

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

Ian Astley
Philipp's University
Marburg

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 *maṇḍala* 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

⁴ Cf. Lewis Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979. The *Rishukyō* (T. 243) corresponds to K. 1275, the *Rishushaku* to K. 1333. The *Gijutsu* (T. 1004, see below) is also included: K. 1334.

⁵ *Banruo boluomiduo liqu jing dale bukong sanmei tianshi jingang saduo deng shiqi sheng da mantuluo yishu* (Jap. *Hannya-haramitta-rishukyō dairaku-fukū-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 bieyi 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 Unequaled 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]

¹Thus, that is to say, the time of gathering together is indicated and is this *sūtra*; [607a11]
²*did I hear*: this indicates the hearing by a close follower of the Buddha; ³*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”. ^{4a}*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*

⁹ In my renderings of this and other official titles, I have followed the suggestions put forward by Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1985. I have also consulted the material contained in Chou Yi-liang, “Tantrism in China”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 8 (1945), pp. 142–332, esp. p. 300; and Raffaello Orlando, *A Study of Chinese Documents Concerning the Life of the Tantric Buddhist Patriarch Amoghavajra (A.D. 705–774)*, Ph.D., Princeton 1981, order no. 81–16540. Kenneth Ch’en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1964, pp. 335–7, basically repeats Chou’s account.

¹⁰ See *BGDJT* 634d, s.v. *shushō*.

¹¹ *MDJT* 809b mentions both exoteric and esoteric explanations for this term. The former would be the expected distinction between *śrāvaka’buddha*, *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(1)). 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 ^{4b} *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-peaked 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]

⁵ *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.

⁶ *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

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.

