

Vairocana in Tathāgata Form

Shuyu Kanaoka

I

With regrd to the Bodhisattva form of Vairocana in the Esoteric Buddhism who has a laymen's topknot (śikhāvandha) and dress, without having monk's hair and kaśāya, which represents an appearance of Śākya-muni after his getting enlightenment, the Mahāvairocana-sūtra states as follows:⁽¹⁾

“With śikhāvandha, make a crown” (髮髻以爲冠⁽²⁾).

“On his head, holds a topknot crown (jātamukūṭa)” (首持髮髻冠⁽³⁾).

The latter jāta-mukūṭa means a coiffure makes a hair like a crown, which is drawn in the “Tai-zō-zu-zō” (胎藏圖像 or garbhadhātu illustration⁽⁴⁾)

These correspondences in Tibetan is as follows:

“(He) has a śikhāvandha and a crown (mukūṭa)” (thor-tshugs dan ni dbu-rgyan ḥcan⁽⁵⁾).

“(He) has a flame-light and jāta-mukūṭa” (ḥbar-bcas thor-tsnugs-dbu-rgyan can⁽⁶⁾).

As it will be easily distinguished, the former states topknot (śikhāvandha) and crown (mukūṭa) separately, while the latter explains a crown made of hair, i. e. jāta-mukūṭa which coincide with the statements

(1) Both in the second chapter (i. e., 入曼荼羅具緣真言品第二).

(2) Taisho, XVIII, 5 a.

(3) ibid., 5 c.

(4) Taisho Illustration, vol. II.

(5) Hattori ed., p. 51, l. 1.

(6) ibid., p. 66, l. 1. Rev. Kawaguchi translated this part as follows: “(His) head is ornamented brilliantly (Kawaguchi's tr., p. 54). But I agree with Dr. Toganō's translation in his “Research on Maṇḍala, p. 134.

of Chinese texts. The latter form, or separate description of śikhāvandha and mukuṭa, more precisely speaking, to put a crown on his topknot is illustrated in current "Genzu-taizō-maṇḍala" (現圖胎藏曼荼羅 or the Extant Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala), of which more original form can be seen in the "Taizō-kyū-zuyō" (胎藏舊圖樣 or the Old illustration of Garbhadhātu Maṇḍala). Among them, the former one is understood as the more original form by scholars.⁽⁸⁾ Anyhow, it is clear enough that both of these forms represent a deity who dwells in Akaiṣṭha world or Śuddhāvāsa, in Bodhisattva form.

The most general form of Vairocana Buddha is as follows: First, he sits on a lotus flower which represents a causal-situation for Tathāgatahood or the virtue of Bodhisattvahood. He puts a laymen's garments instead of monk's robe (kaśāya). He puts a skirt made of pure white silk and similar coat, but his body is almost led naked. He puts bracelet on his arm and elbow. These descriptions represent the most typical form of Bodhisattvas. About this "Ta-jih-ching-shu" (大日經疏 or the commentary on the Mahāvairocana-sūtra)⁽⁹⁾ states as follows:

"Put the stands of white lotus on the seat. With the bīja of the character A, make the body of Mahāvairocana tathāgata. Its colour is as that of the gold Jambudvīpa. *Its form is as that of Bodhisattva*, on whose head has a topknot (śikhāvandha) which looks like a crown (mukuṭa). All over his body eluminates various kinds of ray. He wears crape coat, which symbolizes the enlightenment attained at Śuddhāvāsa stage. Various deities in this stage wear very light clothes which has entirely no weight. He is solemn and pure in his essence, so he has no necessity of any particular ornament. That is why the Lord imitates this appearance as his form."

Indian commetator Buddhaguhya (8th century) also represents the

(7) Taisho Illustration, vol. II.

(8) Prof. Hōryū Kuno: Buddha in Bodhisattva form (in the "Various Problems in Buddhology, Tokyo 1935, p. 229).

(9) fasc. IV, Taisho, XXXIX, 622 a.

form of Vairocana in the Akaniṣṭha world, almost samely with the above mentioned, as follows:⁽¹⁰⁾

“On account of that He (Mahāvairocana) dwells in the Palace of Akaniṣṭha, He has a topknot (śikhāvandha) in accordance with the manners of the deities in this heaven. This is the meaning of ‘Śikhāvandha’.

