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Going Forth: Visions of the Buddhist Vinaya (review)

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(Review)

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and on behalf of ministers and emperors. Kirkland is right in saying that this means also that it is not possible to say that all Daoists were drawn from one social class. They came from diverse social backgrounds.

In discussing the social and political intricacies of Daoism, Kirkland makes a very important contribution to Daoist studies. He offers a well-informed overview of women in Daoist history and practice. In my view, the role of female Daoists is one of the most neglected areas in Daoist studies. One could read pages 126–144 of this text and be confident in having gained an accurate view of the substantive issues on this crucial subject. For example, Kirkland considers such key questions as: What did the classical texts tell us about women practitioners? Were Daoists texts and practices intended exclusively for men? When were women significant in Daoist history, and who were the women who played important roles?

In “The Cultivated Life,” Kirkland devotes a chapter to what might be regarded as the central issue of Daoist studies. What was the ultimate goal of Daoist teaching and practice? Was it to obtain physical immortality? He places Ge Hong and the *Liezi* in their contexts and shows the importance of the Shangqing and Lingbao revelations to any understanding of this subject. He demonstrates that there were many views about death in Daoism, and that not all Daoists pursued physical immortality. He sets aside the idea that the reclusive mountain dweller using a burner to cook the elixir of immortality is the one irreducible ideal in the practice of Daoism. And yet he reminds us that a recurring goal was to attain an exalted state of transformed existence through diligent cultivation of the world’s deeper realities. Once reaching this state, one will not be extinguished, even when the physical body ceases to be one’s form. Kirkland often refers to this transformation in the book as biospiritual cultivation.

All in all, this work is a genuinely new introduction to Daoism that helps clear away much of the dense underbrush of Daoist history and textual relations, and also utilizes the most recent findings and conclusions of scholars of Daoism to set the reader on a more solid path to understanding China’s most misunderstood and underappreciated transformational tradition.

*Going Forth: Visions of the Buddhist Vinaya*. Edited by William M. Bodiford. Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 18. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005. Pp. x + 317. Hardcover \$48.00.

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Monasticism has been a central feature of Buddhism from its earliest inception in ancient India. Monastic ideals, practices, and institutions shaped virtually all aspects of the religion in India and elsewhere, and in many places they still retain their traditional prominence. The Vinaya (monastic code of discipline) was accorded a place of honor as one of the three main divisions of the Buddhist canon(s). As such, it exerted a strong influence on basic Buddhist mores and institutions, not only codifying issues of personal morality but also serving as an organizational charter or

blueprint for the Sangha, the monastic order, which was largely responsible for the transmission and development of Buddhist teachings and practices. With the growth of Buddhism and its spread throughout much of Asia, monasticism inevitably underwent various transformations. The evolution of monastic mores and practices reflected changing historical predicaments and the need to adapt to diverse social milieus and cultural norms. That was especially the case when the religion entered new regions with cultures and societies drastically different from those that gave rise to Buddhist monasticism in India, particularly East Asia, the area covered by the book under review.

Considering the great importance of monasticism and the Vinaya for understanding Buddhism in its historical and contemporary contexts, the paucity of scholarly studies on the subject, especially in regard to East Asian Buddhism, is truly regrettable. William Bodiford's edited volume *Going Forth: Visions of the Buddhist Vinaya* is a step toward rectifying that situation, even if the book is not as focused on the Vinaya as it suggests. The book's title indicates that it is conceived as a study of monasticism and monks (those who have "gone forth"), while the subtitle further clarifies that the main focus is on the Vinaya. While the book's essays cover a range of interesting topics related to the history of Buddhism in China and Japan, both the title and the subtitle are a bit misleading. To begin with, the book does not provide comprehensive coverage even of East Asian receptions and adaptations of the Vinaya—for instance, Korea is completely ignored—let alone discussions of pertinent developments and Vinaya traditions that flourished in other parts of Asia. More importantly, substantial parts of the book are not really directly concerned with the Vinaya (or more broadly with monasticism), using standard interpretations of the term, including the editor's explanation at the beginning of the Introduction.

