**Buddhism Course (2020 Notes)**

**By Nous Monkey**

**Email:** [**nousmonkey@gmail.com**](mailto:nousmonkey@gmail.com)

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**\*In the Buddhist material section also non-lecture content is included, such as**

**content from the books provided by the professor.**

**\*The “Content-II” hyperlink in the header and footer is for going to different sections of the “Buddhist material grouped based on the […]” section.**

**\*** **The header and the footer are the very up and down parts of the documents. To be able to write in a footer/header, you need to double-click. For this reason, pressing on “Return to Content” is a bit difficult. This is not an error with Microsoft office, you simply need to be sure that the footer/header is opened.**

**\*the lectures on the life of Kobo Daishi/Kukai + lectures on “Shingon Koyasan” will not be included during the exam.**

**\*at the end of the Buddhist course there is also a short mention about the exam.**

**\*The additional material section contains material from the course which**

**Is still advisable to look upon.**

**Buddhism Class lectures**

**Buddhism and Philosophy (****a)**

* Meditation—the monkey mind.
* Philosophy is based *on insight*, an idea which encompasses the entire thinking of one person. Fragment from Sartre’s journal: The meaning of *existence*, being aware that you exist, you like anything *exist by chance*, *appear*, and *die*. Husserl—essence of an existent thing (phenomenological suspension).
* The insight of Buddhism: *karmic suffering*. What is karma? Sanskrit word, it means action. In Buddhism, karma means action + intention: a. good karma, b. bad karma, c. unfruitful karma. (a. good intention, b. bad intention, c. no intention, you just know you have to do it). The idea is that *karma comes back to you*, good leads to good, bad to bad.
  + - Through meditation you understand karma, the causal chain of habits. Through meditation you learn to eliminate karma—*the unfruitful karma* (the aim).
    - *Reincarnation*=based on our karma our next life is shaped.

**The Life of the Buddha (****b) (**[**return to material grouped by questions—question 2**](#aboutbuddha)**) (at question 2 you can see a summarised version of the content below)**

* Not known when he was born.
* 563-483 B.C. Not exactly sure. We are less sure of the existence of the Buddha.
* The information about the Buddha was put in the sutras=an oral tradition (no written texts until 250 years later)
* The most difficult part is also his miraculous birth.
* The traditional tail of Buddha’s birth: **(this is almost a word-for-word transcription the teacher’s words)**

Twenty-five centuries ago, king Suddhodana, who ruled a land near the Himalaya mountain, one day near mid-summer festival his wife queen Maya retired to her corner to rest and she slept in a vivid dream in which 4 angels carry her into high mountain peaks and clothed her in flowers. A magnificent white elephant wearing a white lotus approached Maya and walked around her three times. Then, the elephant struck her on the right side with his trunk and vanished into her. When Maya woke, she told his husband about the dream.

The king called 64 Brahmans to interpret the dream. Queen Maya will give birth to a son, the Brahman’s said, and if the sun did not live the household, he will become a world conqueror. However, if he were to leave the household, he would become a Buddha (an enlightened person).

When the birth time came near, queen Maya wished to travel from Kapilavastu to her childhood home in Devadaha. She received the King’s blessing to leave. On the way to Devadaha, the procession (the people with her) passed a place full of trees. Entranced, queen Maya told her people to stop. As she reached to touch the blossoms, her son was born. Then, Maya and her son were blossomed with perfume showers and sparkling water falling from the ski. The infant stood, and took seven steps, and proclaimed, “I alone am the world honoured one”. Then, Queen Maya and her son returned to Kapilavastu. The queen died seven days later. The son was raised by the queen’s sister, Mahapajapati Gotami,

(also married to king Suddhodana).

[There are also other versions of the tale. Some of these versions include aspects which are very Christian. We can see also some resemblance with the birth of Jesus, that is considered a virgin birth (similar to the white elephant entering into queen Maya’s body). However, if we read better (the professor states), an elephant does remind us in Hinduism of the God of wisdom=the Ganapati. It means that the wisdom entered her body. The other aspect is the white lotus. A white lotus, the lotus, in Indian tradition is a symbol of enlightenment (insight, liberation). The lotus symbolises this because it grows out of the mud of a pound into the air and brings forth the beautiful lotus flower—from the mind comes wisdom. The dream might be more symbolic, then ad litteram a Jesus like birth.

The seven steps of the child immediately after birth symbolize going into the direction of the whole world directions (4 corners of the world, up and down, + the seventh).]

Afterwards, he starts to live as Prince Siddhartha, Gautama is the family name. He belongs to the Shakya clan. Herman Hesse wrote a very nice book about Siddhartha. You have, then, the 64 Brahmans, in the more traditional version was that kind Suddhodana went over to ask his sage and the sage Ashita comes to prophesize and states indeed he will be a great king, if he remains in the compound of the temple. If not, he will become a great sage.

Obviously, the father does everything to keep the son inside the castle area. There starts the story of the 4 deeds. Prince Siddhartha already got a wife, Yashodhara, with whom he had a son, Rahula. Prince Siddhartha was not happy, and he did not know what was missing. Now comes the story of the 4 gates. He could not help it anymore, though the king did his best to keep him inside, he started to go outside, curious to discover the world. Of course, this is more a symbolical aspect which tells about the spiritual quest. According to the story, he first went to one gate, asked his drive to go around, and he sees a sick person. Afterwards, Prince Siddhartha wonders if life is about getting sick. Then, he sees, through the next gate, an old person. Here, he realises a person is not going to live forever. Through the third gate, he encountered a procession. Prince Siddhartha asked the driver what is this. The driver answered: “a procession for the dead”.

In this way, Prince Siddhartha encounters the pain, the suffering of life and decides to leave and discover why people have to suffer, and whether there is no solution to it. Then, he leaves on through the fourth gate, as the tradition goes. He leaves his wife and child, (during the night they say). Siddhartha starts to do hard ascetic practices in the woods. According to tradition, he meets there other 5 ascetics, and goes through many different forms of ascetic practices. These forms of ascetic practices are transmitted up to today and you have the tradition of the 33 practices called the Tutangas. He did a lot of practices. (The professor states: There is a famous Japanese manga designed by Osamu Tezuka, who in ten volumes describes all these forms of practices).

One day, Siddhartha fell unconscious along the road, and according to the tradition, it was a peasant girl who found him. This girl gave him a bit of milk, and little by little he starts to be conscious. Siddhartha starts to realise: “What do I do, I am almost dead, and I did not realise why we suffer”. Siddhartha decided to leave the path of ascetism. Thus, he lived both the path of ascetism and of wealth. Siddhartha decides to walk the middle path, not to go into the extremes, accepting what I get today and I will eat what every I get. If it luxurious, I will eat. If it is not luxurious it is also good. Learning to accept what comes along the way, and not longing for other things. That image of the peasant girl giving him something to girl, the professor states: “I have seen a nice scene in Japan one day, where that was taken as the main aspect in the theatre. What was the thinking going on in the mind of the Buddha? Shall I accept that drink, or not. Shall I accept my desires or not”. The professor liked this theatre piece, and the professor started to think of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane was also praying to God saying “please do not give me this challenge". (in the case of Jesus, was about fear of taking on suffering. In the case of Buddha, was about letting go of suffering).

Siddhartha, now, is decided to find out the truth. So, one day he sets himself under a tree. (Later on this tree is called the Bodhi tree). Buddha will get enlightenment under that tree. In the Buddhist language enlightenment is Bodhi. Before he got enlightenment, there is the story of the temptations given by Mara. Mara started to tempt the buddha, as the devil started to tempt Jesus (during the 40 days he was doing his religious practice). These temptations of Mara are up to our imagination. Mara sent his armies, various temptations, and finally the Buddha has to give up his claim of enlightenment. Then, the Buddha touched the earth and called the earth to witness his achievement.

[Mara is a symbol of our inner temptations. Soshikan Tendai Esoteric Buddhism description of Mara’s temptations vs. the temptations mentioned in the story of saint Anthony the hermit. You find a similar evolution in the way Mara tempts the person. The last temptation are very beautiful girls.

Obviously, as human beings, our desires are very strong. Freud talked about the libido Thanatos and libido Sexualis. If we are able to overcome our fear of death. If we can overcome our desire for love in the wrong way then we are close to enlightenment]

The Buddha got enlightened. He got under the bodhi tree, which it is in Gaya (now Bodhgaya). The Buddha was actually doing the faculty of discernment. In the Hindu philosophy, discernment is called buddhi. You can find the word in the Bhagavad Gita. Thus, the buddha becomes the Shakyamuni Buddha (muni means wise). He, then, enters into Nirvana. But there is some kind of confusion because entering in Nirvana, enlightenment, he will also do again at the end of his life. They call the entrance into Nirvana at the end of his life para-nirvana. We, in this course, will use nirvana in the sense of being alive: enlightenment during one’s life.

After the enlightenment of the Buddha, there is also an interesting moment. The buddha was wondering, do I have to tell other people what I have understood. We will speak in the next lesion about the 4 noble truths. The 4 noble truths were the basic insight of Buddha, and the basis for Buddhism. The buddha found it difficult to tell people about these 4 noble truths. The Buddha was thinking: “Will I tell people that I did this myself. This might not help”. And so, he was really wondering, hesitating. It is there that the story of the appearance of Brahma, the God of creation in Hinduism, comes up. It is a strange aspect, no? (Some researches consider this part simply propaganda of early Buddhists. There are several arguments pro it—the professor states) [There exists also other revelation in Buddhism]

Brahma requests the Buddha to start preaching, you need to help other people arrive Nirvana. The Buddha will teach until he is 80 years old (which means 45 years of preaching; 6 years of religious practice. At the age of 35 he started preaching). At his first sermon he will speak about the 4 noble truths, the 4 holly truth, and the setting in motion of the wheel of dharma (it has 8 spikes).

He is there, towards Kushinagara, and he feels that the end is coming. The Buddha was invited by people to have a good meal with poor people. They made meat that was spoiled. The Buddha did not feel well but did not want to say anything, he wants the walk to go on. On the way he get more and more sick. Now, the word that is used there for that meat is “a mushroom in the food from which he got sick”. He goes further as he is about to pass away. As he is passing away. On the passing away, the last words of the Buddha are important. Buddha spoke to Ananda, one of his great disciples, and said: “Maybe is one of you who will say, without the Buddha, the sublime teacher, is no teacher the us. No, Ananda, you should not think this way, whatever doctrine and discipline taught and made known by me will be your teacher… when I am gone”. In fact, the Buddha states, “I have to go since you have to focus more on the teaching, than myself”. The Buddha and the order of the monks refers to the three basic faith aspects in Buddhism: the three refuges: the Buddha taking refuge in the Buddha (the historical Shakyamuni); The Buddha in the Dharma (his teaching), in the Sanga (the order of monks he started).

The very last words of the Buddha: “Behold Monks, this is my last advice to you. All things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your salvation. Buddha went into meditation absorption, a deep jnana meditation, and he went out of it for one last time and stepped into Nirvana. Leaving nothing which would cause him to reincarnate (on a full moon day, in the month of May, known in the Indian calendar as Vesak). The feast of Vesak is also about the birth, the enlightenment and the death of the Buddha.

**The 4 noble Truths (****c)**

1. **Life is suffering** (*dukkha=*suffering produced due to the impermanence of the world)
2. **There is an origin of suffering** (desire is the origin. The 3 causes of desire: ignorance, attachment, aversion. Desire: anger/pride/sadness).
3. **There is way out of suffering** (having *saddha*. Saddha=faith. Beyond suffering= nirvana=pure pleasure)
4. **The middle path as the way out of suffering** (remaining between extremes, not attachment. The 8-fold path: the right view, the right resolution, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right Samadhi)

**About point II**:

* + - 4 types of suffering: *karma* (S is responsible, S ignorant it is wrong), *sin* (S is responsible, S knows it is wrong), *tragedy* (S is not responsible, S ignorant of it), cross (S is not responsible, S is aware of it). (In Buddhism, exist lesser karma/bigger karma).
    - Three marks of existence: *Anika=*impermanence*. Anatman, Dukkha*
      * *Anatman*=no-self=you cannot think about atman (god)=Buddha was against the *atman*, self, doctrine of Hinduism (Vedanta).
    - **On emotions**: emotions influence the body.
    - Love=causes warmth in our whole body.
    - The senses are active, in Hinduism, they seek desire, not only desire influence the senses.

**About III**:

* Action and thought influence each other
* Nirvana also means pure action, unfruitful karma.

**About IV**

* Samadhi the best of them.
* The role of meditation is *discernment* (buddhi=intellect)=to determine which is the best practice.
* Storehouse consciousness=memory of past habits=clean it of desires.
* To eliminate bad thought: a. **act the opposite way** (e.g. if attached to money, learn to give them away) b. **thinking positive of another helps the other change**.
* The 5 hindrances in meditation: desire, ill will, sloth, restlessness, doubt.
* 4 types of meditation: seating, laying down, standing, walking.
* The 5 skandhas=mater (form), sensation (feeling), perception, mental activity (impulsion), consciousness (through the 5 skandhas the self is created).

**About the three types of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana. Vajrayana (****d)**

* **The aim of Buddhism**: reach unfruitful karma.
* **Types of meditation in each type**: ascetic life (Theravada), compassion (Mahayana), deity yoga (Vajrayana) (deity yoga=concentrate on the buddha, become one with the buddha, do as the buddha)
* **Their typology in Vedantic fashion**: Theravada=jnana like, Mahayana=bhakti like, Esoteric Buddhism=karma like.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Theravada B.*** | ***Mahayana B.*** | ***Vajrayana B.*** |
| ***(Raja yoga)*** | (Jnana yoga) | (Bhakti yoga) | (Karma yoga) |
| ***Spirituality*** | Sariputra | Ananda | Maudgalyana |
| ***Ideal figure*** | Arhat | Bodhisattva | Vajrasattva |
| ***Movement of*** | Monks | Lay people | Priests/Gurus |
| ***Meditation*** | Vipassana | Mantras | Rituals |
| ***Focus on*** | Insight | Faith | Mysteries |
| ***Philosophy of*** | Mindfulness | Emptiness | Union w/ Buddha |
| ***Search for*** | True nature | Compassion | Wisdom = Comp. |
| ***Power*** | Self Power | Other Power | Dharma Power |
| ***Worldview*** | Cause and effect | Inter-relatedness | Cosmic Buddha |

**Theravada Buddhism I & II (****e)**

* **The main teacher**: Sariputra.
* **Their ideal**: One has vidya=insight/wisdom. The ideal person is the arhat=the perfect person.
* **The main disciples of Buddha in Theravada**: 10 out of which 3 stick out: Sariputra, Ananda, Mautkalia
* **Their type of practice**: Vipassana=see things as there are (meditation)—to see your cravings.

**The 3 practices**: sila (the ethical behaviour), samadhi (meditation), prajna (the contemplation, the thinking).

**Their solution**: self-effort.

**Their practical approach**: see you true nature (in zen Kensho); naturally being yourself, when being yourself you are zen. Learn to be aware, mindful of oneself, learn to listen more than interpret, judge.

* **The origin and perpetuation of suffering (12 links of cause and effect)**: Karma is cause; Ignorance is an effect… the last effect is rebirth. By breaking the link, by breaking karma🡪nirvana is reached.

**Mahayana Buddhism I & II (****f)**

* **The main teacher**: Ananda.
* **Their ideal**: the great vehicle; everybody going to nirvana. The ideal person is the Bodhisattva=the one who is willing to reincarnate again, after reaching enlightenment, to aid others
* **Their type of practice:** The six paramitas (practices of a Bodhisattva): dana (dana=to give); discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, wisdom.

**Type of meditation:** repeating mantras

**Their focus:** on faith (shinki=faith in a dogma. Shinji=devotion ([see the jisho dictionary for additional definitions](https://jisho.org/search/shinji)).

**Uphaya:** Skilful means, in Mahayana the teaching approach is adapted depending on the level of the audience.

**Their solution:** compassion (*karuna* in Sanskrit). Being compassionate also towards animals (mosquitos etc.) Other power.

**Their practical approach:** When there is a union with the other, one can have compassion.

* Away from the karma reasoning to the dharma reasoning. Dharma reasoning=that each person has its duty in life (Rita=world order). In Mahayana one is from the beginning a Buddha but needs to become aware of it.
* Echo=the idea of transferring faith, love, from one into another.
* The emptiness idea in Mahayana is of no ego=impermanence=the idea that *the ego* is not truly you.
* **Their ontology**: Sunyata=emptiness=Nagarjuna=the Middle Way School. (emptiness related to anika=impermanence). There are 18 types of emptiness, including the emptiness). Emptiness experience=a big hug during which mind is blank and full of love and confidence.
* **Their epistemology**: Indra’s web: *everything is related with everything* (inter-dependence co-origination)—related with the idea of emptiness. (emptiness=what is hidden=essence of p. All grapes are inter-related since they participate in the same idea—this interpretation seems wrong to me) (ideation=finding the essence vs. abstraction=putting a criterion and defining a class. In phenomenology=is important to see the intention behind the phenomenon).
* **Additional points:**

**About Historical context**

* + There is no historical fact to explain why Mahayana appeared.
  + Mahayana appeared at the beginning of the Christian era.

**About Exemplars**

* + Chen Yen=the Mother Theresa of Taiwan
  + There are texts mentioning the previous lives of Buddha… in one of these lives the Buddha gave his body for feeding a hungry tigress—the idea of dana=giving=generosity.

**About Uphaya**

* + The burning house analogy=Children are playing while the house is burning and are not aware that the house is burning=the father uses toys to attract the students to go outside the house and escape the fire—this is Uphaya. (creating higher ideals to distract one from desires)
  + “Vilarmakirty and the chair” analogy: Why are you here/to find a chair or the teaching? It is about the difference between Mahayana (the teaching) and Theravada (the chair).

**Vajrayana Buddhism I & II (****h)**

* **The main teacher**: Maudgalyayana
* **Their ideal**: To become one with the buddha. They also talk of magical powers. Their ideal person is the: Vrasja satva. A person with paranormal gifts: sita
* **Their type of practice:** about mandalas (visualisation) & about rituals.

The Three Mysteries=the body, the speech, mind of the buddha. (mudras=body, mantras=speech, mandalas=mind).

Importance of rituals (e.g. fire ritual)

Tantrism=the union with the divine, the buddha you have chosen. (\*tantric literature, literature about controlling your body. E.g. swallowing a piece of cloth and then giving it back intact)

The teaching of the 4 immeasurable minds: being kind of everyone, compassion for everyone, unselfish joy, equanimity. (Equanimity=to let go, everyone is equally important).

Visualised meditation=picture in your mind the bodhisattva you like.

**The 3 practices**: Sila (morality), samadhi (meditation), prajna (discernment=wisdom) (present also in Theravada and Mahayana)

**Their solution**: dharma power. Unify with the buddha. (The dharma power=the teaching + the material and the essence behind the world)

Cosmic power=Uncreated energies=taping into a different type of energy=the ability of the saints, the mystic abilities=control your breath, feel the emotions of others, predict the future (22:10).

**Their practical approach**: On ritual, since through ritual you become one with the buddha. For them desire is not bad, as in other forms of Buddhism, but desire is nirvana itself. Used with moderation and consciously, desire can teach you to see the true nature. The three mysteries are they key, learning to conduct your action, speech, and mind. They also speak about the wisdom mandala and the compassion mandala. These two mandalas form a 5-fold model (3-fold compassion and 5-fold wisdom) of achieving inner unity, the unity between essence (compassion) and phenomenon (wisdom). The 5-fold aspects are preparation and repetition + the three-fold aspects which are identical as in compassion. Another aspect is the importance of the priest or guru, uncommon to Theravada especially. For them, wisdom and compassion are in fact one. In emptiness you see form and from form you see how form is formed (essence)

* **Their ontology**: the cosmic Buddha.
* The cosmos is created out of the buddha, out of the mind of the buddha… out of the interpenetration of the 5 elements (earth, fire, air, water, space).
* The universe consists of the three universals: san-di, tai-dai (the great essence) , so-dai (the great form) , yu-dai (the great action).
* **Additional Information**

**On Sita, on people with paranormal powers:**

The story of the Milarepa.

Tumo=the power to create heat in your body to resist the cold.

**On Gods and Goddesses, The pantheon**:

Benzaiten=goddess of art. In Mahayana the idea of a pantheon is formed. In esoteric Buddhism the pantheon gets bigger, gods from Hinduism are introduced. Thus, there appears the idea of a buddha encompassing all Buddha’s: the Cosmic Buddha. ([Skip to Shingon esoteric Buddhism](#theory))

**Shingon Kobo Daishi Part I (About the life of Kukai, not asked in the exam) (****j)**

* The founder of Shingon is Kukai/ Kobodashai (774-835 a.c.).
* It has elements from Hinduism.
* The life of Shingon is Kukai: At the age of 7 asked himself if life has a meaning and threw itself from a rock to see if it has ore not—if it has a meaning, he will survive; if it has not, then he dies. He survived. His parents wanted that him to study law. His family was not rich nor poor. He got bored of his studies and took the spiritual path. He was advised to do **kokuzokumongiho**—a long practice mantra (repeat it a lot of times)—aimed at enabling one to remember any mantra.

Once, he was doing his practice in a cave, in Nuroto Misaki, in shikoku (Shikoku is also known for hagigu hakasho—the 88 temples of shikoku refer to places where Kukai must have been). One of them is closed to cape murato (where our Buddhism professor went there) … “Kukai started to despise wealth and luxury, knowing that luxury is impermanent, he also felt sad about beggars” … he has an mystical experience there/loses consciousness and starts to learn Buddhism.

He learns the teaching but still is not happy. He prayed to the Buddha’s to show what was he missing during his studies. The buddha answered in a dream that the **Dainichi Hikio sutra** is what he missed. He read that sutra but found many things he does not understand, he asked others, but they could also could not answer him (He wrote all of this in the Shangu Shiki—the Shangu are the three religions in china: Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism).

Kukai managed to become a priest working for the emperor of Japan. The emperor sent him in China to study Buddhism for finding new teachings. The emperor was interested in using Buddhism for unifying the country (people registering there an being part of one community). He left on the boat to China, from Osaka, and they were hit a typhoon, on the boat he met with Sai Chio, the founder of ten dai Buddhism. The boat of Sai Chio arrived to the proper destination while that of Kukai no. The boat of Kukai landed in another place, where the locals did not allow them to lend, ergo, Kukai waited in the boat. Kukai got sick and wrote a letter to the local governor and he was so impressed that he let him in on land. In china he met Keika, an esoteric Buddhism teacher which was waiting for him… Since the teacher was seek, he made the initiations of Kukai fast:1. Kesein Kangio=making the bound with the Buddha—he is a special disciple since during the initiation the flower fells directly in the middle of the mandala—in three years he ends his studies, has all the copies of the esoteric Buddhism he was taught and he returns in Japan.

He is back in Japan, in Chiushu, to teach his new form of Buddhism. Kukai was first to unify practice and philosophy in Buddhism. The emperor was not so happy since Kukai stayed in China 2 years instead of twenty… he had doubts that Kukai found a new form of Buddhism. In order to prove the emperor, Kukai wrote Nichiorom (here he shows that there exists also esoteric Buddhism). After three years he is allowed to go to Nara, and he teaches his type of Buddhism.

At the age of 40, Kukai wrote a poem:

(in the coursebook page 54)

“Dry leaves are scattered all other mountains and fields,

How could they remain fresh and green? … all time.

I myself have come to the 40th year, that leads me to think over the perfect harmony… where have the floating clouds come from? In essence they are pure

nothingness… when I want to mention my sentiment, the triple radiant sky is cheerfully smiling upon me”.

The triple radiant sky—the three universals which form the cosmic buddha.

He starts in Koyasan, when 60 (I think), to build his meditation place. He prays there to the Shinto gods, before doing his temple. (The idea that Buddhism and Shinto religion is compatible Shinbotsu theory. The hongisuigiaku theory—the theory that once a goddess is added to a Buddhist pantheon it is no longer a Shinto religion)

**Shingon Koyasan Part II (****k) (not asked in the exam)**

* Ku=means sky or emptiness (translation of the Chinese mu)
* Kai=means ocean or everything/vessel (emptiness=suchness in Buddhist terminology)
* Kukai=that everything is empty or related/similar to the Akasha idea.
* Shingon Kobo Daishi probably invented Kana (hiragana)… thus, normal people could read🡪study. He made a school.
* Shingon Kobo Daishi was a calligraphy master.
* He brought the knowledge of dam building (Japans always suffered of typhoon, big rains)
* In the 11th century there was a split in the Shingon tradition lead by Kaku ban (it was a dogmatic question).
* This part is about Koyasan itself. Koyasan is a place in Nara. It is still about Kobodashai. Toji temple in Kyoto, related to Shingon—where studies went on (and still are today since it is the smallest university in Japan) Until 100 years ago only males were allowed.
* There are more temples in one settlement, a lecture temple, etc. there is also a Stupa. There are also temples dedicated to different deities.
* Japanese grave: ashes put in different places, memory for dead people who worked for a company
* In the back of that temple Kobodashai sat there in meditation until death. The dead Kobodashai is given food, he does not eat it, thus the food is given to the people.
* People come to Koyasan to grave the dead, they go there only for funeral rights.
* Esoteric Buddhists have stories of supernatural event, ghosts, animal spirits.

**Shingon Esoteric Buddhism**

**Has three parts**

* [Theory](#theory)
* [Practice](#practice)
* [Cosmology](#cosmology)

**Theory**: **(**[**back to Vajrayana Buddhism**](#h)**)**

**Their basic Sutras**: *Dai Nichi Kiyo* and *Kongonochio*

Dai Nichi Kiyo=was the sutra Kobo Daishi dreamed about and desired to get more answers

In *Dai Nichi Kiyo* the Cosmic Buddha is the one explaining how to perform the rituals. (Cosmic Buddha=in Sanskrit is Variochana Buddha; in Japanese is Dai Nichi Nyorai).

**About what they believe in**: Buddha started his teaching about dharma, not God (this does not mean the Buddha did not believe in God). In Theravadas Buddhism—Buddha is worshiped; In Mahayana—Buddha and Bodhisattvas are worshiped and the number of deities increases until there appears a Buddha encompassing all others, The cosmic buddha.

* The buddha is worship in Kyoto—Toji—a Shingon related temple where is one hall with all the deities in the pantheon.
* When you go to a Buddhist Shingon grave you see 5 stones put one on the other, representing each element. At the back of the tomb mind is written in Chinese or Sanskrit.
* They Believe that Kukai (Kobo Daishi) is still alive and give him food each day. Obviously, he does not eat it🡪give it to the rest.
* The symbol of Vajrasattva, guides the partitioned along the way of mediation. Vajra=diamond, thunderbolt=irresistible form.
* In Buddhism there exist the idea that by understanding the elements we are able to influence them. Our own self is a mini-cosmos—we are buddha—we can become God in Buddhism. In Christianity is not like this, especially in Catholicism and Protestantism.

**Main Shingon concepts:**

* + - * Mandala=a painting where the mind of buddha is represented. **Mandala of wisdom** (fivefold structure) **and** the mandala **of compassion** (threefold structure).
      * **We have the three mysteries**: body, speech, and mind. Mudras (the bodily actions); Mantras (speech); mandalas (mind).
      * **The three universals**: essence, form (phenomenon), action (movement). Similar to phenomenology, about understanding the relation between essence, phenomenology and how the phen. acts.
      * **The three bodies of the Buddha**: the historical body (the historical person), the phenomenal body (that which appears in different forms to help them), the dharmic buddha (the essential body, invisible, eternal, beyond everything). (this idea of three bodies of the buddha appeared not from the beginning).
      * **The 4 mandalas: the 3 mysteries, the unity of these 3 mysteries**.
      * **The 5 elements**: water, fire, earth, wind, either.
      * **The 5 wisdom buddhas**: related to the 5 elements.
      * **In a Shingon temple, there you find flags with 5 colors, representing the 5 buddhas**: yellow, black, red, blue. **The 6th element, the mind**.

**The ten levels of the mind**

The Shingon Buddhist level is the highest level of the mind. These levels are not separate levels, but the more one grows, the more they come in. Shingon states that in this life one can reach enlightenment, not all types of Buddhism accept it. (From PPT on The Ten-levels)

1.in-humanity

People are attached to good and evil, and do not see beyond instant gratificatoin the cause and effect of actions.

2.Fist steps

We learn through contact with the light of the buddha to change diet and peform acts of charity. We gradualy learn about the five virtues and the ten good deeds.

3.Child at ease (Devotion)

Practice is related to devotion, to an innocent joy of life. A fragment: “They observe the precepts so as to be born in heaven. They hear the following words from a good friend: ‘ This is a god, a great god, who bestows all happiness. If you worship him with devotion, all your wishes will be fulfilled.’…Upon hearing this, their hearts are filled with blessed joy, and venerating this god with respect, they practice.”

4.No-self

They realise that there is *atman*, self. They realise that the skandars are ephemeral.

5.Pulling out the roots

One meditates on the 12 links of causes and conditions. “It is like the mind of those who live in solitude and who have eradicated the causes and seeds of karma”

6.Deep mind, great compassion

Deepening our teaching, learning to be fully compassionate.

7.No mind

“There are no grades…there is no troubling oneself about cutting off afflictions and realizing wisdom.” Understanding emptiness (sunyata)

8.All is one

All is unsoiled, is pure, is part of the same Buddha, The three vehicles turn into one, praising the diversity of Buddha’s wisdom.

9.All in one, one in all

Between unity and plurality there is a connection, they are both part of a complex worldview, are two sides of the same coin. “It is like the net of Indra, or the light of many lamps”. (“principle and phenomena interrelate”)

10.Opening the Secret Treasury

The own-nature of a myriad virtues is completely perfected, and in one life you succeed in realizing you hidden treasures.

**P****ractice**

**General Practices**

**Buddha related meditations**

* Visualization meditation=concentrate on the image of a buddha in your mind.
* Nuganganu=buddha and me entering in one another. It is about one going into the buddha and the buddha going into me.
* Tantra yoga=deity yoga=you reflect on a deity

**Reflection & Focus Meditation**

* The adjikan=reflecting on the emptiness of the buddha.
* The gatsirinkan=a white round moon is put on a black screen, trying to look and focus on it.

**Offerings rituals**

* Kagi=to main=to learn to keep the wisdom, the energy, the grace, coming from the Buddha. God in me=grace, mystical experience. Me to god=magic, effort.
* Prayer for the (gaki=spirit who have not found rest after death). There are mantras for praying for the dead. Through these practices one becomes more compassionate.

**Initiation related ritual**

* Kikom=an epical level a person must have reached until getting a new initiation. An Acharya is the one allowed to initiate another.

The hells=they can be skipped depending on one’s karma (narakan)=the hells are in between reincarnations. In Buddhism, there is the Yama, the judge, which decides what one has to do. In some cases, a person can be dammed forever (This is not accepted in the Buddhist traditions adopting compassion)

**Main Practice:** the three levels of the mind: body (mudras), speech (mantra), mind (mandala).

* There is a discussion if practicing just one of the mysteries can be enough for enlightenment. All of the three aspects are important in Shingon.
* These three mysteries can be related to the three yoga: karma (body), bhakti (praying to a deity), jnana (reflection).

**Different information about rituals**

* There also exists also the ritualist meditation. Can you be in meditation when you are acting? Everything we do can be a meditation. It is possible through the rituals the mind becomes silent.
* The ritual word has relation with Rita, the Hindu goddess of world order. You take part in the universal order.
* Are these actions, during the ritual, still thought or sui generis. You are coming to a level that something is acting through you.
* Is ritual an uphaya, a skillful means, or not? As a priest you are taught that god acts through you, is then the person doing nothing? What is there a role for the person? If it is just a skillful means, it means that it is all relative.
* What is the difference between meditation and prayer? Meditation has to do with impersonal mysticism. Prayer is personal mysticism. The observer in the meditation becomes the real person in the prayer. The third person is god, in prayer, not the observer. God explains what is better and how is your mind.
* There is the difference between essence and phenomenon. (11:51). Essence of prayer is meditation. The difference between mysticism and prophetism, the first goes in meditation, the later goes in prayer.
* **a**. Natural gestures (shaking hands when meeting new people), b. symbolic gestures, c. mystical gestures— **b**. symbolic gestures=tathagata theist=of mudra of the cosmic buddha=is by raising the pointing finger of the left hand and inclosing it with the five fingers of the right.

**Types of initiations (sacraments in Christian language)**

* + - * + 5 kangos=five types of baptisms:

Seeing the mandala of wisdom of compassion

* + - * + The kenchen (making the link) kango=making the link with buddha.
        + Tokudo=for the deeper initiation=where the person promises to keep the bodhisattva vows: not to steal, not to lie, not going for illicit sex (baptism confirmation)
        + Tempo kango=for becoming a priest (becoming one who transmits the dharma)
        + Awakening=no initiation for it=between you and buddha.
* This ritual practice, the kego, usually takes three months (when at University). When not at Univ, you stay for one year at a temple.

**Explaining the Christian terminology**

Sacraments=steps to sainthood.

Sacramentos=that help that person to work towards sainthood.

**More Information on Shingon Practice**

* + - Bodhicitta=enlightened mind
    - Yoga comes from yuk, to unite, to unite the three actions of the buddha, our three karmas become the three mysteries.
* The east more focused on practice, rituals, not on theory. Rituals are for entering in a mystical state, to be united with god, with people. Shingon mysticism is purely ritual mysticism, specialized in mantra mysticism.
* Even the Zen tradition is a ritual mysticism tradition—wall gazing (it lasts even for 10 hours).
* Mystical ritual=term to replace the usual terminology in religious studies (that of sacraments) with a non-Christian term applicable to all religions.
* The structure of the essence of mysticism: power (holly spirit), form (Jesus), aim (to make the person happy, relieved, healthy, blessed, ready for haven\*). (\*in Christianity).

**Cosmology**

**Cosmology Part I**

**In Sanskrit: Maha Vairocana Buddha (in Japanese: Dainichi Nyorai Buddha) (Almost a word by word transcription of the professor’s words)**

Here, as in Mahayana Buddhism, the three universals exist: the great essence (tai dai), the great form (so dai), the great action (yu dai). Kukai sees the essence as the compassion, the form becomes the bodhicitta (i.e. the wish to become enlightened or help people be enlightened); [in] the action are the three mysteries of the buddha: the uphaya (i.e. the skillful means of the Buddha). We humans start with action, go to bodhicitta and afterwards to the great essence. Dainichi means great light. Christians, when coming to Japan, originally used Dainichi to refer to God. However, they soon discovered that Dainichi is related to the idea of the Maha Vairocana Buddha. Thus, the Christians used Deux…However, Japanese people do not pronounce well English words and thus Deux sounds similar to the Japanese words for “big lie”. Thus, the Christian use kami, for a moment. The Japanese emperor din not want Christianity on his land, and thus there was conflict. The Japanese use kami to refer to Gods. Chinese use “Ten Shou” to refer to God. “Ten Shou” means “the lord of heaven”. In Shintoism every tree, river etc. has a kami… kami means more “spirit” (i.e. seishin teki; when you talk about the nerves of the person, you talk of shin kei).

The Dainichi is like our God, but is not the creator of the world. If you study deeper, you see that they have a kind of concept of creation, but you can call it a self-creation, or a non-creation (no creation) … because is that mind of the buddha from which the universe comes into being. Not as creation now, and then “God spoke there will be light, and then was light”. No, it is like a spontaneous creation, which comes out of the mind and goes back into the mind. It does not create-and-come back only one time. There is this underling mind in Tibet, and there will come these theories, bit like a creation story—speaking about the primordial wisdom—from which this world came into being, it is part of that big mind. This is related to the mind-only philosophy in Buddhism.

Mind-only philosophy: There is nothing outside the mind. Everything is a creation of our mind. And not my mind, but of the mind. Our mind is a replica of the great mind. The human mind comes out of the great mind, but because our mind is not pure, we los the connection with the pure mind. It is by purification of our mind, that our mind starts to work as the pure mind.

In an Asian context creation is in-and-out, or circular, is not linear. People easily argue that since in Buddhism there is no creator God🡪there is no god. There is a non-creation, like there is a non-self. Real creation is not made by humans—we will come to this later on**.**

**About Buddhism and God**

What about the whole of Buddhism? Is there a God in Buddhism? The idea that there is no God in Buddhism, as a whole, is a western idea. An idea meant to attack Christianity. The Buddhists themselves do not affirm this. “Buddha was not against God, only against the notions of God, that are mere mental constructions that do not correspond to reality. Notions preventing to develop ourselves and touch ultimate reality”.

I find with Rudolph Otto, the great scientists of religion (still in the first half of the last century), and he wrote about emptiness (you also find it in our coursebook on page 27). Emptiness, for Thich Nhat Hanh (Zen monk), is bout inter-being (not nothingness). Between beings there is emptiness, but it does not mean that there is no one. You are an interbeing. You do not exist on your own, you exist in-between, with-others (if others are happy, you can be happy).

God as emptiness, as interbeing, in negative theology… is the idea that by negating who god is, you come to the real god. In the end, God is not a person, is impersonal, it is the dharma in fact. Everything in fact, is about the dharma, everything turns around the dharma. Buddhists call themselves from the beginning follower of the Dharma.

You cannot express the dharma, but becomes visible in its dharma nature and its dharma power. It is about the personal God; one discovers him through personal experience.

Exception for Kukai, who went deeper, who talked about the hoshinsepo (i.e. breaching of the dharma bodhi=the most central body of the buddha. Bodhi is emptiness). Most Buddhists state that the dharma bodhi does not preach to us (remain hidden). Kukai disagreed, he affirmed that dharma bodhi always teaches.

In Shingon tradition, when you do the rituals, the ritual implements are in fact the buddha. The tools you are using are the hands of the buddha. The pit you are putting the fire in is the mouth of the buddha. And so, the practitioner itself becomes buddha. The followers of Kukai did not accept that directly and started to talk about the new Shingon tradition. New Shingon tradition affirmed that (the bodhi of the buddha) is not in the speaking, but in other bodies.

Similar to the Christian problem, whether to or not to sperate between Christ & Jesus, Christ=the divine aspect and Jesus=the human aspect. The Buddha was both Shakyamuni, a person, but was not fully human, and not purely a spirit (he was both). Through the three bodies theory Buddhists solve this. The essence body is the spiritual aspect of the buddha. This two others bodies are the way that the basic spirit reveals itself in the world (as living Buddha or the Bodhisattvas).

**Dharma power and the wholly spirit**

Symbol of dharma nature (dharma taini)=reality as it is (interrelatedness) (sunyata, not the visible aspect. The dharma kaia=the essential body of the buddha—from which the cosmic buddha comes out of. Dharma power=like a cosmic power (ho kai riki=dharma world power ho riki=world power). We already spoke about the three powers previously: self-power, other-power, dharma power.

* Interconnectedness=holly providence=god gives you a gift.
* For Christians the wholly spirit comes from without.
* In Buddhism, the wholly aspect (the dharma power), comes from within.
* For Christian the wholly spirit is ethical
* The dharma power is not directly ethical, is neutral. That why you have the need the kikon (i.e. that you take the ethical stance when performing the ritual)

**Dharma Power as Natural Power**

The mana (mana=power in Shamanism). It could be key, in the Chinese, and Japanese world. In the Hindu tradition is the Prana (the life energy, which comes through breathing) Back to Buddhism: Dharma power is a natural power (ho riki=dharma power; ho ni=natural). The Mahavairocana Buddha is the cosmic buddha, and nature is somewhere together. When they speak about the five elements, they also speak about the five powers. Also, when they speak about the five wisdoms which refer to the five elements. There are also five power buddhas. The essence is that there is no manmade, it is something natural. It comes to you.

**Dharma power and meditation**

Yes, it is a power through meditation, through meditation that power becomes part of you. When you see the self-effort, you still have to do an effort. No, dharma power is something you get, not something you build up.

The other power, is spontaneous, comes in certain moments, it leaves you. A natural power is always there if you have the right attitude and right mind. There is a word within the Buddhist tradition, that is (in Japanese): niyo inogotoku (in eng: as you think). When the meditation becomes deeper, what you think will also be what will happen. You’ve went so deep that you know how the cosmic order will work, and you feel that you know “this will be the result of it”. Is also as if your thoughts are realizing itself, and you are created by your thoughts. That is also not true. The thoughts are reading what will already come there. It is a kind of truth-power, a dharma power. When you are sincere, that power comes to you. (Jesus said, if you have faith, your prayer will be heard)

Also from a psychological view. The honest person does what he says (and is also integer). It can be considered as a power of devotion (see Hinduism and Bhakti yoga). Through devotion for the god head, you become part of that godhead. Through devotion to the cosmic buddha you become part of the cosmos.

Through opening your heart, that things change into you.

**Power through the rituals**

This is why in esoteric Buddhism they do the rituals, so you become one with that dharma power so you can experience it. Or, it is a power through objects.

**Power through objects**

E.g. through taking a stone and write on it, it becomes as an object protecting you, supports you, that you feel one with it.

The whole idea of little cross on hour neckless in Christianity.

It is an object that is energy loaded. Through your energy for it, it becomes loaded with energy.

Hindu’s speak about that when you lose such an object you are ready for change, a part of you dies and you go on.

If you load it too much, it will become magical, and something bad will happen to you [for me (nousmonkey): is unclear if this is about Buddhism, Hinduism, or superstition—I view it as a psychological effect of attachment]

**Cosmology Part II (****p)**

**I. The two virtues (a. wisdom; b. compassion) (**[**go the passages—from his book on Shingon—about the mandala of wisdom and compassion**](#ontwomandalas)**)**

These two virtues are depicted in the mandala of wisdom and the mandala (kon go kai) of compassion (tai so kai).

* + - In **the wisdom mandala**: fivefold structure
    - In **the compassion mandala**: threefold structure

**The wisdom mandala (practice)**

Preparation

Stop thinking

Starting to think again

Insight—linking the two

Repetition

**The compassion mandala (C.M.) (essence)**

In Ten Dai Buddhist meditation

Stop thinking

Starting to think against

Insight—linking the two

—tranquility meditation is the basis of insight meditation🡪you gain an insight

The three-fold truth system (ku Ge Chiu)

Ku—empty truth

Ge—provisory

Chiu—the middle truth (all three are necessary)

**Similarly, in phenomenology**

* + - * + Essence (A rose-the invisible aspect) (empty truth)
        + Phenomena (the visible rose) (provisionary—form)
        + The link between the two (that the visible rose is truly a rose) (The middle truth)

**Similarity with Aquinas in his Sacramentology**

* Power (efficient cause)
* Form (formal cause)
* Aim (teleological cause)

Aquinas also talks of three causes, in his last work, leaven the 4 causes model of Aristotle behind.

In Phenomenology (western phil. But similar to the C.M.)

Epoche (Suspension of Belief)

Grasping Self-givenness, aiming for the essence of the phenomenon (eidetic reduction) (intuition of object)

The middle, the balance between thinking and epoche (balance between *suspension* and *seeking the essence*)

**The wisdom mandala (phenomenon)**

Preparation

We need mental and physical preparation

+The other three

The three compassion aspects.

Repetition

We need to repeat it to master it

—similar structure in Shingon rituals.

\*The three-fold is the essence and the 5-fold are in fact the form. But, both the three and the five are one in the action. Represented with the two hands (one hand wisdom the other compassion) and also within one hand. In one hand you have the five aspects. And within these five aspects (within each finger) you find the three-fold structure.

\*The section above was created since it was a bit confusing this section. It was hard for me to accept that the five-aspect actually mean the three-fold aspect + preparation and repetition. Thus, the three-fold aspects are both part of wisdom and compassion. How? My personal answer, based on the professor’s words is that the three-fold aspects can easily be seen as part of wisdom, as part of getting to the essence. Also, these three aspects can be seen as the essence itself (compassion), as the empty nature of the world; as the conventional nature of the world, as the middle (the synthesis between the two). Why is named the true essence of the world compassion? Is this not an ontological thing, not related to compassion? No, for Buddhists the essence of the world is compassion. Understanding the world means understanding compassion. Compassion is apprehension of the essence of the other, of the perfect non-dual nature of the other, of the empty nature of the other.

**II The Compassion Aspect (From here on, again, almost word by word transcription of the professor’s words)**

These three and five structures are related (according to the professor’s study)

In the tradition of Kukai, wisdom and compassion are in the end one. How they are a unity, it is not explained. Within the five-fold structure of our practice, the wisdom mandala, you enter into the threefold aspect of the buddha—the wisdom is considered as phenomenon, and the essence is compassion.

**The ten dai Buddhist meditation**

Shi kan ho=the method of tranquility (e.g. counting and conscious breathing) and insight meditation (e.g. visualization). The idea of not thinking in meditation is not fully correct.

First, you need to learn not to think. Afterwards, you start little by little to think within the not thinking. Insight meditation needs to be based on tranquility meditation. You need *time* and *observation* for being able to see yourself. Knowing a cake truly takes time… to know the answer to deep questions takes more time.

You need to start with simple things in meditation.

The great thing with ten dai Buddhist meditation is that they take the two aspects together (in a non-dualistic fashion).

You do the tranquility effort. You do the insight effort.

You stop a bit.

And so on…

The result is the middle, that you have an insight, an understanding, the first insight meditation, is still to get the insight, then in the end you get the insight.

You can see a similar structure in the *phenomenological method + eidetic reduction*. You have epoche (suspension of belief) and then you start to concentrate on that object without preconception, you look at it as it is. Afterwards, you perform the eidetic reduction (i.e. you seek the essence of the phenomena), and you find it. (see the phenomenology course notes for more).

Within the phenomenological method in comparative religion, you try to build the structure of that religion. You need to know what you’ve seen, a structure which is concrete and can be checked by everyone.

**The three-fold aspect of truth**

The two-fold aspect of stopping and seeing is related to the Buddhist teaching of the 2 truths: the relative truth and the absolute truth. When it got to china, this teaching was lost. This structure was taken in the three-fold system—that is the structure of (in Japanese: ku=emptiness; ge=provisory; chiu=the middle). It is not that you get from one to another, all three remain valuable.

* the empty aspect is the essence of the rose
* the provisory aspect is the form
* the middle aspect is that the essence and form are together: what you are watching is a real rose, not another flower looking as a rose.

Husserl also affirms that one needs to have an objective attitude, a scientific attitude. Since you look at your subjective experiences as an observer, it is objective. Husserl called his method the reduction (i.e. reduce the phenomenon to its real essence: to come to the real intuition which that object is about) (See the phenomenology notes, on NFK wiki, for more)

**III The Wisdom Aspect**

Though the three is essential, there you see that you get a 5-fold structure. As humans we need:

Preparation=mental and physical.

Repetition

**IV Synthesis between Wisdom and Compassion (The Hands analogy and mudras)**

The three-fold is the essence, and the five-fold is the form. Both these two together are the action. The three and the five become one.

This is present in Shingon through the two mandalas. **Example given by professor**: the structure of the human hand=we have five fingers, each finger having three parts.

The mudra of the cosmic buddha is indeed the five fingers that are including the one finger with the three aspects. The left hand is the wisdom, the right hand is the compassion. When you put them hands together, wisdom and compassion are united.

**The professor during his doctorate years (I think) developed his own model of this**: A circle cut into three parts, and then you have five levels. The three-fold aspect turns around and gets deeper and deeper in that five-fold.

**V Unity between human and divine, between pleasure and divine, between wisdom and compassion**

You have this unity between wisdom and compassion. In esoteric Buddhism tradition they go away from the original Buddhist idea that passion is wrong. They state that desires are nirvana.

To understand well that desire and nirvana are the same, one needs to see that within the desire (i.e. the form) there is the essence. (E.g. if a person likes children very much, they mean something in his/her life. If this desire is not well understood, it can go wrong, it can go to child abuse. If it is well understood, one becomes a teacher/good parent. When that passion becomes a big passion, with big P, you get to the level of nirvana, so to speak)

It is also the unity of the human, and the divine. Between human and buddha, human and god. That within our action, God’s action is there. It means that Dharma power is there.

