

The Movement for the Revival of the Precepts by the Ritsu School in Medieval Japan¹

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INTRODUCTION

THE MOVEMENT to restore strict adherence to the precepts was a prominent feature of the revival of the Buddhist schools in Nara during the Kamakura period (1185–1333). In this paper, I focus on Eizon of the medieval Ritsu 律 school, one of the so-called “six schools of the Southern Capital (Nara),” i.e., *Nanto rokushū* 南都六宗,² who was one of the most important figures in this precept revival movement. First, I will sketch the background of Eizon’s activities and describe his famous self-ordination at the Hokkedō 法華堂 in Tōdaiji 東大寺. Next, I will focus on the innovative use of “comprehensive ordination” (*tsūju* 通受), first advocated by Kakujō 覺盛 (1194–1249) and subsequently developed by Ryōhen 良遍 (1194–1252) and Eizon 叡尊 (1201–1290). Finally, I will describe the organization of Eizon’s community, focusing especially on new categories of lay believers and monastics that he established in his community, and conclude with brief discussions on the Ritsu community of nuns and an interesting story of the transformation of men into women found in several documents of the medieval Ritsu school.

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² The six schools were the Kusha 俱舍, Jōjitsu 成実, Sanron 三論, Hossō 法相, Kegon 華嚴 and Ritsu schools. It must be mentioned that, by the Heian period (794–1185), the first two schools had been absorbed into the Hossō and Sanron schools, respectively, and did not exist as distinct entities.

THE MEANING OF THE PRECEPTS

Rules of Moral Conduct and Discipline

Precepts (*kairitsu* 戒律) are rules for regulating the everyday lives of the members of the Buddhist community (*saṅgha*). However, originally *kai* 戒 (*śīla* or rules of moral conduct) and *ritsu* 律 (*vinaya* or monastic code) were distinct. The former referred to rules for moral conduct that the members of the Buddhist community took upon themselves to follow out of their self-awareness of being followers of the Buddha. In contrast, the latter referred to rules and regulations to be observed by the members of the Buddhist community inasmuch as they were part of the Buddhist organization.³ From early on, the Buddhist community was made up of the so-called “seven groups of Buddhist disciples”: laymen (*upāsaka*), laywomen (*upāsikā*), male novices (*śramaṇa*), female novices (*śrāmaṇera*), probationary nuns (*śikṣamāṇa*), monks (*bhikṣu*), and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*). Among them, lay followers were enjoined to observe the five precepts (not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to steal, not to lie and not to drink alcohol), novices observed the ten precepts (the five precepts plus the following: not to sleep on luxurious beds, not to wear jewelry or use perfume, not to enjoy music or dance, not to handle gold or silver, and not to eat at improper times, i.e., after midday), while monks and nuns were required to keep the complete set of precepts (*gusokukai* 具足戒), consisting of 250 and 500 (actually 348) precepts, respectively.⁴ As this shows, each group of Buddhists had to follow a distinct set of precepts. These determined how the members of the Buddhist community should act and were set forth in the section of the Buddhist canon known as the *vinaya*. The precepts found in the *vinaya* were called “precepts for the seven groups,” which were rules of conduct applicable to the seven groups of Buddhist followers.

Traditionally, Buddhism speaks of the “three practices”: precepts, meditation and wisdom. Among these, the observance of the precepts comes first, inasmuch as it is by observing them, that one can prepare oneself physically and mentally to undertake meditation effectively and, as a result, attain wisdom. In this way, the observance of the precepts is considered to be of fundamental importance. Therefore, whenever the Buddhist world was confronted by a crisis, the precepts almost always became a topic of intense concern and were emphasized by those who wished to revive Buddhism.

³ See Minowa 2001.

⁴ See Hirakawa 1993–95 and Sasaki 1999.

Transformations in the Japanese Context

In Japan, the precepts first became an issue of major importance for the Buddhist community in the Nara period (710–794) when Jianzhen 鑑真 (688–763) succeeded in transmitting the proper form of the ordination ritual from China to Japan. To conduct the ordination ceremony properly, the presence of ten senior monks (specifically by “three masters and seven witnesses” [*sanshi shichishō* 三師七証], more on this below) who had themselves undergone formal ordination was required. Before Jianzhen, this requirement could not be fulfilled, as the necessary number of formally ordained monks did not exist in Japan.

Subsequently, another major development occurred at the beginning of the Heian period when Saichō 最澄 (767–822), the founder of the Japanese Tendai school based at Enryakuji 延暦寺 on Mt. Hiei 比叡山 near Kyoto, set forth his novel interpretation of the precepts. As noted above, in order to become a monk or nun, it was traditionally believed to be necessary to receive the complete precepts set forth in the *vinaya*. However, Saichō argued that one could become a full-fledged monk without taking these, maintaining that it was sufficient to receive and uphold the bodhisattva precepts (*bosatsukai* 菩薩戒), specifically the *Brahmajāla* precepts (*bonmōkai* 梵網戒), or the Mahayana bodhisattva precepts found in the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (hereafter *Brahmajāla sūtra*).⁵ The bodhisattva precepts were spiritual admonitions upon which the daily life of a bodhisattva should be based and were frequently granted to both the laity and monastics. However, the act of taking these precepts was formerly considered insufficient for one to become a monk or nun. Saichō’s claim was therefore a radical departure from the previous understanding of the precepts, but it can be said that his innovative view laid the basis for the distinctive understanding of the precepts that subsequently developed in Japan.

Saichō’s claim later had a great influence on monks living in the temples of Nara who continued to be ordained in the traditional manner by taking the complete precepts found in the *vinaya*. For example, there appeared monks who expressed their desire to receive the bodhisattva precepts at Enryakuji. This can be inferred from the fact that the *Engishiki* 延喜式, a law code promulgated in the Engi era (901–923), contains a clause prohibiting Nara monks from receiving ordination on Mt Hiei.⁶ Apparently, some Nara

⁵ See Ishida 1976.

⁶ *Shintei zōho kokushi taikēi* 新訂増補国史体系 (hereafter abbreviated as SZKT) 26: 545.

monks were so attracted to the Mahayana bodhisattva precepts conferred on Mt. Hiei that they came to despise the precepts of the seven groups upon which their own monastic organization was based, seeing them as an inferior Hinayana form of the precepts.

In this way, there came into being two different ways to become a monk in the early Heian period. The Buddhist schools based in Nara argued that it was necessary to take the precepts enumerated in the *vinaya* in order to become a member of the Buddhist community, while the Tendai school on Mt. Hiei argued that it was possible to become a full-fledged monk by taking the Mahayana bodhisattva precepts found in the *Brahmajāla sūtra*. The existence of these two different ways of becoming a monk became one of the distinctive features of Japanese Buddhism. Yet, it is also true that the adoption of the spiritual bodhisattva precepts gave rise to many unfortunate consequences, one of which was that the distinction between lay followers and monastics became blurred.

*Historical Developments of the Movement for the Revival
of the Precepts before the Kamakura Period*

Although the precepts for the seven groups of Buddhists set forth in the *vinaya* continued to be transmitted and maintained in the temples of Nara, as time went on, it became rare for monks to observe the precepts conscientiously. During the latter part of the Heian period, ordinations at the Nara temples were performed by worker monks (*dōshū* 堂衆) associated with such halls as the Tōkondō 東金堂 and Saikondō 西金堂 of Kōfukuji 興福寺 and the Chūmondō 中門堂 and Hokkedō 法華堂 of Tōdaiji 東大寺. By this time, monks were divided, on the whole, into two groups: elite scholar-monks (*gakuryō* 学侶) and worker monks. The latter served as the ten great masters charged with performing ordinations at the Kaidan'in 戒壇院, the hall containing the ordination platform (*kaidan* 戒壇) located within Tōdaiji. Moreover, it seems that these ceremonies had become mere formalities by that time. This can be surmised by the following harsh criticism found in the *Shasekishū* 沙石集 by Mujū Ichien 無住一円 (1227–1312):

As time went on, the proper ceremonial method [for conferring the precepts] fell into disuse. Since the middle ages, ordinations have been performed in name only. Although people gathered from the provinces [to receive the precepts], they just ran around the ordination platform. They neither know the major and minor

precepts nor do they understand the rules of conduct concerning the repentance to be undertaken when one has transgressed against the precepts.⁷

But despite this sad state of affairs, interest in the precepts gradually increased among the monks living in the Nara temples, and there appeared people who sought to revitalize Buddhism by reviving the precepts.

The pioneering figure in this regard was Nakanogawa Jitsuhan 中川実範 (n.d.–1144). Originally a monk of Kōfukuji, he eventually secluded himself at Jōshinin 成身院 in Nakanogawa, located in the hills east of Nara. Out of his deep desire to revive the precepts, he composed the *Ju bosatsukai hō* 受菩薩戒法 in 1113. Moreover, in 1122, he wrote the *Tōdaiji Kaidan'in jukaishiki* 東大寺戒壇院受戒式, an ordination manual, in an attempt to revive the spirit behind the ordination ceremony.

