

## ARTICLES

### FEATURE: BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS IN EAST ASIAN PERSPECTIVES AND BEYOND

#### Introduction: Bendable Buddhist Law

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(Guest Editor)

THIS SPECIAL feature examines the early evolution of a distinct East Asian Buddhist practice, the conferring of the bodhisattva precepts. While recent decades have seen considerable advances in studies of the canonical Buddhist monastic codes—the Vinaya—the bodhisattva precepts still await in-depth research and clarification. The lack of thorough research on the bodhisattva precepts is sorely felt; while the Vinaya were the cornerstone of monastic regulations, the bodhisattva precepts were conferred on the Buddhist laity, and as such were a central part of many ordinary Chinese people’s relationships with Buddhism. A primary aim of this feature, then, is to better understand how the bodhisattva precepts figured in the construction

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of a Mahayana Buddhist identity in premodern East Asia, as well as to compare this to the situations in India and Tibet.

Buddhist precepts (Skt. *śīla*; Pali, *sīla*; Tib. *tshul khrim*s; Ch. *jie* 戒; Jp. *kai*; K. *kye*), or “morality” in the Sanskrit context, constitute one of the three trainings (that is, morality, concentration, and wisdom; Skt. *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*), and the second of the six perfections on the bodhisattva path. In the Mahayana tradition, the perfection of morality is accomplished through the three sets of pure precepts.<sup>1</sup> These three sets of pure precepts comprise an overarching system incorporating Theravada and Mahayana perspectives; they are not only highlighted in Yogācāra materials, particularly in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* section of the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, but are also explained in several indigenous scriptures of East Asia, such as the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (Brahmā’s Net Sutra), *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經, *Zhancha shan’e yebao jing* 占察善惡業報經, and the *Jingang sanmei jing* 金剛三昧經 (K. *Kūmgang sammae kyōng*).<sup>2</sup> Generally speaking, the Yogācāra precepts and the Brahmā’s Net precepts represent the two major strands of bodhisattva precepts. In medieval China, there had been competition between the Yogācāra precepts and the Brahmā’s Net precepts, but ever since the appearance of the *Pusajie yishu* 菩薩戒義疏 (Commentary on Bodhisattva Precepts) by Zhiyi 智顓 (538–597),<sup>3</sup> the Brahmā’s Net precepts have been the mainstream practice in China. Hence, scholarly attention has also been drawn to the Brahmā’s Net precepts more than the Yogācāra ones. Funayama Tōru’s recent book on the production of the *Fanwang jing* marked a monumental milestone in the study of this scripture.<sup>4</sup> Funayama has convinced us that the second scroll of this scripture appeared earlier than the first scroll, despite the reversed order in all later editions. This scripture had a significant influence on the laity and attracted a remarkable degree of imperial patronage in medieval China; since the appearance of the scripture in the fifth century, up to the eighth century, we have records of at least thir-

<sup>1</sup> These three are (1) restraining precepts, (2) the accumulation of wholesome qualities, and (3) acting for the welfare of beings. For further details, see Buswell and Lopez 2013, pp. 821–22.

<sup>2</sup> T no. 1484, T no. 1485, T no. 273.

<sup>3</sup> T no. 1811.

<sup>4</sup> Funayama (2017a) has scrutinized the context and content of this scripture and enlightened us concerning the textual formation of the manuscript as well as the development of thought related to this scripture, such as Buddha-nature theory, vegetarianism, and the idea of a Mahayana Vinaya. In addition, Funayama has published extensively on the *Fanwang jing*. See Funayama 2014 and 2017b.

teen emperors who received the conferral of the Brahmā's Net precepts, and some claimed themselves to be "bodhisattva emperors."<sup>5</sup>

For issues concerning the origins of Chinese bodhisattva precepts as well as their changes from Indian Buddhism, Japanese scholars, such as Hirakawa Akira, Ōno Hōdō, and Saitō Tatsugen in particular, have laid firm foundations for the field.<sup>6</sup> Rather than attempting to be comprehensive, this volume only touches upon selected topics. There has been relatively less input from Chinese scholars, even though ecclesiastical efforts devoted to studying the bodhisattva precepts have never diminished.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, this volume discusses the bodhisattva precepts in their broad social and historical context—a context that is rich and complex. While medieval Chinese monks strove to comport with Buddhist law codes transmitted from India, those codes underwent considerable negotiation and reinterpretation as they encountered the realities of Chinese society. This adaptation, reinterpretation, and standardization of Buddhist regulations was intertwined with the composition of apocryphal scriptures in China, particularly the *Fanwang jing*, which precipitated new commentarial works, the reformation and revitalization of monastic rules, and numerous precept movements in China and Japan during different periods. These developments pushed the practice of Buddhism further from its Indian origins, yielding, for example, self-ordination—a striking innovation in the history of Chinese Buddhism.