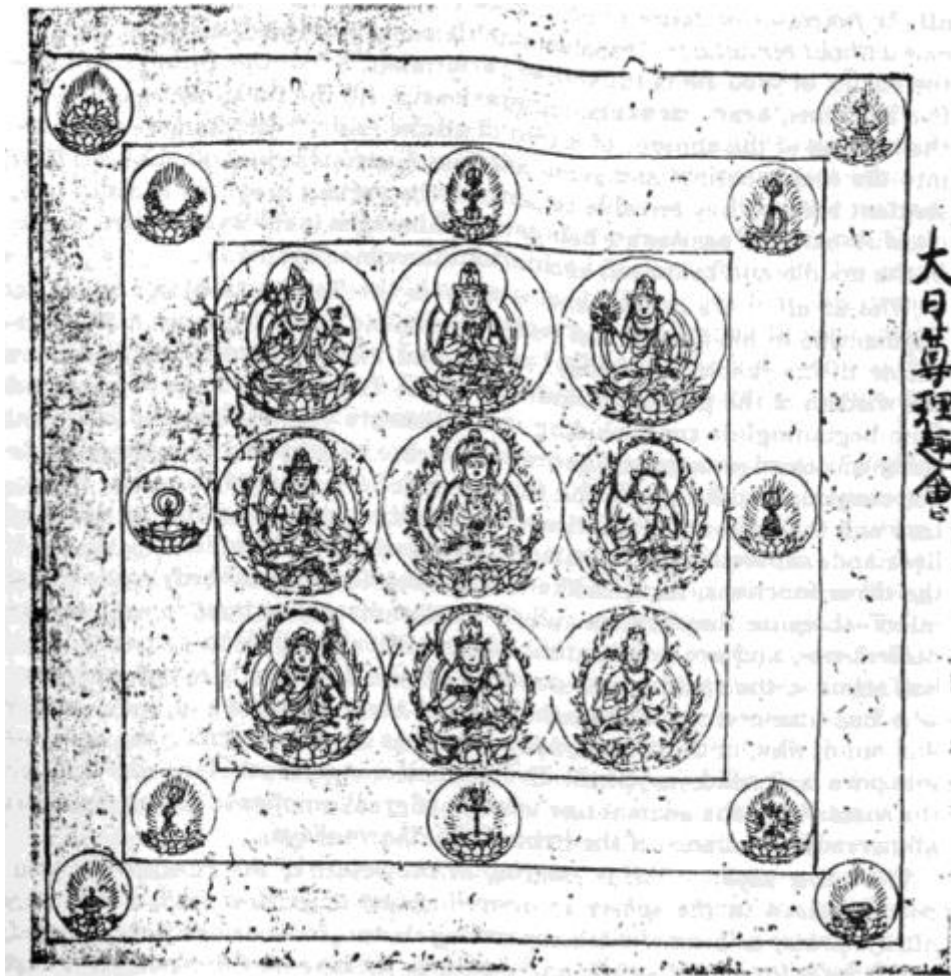


Figure 2: The *maṇḍala* of Mahāvairocana, depicting the first assembly of the *sūtra*, the Dainichi-son Rishu-e (TZ. 5, p, 800). He is depicted here in his quiescent aspect, forming the *mudrā* of contemplation.

(*vaśitā*) 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 *vaśitā* of *yoga* he is capable of performing.¹⁸ “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.¹⁹ Reaching everywhere into the inexhaustible and remainderless *buddhakṣetra* 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*.

[607b18]

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;²⁰ “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 ¹⁰[*Mahā*]vairocana, who has attained the spontaneous power of all the *dharmas* of a *buddhakṣetra*; 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 *bīja*, solid, just as the Thunderbolt is indestructible;²¹ 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, ... ¹¹was residing in the palace of the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven in the sphere of desire: ¹²a great jewelled hall, which they always praise as blessed when sojourning there. ¹³It is variously ornamented, ¹⁴with bells large and small, and banners, striking and fluttering in a soft breeze; with gems, wigs, and necklaces; it is like a fall moon ¹⁵and, indeed, resplendent. “The Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven” designates the highest point of the *kāmadhātu*. The Bodhisattvas of the palace of the *Paranirmita-*

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 *bīja* of the *ālayavijñāna* are purified, no further taints are produced. The term *dharmas* is being used in its analytic sense here.

²¹ Lit. “difficult to destroy”.

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 *mahāmaṇḍala*²² 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, ¹⁶*He was attended by a throng of eighty myriads of Bodhisattvas, namely, ¹⁷Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, the Great Being, ¹⁸Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, the Great Being, ¹⁹Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva, the Great Being, ²⁰Vajramuṣṭi Bodhisattva, the Great Being, ²¹Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, the Great Being, ²²Sacittotpādadharmacakrapravartin Bodhisattva, the Great Being, ²³Gaganagañja Bodhisattva, the Great Being, and ²⁴Sarvamārapramardin Bodhisattva, the Great Being. ²⁵Thus attended by this throng of Great Bodhisattvas, surrounded and revered 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.²³ 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

[607c14]

[607c23]

²² i.e. the first of the four types of *maṇḍala* in esoteric Buddhism, *mahā-*, *dharmā-*, *samaya-*, and *karma-maṇḍala*. See Hakeda, *Kūkai*, pp. 90f; *The Rishukyō*, pp. 29–31.

²³ The order in which the following Bodhisattvas emanate differs from that normally encountered in texts related to the *Sarvatahāgatatattvasaṃgraha*, 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

- [607c27] 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 cycles²⁵ 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.
- [608a2] 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,²⁶ 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 [is born before:] 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 innumerable²⁷ *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*, *triloka*) 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,²⁸ 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.²⁹

Sarvamārapramardin Bodhisattva occupies the north-eastern corner and indicates all the Tathāgatas⁵ great compassion and skilful means. Externally he displays wrath, internally he nurtures compassion. He abides at the stage of practices relating to empowerment [*jiaxing, keyyō*], protecting and maintaining practices of cultivation [*xiuxing, shugyō*].³⁰ 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.³¹

“Thus attended by this throng of Great Bodhisattvas, surrounded and revered by them”: the eight Offering Bodhisattvas and the four Gate Bodhisattvas thereby indicate the concomitants of the Tathāgata’s *samādhi*.

The *sūtra* says, ²⁶*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 utterance³² 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

[608a21]

[608b1]

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 take this as a synonym for skilful means (*upāya*) cf., e.g., *BGDJT* 260b, s.v. *kudai, kuhōben*.

³⁰ i.e. he has the responsibility for those ascetic disciplines which specifically focus on eliminating hindrances which have their roots in the defilements.

³¹ *iqie 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 Buddhahood. 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 *chi* 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.³³ 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.³⁴

[608b7] ... *Exquisite in its words and their purport*: “the words are apposite”³⁵—in accordance with the theory of grammar³⁶ 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 realm³⁷ 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.³⁸ Following the holy Path he attains the stage of Buddhahood—its characteristic is non-compounding.³⁹

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 *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*. See *The Rishukyō*, p. 77.

³⁵ Amoghavajra here reads the phrase, *wenyi 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 *samādhi*; because he rapidly accumulates the merit of extensive felicitous virtues; because he subdues all the hordes of Māra-vinayaka 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 explains⁴⁰ the *yoga-samādhi* 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.

[608b18]

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 compassion⁴¹ and because the Vow to the boundless, conditioned, and inexhaustible worlds of sentient beings attains the benefits of peaceful bliss; and because the inner assembly⁴² takes no rest and is without duality in the equality of self and other, it is simply called *surata*. Through practising Vajrasattva’s *yoga-samādhi*, one realizes the epithet of purity of exquisite bliss. Because of this one attains the stage of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

[608b27]

²*The epithet, ‘the purity of the arrow of desire’, is the stage of a Bodhisattva:* through practising the *yoga-samādhi* 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 ³*The epithet,*

[608c4]

⁴⁰ The *Taishō* edition reads *tuō/datsu* (Release”), an obvious error for *shuo/setsu* (“explain”); cf. *The Rishukyō*, p. 88, n. 24.

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-samādhi* 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 *maṇḍala* 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 Vajra Pride. 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 Thunderbolt 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 Vajrabodhisattva of Desire. 9The epithet, 'the purity of pride', is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of thunderbolt pride one attains the epithet of the purity of pride. Because of this one attains the stage of the Bodhisattva of Thunderbolt Pride. 10The epithet, 'the purity of adornment', is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt of the spring one attains the epithet of purity of adornment. Because of this one attains the stage of the Thunderbolt Bodhisattva of Spring. 11The epithet, 'the purity of mental abundance', is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt 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 Thunderbolt Bodhisattva of Cloud. 12The epithet, 'the purity of purity of light', is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt of the autumn one attains the epithet of purity of light. Because of this one attains the stage of the Thunderbolt Bodhisattva of Autumn. 13The epithet, 'the purity of bodily bliss', is the stage of a Bodhisattva: through practising the yoga-samādhi of the thunderbolt of the winter one attains the epithet of the purity of bodily bliss. Because of this one attains the stage of the Thunderbolt 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 Thunder-

[608c 13]

[609a2]

bolt Bodhisattva of Form. ¹⁵*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. ¹⁶*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. ¹⁷*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.

[609a16]

¹⁸”*And why is it so? Because all dharmas in their self-nature are pure, the Prajñāpāramitā is pure:* despite the original purity of all *dharma*, through their having *āgantuka-kleśa-vāsanā*⁴⁴ body and mind are obscured, and one circulates through the six destinies.⁴⁵ 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 harmonizing⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ Attaining the excellent fortune is certainly no different. Quickly one realizes *anuttara-samyaksambodhi* by dint of the proper cause.

[609a24]

¹⁹”*Oh, Vajrapāṇi, if anyone hears the prajñā guiding principle of these epithets which manifest purity, ²⁰until he attains the locus of enlightenment, ²¹all hindrances—hindrances of the passions, hindrances to the Dharma, hindrances to action—²²even the far-reaching accumulations of habit will not cast him down into the destinies of the hells and the rest. ²³He will even extinguish the influence of grave sins and will not be troubled. ²⁴“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, ²⁵in this present life itself ²⁶one shall attain the adamant samādhi of the sameness of all dharmas; ²⁷in the midst of all dharmas one shall completely attain sovereignty and ²⁸receive the joy of innumerable blisses. ²⁹Passing through the lives of the sixteen Great Bodhisattvas, ³⁰one shall attain the stages of the Tathāgata and of the one who holds the Thunderbolt.”*

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 *yoga* 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.

