An Annotated Translation of Amoghavajra’s Commentary on the Liqu jing (Rishukyō)—Part I

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Introduction

The present contribution is an attempt to give a serviceable translation of Amoghavajra’s main commentary on the Rishukyō, as a supplement to my previously published translation and study of that traditionally important text of the Japanese Shingon sect.1 Our present text, which I shall refer to here as the Rishushaku,2 was the subject of some controversy in the early history of institutional esoteric Buddhism in Japan, since it was one of the factors on which the conflict that led to the decisive controversy between Kūkai and Saichō, was focussed.3 Its importance is farther underlined by

1 Ian Astley-Kristensen, The Rishukyō: The Sino-Japanese Tantric Prajñāpāramitā in 150 Verses (Amoghavajra’s Version), Buddhica Britannica’s Series Continua III, Tring, U.K.: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1991. Hereafter referred to as The Rishukyō. For a description of Amoghavajra’s version and the various commentaries, cf. pp. 15–18. For reasons of space it has only been possible to include the first juan in the present article, my study of the second scroll will follow in a subsequent issue of SCEAR. In preparing this study I have been assisted by discussions with Harriet Hunter (Leiden), who is working on the mandala of the Rishukyō from the art-historical perspective; particularly useful is her work on the Five Secrets Mandala (Jap. go-himitsu-mandara), to be published in the Festschrift for Anna Seidel (Paris and Kyoto, forthcoming). For abbreviations used here, see the list at the end of this article.

2 Dale jingang bukong tianshi sanmoye jing banruo boluomiduo liqu chu (Jap. Dairaku-kongō-fukū-shinjitsu-sanmaya-kyō-hannya-haramitta-rishushaku), T. xix/1003: 607a–617b. In using this abbreviation I thus depart from the convention of referring to works composed in Chinese (or available primarily in the Chinese translation) by their Chinese reading, since the present work has a traditional significance and contemporary currency which is specifically Japanese, the tradition surrounding the Rishukyō having long since disappeared from China. The same comments apply of course to the Rishukyō itself.

3 This dispute left rather deep scars in the relations between the Tendai and the Shingon, even to the present day. In Kyoto in the late summer of 1993, it was, however, interesting to observe that in the preparations for the celebrations of the 1200th anniversary of the founding of Heiankyō, the two organizations joined together in presenting their respective founders as two great figures in the early history of the city. (In contrast, the Shingon-sponsored film, Kūkai, released for the 1150th anniversary of Kūkai’s passing in 1984, was less than complimentary. Accounts of the dispute available in English are sparse, but see A. and D. Matsunaga, Foundation of Japanese Buddhism, Los Angeles and Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1974, Vol. I, pp. 144–9; Y. S. Hakeda’s account (Kūkai: Major Works, New York: Columbia University Press, 1972, pp. 42–6; passing reference to Taihan, p. 49) glosses over the episode, as does Taikō Yamasaki (Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, Boston and London, 1988, pp. 26–33, esp. p. 29).
its importance to Kūkai and its influence on subsequent Shingon scholastics. Whether the sūtra and its commentaries maintained their importance after Kūkai’s time, or indeed whether their historical and contemporary importance is due solely to the efforts of Kūkai and the esoteric Buddhist tradition in Japan, is a moot point. Both the Rishukyō and the two commentaries translated or composed by Amoghavajra were known to the Koreans, but this is in itself no proof that they had any significance—once a sūtra and its related materials was adopted as canonical they would not be edited out readily, since the Buddha’s word as such was regarded as holy and the very presence of such scripture had religious significance in itself, independently of whatever use was being made of it at a given time.4

Although the prefatory information given in the Taishō edition of the Canon dearly indicates that the work is a translation, we do not have any evidence of a Sanskrit original. The same applies to the other extant commentary to the Rishukyō which Amoghavajra dealt with, referred to in the Japanese tradition as the Gijutsu.5 According to the Mikkyō-daijiten the Tendai esoteric tradition regards the Rishushaku as having been composed by Amoghavajra, but its quoting of Kūkai’s view that the composition of the commentary is intimately connected with Vajrasattva is less helpful.6

If the origins of the text in, or its route to, the south of the Indian subcontinent, where Amoghavajra collected the manuscripts which now form the core of the works of his included in the various extant canons, are obscure, the situation with regard to the subsequent status of this commentary presents quite a contrast. Perhaps because of the political importance which derived from the controversial role which it assumed in the power struggle between Kūkai and Saichō, perhaps because it is the only explicitly esoteric commentary prior to the Japanese tradition, and perhaps also because of the express directions for the ritual application of the Rishukyō, to the present day the analysis presented by the Rishushaku runs through the commentarial tradition which pertains to this central text of the Shingon tradition.7

It is important to realize that the Rishushaku is not only a commentary with a definite scholastic background, but also a ritual manual, since the basic directions for the rites relating to the maṇḍala in the Rishukyō are given as an integral part of Amoghavajra’s explanations. Indeed, in a sense, it is on the basis of the contents of this commentary that it indeed became possible to

5 Banruo boluomiduo liqu jing dale bukong sanmei tianshi jingang saduo deng shiqi sheng da mantuluo yishu (Jap. Hannya-haramitta-rishukyō dairaku-fukā-sanmai-shinjitsu kongōsatta-tō jūshichishō-daimandara-gijutsu), T. xix/1004. MDJT 1838b, for example, describes the text as “composed” by Amoghavajra.
6 MDJT 1546a. The same entry informs us that copies of the text were collected by Ennin, Enchin, and Eun (798–869, in China from 842–7; cf. MDJT 144b) in addition to Kūkai.
7 See The Rishukyō, pp. 16f.
speak of the Rishukyō’s having maṇḍala at all. On the other hand, the task of matching the available textual sources with the available iconographic materials is confusing, to say the least. I doubt whether it will be possible to find sufficiently consistent materials from around Amoghavajra’s time, firstly because the tradition is partly oral and hence not necessarily committed to paper in a consistent fashion; secondly, because the issue has been confused by the Japanese codification of the tradition (a corollary of which is that the sources we do have mostly antedate Amoghavajra by approximately a century and many of them are even later, e.g. the Besson-zakki). Also, the iconographical elements of much Dunhuang material seem to belong to disparate traditions, none of which seems to have any determinable connection to the materials which Amoghavajra had at his disposal.

Whatever, the often terse quality of the Rishushaku does mean that many of the passages are cryptic or are in a style which most resembles a notebook. In my translation I have attempted to make such passages readable and where necessary have attempted to clarify the meaning in the footnotes. That such a translation of the text is possible by the use of historico-philological methods, without involving what would emically be described as a direct experience of the inner truth of the text, raises to my mind questions as to Kūkai’s motives in denying Saichō access to the text, particularly since Saichō himself had been able to collect a copy of the sūtra itself.8

The references in the margins are of course to the Taishō edition. I have supplied section headings and subscript numbering for individual segments of the sūtra text quoted by Amoghavajra in order to facilitate cross-referencing to my translation of the Rishukyō itself. Similarly, the section headings (enclosed in brackets) are included here for facility of reference, too. I have left the passages from the Rishukyō largely as previously published, although it has been necessary or desirable to make the occasional minor change. Where the commentary quotes the text of the sūtra I have italicized this, where individual phrases for then selected for comment, I have enclosed these in quotation marks. Naturally, due to the often radically different word order necessary in English, the commentarial explanations are given in what to the reader of English may appear a strange order. I assume that the reader has the original before him and will be able to recognize these apparent discrepancies immediately. The commentary is, after all, working material!

