

Journal of Buddhist Ethics

ISSN 1076-9005

<http://www.buddhistethics.org/>

## Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya

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# Review of *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*

Brian Nichols\*

*Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya*. Edited by William M. Bodiford. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005, x + 317 pages, ISBN: 0-8248-2787-2, US \$48.00 (cloth).

Monasticism has been a central feature of the Buddhist tradition from its founding in India to its present revival in China and spread to America. Given the importance of monasticism and the *vinaya*, the rules for living as a monk in a monastery, it is refreshing to find a volume dedicated to exploring this terrain. *Going Forth* is a collection of essays about the *vinaya*, precepts, ordinations, penance rituals, monks and monasteries in China and Japan written by former students of Stanley Weinstein and presented in his honor. Given the nature of the volume, the connection between chapters is necessarily loose, bearing on disparate issues related to the *vinaya* and monasticism in China and Japan across time periods ranging from the fifth to the twentieth century.

A brief introduction notes the central role traditionally ascribed to the *vinaya* as the instrument through which the Buddhist order is established and through which the Buddhist teachings are preserved and transmitted. Bodiford then discusses issues in the reception of the *vinaya* in China and Japan and how the chapters in this volume shed light on di-

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verse aspects of the development, interpretation and dismissal of the *vinaya* in East Asia. The first seven chapters focus on China and the remaining four deal with Japan. While the content of the chapters is quite diverse, the methodology they exhibit is rather similar and exemplary. Each author uses old texts to recreate persons, contexts and debates, and to weave stories and reveal features of Buddhism that would otherwise remain unknown. In each of the essays, doctrine meets practice, and the author demonstrates how fallible and creative humans have adapted austere ideals in the Indian *vinaya* to differences in time, place and circumstance. While some of the chapters do not deal with the *vinaya* directly, *Going Forth* succeeds in expanding our associations of the *vinaya* beyond the narrow strictures of "rules for clerics" to its application in the experience of Buddhists in China and Japan.

Understanding that different chapters will appeal to different readers depending on their training and interests, I will offer a brief summary of each chapter with the aim of conveying enough information to alert interested readers to the presence of articles that may either interest them or demand their attention.

In the first chapter Nobuyoshi Yamabe examines the visionary dimensions of repentance and ordination found in the *Brahma Net Sutra* (BNS) and in Indian and Central Asian antecedents. The BNS is an apocryphal sutra of central importance in the establishment of bodhisattva precepts in East Asia. After Saichō (767-822), it became common for monks in Japan to be ordained with bodhisattva precepts rather than the *vinaya*. According to the BNS, visions are required for self-ordination before statues of buddhas and bodhisattvas and for the validation of one's repentance, which is itself a prerequisite for ordination. Seeking to answer why the BNS makes the connection between visionary experience and ordination, Yamabe looks for Indian and Central Asian texts that predate the BNS and similarly call for visions. He argues that the BNS re-

flects a popular conception of Indo-Central Asian Buddhism with respect to visionary repentance and its connection to the precepts. In conclusion he presents a contemporary Japanese example of self-ordination practiced by disciples of Saichō on Mt. Hiei that mirrors the structure of experiences described in the BNS.

Chapter two has little direct bearing on the *vinaya*; in this chapter David Chappell examines the use of repentance ceremonies in Chinese Buddhism and Daoism to mitigate the suffering of the dead. In the process he engages in much needed comparison between Buddhist and Daoist texts and rituals. In addition, he compares Indian and Chinese uses of repentance and argues that Chinese repentance rituals used to relieve the suffering of departed kin represent an innovation not found in Indian materials, which focus on the moral improvement of the individual: "What was new for Chinese Buddhists was the notion that individual misdeeds could result in collective punishment and that salvation for the dead was possible if sincere repentance, pleas, and vows were made by the living." (p. 60) In conclusion he argues that the repentance ritual of the *Precious Scroll of the Liang Emperor* offers "a clear case of the signification of Buddhism." (p. 64)

John McRae (chapter three) engagingly sheds light on an important chapter in Chinese Buddhist history by examining the efforts of Daoxuan (596-667) in constructing an ordination platform meant to replicate the Buddha's platform at Jetavana monastery. McRae argues that Daoxuan's was an attempt to relegitimize Chinese Buddhism by bringing the Buddha to the ordination platform (symbolically in the shape of the altar, physically through relics, epistemologically through lineage) to empower ordinations. His efforts inspired what McRae describes as an ordination platform movement.

T. H. Barrett (chapter four) presents a multi-perspectival (historical, political, economic, doctrinal, Chan and Daoist) account of the Linhuai

ordination scandal that allows readers to understand that multiple readings are possible. The scandal involved the sale of ordination certificates by Wang Zhixing (d. 836), the governor of Xuzhou and Sizhou (in present Jiangsu), for personal enrichment. He was denounced in a memorial by Li Deyu (787-859) but praised for his support of Buddhism in a poem by Bai Juyi (772-846). Barrett's complex excursion ends with a re-evaluation of Bai's positive portrayal—a liberal attitude toward ordinations may reflect more than crass economic motives, it may be a skillful means of spreading the dharma.