³¹Then the Lord, ³³the Bodhisattva Vajrapāni, the Great Being, ⁽³¹⁾the victorious Thunderbolt-holding Being of all the maṇḍala of all the Tathāgatas' Pledge of Mahāyāna Enlightenment, ³²who subjugates without remainder in the three realms and perfects all purposes, ³⁴being about to elucidate this meaning further, relaxed his mien and broke into a smile. ³⁵With his left hand he formed the Seal of Adamantine Pride, ³⁶with his right hand he grasped and cast the Original Great Thunderbolt, aroused the vigour of courageous progress ³⁷and expounded the essence of the propitious sacrament of the Thunderbolt of Great Bliss.⁴⁸ "The Lord" is as explained above. "All the Tathāgatas" are the Buddhas of the central five positions in the *mahā-maṇḍala*. "Mahāyāna" has seven meanings: firstly, the greatness of the Dharma; secondly, the greatness of mind [*xin, shin, hṛdaya*] 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 [*mahāyāna*] 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*.⁴⁹ All the *maṇḍala*": in the main division there are four types of *maṇḍala*, firstly the *mahā-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]⁵⁰ Being" is the mind enlightened to the

[609a9]

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, Maheśvara 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 fundament is *samantabhadra* and is occasioned by the joined hands of the Buddha Vairocana. He receives directly the *vajra*-implement⁵² and indeed the conferring of consecration—hence the name, Vajrapāṇi. “Bodhisattva, the Great Being” is as explained above.

[609c2] “Being about to elucidate this meaning further^M: that is to say, he manifests the emblem of the great seal of wisdom, the jewelled diadem of the five Buddhas on the crown of his head. “[He] 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”: “original” is the originally pure *dharmadhātu*. “With his left hand he formed the Seal of Adamantine Pride” is subjugating sentient beings of the left-hand path and the left-hand practices, and causing them to return to the true path. “With his right hand he grasped and cast the Original Great Thunderbolt, aroused the vigour of courageous progress ...”: bringing about the extremely profound *samādhi* of self and other, ascending and advancing through continued meditation on the true path of the Buddha, one attains the stage of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva.

[609c9] “And expounded [the essence of] the propitious sacrament of the Thunderbolt of Great Bliss”, the essence of the original vow, the *mantra hūṃ*. The character *hūṃ*⁵³ has the meaning of cause. The meaning, cause, that is to say that the *bodhicitta* is the cause, in fact the *bodhicitta* of all the Tathāgatas; or again, it is that the innumerable virtues of the incomparable, wonderful bodies of true suchness of all the Tathāgatas are all concomitant with this life. This one character is possessed of four meanings; namely the character *h[a]*, inherent in the main body of the character there arises the character *a*.⁵⁴ Because of the character *a*, the original non-generation of all

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 *bīja* depicted as a grapheme in the *xitan* (Jap. *shittan*) style.

dharmā, the cause of all *dharmā* 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 *dharmā*. On the top of this character there is a half moon with a round point,⁵⁵ which is in fact the character *m*,⁵⁶ the unattainability of the meaning of self in all *dharmā*. Self is of two types, that is to say, the self of people and the self of things.⁵⁷ 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 benefits⁵⁸ one will in fact achieve⁵⁹ the Middle Path.

om—the character *om* is the *dharmā-jñāna-mudrā*⁶⁰ of Vajrasattva;⁶¹ *ma* [609c20]

pp. 3ff.

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* (*dharmā*) 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 *dharmā* 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 *bīja* is not arbitrary, but builds up to form the Sanskrit sentence, *Oṃ mahāsukha vajrasattva jah huṃ vaṃ hoḥ suratas tvam*. For an explanation, see *The Rishukyō*,

—the character *ma* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Desire; *hā*—the character *hā* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajrakelikila; *su*—the character *su* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Love; *kha*—the character *kha* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Pride; *va*—the character *va* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Mental Abundance; *jra*—the character *jra* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajrakelikila; *sa*—the character *sa* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Love; *tva*—the character *tva* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Pride; *jaḥ*—the character *jaḥ* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Spring; *huṃ* the character *huṃ* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Cloud; *vaṃ*—the character *vaṃ* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Autumn; *hoḥ*—the character *hoḥ* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Vajra Winter; *su*—the character *su* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Rūpavajra; *ra*—the character *ra* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Gandhavajra; *ta*—the character *ta* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Gandhavajra; *stvaṃ*—the character *stvaṃ* is the *dharmajñāna-mudrā* of Rasavajra;

[610a9] The seventeen syllables of this *mantra* are the *bīja* of the seventeen Bodhisattvas, that is, they constitute the *dharmamaṇḍala*. 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 *bīja* each written in their original position is in fact called the *dharmamaṇḍala*. 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 [Vajra]sattva 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 Kelikilā;⁶² in the rear corner to the left, place Aikongō; in the front corner to the left, place Gōkongō. 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 identification⁶³ with the main object of worship and the four loci of empowerment, [and dons] the hel-

pp. 100, 115f; Table 4, p. 212.