8 Saichō’s catalogues of the scriptures and other items which he took back with him include the Liqupin biyi jing Rishubon-betsuyaku-kyō (T. lV/2160:1058b12), which can reasonably be assumed to be another name for our sūtra. Kūkai’s Go-shōrai-mokuroku to which, for the sake of convenience here, we may also refer in the Taishō edition, includes the Kishukyō at T. lV/2161:1061b7, and the Rishushaku at p. 1061c8.
Figure 1: Portrait of Amoghavajra as included in the Kōsōzō, TZ. 11, p. 41.
A Commentary on the Guiding Principle of the Perfection of Insight in the Sūtra on the Unfailing True Vow of the Thunderbolt of Great Bliss

First scroll

Translated at the Imperial behest and humbly presented by Amoghavajra of the Daxingshan Temple, the Tripiṭaka Monk of Great and Broad Wisdom, Commander Unequalled in Honour,⁹ Lord Specially Advanced, Probationary Chief Minister of the Court Ceremonial, Duke of Su, Assigned of a Fief of Three Thousand Households, Bearer of the Purple Robe, accorded [the office of] Minister of Works, accorded the title, “Great Clarity and Rectitude”

[THE PRELIMINARY SECTION]

Thus, that is to say, the time of gathering together is indicated and is this sūtra; did I hear: this indicates the hearing by a close follower of the Buddha; at a certain time corresponds to the time of the expounding of the sūtra. Then, the earth shook in six ways and the heavens rained with myriad flowers: other times do not indeed have this characteristic. Again, the seeds of enlightenment¹⁰ in the three vehicles¹¹ all attain the holy fruit. Thus one calls this “a certain time”. The Lord is the one who breaks down the obstacles; that which is broken down, are the four demons.¹² Again, there are the six meanings as explained in the theory of sound:¹³ homa-vaśitā

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¹⁰ See BGDJT 634d, s.v. shushō.

¹¹ MDJT 809b mentions both exoteric and esoteric explanations for this term. The former would he the expected distinction between śrāvaka’sbuddha, pratyeha-buddha and bodhisattva, the latter refers to the three mysteries (triguhya, sanmi, sanmitsu) central to esoteric Buddhism.

¹² i.e. understanding (Skt. *artha) in its broadest sense, the prescribed or expected goal of a course of action or way of life (cf. also BGDJT 218b(l)). The strangeness of these lines to the English speaker’s ear, lies in the text’s designating the goal or target as the “four demons.” The latter is a designator of four types of affliction or hindrance: the defilements (or passions, kleśa), the sufferings which arise from the five skandha, death and, finally, the ruler of the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven. Cf. BGDJT 532a, s.v. shima.

¹³ Shenglun, shōron, śabdavidyā; cf. Moch. 28190–2821’s s.v. shōron. The concept encompasses a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from grammatical expositions to philosophic speculations on sound itself. Hence the implicit connection here to the exploration of the meaning of sound in the ritual context of esoteric Buddhism. See also note 36.
through to ornamentation, etc.$^{14}$ Who has accomplished the most excellent [sacramental wisdom]:$^{15}$ this is the holy wisdom of Vairocana’s spontaneous enlightenment; all the Tathāgatas: this indicates the five Buddhas in the yoga teaching. These five Buddhas are, then, the Buddhas—inexhaustible and without remainder—of the dharmadhātu, which has the ubiquity and infinity of space, and collectively they constitute these five bodies. Adamantine empowerment indicates the Tathāgatas’ ten suchnesses, the ten dharmadhātu and the ten stages of the Tathāgatas. It thus constitutes the locus of the great wisdom of emptiness, the ten-peak thunderbolt with its upper and lower parts.$^{16}$ “Empowerment” indicates the sixteen Great Bodhisattvas’ all-pervading wisdom of the Tathāgata on the middle path. In accordance with this they develop and emanate, and together attain the thirty-seven ranks, that is, the mahāmaṇḍala, the wheel of liberation. Sacramental wisdom is the vow and, further, the maṇḍala.

[607b3]

Who by dint of his attainment of the consecratory gemmed diadem of all the Tathāgatas is ruler of the three spheres: The Tathāgata occupies the stage of the cause.$^{17}$ Accompanying the consecration master one enters the maṇḍala of the samaya-wisdom. The ācārya empowers the fundamental nature of the tathāgatagarbha in the disciple’s body and calls forth the empowerment of the Thunderbolt. Because of this one attains the practice of the mantra-discipline and the Bodhisattva’s ritual implements, and consequently is fit to receive mantra, to transmit and receive mudrā, and reach the stage of abhiṣeka. Because of this there is the initial cause. Through the three mysteries there is co-ordination of the seals of the four wisdoms and one attains the absolute, the lordship of a king of the Dharma over the three realms (dhātu): this is the fruit.

Who has attained the unified, natural existence which derives from all the Tathāgatas’ wisdom of all knowledges: “… all the Tathāgatas,” are the five Buddhas, as explained above; “wisdom of all knowledges”: the wisdom of the spontaneous enlightenment of the Buddhas alone is completely in accord with the yoga teaching and is attained in the spontaneous mastery

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$^{14}$ Zizai.jizai. The vaśitā are most commonly found as ten powers possessed by a Bodhisattva of higher rank; cf. MW 929b, Moch. 1774b ff. It is not wholly clear what the text is referring to here, but these items appear to belong to a series whose common element involves subjugation or overcoming in a wrathful aspect and thereby coming to knowledge. The implications of zhisheng (shijō, prajvala, “flaming; understanding”) point consistently in this direction (e.g. MDJT 946af, s.v. shijō-°). The term danyuan (tangon), for example, refers to being endowed with the thirty-two lakṣana of a Buddha, and is one of the victories explained in the Dacheng qixin lun; cf. MDJT 872c, s.v. jusshō.

$^{15}$ Amoghavajra divides our segment 4 into individual terms.

$^{16}$ The reference is to the double vajra known in ritual and iconography, where each end has representations of the central five Tathāgatas of the esoteric Buddhist formulation. (This is of course to be distinguished from the crossed vajra, the viśvavajra). See The Rishukyō, p. 110, n. 151.

