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The History of Buddhist Nuns in Japan

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Buddhism was introduced into Japan in the sixth century C.E. The first official introduction of the Buddhist faith into Japan was in the year 538 C.E. (the seventh year of the Emperor Kin-myō), when King Sheng Ming (r. 523–553 C.E.) of the kingdom of Paekshe (now Korea) presented Buddhist images, scriptures, and other items to the emperor of Japan and advised him to follow Buddhism. Buddhism had already been introduced into Japan privately, however, by Koreans who had immigrated to Japan earlier. Later on, Buddhism was introduced into Japan directly from China, and most of the main doctrines of Chinese Buddhism were introduced into Japan during the Nara era (710–781 C.E.).

NUNS IN CHINA

Buddhism had been introduced into China from about the first century C.E. from India via central Asia. During the early centuries, Buddhist scriptures began to be translated into Chinese, and some Chinese took the tonsure and lived as *bhikṣu*, following the example of monks who came from central Asia. In those days, however, the Vinaya-piṭaka had not yet been introduced into China in its complete form, and most Chinese had only a poor knowledge of Vinaya. They did not take refuge in the Three Jewels (*trīśaraṇa-gaṃana*) or receive the five precepts according to the proper procedures.

As time went on, the number of monks and nuns increased. According to the *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*,¹ during the Chien Kang era (313–316 C.E.) of the Hsi Chin dynasty, the nun Ching Chen and twenty-four other women became nuns by receiving the tonsure and taking the ten precepts from the master Chih Shan, who was from central Asia. These nuns built the Bamboo Forest Temple in Loyang and practiced the Dharma there. By receiving the ten precepts from the monk Tzu San, they seem to have been the first *śrāmaṇerikā* in China, but it is not clear which school of Vinaya they followed since we do not find that information in the written accounts.

The first woman to take full ordination (*upasampadā*) properly and to become a *bhikṣuṇī* was the nun Hui-kuo. This occurred in the fifth century C.E. The sixty-one volumes of the Daśabhāṇavāra Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin school were translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva between 404 and 409 C.E. The sixty volumes of the Caturvarga Vinaya of the Dharmaguptaka school were translated into Chinese by Buddhayśas between 410 and 412 C.E. After that, Fa Hsien, in cooperation with Buddhābhadrā, translated the forty volumes of the Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya between 416 and 417 C.E. Buddhajīva translated the thirty volumes of the Pañcavarga Vinaya of the Mahīśāsaka school between 423 and 424 C.E. Since the texts of the Vinaya-piṭaka of the four schools were translated into Chinese in the beginning of the fifth century, the Chinese had by then enough knowledge to begin performing the full ordination (*upasampadā*) ceremony according to the *ñatti-catuttha-kamma*, a procedure that is presided over by an assembly of ten fully ordained monks (*dasavaggo bhikkhusaṅgho*). However, owing to a lack of records, we do not know when this procedure began to be used.

According to *Biographies of Eminent Monks*,² Guṇavarman, who was from India, died in 431 C.E. at the age of sixty-five and was cremated before the full ordination platform (*upasampadā-maṇḍala-sīmā*) at the South Forest Temple. This indicates that a platform for performing full ordination already existed at that time and that a full ordination (*upasampadā*) might have already taken place there. Since in those days many monks had come to China from India and central Asia, it was not difficult to find ten *bhikṣu* to perform the full ordination. However, it is not known what school of Vinaya the Chinese monks followed in receiving ordination. In the early years, it was popular to study the Daśabhāṇavāra Vinaya, so these monks may have received the precepts in accordance with the Daśabhāṇavāra Vinaya.