‘To possess a crown (mukṇṭa)’ means to wear a crown on the occasion of Abhiśekhā ceremony of Dharma-rāja or secular rāja.

This Akaniṣṭha is Śuddhāvāsa of Śubhākarasiṃha, so both statements point the same heaven. The description of the Bodhisattva’s appearance, which wears a light silk paridhāna on his lower part of the body and uttariya on his upper part of the body.

As it is seen in the above description, this Mahāvairocana tathāgata is, as well as the other various Bodhisattvas, represented in the form of the typical Bodhisattva or general form of ancient kings,⁽¹¹⁾ while the other four Buddhas in the Central Lotus Square of Eight Petals are represented in the Tathāgata or monk form which has a short coiled hair and robes.⁽¹²⁾ About this reason, many sūtras and commentaries explain as follows: These four Buddhas represent the four preparatory stages for the non-dialectical nirvāṇa respectively, i. e., conversion, practice, bodhi and nirvāṇa. In this last stage of dialectical nirvāṇa, Mahāvairocana dwells in Akaniṣṭha as a Lord of the three thousand Great Chiliocosmos. That is why Mahāvairocana is represented as Bodhisattva form who is a teacher of this Chiliocosmos, while the four Buddhas represented as form of monks.

II

From the above mentioned, it will be understood that in both Esoteric

(10) Mahāvairocanābhisambodhivikuvīṭadhiṣṭhāna-mahātāntra-piṇḍārtha (Peking revised ed. 67 a, also see Dr. Toganōs “Research on Maṇḍala p. 136).

(11) Dr. Toganōs op. cit., pp. 137~8.

(12) e. g., commentary on the Mahāvairocana-sūtra (大日經疏) fasc. IV., and also see the Sūtra for reciting being an abridged translation of the Vajraśekhā-rayogatantra (金剛頂瑜伽中略出念誦經, Nj. 534.) cf. Dr. Toganōs op. cit., pp. 126 & 138.

Schools of Śubhākarasiṃha and of Buddhaguhya, the form of Mahāvairocana is represented by that of Bodhisattva who dwells in the Akaniṣṭha.

But it is not always to be allowed to say Mahāvairocana is represented by Bodhisattva form. With regard to this point, it will be better to mention some examples found in Kyushu District of Japan.

In two Prefectures of North Kyushu, i. e. Ōita and Saga, it remains more than several hundred of stone images, which prevails thirty-nine places of eight counties. In 1921, about these stone images of various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Vidyārājas, which are very seldom to be found in Japan unlike in India or in China, was carefully investigated and reported by Dr. Genmyo Ono and other scholars, According to it, there found seven Mahāvairocana images.

Among these, so called Mahāvairocana's only one image which was found at Usuki County of Ōita Prefecture coincide with the definition above mentioned. Beside this, all the other images are completely different with the Bodhisattva form of typical Mahāvairocana. Especially two images at Ogata village of Ōno County and Tazome village of Nishikokuto County have typical monk or Tathāgata form which have coiled hair and kaśāya. Further, their mudrās are also diverse and have not definite form.

About this reason Dr. Ono concludes ultimately, after stating that it is very difficult to confer the period of production, because of the scanty of the necessary historical documents, and that these images were to be produced before Kūkai's visit to China (804 A. D.). Therefore the difference between these stone images and similar ones in the Central District of Japan is not from the relation of remote region and the Center, but from the gap of the period of production.

Further with regard to the reason why he conferred that these stone images were produced after Kūkai period, he mentioned three fundame-

(13) Dr. G. Ono: About the stone Buddhas in Ōita and Saga prefectures (in his "Research on the Fine Arts History of Mahāyāna Buddhism p. 532).

(14) Ono: op. cit. p. 402 & 430.

(15) ibid. p. 540

ntal points of view, viz.:

(1) Even it is called Esoteric Buddhism similarly, as the teachings of before Kūkai was not authorized as an independent sect, it is not in fashion publically.

(2) At that time, as it was before, receiving the Amoghavajra's productive translations (720~774 AD in China) into Jaoan, Japanese Esoteric Buddhist has not plenty of sūtras and kalpas unlike after Kūkai.

