," p. 103, Table II

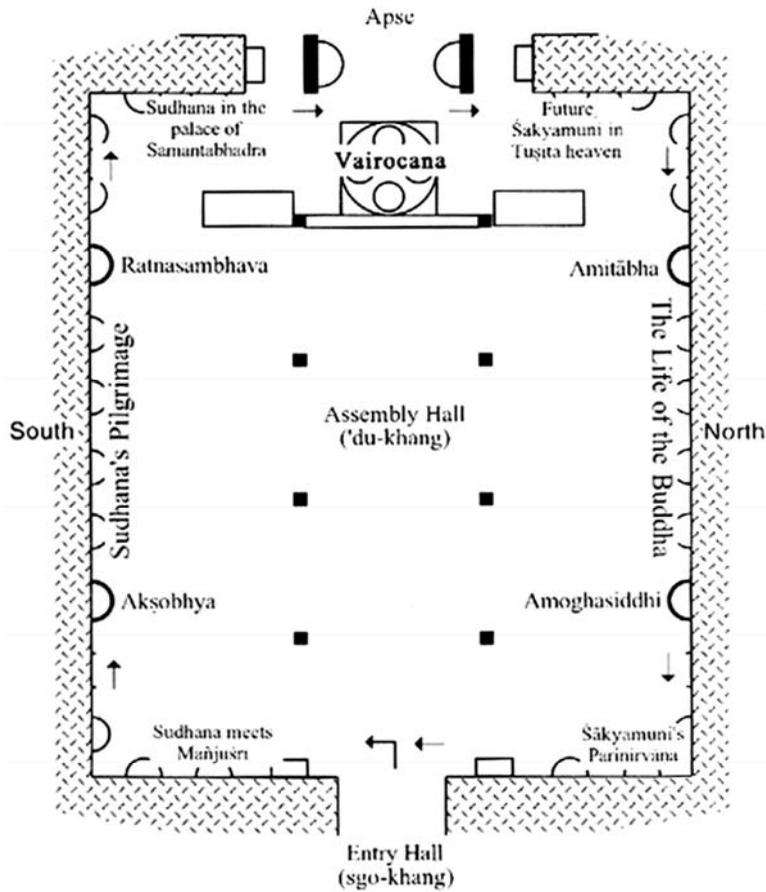


Figure 17: Drawing of Program of Main Temple, Assembly Hall.

Tabo Monastery, 11th century, Western Himalayan,
 From Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *et al*, *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom*, p. 122, diagram 8



Figure 18: Pilgrimage of Sudhana. Sudhana visiting the monk Meghaśrī.
Tabo Monastery, Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, 11th century, Western Himalayan, Mural painting.
From Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *et al*, *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom*, p. 124, fig. 120



Figure 18a: Mañjuśrī, detail of Sudhana's Pilgrimage.
Tabo Monastery, Main Temple, Assembly Hall, east wall, 11th century, Western Himalayan,
Mural painting, From Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *et al*, *Tabo:
A Lamp for the Kingdom*, p. 123, fig. 119



Figure 19: Sculptural deities of the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala.
 Tabo Monastery, Main Temple, 11th century, Western Himalayan,
 From Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *et al*, *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom*, p. 93, fig. 54



Figure 19a: Mahāvairocana.
 Tabo Monastery, Main Temple, 11th century, Western Himalayan, Sculpture
 From Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *et al*, *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom*, p. 97, fig. 61

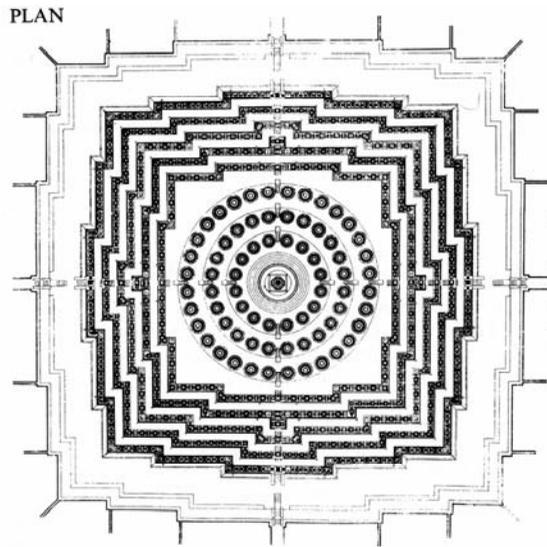


Figure 20: Diagram of Borobudur.
 Borobudur, Central Java, Circa 8th century,
 From Gómez and Woodward, Jr., eds., *Borobudur: History and Significance
 of a Buddhist Monument*, p. xvii

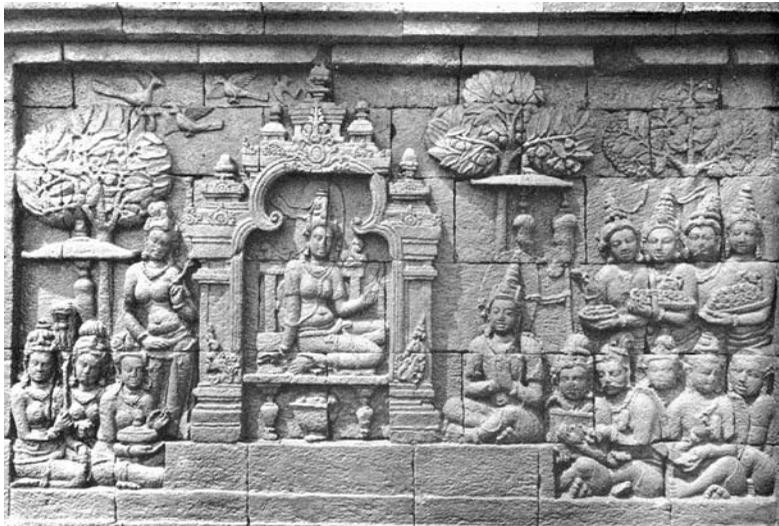


Figure 20a: Pilgrimage of Sudhana, Sudhana's visit to Vasumitra.
 Borobudur, Central Java, Circa 8th century, Stone relief,
 From Jan Fontein, *The Pilgrimage of Sudhana: A Study of Gaṇḍhavyūha Illustrations
 in China, Japan and Java*, pl. 50

ASIATISCHE FORSCHUNGEN

MONOGRAPHIENREIHE
ZUR GESCHICHTE, KULTUR UND SPRACHE
DER VÖLKER OST- UND ZENTRALASIENS

Herausgegeben von
Thomas O. Höllmann

unter Mitwirkung von Herbert Franke und Charles R. Bawden

Band 151

Reflecting Mirrors

Perspectives on Huayan Buddhism

Edited by
Imre Hamar

2007

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

2007

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden