

空海(くわい=Kukai)

It's an undisputed fact that Shotokutaishi laid the foundation of Japanese Buddhism, but Saicho and Kukai Japanized it.

(Shotokutaishi: http://www.tourguidejd.com/tourguidejd/deploy/infopacks/docs/jd_infoPack_352.pd Saicho: http://www.tourguidejd.com/tourguidejd/deploy/infopacks/docs/jd_infoPack_342.pdf)

Saicho's major accomplishments were: his advocacy of a new concept that all beings could become buddhas, and a simpler method of ordination than had previously been allowed. [最澄(さいちょう=Saicho)<767-822>] Well, then, how about Kukai? Kukai<774-835> introduced esoteric Buddhism(Mikkyo) into Japan in the form of the Shingon sect. In the Mikkyo sects, existing teachings are referred to as "exoteric Buddhism," which they say the Buddha preached as simplified, temporary Buddhism for the masses. In contrast, the true Buddha is Dainichi Nyorai(Maha Vairocana), who preaches the truth through all creation, but because it can't be understood, is referred to as "esoteric."

	object of worship	according to Mikkyo sect's version
esoteric Buddhism	Dainichi Nyorai	Dainichi Nyorai preaches the truth through all creation
exoteric Buddhism	Shaka Nyorai	simplified, temporary Buddhism for the masses

Shaka Nyorai is what people deified. In contrast, Dainichi Nyorai is what people apotheosized and is thought to exist at the root of nature. Therefore, Dainichi Nyorai is the appearance of nature and exists everywhere: in a human being, in a wood, or in nature,..... In this respect, Mikkyo is rather the teaching of nature and is a kind of pancosmism.

As Japan had been the country of nature worship or animism, the idea of Mikkyo was easily accepted by lots of Japanese people.

Kukai started to allege that: by means of establishing special communication with this Dainichi Nyorai, one can become a buddha in one's very body. This is a distinctive doctrine of esoteric Buddhism and is called 即身成仏(そくしんじゅうぶつ=sokushin-jobutsu). Such communication is achieved by forming mudras with the hands, reciting mantras and keeping the Buddha in one's mind.

The Shingon sect takes as its central scriptures 大日経(the Mahavairocana Sutra) and 金剛頂経(the Vajrasekhara Sutra), which are represented by mandalas. The former is the Womb Realm Mandala(胎藏曼荼羅), and the latter is the Diamond Realm Mandala(金剛界曼荼羅), and together they are referred to as the Mandalas of the Two Mandalas(两部曼荼羅).

They portray the realm of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and are objects of veneration among believers.



the Mandala of the Womb Realm



the Mandala of the Diamond Realm.

To get an insight into Mikkyo, it's worthy of paying attention to Kukai's appraisal of Saicho. He said "Saicho with a rueful face doesn't understand what Buddhism is. Buddhism is not a sad idea, but a boldly affirmative one over this world and over one's body. In the true Buddhism, one can become a buddha in this world and in one's very body. So, it's not good to have such a rueful expression as Saicho. He has to have a broad smile."

See the figures below: Saicho with a rueful face, while Kukai's face with dynamic potential. That well symbolizes their basic idea difference.

Saicho's idea: one can at long last become a buddha by repeating reincarnation many times.

Kukai's idea : one can become a buddha in this world and in one's very body.

In reality, those 2 ideas inspired one another and led to the birth of the Japanese Buddhism essence: 山川草木皆悉成仏(sansensoumokushikkajobutsu) meaning "Grasses, Trees, Mountains and Rivers All Become Buddhas", which can be said that Buddhism in Japan transmuted into animism.



Saicho



Kukai