

Omuro Mandala of Two Realms

This imprint is one of a set of 300 which, when printed together, create a visual map of the Buddhist universe known as a mandala. These are not literal maps, but conceptual guides that display how the deities central to the Buddhist understanding of the world relate to each other and to the phenomena around them. This imprint dates back to 1869, but the design is much older, based on two mandalas that the monk Kukai (774–835) brought to Japan from China in 806. These mandalas depict two separate but related understandings of the Buddhist universe, the Diamond Realm and the Womb Realm, collectively known as the Mandala of the Two Realms. The Diamond Realm serves as a map of the more abstract aspects of Buddhism, while the Womb Realm serves as a guide to the ways in which deities manifest and act in the physical world. While Kukai's original was painted on silk, this imprint re-creates the images in woodblock print form. The woodblocks were carved in 1869. Although a print of the two mandalas together exists, it is not on display.