In the end, Buddhism remains Buddhism, and always starts from the wisdom aspect.

Through wisdom we come to compassion.

In the catholic tradition one starts from compassion, and afterwards they go to wisdom. (In the end, both see that wisdom and compassion are one)

**Inter-religions Dialogue (from minute 20:36) (the “Shingon Cosmic Buddha Part II” recording)(****q)**

Not yet complete. Not part of the 10 exams questions for now.

**4 forms of dialogue in Catholic inter-religious dialogue**:

1. Dialogue of life
2. Dialogue of experience
3. Dialogue of theology
4. Dialogue of action

\*for the professor these aspects are put in this order (from 1 to 4). Others do not put them in this order. First you live with the Muslim. Afterwards, you are interested in how the Muslim is praying (and, you want to partake into that a Muslim prayer).

After this is the level of theology, because you have seen it, you have experienced it, and then you want to see also how they understand it. How they put it into bigger structure? In their faith question. And afterwards, one is ready to do interreligious action, interreligious activity.

Because as long as it is gathering food for the poor, then they do not ask you “what do you believe in? Why you do that? No. But if you want to organise a prayer with people of other religions, as the catholic church cannot officially do. When there is a prayer activity in an interreligious dialog, everybody goes on its own. If you want to organise something like this (the professor states), you need to know the other religions well for being able to know what the practitioners of those religions are willing to do (also, be prepared for being rejected and respect the other’s choice).

**A beautiful example of interreligious dialogue (given by the professor):**

One week with Buddhist scholars from Koyasan university. These Buddhist scholars contacted the Theological faculty of xxx have an exchange and to come to an agreement… that students can come to Koyasan or to xxx. Or to study there for one/two years as a scholarship, to come to know each other better. The professor was happy that he could cooperate as a translator.

The professor helped a bit the dialogue since they wanted to have a dialogue, not just listening. A whole week to different theologians, about their research. The Catholics wanted to organised a Mass. Our Buddhism professor told them that the Buddhists ought to be allow to take add a tiny bit of their own rituals in the Mass. The Catholics stated this is not possible. Our Buddhism professor told the Catholics that: “First the Buddhist scholars come and get a blessing, which is a habit in Japan. Then, they can go to their place, and then you can distribute the xxx” (sorry for xxx but I did not understand what the professor said)

The professor states that: “The Buddhists, after the communion, chanted some Shon yon, which is the esoteric Buddhist form of the Gregorian Chant. […] In interreligious dialogue it is good that you have a taste of the different levels, not only one”

**About Exam:**

Due to the corona situation, there have been a set of changes for the on-campus Buddhism exam. There might be cases of sudden changes without announcement. Thus, it is warranted to talk to the ombudsperson at the beginning of the examination period, check Toledo & emails regularly.

**The 10 exam Questions**

\*besides these 10 general questions, to the exam there were also other 3 in depth questions, to test our deep understanding of Buddhism.

1. Explain the concept of Karma and the way Karma is overcome according to Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism.
2. Describe first in short, the life of the Buddha. Then answer the question: Is the Buddha a person or a deity?
3. What are the Four Noble Truths, and which basic Buddhist concepts can be related to them?
4. Explain the basic tenets of Theravada-Buddhism.
5. Explain the basic tenets of Mahayana-Buddhism.
6. Explain the basic tenets of Vajrayana-Buddhism.
7. What are the Three Mysteries in Shingon Buddhism, and why is it called Esoteric Buddhist Yoga?
8. Explain the concept of Dharma, beginning with its Hindu meaning, and its development in Buddhist thought, and what is Dharma Power about?
9. What are the Four Immeasurable Minds about?
10. Is Buddhism a philosophy? Give arguments in favor, and against.

**Buddhism material grouped based on the 10 questions**

**Content-II**

1. Explain the concept of Karma and the way Karma is overcome according to Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism. (a
2. [Describe first in short, the life of the Buddha. Then answer the question: Is the Buddha a person or a deity?](#aboutbuddha)
3. [What are the Four Noble Truths, and which basic Buddhist concepts can be related to them?](#aboutnobletruths)
4. [Explain the basic tenets of Theravada-Buddhism](#explainbasictenetstherav).
5. [Explain the basic tenets of Mahayana-Buddhism](#explainbasictenetsmahayana).
6. [Explain the basic tenets of Vajrayana-Buddhism](#explainbasictenetsvrajnayana).
7. [What are the Three Mysteries in Shingon Buddhism, and why is it called Esoteric Buddhist Yoga?](#whatarethethreemysteries)
8. [Explain the concept of Dharma, beginning with its Hindu meaning, and its development in Buddhist thought, and what is Dharma Power about?](#explaindharma)
9. [What are the Four Immeasurable Minds about?](#explainwhatarethefourimmesurable)
10. [Is Buddhism a philosophy? Give arguments in favor, and against.](#explainisbuddhismaphilosophy)

[Additional Material (about Mudras, Mandala, The Two Mandalas, and Bodhisattvas)](#additionalinfo)

1. **Explain the concept of Karma and the way Karma is overcome according to Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism.**

From The lecture

ABOUT KARMA: Mentioned in the class Lectures:

**In general:**

The insight of Buddhism: *karmic suffering*. What is karma? Sanskrit word, it means action. In Buddhism, karma means action + intention: a. good karma, b. bad karma, c. unfruitful karma. (a. good intention, b. bad intention, c. no intention, you just know you have to do it). The idea is that *karma comes back to you*, good leads to good, bad to bad.

* + - Through meditation you understand karma, the causal chain of habits. Through meditation you learn to eliminate karma—*the unfruitful karma* (the aim).
    - *Reincarnation*=based on our karma our next life is shaped.
    - 4 types of suffering: *karma* (S is responsible, S ignorant it is wrong), *sin* (S is responsible, S knows it is wrong), *tragedy* (S is not responsible, S ignorant of it), *cross* (S is not responsible, S is aware of it).
    - In Buddhism, exist lesser karma/bigger karma.
    - beyond suffering=nirvana=pure pleasure. Nirvana means also pure action=unfruitful karma. Saddha=faith. Action and though influence each other.

About Karma and in Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana.

**Theravada:**

The 12 links of cause and effect=from ignorance to rebirth. Karma is cause; Ignorance is an effect… the last effect is rebirth. By breaking the link, by breaking karma🡪nirvana is reached.

Theravada=jnana like, Mahayana=karma like, Esoteric Buddhism=bhakti like.

The aim of Buddhism=reach unfruitful karma.

**Mahayana:**

Away from the karma reasoning to the dharma reasoning. Dharma reasoning=that each person has its duty in life (Rita=world order). In Mahayana one is from the beginning a Buddha but needs to become aware of it

**Vajrayana**:

The hells=they can be skipped depending on one’s karma (narakan)=the hells are in between reincarnations. In Buddhism, there is the Yama, the judge, which decides what one has to do. In some cases, a person can be dammed forever (This is not accepted in the Buddhist traditions adopting compassion)

Becoming aware of the intention of you action🡪being able to work on your action (karma)

You have this unity between wisdom and compassion. In esoteric Buddhism tradition they go away from the original Buddhist idea that passion is wrong. They state that desires are nirvana. The idea is to follow the deep desires, and the idea is not to go in ogres, like Caligula, but be moderate.

To understand well that desire and nirvana are the same, one needs to see that within the desire (i.e. the form) there is the essence. (E.g. if a person likes children very much, they mean something in his/her life. If this desire is not well understood, it can go wrong, it can go to child abuse. If it is well understood, one becomes a teacher/good parent. When that passion becomes a big passion, with big P, you get to the level of nirvana, so to speak)

About the way out of Karma in Different Schools

Theravada

* Vipassana=see things as there are (meditation)—to see your cravings. (jnana=wisdom focused)
* The 3 practices: sila (the ethical behaviour), samadhi (meditation), prajna (the contemplation, the thinking).
* Learn to become aware, mindful of ourselves, learn to listen more than to interpret/judge others.

Mahayana

* The six paramitas=practices of a Bodhisattva: dana; discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, wisdom.
* When there is a union with the other, one can have compassion. ([Skip to question 2](#aboutbuddha))
* Echo=the idea of transferring faith, love, from one into another (?)
* The emptiness idea in Mahayana is of no ego=impermanence=the idea that *the ego* is not truly you

**Extra material** ([Skip to question 2](#aboutbuddha))

Form His Book on Shingon

“We have thus to look at Buddhism also as a philosophy of life. Every philosophy is based on a specific human experience. In the case of Buddhism, its philosophy is based on the human experience that suffering is omnipresent in our lives, and has thought of a way out of this suffering. The word karma is used to describe this special sort of human suffering. Now, the idea of karma as such is unknown or vague for many Westerners, and is often misunderstood as fate. But this is not how Śākyamuni Buddha perceived it. According to him, karma is the fruit of our own selfish actions. Consequently, if we engage in selfless actions we can be without the fruit of karma (11).

The Sanskrit term karma means action, but in the Pāli suttas (early Buddhist scriptures), the Buddha defines karma as intention. Depending on our intention behind the action, we can have bad, good, and fruitless karma. Through doing good for others we create good karma, though this is still not good enough. My good intentions might still create suffering. The way to hell is also paved with good intentions. Only through purifying our intention can we purify ourselves from any karmic suffering. This pure karma is called fruitless karma, because no suffering comes to us after an action with a pure intention. Ignorance is being not aware at all of your own intention why you say this, why you did that, or why you think so. Through meditation we become aware of our intention behind our action. We think before we act. Meditation sharpens and purifies our intentions, and thus also our actions. It is interesting that the Indian term for faith is śraddhā, which can also be translated as intention. This explains why in Buddhism of the Great Vehicle meditation found a close partner in the faith towards the Buddha. Faith and prayer has this element of purifying one's intention too” (12).

**The idea of Karma**

“At the age of twenty-one I had a dream that taught me the smarting reality of karma.

I found myself present at an African ritual with white and black people participating. All were descending a hill in long rows carrying their offerings to a large fire in the valley. Helped by someone else, I also carried a basket full of what I thought to be potatoes. But as we went down to the fireplace, I observed the basket of the people in front of me. I realized that these potatoes where in fact the skulls of black children smothered with dried blood and sand. At the very moment I realized what kind of offering I was carrying, I pulled my hand away from the basket and ran away. Standing at a distance from this disgusting scene and looking at it, I saw how everything continued and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

When I awoke from this dream my eyes were full of tears. The sorrow and the pain I felt did not leave me until my Jewish master Henri van Praag explained to me two days later that the dream was an experience of what he called worldly karma, but which is better known as group karma. Group karma is the pain and suffering which a given group of people, in this case the colonizing West, causes to another group of people, the peoples of Africa.

This shocking dream introduced me unexpectedly into the very essence of Buddhist philosophy. It confronted me with ideas such as universal suffering, karma, meditation, and enlightenment. I got fascinated in this way by the life and teachings of the Buddha” (13).

THE WAY OUT OF KARMA: Mentioned in the lectures (From the Lecture)

In general:

*The middle path is the way out of suffering.* Remaining between the extremes, not attachment. The 8-fold path: the right view, the right resolution, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right Samadhi.

* + - Samadhi is the best of them.
    - The role of meditation is *discernment* (buddhi=intellect)=to determine which is the best practice.
    - To eliminate bad thought=a. do the opposite thing (if attached to money, learn to give and the attachment goes away) b. thinking positive of another helps the other change. The 5 hindrances in meditation: desire, ill will, sloth, restlessness, doubt.
    - Storehouse consciousness=memory of past habits=clean it of desires.
    - The 5 skandhas=mater (form), sensation (feeling), perception, mental activity (impulsion), consciousness (through the 5 skandhas the self is created).
    - 4 types of meditation: seating, laying down, standing, walking.

*Origin of suffering=*desire is the origin=anger/pride/sadness. The 3 causes of desire: ignorance, attachment, aversion

Theravada

* Vipassana=see things as there are (meditation)—to see your cravings. (jnana=wisdom focused)
* The 3 practices: sila (the ethical behaviour), samadhi (meditation), prajna (the contemplation, the thinking).
* Learn to become aware, mindful of ourselves, learn to listen more than to interpret/judge others.

