



William M. Bodiford, ed., *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*

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THIS VOLUME is subtitled “Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Stanley Weinstein,” and all of the contributors received their PhDs at Yale University under his supervision. As anyone in Buddhist Studies is aware, Weinstein is one of the most influential specialists in East Asian Buddhism, and he has authored some of the seminal works in the field. These essays are a further testimony to his legacy, as all the contributors are prominent scholars in Chinese or Japanese Buddhism.

The chapters in this volume cover a wide range of topics related to the reception and adaptation of Buddhist monastic discipline in China and Japan. The title is somewhat misleading, as there is little discussion or contextualization of *vinaya* in relation to its Indian origins, nor is there any significant discussion of *vinaya* traditions in Southeast Asia or Tibet, Mongolia, or Central Asia, nor is there any coverage of Korea or Vietnam. Rather, the authors focus on specific figures or controversies in China and Japan, primarily in the medieval period, and mostly rely on textual sources.

As Bodiford points out in his introduction, the term “*vinaya*” has a wide range of associations, mostly connected with the rules of monastic conduct and issues relating to it. Chinese Buddhists inherited several textual *vinaya* traditions, including the Sarvāstivāda *Ten-Recitation Vinaya* (*Shisong lü*), the Dharmaguptaka *Four-Part Vinaya* (*Sifen lü*), the Mahāsāṃghika *Vinaya* (*Mahesengqi lü*) and the Mahīśāka *Five-Part Vinaya* (*Wufen lü*). Their translation into Chinese in the early part of the fifth century began a process of evaluation and adaptation of the norms of Indian Buddhist monasticism. As Buddhism was being imported to China, Chinese learned of a distinction between a “Greater Vehicle” (Mahāyāna) and a “Lesser Vehicle” (Hīnayāna), and debates soon arose regarding whether the *vinaya* collections belonged to the superior first tradition or the latter. To further complicate matters, self-proclaimed “Mahāyāna” texts containing precepts for bodhisattvas and

denouncing the earlier “Hīnayāna” collections began to appear in China. The most influential of these was the apocryphal *Brahma Net Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing*, composed in China around 432–460), which declared that the “Hīnayāna” *vinayas* were superseded by its “Mahāyāna” precepts and that aspiring bodhisattvas should eschew the inferior codes. These controversies, along with the imperative of adapting a monastic system devised in India to East Asian cultural contexts, led to a range of new paradigms for monastic rules and ongoing debates regarding what should be considered normative for Buddhist practitioners. A further complication was the widespread belief in East Asia that the world had entered the age of “degenerate dharma” (Ch. *mofa*; Jp. *mappō*) and that the norms and practices of the past are no longer relevant or effective. By at least the Kamakura period (1185–1333), most Japanese Buddhists accepted the notion that they were living in *mappō*, and a number of new schools and paradigms arose in response to the perceived need to adapt the tradition to the reduced capacities of Buddhist practitioners.

Nobuyoshi Yamabe’s chapter examines the role of visionary experience prior to and during conferral of precepts based on the *Brahma Net Sūtra*. Such experiences were widely viewed as attestations of authenticity, particularly for Buddhists engaged in practices prohibited by traditional *vinaya*. Yamabe focuses on the story of Daojin (ca. fifth century), who requested the precepts from Dharmakṣema, but was told that he would be required to receive a vision before he given them. After an experience of a suitable sign, Dharmakṣema conferred the precepts, but indicated that this was merely a confirmation of the Buddha’s approval. As Yamabe notes, this sort of visionary experience became an important aspect of Chinese ordinations, and was used to justify innovations and new practices.