The first full ordination of *bhikṣuṇī* was performed later since it required a *saṅgha* of ten *bhikṣu* and a *saṅgha* of ten *bhikṣuṇī*. According to the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*,³ in the sixth year of the Yuen Chia era (426 C.E.), eight *bhikṣuṇī* came to the southern capital from Sri Lanka. They questioned the Chinese nuns, saying that it would have been impossible to perform a full ordination for nuns according to the proper procedure administered by ten *bhikṣu* and ten *bhikṣuṇī* because there were no *bhikṣuṇī* in China. In response to their advice, the nun Hui-kuo began to doubt whether her ordination was correct and requested Guṇavarman to perform a full ordination for nuns, with both *saṅgha*. However, there were only eight *bhikṣuṇī* from Sri Lanka—not enough to perform the ordination. Moreover, the nuns from Sri Lanka did not know Chinese. Therefore, they decided to invite two more nuns from Sri Lanka and have the nuns learn Chinese.

Although Guṇavarman died in 431, right after his death Devasara and some other *bhikṣuṇī* arrived from Sri Lanka, so there were at least ten *bhikṣuṇī* all together. Subsequently, Saṅghavarman arrived from India and was requested

by Hui-kuo and the other nuns in Yin Fu Ssu to perform the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. Thus, they received full ordination from both *Saṅgha* and became *bhikṣuṇī* in accordance with the proper procedure. The *bhikṣu* precept instructor (*upādhyāya*) at the ordination was Saṅghavarman, but we do not know the name of the *bhikṣuṇī* precept instructor. *Guṇavarman* had translated the *Caturvargika Bhikṣuṇī Karma*⁴ and spread the precepts of the Dharmagupta Vinaya school. *Saṅghavarman*, who translated the ten volumes of the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya-mātrkā*,⁵ maintained and transmitted the precepts of the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya school. So the precepts that were received from Saṅghavarman may have been those of the Daśabhāṇavāra Vinaya of the Sarvāstivāda school. There is a possibility that the precepts that the nuns received were those of the Caturvarga Vinaya of the Dharmagupta school, but this cannot be ascertained owing to a lack of documentation. In any case, the nun Hui-kuo and her companions were officially the first *bhikṣuṇī* in China who were properly ordained. When they were ordained, the Sri Lankan *bhikṣuṇī* constituted a full *Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha* and administered the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. Therefore, the precepts that were transmitted would have been those of the Theravāda school. However, in those days, the Theravāda precepts had not been introduced into China, so Hui-kuo and the other nuns could not easily have received the Theravāda precepts.

We do not know how long this full ordination for nuns, which began in 433 C.E., continued. These days, there are a large number of nuns in monasteries in Taiwan and China who receive full ordination according to the Caturvarga Vinaya, but they apparently do not always receive the ordination from both *Saṅgha*. There are also some nuns who do not receive full ordination, taking only *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts. Most take *bodhisattva* precepts as well.

NUNS IN KOREA

Next I would like to give a short explanation about Korean nuns. Buddhism was introduced into the kingdom of Koryo from the northern part of China. Soon afterward, Buddhism spread into the Paekshe and Silla kingdoms in the southern part of what is today Korea. Although the full ordination of *bhikṣuṇī* by two *Saṅgha* began in Nanking in the southern part of China in 433 C.E., it is not clear when it began in Korea. It would seem that the full ordination for nuns was introduced into Korea soon after that. At present, there are nuns in Korea who have received *śrāmaṇerikā*, *bhikṣuṇī*, and *bodhisattva* precepts. These *bodhisattva* precepts are the Mahāyāna precepts that were popularized by Chih-i (538–597 C.E.), the founder of the T'ien T'ai sect in China. Since these Mahāyāna precepts are explained in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, they are known as the *Brahmajāla* precepts. These precepts became popular in China after Chih-i and were introduced into Korea and Japan, where they also became very popular.

NUNS IN JAPAN

Next I would like to explain the history of Japanese nuns. Buddhism was introduced into Japan in the sixth century C.E. In the emperor's court, the ministers were split into a pro-Buddhist faction and an anti-Buddhist faction. Emperor Kin-myō gave Sogano Inami a Buddhist image and permitted him to worship it, and he converted his own house into a temple and enshrined a statue there. Afterward, his son Sogano Umako obtained two more Buddhist images and put them in the temple. They then needed monks to recite scriptures and hold ceremonies before these statues, so they invited Ebin from Koryo to serve as the resident monk and had him conduct services before the statues. They wanted to have some Japanese monks and nuns also, so they had three Japanese women become nuns in 584 C.E.