$^{17}$ i.e. the basis of Buddhahood; cf. BGDJT 71a.
Figure 2: The mandala of Mahāvairocana, depicting the first assembly of the sūtra, the Dainichi-son Rishu-e (TZ. 5, p, 800). He is depicted here in his quiescent aspect, forming the mudrā of contemplation.
(vaśītā) of dharmas; all the Seals of all the Tathāgatas—the seals of the four wisdoms; who is capable of performing the various actions of the sameness of [all the Seals of all the Tathāgatas], thereby bringing to complete satisfaction all the functions of desire in all the spheres of sentient beings, inexhaustible and without remainder: “capable of performing”—through his attainment of the vaśītā of yoga he is capable of performing. “All the Tathāgatas”: the five Buddhas, again, as explained previously. All the Buddhas each possess the wisdom of the spheres of action of all the seals. Reaching everywhere into the inexhaustible and remainderless buddhaśetra and the worlds of sentient beings, they are able to perform the various benefits. The absolute, blissful realms of passionate beings are all brought to full satisfaction; above, in the middle and below, all each attain the nine-part siddhi.

[607bl8] Who at all times in the three worlds is the Tathāgata Mahāvairocana, adamantine in his functions of body, speech and mind; is perpetually adamantine in his functions of body, speech and mind: “perpetually” indicates the wisdom of the pure dharmadhātu of the Tathāgatas, originally existent from beginningless time, abiding in defilements yet not impaired by them; being in accord with pure dharmas, they are enlightened to purity and do not compound suffering; “the three worlds” are those of the past, the future and the present; “at all times” means the times of existing in different lives and, subsequently, the time of attaining the holy fruit. The purity of the three functions, then, is like space. “The functions of body, speech and mind”—because they are not subject to vain discrimination, do not produce defilements, and are not tainted. “Adamantine” is [Mahā]vairocana, who has attained the spontaneous power of all the dharmas of a buddhaśetra; who has attained the Thunderbolt of the three mysteries of body, speech and mind; who, in the ālayavijñāna practises the Way, refining the passions into pure bija, solid, just as the Thunderbolt is indestructible; who through the samādhi of the adamantine wisdom of great emptiness has attained the all-pervading radiance of the light of the dharmakāya.

[607b28] The sūtra says, … was residing in the palace of the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven in the sphere of desire: a great jewelled hall, which they always praise as blessed when sojourning there. It is variously ornamented, with bells large and small, and banners, striking and fluttering in a soft breeze; with gems, wigs, and necklaces; it is like a fall moon and, indeed, resplendent. “The Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven” designates the highest point of the kāmadhātu. The Bodhisattvas of the palace of the Paranirmita-

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18 neng here simply indicates the active voice when used in reference to a revered person or being (opp. suo). Occasionally, however, as here, I think it does help to translate more literally.
19 As the mystery associated primarily with the body, the seals, or mudra, are typically put in a direct connection with action, i.e. associated with the karmakula.
20 i.e., when the bija of the ālayavijñāna are purified, no further taints are produced. The term dharma is being used in its analytic sense here.
21 Lit. “difficult to destroy”.

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vaśavartin heaven have attained the sixth stage, abhimukhī-bodhisattva, and abide [there] in contemplation through the perfection of insight. Many work for [the sake of] the ruler of this heavenly host, expounding the prajñāpāramitā for the deities. The victory over the five desires in this heavenly realm takes one beyond the gods, and because of this the Buddha Vairocana expounds to Vajrasattva great bliss and the taint of great passion. Empowerment manifests the teaching of yoga rapidly, and because of this one comes to hear of the untainted world detached from taint and the defilements, and goes beyond the realm of Māra. This palace is Vajrasattva’s mahāmaṇḍala22 of great bliss and propitiousness, and follows completely from the myriad manifestations of the blessings and virtues of the Buddha Vairocana. This maṇḍala is the bejewelled palace of the diamond peak in which the five great and wonderful adamantine jewels are attained. There are four directions, eight pillars corresponding to eight positions, and four gates. In the central position there is Vairocana, the Tathāgata of all-pervading light—this is the liberation of the wisdom of his inner attainment. The eight positions are explained in detail in the following.

The sūtra says, He was attended by a throng of eighty myriad of Bodhisattvas, namely, Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Being, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, the Great Being, Åkāśagarbha Bodhisattva, the Great Being, Vajramuṣṭi Bodhisattva, the Great Being, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, the Great Being, Sacittotpādadharmacakra-pravartin Bodhisattva, the Great Being, Gaganagañja Bodhisattva, the Great Being, and Sarvamārapramardin Bodhisattva, the Great Being. Thus attended by this throng of Great Bodhisattvas, surrounded and reverenced by them he expounded the teaching.

The Bodhisattvas each have the same basic nature. There is an assembly of ten koṭi. Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva occupies the lunar disc in front of Vairocana and indicates the mind of enlightenment of all the Tathāgatas, the first awakening of the mind of enlightenment through the empowerment of Vajrasattva. Cultivating and realizing the vow of the practice of Samantabhadra one attains the stage of the Tathāgata. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva occupies the lunar disc behind Vairocana and indicates the great compassion of all the Tathāgatas; in the six destinies, with their causal dictates, he saves all sentient beings from life and death, detaching them from taints and sufferings, and quickly attains the samādhi of purity. In not being attached to life and death and not attaining nirvāṇa, he24 is completely in accord with the

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22 i.e. the first of the four types of maṇḍala in esoteric Buddhism, mahā-, dharma-, samaya-, and karma-maṇḍala. See Hakeda, Kūkai, pp. 90ff: The Rishukyō, pp. 29–31.
23 The order in which the following Bodhisattvas emanate differs from that normally encountered in texts related to the Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha, to which in fact the overall structure of the Rishukyō corresponds. Instead of Centre–East–South–West–North, we have Centre–East–West–South–North.
24 The text may be said to waver between the standpoints of the Tathāgatas and Bodhisattvas on the one hand and the aspirant on the other, sometimes shifting imperceptibly. This reflects
manifest attainment of Avalokiteśvara’s adamantine teaching. Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva occupies the lunar disc to the right of Vairocana and indicates the innumerable heaps of the virtues and merits of all the Tathāgatas’ suchness. Through the practices of Ākāśagarbha, after practising the four kinds of giving, he shall explain the purity of the three cycles as being like space [ākāśa], inexhaustible and devoid of impurities, and he acquires the innumerable qualities of the sambhoga-and the nirmāṇakāya. Vajramuṣṭi Bodhisattva occupies the lunar disc to the left of Vairocana and shows the threefold mystery of all the Tathāgatas in Vajramuṣṭi Bodhisattva’s clasp. Through cultivating the Bodhisattva’s mantra-practice, one enters the maṇḍala-altar and receives consecration [abhiṣeka], comes to hear the ascetic practice of the esoteric teaching of the three functions of the Tathāgata, and attains the marvellous mundane and supra-mundane siddhi. [This] purity eradicates the ten kinds of unwholesome, evil deeds, and one attains the supreme wisdom which is devoid of hindrances.

Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva occupies the lunar disc in the south-eastern corner, and indicates the wisdom-sword of all the Tathāgatas’ perfection of insight. He resides in the three gates to liberation and is able to manifest the perpetually blissful purity of self of the dharmakāya of suchness. Through the Bodhisattva’s realization of this wisdom, he thereupon attains perfect enlightenment. Sacittotpādadbarmacakrapravartin Bodhisattva occupies the lunar disc in the south-western corner and shows the Tathāgatas’ four kinds of maṇḍala: the maṇḍala of the dharmadhātu, the maṇḍala of the subjugation of the three worlds, the maṇḍala of ubiquitous subjugation, the maṇḍala of the accomplishment of all ends. Through cultivating the Bodhisattva’s mantra-practice, one gains entry to the above-mentioned maṇḍala, according to the four wisdom-seals, thereby completing the lives of the sixteen Great Bodhisattvas and thereupon attaining the unsurpassed enlightenment. Gaganagañja Bodhisattva occupies the north-western corner and indicates the wide-ranging worship of all the Tathāgatas. Through cultivating the Bodhisattva’s mantra-practice, one attains the yoga-samādhi of Gaganagañja Bodhisattva. In an instant one’s body appears in the presence of the various Buddhas of ten ubiquitous dharmadhātu of endless space, in the assembly of the great multitude. Through the various innumerable pūja one offers reverentially to the Tathāgatas, thereupon the underlying idea of identification with the divinity, an ambiguity which creates no problems for the Chinese syntax, but which occasionally leads to a hiatus in the flow of the English, as here.

25 Cf. MDJT 844c, s.v. sanrin-shōjō, which refers to meditations on the practice of giving (i.e. Skt. dāna), namely the act of giving, of being given (in the sense of receiving), and the things which are given. Hence my choice here of the word “cycles”. Cf. also BGDJT 493a.4.

26 This maṇḍala refers to subjugation in the spacial sense, the former item refers to temporal subjugation, the “three worlds” (san shi, sanze, tri-loka) being those of the past, present and future.

27 Lit., “cloud-sea”, used as a figurative expression to indicate a vast number or extent. It
coming into the company of all the Buddhas and hearing them expound the wondrous teaching. He quickly fulfils the multitude of virtues and wisdoms. Deriving from space there is the potential for enlightenment, and in accord with the destinies he saves and brings benefit to sentient beings, gradually drawing them to the unsurpassed enlightenment by using expedient means. Sarvamārapramardin Bodhisattva occupies the north-eastern corner and indicates all the Tathāgatas’ great compassion and skilful means. Externally he displays wrath, internally he nurtures compassion. He abides at the stage of practices relating to empowerment [jiāxing, kegyō], protecting and maintaining practices of cultivation [xiuxing, shugyō]. He eliminates the hindrances and at the time of enlightenment he subdues all those who are difficult to overcome, the heavenly demons and Maheśvara, bringing about their transformation and leading on to unsurpassed enlightenment. Through wrathful wisdom, moreover, he attains the ultimate realm.

The eight Great Bodhisattvas, as explained above, bring together the threefold dharma, which are namely the mind of enlightenment, great compassion, and skilful means. The Bodhisattvas explained above encompass the mantra-teachings of the Dharma of all the Buddhas, and all the exoteric great vehicles.

“Thus attended by this throng of Great Bodhisattvas, surrounded and reverenced by them”: the eight Offering Bodhisattvas and the four Gate Bodhisattvas thereby indicate the concomitants of the Tathāgata’s samādhi. The sutra says, He expounded the teaching, good in the beginning, the middle and the end. What teaching is explained?—the guiding principle of the insight [prajñā-naya] of the Great Bodhisattvas. “Good in the beginning” means all the Tathāgatas’ mystery of body, the corporeal majesty of all the seals. “Good in the middle” means all the Tathāgatas’ mystery of speech: the utterance of the teaching of the King of the dharma of mantra and dhāraṇī cannot be contravened or surpassed. “Good in the end” means union with the object of worship, liberation through the innumerable wisdoms of all the

seems to be used particularly in conjunction with themes of worship; cf. MDJT, 129a, and Ding Fubao (ed.), Foxue dacidian, Taipei: Tianhua (Heavenly Lotus), 1984, Vol. 3, p. 2065a.

28 Lit. “the storehouse-treasurehouse”, which I take (here as elsewhere) to be an indication of the inherent capacity for enlightenment. Also, the element space is invoked here in a sense as a metaphor for the infinity of this supporting faculty.

29 i.e. he has the responsibility for those ascetic disciplines which specifically focus on eliminating hindrances which have their roots in the defilements.

30 i.e. kudai, kuhōben.

31 qiē xian dacheng (608a28): this is an indication that the term mahāyāna is not necessarily to be understood in the singular, but as a general term for types of career or courses of action which lead to Buddha-hood. In this summary, the commentary is simply indicating that the eight Great Bodhisattvas just described, are to be seen as encompassing all aspects of the Buddhist path, both esoteric and exoteric.

32 qi has implications of words spoken by a ruler, a decree. For political reasons, Amoghavajra would certainly not have been averse to such implications in a text presented to the Emperor.
samādhi. Another explanation: “Good in the beginning” means furthering one’s study of the superior precepts; “good in the middle” means furthering one’s study of the superior mind; “good in the end” means furthering one’s study of the superior wisdom.

... Exquisite in its words and their purport: “the words are apposite”—in accordance with the theory of grammar the rhythm is pure and elegant and it possesses the sixty-four sounds of Sanskrit; “the meanings are marvellous”—according to the two truths, the common worldly truth and the truth of the splendid meaning. Of pure unity indicates that the Tathāgata’s yoga is not in contrast to the complementary teachings of the three vehicles; hence the blissful wisdom of the paradisiac realm of the incomparable buddhadharma which is the inner attainment of the absolute realm of the Tathāgata alone. As for perfectly satisfying, following from this wisdom one is able to eliminate the three worlds, [progress through] the nine stages, see the Way and practise it, and [eliminate] all kleśa and vāsanā: the perfect satisfaction of the two kinds of virtue, eliminating the two kinds of hindrance. Pure indicates the purity which is detached from defilements; because of the yoga teaching, with one thought the mind is harmonized and attains the furthest reach of suchness, not abandoning great compassion in the pure and defiled worlds. The sambhoga- and nirmāṇa-kāya become Buddha. The sūtra says, integral: the pure dharmadhātu is untainted at its origins. Through the various, innumerable defilements, harbouring distinctions gives rise to the stations of ignorance—its characteristic is non-diminishing. Following the holy Path he attains the stage of Buddhahood—its characteristic is non-compounding.

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33 i.e. a reference to the mystery of mind. The sequence of explanation here implies the temporal sequence adopted in the rituals of esoteric Buddhism: adopting a bodily posture, intoning the appropriate mantra, then performing the appropriate meditation.

34 The perceptive reader will have noted that in this explanation, Amoghavajra refers to the traditional division of the eightfold path into šīla, samādhi, and prajñā. See The Rishukyō, p. 77.

35 Amoghavajra here reads the phrase, wen yi chiao miao, as wen chiao ... yi miao, “the words [are] apposite ... the meanings are marvellous”; see The Rishukyō, pp. 77f.

36 i.e. śabdavidyā, where śabda encompasses both sound and grammar, a fruitful convolution for esoteric hermeneutics, which amongst other things is interested in how the ritual and meditative use of non-semantic sound can be understood as designating teachings which have express semantic aspects; see the contribution by F. Rambelli, “The Semiotic Articulation of Hosshin Seppō: An Interpretive Study of the Concepts of Mon and Monji in Kūkai’s Mikkyō”, in: I. Astley (ed.), Esoteric Buddhism in Japan (SBS Monographs, No. 1, Copenhagen and Aarhus: SBS, 1994, pp. 17–36. Cf. also note 13, above.