However, the Chinese term *jie* had domestic connotations prior to the arrival of Buddhism: there are mentions of the compound *zhaijie* 齋戒 (Jp. *saikai*) in the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), the *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子), and in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, as is discussed in T. H. Barrett's essay in this volume. This compound can be read as "fasting" in the Chinese context, or more precisely, "to purify the mind by means of fasting." This is interesting in contrast to the Buddhist definition of *jie*, or precept, often referring to a set of rules of abstinence and prohibitions. The compound *zhaijie* would refer closely to purification observance, which, in his essay, Dermott J. Walsh defines as "pure morality" in the context of Japanese Buddhism.

Seeking a comparative perspective on the Chinese interpretations of the bodhisattva precepts, this feature brings together specialists on the array of

<sup>5</sup> For the names and reigns of these emperors, see Funayama 2017a, pp. 12–13; Mochizuki 1946, pp. 425–84; and Iwasaki 1989.

<sup>6</sup> See Hirakawa 1989, Ōno 1954, and Saitō 1986. Of course, there are many more works by Japanese scholars than I could possibly mention here. Two others of particular relevance would be Etani 1977 and Sasaki 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Two of the relevant Chinese works in this field would be Fu 1993 and Shi 1989.

cultures where the precepts have been employed. Consequently, contributors to this volume grapple with questions such as: Which scriptures were connected to the bodhisattva precepts, and how did their textual authority function in different cases (Lee)? Do these cases imply a change in the cardinal teachings of the perfection of morality (Habata and Saitō)? Similarly, how was “bodhisattva” conceptualized (Sobisch)? What was the connection between the precepts and the procedure of the ordination when they were bestowed (Groner)? How did the precepts affect the relationship between monastics and laity in the regions where they were employed (Walsh and Bodiford)? How did the Chinese make sense of and justify alterations in the bodhisattva precepts (Barrett)? Were there any Indian or Tibetan precursors to the Chinese movements (Habata and Sobisch), and did Japanese Buddhists conceptualize the bodhisattva similarly to their Chinese counterparts (Lin)?

In short, this volume as a whole seeks to explore the articulation of premodern interpretations of the precepts across East Asia, India, and Tibet. There are many more eminent scholars working in the field of bodhisattva precepts than this feature can include, and our hope is to present the “tip of the iceberg” in order to draw attention to this vibrant field.

In the first article, Hiromi Habata points out that the origin of the bodhisattva precepts in India remains obscure. It is well known that the concept of bodhisattva precepts (*bodhisattvaśīla*) was introduced to China by Dharmakṣema (385–433), the translator of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Ch. *Pusa dichi jing* 菩薩地持經), the *Sutra of the Upāsaka Precepts* (Ch. *Youposai jie jing* 優婆塞戒經), as well as the *Nirvana Sutra* (Skt. *Mahāparinirvāṇamahā-sūtra*; Ch. *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經).<sup>8</sup> Habata’s essay raises the question as to whether there was something like a *bodhisattva-vinaya* or *bodhisattvaśīla* in India. The *Nirvana Sutra* shows strong concern for *śīla* and *vinaya*. Habata makes clear that the regulations found in this sutra originated from the old *śīlaskandha*, and that the description in the sutra reflects the situation in India before the systematization of the bodhisattva precepts in later texts. She gives examples of different perspectives on specific issues such as a Buddhist layman offering objects of great value, like gold or silver, to monks—an action made possible in the looser interpretations of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, but strictly rejected in the *Nirvana Sutra*’s insistence on the “austere life” (Skt. *saṃlekha*). She also summarizes the research of Hirakawa Akira on a similar concept, *Mahāyānaśīla*, as seen in the notion

<sup>8</sup> T no. 1581, T no. 1488, T no. 374.

of the “ten good deeds” by a bodhisattva. An important point here is that adherence to sutras is a rationale for putting aside the traditional Vinaya.

