

# Paradigms of Practice: The Nature of the Precepts in Eisai's Zen

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The practice of Zen makes the precepts primary. Unless one is completely distanced from all wrong doing, how can one attain awakening and become a patriarch?

*Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 1, p. 100.<sup>1</sup>

**M**YŌAN EISAI (a.k.a. Yōsai) 明菴榮西 (1141–1215) is known primarily in the historical record as the founding ancestor of the Rinzai Zen lineage (Ch. *linji zong* 臨濟宗) in Japan and founder of the temple Kenninji 建仁寺.<sup>2</sup> Eisai himself never made such claims on his own behalf; rather, Eisai presents Zen as a practice, not a distinct school or sect (*shū* 宗) of Buddhism. Eisai sees Zen as a remedy to Tendai 天台 monastic ill-discipline, and states that Zen has always been a part of Tendai, but also argues forcefully for the distinctive significance of Zen as a practice that must take center stage during the “era of the degenerate Dharma” (*mappō* 末法).

Eisai spent four years practicing Zen 禪 (Ch. Chan) in China from 1187 to 1191 at the temple Jingdeshi 景德寺 on Mount Tiantong 天童. On

<sup>1</sup> Eisai here quotes directly from the *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (Jp. *Zen'on shingi*; Pure Rules for Chan Monasteries; X no. 1245, 63: 523a17). The importance of this text for Eisai is discussed below.

<sup>2</sup> Eisai's place at the beginning of the Rinzai transmission to Japan was established by Tokugawa 德川 period (1600–1868) commentators such as Kōhō Tōshun 高峰東暎 (1736–1801), who promoted Eisai by publishing a critical edition of *Kōzen gokokuron* 興禪護國論 in 1778, with a posthumous four-volume commentary released in 1813 (Fujita 2014, p. 30). This version replaced the 1666 edition released by Kenninji, which was replete with errors and was difficult to understand, meaning the text had little impact (Fujita 2014, p. 29). It was quickly replaced by Kōhō's version.

his return to Japan, Eisai argued for the introduction of Chan monastic practices from Song 宋 period (960–1279) China to Tendai monasteries; however, he had to defend his position from opponents within the Tendai establishment, and so his work both outlines Zen monastic practice and provides a doctrinal justification for their use.

Broadly speaking, I characterize Eisai's Zen as a practice focused on the relationship between morality and meditation. The purpose of this essay is to explicate the first element, Eisai's understanding of Zen morality, which is the dominant theme in Eisai's post-China works. In particular, there are three contexts to Eisai's Zen that focus on conduct and the precepts: the practical context—how Zen positively impacts monastic discipline through a restraint-based approach to discipline similar to *vinaya*; the ritual context—the relationship of Zen to ordination procedures in the Tendai school and the role of the bodhisattva precepts; and the doctrinal context—how Eisai views the relationship between Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts. I examine below each of these three contexts by drawing from three texts composed by Eisai following his return to Japan in 1191. These works are aimed at distinct monastic, ecclesiastical, and lay audiences, but share the sense of Zen as a new and effective religious technology.

*The Practical Context: Eisai on the Decline of Japanese Monasticism*

Eisai presents a version of Zen that establishes how Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts work in conjunction:

Externally maintaining the rules of restraint, and internally having the mind of great compassion that benefits all beings, this is the Zen school; these are the teachings of the Buddha.<sup>3</sup>

This position immediately puts him at odds with the Tendai establishment. Following the death of Saichō 最澄 (767–822), Tendai abandoned the Vinaya ordination and its associated rules of monastic conduct. While Eisai was not the first Tendai monk to argue for the reintroduction of the Vinaya, his use of Zen as a medium of monastic reform that utilizes Vinaya regulations without requiring a distinct Vinaya ordination is quite unique.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 2, p. 107. All quotations from *Kōzen gokokuron* refer to the Ichikawa Hakugen edition, which is considered authoritative. The *Taishō* edition (T no. 2543) has some slight differences, some of which are discussed below.

<sup>4</sup> Enchin 圓珍 (814–891) is one example of a Tendai cleric who advocated for Vinaya practices; nevertheless, abstract interpretations of the precepts and an emphasis on esoteric

The first text Eisai composed on his return from China is *Shukke taikō* 出家大綱 (Essentials of Monastic Life, 1195).<sup>5</sup> This text is significant as it reflects Eisai's concerns on his return to Japan. It is also significant as a springboard for Eisai's most famous work, *Kōzen gokokuron* 興禪護國論 (A Treatise Promoting Zen for the Protection of the State) from 1198.<sup>6</sup> The most notable similarities between the texts concern Eisai's doctrinal assessment of the relationship between Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts discussed below. Both texts also share an emphasis on daily monastic conduct.

