Shingon Risshū 真言律宗 (literally, “Mantra Vinaya school”) designates the Japanese Buddhist order of Saidaiji (Saidaiji-ryū 西大寺流) in Nara 奈良 that emerged from the “precepts restoration movement” (kairitsu fukkō undō 戒律復興運動) initiated by Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290; also Eizon) and others around 1238 (Groner 2005, 215; cf. infra). The distinctive twofold appellation “Shingon Risshū” hints at the synthesis of Shingon doctrine and ritual with the praxis and ceremonial of monastic discipline as propagated in the Japanese “Vinaya school” or Risshū (Quinter 2007, 437).¹

Although very little is known about the first Buddhist communities on the Japanese archipelago (Hankó 2003, 329–33), early Nara-period (710–784/94) hieratical officiates seem to have been regulated by the state and primarily conducted for its welfare. The procedure had more to do with evaluating a candidate’s diligence in chanting sūtras or performing nation-protection ceremonies than with his/her vowing to uphold a certain set of disciplinary rules in front of a quorum of ten (or in remote areas five) legitimately ordained monks (three learning masters and two or seven witnesses), as prescribed by the “orthodox” method (Hankó 2003, 333). Aside from the official sacerdotal examination system, there were also self-ordained priests and priestesses or “monastics who liberated themselves” (jidosō 私度僧) (Groner 1984b, 5–6).²

In 733, however, the court sent two men to China to request Chinese masters to come to Japan and perform legitimate ordinations according to the regulations of the Sifenlü 四分律 (Shibunritsu, T. 1428) (Groner

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¹ On the origins and establishment of Risshū in Japan, see Hankó 2003, esp. 327ff; for genealogies, 357–58.
² For contemporary self-ordinations or “vowing to keep the precepts on your own accord” (i.e., jisei-jukai 自誓受戒) and their textual foundation, see Hankó 2003, 332–34, esp. *2; and Yamabe 2005; on early ordinations in Japan, see Hankó 2003, 328ff.
Their invitation was accepted by the reputed *vinaya* master (*risshi* 律師) Jianzhen 鑑真 (Ganjin, 688–763), who reached Japan in 753 or 754 (Ueda 1939, 120; Hankó 2003, 346). He introduced the *Shibunritsu* interpretation of Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) or the Nanshan Vinaya school (Nanshan Lüzong 南山律宗), and conferred the “full precepts” (*gusokukai* 具足戒) of the continental tradition upon Japanese priests who renounced their previous “unorthodox” initiations, and thus became the first full-fledged formally and properly ordained monastics on Japanese soil. Jianzhen erected an ordination platform hall (*kaidan’in* 戒壇院, also *kaidandō* 戒壇堂) at Tōdaiji 東大寺 (Nara) in 755, which became the center for official ordinations (Groner 1984b, 8–9).

However, as in China where Mahāyānists took an additional set of precepts as a supplement to the *Shibunritsu*, Jianzhen also conferred the bodhisattva-śīla (*bosatsukai* 菩薩戒) of the *Fanwangling* 梵網經 (*Bonmōkyō*, T. 1484) upon the Japanese candidates as a “separate ordination” (*betsuju* 別受) (Groner 1979, 26; Unno 1994, 29; Abé 1999, 47–49; Groner 2005, 214). Jianzhen’s establishment of a legitimate ordination system gave him the reputation of the founder of Risshū, which from 759 onward was headquartered at Tōshōdaiji 唐招提寺 (Ueda 1939, 120; Hankó 2003, 13–14 nn. 39–40).

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3 This Chinese translation of the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* had been accepted as the only valid scriptural authority for monastic ordination practice throughout China almost two decades earlier (Heirman 2002, 422; Heirman 2007, 195; André Bareau, cited in McRae 2005, 70).

4 On Ganjin, see Hankó 2003, 341–52.

5 For six years the Tōdaiji Kaidan’in was the only permanent ordination platform on Japanese soil, but after Empress Kōken 孝謙 (r. 749–758; a.k.a. Shōtoku 称徳, r. 764–770) ordered the erection of two additional precept platforms in 761, it became known as the “central platform” or *chūō kaidan* 中央戒壇; at Yakushiji 楽師寺 in Shimotsuke 下野 (Tochigi) there was an “eastern platform” or *tōkaidan* 東戒壇 and at Kannonji 觀音寺 in Chikuzen 筑前 (Fukuoka) a *saikaidan* 西戒壇 or “western platform” (Eliot 2005, 232). On ordination platforms in India and China, see McRae 2005, 75ff.

6 Traditionally the alleged translation of the Sanskrit *Brahmajāla sūtra* or the tenth chapter of the *Bodhisattvaśīla sūtra* attributed to Kumārajīva (344–413) in 406, but nowadays accepted as a Chinese forgery. By the end of the fifth century, the second fascicle of the *Bonmōkyō* circulated as a so-called *Bodhisattva-prātimokṣa* (Pusa jieben; *Bosatsu kaihon* 菩薩戒本), which formed the basis for the Mahāyānist code in East Asia. On the term *bodhisattva-prātimokṣa*, see Malalasekera 1972, 240–46. For a brief discussion on the apocryphal origins of the *Bonmōkyō*, see Hankó 2003, 108–10. For an annotated German translation, see Hankó 2003, 125–81; see 182–85 for an overview. For a complete French translation, cf. De Groot 1967. For further reference, see Groner 1990, esp. 251–57; Gombrich 1998, 52–53; Yamabe 2005.