37 Lit. “dharma garden”, a term which may be seen as equivalent to buddhakṣetra.

38 i.e. ignorance is not overcome in any way.

39 Lit. “not increasing and adding”, i.e. not compounding already present suffering by continuing in the same deluded vein.
The sūtra says, (He expounded the Gate of the Epithets of the Purity of all Dharmas. Because the ascetic practising yoga abides in the non-taintedness of the round of life and death; because he extensively creates beneficial and blissful things for sentient beings; because he quickly attains the liberating wisdom of innumerable samādhī; because he rapidly accumulates the merit of extensive felicitous virtues; because he subdues all the hordes of Māravinayaka and rapidly attains the completion of the excellent mundane and supra-mundane aspirations, he explains the great compassion of the Tathāgata. Being compassionately mindful of the various characteristics of the supreme vehicle, he explains the yoga-samādhī of the seventeen kinds of purity. Because of this, the sūtras explain Mind-Only in the three realms: in accordance with mind there is purity and the purity of sentient beings, in accordance with mind there are the various taints and the various taints of sentient beings. Again, he explains that the world of sentient beings is the pure and splendid Buddha-Land of the Bodhisattvas.

Through his practice he attains the Gate of the Seventeen Epithets of Purity.

With these words: 1 “The epithet, ‘the purity of exquisite bliss’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva. “Exquisite bliss” is in fact surata in the Sanskrit reading. Surata is like the mistaken bliss of the mundane Nara and Narī. Vajrasattva, moreover, is surata. Because of indiscriminate great compassion and because the Vow to the boundless, conditioned, and inexhaustible worlds of sentient beings attains the benefits of peaceful bliss; and because the inner assembly takes no rest and is without duality in the equality of self and other, it is simply called surata. Through practising Vajrasattva’s yoga-samādhī, one realizes the epithet of purity of exquisite bliss. Because of this one attains the stage of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

2 The epithet, ‘the purity of the arrow of desire’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhī of the Thunderbolt of Desire [Iṣṭavajra] one attains the epithet of the purity of the arrow of desire. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva, Thunderbolt of Desire. 43

41 Cf. BGDJT 1316, s.v. muen no daihi; also BGDJT 1315, s.v. muen no ji.
42 xinhui: I commented on this in The Rishukyō, p. 89, n. 30. A further explanation may simply be that the term refers to the fully concentrated mind. Certainly, these various possibilities can be seen as belonging to a consistent complex.
43 This pattern is repeated for the following Bodhisattvas: through practising (or cultivating) the yoga-samādhī associated with the relevant epithet one attains that epithet of purity and therewith the rank of the associated Bodhisattva. In translating the following passages I have attempted to circumvent some of the problems involved in the ambiguity of the names of Bodhisattvas and the states of mind which they represent. Also, where Amoghavajra transcribes, I transcribe too. Discrepancies also arise in the positioning of the descriptor vajra: I have translated as placed by Amoghavajra, although I do not think that the different positions have any effect on the actual meaning. Furthermore, vajra very often has no specific meaning anyway,
Figure 3: The *mandala* of Vajrasattva, depicting the second assembly of the *sūtra*, the Kongōsatta Rishu-e (TZ. 5, p. 801).
‘the purity of touching’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of Vajrakelikila one attains the epithet of the purity of touching. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva Vajrakelikila. 4The epithet, ‘the purity of the bond of love’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the Thunderbolt yoga-samādhi of the bond of love one attains the epithet of purity of the bond of love. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of the Thunderbolt of Love. 5The epithet, ‘the purity of natural sovereignty’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of adamantine pride one attains the epithet of the purity of natural sovereignty. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Adamantine Pride. 6The epithet, ‘the purity of seeing’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of Vajra Pride one attains the epithet of the purity of seeing. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Cloud. 7The epithet, ‘the purity of rapture’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the Thunderbolt yoga-samādhi of rapture one attains the epithet of the purity of rapture. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Rapture. 8The epithet, ‘the purity of love’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the vajra-yoga-samādhi of desire one attains the epithet of the purity of love. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Desire. 9The epithet, ‘the purity of pride’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the thunderbolt pride one attains the epithet of the purity of pride. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Pride. 10The epithet, ‘the purity of adornment’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the spring one attains the epithet of purity of adornment. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Spring. 11The epithet, ‘the purity of mental abundance’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the vajra-yoga-samādhi of cloud one attains the epithet of purity of mental abundance, or again, the epithet of the purity of joyful rapture. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Cloud. 12The epithet, ‘the purity of purity of light’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the autumn one attains the epithet of purity of light. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Autumn. 13The epithet, ‘the purity of bodily bliss’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the vajra-yoga-samādhi of the winter one attains the epithet of the purity of bodily bliss. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Winter. 14The epithet, ‘the purity of form’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt of form one attains the epithet of the purity of form. Because of this one attains the stage of the Thunderbolt Bodhisattva of Spring.
The epithet, ‘the purity of sound’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt of sound one attains the epithet of the purity of sound. Because of this one attains the stage of the Thunderbolt Bodhisattva of Sound. "And why is it so? Because all dharmas in their self-nature are pure, the Prajñāparamitā is pure: despite the original purity of all dharma, through their having āgantuka-kleṣa-vāsanā body and mind are obscured, and one circulates through the six destinies. Through attaining the four knowledge-seals of the yoga-teaching, that is to say, the great [mahā] knowledge-seal, the samaya knowledge-seal, the dharma knowledge-seal, and the karma knowledge-seal, as above, the Bodhisattvas are each endowed with the four seals. The methods of harmonizing result in detachment from defilement and purity, then one realizes the stage of Samantabhadra, the Great Bodhisattva, and establishes the four knowledge-seals, which causes and conditions are not endowed with and do not affect. As the sūtra explains, hearing takes place through the ear. Attaining the excellent fortune is certainly no different. Quickly one realizes anuttara-samyaksambodhi by dint of the proper cause.

The epithet, ‘the purity of smell’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt of smell one attains the epithet of purity of smell. Because of this one attains the stage of the Thunderbolt Bodhisattva of Smell.

The epithet, ‘the purity of taste’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt of taste one attains the epithet of purity of taste. Because of this one attains the stage of the Thunderbolt Bodhisattva of Taste.

If one is able to receive and retain this teaching, read it and recite it daily, direct one’s mind to it and contemplate it, in this present life itself one shall attain the adamantine samādhi of the sameness of all dharmas; in the midst of all dharmas one shall completely attain sovereignty and receive the joy of innumerable blisses. Passing through the lives of the sixteen Great Bodhisattvas, one shall attain the stages of the Tathāgata and of the one who holds the Thunderbolt.”