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 (*sanmi*, *sanmitsu*, *triguhyā*).

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,⁶⁴ 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. [610ab3]
 “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.⁶⁵ For the Bodhisattvas he expounds the fourfold holy wisdom of spontaneous enlightenment and spontaneous awakening,⁶⁶ he expounds the *bodhi* of the four wisdoms. [2Took 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]⁶⁷ with these words: 3”There is perfect awakening to the sameness of the Thunderbolt because great enlightenment is of adamantine solidity”: through the Tathāgata’s pure

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 fêting, 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 *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*, one of the—as it were—parent *sūtra* in the esoteric tradition, is set in the Akiniṣṭha heaven.

⁶⁶ *zi* (Jap. *ji*, generally glossed *onozukara* or *mizukara*) is often translated “self-^o” 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.⁶⁸

[610b10]

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,⁶⁹ 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 lands⁷⁰ or in the tainted mundane world, he abides without compounding [suffering]⁷¹ 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,* ⁸*even though he may commit for a time grave sins without number, he will without fail be able to go beyond all the woeful destinies* ⁹*and take his place at the locus of enlightenment.* ¹⁰*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.

[610b22]

¹¹ *Thereupon, having thus given his explanation, the Lord, being about to elucidate this meaning further, relaxed his mien and gave a subtle smile:* ¹²*forming the Seal of the Wisdom Clasp,* ¹³*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

[610b28]

⁶⁸ The commentary from here onwards expressly adopts the framework of the *cittamātra* analysis of man and the attainment of enlightenment.

⁶⁹ Cf. *The Rishukyō*, p. 127, n. 248.

⁷⁰ i.e. the various *buddhakṣetra*.

⁷¹ i.e. his actions do not produce residues that are stored as predispositions to further suffering.