Mahayana

* The six paramitas=practices of a Bodhisattva: dana; discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, wisdom.
* When there is a union with the other, one can have compassion.
* Echo=the idea of transferring faith, love, from one into another (?)
* The emptiness idea in Mahayana is of no ego=impermanence=the idea that *the ego* is not truly you

Vajrayana ([Skip to question 2](#aboutbuddha))

* Vrasja satva=a bodhisattva of the practice
* Importance of rituals: fire ritual,
* In emptiness you see form and from form you see how form is formed (essence)
* The Three Mysteries=the body, the speech, mind of the buddha. (mudras=body, mantras=speech, mandalas=mind)
* Mantrayana=a mantra orientated type of esoteric Buddhism
* The philosophy behind this: when you do the rituals, you become one with the buddha.
* Tantrism=the union with the divine, the buddha you have chosen.
* Wisdom + compassion is important=are in fact one. (In Theravada Buddhism=wisdom; In Mahayana=compassion). If wisdom, then compassion. If compassion, then wisdom.
* The teaching of the 4 immeasurable minds: being kind of everyone, compassion for everyone, unselfish joy, equanimity
* (vipassana—Theravada, mantras—Mahayana, rituals—Vajrayana**).**

In Ku Kai Esoteric Buddhism there is the idea of the wisdom (5-fold structure) and the compassion (3 fold structures) mandalas. By accessing these mandalas, one access the mind of the Buddha.

1. **Describe first in** **short, the life of the Buddha. Then answer the question: Is the Buddha a person or a deity?**

**About the life of the Buddha:**

Born in 563 and died in 483 B.C., the date of birth and death are not truly known. We are less sure of the existence of the Buddha. The information about the Buddha was put in the sutras=an oral tradition (no written texts until 250 years later). Let’s point the main ideas from his miraculous birth story and his life, according to tradition:

* Queen Maya was the wife of king Suddhodana.
* One day, near mid-summer festival, Maya had a dream of being raised by some deities on a mountain. Being showered with flowers there. Afterwards, a white elephant with a white lotus in his trunk enters into her.
* After the dream, Brahmans interpret the dream as: you will have a wise child. If you keep him in the castle, he will be a great king. If you let him go outside, he will become a great sage.
* During the pregnancy, Maya goes with a procession to her home in Devadaha, to give birth to the child there. Along the road, she is entranced by some beautiful flowers. When touching the flours, the child is born. The child immediately makes seven steps and proclaims: “I alone am the world honoured one”.
* King Suddhodana does everything in his power to keep him inside. Prince Siddhartha, the not yet realised Buddha, lived until 30 years in the castle. Had a wife, Yashodhara, and a child, Rahula. Prince Siddhartha was not happy, and he did not know what was missing.
* Now comes the story of the 4 gates. Unfulfilled, Siddhartha goes outside to see the world. Gate one: he goes outside the castle and sees a sick man. Gate two: he sees an old person. Gate three: he sees a procession of mourning the dead. Gate four: he lives the castle forever, without his wife and child, starting an ascetic life.
* The 3 gates make him realize that there is suffering, sleekness and death. Siddhartha wondered if there is a solution to all this suffering.
* Part I: asceticism. He meets several people and does many practices; he lives in poverty.
* Part II: one day, he is so stressed out that he faints. A Japanese peasant girl gives him something to eat. Siddhartha becomes conscious again. From this moment on he leaves ascetism and joins the middle path. The middle path is his own path. Between the luxury of when he was born, and the ascetic life, is the middle. The middle path is that of non-attachment, not attachment to pleasure and neither to pain. Siddhartha did not find through ascetism the answer to the question “why we suffer”.
* Part III: one day, Buddha sits under the Bodhi tree. There, he enlightens himself. He successfully defeats the temptations of Mara (i.e. symbolic for inner desires) (he defeats the desire to get enlightenment. Afterwards, he has a vision from Brahman telling him that he must preach what he discovered.
* Now, the Buddha, the enlightened one, starts preaching. In his first sermon, he mentions the 4 noble truths.
* At his death, when 80 years old, he tells the rest of the people that his teaching are the teacher, not he himself. And that it is good that he dies, since if he lived, it would be too much focus on him and not the teaching. He died from eating spoiled meat, from what I understood, it had some mushrooms in it.
* At the point of death, he enters into deep jnana absorption (meditation), goes out of it and enters into para-Nirvana. (Under the bodhi tree he enters into Nirvana, at his death into Para-nirvana).

“**Is Buddha a person or a deity?”:**

The Buddha is neither a person nor a deity, it has a divine aspect through his inner purity and his actions, but he is not a deity since it has a human body. The same in Christianity, there is the distinction between Christ and Jesus. Jesus is the human person. Christ is a divine being.

The prophecy at the birth of the Buddha shows that the Buddha had a special potential. Buddha, similar to Jesus, had an unusual birth. There is even a dream his method had before becoming pregnant that a white elephant with a white lotus entered into her. This dream can be interpreted in a Christian manner, as if Buddha was not born aided by a father. The White elephant in Hinduism means wisdom, and thus the whole story can be interpreted symbolically. This is clearly a divine element, premonition and so on. It is interesting that the Buddha had a choice during his life between going on a spiritual path or be a king. There is also an element of revelation during Buddha’s enlightenment. As in the case of Jesus, the Buddha had different temptation during his self-realization process. Thus, there seems to be a divine element in Buddha, and a human aspect. The proportion of this aspects, in comparison with Jesus, is debatable.

From his book on Shingon

“Indeed, we can see a similar approach in the way Christians look at Jesus Christ. Jesus did not consider himself to be divine. When his disciples praised him highly, Jesus rebuked them by saying that only the One—the Jewish term for God—is good (Mc 10, 18; Lc 18, 19). His disciples—especially Saint Paul—saw him as the greatest among the sons of God, the Son of God. He was considered to be the Messiah, the Christ, the one anointed by God to take away the sins of the world. He was therefore also called the Son of Man.

But little by little the Christ Jesus too was raised to a higher position, and was placed as the Son of God next to God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity. Also the belief in the second coming of Christ, as well as in the Cosmic Christ sprang up. In one word, Jesus became God to the simple believers, although behind the screens of popular belief, the Church never went away from their first intuition: Jesus Christ has two natures, a divine and a human one. To say only “Jesus is God” is therefore theologically incorrect.

In current theology, a difference is made between the historical Jesus and the eternal Christ. Christ is then so to speak the “original” body of Jesus. This is to open the Church towards other religions. The intention to think so is good, but theologically not correct. There is but one original body, which is God. It was the vocation of Jesus to be the Christ, the first Messianic person to enter the Kingdom of God, and we as Christians have to follow suit. To split Jesus Christ’s [is not orthodoxly correct]”

1. **What are the Four Noble Truths, and which basic Buddhist concepts can be related to them?**

From lectures

* *Dukkha*=all life is suffering=all is impermanent/changing.
* *Origin of suffering=*desire is the origin=anger/pride/sadness. The 3 causes of desire: ignorance, attachment, aversion.
  + - Love=causes warmth in our whole body. Emotions influence the body.
    - The senses are active, in Hinduism, they seek desire, not only desire influence the senses.
    - Desire causes suffering.
    - 4 types of suffering: *karma* (S is responsible, S ignorant it is wrong), *sin* (S is responsible, S knows it is wrong), *tragedy* (S is not responsible, S ignorant of it), *cross* (S is not responsible, S is aware of it).
    - In Buddhism, exist lesser karma/bigger karma.
    - *Anatman*=no-self=you cannot think about atman (god)=Buddha was against the *atman*, self, doctrine of Hinduism (Vedanta).
    - Three marks of existence: *Anika=*impermanence*. Anatman, Dukkha*
* *A way out of suffering=*havingfaith.
  + - beyond suffering=nirvana=pure pleasure. Nirvana means also pure action=unfruitful karma. Saddha=faith. Action and though influence each other.
* *The middle path is the way out of suffering.* Remaining between the extremes, not attachment. The 8-fold path: the right view, the right resolution, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right Samadhi.
  + - Samadhi is the best of them.
    - The role of meditation is *discernment* (buddhi=intellect)=to determine which is the best practice.
    - To eliminate bad thought=a. do the opposite thing (if attached to money, learn to give and the attachment goes away) b. thinking positive of another helps the other change. The 5 hindrances in meditation: desire, ill will, sloth, restlessness, doubt.
    - Storehouse consciousness=memory of past habits=clean it of desires.
    - The 5 skandhas=mater (form), sensation (feeling), perception, mental activity (impulsion), consciousness (through the 5 skandhas the self is created).
    - 4 types of meditation: seating, laying down, standing, walking.

1. **Explain the basic tenets of Theravada-Buddhism.**

From Lectures

* The 3 practices: sila (the ethical behaviour), samadhi (meditation), prajna (the contemplation, the thinking).
* Self-effort=the solution
* The 12 links of cause and effect=from ignorance to rebirth. Karma is cause; Ignorance is an effect… the last effect is rebirth. By breaking the link, by breaking karma🡪nirvana is reached.
* Learn to become aware, mindful of ourselves, learn to listen more than to interpret/judge others.

**Basic Tenets of Buddhism (For all the tenet questions look here)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Theravada B.*** | ***Mahayana B.*** | ***Vajrayana B.*** |
| ***(Raja yoga)*** | (Jnana yoga) | (Bhakti yoga) | (Karma yoga) |
| ***Spirituality*** | Sariputra | Ananda | Maudgalyayana |
| ***Ideal figure*** | Arhat | Bodhisattva | Vajrasattva |
| ***Movement of*** | Monks | Lay people | Priests/Gurus |
| ***Meditation*** | Vipassana | Mantras | Rituals |
| ***Focus on*** | Insight | Faith | Mysteries |
| ***Philosophy of*** | Mindfulness | Emptiness | Union w/ Buddha |
| ***Search for*** | True nature | Compassion | Wisdom = Comp. |
| ***Power*** | Self Power | Other Power | Dharma Power |
| ***Worldview*** | Cause and effect | Inter-relatedness | Cosmic Buddha |

1. **Explain the basic tenets of Mahayana-Buddhism**

From Lecture

* The six paramitas=practices of a Bodhisattva: dana; discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, wisdom.
* Meditation is done by repeating Mantra
* Focus of faith=shinki=faith in a dogma/shinji=devotion (信者) or male lay devotee (信士 ) (for more [see jisho dictionary](https://jisho.org/search/shinji))

Uphaya=skilful means: faith is a skilful means, a means to achieve enlightenment

* Sunyata=emptiness=Nagarjuna=the Middle Way School. (emptiness related to anika=impermanence). There are 18 types of emptiness, including the emptiness of emptiness. Emptiness experience=a big hug during which mind is blank and full of love and confidence
* Away from the karma reasoning to the dharma reasoning. Dharma reasoning=that each person has its duty in life (Rita=world order). In Mahayana one is from the beginning a Buddha but needs to become aware of it
* **Indra’s web**: *everything is related with everything* (inter-dependence co-origination)—related with the idea of emptiness. (emptiness=what is hidden=essence of p. All grapes are inter-related since they participate in the same idea—this interpretation seems wrong to me) (ideation=finding the essence vs. abstraction=putting a criterion and defining a class. In phenomenology=is important to see the intention behind the phenomenon).
* The emptiness idea in Mahayana is of no ego=impermanence=the idea that *the ego* is not truly you.

Form His Book on Shingon

**“The love for Ananda**

The most beloved disciple of the Buddha was his nephew Ānanda. Ānanda loved his master and was loved by him. In the Buddhism of the Great Vehicle

(Mahāyāna Buddhism) this love for—and of—the Buddha became central. As Early Buddhism emphasized self-effort, the Buddhism of the Great Vehicle stresses the love and the grace of the venerated Buddha. Meditation on the manifold expressions of the Buddha leads the monk as well as the layperson to the experience of universal love that is personified in the Buddhist goddess of mercy: Amida Buddha. The philosophical expression of this same experience is called śūnyatā, meaning void or emptiness. At first sight the concept may seem rather distant and cool, yet, if rightly understood, one will view it as a deep and warm- hearted idea.”