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44 i.e. deposits of defilements which come from outside, that is, intrude on this original purity.
45 English syntax requires a different structure from the Chinese here.
46 i.e. yoga, in the sense of co-ordinating, integrating.
47 In the light of the following, this rather obvious—and hence cryptic—comment would seem to mean that if the appropriate prerequisite of enlightenment is present, then the latter can be realized in practice.
The Buddha Vairocana occupies the centre of the great assembly. Future sentient beings’ practising yogā stands in contrast to the Bodhisattvas of the ten stages. In expounding, receiving, maintaining, reading, and reciting [the sūtra] one is endowed with the felicitous benefits of ascetic discipline. Quickly one extinguishes the innumerable, accumulated karmic hindrances from beginningless time, up to and including the innumerable future permutations. By the compassionate, extensive powers of the Great Vow, one circulates in the six destinies and benefits and brings bliss to sentient beings. Through hearing and practising one is not defiled and does not cling to the unwholesome fruits and actions; one attains the marvellous mundane and supra-mundane siddhi; to wit, in the lives of the sixteen Great Ones one creates Vajrasattva Bodhisattva and the rest, through to Vajramuṣṭi Bodhisattva. Finally one’s body becomes the body of Vairocana.

Then the Lord, the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, the Great Being, the victorious Thunderbolt-holding Being of all the maṇḍala of all the Tathāgatas’ Pledge of Mahāyāna Enlightenment, who subjugates without remainder in the three realms and perfects all purposes, being about to elucidate this meaning further, relaxed his mien and broke into a smile. With his left hand he formed the Seal of Adamantine Pride, with his right hand he grasped and cast the Original Great Thunderbolt, aroused the vigour of courageous progress and expounded the essence of the propitious sacrament of the Thunderbolt of Great Bliss. “The Lord” is as explained above. “All the Tathāgatas” are the Buddhas of the central five positions in the maḥā-maṇḍala. “Mahāyāna” has seven meanings: firstly, the greatness of the Dharma; secondly, the greatness of mind; thirdly, the greatness of release; fourthly, the greatness of mental bliss; fifthly, the greatness of the virtues; sixthly, the greatness of the time; seventhly, the greatness of the Ultimate. Since the Bodhisattvas follow this Great Course they attain unsurpassed, complete enlightenment; “enlightenment” is the yoga masters attaining the realm of samādhi; “pledge” is the name for the original vow; or again, for time, or for a point in time; or again, it is a different term for maṇḍala. All the maṇḍala: in the main division there are four types of maṇḍala, firstly the maḥā-maṇḍala, secondly the samaya-maṇḍala, thirdly the dharma-maṇḍala, and fourthly the karma-maṇḍala. These are the four types of maṇḍala, collectively known as “all the maṇḍala of [the] yoga [teaching]”. “Victorious Thunderbolt[holding] Being” is the mind enlightened to the

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48 i.e. the manta, hūṃ, explained at 609c10.
49 Amoghavajra is here giving the various meanings of samaya. His introducing the term maṇḍala in this connection may refer either to the samaya-maṇḍala or (the more likely explanation in the present context) the fact that a maṇḍala is a coming together (Skt. sam + √i) of divine beings.
50 Amoghavajra does not comment on the character chi (to hold), although holding the vajra is of course Vajrapāni’s primary distinguishing characteristic.
meaning of the *vajra*; “victorious”, that is to say, the greatest victory; “Being” [*sattva*] is a name for courage. “Who subjugates [without remainder] in the three realms”*: the three realms, that is to say, the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of non-form.*51 Therein he is capable of subjugating those who are difficult to subjugate, Mahēśvara and the rest. He brings about these transformations “without remainder”. “Perfects all purposes” is a different name for Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. “The Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, the Great Being: this Bodhisattva’s fundiment is *samantabhadra* and is occasioned by the joined hands of the Buddha Vairocana. He receives directly the *vajra*-implement*52 and indeed the conferring of consecration—hence the name, Vajrapāṇi. “Bodhisattva, the Great Being” is as explained above.

51 i.e. *kāma-, rūpa*-and *ārūpyadhātu*.
52 i.e. the reference here (609c1) is specifically to the *vajra* in its form as a ritual implement.
53 It should be remembered that mantra here implies the grapheme, both in the Chinese and the Sanskrit script, as well as the component phonemes of the syllable. Remembering this complexity is an essential step in understanding Amoghavajra’s analysis of this and other mantra. See Figure 4, p. 45, for an illustration of the style which has become characteristic for esoteric Buddhism in East Asia.
54 i.e. according to Indian grammar, the neutral vowel (*a*) is inherent in all consonants. Other vowels are modifications to this primary sound and indicated as additions to the basic grapheme. A basic but clear and accurate explanation of this idea is to be found in Michael Coulson’s *Sanskrit: An Introduction to the Classical Language*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976,
**Figure 4:** The bija depicted as a grapheme in the xitan (Jap. shittan) style.

dharma, the cause of all dharma cannot be attained. In the middle of this character there is the sound, ū. The sound ū is the unattainability of the transience of all dharma. On the top of this character there is a half moon with a round point, which is in fact the character m, the unattainability of the meaning of self in all dharma. Self is of two types, that is to say, the self of people and the self of things. These two types are both in the grasp of the poison of ignorance and this is called the perpetuation of suffering. If one detaches oneself from transience and increases benefits one will in fact achieve the Middle Path.

*om*—the character *om* is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajrasattva; [609c20]

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55 Translating yuandian (609c16) literally. It is, in fact, the bindu, i.e. a teardrop-shaped point, as will be apparent from the accompanying illustration (Figure 4).
56 i.e. the anusvāra.
57 *Fa* (dharma) is clearly being used in its broadest sense here. “Self” translates ātman, which of course has further-reaching implications in Buddhist thinking than in the English.
58 Perhaps a clumsy rendering, but the term indicates in the broadest sense all states of mind which may be described as kuśala, i.e. conducive to the attainment of enlightenment, and not merely material or mundane benefits.
59 The character qi (609c19) has the basic meaning of contracting, forming a bond (it is also one of the component characters in one of the Chinese translations of the esoteric term, mudra, “seal”). The implication here is that the practitioner comes into contact with the Path of the Buddha and develops a firm resolve to follow it.
60 The word dharma identifies these seals as the relevant sub-type of the four “knowledge seals” (zhiyin, chi-in, jñāna-mudrā), cf. MDJT 966b.
61 This sequence of bija is not arbitrary, but builds up to form the Sanskrit sentence, *Om mahāsukha vajrasatva jah hum vam hoḥ suratas tvam*. For an explanation, see The Rishukyō,
— the character ma is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Desire; hā— the character hā is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajrakelikila; su— the character su is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Love; kha— the character kha is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Pride; va— the character va is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Mental Abundance; jra— the character jra is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajrakelikila; sa— the character sa is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Love; tva— the character tva is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Pride; jah— the character jah is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Spring; hum the character hum is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Cloud; vam—the character vam is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Autumn; hoḥ—the character hoḥ is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Vajra Winter; su—the character su is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Rūpavajra; ra—the character ra is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Gandhavajra; ta—the character ta is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Gandhavajra; stvam—the character stvam is the dharma-jñāna-mudrā of Rasavajra;

[610a9]

The seventeen syllables of this mantra are the bija of the seventeen Bodhisattvas, that is, they constitute the dharma-maṇḍala. If you draw the original forms of the individual Bodhisattva then that constitutes the mahā-maṇḍala. If you draw the original emblems held by the Holy Ones, then that constitutes the samaya-maṇḍala. As above, the characters for the bija each written in their original position is in fact called the dharma-maṇḍala. Casting [a representation of] the original forms and placing them in the original positions constitutes then the karma-maṇḍala.