The first part of Eisai's *Shukke taikō* draws heavily on the work of Chinese Vinaya master Yijing 義淨 (635–713) and his *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (Jp. *Nankai kiki naihō den*; Record of Buddhist Practices sent Home from the Southern Seas), to the extent that the first part of *Shukke taikō* is effectively a Japanese edition of Yijing's work.<sup>7</sup>

Eisai presents Yijing's work in *Shukke taikō* as an authoritative source on practical matters of daily conduct in a monastic setting. During this period, Tendai monasticism was suffering from disciplinary problems. Eisai notes in *Shukke taikō* several instances of inappropriate conduct. He focuses particularly on circumstances where he personally witnessed monastics breaking prohibitions against eating meat, against eating after midday, and perhaps most notably, the prohibition against consuming alcohol. It

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ordinations remained by and large the norm on Mount Hiei 比叡. For further details, see Groner (1984) 2000, pp. 301–2 and Groner's article in this issue of *The Eastern Buddhist*, pp. 103–27.

<sup>5</sup> In the preface of *Shukke taikō*, Eisai states he began working on the document while in China during the period 1187–1191, and completed it on his return. Taga (1965, p. 257) notes the preface reads 1195 while the postscript reads 1200. There are many possible explanations for this, including the intriguing possibility that Eisai may have re-edited *Shukke taikō* in light of the reception of *Kōzen gokokuron*, written in 1198. The oldest surviving manuscript version of *Shukke taikō* dates from 1789, and was made public by Kōhō Tōshun, then abbot of Kenninji, a temple founded by Eisai in 1202 (Fujita 2014, p. 30). The version of the text cited in this article is the manuscript version held in the Komazawa University library, document no. 001614163. Appended to this text was Eisai's *Saikai kanjinmon* 齋戒勸進文 (Tract Encouraging the Maintenance of Pure Morality) dated 1204. All quotations from *Shukke taikō* and *Saikai kanjinmon* refer to this manuscript version.

<sup>6</sup> The two texts have different intended audiences. *Shukke taikō* is an “insider” text for monastics, focusing on the details of monastic life. *Kōzen gokokuron* attempts to justify doctrinally many of the arguments found in *Shukke taikō* to the Tendai hierarchy. With this in mind, I suggest, contra Fujita (2014, 28), that *Shukke taikō* and not *Kōzen gokokuron* is the first Japanese outline of the doctrinal basis of monastic Buddhism in the Southern Song 宋 period (1127–1279).

<sup>7</sup> T no. 2125. See Taga 1965, pp. 259–60.

is telling that Eisai himself laments the laxity of his previous positions on such behavior, admitting that he condoned the breaking of the above precepts by monastics under his own care.<sup>8</sup>

Eisai seeks to incorporate the daily observance of both Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts by expanding on the traditional Buddhist concept of *saikai* 齋戒. Originally, *saikai* referred to lay observance of the eight precepts (*hakkai* 八戒).<sup>9</sup> Iwamoto Yutaka refers to the Chinese use of the term, which extends beyond the scope of the original meaning of the Sanskrit term to designate the observance of exercises or rituals related to physical and mental purification in both lay and monastic contexts.<sup>10</sup> Given the broadening of meaning and the unique context to Eisai's use of the term, I have decided to translate *saikai* as "pure morality."<sup>11</sup> In *Shukke taikō* the term *saikai*

<sup>8</sup> The following is the passage translated from *Shukke taikō*, p. 11:

Some people say, they have heard it is permissible to eat meat. Such a thing was never said. To eat in this way as one who has taken the Mahayana precepts is not considered appropriate conduct. If I had not outlined these texts, the people of this land would not have known about the two types of food. The passages I have outlined from these texts are followed in their entirety by the Lesser Vehicle, and thus [violations] result in a loss of reliance on the practice of the Buddha. I have simply wanted to make known the substance of the doctrine of the two types of foods. It is also possible that in these times someone will say: "For those who have not yet eaten, it is permissible to eat after midday." I regret terribly the fact that in the past, I myself have spoken in this way. From now on, this cannot be considered correct teaching. At the time when the Buddha was living, both the Buddha and his disciples would sometimes not have meals at all. This was because midday had past. Among my own disciples who are maintaining pure morality, if there are those who have adopted this bad habit, this is not unintentional and should be cautioned against. Also, in the past among my own students who are maintaining pure morality, many have broken the prohibition against alcohol, and many repent of drinking.