T. H. Barrett then discusses the practical function of precepts in lay ordinations. His essay is inspired by Arthur Waley (1889–1966), who once observed that “vows were often administered to young children as a protection against disease, somewhat in the manner of vaccination.”<sup>9</sup> Such a medical model for understanding precepts might seem at odds with the way in which they are treated in Chinese Buddhist commentary. And yet, the way that the precepts were regarded by lay people was not necessarily the same as for monastics who themselves adhered to the Vinaya. Is there any evidence that lay people saw the practical function of precepts in the way that Waley suggests? Barrett further discusses the language of *jie* as “precept” and as a Chinese translation of *śīla*, its relationship to fasting as a purification prerequisite to making offerings, and the talismanic use of precepts in lay ordinations, even given to children as protection against disease. He presents significant detail of how these notions influenced religious Daoism, where we do not see the character 戒, but instead another *jie*, written 誠. The apotropaic function of taking precepts is connected with beliefs that illness comes from possession by external demons that can enter the body, and this is seen in both Buddhist and Daoist materials. An example of ordaining infants “just in case” is also mentioned, with an allusion to precept-bestowing in India and the complex world of Daoist ordination rituals.

Sangyop Lee’s essay is a study of the bodhisattva *prātimokṣa* in the *Youposai wu jie weiyi jing* 優婆塞五戒威儀經,<sup>10</sup> which gives four major, and forty minor, bodhisattva precepts. Following Ōno’s pioneering study of bodhisattva precepts, *Daijōkaikyō no kenkyū* 大乘戒經の研究,<sup>11</sup> the *Weiyi jing* has been traditionally referred to as a variant “Yogācāra *pratimokṣa*” (Ch. *Yuqie jieben* 瑜伽戒本), or more precisely, a polished redaction of the preexisting fifth-century Chinese translations of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* and the *Pusa shanjie jing* 菩薩善戒經.<sup>12</sup> By comparing the Sanskrit *Bodhisattvabhūmi* with the *Weiyi jing prātimokṣa* and other extant Chinese translations, including the seventh-century translation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664),<sup>13</sup> he raises the important question as to which text is the original source for various similar phrasings. If it is the *Weiyi jing*, it may

<sup>9</sup> Waley 1952, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> T no. 1503.

<sup>11</sup> Ōno 1954.

<sup>12</sup> T nos. 1582, 1583.

<sup>13</sup> T no. 1579.

signal something that indeed came from India. This paper is a comparative text-critical look into the language found in all these texts.

Pei-ying Lin's essay investigates how the figure of Bodhidharma functions in precept lineages in the Chan 禪 (Jp. Zen) and Tiantai 天台 (Jp. Tendai) traditions. Bodhidharma is noticeably absent in the earlier Chan construction of lineages from India, but by the seventh century he is symbolic of the transmission through lineage of a dharma from the Buddha to Chinese soil. From pieces of information about Bodhidharma lineages preserved in the Japanese sources, namely those by Saichō 最澄 (767–822) and his three disciples Kōjō 光定 (779–858), Enchin 円珍 (814–891), and Annen 安然 (841–889?/915?), the conception of the figure of Bodhidharma proves to be particularly significant in the legitimation of precept conferral and lineage invention. To Saichō's disciples, this lineage of Bodhidharma was an important authority for the transmission of Bodhisattva precepts. This conceptualization was initiated by the followers of Daoxin 道信 (580–651) in late seventh-century China. It is noteworthy that one of the first texts that mentions Bodhidharma is Daoxin's *Pusa jiefa* 菩薩戒法 (Manual of Rules for the Bodhisattva Precepts),<sup>14</sup> which describes him as a “representative” of those precepts. As this study demonstrates, the ideas of Saichō and his disciples about Bodhidharma are valuable for understanding the early development of Chan because this Indian patriarch stood for a cross-cultural transmission from the outset. This essay is thus important for showing how the roles of bodhisattva precepts, together with specific traditions of meditation, were central to the sectarian identities of both Chan and Tiantai. It also shows how they played an important role in the construction of who Bodhidharma was and what he brought to China, and of course, how Chan and Tiantai merged in the writings of Saichō and the establishment of Tendai in Japan.

Paul Groner examines an influential essay by Annen on bodhisattva precept ordination. The essay, *Futsūju bosatsukai kōshaku* 普通授菩薩戒広釈, has three parts.<sup>15</sup> The first is an examination of the term *tsūju* 通受, which is translated as “universal ordination,” indicating a ritual that could be applied to the whole range of Buddhist believers. It can be contrasted with “distinct” or “separate ordinations” (*betsuju* 別受), namely, a set of distinct rituals with distinct precepts for the various types of Buddhist practitioners. The

<sup>14</sup> Daoxin's work is lost, but is mentioned in the *Lengqieshiziji* 楞伽師資記 (T no. 2837, 85: 1286c20).