[610a15]

Next we shall explain the placing of the positions in the maṇḍala in sequence and by section. There are nine central positions and an outer quarter, to which is added one layer. In the centre, place Vajrasattva. In front of Vajrasattva Bodhisattva place Iṣṭavajra; to his right place Kelikila; behind him place Vajra Bliss of Love; to his left place Vajra Pride. In the front corner to the right, place Vajra Mental Abundance; in the rear corner to the right, place Kelikila; in the rear corner to the left, place Autumn Vajra; in the front corner to the left, place Gökongō. Next, the outer quarter in the same sequence as above, fill in the four corners: firstly place Spring Vajra, then Cloud Vajra, then Autumn Vajra, then Winter Vajra. At the front of the outer quarter place Rūpavajra, to the right place Śadavajra, to the rear place Gandhavajra, and to the left place Rasavajra.

[610a23]

Having thus finished placing [the figures], the practitioner then performs the samaya- and the other mudrā and completes the identification\(^\text{63}\) with the main object of worship and the four loci of empowerment, [and dons] the hel-

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\(^{62}\) There is actually no indication of gender in the Chinese, but logically this class of divinities would be female.

\(^{63}\) i.e. yoga, in this case to be translated as identification since it refers to the esoteric practice of ritual identification of oneself with the relevant divinity through the three mysteries (ṣanmi, sanmitsu, triguhya).
met of the consecration of the Buddhas of the five directions; he intones the four-character mantra, calls upon the divinities, summoning them into the maṇḍala, secures them there, celebrates them, and offers the argha. This constitutes in fact the yoga of the four Knowledge Seals. The chanting upon entering samādhi, or the yoga master’s being in the samādhi in the central position, in the order as before, that is he intones the seventeen-character mantra, the epithets of purity of this guiding principle [naya] one by one in accord with the mind. He enters the gate of the one teaching, pervading the dharmakāya, up to the realm of the seventeenth position and then begins again. Through the mind he attains the limit of samādhi, which in fact is called the ascetic yogic rite of the unfailing reality of great bliss.

_Here ends the Section on The First Assembly, Vajrasattva’s, Unfailing and of Great Bliss_

[II: THE DHARMA-GATE OF ATTAINING ENLIGHTENMENT]

§Then the Lord Vairocana, the Tathāgata: “the Lord” is as explained above. “Vairocana, the Tathāgata” is an appellation for “shining everywhere”, the Buddha of the sambhogakāya. In the Akaniṣṭha heaven in the fourth dhyāna, at the summit of the realm of form he attains perfect enlightenment. For the Bodhisattvas he expounds the fourfold holy wisdom of spontaneous enlightenment and spontaneous awakening, he expounds the bodhi of the four wisdoms. Took up the exposition of the guiding principle of wisdom which manifests the highest perfect awakening to the nature of the Dharma which is the calm tranquillity of all the Tathāgatas] with these words: “There is perfect awakening to the sameness of the Thunderbolt because great enlightenment is of adamantine solidity”: through the Tathāgata’s pure

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64 i.e. I have here supplied the terms “divinities” and “maṇḍala” since these are implicit in the fourfold ritual activity which takes place here (hence the four mantra which are mentioned at the start of this passage). Having set up the physical representation of his interaction with the divine beings on whom the rite is centred, the practitioner has to, as it were, “people” his temenos. This he accomplishes by the named fourfold activity, i.e. calling upon the divinities, causing them to enter the maṇḍala, ensuring that they remain there for the duration of the rite, and then feasting, or celebrating, them; cf. T. Yamasaki, _Shingon: Japanese Esoteric Buddhism_, Boston and London: Shambala, 1988, pp. 126ff, for a short explanation in English.

65 This is in contrast to the setting of the sūtra itself, which as we have seen is in the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven, which lies immediately below the first dhyāna. The Sarvatathāgatattavasamgraha, one of the—as it were—parent sūtra in the esoteric tradition, is set in the Akaniṣṭha heaven.

66 zi (Jap. ji, generally glossed onozukara or mizukara) is often translated “self-” which can be misleading. It is not “self” in the reflexive sense, but rather in the sense of that which is sufficient in itself, not dependent on external influences or factors. (Whether such a position is philosophically tenable or not is a separate issue, but I think that this sense is important in this particular characteristic of the tradition.)

67 Amoghavajra does not comment specifically on this portion of the text.
Figure 5: The maṇḍala of Mahāvairocana, depicting the third assembly of the sūtra, also known as the Dainichi-son Rishu-e (TZ. 5, p. 802). Here, Vairocana is in his active aspect, as is evidenced by his mudrā.
ālayavijñāna in his yoga of the great perfect mirror wisdom, he attains the solid, undefiled samādhi and is able to purify the subtle defilements [kleśa] of the beginningless stages of ignorance.  

4 “There is perfect awakening to the sameness of ends because enlightenment is the benefit of the one end”: the seventh, manas without defilements, produces seeds [bīja] without defilements in the eighth, pure ālaya consciousness; because that equality of causing and being caused is equality detached from perceiving and being perceived, it attains the wisdom of equality, and flows out according to that Bliss Body’s love for sentient beings. Thus the myriad-coloured gem is able to create benefits for the ends of boundless sentient beings.

5 “There is perfect awakening to the sameness of dharmas because great enlightenment is the purity of self-nature”. Now, the Tathāgatas’ pure manovijñāna furnishes the yoga of the wonderful wisdom of discriminating in contemplation [miaoguancha zhi myōkanzatchi], and the attainment of the purity of the original nature of all dharma, that the Bodhisattvas may turn the unsurpassed wheel of the Teaching in the pure and wonderful land of the Buddhas. 6 “There is perfect awakening to the sameness of all actions because great enlightenment is the distinctionless nature of all distinctions”: through the Tathāgatas’ taintless five sense consciousnesses the yoga of the wisdom of action comes about and manifests the transformation of the three functions [i.e. of body, speech and mind], in the pure and wonderful lands or in the tainted mundane world, he abides without compounding [suffering] and without discriminations, performing the deeds of Buddhas and of sentient beings.

7 “Vajrapāṇi, if anyone hears this teaching of the four manifestations, recites them, receives them, maintains them, seven though he may commit for a time grave sins without number, he will without fail be able to go beyond all the woeful destinies and take his place at the locus of enlightenment. 8 He will be able to gain a speedy victory and attain supreme perfect enlightenment”: the Buddha addresses Vajrapāṇi, that sentient beings in the future might [enjoy] the meritorious benefit of hearing this teaching of the practice of the Middle Way, with an untroubled mind be able to develop practices of pure faith, be able to turn evil retribution in this very life and future lives into actions in samādhi, and quickly attain the highest enlightenment.