The next important figure associated with the revival of the precepts was Jōkei 貞慶 (1155–1213). Jōkei was a major figure in the Buddhist world from the end of the Heian period to the early years of the Kamakura period, and one of his main concerns was to revive the precepts. He wrote a number of works, including the *Gedatsu shōnin kairitsu kōgyō gansho* 解脱上人戒律興行願書, a document concerned with the establishment of Jōkiin 常喜院 by Jōkei's disciple Kakushin 覚真 (1170–1243, the clerical name of Fujiwara no Nagafusa 藤原長房 after he took the tonsure) within the precincts of Kōfukuji as the center for restoring the precepts. From this document, in which Jōkei sets forth his vow to revive the precepts, we can see how the precepts were treated at that time:

The monks of Tōkondō and Saikondō at Kōfukuji are specialists in the precepts. They consider Master Jianzhen to be their patriarch, and the doctrines of the Dharmaguptaka school to be their fundamental teachings.⁸ After receiving their robes (*jie* 持依), they make it a point to call themselves the Ritsu school. There is a limit [as to the number of people] who can advance to the position of the ten major and minor masters, and they consider the rank of precept master to be their highest office.⁹

⁷ Watanabe 1966, p. 154.

⁸ The *Sifenlü* (hereafter *Vinaya in Four Parts*), the fundamental text of the Ritsu school, was the *vinaya* of the Dharmaguptaka school.

⁹ Kamata and Tanaka 1971, p. 10.

This passage shows us the kind of image the worker monks making up the Ritsu school had of themselves at that time. Moreover, the text continues:

Ordinations in Nara are usually performed by imperial order at the seven great temples in general, and specifically by the ten masters of the two halls [i.e., Tōkondō and Saikondō]. The ceremony is extremely strict.¹⁰

This shows that the worker monks of these two halls took part in the ordination of Nara monks. Jōkei was a scholar-monk of the Hossō school of Kōfukuji. In the document above, he left his observations on the contemporary state of the precepts and on their transmission and maintenance by the worker monks from his standpoint as a scholar-monk.

After Jōkei, the movement for the revival of the precepts was carried on by his disciple Kainyo 戒如 (n.d.). Kainyo was an important figure in the revival since both Kakujō and Eizon, the two representative figures of the medieval Ritsu school, were his disciples. It has been said that Kakujō and Eizon were the de facto founders of the two major lineages of monks within the Ritsu school's precept revival movement in medieval Nara.¹¹ Among the three temples—Tōshōdaiji 唐招提寺, Saidaiji 西大寺 and Tōdaiji's Kaidan'in—that became the strongholds of the Ritsu school, the first two became centers of the two major lineages of reform-minded Ritsu monks.¹² Kakujō was the founder of the lineage based in Tōshōdaiji, while Eizon was the founder of the Saidaiji lineage. Between these two monks, it can be said that Kakujō laid the theoretical basis for the precept revival movement, while Eizon took Kakujō's ideas and put them into practice, albeit after modifying them slightly. Actually, Eizon was the more effective of the two, inasmuch as he succeeded in creating a large monastic organization under his leadership.

In the pages below, I will first describe the self-ordination undertaken by Eizon, Kakujō and their companions in 1236 (Katei 嘉禎 2). Next, in the following sections, I will consider Kakujō's innovative interpretation of the precepts and then turn to Eizon's understanding of them.

¹⁰ Kamata and Tanaka 1971, p. 10.

¹¹ See Matsuo 1988 and Minowa 1999.

¹² See Ueda 1975.

SELF-ORDINATION FOR TAKING THE COMPLETE PRECEPTS

An event of monumental importance for the medieval Ritsu school occurred in 1236 with the introduction of self-ordination as a means to receive full ordination.¹³ Kakujō, Eizon and their followers had previously undergone ordination and received the complete precepts at the Kaidan'in. However, they believed that, since this ordination did not conform to the Dharma, the precepts had not been properly transmitted to them. As noted above, the proper form for undertaking ordination and taking the precepts was transmitted to Japan by Jianzhen in the Nara period. Eventually, however, this procedure fell into disuse and only the outward form of the ritual continued to be held at the Kaidan'in. Hence Kakujō, Eizon and their followers believed that the Kaidan'in ordination was an empty ritual that did not actually confer the precepts.

Eizon fervently desired to undergo genuine ordination, and the person who helped him realize his wish was Kakujō. According to the *Kongō busshi Eizon kanjin gakushōki* 金剛仏子叡尊感身学正記 (hereafter *Gakushōki*), Eizon's autobiography, in the third month of 1235 (Bunryaku 文暦 2), at the Kaizen'in 戒禅院 in Tōdaiji, Eizon attended a lecture by Ensei 円晴 (1180–1241) of Kōfukuji on the first fascicle of the *Sifenlü xingshi chao* 四分律行事鈔, a commentary on the *Vinaya in Four Parts* by Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), the founder of the Chinese Nanshan Lü 南山律 (Jpn. Nanzan Ritsu) school. In the fall of that year, Eizon attended lectures on the remaining four fascicles of the text. Subsequently, at the Jōkiin in Kōfukuji, Eizon discussed with Kakujō the “Biaowubiao” 表無表 chapter of the *Dacheng fayuan yilinzhang* 大乘法苑義林章, a text which refers to self-ordination. At that time, it is said that Eizon was elated to find that:

Clearly you should know that, according to sacred treatises like the *Yugashide lun* 瑜伽師地論 [hereafter *Yogācārabhūmi*], once the seven groups of Mahayana [Buddhist disciples] comprehensively receive, whether through self-ordination or from others, the three sets [of pure precepts], henceforth until the end of time, they will all gain the precepts and attain the nature [of the precepts] in accordance with their aspirations.¹⁴

¹³ See Matsuo 1988.

¹⁴ *Saidaiji Eizon denki shūsei* 西大寺叡尊伝記集成 (hereafter abbreviated as SEDS), p. 9.

Then, from the twenty-sixth day of the third month until the seventeenth day of the seventh month of 1236, Eizon studied the second and third fascicles of the *Sifenlü xingshi chao* on his own. On the eighteenth day of the seventh month, when he went to visit Kakujō at the Jōkiin, the latter told him of the project of self-ordination for the full precepts he had prepared with Ensei and Ugon 有嚴 (1186–1275), scheduled to take place on the first day of the ninth month. According to the *Gakushōki*, Kakujō remarked:

Two or three people have already undergone the preparatory training (*kegyō* 加行). They are now ready to pray to receive auspicious signs (*kōsō* 好相). From the first day of the coming ninth month, they shall visit the Kenjakuin 羈索院 at Tōdaiji, and endeavor with diligence, and so forth.¹⁵

It is evident from this passage that specific preparations for self-ordination were being carried out at this time. Kakujō and his companions had studied the *Yogācārabhūmi* and, through their reading of the “Biaowubiao” chapter, became convinced that self-ordination was possible. Hence they planned to carry it out.

On the twenty-sixth day of the eighth month, Kakujō, Ensei, and Ugon received auspicious signs and preparations for self-ordination were progressing steadily. On the same day, Eizon also visited the Great Buddha Hall at Tōdaiji to pray to receive a sign, which he gained at the Kaizen’in on the twenty-eighth. Then, they secluded themselves at last in the Hokkedō of Tōdaiji on the thirtieth day of the eighth month to undergo self-ordination.

Auspicious Signs in Dreams

To undertake self-ordination, it was first necessary to eradicate one’s evil karma through sincere repentance. It was for this reason that Kakujō and the others conducted the prayers mentioned above. Then, to ascertain that their evil karma had actually been eradicated and that they had reached a state where they could receive the precepts, they sought to obtain auspicious signs in their dreams, examples of which included the appearance of the Buddha to pat one’s head or flower petals falling from the sky. The criteria for the authenticity of these signs were sought in such texts as the *Brahmajāla sūtra* and the *Dafangdeng tuoluoni jing* 大方等陀羅尼經. This is a significant point,

¹⁵ SEDS, p.10.

since it also helps us verify that the latter sutra was actually used in Japan. The auspicious signs received in dreams also served to verify whether or not the precepts really had been conferred on an individual.