<sup>15</sup> T no. 2381.

dispute over which type should be used would have important ramifications for the whole of Tendai history. The second part concerns the decline of the influence of the *Fanwang jing*, the text that the founder of Tendai, Saichō, had designated to replace the Vinaya. Annen's critique of the text would be vital for the interpretation of monastic discipline. The third part is a discussion of the esoteric Buddhist influences on Annen's views, particularly how he relates ordinations to the realization of Buddhahood with this very body (Jp. *sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成佛). The result of these developments would be to change Tendai monasticism so that it would probably have become unrecognizable to Saichō. There is significant detail in the essay about the issue of distinguishing lay from monastic if the precepts pertained to both, and how this resulted in the loss of the significance of the *Fanwang jing* due to its lack of clarity on this point, and the relative increase in importance of the *Yingluo jing* instead. In the discussion on confession and expiation of precept violations, Annen accepts the fact that violations of the precepts would happen but that ritual confession, *dhāraṇī* recitation, and reordination would solve the problem, meaning that in the end precept observance is only an expedient means.

Dermott J. Walsh's essay explores the concerns of Myōan Eisai (Yōsai) 明菴栄西 (1141–1215) in his writings following his return from four years of study in China. Eisai is best known for having transmitted the Rinzai 臨濟 Zen lineage to Japan. However, Eisai's texts reveal little concern with traditional Zen themes. Rather, his early works are concerned mainly with esoteric Buddhism. Nevertheless, following his return from China in 1191, a major change in Eisai's thinking occurs when he begins advocating for the reintroduction of the *Four-Part Vinaya* (Jp. *Shibunritsu* 四分律), a set of precepts abandoned by the Japanese Tendai school almost four centuries previously.

Walsh makes the interesting point that Eisai follows the same interpretation as Eison 睿尊 (1201–1290) and Kakujō 覺盛 (1194–1249), both slightly later, that even self-ordination of the bodhisattva precepts (following the *Fanwang jing*) somehow includes transmission of the traditional Vinaya rules. Eisai uses the *Nirvana Sutra* to supply what he calls "supplementary precepts" to a bodhisattva perspective emphasizing compassion, and this model pertains to Eisai's view of what the Zen school is all about, namely, rigorous monasticism. In effect, Eisai sees the pure rules of Chan as a means to implement the Vinaya on a practical level, without the need for a Vinaya ordination precisely because he is still beholden to the authority of the bodhisattva precept ordination. As Walsh points out, this research

leads to further inquiry into the differences between Eisai and Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) on their understandings of the Chinese tradition of pure rules in the Chan tradition, and the similarity between his own attempt at monastic reform and that of the Ritsu 律 leaders also operating in the early Kamakura period (1185–1333). What is also valuable about this essay is its detailed look at a work of Eisai's called *Shukke taikō* 出家大綱, dated 1195, and written three years before his now well-studied *Kōzen gokokuron* 興禪護國論.

Jan-Ulrich Sobisch's essay deals with the question of how Mahayana scriptures treat transgressive actions by bodhisattvas that are in violation of rules and regulations set down in the Vinaya and elaborated in some cases by Abhidharma literature. In particular, Sobisch is concerned with the so-called compassionate killing of human beings and unwitting sexual activity for monastics. There are texts like the *Upāyakauśalya mahāyānasūtra*<sup>16</sup> that not only justify murder, but praise it when it prevents a far greater amount of death by removing one who intends to harm others. The bodhisattva does this with full knowledge that in doing so, he or she will suffer for a time in a hell as karmic retribution, but takes the action anyway out of compassion. The author concludes that, depending on which stage the bodhisattva is at along the path, this course of action may, or may not, be acceptable. Certainly, the most striking example of the special bodhisattva ethics under discussion is this killing out of compassion. The usual illustration is that of the rather complex case of a bodhisattva who reads in the mind of another person the plan to kill five hundred merchants. Then—out of compassion for that vicious person—the bodhisattva kills that man before he becomes a murderer to prevent him from going to hell. The bodhisattva also keeps his compassionate intention a secret, because he must at the same time prevent the five hundred merchants from taking the matter into their own hands and thus go to hell for killing in self-defense. The outcome of that story is sometimes described as a positive one for the bodhisattva doing the killing because his compassionate intention somehow overrides the act of killing itself. Interestingly, however, even though the story and the intentions involved in it are rather complex, this outcome is hardly ever discussed in any detail.