These first three women who became nuns in Japan were called Zenshin-ni, Zenzo-ni, and Kenzen-ni. Although they became nuns, their ordinations were not conducted according to the correct procedures, so they did not receive the precepts properly. Therefore, they decided to go to Paekshe, in what is now Korea, to receive precepts. According to the *Genkōji* chronicles, they received *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts the year they arrived in Paekshe. The next year they received the six precepts (*chasu-dhamesu-sikkhā*) of a probationary nun (*śikṣamāṇā*). In March 590 C.E., they received full ordination and went back to Japan, where they lived in a temple known as Sakurai-dera. But, according to the rules of the Vinaya-piṭaka, a nun must train in the six Dharma precepts of a *śikṣamāṇā* for two years. One year of training is not enough to qualify for receiving full ordination. They went to Paekshe in March 588 C.E. and arrived back in Japan in March 590 C.E. If they received *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts immediately after they reached Paekshe and received *śikṣamāṇā* precepts subsequently, they may have taken *bhikṣuṇī* precepts directly before they returned to Japan. It is said that Zenshin-ni became a novice nun at the age of seventeen, in 584 C.E., and that she was old enough to receive full ordination in 590 C.E. (i.e., at least twenty). If the *bhikṣuṇī* of Paekshe were familiar with the Vinaya regulations, they should have followed the Vinaya procedures when transmitting the precepts.

In any case, Zenshin-ni and the others received *śrāmaṇerikā* precepts, *śikṣamāṇā* precepts, and *bhikṣuṇī* precepts before returning to Japan. However, it is not clear which school of Vinaya Zenshin-ni and her companions relied on. It may have been either the Daśabhāṇavāra Vinaya or the Caturvarga Vinaya. Although Zenshin-ni and the others became fully ordained nuns, three *bhikṣuṇī* did not constitute a *Śaṅgha*. In the case of the *Bhikṣu Śaṅgha*, a minimum number of five fully ordained monks (*pañcavaggo bhikkhusaṅgho*) are able to give full ordination, but, in the case of the *Bhikṣuṇī Śaṅgha*, this is not allowed. So, although there were *bhikṣuṇī* in Japan, a complete *Bhikṣuṇī Śaṅgha* never existed there. Nevertheless, even though the full ordination for nuns was never given by a *Bhikṣuṇī Śaṅgha*, nuns could take *śrāmaṇerikā* pre-

cepts. In any event, there were women known as nuns in Japanese Buddhism from early times. For example, it is said that Shōtoku Taishi (574–622 C.E.) built many nunneries in the Nara area, such as Chūgū-ji, Tachibana-dera, Ikeshiri-ji, Katsuragi Nunnery, and so on, so the number of monasteries where nuns could live increased.

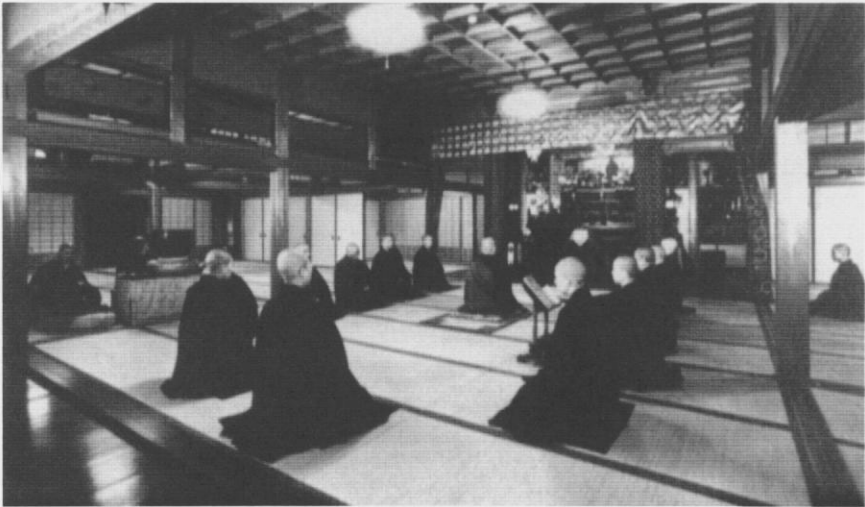
The *Bhikṣu Saṅgha* was established in Japan in the following way. Emperor Shōmu (r. 722–743 C.E.) built the temple known as Tōdai-ji during the Nara era (710–781 C.E.). Emperor Shōmu wanted to have monks who had received the *bhikṣu* precepts to live in *Tōdai-ji*, so he sent emissaries to China to invite highly virtuous *bhikṣu* to serve as precept instructors (*upādhyāya*). Having received the invitation of Emperor Shōmu, the monk Ganjin (Ch. Chien-chen), who belonged to the T'ien T'ai sect, came to Japan in the year 754 C.E. (the sixth year of the Tenpyō Shōho era).