Eizon and his companions took the precepts for laymen (*gonjikai* 近事戒) on the first day of the ninth month and those for male novices (*shamikai* 沙弥戒) on the second day. Ensei and Ugon performed self-ordination to take the precepts for monks (*bikukai* 比丘戒) on the third day, thus becoming full-fledged monks. Kakujo and Eizon took the precepts for monks on the fourth day. In the *Jisei jukai* 自誓受戒記, a record of the self-ordination written by Eizon himself, it is mentioned that “the self-ordination ritual composed by Maitreya was recited.”¹⁶ Since the *Yogācārabhūmi* is traditionally attributed to Maitreya, we can infer that they performed the self-ordination using the threefold pure precepts (*sanju jōkai* 三聚淨戒) found in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, and took the precepts for monks through this action. Moreover, according to the *Kōshō bosatsu gokyōkai chōmonshū* 興正菩薩御教戒聽聞集, a record of Eizon’s sayings, after they had taken the complete precepts, they sought to verify that they had actually received them by seeking auspicious signs in dreams.¹⁷

In this way, as they believed it impossible to receive the complete precepts in the traditional manner from three masters and seven witnesses, Eizon and his companions adopted the use of a new form of ordination, i.e., self-ordination. Herein lies the characteristic feature of the self-ordination undertaken by Eizon and his companions. However, although, at this stage, they had come to maintain that it was possible to be conferred with the complete precepts by receiving the threefold pure precepts “through self-ordination or by being ordained by others,” it needs to be noted that, at this point in time, self-ordination was still not considered the ordinary method of ordination for the seven groups of disciples.

THE ADOPTION OF “COMPREHENSIVE” AND “SEPARATE” ORDINATIONS

Separate Ordination Ceremony for Conferring the Precepts

The distinctive feature of the medieval Ritsu school lay in its adoption of two very different methods of ordination, i.e., the “comprehensive ordination” and the “separate ordination” (*betsuju* 別受). Kakujo’s *Bosatsukai tsūbetsu*

¹⁶ SEDS, p. 337.

¹⁷ Kamata and Tanaka 1971, p. 208.

nijushō 菩薩戒通別二受鈔 (hereafter *Nijushō*), a treatise composed in 1238 (Katei 嘉禎 4) on these two forms of ordination begins with the words, “Question: What are the procedures for the comprehensive ordination and the separate ordination?”¹⁸ The rest of the treatise is devoted to answering this question. As this indicates, Kakujō held that there existed two different procedures for ordination.

In the medieval Ritsu school, the traditional method of ordination, in which the complete precepts were conferred on the initiate, was called the “separate ordination.” This form of ordination, which is described in the *vinaya*, required the presence of ten senior monks, or monks who had been ordained for at least ten years. As noted above, these ten monks consisted of three masters and seven witnesses. Among them, the three masters were the precept master, who guided the novice in everyday matters after the latter’s ordination, an instructor (*kyōjushi* 教授師), who questioned the novice to determine if he or she was eligible for ordination, and an ordination master (*konmashi* 羯磨師), who served as master of ceremonies in the ordination. Under the guidance of the three masters and seven witnesses, novices wishing to receive the complete precepts were typically ordained in an act called “performance of the four pronouncements” (*byakushi konma* 白四羯磨). In this act, the ordination master informs the assembled monks that the initiate wishes to undergo ordination and demands that if anyone objects, he should speak up. This pronouncement (*byaku* 白) is repeated three more times, and if the assembled monks remain silent, this is taken as a sign that they do not object to the initiate’s ordination.

The complete precepts that were conferred during this ceremony refer to the full set of monk’s precepts given to an initiate wishing to enter the *saṅgha*. In concrete terms, the complete precepts for monks consist of the 250 rules of training (Skt. *śikṣāpada*; Jpn. *gakusho* 学処), divided into the following five categories: (1) *pārājika* (Jpn. *haraihō* 波羅夷法), or offenses leading to banishment from the monastic community (having sex, stealing, killing and claiming to have attained supernatural powers), (2) *saṅghāvaśeṣa* (Jpn. *sōzanhō* 僧殘法), or offenses that can be forgiven according to a fixed procedure, thus allowing the transgressing monk or nun to remain in the monastic community, (3) *naiḥsargikā prāyaścittika* (Jpn. *shadahō* 捨墮法, also *nisagi haiddaihō* 尼薩耆波逸捏法), or offenses that can be forgiven after confession and repentance before the monastic community, (4) *śuddha prāyaścittika* (Jpn. *tandahō* 單墮法, also *haiddaihō* 波逸捏法), or offenses

¹⁸ T 74: 53b8. Cf. Minowa 1999, p. 650.

that can be forgiven after confession and repentance in the presence of one or two other monks, and (5) *śaikṣadharmā* (Jpn. *hyakushu gakuho* 百衆学法), or minor offenses. This method of classification is called the five categories, and the 250 rules of training enumerated therein are commonly called the 250 precepts.

The highlight of the ordination ceremony is the *konma* (Skt. *karman*), wherein the ordination master pronounces the statement for conferring the precepts on the initiate. In conjunction with the *konma*, the initiate was required to pledge to refrain from the four *pārājika* offenses and to abide by the four reliances (*shiehō* 四依法) or the four basic rules of the monastic lifestyle (to wear robes of rags, to live by begging, to dwell in the forest and to use only cow urine for medicine). With this, the formal ordination ceremony was concluded and one became a full-fledged monk.

Comprehensive Ordination Ceremony for Conferring the Precepts

The comprehensive ordination was a new form of ordination adopted by the medieval Ritsu school. This method of ordination was actually almost identical to the Tendai ordination ceremony for granting the Mahayana bodhisattva precepts. Since Kakujō's ordination manual is not extant, we can only speculate on its liturgical form from his remaining writings such as the *Nijushō* and *Bosatsukai tsūju kengishō* 菩薩戒通受遣疑鈔 (hereafter *Kengishō*), a work discussing the comprehensive ordination. According to the *Nijushō*:

In the comprehensive ordination, one simultaneously receives, by means of the *konma* consisting of the threefold [pure precepts], [the precepts] encompassing all the rules of conduct as well as [the precepts] to practice good acts and to benefit [sentient beings].¹⁹

This passage shows that the threefold pure precepts were conferred during the comprehensive ordination. These precepts appear in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, where they are described as the precepts to be observed by bodhisattvas. Properly speaking, these consist of: (1) the precepts encompassing all the precepts, or the precepts to observe all the rules of conduct established by the Buddha and to avoid all evil, (2) the precepts encompassing all good acts, or the precepts to practice all good acts and (3) the precepts encompassing all sentient beings (in Chinese translation by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), this is rendered as “precepts to benefit sentient beings” [*nyōyaku ujōkai* 饒益有情戒]). It may be added that, as its name implies, the first of

¹⁹ T: 74, 53b8–10. Cf. Minowa 1999, p. 650.

the three precepts above is believed to be composed of all the precepts, including the complete precepts as well as the bodhisattva precepts found in such texts as the *Brahmajāla sūtra*.

A characteristic feature of the comprehensive ordination ceremony is that, in performing the *konma*, the initiate is asked whether or not he or she will uphold the threefold pure precepts. That is to say, in contrast to the separate ordination where the initiate is conferred the complete precepts as expounded in the *vinaya*, in the comprehensive ordination, the initiate is granted the threefold pure precepts as found in the *Yogācārabhūmi*. This was a revolutionary innovation, inasmuch as the Buddhist schools of Nara (including the Ritsu school) traditionally held that the only way to become a monk was to receive the complete precepts.

Let us next consider the part of the comprehensive ordination ceremony called the *sessō* 説相 (literally “explanation of the characteristics [of the precepts]”). The *Kengishō* states:

The threefold pure precepts of our treatise [i.e., the *Yogācārabhūmi*] necessarily include all of the five categories and seven groups of prohibitions [*gohin shichiju* 五篇七聚, i.e., the 250 rules of conduct constituting the complete precepts].²⁰ Not only is this a requirement found in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, this is also what is taught in the *Brahmajāla [sūtra]*. The ten major and forty-eight minor [precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra*] are [taken up in] the *sessō*. The *sessō* is an abridged explanation of the essential points of the characteristics of the precepts which are received during the ordination, and [it is taught to] instruct the initiate in advance about their main points.²¹

As this shows, the *sessō* is the part of the ordination ceremony in which the initiate is given brief preliminary instructions concerning the precepts conferred during the ordination. According to the passage above, the ten major and forty-eight minor precepts found in the *Brahmajāla sūtra* were expounded in the *sessō*. The ten major precepts are the precepts against killing living beings with pleasure, stealing from people by threatening

²⁰ Both the five categories and seven groups are ways of classifying the 250 rules of conduct. The five categories refer to the fivefold classification of the rules of conduct noted above: *pārājika*, *saṅghāvaśeṣa*, *naihsargika prāyaścittika*, *śuddha prāyaścittika* and *śaikṣadharmā*. The seven groups are *pārājika*, *saṅghāvaśeṣa*, *aniyata*, *naihsargika prāyaścittika*, *śuddha prāyaścittika*, *pratideśanīya*, *śaikṣadharmā* and *adhikaraṇa śamatha*.