1. **Explain the basic tenets of Vajrayana-Buddhism. (**[**go to tenet chart**](#tenetchart)**)**

From Lecture

* They are detached from rules
* Desires themselves contain ‘nirvana’, the idea is not too follow little desires, but the deep desires, and the idea is not to go in ogres, like Caligula, but be moderate
* It talks about magical powers. Sita=somebody with paranormal gifts.
* Tumo=the power to create heat in your body to resist the cold
* Vrasja satva=a bodhisattva of the practice
* Importance of rituals: fire ritual,
* In emptiness you see form and from form you see how form is formed (essence)
* The Three Mysteries=the body, the speech, mind of the buddha. (mudras=body, mantras=speech, mandalas=mind)
* The philosophy behind this: when you do the rituals you become one with the buddha.
* Tantrism=the union with the divine, the buddha you have chosen.
* The importance of the priest, of the one knowing how to do the rituals.
* Wisdom + compassion is important=are in fact one. (In Theravada Buddhism=wisdom; In Mahayana=compassion). If wisdom, then compassion. If compassion, then wisdom.
* Wisdom=middle way=vajra. In wisdom=is a 5-fold /Compassion is 3-fold (the essence is 3-fold while the practice is 5-fold).
* **The teaching of the 4 immeasurable minds**: being kind of everyone, compassion for everyone, unselfish joy, equanimity. Equanimity=to let go, everyone is equally important
* The dharma power=the teaching + the material and the essence behind the world.
* Cosmic power=Uncreated energies=taping into a different type of energy=the ability of the saints, the mystic abilities=control your breath, feel the emotions of others, predict the future (22:10)
* The cosmos is created out of the buddha, out of the mind of the buddha… out of the interpenetration of the 5 elements (earth, fire, air, water, space).
* The universe consists of the three universals: san-di, tai-dai (the great essence) , so-dai (the great form) , yu-dai (the great action).
* Visualised meditation=picture in your mind the bodhisattva you like.
* You also get tantric literature, in esoteric practices. Tantric literature teaches you to tap into hidden potentials of your body and mind. (e.g. of tantric literature: exercise of control of your body—swallowing a lot of salt water and then vomiting but keep it intact—swallowing a piece of cloth and then giving it back intact).

1. **What are the Three Mysteries in Shingon Buddhism, and why is it called Esoteric Buddhist Yoga?**

From Lectures

**What are the three mysteries?**

* **The three mysteries**: body (mudras), speech (mantra), mind (mandala).
* Two main sutras and two main mandalas. Mandala, a painting where the mind of buddha is represented. Mandala of wisdom (fivefold structure) and the mandala of compassion (threefold structure). We have the three mysteries: body, speech, and mind. Mudras (the bodily actions); Mantras (speech); mandalas (mind). The three universals: essence, form (phenomenon), action (movement). Similar to phenomenology, about understanding the relation between essence, phenomenology and how the phen. acts. The three bodies of the Buddha: the historical body (the historical person), the phenomenal body (that which appears in different forms to help them), the dharmic buddha (the essential body, invisible, eternal, beyond everything). (this idea of three bodies of the buddha appeared not from the beginning). **The 4 mandalas**: the 3 mysteries, the unity of these 3 mysteries. The 5 elements: water, fire, earth, wind, either. **The 5 wisdom buddhas**, related to the 5 elements. In a Shingon temple, there you find flags with 5 colors…. Representing the 5 buddhas… yellow, black, red, blue. **The 6th element, the mind**.
* **These three mysteries can be related to the three yoga**: karma (body), bhakti (praying to a deity), jnana (reflection).
* Here, as in Mahayana Buddhism, the three universals exist: the great essence (tai dai), the great form (so dai), the great action (yu dai). Kukai sees the essence as the compassion, the form becomes the bodhicitta (i.e. the wish to become enlightened or help people be enlightened); [in] the action are the three mysteries of the buddha: the uphaya (i.e. the skillful means of the Buddha). We humans start with action, go to bodhicitta and afterwards to the great essence.

1. **Explain the concept of Dharma, beginning with its Hindu meaning, and its development in Buddhist thought, and what is Dharma Power about?**

Dharma in Hinduism & Buddhism (not from Lecture) ([skip to question 9](#explainwhatarethefourimmesurable))

From his book on Shingon

“In Hinduism, dharma is the opposite of karma. A person who has found his dharma does not create any more karma. His/her karma becomes fruitless karma. In Christianity this can be compared to finding your vocation. Then you know that your action comes from God, and not from yourself.

In Buddhism, the word Dharma also has other meanings. First, in Theravāda it meant simply the teachings of the Buddha. Then later in Mahāyāna, the Wheel of Dharma becomes more like a universal Law, the Buddhist Law. And last, in Vajrayāna or Esoteric Buddhism, it becomes truth itself. The world of truth is called the Dharmadhātu, Dharma-world, and the Buddha is omnipresent in this world of Truth, he is the Buddha of the Dharma-world.

This third power, the power of the Dharma-world has to be understood in terms of truth. Dharma Power is the power of truth. Once one is on the level of truth, this power comes into action. The word Shingon has been therefore translated in Chinese and Japanese as “true words” because the power of a mantra lies in people who speak the truth. A person has to come to this level of wisdom, purity, and truthfulness. And here we are back to the Hindu concept of dharma as the opposite of karma. The more one gets rid of karma, the more one has found dharma, and the power that accompanies dharma” (114-115)

From Lecture

What is Dharma?

**From the life of the Buddha:**

The Buddha and the order of the monks refers to the three basic faith aspects in Buddhism: the three refuges: the Buddha taking refuge in the Buddha (the historical Shakyamuni); The Buddha in the Dharma (his teaching), in the Sanga (the order of monks he started).

There he will speak about the 4 noble truths, the 4 holly truth, and the setting in motion of the wheel of dharma

**In Mahayana:** Away from the karma reasoning to the dharma reasoning. Dharma reasoning=that each person has its duty in life (Rita=world order).

**In esoteric Buddhism:** God as emptiness, as interbeing, in negative theology… is the idea that by negating who god is, you come to the real god. In the end, God is not a person, is impersonal, it is the dharma in fact. Everything in fact, is about the dharma, everything turns around the dharma. Buddhists call themselves from the beginning follower of the Dharma.

You cannot express the dharma, but becomes visible in its dharma nature and its dharma power. It is about the personal God; one discovers him through personal experience. Exception for Kukai, who went deeper, who talked about the hoshinsepo (i.e. breaching of the dharma bodhi=the most central body of the buddha. Bodhi is emptiness). Most Buddhists state that the dharma bodhi does not preach to us (remain hidden). Kukai disagreed, he affirmed that dharma bodhi always teaches.

About What is Dharma Power:

From his book on Shingon

The teaching of Dharma Power is unique to Shingon Buddhism. In Buddhism two powers are generally recognized. They are commonly called self-power and other- power. It is much discussed which of the two is important. But in Esoteric Buddhism, the existence of a third power is taught, the power of the Dharma- world (Dharmadhātu). It is often called simply Dharma Power. This universal or cosmic power is something that exists in all times and all places. The Dharma Power is always present; one only has to tap into, so to speak. Once one is connected to it, things move on their own accord in the right way at the right time. Kaji (加持 empowerment) is the way to connect to this universal power in Shingon, and kajiriki (加持力) is the power that comes from this connection. Looking at his art, buildings, charity work, scientific studies, relationships, and his great wisdom and compassion, Kūkai must have had a strong experience of this power.

Without this power the important place of mantras and rituals in Shingon cannot be understood! In Shingon, mantra recitation and ritual meditation are the main means to receive or to give this empowerment, called kaji, which you can translate best with the Christian term blessing. Through praying to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, one receives power from them. This idea of a power behind kaji, the so-called kajiriki, is essential to understand Shingon as a religion. ([skip to question 9](#explainwhatarethefourimmesurable))

**More Material** ([skip to question 9](#explainwhatarethefourimmesurable))

From Class Lecture

The dharma power=the teaching + the material and the essence behind the world.

You cannot express the dharma, but becomes visible in its dharma nature and its dharma power. It is about the personal God; one discovers him through personal experience.

Exception for Kukai, who went deeper, who talked about the hoshinsepo (i.e. breaching of the dharma bodhi=the most central body of the buddha. Bodhi is emptiness). Most Buddhists state that the dharma bodhi does not preach to us (remain hidden). Kukai disagreed, he affirmed that dharma bodhi always teaches.

In Shingon tradition, when you do the rituals, the ritual implements are in fact the buddha. The tools you are using are the hands of the buddha. The pit you are putting the fire in is the mouth of the buddha. And so, the practitioner itself becomes buddha. The followers of Kukai did not accept that directly and started to talk about the new Shingon tradition. New Shingon tradition affirmed that (the bodhi of the buddha) is not in the speaking, but in other bodies.

Similar to the Christian problem, whether to or not to sperate between Christ & Jesus, Christ=the divine aspect and Jesus=the human aspect. The Buddha was both Shakyamuni, a person, but was not fully human, and not purely a spirit (he was both). Through the three bodies theory Buddhists solve this. The essence body is the spiritual aspect of the buddha. This two others bodies are the way that the basic spirit reveals itself in the world (as living Buddha or the Bodhisattvas).

**Dharma power and the wholly spirit**

Symbol of dharma nature (dharma taini)=reality as it is (interrelatedness) (sunyata, not the visible aspect. The dharma kaia=the essential body of the buddha—from which the cosmic buddha comes out of. Dharma power=like a cosmic power (ho kai riki=dharma world power ho riki=world power). We already spoke about the three powers previously: self-power, other-power, dharma power.

* Interconnectedness=holly providence=god gives you a gift.
* For Christians the wholly spirit comes from without.
* In Buddhism, the wholly aspect (the dharma power), comes from within.
* For Christian the wholly spirit is ethical
* The dharma power is not directly ethical, is neutral. That why you have the need the kikon (i.e. that you take the ethical stance when performing the ritual)

**Dharma Power as Natural Power**

The mana (mana=power in Shamanism). It could be key, in the Chinese, and Japanese world. In the Hindu tradition is the Prana (the life energy, which comes through breathing) **Back to Buddhism**: Dharma power is a natural power (ho riki=dharma power; ho ni=natural). The Mahavairocana Buddha is the cosmic buddha, and nature is somewhere together. When they speak about the five elements, they also speak about the five powers. Also, when they speak about the five wisdoms which refer to the five elements. There are also five power buddhas. The essence is that there is no manmade, it is something natural. It comes to you.

**Dharma power and meditation** ([skip to question 9](#explainwhatarethefourimmesurable))

Yes, it is a power through meditation, through meditation that power becomes part of you. When you see the self-effort, you still have to do an effort. No, dharma power is something you get, not something you build up.

The other power, is spontaneous, comes in certain moments, it leaves you. A natural power is always there if you have the right attitude and right mind. There is a word within the Buddhist tradition, that is (in Japanese): niyo inogotoku (in eng: as you think). When the meditation becomes deeper, what you think will also be what will happen. You’ve went so deep that you know how the cosmic order will work, and you feel that you know “this will be the result of it”. Is also as if your thoughts are realizing itself, and you are created by your thoughts. That is also not true. The thoughts are reading what will already come there. It is a kind of truth-power, a dharma power. When you are sincere, that power comes to you. (Jesus said, if you have faith, your prayer will be heard)

Also from a psychological view. The honest person does what he says (and is also integer). It can be considered as a power of devotion (see Hinduism and Bhakti yoga). Through devotion for the god head, you become part of that godhead. Through devotion to the cosmic buddha you become part of the cosmos.

Through opening your heart, that things change into you. ([skip to question 9](#explainwhatarethefourimmesurable))

**Power through the rituals**

This is why in esoteric Buddhism they do the rituals, so you become one with that dharma power so you can experience it. Or, it is a power through objects.

1. **What are the Four Immeasurable Minds about?**

From Lecture

**The teaching of the 4 immeasurable minds**: being kind of everyone, compassion for everyone, unselfish joy, equanimity. Equanimity=to let go, everyone is equally important

Not from Lecture

From his book on Shingon

“A concrete example is the contemplation on the Four Immeasurable Minds in Buddhism: the minds of benevolence, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Let me explain the idea of these four immeasurable minds from my experience as a parish priest.