Regarding the use of alcohol, Taga (1965, pp. 266–67) points to Tendai sources from the period which justify alcohol use during the winter months on Mount Hiei to keep warm.

<sup>9</sup> Nakamura 2002, vol. 2, p. 1434b.

<sup>10</sup> Iwamoto 1988, p. 588.

<sup>11</sup> Nakamura (2002, vol. 2, p. 1434b) suggests the term *saikai* overlaps with the idea of pure rules, a topic I refer to later in the essay. Iwamoto (1988, p. 614) traces the term as far back as Brahminism. He also points to several synonyms (1988, p. 85), the most common of which is *kinjū* 近住 (*konjū*), a term which also refers to lay upkeep of the precepts and is found in the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* (Jp. *Dai bibasha ron* 大毘婆沙論, T no. 1545) attributed to Kātyāyanīputra (Jp. Kataennishi 迦多衍尼子), one of the ten noted disciples of the Buddha.

means to observe the precepts of both vehicles correctly; if one does so, one is practicing pure morality.

According to *Shukke taikō* there are two ways of practicing pure morality: following the observances on clothing and food (*ejiki* 衣食) and observing correct “practice and deportment” (*gyōgi* 行儀).<sup>12</sup> The term *gyōgi* is then further defined: *gyō* refers to “morality” (*kai* 戒) while *gi* means the “prevention of evil” (*ritsu* 律). Thus, “practice and deportment” is equivalent to “morality and discipline,” or the precepts (*kairitsu* 戒律). For Eisai, in the monastic context morality is maintained through the bodhisattva precepts, while “the prevention of evil” refers to the function of the Vinaya. Eisai also states that morality and discipline are divided in accordance with the type of practitioner: “Within morality there are two types, the morality of the *bhikṣu* and of the bodhisattva. Regarding discipline, there are two types, secular and religious.”<sup>13</sup> Pure morality can be practiced in a variety of different contexts, with both lay and monastic observance possible; nevertheless, the difference in context results in different expectations. Lay practitioners are expected to uphold pure morality by observing the bodhisattva precepts as concrete observances. Eisai’s understanding of Zen and its benefits also extends to laity, and in this context the bodhisattva precepts serve as the basis for lay discipline.

Eisai’s 1204 composition, *Saikai kanjinmon* 齋戒勸進文, appended to the 1789 edition of *Shukke taikō*, explains how Zen morality can be practiced by lay people through observing the bodhisattva precepts. Eisai suggests that the fifty-eight rules of the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (Jp. *Bonmōkyō*; hereafter, *Brahmā’s Net Sutra*)<sup>14</sup> are concrete moral prescriptions that lay practitioners should follow. Eisai suggests that the laity follow prescriptions on maintaining purity on certain days: “For lay people, observe the six days of purity [per month] and the three months of purity [per year] in accordance with the teachings and the fourfold division of the sangha, and one will receive the reward of the Buddha’s benevolence.”<sup>15</sup> This illustrates how Eisai alters his definition of *saikai* to suit the expectations of a lay practitioner. For a monastic, *saikai* means following the moral precepts of both vehicles but for the lay practitioner one follows the bodhisattva precepts in order to maintain pure morality. Eisai emphasizes this again in the citation below:

<sup>12</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> T no. 1484.

<sup>15</sup> *Saikai kanjinmon*, p. 28.

“Pure” means not to eat outside the allotted times; “morality” refers to the bodhisattva precepts. . . . Now, what I am promoting is not [the morality] of the *bhikṣus*, which benefits only them, [but rather] salvation for each and every being. The Buddha says, “Those who do not pay attention to pure morality are not my disciples.” . . . For lay people I pray also that [this practice] will lead to salvation. Not to mention, it is also the case for monastic practitioners.<sup>16</sup>

Again, as with *Shukke taikō*, Eisai’s emphasis is on issues surrounding food, but with the complete set of bodhisattva precepts adding an additional layer of moral practice for laity. This text illustrates that Eisai sees *saikai* as a term with an evolving frame of reference; the terminology represents something distinct depending on certain paths or contexts of practice, and is not designed with conceptual or logical consistency as a determining factor.<sup>17</sup>

Eisai’s vision for Zen is one of practical discipline and dedicated upkeep of morality for both monastics and lay practitioners. For monastics, Eisai states *saikai* consists of observing both sets of precepts. This doctrine puts Eisai at odds with the official position of the Japanese Tendai school, which remained opposed to the Vinaya ordination. Eisai attempts to reconcile his position with that of the Tendai hierarchy by expanding the range and import of the bodhisattva precepts in the ritual context.