(3) As the Esoteric practices were not very popular, the method of practices and its Iconography were not very strict among them.⁽¹⁶⁾

By these reasons, if these stone Mahāvairocanas were produced after Heian Period (8~12 c) even the details of their general form, mudrā, āsana, halo behind an image and stand must be certain according to the definition of the manuals (kalppas). With regard to these, there was no exeption both in Tō-mitsu or Shingon Esoteric Sect and in Taimitsu or Teudai Esoteric Sect. But, now, these stone images are completely free from the said definition, expressing very particular faith with their peculiar form, so they must be produced before introducing the manuals state the detail of such iconographic definitions.

This is a short account of Dr. Ono's investigation on particular Mahāvairocana images in Japan.

III

As it is seen from the above mentioned, Dr. Ono presumed that the period of the production of these stose images of Mahāvairocana in Oita Prefecture was before introduction of both Esoteric Sects, on account of their disagreement with the definition of the traditional iconography of the Sects.

Beside above, it will be useful for us to remember some other examples found in Java. Dr. Shōun Toganō made a research on a tower at Bo-roboedoer in Java, who estimated it as a Garbha tower of ādibuddha,

(16) *ibid.* p. 538

which will be divided into seventy-three minor Garbhatowers. According to the Vajrayāna doctrine, the central Buddha there represents Akṣobhya, while the other seventy-two Buddhas are all Vairocanas.⁽¹⁷⁾

The form of all these Vairocanas are similar with that of Śākyamuni, who makes Dhama-cakra mudrā with his hands on his chest, i. e., Dharma teaching mudrā. This doesn't agree with the definition of the Mahāvairocana form which is stated in the Mahāvairocana-sūtra and its commentaries above mentioned.

Dr. Toganō makes it clear that this cakra mudrā corresponds to the Bodhyaṅgī-mudrā of Advayavajra's Pañcākāra, which is opposite to the Bodhyagrī-mudrā or Wisdom-fist muārā of general Mahāvairocana.⁽¹⁸⁾

It will be not proper now to conclude whether the Boroboedoe tower is the Adhyardaśatikāprajñāpāramitā Caitya or not, but is not peculiar that there is Vairocana in Tathāgata form who holds a Dharma-teaching mudrā like Śākyamuni, which agrees with the details of manuals and statues.⁽¹⁹⁾

"Kalpokta-marīcī-sādhana"⁽²⁰⁾ mentions the Vairocana who holds Bodhyaṅgī-mudrā in Tathāgata form who sits in the crown of Marīcī, the example of which exists in Calcutta Museum.⁽²¹⁾

Further Dr. Toganō assumes that this Vairocana in Bodhyaṅgī mudrā corresponds to the ādibuddha of the pañcajñānātmika in Nepalese Esoteric

(17) Dr. S. Toganō: op. cit. p. 476.

(18) ditto: Research on the Adhyardaśatikāprajñāpāramitā, p. 477. Vairocana in Cakra-form, like in Nepal, is explained in Advayavajra's Pañcākāra (in Advayavajrasaṃgraha, p. 41), as follows: White Vairocana born from Oṃ character holds bodhyaṅgī-mudrā which symbolizes white Vajra-cakra " (Oṃkārajaḥ śukla-varṇa-vairocanaḥ śukla-cakra (-vajra)-cihnaḥ bodhyagī-mudrā dharah).

(19) cf. Dr. Ryūshō Hikata: Gaṇḍavyūha and the Reliefs of Barabudur Galleries (in "Studies in Indology and Buddhism presented in Honour of Prof. Gisho on the occasion of his 70 th Birthday).

(20) Sādhana-mālā, vol. I, p. 277.