Some of the chapters make notable contributions to the understanding of various issues related to the evolution of monasticism in East Asia (e.g., the chapters by John McRae, Timothy Barrett, Yifa, Morten Schlütter, and Paul Groner). However, others deal with issues that are only indirectly related to monasticism and the Vinaya, such as the various precepts and ordinations directed toward lay people and/or alternative priestly orders (e.g., the chapters by Daniel Getz and James Dobbins). Many of these developments were linked to the emergence of the Bodhisattva precepts in China, which in their original context were conferred on both monks and laypeople and did not serve as a replacement for the Vinaya. Under the influence of a prevalent belief that Buddhism had entered a period of irreversible decline (*mofa*), and in response to specific historical circumstances and sectarian developments, there was a gradual emergence of new Buddhist paradigms that discarded the Vinaya and rejected traditional monasticism. This became an especially prevalent tendency in Japan, where the development of alternative religious ideals and institutional arrangements was typically linked with the growth of new ideological orientations or sectarian traditions. Important as they might be for understanding East Asian Buddhism, strictly speaking the various lay precepts, ordinations, and related phenomena surveyed in some of the chapters are outside the history of the Vinaya; they might better be incorporated into a more general category, such as "precepts."

Finally, some parts of the book have no apparent connection with the Vinaya, especially the chapter by David Chappell, which deals with repentance rituals for the dead that developed within the context of popular Buddhism and Daoism.

This kind of somewhat loose use of the concept of Vinaya seems to reflect a desire to impute a sense of thematic coherence to what are basically individual essays that deal with a broad range of topics. That is often the case with edited books, especially festschrift volumes, since individual authors usually follow their own research trajectories rather than work together on a common project. As indicated on the title page, all the essays included in the book were written by students of Stanley Weinstein in his honor. Weinstein's long career at Yale was marked by exemplary dedication to the education of his graduate students, a number of whom went on to have successful academic careers. Aside from the discrepancy between the book's title and its contents, on the whole the individual essays uphold solid academic standards and shed light on significant aspects of East Asian Buddhism.

The first seven essays center on China, while the last five focus on Japan. For reasons of space I cannot comment individually on each chapter, but the brief remarks on six of the eleven chapters should suffice to illustrate the range of topics and perspectives included in the book. There was no special criterion for selecting which chapter to comment on, and the other chapters are of equally good quality and provide equally important scholarly contributions. The essay by Nobuyoshi Yamabe deals with the *Brahmā Net Scripture*, an apocryphal Chinese text that exerted a major influence on the codification and popularization of the Bodhisattva precepts as an integral part of Chinese Buddhism, among both lay people and monastics. The author examines the roles played by "mystical" elements, especially visions of the Buddha(s), in repentance ceremonies and ordinations (including self-ordinations). The visions supposedly enabled the supplicants to expiate their transgressions and receive the Buddha's approval to acquire the Bodhisattva precepts. These kinds of visionary experiences played an important role in the history of ordinations in East Asian Buddhism, and they were used to justify various innovations or circumvent established ordination procedures.

Chappell's engaging essay explores the origin and growing popularity of repentance rituals in medieval China, with a focus on a well-known ritual attributed to Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (r. 502–549). These rituals were primarily directed toward the salvation of others, especially the dead. This reflected a concern with kinship ties characteristic of Chinese culture, but also a broadening of the sphere of compassionate concern, which came to include all beings. A uniquely Chinese development, the repentance rituals grew into major public ceremonies of a kind with no counterparts in India. While monks and laypeople alike participated in these rituals, they primarily addressed the needs of the laity and accommodated the religious sensibilities of both elites and commoners. These rituals had close counterparts in Daoist repentance rituals and represent a fascinating example of the Sinification of Buddhism.

McRae's interesting discussion of Daoxuan's (596–667) institution of a new type of ordination platform builds upon the idea that visionary experiences played an im-

portant role in instigating the justifying of new ritual procedures. As part of his efforts to invigorate the Buddhist order and bolster its legitimacy by stressing the primacy of the Vinaya and the ordination procedures based on it, Daoxuan established an ordination platform in 667 on the basis of his visions. Daoxuan's platform was meant to replicate the one established by the Buddha at Jetavana. His novelty was picked up by other monks, and before long it developed into a broad-based ordination platform movement. These events exemplify a tendency to evoke tradition in the service of innovation, thereby bringing about a sense of rapprochement between the two.

In his contribution to the volume Schlütter presents a useful survey of the various kinds of Buddhist monasteries that existed in Song China (960–1279). The Song system of registering and classifying monasteries was instituted by the imperial government as a way of controlling the monastic order. Within it, monasteries were divided into two basic categories: hereditary and public. Hereditary monasteries were legally recognized as the property of the resident monks or nuns, with the abbacy changing hands only within the lineage of a tonsure family that was structured along the lines of the extended Chinese family. In contrast, in public monasteries abbots were selected (in theory at least) on the basis of their spiritual attainment, even though the system was exposed to state control and abuse. The public monasteries were the most prominent Buddhist institutions in Song China, and a basic requirement for assuming the abbacy was membership in the Chan lineage. Such a government-sanctioned system shored up the Chan school's position as the main tradition of elite Chinese Buddhism. With the resurgence of the Huayan and Tiantai schools, some monasteries associated with them were assigned to a separate category of teaching monasteries. That eventually led to a tripartite taxonomy of monasteries during the late Song period: Chan, teaching, and Vinaya (with the last category coinciding with the aforementioned hereditary monasteries, rather than monasteries associated with a separate Vinaya tradition).