According to the chronicles of the Vinaya sect,⁶ Ganjin was accompanied by fourteen *bhikṣu*, including Fa-chin, T'an-ching, Fa-ko, Ssü-to, I-ching, Chih-tzai, Fa-tzai, Fa-ch'eng, T'an-yao, Huai-chien, and Jen-han; three *bhikṣuṇī*, including Chin-shou; and seven *upāsakā*—twenty-four people in all. Since there were a total of fifteen fully ordained monks including Ganjin, they were able to perform the ordination with the required ten *bhikṣu*. It is said that the novice monk Chōshū and some 410 people received this ordination and that more than eighty others relinquished their previous precepts and received ordination anew, with Ganjin serving as the ordination master. At that time, Ganjin administered the ordination according to the Caturvarga Vinaya of the Dharmagupta school. Afterward, the Vinaya sect (Jp. *Ritsu-shū*) was founded on the basis of the scriptures of the Caturvarga Vinaya.

There were three fully ordained nuns who came with Ganjin, but again they could not give *bhikṣuṇī* ordination because they lacked the number of *bhikṣuṇī* necessary for transmitting the precepts. A *Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha* never came to Japan from China at any later time either. Therefore, although nuns have existed in Japan, a *Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha* was never established there, nor has a *bhikṣuṇī* ordination ever been performed.

During the Nara era, Tōdai-ji was made the headquarters of the system of temples known as Kokubunji. Hokkei-ji became the headquarters of the system of nunneries that were built. Twenty monks lived in each of the monasteries, and ten nuns lived in each of the nunneries. These national temples for monks and nuns were built in the capitals of more than sixty prefectures to ensure the peace of the nation, the peace of the people, and good harvests of the five grains. These aims were to be effected by means of the prayers of the monks and nuns in each national monastery and nunnery. The number of nuns who lived in such national nunneries was large. We have no accounts that give information as to the kinds of precepts they received, but we can presume that they received and practiced the ten precepts of a *śrāmaṇerikā*, similar to the way in which the monks in those days received *śrāmaṇera* precepts before they received full ordination. So we see that it was during the Nara era that *bhikṣu* came to





Scenes from a Soto Zen Buddhist nunnery. *Facing*: Aichi Semmon Nisodo in Nagoya, Japan, showing the striking of a wooden fish to mark daily activities. *Above*: Nuns eating while seated on their cushions (*top*), and evening meditation practice (*bottom*). Photos are from a booklet supplied by A. Hirakawa and published by Aichi Semmon Nisodo.