#### *The Ritual Context: Bodhisattva Precepts and Ordination*

The standard Tendai ordination during this period was based on the “perfect and sudden precepts” (*endonkai* 圓頓戒). During this ceremony the aspirant receives the completion of the three Buddhist trainings (*sangaku* 三學) of morality (*kai*), meditative concentration (*jō* 定), and wisdom (*e* 慧) simultaneously as a result of the ritual process. Eisai himself received this ordination on Mount Hiei 比叡 at the age of fourteen.<sup>18</sup> Usually, a version of the bodhisattva precepts represents an abstract concept received concurrently

<sup>16</sup> *Saikai kanjinmon*, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> This is one of the key problems with attempts to discuss Buddhist morality from a philosophical point of view. Western ethical-philosophical concepts were designed to explain argumentative positions in a manner that was consistent and logically appealing; Buddhist concepts do not work in the same way in the field of ethics, and so attempts to apply Western ethical or philosophical positions to Buddhist philosophers and to discuss Buddhism in these terms is to miss the point of Buddhist ethical concepts entirely.

<sup>18</sup> Kagamishima 1962, p. 29.

with the ordination.<sup>19</sup> Such ordinations clearly de-emphasize prescriptive moral injunctions and highlight a disjunction between the transformative power of the ordination ritual and the practical reality of moral laxity in the context of monastic discipline. This is not surprising given that concrete moral injunctions and the cultivation of certain emotions such as compassion are both more realistic moral aspirations than the expectations implied by the *endonkai* ceremony. Neither Vinaya regulations nor the bodhisattva precepts as concrete prescriptions are included within the standard interpretation of the *endonkai* ordination.

Eisai makes a clear argument for the concurrent use of both Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts, describing this as a form of “shared morality” (*tsūkai* 通戒), a position he develops based on the *Shichibutsu tsūkai ge* 七佛通戒偈 (Verse of the Shared Morality of the Seven Buddhas):

Concerning the sutras, the Vinaya, and *śāstras*, in accordance with these teachings, one must make a firm decision to practice restraint with one's body and mind and follow in the footsteps of the Buddha, which is the same thing. In the “Verse of the Shared Morality of the Seven Buddhas” it says: “Desist from evil deeds, practice acts of goodness, purify your mind; this is the teaching of the Buddhas.” . . . How is it possible that one can become a monastic according to the Buddhist law and yet not follow the precepts?<sup>20</sup>

Eisai's position is open to criticism from a Tendai perspective. Eisai refers to an unnamed interlocutor who may ask: Does not Saichō's establishment of “separate bodhisattva precept ordinations” (*betsuju bosatsu kai* 別授菩薩戒) invalidate the idea of shared morality?<sup>21</sup> In response, Eisai suggests that Saichō was aware of the dawning of *mappō*, and used separate bodhisattva precept ordinations to maintain knowledge of the precepts:

What fault could there be in Saichō's establishment of separate bodhisattva precept ordinations? If Saichō had not established

<sup>19</sup> Ueda 1976, p. 68.

<sup>20</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 3. This verse is often associated with the *Nirvana Sutra*, and parts of the verse appear in numerous texts throughout the canon. It also appears in its complete form in a key text which influenced Eisai: *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義釋籤 (T no. 1717, 33: 843c10; Explication of the Profound Meaning of the Lotus) by Zhanran 湛然 (711–782). See Nakamura 2002, vol. 1, p. 676b for more information concerning this verse.