²¹ T 74: 48c25–29. Cf. Minowa 1999, p. 681.

them, engaging in sex without compassion, lying intentionally, committing transgressions by selling alcohol, discussing the faults of others, praising oneself and disparaging others, grudgingly giving others what they request, being angry and not forgiving the transgression of others, and slandering the Three Treasures. In the Tendai ordination ceremony for conferring the Mahayana precepts, the ten major precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra* are also taken up in the *sessō*. Hence, it may be said that Kakujiō's comprehensive ordination closely followed the format of the Tendai ordination ceremony. Moreover, as noted above, Kakujiō argues in the *Kengishō* that, "The threefold pure precepts of our treatise (i.e., the *Yogācārabhūmi*) necessarily include all of the five categories and seven groups of prohibitions." Since the five categories and seven groups refer to the 250 rules of conduct constituting the complete precepts, it is evident that Kakujiō believed it possible to receive these precepts through this ordination. He sought scriptural support for his interpretation in such texts as the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the "Biaowubiao" chapter of the *Dacheng fayuan yilinzhang*, and the *Zhanchajing* 占察經.

The *Zhanchajing*, generally believed to be an apocryphal Buddhist sutra, recommends self-ordination if no pure monk is available from whom to receive ordination. Interestingly, this text is cited in the biography of the Nara period monk Fushō 普照 (n.d.) found in the *Nihon kōsōden yōmon shō* 日本高僧伝要文抄. Along with Yōei 榮叡 (n.d.–749), Fushō played a major role in bringing Jianzhen to Japan, but according to a revealing passage in this biography, it is stated that "Shichū 志忠 [n.d.], Ryōfuku 靈福 [n.d.] and Kenkei 賢環 [714–793], citing the *Zhanchajing*, maintained that it is possible to receive the precepts through self-ordination"²² and refused to accept the ordination ceremony transmitted to Japan by Jianzhen. As this shows, this sutra was used by Nara period Japanese monks to provide justification for undertaking self-ordination even after Jianzhen's arrival in Japan made it possible to undertake ordination according to the correct form described in the *vinaya*.

In any case, Kakujiō and his companions asserted that it was possible to receive the complete precepts and become full-fledged monks by taking the threefold pure precepts, which they understood as being a legitimate type of *konma*, or an official act of receiving the precepts for becoming monks, which constituted the core of the traditional ordination. Yet, in the *Nijushō*, Kakujiō also writes:

²² *Dainihon bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書 (hereafter abbreviated as DBZ) 101: 69a5–6.

When it is possible to fully perform both the comprehensive and separate ordinations, one should receive the five, ten and complete (precepts) following the procedures for the separate ordination and undertake the comprehensive ordination just once, as necessary.²³

From this passage, it appears that Kakujō thought it sufficient to undertake the comprehensive ordination just once in one's lifetime.

In the *Nijushō*, Kakujō also takes up the question as to why it is possible to receive all the precepts of the seven groups of Buddhists by taking the identical threefold pure precepts. His answer is as follows: "It is not that one gains all the precepts for the seven groups during the comprehensive ordination. One only receives one set of precepts, depending on whether one is a lay person or a monastic."²⁴ In other words, Kakujō's argument here is that, even though they are conferred with the same threefold pure precepts, those who wish to become lay disciples attain this status upon receiving these precepts, while those wishing to become monks attain this status upon receiving the same set of precepts, etc. Moreover, he states, "In conducting one's life in accordance with the precepts (*zuigyō* 隨行) after the ordination, one keeps those precepts that accord with one's desired status and one's wishes."²⁵ As this shows, Kakujō apparently believed that, after the ordination, one needed only to keep one of the seven types of precepts appropriate to the status (such as layman, novice or monk) that he or she had acquired in the ordination. It is necessary to remember that, at this point, the comprehensive ordination was not yet recognized as the accepted method for conferring the precepts for the seven groups of disciples.

As noted above, in the comprehensive ordination as envisioned by Kakujō, the threefold pure precepts are conferred during the *konma* of the ordination ceremony, and the ten major and forty-eight minor precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra* are taken up in its *sessō* portion. This is no different from the traditional, and most common, method employed for conferring the bodhisattva precepts. Kakujō's argument that it was possible to become full-fledged monks through this new method of ordination was considered quite novel among the monks of the Nara temples at that time. This is clear from the opening question found in the *Kengishō*: "Question: In recent years,

²³ T 74: 57a13–15. Cf. Minowa 1999, p. 663.

²⁴ T 74: 57a5–6. Cf. Minowa 1999, pp. 662–63.

²⁵ T 74: 49a3–4. Cf. Minowa 1999, p. 681.

groups of recluses (*tonsei* 遁世) have taken to calling themselves monks after receiving the threefold pure precepts, and, observing the five groups of prohibitory regulations, claim to practice the dharma of a bodhisattva. This would appear to be a new thesis.”²⁶ However, Kakujō’s new interpretation presents a problem since, if the act of taking the bodhisattva precepts results in the acquisition of the complete precepts, what should one do if he or she wants to receive just the bodhisattva precepts? In other words, if Kakujō’s position were accepted, then there could be no way to confer the bodhisattva precepts. Clearly, some inconsistencies remained. Thus, the theory of the comprehensive ordination at this early stage continued to be problematic at many points. It was only after Ryōhen and Eizon presented their interpretations that these problems were finally overcome.

THE INTERPRETATIONS OF RYŌHEN AND EIZON

The Comprehensive Ordination as Transmitted by Ryōhen

Ryōhen of the Hossō school is most famous for his works on Hossō consciousness-only philosophy like the *Kanjin kakumushō* 観心覚夢鈔, but he also received the precepts from Kakujō and worked for their revival. Like Kakujō, Ryōhen recognized that the complete precepts could be received through both the separate and comprehensive ordinations. This is clear from the *Tetteishō* 徹底章 by Genkyū 元休 (n.d.), which says:

Here, Ryōhen and Shinkū 真空 were great scholars of the two temples. They had many disciples. After abandoning their scholarly reputations, they entered Kakujō’s group of disciples and were ordained as monks through the comprehensive ordination. Moreover, they compiled passages from the commentaries and explained how to fulfill the innate precepts (*shōkai jōju* 性戒成就). Therefore, the students of both temples could not criticize them.²⁷

Here it is said that the students of Tōdaiji and Kōfukuji (the two temples in the quotation above) could not criticize the notion of the comprehensive ordination since Ryōhen and Shinkū, under whom many of these students studied, approved of this form of ordination.

Among Ryōhen’s writings on the precepts, we find such works as the

²⁶ T 74: 48b13–15. Cf. Minowa 1999, p. 679.

²⁷ *Nihon daizōkyō* 日本大藏經 (hereafter abbreviated as ND) 35: 682b5–8.

Bosatsukai tsūbetsu niju shō 菩薩戒通別二受抄, the *Bosatsukai betsuju gyōhi* 菩薩戒別受行否 and the *Tsūju kisoku unan tsūe shō* 通受軌則有難通會抄 (hereafter *Tsūeshō*). Among them, let us consider the *Tsūeshō*. This work, written in 1250 (Kenchō 建長 2), contains the following question:

Even in the case of the comprehensive ordination, in order to confer the precepts for monks (i.e., the complete precepts), it is necessary to provide an explanation of the four *pārājikas* [in the *sessō*]. However, nowadays, from what I have heard, there are many irregularities, with either the latter four [major precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra*] being explained, or the ten major [precepts] being explained or the first four [major precepts] being explained as well [and so forth]. This is highly questionable.²⁸

From this passage, it is clear that at the time when this work was written, there was no uniformity concerning the kinds of precepts taken up in the *sessō*. Sometimes the ten major precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra* were used, while at other times only the last four of these major precepts were employed. Ryōhen himself maintained that, in principle, the four “unshared” *pārājikas*,²⁹ that is to say, the four *pārājika* offenses enumerated in the *Yogācārabhūmi*³⁰ should be taken up in the *sessō*. Moreover, he argued that “the comprehensive ordination encompasses all the unshared and shared precepts. Therefore, after the four unshared *pārājikas* are explained, it is also permissible to take up the four shared *pārājikas*,”³¹ that is to say, the four *pārājikas* enumerated in the *vinaya* (having sex, stealing, killing and claiming to have attained supernatural powers). In other words, Ryōhen recommended using both the four unshared *pārājikas* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the four *pārājikas* of the *vinaya*, since he maintained that they were both bodhisattva precepts. This structure was later adopted and used by Eizon’s community of disciples. Actually, there is no way of knowing whether this structure was first proposed by Ryōhen or Eizon. However, in

²⁸ ND 35: 575a10–12.

²⁹ These *pārājikas* are called “unshared” because they are to be observed specifically by bodhisattvas.

³⁰ The *shita shōshohō* 四他勝処法, which are identical to the last four of the ten major precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra*: praising oneself and disparaging others, grudgingly giving others what they request, being angry and not forgiving the transgressions of others, and slandering the Three Treasures.

³¹ ND 67: 577a10–11.

view of the fact that this is closer to the teachings of the Hossō school (the *Yogācārabhūmi* was one of its central texts), we may speculate that this form of the comprehensive ordination, which employs both sets of the four *pārājikas* from the *vinaya* and the *Yogācārabhūmi* in the *sessō*, may have originated with Ryōhen.

