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## With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyo Vision

*Cynthia J. Bogel*

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**Cynthia J. Bogel : With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyo Vision** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised With a Single Glance: Buddhist Icon and Early Mikkyo Vision:

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*With a Single Glance* considers the visual culture of the Japanese esoteric Buddhist tradition, Mikkyo, at the time of its introduction to Japan early in the ninth century. Huge painted mandalas of assembled colorful divinities, hand-held gilt-bronze vajra, and statues on temple altars were more than ritual aids. Cynthia Bogel demonstrates that the visual and visionary impact of Mikkyo material culture was transformatory, not only to the adherent, but at a broad cultural level. Her finely crafted study illuminates the sea change marked by Mikkyo visuality in Japanese art history and suggests continuities with eighth-century Nara Buddhist forms of representation and praxis. The monks Kukai (774-835) and Saicho (767-822) each studied briefly in China. Kukai's Shingon teachings, and to a lesser extent the Tendai Lotus Esotericism formulated by Saicho, introduced to Japan new ritual practices, icons and worship spaces, and literally hundreds of new divinities. Bogel examines the visual components of Mikkyo through a huge range of sources on art and imagery, philosophy and critical theory, religious studies, cognitive science, cultural analysis, and ritual theory. She presents a framework for understanding the sectarian construction of Japanese Esoteric Buddhist art and doctrine and, for the first time, explores the cultural sources and representational practices that define Mikkyo visual culture. Even while Mikkyo enveloped many existing representational and ritual strategies, Bogel demonstrates that it required and fostered a new visionary and artistic means and a "logic of similarity" among imagery, ritual, and practitioner implicit in Mikkyo doctrine. Mikkyo altered the sensory apprehension of the Buddhist realm. Kukai wrote, "With a single glance [at the representations of the mandala divinities] one becomes a Buddha." The book ranges broadly across imagery, place, and time, allowing Buddhist icons and spaces to "look back" and return the viewer's glance, encouraging a historically specific understanding of the visual characteristics and visual efficacy of Mikkyo.

"Cynthia Bogel's book is the most up-to-date, comprehensive account of this subject. Animated by an intense and robust conceptualizing drive, her book demonstrates what 'visuality' is about: part mental, part visible, part energy projection, and part geometry inflected by ritual technology. And there is more. Bogel has made us pause: so much goes into a single glance that we no longer take 'looking' for granted, especially with regard to a different and distant culture." --Eugene Wang, Harvard University

"The art and material culture of Japanese esoteric Buddhism constitutes, by any measure, one of the most stunning yet complex visual traditions of East Asia. *With a Single Glance* is the first English-language volume on Japanese esoteric Buddhist art to draw extensively on recent theoretical work in the areas of religion, ritual, and Buddhism, in addition to art history. Bogel's comprehensive and exciting study will be of broad interest not only to scholars of Japan and Buddhism but also to scholars of religious art and material culture writ large." -- Robert Sharf, University of California, Berkeley

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"There is no other book in English that approaches the sophistication or analytical rigour of this explication of the radical changes in visuality brought about by the introduction of Mikkyo to Japan. Exhaustively researched and beautifully written, Bogel's study provides a new understanding of the material, somatic, and visual dimensions of Mikkyo imagery, practices, and spaces. This is a superb book." Christine Guth, Head, Asian Design History Specialism, Royal College of Art and Victoria and Albert Museum

"This book is an extensive and detailed account of perhaps the most seminal, defining phase in Japanese culture. It builds on the author's extensive knowledge of the history of Japanese art and reaches impressively into Buddhist studies, early Japanese politics and institutional history, as well as the Chinese background. It is presented with the articulacy of a scholar with a long-standing passion for the multi-faceted theoretical background to her field." Ian Astley, University of Edinburgh

About the Author  
Cynthia Bogel is associate professor of Japanese art and architecture at the University of Washington.