David Chappell examines how rituals of repentance were used to rescue deceased ancestors and other spirits. The famous Indian antecedent to this is the story of Maudgalyāyāna rescuing his mother from rebirth as a hungry ghost. As Chappell points out, in East Asia the practice was extended, and it was widely believed that Buddhist rituals and other practices had the power to save many sentient beings from unfortunate rebirths. He also argues that this practice seems to have been largely an East Asian innovation and that repentance rituals for the dead were not mentioned by early Buddhist pilgrims to India. His analysis focuses on a ritual that was designed to rescue a princess whose evil deeds had caused her to be reborn as a snake. One interesting aspect of Chappell’s discussion is that she was apparently guilty as charged, but the ritual was able to avert her karma and cause her to be reborn as a god. He argues that such rites vastly broadened the focus of concern from oneself to all sentient beings. Instead of undergoing repentance in pursuit one’s own religious aims, these practices could bring positive results to others, presumably even beings who rejected Buddhism. The sincerity and merit of the performer(s) was the main determining factor in how effective the rituals would be, not the karma of the beneficiaries.

John McRae provides an insightful analysis of the development of the ordination platform movement in medieval China, focusing on Daoxuan’s (596–667) efforts to

build an ordination platform corresponding to a vision of the Buddha's ordination platform at Jetavana in India. He subsequently constructed a structure that resembled what he had seen in his revelation and believed that the connection between his structure and the Buddha's platform augmented the authenticity of the ordinations performed at his monastery. McRae points out that for Chinese Buddhists of the time, the Buddha was not a human sage, but a golden cosmic being, and Buddhist rituals were thought to be imbued with occult power. According to McRae, any misgivings about the authenticity of Chinese ordinations were eliminated in Daoxuan's mind by his vision of the Buddha and the certainty that the ordinations he conducted corresponded exactly to those performed in India under the Buddha's direction. His attention to detail included an ordination platform that he believed mirrored the one used by the Buddha (even though there is no historical evidence to suggest that the Buddha or his followers ever built such a structure).

The Linhuai ordination scandal is the focus of T. H. Barrett's chapter. The scandal centered on a scheme to sell large numbers of Buddhist ordinations, many of them to people who apparently had little interest in or knowledge of Buddhism, but who wished to avoid paying taxes or military service. This was in violation of government regulations on the Buddhist *samgha* and traditional Buddhist practice, and the local officials involved were clearly motivated by the prospect of monetary gain. The incident led the government to impose strict regulations on the conferral of Buddhist ordinations, but Barrett looks beyond the generally known details of the case and argues that the Buddhist principals may have been motivated by sincere religious sentiment, and not merely greed. He takes a variety of perspectives, and points out that they may have wished to free peasants from excessive government impositions and lead large numbers of people into the Buddhist fold.

Yifa discusses the Chan school's approach to *vinaya* in her chapter, which focuses on the *Pure Rules for Chan Monasteries* (*Chanyuan qinggui*). Written in 1103, it presented a new *vinaya* adapted for Chan institutions, much of which derived from Indian models, but which also reflected Chinese ideas and traditions. Among these are Confucian notions of etiquette and Chinese social and cultural norms. Yifa argues that they are not so much a departure from Indian models as a Sinicization of monastic life that adapted a foreign system to the Chinese milieu.

As Buddhism grew in influence in China, governments imposed regulations on the *samgha* and its institutions. Morten Schlütter examines some important examples of this from the Song dynasty (960–1279) in his chapter. The focus is on “hereditary” (*jiayi*) and “public” (*shifang*) monasteries. The abbots of the latter type were chosen by prominent clergy, while in the latter abbots followed a system of lineal succession. Schlütter demonstrates how regulating the procedures for succession allowed the government to better control the Chinese *samgha*, and he argues that the fact that Chan largely opted for the “public” model was a significant factor in its growth during this period.

Different Buddhist traditions adopted regulations and institutions that reflected their doctrines and practices. Daniel A. Getz focuses on how Tiantai adapted the

bodhisattva precepts in his chapter, in which he claims that Tiantai's appropriation of bodhisattva precepts was at least partly a response to current notions of Pure Land Buddhism and that it was motivated by a desire to broaden lay participation by incorporating popular deities, practices, and traditions. Tiantai viewed itself as a training program for bodhisattvas, but it was widely seen as an elite scholastic school; by adopting Pure Land Buddhism into its system, it sought to "bring ever increasing numbers of laypeople into the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva vision through the promise of the Pure Land" (181).