<sup>21</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 21.



the separate bodhisattva precept ordination, by what means could people in this land have maintained discipline during *mappō*? What else could have caused them to receive and observe this morality?<sup>22</sup>

Saichō did argue for new forms of Buddhist practice based on the impending dawn of *mappō*, although he did not provide a concrete chronology for when this would occur.<sup>23</sup> In *Kōzen gokokuron*, Eisai cites the *Mappō tōmyōki* 末法燈明記 (The Candle of the Latter Dharma) as the source for Saichō's ideas regarding *mappō*.<sup>24</sup> There are scholarly doubts as to whether this text was actually authored by Saichō,<sup>25</sup> but Eisai nonetheless argues that statements in this text that the precepts cannot be properly maintained during *mappō* refer only to Vinaya, and not bodhisattva precepts. This would seem to contradict Eisai's advocacy of Vinaya practice; however, it is important to note that here Eisai is referring to the ordination procedure, rather than the practice of maintaining certain rules of decorum implied therein. Eisai uses an expanded understanding of the bodhisattva precept ordination in order to explain how the Vinaya ordination—or at least concrete moral prescriptions which cover daily conduct and decorum as per Vinaya regulations—should still be a part of monastic life. Eisai suggests that the Vinaya is subsumed within the bodhisattva precept ordinations, thus elevating the importance of the bodhisattva precept ordination ritual.

Eisai makes the case for the ritual importance of the bodhisattva precepts by suggesting that when one undertakes a bodhisattva precept ordination based on the *Brahmā's Net Sutra* one also receives the Vinaya precepts as part of the three collections of pure precepts (*sanju jōkai* 三聚淨戒).<sup>26</sup> He argues that this was Saichō's "original intention, although it does not readily reveal itself."<sup>27</sup> With this, there is no need to reintroduce a Vinaya ordination ritual, as Vinaya precepts will be received via the bodhisattva precepts ordination ceremony.

<sup>22</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> Groner (1984) 2000, pp. 173–74.

<sup>24</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 1, pp. 106–7. For *Mappō tōmyōki*, see Hieizan Senshūin (1912) 1975, vol. 1, pp. 415–27.

<sup>25</sup> For a brief overview of sources concerning the discussions of the text and its authenticity, see Groner (1984) 2000, pp. 173–74, n. 24.

<sup>26</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 21.



Eisai's position on the importance of the bodhisattva precepts is emphasized again in his discussion of self-ordination (*jisei jukai* 自誓受戒).<sup>28</sup> Eisai references again the *Brahmā Net Sutra*<sup>29</sup> and argues not only that self-ordinations with the bodhisattva precepts are valid, but also that the Vinaya is included in any such ceremony.<sup>30</sup> As is well known, self-ordination was used by the Shingon Risshū 真言律宗 movement and its key figures, Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290) and Kakujō 覺盛 (1194–1249), to establish a new lineage which includes the Vinaya ordination;<sup>31</sup> the question of Eisai's role, either as a direct influence on the figures associated with the Shingon Risshū movement, or as a key figure in legitimizing the idea of self-ordination in Japan, has been overlooked, and is worthy of consideration.

The question then emerges, how does one reintroduce a form of practice that resembles Vinaya emphasis on concrete rules of decorum to Japanese monasteries? Eisai advocates the introduction of *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (Jp. *Zen'on shingi*; Pure Rules for Chan Monasteries)<sup>32</sup> compiled by Zhanglu Zongze 長蘆宗曠 (d.u.) in 1101–1103, a text that Eisai brings to Japan for the first time, although there is some debate concerning which version of the text Eisai accessed.<sup>33</sup> The influence of the *Chanyuan qinggui* on Eisai seems clear. An entire section of *Kōzen gokokuron* is entitled “Establishing a Separate Catalogue [of Rules] for the Zen School: Following the Pure Rules for Zen Monasteries and the Conventions Seen Practiced in the Great Countries,”<sup>34</sup> and consists largely of excerpts from the *Chanyuan qinggui*.<sup>35</sup> In the excerpt below, Eisai cites the first two sections of the first fascicle, entitled “Receiving the Precepts” (*Jukai* 受戒) and “Observing the Precepts” (*Gokai* 護戒):

Second, concerning receiving the precepts, it says: The Greater Vehicle precepts and the Lesser Vehicle precepts exist within human feelings, but regardless, the feeling of great compassion that brings benefits to all sentient beings is present in all. This

<sup>28</sup> As far as I am aware, this is the earliest explicit discussion of the idea of self-ordination in Japanese Buddhism, at least in terms of suggesting that this ordination can also bestow Vinaya and bodhisattva ordinations simultaneously.

<sup>29</sup> T no. 1484, 24: 1006c5–18.

<sup>30</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> Quinter 2015.