Bodiford's nicely written and clearly argued essay discusses a shift in Japanese Buddhism away from the use of precepts as codes that guide moral behavior and toward their abstract conception as the embodiment of awakening that is intrinsic to each person. He focuses on Zen precepts that were said to have originally been transmitted to China by Bodhidharma, the legendary "founder" of the Chan/Zen tradition. Initially the notion of Bodhidharma precepts circulated within the Tendai school, since it was believed that they were brought to Japan by its founder, Saichō (767–822), although later generations of Tendai leaders found different strategies of interpreting the precepts in terms of Tantric notions about awakening and Buddhahood. Through a series of historical and doctrinal distortions, along with creative misquotations of canonical sources, Zen monks reinvented the precepts as a putative conduit for the transmission of Zen awakening. Within such an interpretative scheme, which was part of a broad strategy aimed at winning lay support, ordination was based on the idea of a union of precepts and salvation. Despite the Zen school's efforts at highlighting its uniqueness, Bodiford shows how its ordination rituals were construed in light of Tendai doctrinal templates, which were widely diffused throughout Japanese Buddhism. Ultimately, this made efforts at reviving the

Vinaya by reformist Zen monks such as Eisai (1141–1215) a hopeless undertaking, as salvation came to be seen as depending on proper ritual consecration rather than on monastic practice and personal experience.

Groner's excellent essay—one of the best in the book and easily the one most directly concerned with the Vinaya among the essays dealing with Japan—describes Eison's (1201–1290) efforts to reinstitute a pattern of monastic life based on the *Four Parts Vinaya*. Faced with doubts about the validity of clerical ordination in Japanese Buddhism, Eison undertook the extraordinary step of ordaining himself as a full-fledged monk (*bhikṣu*), even though that contravened the Vinaya rules concerning ordinations, which require a quorum of monks. Faced with the unavailability of properly ordained monks in Japan to confer an ordination, he justified his peculiar course of action by resorting to visionary experiences, which he construed as signs of the Buddha's sanction of his actions, as well by reinterpreting various passages in canonical texts. Following in the footsteps of earlier Vinaya masters such as Daoxuan and Ganjin (688–763), as part of his efforts toward reinstating the Vinaya and setting up pure monastic institutions Eison initiated a significant reform movement and instituted "proper" ordination procedures for the conferring of monastic precepts on his followers. He was also behind the establishment of an order of nuns who observed the Vinaya, despite the social tensions and prejudices they had to contend with.

The topics covered in the remaining five chapters are: the ambivalent attitudes toward the Bodhisattva precepts within the Jōdo school of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism (Dobbins), various perspectives on a Tang-era ordination scandal that involved the sale of ordination certificates by government officials (Barrett), the relationship between the Chan school's monastic regulations on the one hand and the Vinaya rules and Chinese cultural practices on the other (Yifa), the Song Tiantai tradition's incorporation of popular and Pure Land elements into the Bodhisattva ordinations, largely undertaken in response to lay needs (Getz), and the debates about meat-eating in later Japanese Buddhism (Richard Jaffe).

The book is nicely produced. Especially noteworthy are the editor's efforts at ensuring clarity and imposing stylistic uniformity. East Asian logographs are provided for all technical terms and proper names, as well as in entries written in East Asian languages included in the bibliography. The essays are based on textual sources and cover a wide range of individuals, issues, and time periods, although most of them focus on the medieval period; there is minimal attention to contemporary developments, and there is also not much coverage of nuns or women in general (with the partial exception of Groner's essay). The main themes that run through much of the book are how Buddhists in East Asia tried to adapt monastic rules, ideals, and practices developed in a different culture and geographical area (a predominant pattern in China), or how they rejected or simply ignored the heritage of the Vinaya and developed new interpretations, rituals, and institutions that signified a break with monastic Buddhism (a prevalent tendency in Japan). The book contains a wealth of information and covers a large ground, and there is probably going to be something for everybody with an interest in the history of Buddhism in China and Japan.