The remaining articles in this volume focus on Japan. Bodiford examines the precept lineage traditionally held to have been transmitted by Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma is one of the most important and enigmatic figures in the history of East Asian Buddhism and is the subject of numerous legends and myths. Because so little is known about him or his activities, he has been appropriated in different ways by various individuals and schools, particularly Chan/Zen. Bodiford mentions the impact of Saichō's (767–822) famous rejection of Indian "Hīnayāna" *vinaya* in favor of bodhisattva precepts and his decision to establish an alternative system of ordination on Mt. Hiei. According to Bodiford, Saichō viewed Bodhidharma as an Indian paradigm of a "bodhisattva monk," fully committed to Buddhist practice but unburdened by the unnecessary restrictions of traditional monasticism. In this interpretation, conferral of the bodhisattva precepts is thought to directly transmit the awakened mind of the buddhas and patriarchs. In Japan, those who received the precepts were conceived as appropriating this mind transmission and thus making a direct link to the very origins of Buddhism.

Paul Groner examines the Japanese practice of self-ordination, focusing on Eison (1201–1290) and a group of colleagues, who were dissatisfied with the institutionalized Buddhism of their day; in 1236, following visionary experiences confirming the validity of their intended actions, they conducted a ceremony in which they gave themselves Buddhist precepts. This was in direct violation of *vinaya* regulations—which require a quorum of properly ordained monks—but they considered their actions to be justified by visions, which they believed confirmed the approval of the Buddha himself. Groner argues that the situation was complex, because while this and subsequent actions violated *vinaya* regulations, Eison was committed to maintaining the precepts, and he found justifications in the *vinaya* and in Buddhist scriptures. He considered many of his Japanese colleagues to be lax in observance of the precepts, and his self-ordination and subsequent conferral of the precepts to others were intended to revive the *vinaya* and to promote pure practice of monastic codes.

James Dobbins points out that the precepts have been a subject of contention in Japanese Buddhism, and following Shinran's (1173–1263) famous rejection of monasticism, the Pure Land tradition has been widely associated with valorization of the life of a householder over that of a monk. Shinran argued that taking monastic vows entails an implicit rejection of the notion of Amida's saving grace because it involves adhering to rules of conduct in order to accrue positive karma. This was linked to the notion of *mappō*, during which people degenerate to such an extent that the norms

of the past are no longer appropriate, and it is simply impossible for practitioners to maintain the precepts. As Dobbins argues, once this principle was adopted, some began to question how far this should be applied: is any action justified by *mappō*, including mass murder? Can one with faith in Amida engage in acts of violence and crime, secure in the protection of Amida's vow? Some Pure Land leaders took radical stances, but most advocated adherence to ethical norms as a sign of salvation, and Dobbins shows how in the Jōdōshu tradition precepts were viewed as ancillary to the nenbutsu, and adherence to them was seen as a way of strengthening one's faith and deepening practice.

Richard Jaffe examines some Japanese debates regarding meat eating. Unlike other East Asian countries, vegetarianism is uncommon in Japanese Buddhist monasteries. There is no prohibition against meat eating in the *vinaya* (except for certain types of meat), but a number of Mahāyāna scriptures explicitly condemn it. Jaffe examines several interesting texts that linked meat eating with the development of a modern Japan. As part of Japan's war effort during the Meiji period, some Buddhist clergy argued that the vitality of Western countries was partly connected with diets that included meat and that Japanese must also adopt such dietary practices in order to better compete with them. A carnivorous diet was presented as an expedient means that would promote better health and national vigor, that would serve the cause of Japanese nationalism, and that would make the nation stronger.

These essays span a wide range of time periods and topics, and the quality of the scholarship is consistently good. Some of the topics look at movements or people who failed to exert long-term influence in either China or Japan, but the issues they grappled with were all major points of contention. The overall thrust of the book is the various ways in which Chinese and Japanese Buddhists worked to adapt a monastic tradition created in the warm climate of India in a society in which religious mendicants had been supported for centuries to a fundamentally different climate and social milieu. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of Buddhist monasticism and how it was adapted in East Asia.

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