The Structure of the Comprehensive Ordination according to Eizon

The structure of the comprehensive ordination proposed by Eizon is generally identical to that advocated by Ryōhen above. That is to say, the threefold pure precepts are employed in the *konma* while the four *pārājikas* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the precepts for the seven groups of disciples found in the *vinaya* are employed in the *sessō*.

Let us consider two works believed to convey Eizon's ritual procedures for conferring the precepts, namely the *Jubosatsukai sahō* 授菩薩戒作法, an ordination manual for conferring the bodhisattva precepts, and the *Jubosatsukai yōi kikigaki* 授菩薩戒用意聞書 (hereafter *Yōi kikigaki*), a record of Eizon's instructions on the bodhisattva precepts, both preserved at Saidaiji.³² The extant copy of the former dates from the early modern period, but it can be inferred that the document on which it was ultimately based goes back to the medieval period. The *Yōi kikigaki* is believed to have been written by Eizon's disciple Kyōgi 教基 (n.d.) immediately after his master's death in the tenth month of 1290 (Shōō 正応 3). Hence, we can assume that it reflects quite faithfully the manner in which ordinations were carried out by Eizon.

According to the *Jubosatsukai sahō*, the threefold pure precepts—namely, the precepts encompassing all the precepts, the precepts encompassing all good acts, and the precepts to benefit all sentient beings—were all conferred on the initiate, but the precepts taken up in the *sessō* differed depending on the categories of the initiates—*gonji* 近事, *gonjū* 近住, novices or monks—being ordained (the terms *gonji* and *gonjū* will be explained in the following section). Furthermore, in the section entitled “*Sessō no koto*” 説相事 of the *Yōi kikigaki*, Eizon's words are cited as follows:

In conferring the precepts for novices, the four *pārājikas* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* are conferred first, followed by the ten precepts for novices. Because the threefold pure precepts are encompassed by the bodhisattva's four *pārājikas*, there is no particular need to include a *sessō* [but it is included] to conform to the separate

³² The text of these two works can be found in Minowa 1999, pp. 537–646.

ordination—so it was said [by Eizon]. This is to be followed in the case of monks, nuns, probationary nuns and others.³³

Although Eizon makes no changes in the *konma* wherein the threefold pure precepts were conferred on each of the seven groups, he altered the *sessō* so that the four *pārājikas* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* along with the ten precepts were conferred on novices, while these four as well as the four *pārājikas* of the *vinaya* were conferred on monks. In this way, a new pattern was created whereby the *vinaya* precepts for the seven groups and the four *pārājikas* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* were conferred together.

By using this structure, it was possible to show that this ordination was clearly different from ceremonies for granting the bodhisattva precepts, where only the bodhisattva precepts were conferred. Therefore, it may be said that the structure of Eizon's comprehensive ordination was much more consistent than that of Kakujiō's. What, then, was the significance of this method of ordination?

First, the claim that one could legitimately become a full-fledged monk by taking the threefold pure precepts greatly deviated from the tradition of the *vinaya*. One of the earliest discussions concerning whether or not one could become a monk by taking the threefold pure precepts is found in the *Dacheng yizhang* 大乘義章, a Buddhist encyclopedia compiled by the Chinese monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (523–592) of Jingying Temple, specifically in a section from its tenth fascicle entitled “Sanjujie qimen fenbie” 三聚戒七門分別 which discusses the threefold pure precepts. Here, the question is raised as to whether or not a person could be exempted from taking the complete precepts in order to become a monk if he had already taken the bodhisattva's threefold pure precepts as a layman. To this question, the *Dacheng yizhang* replies in the negative:

This is inadmissible. Although the dharma [i.e., the precepts] of the seven groups of disciples are all included in the bodhisattva precepts, it is not possible for one person to keep all the precepts of the seven groups of disciples simultaneously. Because [the precepts] are established in accordance with the form [i.e., the form or outward appearance one takes as a lay person, novice, monk etc.], each person must take [the precepts appropriate to his or her status] separately.³⁴

³³ Minowa 1999, p. 551.

³⁴ T 44: 663a.

According to this passage, although the precepts of the seven groups of disciples are all included in the threefold pure precepts, each group is required to keep a different set of precepts appropriate to his or her status. In other words, lay people are required to keep the five precepts, male and female novices the ten precepts and monks and nuns the complete precepts. Therefore, each of these groups had to receive the precepts corresponding to their status before they could be officially accepted into the Buddhist community. From this, it followed that, even if one had already taken the threefold pure precepts as a lay person, it was necessary to take the complete precepts anew in order to become a full-fledged monk. However, many followers did not accept this argument, and this led to the development of a characteristically Japanese form of Buddhism.

Second, by taking up the *pārājikas* of the *vinaya* in the *sessō*, it became possible to both distinguish this form of ordination from the ordination ceremony for conferring the bodhisattva precepts based on the *Brahmajāla sūtra* and, at the same time, highlight its similarity with the ordination ceremony based on the *vinaya*. In conclusion, it may be said that with the appearance of this format for the ordination based on the complete precepts of the threefold pure precepts, there was created an ordination ceremony that could stand on equal footing with the ordination ceremony centered on the *byakushi konma*.

In this way, Eizon was able to develop Kakujiō's theory of the precepts one step further, creating a more practical system. To be more specific, he was able to redress a glaring inconsistency in Kakujiō's ordination ceremony noted above. According to the *Tsūju sange ryōji fudōki* 通受懺悔兩寺不同記 (hereafter *Ryōji fudōki*), a short work by Gyōnen 凝然 (1240–1321) concerning the different ways in which repentance was conducted as a part of the comprehensive ordination ceremonies at Tōshōdaiji and Saidaiji, it is clear that, by the Kōan 弘安 era (1278–88), the comprehensive ordination was modified even at Tōshōdaiji, Kakujiō's base of operation, to include the conferring of the four *pārājikas* of the *vinaya* and the forty-three minor precepts (*kyōkai* 輕戒) of the *Yogācārabhūmi*.

Differences in the Interpretation of the Violation of the Precepts

Eizon and Kakujiō also differed over their understanding of the method for undertaking repentance when the complete precepts received in the comprehensive ordination were violated. For Kakujiō, the precepts conferred in the comprehensive ordination were the complete precepts

for bodhisattvas, meaning that those who took this ordination became bodhisattvas. And since the *Yogācārabhūmi* states, “it should be known that all the violations of the precepts committed by bodhisattvas are misdeeds (or transgressions that can be forgiven if one repents),”³⁵ Kakujō argued that all the violations of the precepts committed by people who took the comprehensive ordination, including even those offenses classified as *pārājikas*, should be treated as acts that could be forgiven through repentance. This is clear from the *Ryōji fudōki*, which quotes Kakujō as saying that “the bodhisattva’s threefold pure precepts are all categorized as ‘misdeeds of one type.’”³⁶ As this shows, Kakujō emphasized that the comprehensive ordination was a new method that differed from the separate ordination centered on *byakushi konma*, thus requiring a different type of repentance when violated.

In contrast, the *Ryōji fudōki* attributes the following words to Eizon:

[Even] those who become bodhisattva monks and nuns through the comprehensive ordination must recognize the distinctions between the five groups and seven categories of precepts and uphold them in the manner stipulated. Accordingly, the violations [are expiated] following the names of the five categories and seven groups of precepts.³⁷

As this passage shows, Eizon understood that, even when conferred through the comprehensive ordination, a *pārājika* was a *pārājika*, i.e., a serious offense requiring immediate banishment from the Buddhist community.

However, Eizon’s interpretation—that the *pārājikas* must be expiated in the same way, whether they were granted through the separate or comprehensive ordination—must be judged inconsistent. As noted above, Kakujō argued that the prohibitions against committing the *pārājikas* conferred in the comprehensive ordination were bodhisattva precepts and thus could be treated as “misdeeds of one type” when violated. In contrast, the prohibitions against committing the *pārājikas* conferred in the separate ordination were the *vinaya* precepts, thus requiring that they be expiated as stipulated in the rules for the precepts of the five categories and seven groups. Hence, Kakujō stressed the difference between the two kinds of *pārājikas*. That is to say, he claimed that there were different methods of

³⁵ T 30: 521a.

³⁶ T 74: 59b26.

³⁷ T 74: 62a1–3.

repentance depending upon the kind of ordination that was performed to confer the precepts. On the other hand, Eizon maintained that it was far more serious to commit a *pārājika* offense than to commit any other offense. This interpretation is inconsistent and is, for this reason, somewhat problematic. However, Eizon was unconvinced by Kakujō's argument that when monks and nuns who had taken the comprehensive ordination violated the *pārājikas*, it should be treated as a misdeed only requiring repentance. Eizon's position reflected his desire to give priority to maintaining the highest moral standards for his community. Here we see how sincere a monk Eizon was.