exist in Japan. The *Bhikṣu Saṅgha* was established, and people began to practice the Caturvarga Vinaya and to study the Vinaya scriptures. The Vinaya sect (Jp. *Ritsu-shū*) was founded, with Toshōdai-ji and the ordination platform of Tōdai-ji constituting the headquarters of the sect. At the beginning of the Heian era (782–1191 C.E.), however, Vinaya in Japanese Buddhism was completely changed by Saichō (767–822 C.E.), who founded the Tendai Hokke sect. Saichō received full ordination at the ordination platform of Tōdai-ji at the age of twenty, becoming a *bhikṣu*. He took a vow to practice the precepts of the Caturvarga Vinaya for life. But later, at the age of thirty-nine (804 C.E.), he went to Mount T'ien T'ai in China and received the doctrine of the T'ien T'ai sect and the *bodhisattva* precepts taught in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* from Tao-sui of Hsiu-ch'an-ssu. He received the essence of the T'ien T'ai doctrine from Heng-man of Fo-lung-ssu. He then received Niu-t'ou Ch'an from Sho-jan of Ch'an-ling-ssu as well as the profound essence of Tantric Buddhism from Shunhsiao of Ling-yen-ssu before returning to Japan. From that time on, Saichō began to keep two types of precepts—the 250 precepts of a *bhikṣu* in accordance with the Caturvarga Vinaya and the *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, consisting of ten root downfalls and forty-eight secondary precepts.

Saichō built the temple of Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei near Kyoto and spread the One Vehicle doctrine of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (Jp. *Hokkekyō*). This doctrine conflicted seriously with the Three Vehicle doctrine of the Yogācārya sect, which was the central force of Japanese Buddhism in the Nara era. Since the ordination platform at Tōdai-ji was under the control of the Yogācārya sect, the monks of the Tendai sect at Mount Hiei met with a great deal of difficulty in receiving full ordination. Saichō felt that he had to become free from the control of the Vinaya sect in Nara even with regard to Vinaya in order to teach his One Vehicle doctrine of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*. At the age of fifty-two, in 818 C.E., he decided to relinquish the precepts of the Caturvarga Vinaya, which he had received at the ordination platform of Tōdai-ji, and to keep only the *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, which he had received in China. He also insisted that, if his disciples received the Brahmajāla precepts at Mount Hiei, they would be the equivalent of *bhikṣu* who received ordinations at the ordination platform of Tōdai-ji. The substance of his declaration was that people who received the Brahmajāla precepts would become monks equivalent in status to *bhikṣu*. Saichō was the first person who asserted this theory. Such a theory had never existed before either in Japan or in China.

The Brahmajāla precepts are explained in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*⁷ and consist of ten root downfalls (*pārājikas*) and forty-eight secondary precepts. With respect to the ten root downfalls, the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* differs from the *Vinaya-pitaka*. Even if someone were to commit a root downfall of the Brahmajāla precepts, that person would not be expelled from the *Saṅgha* but would simply lose the precept itself. Once a precept is lost, a person no longer holds it and must receive it again. If a person repents sincerely, he or she will be allowed to take the precept again.⁸ According to the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, the Brahmajāla

precepts can be taken by both ordained and laypeople and by both men and women. The third root downfall of the Brahmajāla precepts prohibits sexual activity. However, if someone takes this precept in the capacity of a layperson, it becomes a lay precept (which does not entail celibacy), while, if someone takes the precept in the capacity of an ordained person, it becomes a precept of the ordained (which does entail celibacy). So the *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* function as precepts for both ordained and laypeople. They vary in scope depending on the decision of the person who receives the precepts.

The substance of the *bodhisattva* precepts explained in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* is different from that of the precepts explained in the *Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra*.⁹ The *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra* consist of three categories of vows (*śīlam trividham*). The first of these, called *saṃvara-śīla* (meaning to protect from falling into the three lower migrations), includes seven classes of individual liberation vows. The seven classes of individual liberation vows refer to fully ordained monks, fully ordained nuns, probationary nuns, novice monks, novice nuns, laymen, and laywomen. Therefore, if *bodhisattva* of the Mahāyāna tradition receive the *saṃvara-śīla* in the capacity of an ordained person according to the *Yogācārabhūmi* system, they come to receive the full ordination for monks and nuns that is explained in the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.