(21) ibid., vol. II, pl. XIII

Buddhism, i. e., Jñāna-dharma-karma from whom all Buddhas are evolved. In this case, as Vairocana is involved in the internal world of Samantabhadra Vajrasattva, it is not necessarily independent from Samantabhadra Vajrasattva. In Amoghavajra's (720~774 A. D.) "Thirtyseven deities Evolution" (三十七尊出生義), it is stated that, from him, first, the four Buddhas, i. e. Akṣobhya etc, are evolved, and secondly, the four Pāramitās and sixteen Vajrarājas and so on.⁽²³⁾

This is Nothing but Mahāvairocana which is mentioned by Śākyamitra⁽²⁴⁾ of the tenth century, and by Ānandagarbha⁽²⁵⁾ of the tenth century, and it is completely different from Vairocana in Rūpa or Sambhoga-kāya who has thirty-two marks and eighty subsidiary signs. As it is well known, in current Vajradhātu-maṇḍala. this Samantabhadra Vajrasattva is drawn as Mahāvairocana who holds Wisdom-fist mudrā or Bodhyagrī mudrā in the center of the maṇḍala, in whom Vairocana of Rūpa and Sambhoga kāya is included. It is clear that the definitions of the "Thirty-seven deities Evolutions" also stands on the same point of view. The first Assembly of the "Vajrasekhara-sūtra", first mentions Mahāvairocana in its Separate Preface, and then in its General Preface mentions Vairocana of Mahākaruṇā who dwells in Akaniṣṭha Rūpa-kāya.

Now, it will be allowed for us to conclude that, as general form of Vairocana, the Bodhisattva from which is delivered in the Mahāvairocana sūtra is most in fashion, about which, two main commentators on this sūtra, i. e., Śubhākarasiṃha and Buddhaguhya agrees with each other.

Against this, we have another form of Vairocana. He is evolved directly from internal world of Samantabhadra Vajrasattva, whose mudrā is similar with that of Śākyamuni, i. e., Dharma-cakra mudrā. This Vairocana is nothing but Mahāvairocana who represents the substantiality of Vajrasattva and the Five Wisdoms (pañcājñāna), whose form is similar

(22) Taisho, XVIII, 297 c~298 a

(23) Dr. S. Toganō: Adhyardāśatikā, p. 481 & his Maṇḍala, p. 213.

(24) Kosalaṃkāra-tattva-saṃgraha-ṭīkā (Peking, L. p. 9 a)

(25) Sarvatathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha-vyākhyā'okakarī (Peking, LII, p. 32 a)

with that of Akṣobhya tathāgata also. About this circumstance, the detail will be found in the first Assembly of the “Vajraśekhara-sūtra”, the “Thirty-seven Deities Evolution” and in leading commentaries which belong to the Vajraśekhara School, e. g. Śākyamitra, Ānandagarbha, Advaya-vajra and so on. Its examples are very easily found in various Esoteric Buddhist countries, like in Nepal, Tibet, and in Java as well.

Thus, it is clear that there are two kinds of Vairocana, one of which is represented by Bodhisattva form, and the other of which is by Tathāgata form. Formerly, Prof. Kuno regarded Mahāvairocana in Bodhisattva form as an ultimate form of the Buddha's body. But after the completion of the Mahāvairocana sūtra, in the history of Esoteric Buddhism, the Vajraśekhara school became in power, who maintained the importance of Ādibuddha and Yogacāristic discipline for Him. This Ādibuddha is, sometimes, represented by Vajrasattva form, or sometimes, by Mahāvairocana form.⁽²⁷⁾ Thus it will be better for us to conclude that the Mahāvairocana in the Bodhisattva form is not an ultimate form of the Buddha's body, but He in the Tathāgata form is an ultimate one.

If this assumption was accepted, the stone images of Mahāvairocana in Ōita Prefecture, I mentioned at the beginning of this article, is not also able to assume immediately that it must be before an introduction of the orthodox two Esoteric Sects into Japan from China, only on account of disagreement of its form with that defined in the Orthodox Iconography. I do not deserve to conclude the period of the production of such kind of Buddhist images, but it will be necessary for us to remember that, at least, there were two kinds of schools with regard to the Mahāvairocana's body investigation and its practices, that is, briefly speaking, Mahāvairocana-sūtra and Vajraśekhara school.

(26) Prof. Hōryū Kuno: op. cit., pp. 212~230.

(27) see my “ādibuddha thought as seen from the Bodhisattva concept (Toyo University Asian Studies, No. I. pp. 25~32).

(28) It will give a difficulty for Dr. Ono to explain the difference of Mahāvairocana form only its earlier period of production that even remains a regular formed Mahāvairocana mentioned above. p. s. reference with * mark denotes written in English.