William Bodiford then discusses the Japanese Tendai school's Anraku Ritsu 安樂律 (Anraku [temple's] approach to clerical rules), which represented a dramatic departure from the overall historical trend of Bud-

<sup>16</sup> T nos. 310 (38), 346.

dhist practice and teachings in Japan. After the death of Saichō, Tendai Buddhism developed its own distinctive identity. Saichō's successors abandoned monastic ordinations according to the designated procedures (Skt. *karma*; Jp. *konma* 羯摩) of the Vinaya tradition in favor of new procedures based on Mahayana scriptures. This distinctive approach to monastic rules of morality influenced the subsequent development of all forms of Buddhism in Japan regardless of their doctrinal orientations or institutional affiliations. In this way, Buddhism in Japan developed many distinctive features due to the pervading influence of Tendai doctrines regarding precepts. During the seventeenth century, the Tendai establishment implemented a drastic reconfiguration of its approach to the bodhisattva precepts. This new approach is now known as "Anraku Ritsu." This study of the rise and demise of the Anraku Ritsu builds upon Bodiford's previous works on Tendai Buddhism in early modern Japan; it reveals the close ties between religion and government in premodern Japan and demonstrates how the ambiguous status of Vinaya provided Buddhists with a large amount of room to reform and reconfigure Buddhist practices. For most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Anraku Ritsu constituted the orthodox Tendai approach to monastic rules of morality. The social and doctrinal significance of Anraku Ritsu increased dramatically, especially during the lifetimes of Myōryū Jizan 妙立慈山 (1637–1690), who helped to inspire it, and Kōben 公辨 (1669–1716), the royal prelate who implemented it. By tracing the emergence and the factors that facilitated the rise of the Anraku Ritsu, Bodiford illustrates that, in Japan, the lack of clear standards for monastic rules triggered religious anxiety that demanded periodic episodes of reform. He also identifies key issues in the way that Anraku Ritsu transformed not just the bodhisattva precepts, but also the *śrāmaṇera* precepts and *bhikṣu* precepts.

In the final essay of this feature, Saitō Takanobu untangles the relationship between Jōdoshū 浄土宗 (Pure Land Buddhism) and Buddhist precepts in Japanese Buddhism. As precepts have been rather predominant in Zen and Tendai circles, it is worth considering what stance the Japanese Jōdoshū has taken in actual practice. The Jōdoshū adopted the Tendai system of "perfect and sudden precepts" (Jp. *endonkai* 円頓戒) since the founder of Jōdoshū, Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), studied Tendai philosophy at Mount Hiei 比叡 and received the perfect and sudden precepts from Eikū 叡空 (d. 1179). To Hōnen, the perfect and sudden precepts were a form of common Buddhist practice, and hence should be upheld by the Jōdoshū too. Deducing from the understandings of the perfect and sudden precepts

of Hōnen and Shōgei 聖阿 (1341–1420), Saitō concludes that the *nenbutsu* 念仏 and the perfect and sudden precepts are complementary for Jōdoshū practitioners: one relies on the *nenbutsu* for going to a pleasant world in the next life, and the perfect and sudden precepts for attaining peace of mind in the present life. The *nenbutsu* is the practice set forth by Amida Buddha which allows us to attain birth in the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss. In contrast, the perfect and sudden precepts are Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings for attaining peace of mind in the present life.

Overall, by focusing on Buddhist textual scholarship, this feature seeks to further explore how the medieval interpretations of the bodhisattva precepts were articulated mainly across the larger Sinitic world, and in comparison with India and Tibet. The bodhisattva precepts were extended to the Buddhist laity, and this openness to the mass of ordinary people made these precepts central to the constitution of Mahayana Buddhism. The contributors explore the doctrinal transformations of the bodhisattva precepts, the practice of their conferral, their ordination rituals, as well as matters concerning their transgression and its subsequent repentance. The results not only detail how these notions were formulated, but also give numerous perspectives on how flexibly they were interpreted in the medieval Mahayana world, as well as their importance to the domestication of Buddhism, particularly in China and Japan, as a local religion that could be adapted to local conditions. This is most salient in the Tiantai/Tendai and Chan/Zen traditions. Although this concept is particular to East Asian Buddhism, it has clear roots in Indian Mahayana literature, where it was argued that the notion of a bodhisattva path supersedes the previous “two vehicles.” This inevitably brings forth questions about how the Vinaya should be regarded and what rules and regulations should be applied to Mahayana followers for whom the monastic/lay distinction was not nearly as sharp as in earlier Buddhism. By discussing how the reinterpretation and standardization of Buddhist regulations precipitated the new developments of the bodhisattva precepts and thus pushed the practice of East Asian Buddhism further from its Indian origins, the essays collected here will set the stage for the next phase of research on this essential topic in Buddhist studies.

## ABBREVIATION

- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–35.

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