THE MEMBERS OF EIZON'S ORDER

Gonji and Gonjū

Another noteworthy feature of the medieval Ritsu school is the fact that new categories of Buddhist disciples were created as part of its religious organization. Among them, the most important were two categories of lay believers, *gonji* and *gonjū*, and two types of novices, probationary novices (*gyōdō shami* 形同沙弥) and novices in conformity with the Dharma (*hōdō shami* 法同沙弥). In the case of Eizon's community, where we have ample records substantiating this innovation, it is clear that these new categories of believers were instituted. We may surmise that this was the same in Kakujō's community, but we cannot be certain due to the lack of historical documents. There were both male and female members in all four categories, but we will focus on the male members in explaining these new categories below.

The medieval Ritsu school distinguished lay disciples into two groups: *gonji* and *gonjū*. *Gonji*, a translation of the Sanskrit term *upāsaka* which is usually rendered into English as "layman," means "those who approach and serve the Three Treasures." The term is found in Xuanzang's translation of the *Abhidharmakośa* and refers to those lay people who observe the five precepts. *Gonjū*, in Sanskrit *upavāsastha*, meaning "those who approach and abide in the Three Treasures," is also found in Xuanzang's translation and refers to those lay followers who observe the eight precepts of abstinence (*hassaikai* 八齋戒). These eight refer to those precepts which lay people, emulating the lifestyle of renunciants, keep for six days—the eighth, fourteenth, fifteenth, twenty-third, twenty-ninth and thirtieth—of every month. According to the *Abhidharmakośa*, these precepts are: not to kill, not to steal, not to engage in sex, not to lie, not to drink alcohol, not to sleep on luxurious beds, not to wear jewelry or use perfume, not to enjoy

songs or dancing, and not to eat at improper times. By observing these eight precepts, lay people could approach the ideal life of a renunciant, even if only temporarily.

In the *Abhidharmakośa*, the *gonjū* comes before the *gonji*, indicating that the former represents a less advanced level of Buddhist practitioner. However, in the medieval Ritsu organization, the order was reversed so that the *gonji* was ranked lower than the *gonjū*. This change derived from the way in which the eight precepts of abstinence were undertaken. As noted above, lay people traditionally had to observe these precepts only six days a month. (It might be added that, with the growth of Jizō worship in the Heian period, there apparently arose the practice of keeping these precepts on ten specified days each month.) However, Eizon newly established an order of laymen and women who vowed to keep the eight precepts of abstinence for an extended period of time. These people became known as *gonjū* and came to be ranked higher than the *gonji*, resulting in the reversal of the original hierarchy.

The Practitioners of the Extended Abstinence

The practice of observing the eight precepts of abstinence for an extended period of time is sometimes called extended abstinence (*chōsai* 長齋). The believers who followed this practice were often called “practitioners of the abstinence precepts” (*saikaishu* 齋戒衆) or “practitioners of the eight precepts of abstinence” (*hassaikaishu* 八齋戒衆).³⁸ For example, these terms, as well as the term “practitioners of the eight abstinences” (*hassaishu* 八齋衆) are found in the *Saidaiji nishi sōbō zōei dōshin gōriki hōgachō* 西大寺西僧坊造當同心合力奉加帳, a register of people who helped with the construction of the western monastic dormitory of Saidaiji.³⁹ It is likely that all of these terms referred to believers who observed the eight precepts of abstinence, not just on specific days of the month, but for an extended period of time. The expression “the eight precepts of abstinence to be kept until the end of time” (*jin miraisai no hassaikai* 尽未来際の八齋戒) is found sporadically in the *Gakushōki*, showing that there were people who observed the eight precepts of abstinence continuously throughout their lives.

From the *Gakushōki*, we learn that the practice of extended abstinences

³⁸ See the chapter entitled “Chūsei Yamato no jiin to zaichi seiryoku: Saidaiji o chūshin to shite 中世大和の寺院と在地勢力: 西大寺を中心として” in Ōishi 2004, pp. 23–61 and Hosokawa 1987.

³⁹ The terms *saikaishu* and *hassaishu* are found in SEDS, p. 387, while the term *hassaikaishu* is found in SEDS, p. 388.

was undertaken in various places and under various circumstances. For example, the entry from the seventh month of 1267 (Bun'ei 文永 4) noting the installation of an image of Mañjuśrī at Hannyaji 般若寺 states, “while [the statue] was being created, all the followers of the Buddhist path, including sculptors, painters, sutra-copyists, carpenters and lacquerers, observed the eight precepts of abstinence.”⁴⁰ From this passage, we can see that sculptors and painters undertook the extended abstinence when they created or painted Buddha images. Again, in the entry for the twenty-sixth day of the seventh month of 1281 (Kōan 弘安 4), it is stated, “an order was issued inviting abstinence-observing monks (*jisaisō* 持齋僧) to Hachimangū from the southern and northern capitals (i.e., Nara and Kyoto) to pray for the peace of our country and to rid our country of the harmful acts of a foreign country (i.e., the Mongol invasion).”⁴¹ From this passage, we can infer the existence of abstinence-observing monks, namely monks who observed the extended abstinence. Moreover, although the following is a statement made from the side of those conferring the precepts, the entry for the fourteenth day of the sixth month of 1262 (Kōchō 弘長 2) of the *Kantō ōgenki* 關東往還記, a record of Eizon's trip to Kamakura undertaken in that year, states:

The period of six days for observing the eight precepts of abstinence is being extended. The ordination ceremonies for both the nobility and commoners are also gradually increasing. Sometimes one or two thousand people, sometimes even up to two or three thousand people are ordained. Again, not just on the six days of abstinence, but every day the precepts are conferred.⁴²

From this passage we can confirm that the eight precepts of abstinence were granted not just on the days when they were to be observed but over a period of several days in a row.

Moreover, the following passage can be found in the section entitled “Jisai kiu no koto” 持齋祈雨事 (Prayers for Rain by Precepts-Observing Monks) in Eizon's *Kōshō bosatsu gokyōkai chōmon shū*: “When more than 270 lay followers took the precepts of abstinence and prayed for rain for three days and three nights at the Shiōdō 四王堂 (of Saidaiji), reciting the precious name of Kannon.”⁴³ The following passage reads, “during these three days and

⁴⁰ SEDS, p. 32.

⁴¹ SEDS, p. 49.

⁴² SEDS, p. 82.

⁴³ Kamata and Tanaka 1971, p. 197.

three nights, they refrained from doing evil and, in this state of purity, they performed this [prayer for rain].”⁴⁴ This suggests that the abstinence period was understood as being linked to purification. Although this passage only states that lay people undertook the extended abstinence in order to pray for rain, it is likely that the prayers were performed together with the monks. Hence, it can be surmised that the practice of extended abstinence was used as a means of strengthening the ties between these two groups of Buddhist disciples.

As the above analysis suggests, it is possible to distinguish two types of extended abstinences: one that is undertaken for a limited period of time, and another that is observed for a much longer period, namely, for the duration of one’s lifetime. Of the two, the latter is more significant. Eizon created an innovative order of lay people dedicated to keeping the extended abstinence throughout their lives. Examples of people practicing the extended abstinence individually can be found as early as the age of Fujiwara no Kamatari 藤原鎌足 (614–669) during the Asuka period (592–694). However, it became institutionalized as the practice of an entire order of lay people under Eizon and became a distinctive feature of the medieval Ritsu school.

Probationary Novices and Novices in Conformity with the Dharma

Let us turn our attention to two other categories of practitioners found within the medieval Ritsu organization: probationary novices and novices in conformity with the Dharma. The Japanese term for probationary novice, *gyōdō shami*, literally means “those whose appearance is identical to that of a novice.” In contrast, the term *hōdō shami* means “those who are identical to novices (*shami*) who conform to the Dharma.” It seems likely that the latter refers to the traditional category of novices found in the *vinaya*. These terms appear in the works of Daoxuan’s *Sifenlü xingshi chao* and *Jiemoshu* 羯磨疏. Moreover, in the section entitled “Shami biexingpian” 沙弥別行篇, which treats the practices of the novices found in the fourth fascicle of the *Xingshi chaozi chiji* 行事鈔資持記, a commentary on Daoxuan’s *Sifenlü xingshi chao* by Lingzhi Yuanzhao 靈芝元照 (1048–1116) of the Song period, the difference between these two types of novices is succinctly explained as follows: “those who take the tonsure are called probationary novices, but once they take the ten precepts, they become novices in conformity with the Dharma.”⁴⁵ Since Kakujō, Eizon and their companions studied the teachings of the Nanshan

⁴⁴ Kamata and Tanaka 1971, p. 197.

⁴⁵ T 40: 416b.