As a priest you have to love all parishioners equally and be kind to them, always be ready to meet their demands as far as possible. This is the first immeasurable mind: the mind of benevolence. This mind is immeasurably good, because we easily think of our own needs, not of the need of others.

When you hear that a parishioner is hospitalized, you will spontaneously visit the person, give the sacrament of the sick, and comfort the person with kind words. This is the second immeasurable mind: the mind of compassion. This mind is great, because you learn to suffer with the other. The pain of the neighbor is felt as your own pain. This was also the greatest command of Jesus: to love your neighbor as yourself.

Then, when the parishioner heals and is happy again, you rejoice with the person. This is the third immeasurable mind: the mind of joy. This mind is also great, because we normally cannot be happy with the happiness of others. We get jealous, and envy the person. To get rid of this makes the mind immeasurable great.

And now comes the most difficult part. Although you became close to this one parishioner through suffering and rejoicing with him/her, you should remain equal in your love for all parishioners. To be free to help others in their suffering too you have to be careful of your attention to that one person. This is the fourth and last mind: the mind of equanimity. Another term for this mind is the mind of leaving behind. This mind is maybe the greatest, because we all know how hard it is to part from objects or persons when we love them. Priests, and also laypeople, find this very hard, and many leave—or have to leave—the priesthood because they get too close to one person, or a group of persons. There is an expression in Japanese: from compassion to love (dōjō kara aijō e). It shows that love built on compassion is not true love. Compassionate love ends as soon as the other is not in need anymore. Sometimes the other person interprets the priest’s attention as love and cannot accept the sudden detachment from her/him. The person might even harass him to keep receiving attention. But a priest is there for all people! It is hard, but you leave the person and start all over again with being benevolent, compassionate, joyful, and equanimous.

The mind of compassion is one of these four that are in essence one mind. You can see how beautifully compassion is explained in a Buddhist way. Love for the neighbor is taught in Buddhism, only the terms and the ways to do so are different. If you see what Kūkai has realized all to help his people, you cannot deny that” (130-131)

1. **Is Buddhism a philosophy? Give arguments in favor, and against.**

From the Lecture

Meditation is about training the monkey mind: teaching the mind to listen, to observe, instead of making constant noise.

Philosophy is about insight=one idea to encompass the whole thinking of a person. Philosophy is not only this, most contemporary philosophical papers treat a specialized topic. This wholistic aspect is the Weltanschauung=an entire life-view. The professor of the Buddhism course gives as example a fragment from Sartre’s journal. This fragment states about the meaning of *existence*, being aware that you exist. You, like anything, *exist by chance*, *appear*, and *die*. This is similar to the epoche, the phenomenological suspension of assumptions, looking at life with naked eyes. Epoche is the first step towards grasping the essence of a phenomena. Through grasping the essence, an insight is produced.

In Buddhism, suffering has a special importance. Suffering is related to the concept of karma, which means action + intention (in Buddhism). Each action or state of being leads to specific results (in Sanskrit it means action). The professor mentions these several distinctions: a. good karma, b. bad karma, c. unfruitful karma. The goal of Buddhism is unfruitful karma, to have no intention (attachment) in your actions. The idea is that karma comes back to you: good🡪good; bad🡪bad. Fruitless karma🡪nothing specific comes back to you.

Based on your karma, you reincarnate in the next life. Through mediation one understands karma (i.e. the causal chain of habits), and learns to eliminate the good and the bad karma. \*Later, things get a bit more complicated, with the [4 imponderables](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acinteyya) and the concept of Dharma. The world is sunyata (emptiness), thus it cannot about “understanding” in the normal, dualistic sense (this annotation was not mentioned by the professor).

**The 4 imponderables (from Wikipedia)**

1. The Buddha-range of the Buddhas [i.e., the range of powers a Buddha develops as a result of becoming a Buddha];
2. The jhana-range of one absorbed in jhana [i.e., the range of powers that one may obtain while absorbed in jhana];
3. The [precise working out of the] results of kamma ([Karma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karma) in Sanskrit);
4. Speculation about [the origin, etc., of] the cosmos is an imponderable that is not to be speculated about (SN 56.41 develops this speculation as the ten indeterminate).

Form His Book on Shingon

“My dear friends, Buddhism is as much a religion as it is a philosophy. In the Eastern religions in general the difference between philosophy and religion is not as clear as in the West. It might confuse us from time to time, but this is the mystical way of thinking, so typical of the East. Everything is connected with everything, and one has to learn to think that way.

We have thus to look at Buddhism also as a philosophy of life. Every philosophy is based on a specific human experience. In the case of Buddhism, its philosophy is based on the human experience that suffering is omnipresent in our lives, and has thought of a way out of this suffering. The word karma is used to describe this special sort of human suffering. Now, the idea of karma as such is unknown or vague for many Westerners, and is often misunderstood as fate. But this is not how Śākyamuni Buddha perceived it. According to him, karma is the fruit of our own selfish actions. Consequently, if we engage in selfless actions we can be without the fruit of karma” (11).

**Additional Material**

**On Esoteric Buddhism and the Two mandalas (wisdom and Compassion) (From his book on Shingon) (additional information)**

**1. What do the Two Mandalas depict? (**[**return to the Cosmic Shingon Buddhism class)**](#cosmology)

They depict Mahāvairocana Buddha in his essence (Compassion) and in his action (Wisdom) aspects. There is a pair of mandalas from the late Heian period in which the painter mixed some of his own blood into the red pigment. It shows how real these two worlds of the Buddha are for Shingon believers. My teacher Rev. Habukawa has started a project to restore the blood mandalas with the same company who restored the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. I am curious to see the result.

**2. How is Shingon Buddhist wisdom explained through the Wisdom Mandala?**

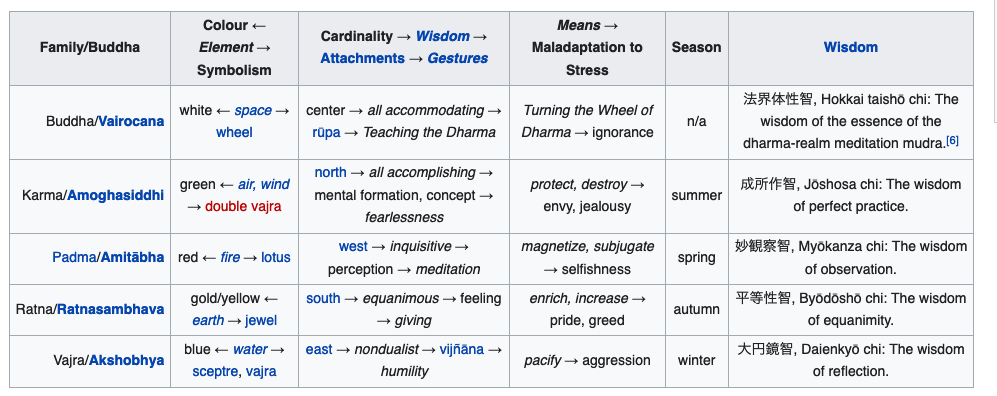
The Mandala of Wisdom is called the “Mandala of the Vajra-world” (金剛界曼荼 羅 Kongōkai Mandala). We talked before about how important the vajra is in Shingon, and that it is called kongō in Japanese. The mandala depicts the growth of wisdom through five steps, which is based on the Vajraśekhara Sūtra. Mahāvairocana Buddha is divided into five Wisdom Buddhas that represent the different aspects of his wisdom, though the five are one. In total, however, 1,461 deities are depicted in this mandala! It takes you some time before you can tell who is who, and who is where. These five are related to the Five Great Elements, and I can see the relation this fivefold structure has with the phenomenological method and many other philosophical and theological methods. It is really a universal growth in wisdom that is depicted there, but it takes time to understand the whole. “Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.” (Shakespeare) The system becomes clear when practicing kegyō because the Mandala of Wisdom represents the practitioner of the yoga of Three Mysteries on the way to become a being of wisdom, a Vajrasattva.

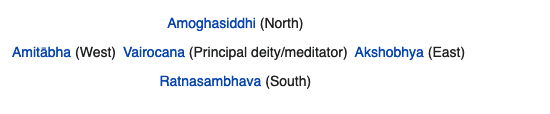
**3. Is there a similar structure in the Mandala of Compassion?**

The full name is the Womb Mandala of Great Compassion (大悲胎蔵曼荼羅 Daihi Taizō Mandala) and is a pictorial representation of the Mahāvairocana Sūtra. This sutra presents the world as a stage on which Mahāvairocana Buddha, residing in the inmost heart of every being, reveals the three mysteries of the Esoteric school of Buddhism by which one may discover one’s own pure mind of enlightenment, the bodhi-mind. This mandala represents therefore the birth of the bodhi-mind in three steps. The first step is called the cause. The cause of a bodhi- mind is the longing for a bodhi-mind, and can be likened to a child in the womb of the mother. The second step is called the root. The root of bodhi-mind is considered to be great compassion, and can be likened to coming out of the womb. The third step is called the ultimate. The ultimate bodhi-mind is the mind that uses skillful means, and can be likened the growing up of a child. These three aspects of cause-root-ultimate symbolize Mahāvairocana Buddha’s compassion. That is why this mandala is the Mandala of Compassion.

For those who have studied a bit of Shingon, it is interesting to see that the three aspects of cause-root-ultimate can be related to the Buddhist teaching of the Three Universals: essence-phenomenon-action. **Namely, the longing for a bodhi-mind is like being in the womb, not visible. This is the Universal of Essence**. Through being compassionate the bodhi-mind starts to open itself up. The Buddha-nature of a person is becoming visible. Compassion is therefore the Universal of Phenomenon. Compassion is the root of the bodhi-mind. Take the root away and the plant will die. Last, the bodhi-mind needs skillful means to grow, but even when it is grown up, it will put its compassion into acts through the use of skillful means to save others. This is the level of the last Universal, the Action. This threefold pattern in enlightenment can be found in the threefold construction of the Mandala of Compassion, and thus also in Mahāvairocana Buddha.

The method of stopping-and-seeing (止観法, shikan-hō) that is taught in Tendai Buddhism can be seen as a similar exercise to come to wisdom and compassion. Namely, a person is wise when he knows when to stop speaking, seeing, hearing (as the three Chinese monkeys show us), and he is compassionate when he sees what his neighbor needs. But sometimes one does not know anymore what comes first. Did I see what the person needed because I stopped talking, or is it because I see the person’s need that I stopped talking? This is the right sign that wisdom and compassion are becoming one and the same action, that the mind is becoming a mystical mind

 Wisdom Mandala (From Wikipedia)



Compassion Mandala

I did not find any information on the internet yet

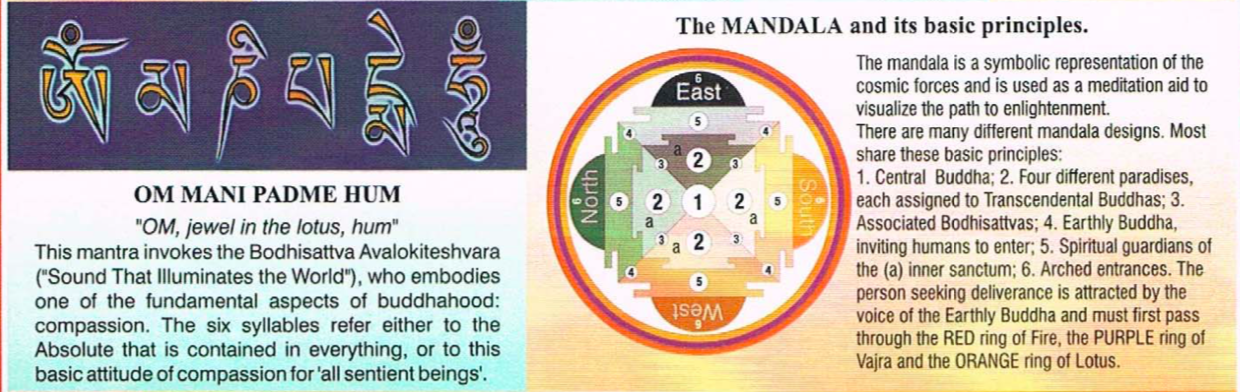


Mudras, Mantras, Bodhisattvas, Info on Doctrines,

Mudras



Mantras and Mandala



Bodhisattvas



Doctrines