The second of the three categories of vows in the *Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra*, *kuśala-dharma-saṃgrāhaka-śīla*, explains the many virtuous actions to be engaged in. The third category of vows, *sattvāthakriyā-śīla*, explains the many virtuous actions to be performed for the benefit of all sentient beings. Of the three categories of vows, then, the first one (*saṃvara-śīla*) enumerates those negative actions to be abandoned (*sabbapāpassa akaranam*), while the second and third (*kuśala-dharma-saṃgrāhaka-śīla* and *sattvāthakriyā-śīla*) enumerate those virtuous actions to be cultivated. Therefore, the *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra* in fact encompass all three categories of precepts. However, in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, the three categories of vows are not distinguished as such. In the Brahmajāla precepts, both negative actions to be abandoned and virtuous actions to be cultivated are included together without differentiation. In the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, the expression “three categories of vows” (*śīlam trividham*) is not used. Therefore, the *bodhisattva* precepts that are explained in the *Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra* and those explained in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* are quite different. The *Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra* explains the *bodhisattva* precepts, consisting of four root downfalls and forty-two secondary precepts, after explaining the three categories of vows. Some of these precepts are consistent with the ten root downfalls and the forty-eight secondary precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*.

Saichō built a Mahāyāna ordination platform at Mount Hiei and gave his disciples *bodhisattva* precepts according to the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. He wrote *Precepts for Students of the Mountain School*¹⁰ and presented it to the court to obtain approval for people to receive the Brahmajāla precepts at the ordination

platform on Mount Hiei and to receive recognition as Mahāyāna monks. He was unable to obtain approval immediately. His request was only granted by the court seven days after his death.

From that time on, people who received the *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* were recognized by the state as monks equal to those who had received full ordination (*upasampadā*) according to the Caturvarga Vinaya. From then on, the Tendai sect on Mount Hiei flourished and subsequently spread throughout the country. By contrast, Nara Buddhism did not develop nearly as greatly. Because all the new Buddhist sects that were founded during the Kamakura era (1192–1332 C.E.) following the Heian era had split off from the Tendai sect of Mount Hiei, they adopted and held the *bodhisattva* precepts according to the interpretation of Saichō. Thereafter, the *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* flourished even further in Japanese Buddhism. The Jōdo sect founded by Hōnen (1133–1212 C.E.), Shinran (1173–1262 C.E.), Ippen, and others, the Zen sect founded by Eisai and Dōgen (1200–1253 C.E.), and the Nichiren sect founded by Nichiren (1222–1282 C.E.) were all offshoots of the Tendai sect in terms of *bodhisattva* precepts. These schools constitute the mainstream of Japanese Buddhism today.

In particular, the Jōdo sect founded by Hōnen received the *Brahmajāla* precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* from the Tendai sect. Monks and nuns of the Jōdo sect receive *bodhisattva* precepts at the time they become monks and nuns. Therefore, in the Jōdo sect, the precepts of the nuns are the *bodhisattva* of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. The nuns, especially, keep the *bodhisattva* precepts sincerely and maintain strict celibacy (*brahmacarya*). In the Jōdo sect, there is no discrimination between monks and nuns; nuns can attain even the highest rank. The temple of Zenkō-ji in Nagano City is one of the largest monasteries in Japan, jointly administered by Daikanjin of the Tendai sect and Daihongan of the Jōdo school. One learned and highly virtuous nun, who is a resident of this temple, holds the highest rank of Exalted Master (*Daisōjo*). In the Jōdo sect, there are many temples where nuns reside, but these days there are few applicants who wish to become nuns, so senior nuns find difficulty in fostering successors. According to statistics taken in 1987, there are 8,165 monks and 706 nuns in the Jōdo sect.