Lü school using texts written by Yuanzhao, such as the *Jiemoshu jiluji* 羯磨疏濟緣記, a commentary on Daoxuan's *Jiemoshu*, and the *Xingshi chaozi chiji*, they probably adopted the notion of these two types of novices from Yuanzhao. From such works as Genkyū's *Tetteishō*, we can ascertain that Yuanzhao's *Xingshi chaozi chiji* was transmitted to Japan by Shunjō 俊苾 (1166–1227) who went to China in 1199 to bring back the *vinaya* teachings and that it was subsequently brought to Nara by Jōkei's disciple Kainyo.⁴⁶ Therefore, it is evident that the medieval Ritsu movement was influenced by the Chinese Buddhism of the Song period and especially Yuanzhao, who is celebrated for having revived Buddhism in Song China.

It may be assumed that the probationary novices were characterized by the fact that they kept the ten major precepts found in the *Brahmajāla sūtra*. Whereas the *gonji* and *gonjū* kept the five and eight precepts, respectively, the probationary novice, who represented the next step up in the Ritsu organization, kept the ten major precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra*. This is corroborated by the *Bosatsukai mondō tōgi shō* 菩薩戒問答洞義抄 written by Eishin 英心 (n.d.) of Saidaiji, which states, “If we follow [Saichō's] *Kenkairon* in interpreting [the term] ‘great monk,’ it applies only to the probationary novice.”⁴⁷ In other words, this refers to a practitioner who keeps the ten major precepts and is a monk in appearance only. He is, in a sense, equivalent to an apprentice (i.e., a novice) monk. Having taken the tonsure, they have the appearance of novices, but they are still one step short of becoming a full-fledged novice.

The characteristic of the novice in conformity with the Dharma is that he upholds the ten precepts, namely those traditionally taught in the *vinaya*. The *Bosatsukai kōyō shō* 菩薩戒綱要鈔 (date and author unknown), a work on the bodhisattva precepts written from the standpoint of Eizon's Saidaiji Ritsu school, states, “now, we rely on the threefold pure precepts found in the *Yogācārabhūmi*,”⁴⁸ and continues, “the three [precepts] for novices are the fifty-seven [major and minor precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra*]. The rules of conduct for avoiding evil are the ten precepts.”⁴⁹ Since this means that they relied on the threefold pure precepts, this suggests that they received the comprehensive ordination, but in any case, it is clear from this passage that the ten precepts were the rules of conduct they had to follow.

⁴⁶ ND 67: 681b16–682a3.

⁴⁷ T 74: 89b29–c1.

⁴⁸ T 74: 107a29.

⁴⁹ T 74: 107b4.

However, these methods for conferring the precepts seem to have been slightly different from the usual method. This can be inferred from statements found in the *Jubosatsukai sahō* and the *Yōi kikigaki*. For example, according to the *Yōi kikigaki* cited above:

In conferring the precepts for novices, the four *pārājikas* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* are conferred first, followed by the ten precepts for novices. Because the threefold pure precepts are encompassed by the bodhisattva's four *pārājikas*, there is no particular need to include a *sessō* [but it is included] to conform to the separate ordination—so it was said [by Eizon].⁵⁰

Therefore, it appears from this passage that when the comprehensive ordination was actually carried out, both the four *pārājikas* of the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the ten precepts were expounded in the *sessō*. Indeed, we can suppose that in actuality both the four *pārājikas* from the *Yogācārabhūmi* as well as the ten precepts were considered to be rules of training that novices had to follow.

PARTIAL ADHERENCE TO THE PRECEPTS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ORDER OF NUNS

The Partial Adherence to the Ten Major Precepts

One other innovation of Eizon that deserves special attention is the fact that he recognized the possibility of selecting a limited number of items from the rules of training to confer on the initiate. This reveals that Eizon was somewhat flexible when it came to conferring the precepts. For example, there are cases where he limited the rules of training depending on the person on whom they were being conferred. Let us consider one example. The entry for the twenty-third day of the third month of 1276 (Kenji 建治 2) in the *Gakushōki* states, “I conferred the bodhisattva precepts on a lady-in-waiting and the ten major precepts on the retired emperor [Kameyama], excluding the one for not committing adultery.”⁵¹ This means that the retired emperor was exempted from keeping the third of the ten major precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra*. This measure was probably taken in order to allow him to maintain his relationship with his consort. As retired emperor, Kameyama must have been

⁵⁰ Minowa 1999, p. 551.

⁵¹ SEDS, p. 43.

deeply concerned with producing heirs. Probably he requested that the third precept be excluded, and Eizon complied.

Conversely, there are cases where the practitioner pledged to keep the code of training more strictly than required. In the entry for the evening of the nineteenth day of the fifth month of 1262 (Kōchō 弘長 2), the *Kantō ōgenki* states, “In particular, the lady-in-waiting Ichijō [to whom the Dharma name Jinyo 慈如 was given] showed an exceptionally firm faith and took all the ten major precepts.”⁵² As noted above, the third of the ten major precepts was “not to engage in sex without compassion,” but here this precept was interpreted to mean not having sex at all.

From the examples above, we see that Eizon was flexible when it came to granting the precepts, taking into consideration the needs of the recipient. He did not rigidly insist, for example, that, since he was conferring the ten major bodhisattva precepts of the *Brahmajāla sūtra*, the recipient must be granted all of them without exception. Although the position that such partial precepts could be granted can be found in the *vinaya*, we see that Eizon practiced conferring such partial precepts in order to respond to the needs of the recipient. This perhaps reflects his sincere wish that people faithfully keep the precepts conferred on them.

The Establishment of an Order of Nuns

An important feature of Eizon’s revival of the precepts was his effort to establish a community of properly ordained female renunciants, that is, an order of nuns. We do not know whether or not rules for properly ordaining female renunciants were strictly observed in Japan from the ancient to the medieval periods.⁵³ However, Eizon and his companions established the order of properly ordained nuns within the religious community of the medieval Ritsu school. According to the *Gakushōki*, female novices were ordained for the first time in 1245 (Kangen 寛元 3). But before it was possible to allow women to become full-fledged nuns, it was first necessary to establish an order of female novices, and then establish an order of probationary nuns who pledged to keep the six rules: not to have contact with men with indecent thoughts, not stealing someone else’s money, not killing

⁵² SEDS, p. 80.

⁵³ Of course, from the existence of *kokubunni-ji* 国分尼寺, or state-supported provincial nunneries, as well as from the entries regarding the nunneries Hokkeji and Saiin 西院 in the third fascicle of the *Sanbō ekotoba* 三宝絵詞, there is no question that nuns did exist during this period.

animals, not telling lies, not eating after noon, not drinking alcohol. Only then was it possible to create an order of nuns. And this was the process that was actually followed. In this regard, the *Gakushōki* states:

On the ninth day of the fourth month of 1245 (Kangen 寛元 3), I conferred the precepts for female novices on three women at Hokkeji. On the twenty-third day, [I conferred the same precepts] on another woman; and on the twenty-fifth day, on one other woman. In all, I conferred the precepts for female novices on five women. In the middle of the ninth month at Ebaraji 家原寺 in Izumi 和泉, we performed for the first time a separate ordination for conferring the precepts for monks in conformity with the Dharma. . . . On the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the precepts for female novices were conferred on three women at Hokkeji.⁵⁴

In other words, a total of eight women became female novices.

Now, let us consider the following entry from the *Gakushōki* from 1247 (Hōji 宝治 1):

First year of Hōji: After the end of the rainy season retreat, a lecture was given on the *Biqiuni chao* 比丘尼鈔 at Hokkeji. On the twenty-third day of the twelfth month, the precepts for probationary nuns were conferred at Hokkeji.⁵⁵

Finally, let us consider the passage describing the birth of the first full-fledged nuns in the medieval Ritsu school. The following lines are found in the entry for 1249 (Kenchō 建長 1) in the *Gakushōki*: “First year of Kenchō: Twelve women were conferred the precepts for great nuns at Hokkeji.”⁵⁶

From these entries, we can see that the ordination for female novices first occurred in 1245, the ordination of probationary nuns first took place in 1247 and the first order of nuns was established in 1249. Eizon also notes that, with the establishment of the order of nuns, all of the seven groups of Buddhist disciples constituting the Buddhist community came into existence in Japan for the first time.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ SEDS, p. 20.

⁵⁵ SEDS, p. 21.

⁵⁶ SEDS, p. 22. This is the first time that all of the seven groups of Buddhist disciples practicing in conformity to the Dharma appeared in Japan.

⁵⁷ It may be noted that, although it is said that no properly ordained female renunciants

The Theory of the Transformation of a Man into a Woman

The establishment of the order of nuns is also related to the issue of women's attainment of buddhahood. From the existence of the *abhiṣeka* ritual for transmitting the Dharma (*denbōkanjō* 伝法灌頂) to women, we can assume that, for the most part, the notion that women cannot attain buddhahood did not exist.⁵⁸ However, it is generally acknowledged that the monks of the Ritsu school did accept the notion that a woman must first be transformed into a man before attaining buddhahood. Yet, there are also sources suggesting that some monks recognized that women could attain buddhahood in their feminine bodies. In this regard, there exists an interesting story in which, instead of a woman turning into a man, a man is transformed into a woman.