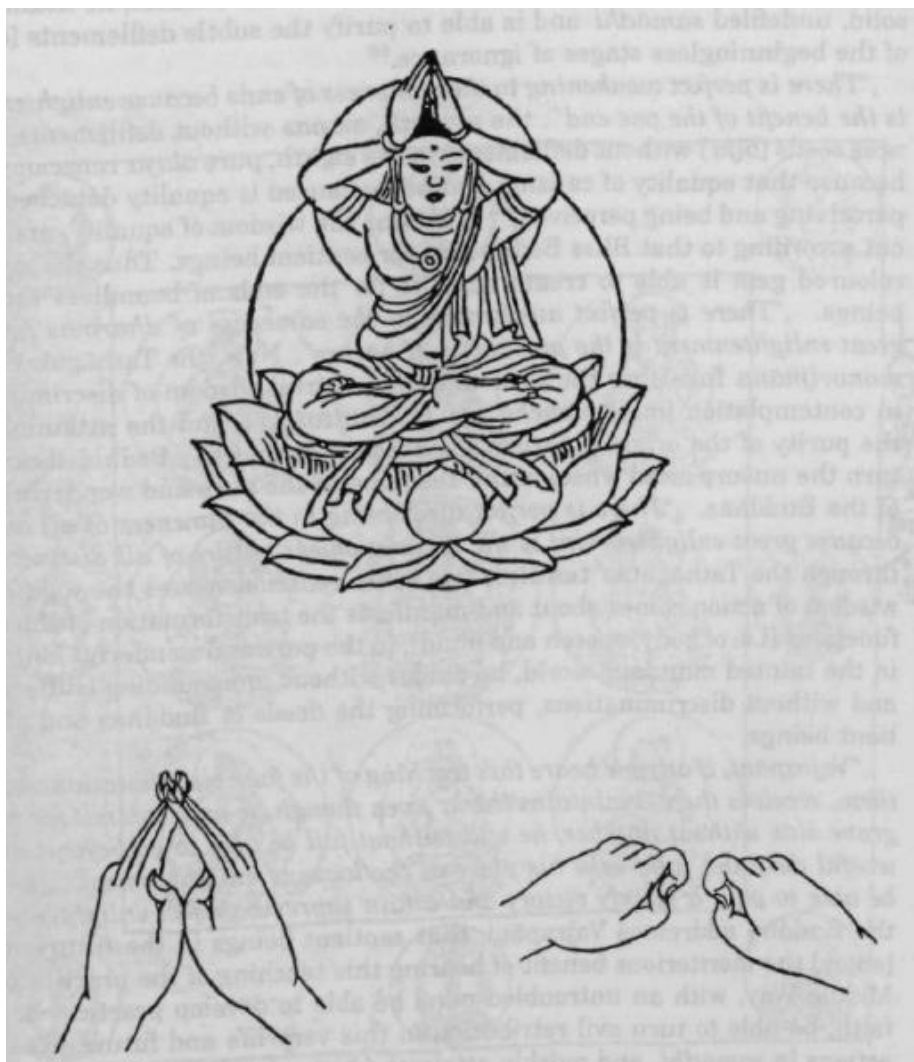


Figure 6: Vajrakarman in his standard aspect, as for example in the central assembly of the Vajradhātu Maṇḍala (cf. Gonda Raiftj (ed.), *Shinsan Butsuzō-zukan*, Tokyo 1972). The standard form of his *mudrā* is shown below (left), along with the alternative form (cf. *MDJT*, Vol. 6, *Mikkyō-inzu-shū sakuin*, nos. 226, 310).

things indicates the practitioner endowed with all attachments⁷² 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. [610c6]

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.

aṃ—the character *aṃ* means enlightenment.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ The first three apply to the common man, the *srāvaka-buddha* and the *pratyeka-buddha*, 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 Vajraratna Bodhisattva, the third is Vajradharma Bodhisattva and the fourth is Vajrakarman Bodhisattva. [610c15]

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 [610c24]

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-nehān*, *apraṭiṣṭhita-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, Akāśagarbha 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 vigour⁷⁵ 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*,⁷⁶ 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.

[611a6] Vairocana Buddha attains perfect enlightenment through the four kinds of yogic *samādhi*, that is to say the yogic *samādhi* of Vajrasattva, Vajraratna, Vajradharma, and Vajrakarīna. 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 *maṇḍala*—the Great Wisdom, Samaya, Dharma and Karma discs. They are the same types as explained before, in Great Bliss.⁷⁷ If the yogin perfects the guiding principle of wisdom, he will stand in the central position.⁷⁸ That is, he will intone the *mantra* of Vairocana Buddha: *vajradhāto āḥ*.⁷⁹

[611a17] 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.

⁷⁵ Implicit is the virtue of *vīrya*, which again implies energy and resolve.

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ i.e. the same pattern as was seen before, in the chapter concerning the Dharma-Gate of Great Bliss.

⁷⁸ 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*.

⁷⁹ Cf. *The Rishukyō*, p. 132, n. 281.

List of Abbreviations

- BGDJT* Nakamura Hajime. *Bukkyōgo-daijiten*. 3 volumes. Tokyo: Tōkyō Shoseki, 1974; repr. in 1 vol., 1981.
- MDJT* Ōmura Chōkaku *et al.* *Mikkyō-daijiten*. Rev. and enlarged edition in 6 vols. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1970. [Orig. publ. in 3 vols., 1931; photographically reduced edition in 1 vol., 1983.]
- MJT* Sawa Ryūken *et al.* (eds.). *Mikkyō-jiten*. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1975.
- Moch.* Mochizuki Shinkyō. *Bukkyō-daijiten*. 10 volumes. Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kangyō Kyōkai, 1974–7. [(1st ed.: 1933-6 (3 vols.); rev. ed.: 1954–7 (6 vols.).)]
- MW* Monier-Williams, M. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899.
- T. *Taishō-shinshū daizōkyō*. [The Taishō canon.]
- TZ. *Taishō-shinshū daizōkyō-Zuzō*. [The iconographic supplements to the above.]