In the Jōdo Shin sect, which developed out of the Jōdo sect founded by Shinran, there are no nuns. Shinran himself was married and had children. After he married, he continued to teach his theory of Jōdo Shin Buddhism as a layperson. Since there are no monastic precepts in the teachings of Shinran, there are no nuns in Jōdo Shin Buddhism; instead, there are women priests. These women priests get married and do not shave their heads. Although they are in the service of the temple, they make their own livelihood the same as laypeople. Women have the same qualifications as male priests, and some also become residential priests. They obtain a license as a priest after an examination on Buddhist doctrine and on the administrative regulations of the head temple. These priests take refuge in the Three Jewels and receive the five pre-

cepts. According to statistics taken in 1975, there were 13,467 male priests and 1,271 female priests in the Ōtani branch of the Jōdo Shin sect. In the Hongan branch of the Jōdo Shin sect, there were an almost equal number of female priests.

In the Soto Zen sect founded by Dōgen, there are as many nuns as in the Jōdo sect. Since Dōgen received the precepts of the Tendai sect, he extracted passages related to precepts from the text *Bestowing Bodhisattva Precepts* written by Saichō.¹¹ Based on this text, Dōgen expounds sixteen precepts: the three refuges, the three categories of vows (*śīlam trividham*), and the ten root downfalls. These sixteen precepts are explained in the text *Shōhō Genzō Jukai*.¹²

The ten root downfalls expounded by Dōgen are the same in content as those of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. Therefore, the precepts of Dōgen's doctrine are the *bodhisattva* precepts included in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, but the three categories of vows expounded by Dōgen are not explained in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. Moreover, the three categories of vows taught by Dōgen are quite different from those contained in the *Yogācārabhūmi Sūtra*. The three categories of vows expounded by Saichō and Dōgen are explained in the *Bodhisattva Muktabhāra Sūtra*.¹³ In any case, the sixteen precepts of Dōgen's doctrine originate from the *bodhisattva* vows of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. In the Soto Zen sect, both laypeople and ordination candidates receive these sixteen precepts. The third of the ten root downfalls is sexual conduct (*maithuna-dharma*), and there is a difference between ordained and laypeople with regard to how this precept is received and kept.

In the Soto Zen sect, nuns also receive the sixteen precepts, keeping the training sincerely and maintaining celibacy. During the training period, nuns stay in the training hall, living in a group and practicing mainly Zen meditation. There are training halls for nuns in six places, including Tokyo, Nagoya, and Niigata. There are also Zen masters and teachers in the training halls who are nuns. Still, compared to the number of monks, the number of nuns is quite few. According to statistics taken in 1975, there were 25,072 monks and 1,447 nuns. In the Soto Zen sect these days, there are few candidates who wish to become nuns, and it is difficult for nunneries to find successors.

There are also nuns in the Tendai, Shingon, Nichiren, Rinzaï Zen, and other sects. Excellent nuns have appeared, but still their number is few—less than 5 percent of those ordained.

CONCLUSION

The *Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha* was never established in Japanese Buddhism. However, nuns exist who receive and keep the *bodhisattva* precepts of the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. The substance of these precepts is similar to the ten precepts of a novice nun, but they are slightly different from a novice nun's precepts because the *bodhisattva* precepts are meant not only to help abandon negative actions but also to create positive, virtuous actions.

NOTES

1. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, edited by Takakusu Junjiro and Watanabe Kaikyoku (Tokyo: Daizōkyōkai, 1924–1935) (hereafter abbreviated as “T”) 50.934c, no. 2063. For a complete English translation of this work, see Pao Chang, *Biographies of Buddhist Nuns*, trans. Li Jung-hsi (Osaka: Tohokai, 1981). For another translation and an analysis of the same work, see Kathryn A. Cissell, “The Pi-ch’iu-ni Chuan: Biographies of Famous Chinese Nuns from 317–516 C.E.” (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1972).

2. T 50.341b, no. 2059.

3. T 50.341bc, no. 2059.

4. T 22.1065–1072, no. 1434.

5. T 23.564–626, no. 1441.

6. T 74.18c, no. 2348.

7. T no. 1484.

8. T 29.1008, no. 1484.

9. Wogihara ed., pp. 138ff.

10. T 74.625a, no. 2377.

11. Jp. *Ju-bosatsu-kai-gi* (T 74.626b–629b, no. 2378).

12. T 82.307b, no. 2582.

13. T 24.1020c–1021a, no. 1485.

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