This story is found in Kakujiō's biography, contained in the eleventh fascicle of the *Ritsuon sōbōden* 律苑僧宝伝, a collection of biographies concerning monks of the Ritsu school. Here, for the first time, we find a story in which a man is transformed into a woman. The setting is the Buddha relic ceremony held at Tōshōdaiji in 1244 (Kangen 寛元 2):

[The second year of Kangen:] Summer, fourteenth day of the fourth month. A Buddha relic ceremony was held with more than forty monks in attendance. Chanting in the Indian style and music [were performed], and the voices shook the forests and peaks. Next the biweekly confessional ceremony based on the *Vinaya in Four Parts* was undertaken, and the fortnightly confessional ceremony based on the *Brahmajāla sūtra* was held on the following day. When these confessional ceremonies were concluded, the assembly of monks were led to the Sanjubō 三聚坊 cloister. A ray of golden light appeared from the west of the cloister. In the light, there was a god who was more than ten feet tall. His crown and garments were extremely beautiful. The monk Kyōen 教円 went before him and asked, "Who are you?" He said, "I am Indra, the lord of the thirty-three heavens. The master Kakujiō has aroused the aspiration to seek supreme buddhahood, set up the

can be found in Southeast Asia, it was reported that in February 2002, properly ordained female renunciants came into existence for the first time. In the same way that Eizon proceeded step-by-step in establishing his order of nuns, it is said that monks took a central role in conferring the precepts for novice nuns, precepts for probationary nuns and the complete precepts on women step-by-step over a period of time.

⁵⁸ See Matsuo 1998, pp. 272–309.

banner of the Ritsu school that had fallen to the ground, and has performed the biweekly confessional ceremonies in conformity with the Dharma. The sixteen *arhats* sent me out of joy.” He also said, “although the order of monks has already come fully into existence, there are still no nuns. I will first make you into a nun.” After saying this, the god vanished. The temple was then pervaded by a wonderful fragrance. *At once Kyōen was transformed into a woman* (italics added). All the assembled monks were surprised. Kyōen then took his leave of the assembled monks and returned to his village. He prevailed upon his elder sister to take the tonsure. Her name was Shinnyo 信如. She received the precepts for nuns from a master. Subsequently, all the nuns from the two temples, Shōbōji 正法寺 and Hokkeji, received the complete precepts from the master (Kyōen) or Eizon.⁵⁹

This event had occurred exactly one year before Eizon and his followers established an order of female novices for the first time in 1245.

On the other hand, if we look at Eizon’s autobiography, the *Gakushōki*, only the following brief statement is found concerning the Buddha relic ceremony in the entries for 1244: “On the fourteenth and fifteenth day of the fourth month, monks from various temples gathered at [Tō-]Shōdaiji. [Those taking part in] the biweekly confessional ceremonies were thirty-eight monks and eight novices.” The fact that this passage is found in Eizon’s autobiography indicates that he took part in these ceremonies, but there is no mention of a monk being transformed into a woman at this point. However, in the entry for 1251 (Kenchō 建長 3) there is a passage that clearly mentions this event. Here, it is worth quoting the whole passage from the *Gakushōki*:

Fifth day of the first month: The painting of the founder’s image was begun and continued until the thirtieth day of the second month. [While working on this image] during these past two years, for a total of sixty-five days [excluding those days in which he did not paint], the painter Gyōson 堯尊 observed the eight precepts of abstinence and did not paint any other image. He was especially diligent. He did it for perpetuating the Dharma and benefitting sentient beings. He made paintings of Mañjuśrī, the sixteen venerable ones (*jūroku sonja* 十六尊者, i.e., the sixteen *arhats*),

⁵⁹ DBZ: 105, 132b14–133a7.

the venerable Nandimitra, the great master of the Nanshan school 南山大和尚 (also known as Daoxuan), and the Precept Master Dazhi 大智律師 (also known as Yuanzhao). He brought to completion twenty-one works. He added twenty-six people, including monks, lay people, nuns, novices, *gonjū* and others. Originally, the sixteen *arhats* were those who received the commission [to uphold the Dharma after Śākyamuni's passing] from the Tathāgata (i.e., Śākyamuni), and obeyed his dying instruction to spread the Dharma after his death. If all sentient beings have no sense of shame, they (the sixteen *arhats*) lose their magnificent power and fail to appear [in this world]. If sentient beings have faith, they (the sixteen *arhats*) remember the Buddha's instructions and protect Buddhist practitioners. Pleased that there are more than sixty great monks, they sent the god of the second heaven (Indra) to protect them with his supernatural powers and look after them (i.e., the practitioners). Seeing that the orders of great and lesser nuns have yet to be re-established, *a monk was transformed into a nun. This is a miraculous event, something extraordinary* (italics added). The Zen nun (i.e., the imperial princess Takamatsu 高松女院, first called Lady Takakura, and later Lady Daigo. She died at Hokkeji), after her death, appeared in a dream of the abbess, the nun Jizen 慈善 (her disciple), and said, "no one wants to visit me. Hold a memorial service for the sixteen *arhats* (and so forth)."⁶⁰

The italicized passage clearly states that a monk was transformed into a nun. This undoubtedly refers to the event that occurred during the fortnightly confessional ceremonies at Tōshōdaiji mentioned in Kakujō's biography above.

We must pay particular attention to the fact that this miraculous story was highlighted in medieval Ritsu school texts just as the order of nuns was in the process of being created. Since the story appears not only in Kakujō's biography but in Eizon's autobiography as well, it must have had a special significance for the Ritsu school. The message of this story is in direct opposition to the theory that a woman must be transformed into a man in order to attain buddhahood, enunciated in the *Lotus Sutra* as well as the *Larger Sukhāvativyūha*, the central text of the Pure Land tradition. It may be inferred that the theory of the transformation of men into women

⁶⁰ SEDS, pp. 23–24.

was developed to advocate the possibility that a woman could attain buddhahood in her feminine body. Moreover, inasmuch as it represented a step forward when compared with the earlier views, it must be said that it was a new development in the history of Japanese Buddhist thought.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REVIVAL MOVEMENT IN THE RITSU SCHOOL

In the pages above, we reviewed the revival of the precepts focusing on Eizon. However, it is important to note that his movement was not simply a revival of the Ritsu school that existed in the Nara period. Its aim was to revive the fundamental Buddhist practice of observing the precepts strictly, thereby reviving Buddhism itself.

Perhaps it was not easy to actually keep the precepts. However, Eizon permitted people who found it difficult to keep certain precepts to receive partial ones that they felt they could keep in good faith. Moreover, it is possible to make the paradoxical statement that Eizon established different groups of Buddhist practitioners depending on the kinds of precepts they felt they could keep. Hence, there came into existence new groups of Ritsu followers like the *gonjū* who kept the eight precepts of abstinence, and the probationary novices, who kept the ten major precepts. The appearance of these groups represented a new development not found in earlier phases of Japanese Buddhism.

Moreover, the foremost difference with the Buddhist schools of the ancient period was the fact that Eizon differentiated between the use of comprehensive and separate ordinations for conferring the complete precepts. The comprehensive ordination is properly called the “comprehensive ordination using the threefold pure precepts,” also known as the bodhisattva precepts. As noted above, Eizon maintained that it was possible to become a full-fledged monk by receiving only this set of precepts, since he claimed that receiving a comprehensive ordination was equivalent to receiving the complete precepts. This was an unprecedented claim which contradicted the traditional understanding of the precepts. Eizon justified his new interpretation by using relevant passages from texts like the *Yogacārabhūmi*, the “Biaowubiao” chapter of the *Dacheng fayuan yilinzhang*, and the *Zhanchajing*. On the one hand, the existence of the Mahayana precepts on Mt. Hiei must have been a major influence on Eizon. But in any case, it must be said that the medieval Ritsu school’s movement to revive the pre-

cepts was in many ways an innovative movement to reform Japanese Buddhism.

(Translated by Elisabetta Porcu)

ABBREVIATIONS

- DBZ *Dainihon bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書. 150 vols., ed. Bussho Kankōkai 仏書刊行会. Tokyo: Bussho Kankōkai, 1913–22.
- ND *Nihon daizōkyō* 日本大藏經. 100 vols., ed. Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan 鈴木學術財団. Tokyo: Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1973–78.
- SEDS *Saidaiji Eizon denki shūsei* 西大寺叡尊伝記集成, ed. Nara Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyūjo 奈良国立文化財研究所. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1977.
- SZKT *Shintei zōho kokushi taikai* 新訂増補国史大系. 66 vols., ed. Kokushi Taikai Henshūkai 国史大系編修会. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964–67.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 85 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. 1924–34.

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