Yifa (chapter five) presents a succinct (twelve pages) and authoritative challenge to the traditional notion that the Chan monastic codes known as pure rules (*qing gui*) represent a distinct sectarian "declaration of independence." Examining the earliest extant Chan rules, the *Pure Rules for Chan Monasteries* (*Chanyuan qinggui*, 1103), Yifa finds that many features thought to be Chan innovations are actually found in earlier Indian *vinayas* (translated into Chinese)—for example, the use of a Chan stick to awaken drowsy meditators! Furthermore, she points to Confucian elements of other supposed Chan innovations such as etiquette related to the tea ceremony.

Morton Schlütter (chapter six) describes the differences between hereditary monasteries in which the abbacy was passed on to a member of the tonsure family and public monasteries in which the abbacy was open to approval or appointment by local authorities and could not be kept within the tonsure family. He reveals how public monasteries were associated with the Chan school from early on in the Song dynasty (960-1279) and how hereditary monasteries were called *vinaya* monasteries although they were not associated with the Vinaya school. Schlütter stresses the importance of understanding the meaning of these associations in reading Song texts that use the terms Chan and *vinaya* to describe public and hereditary monasteries respectively rather than as

doctrinal classifications. In conclusion, Schlütter argues that the growth and dominance of the Chan school during the Song dynasty owes a good deal to government policies that favored the proliferation of public monasteries.

Daniel Getz (chapter seven) examines four monks of the Wu-Yue kingdom and early Song dynasty, focusing on their bodhisattva ordination manuals. The masters he examines are the Chan master Yanshou (904-975), the Tiantai monks Zhili (960-1028) and Zunshi (964-1032) and the *Vinaya* monk Yuanzhao (1048-1116). Getz argues that the incorporation of litanies of popular deities and references to the Pure Land into their bodhisattva ordination rites reflects a trend of catering to the interests of lay Buddhists.

William Bodiford (chapter eight) draws out an important and overlooked connection between Tendai, Tantra and Zen as exemplified in medieval Japanese Zen ordination with Bodhidharma's precepts. Focusing on the Tendai monk Kojo (779-858), Bodiford demonstrates how the Tendai tradition sought to validate its rejection of the *Four Part Vinaya* and reliance on bodhisattva precepts by establishing a lineage of bodhisattva precepts from Sakyamuni to Bodhidharma to Saichō. These precepts are variously termed One-Mind precepts or perfect sudden precepts (*endon kai*) and identified with the body of Vairocana. The influence of these Tendai notions is traced to the Zen monk Kokan's (1278-1346) writings on ordination and precepts. What emerges in Zen is a precept initiation ceremony designed to awaken one's Buddha nature that owed much to Tendai doctrine.

Paul Groner (chapter nine) traces the efforts of the Japanese monk Eison (1201-1290) who, along with Kakujō (1193-1249), turned to self-ordination in order to revive the *vinaya* in Japan. Groner not only weaves a nice biographical sketch of this influential monk, but sheds light on intriguing issues in the ordination of monks, nuns and laypersons during

this period in Japanese history such as nuns that temporarily change genders!

James Dobbins (chapter 10) outlines attitudes towards precepts taken by Japan's Pure Land school (Jōdoshū) from the time of its founding under Hōnen (1133-1212) into modern times. While Hōnen followed precepts himself, he spoke of them as auxiliary to *nembutsu* practice; this ambiguity led to different levels of acceptance of precepts in Japanese Pure Land. Shinran's (1173-1263) response was most radical—the outright rejection of precepts. Dobbins looks at the more moderate and ambivalent approaches by Jōdoshū monks who accepted bodhisattva precepts as moral guides, but lacked the will to strictly adhere to them in the age of *Dharma's* decline (*mappō*).

The final chapter by Richard Jaffe examines Japanese debates over the eating of meat by Buddhist clerics from the Tokugawa era (1603-1867) to the twentieth century. There were traditionalists who argued that monks should practice vegetarianism out of compassion, but these voices never won out over the more progressive voices arguing that Western knowledge of biology and nutrition proved that meat protein was necessary for vigor. In the twentieth century, the "progressive" voices adjoined nationalistic rhetoric to their defense of meat eating. Eat meat, they argued, for the health and vigor of the nation. Today, Jaffe notes, meat eating by Buddhist clerics in Japan excites little controversy.

The book is volume eighteen of the Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism. It is well edited and terminology appears to be used consistently throughout. Chinese characters and kanji are consistently provided along with *pinyin* and *rōmaji* for proper names and terminology. There is an index and the essays share a common bibliography. The standard of scholarship throughout the volume is consistently high and the book offers fine contributions to our understanding of East Asian Buddhism; it also raises questions that require more attention before a

broader consensus may be established. On the downside, the title of the volume is somewhat misleading in that one expects to learn more about what it means to be a monk or nun, that is, one who has "gone forth." A more substantial introduction may have been able to improve on this and other lacunae, but as a collection of essays that advance our understanding and raise questions about East Asian monasticism it succeeds wonderfully.