9 Thereupon, having thus given his explanation, the Lord, being about to elucidate this meaning further, relaxed his mien and gave a subtle smile: forming the Seal of the Wisdom Clasp, he explained the essence of the sameness of the self-nature of all dharmas: [āḥ]. “Relaxed his mien and gave a subtle smile: forming the Seal of the Wisdom Clasp”: the miraculous in

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68 The commentary from here onwards expressly adopts the framework of the cittamātra analysis of man and the attainment of enlightenment.
70 i.e. the various buddhakṣetra.
71 i.e. his actions do not produce residues that are stored as predispositions to further suffering.
Figure 6: Vajrakarman in his standard aspect, as for example in the central assembly of the Vajradhātu Manḍala (cf. Gonda Raftj (ed.), *Shinsan Butsuzō-zukan*, Tokyo 1972). The standard form of his mudrā is shown below (left), along with the alternative form (cf. *MDJT*, Vol. 6, *Mikkyō-inzu-shū sakuin*, nos. 226, 310).
things indicates the practitioner endowed with all attachments and the passions, merely by forming the Great Wisdom Seal of Vairocana and intoning the heart mantra one becomes identical with the boundlessly radiant Revered One; that is, he necessarily receives the most excellent worship of the whole world, necessarily receives the worship and adoration of all the Tathāgatas and Bodhisattvas. Hence there is this subtle smile.

āḥ—the heart-mantra āḥ, altogether includes four characters, forming one essence.

a—the character a means the mind of enlightenment [bodhicitta], like this character it is the point of departure for all characters. In the teaching of the Great Vehicle the mind of enlightenment directed towards the highest enlightenment is the point of departure.

ā—the character ā means practice, that is the four Wisdom Seals. In the Yoga teaching, through gathering an innumerable amount of merit and wisdom, one attains the true cause of the highest enlightenment. The third character is of the greatest length and high in tone.

am—the character am means enlightenment. Through attaining the dhāraṇī-teaching of the liberating samādhi of boundless wisdom, one overcomes the four kinds of demon and receives the consecration of the Dharma-king of the three realms from all the Tathāgatas, and turns the wheel of the true teaching.

The fourth character, āḥ, means nirvāṇa. Through eliminating the two kinds of hindrance, that is to say the hindrances known by the passions, one attains the fourfold perfect tranquillity. That is to say, firstly, nirvāṇa as the purity of self-nature, secondly nirvāṇa with residual factors, thirdly, nirvāṇa without residual factors, fourthly, nirvāṇa without abode. The first three apply to the common man, the srāvakabuddha and the pratyekabuddha, in the fourth alone the Buddha solely attains the vehicle which has neither identity nor differences. That is, these four characters are the liberation by the fourfold wisdom of the holy wisdom of the self-enlightenment of the Buddha Vairocana, the outer manifestation is the Bodhisattvas of the four great wheel-turning kings. Namely, the first is Vajrasattva, the second is Vajratatnabodhisattva, the third is Vajradharmabodhisattva and the fourth is Vajrakarman Bodhisattva.

The yogin should construct the maṇḍala. Centre: Vairocana; background, a solar disc; with a crown on the head and a jewelled necklace; wearing on his body white silk gauze clothing, he forms the seal of the Wisdom Clasp, he is seated on a lion throne, body like the lunar palace. In front of Vairocana Buddha, Vajrasattva Bodhisattva; background: a lunar disc; adorned with

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72 jieshi, kesshi (BGDJT 318b) means that which binds or is attached and is also used as a synonym for bonnō (kleśa), the defilements.

73 dengxue, tōgaku, is a simple term for enlightenment, glossed as satori; cf. BGDJT 1003a.

74 wuzhu niepan, mujūsho-nehan, apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa, where one abides neither in the mundane world nor in nirvāṇa; cf. BGDJT 1328d.
the diadem of the Five Buddhas. The right hand holds a vajra, the left holds a bell; half lotus posture. To the right of Vairocana Buddha, Akāsagarbha Bodhisattva; background: a lunar disc. The right hand holds the Adamantine Gem [vajra-ratna], the left hand bestows the Vow; half lotus posture. Behind Vairocana, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. The left hand holds a lotus flower, the right hand is the vigour to open the flower. Again, half-lotus posture. In the lunar disc to the left of Vairocana Buddha, Vajrakarman Bodhisattva. His two hands form the turn-dance mudrā, placed on the crown of the head; vigour. In the inner four corners place the four Inner Worshipping Bodhisattvas, each as per their original form. In the outer four corners position the four Outer Worshipping Bodhisattvas, each holding the basic implement of worship. At the four gates position the Bodhisattvas of the Hook, Rope, Chain and Bell, each abiding in the original majesty.

Vairocana Buddha attains perfect enlightenment through the four kinds of yogic samādhi, that is to say the yogic samādhi of Vajrasattva, Vajraratna, Vajradharma, and Vajrakarina. From Vajrasattva to [Vajra]karman there emanate in sequence the Bodhisattvas of Joy, Wig, Song and Dance. Again, along with the Inner Worshipping there emanate in sequence the four Outer Worshipping Bodhisattvas, Incense, Flower, Lamp and Unguent. Again along with the four Great Bodhisattvas, there each emanate four Gate Bodhisattvas. They are the four mandala—the Great Wisdom, Samaya, Dharma and Karma discs. They are the same types as explained before, in Great Bliss. If the yogin perfects the guiding principle of wisdom, he will stand in the central position. That is, he will intone the mantra of Vairocana Buddha: vajradhāto āḥ.

Spontaneously one performs union with the main object of worship, by the four-character vidyā one summons the Holy Assembly into the maṇḍala. Intoning the four rituals of manifestation with an untrammelled mind, one by one they manifest. The all-embracing dharmadhātu is all-pervading and is without beginning, all through the yoga of the Five Wisdoms. Through persistent meditation one is able to extinguish ingrained hindrances and bad karma. In the present life one attains the stage of a Bodhisattva, after sixteen lives one attains the boundless Dharmakāya of Vairocana and is able to manifest oneself as sambhoga and nirmāṇa-[kāya] in innumerable pure and defiled lands and manifest one’s attainment of the highest enlightenment.

Implicit is the virtue of vīrya, which again implies energy and resolve.

For this mudrā, in which Vajrakarman has both hands raised to the top of the head, palms inwards and the fingers extended, cf. The Rishukyō, p. 132, n. 277; see also Figure 6.

i.e. the same pattern as was seen before, in the chapter concerning the Dharma-Gate of Great Bliss.

i.e., as we have seen previously, an indication that the practitioner is now identical with Vairocana and occupies the central position in the maṇḍala. It also implies that the practitioner has now become a perfect expression of the ideas and virtues depicted in the maṇḍala.

List of Abbreviations


**T.** *Taishō-shinshū daizōkyō*. [The Taishō canon.]

**TZ.** *Taishō-shinshū daizōkyō-Zuzō*. [The iconographic supplements to the above.]