<sup>32</sup> X no. 1245.

<sup>33</sup> Yifa 2002, pp. 38–40.

<sup>34</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 3, p. 117.

<sup>35</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 3, sec. 8.

teaching does not prioritize the precepts of either the Greater or Lesser [Vehicle]; only maintaining morality and pure practice is prized. . . . Third, concerning maintaining the precepts, it says: even if one claims to have received the precepts, if one does not maintain them and breaks them, it is no different from obtaining and then breaking a precious jewel. Because of this, the two-hundred-and-fifty precepts of the monastic, and the three categories of bodhisattva [pure precepts], the ten grave precepts, and the forty-eight minor precepts need to be maintained unrelentingly.<sup>36</sup>

As Yifa's study of the *Chanyuan qinggui* has shown, the text was based largely on the Vinaya commentaries of Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) and seems to have been intended as a primer for novice monks:

Scrutiny reveals that a great deal of *Chanyuan qinggui*'s content is based directly on the Vinaya and the works of the great Vinaya advocate Daoan 道安 (312–385) and the Lü 律 master Daoxuan. . . . With its opening words, *Chanyuan qinggui* establishes itself in the Vinaya lineage. The work's preface acknowledges that novices may find the complexity and detail of the regulations overwhelming and makes reference to the bodhisattva threefold pure precepts and the *śrāvaka* precepts.<sup>37</sup>

It could well be the case that Eisai, familiar with the use of the *Chanyuan qinggui* in Chinese monasteries, may have seen its utilitarian function in terms of instilling monastic discipline without the need for an associated ordination by expanding the ritual potency of the bodhisattva precept ordination ceremony.

It is worth making here a comparison between Eisai's position and that of Sōtō 曹洞 Zen patriarch Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253). Dōgen's attitude towards the precepts appears to contradict Eisai on all the key issues,<sup>38</sup> especially the idea that Vinaya precepts can be held with a bodhisattva mindset.<sup>39</sup> Yet

<sup>36</sup> For the sections from the Pure Rules that Eisai draws upon see X no. 1245, 63: 523 a17–b16. The passage quoted above is found at *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 3, pp. 117–18. The *Taishō* version (T no. 2543, 80: 14b29) has the following quote directly from the *Chanyuan qinggui* inserted into the text: “The *Chanyuan qinggui* says: ‘After receiving the precepts, you must protect them. It is better to die with the law, than to live without it’” (禪苑清規云：受戒之後、常應守護。寧有法死、不無法生。X no. 1245, 63: 523b4).

<sup>37</sup> Yifa 2002, pp. 53–54.

<sup>38</sup> Bodiford 1993, pp. 168–70.

<sup>39</sup> DZZ, *Sanjūshichihon bodai bunpō* 三十七品菩提分法, bk. 74, vol. 1, p. 517.

it is possible that Dōgen's well-known advocacy of pure rules is precisely what allows him to ordain novices with his sixteen articles, ten of which correspond to the heavy rules of the bodhisattva precepts contained in the *Brahmā Net Sutra*. Dōgen's sixteen articles are not detailed enough to provide a framework for daily monastic practice and therefore are largely significant in a ritual, rather than a practical, sense. It is Dōgen's emphasis on pure rules as a Vinaya alternative that allows him to adhere to an abstract ordination based on the bodhisattva precepts alone.<sup>40</sup> The image of Dōgen as a pioneer of strict Song-period monastic discipline was key in premodern attempts to revitalize Dōgen's temple Eiheiji 永平寺.<sup>41</sup> While it is difficult to provide concrete answers, it seems possible that Eisai's emphasis on the practical importance of the *Chanyuan qinggui* in the context of daily monastic practice as a viable Vinaya replacement was a key influence on Dōgen and his approach to monastic discipline.

*The Doctrinal Context: Vinaya and Bodhisattva Precepts*

Doctrinally, Eisai is clear about the limitations of Vinaya precepts. He takes the traditional stance of critiquing the goals of mainstream practice as fundamentally inferior to bodhisattva practices:

By means of self-control and self-actualization one can attain nirvana; however, one cannot attain supreme enlightenment. If the bodhisattva regresses back into the *śrāvaka* vehicle, it is called the "death of the bodhisattva." Thereby, one does not adopt the spirit [of the Lesser Vehicle], but only their morality. During *mappō* most practitioners are inclined towards the Mahayana, but in order to avoid committing small transgressions, one must study both vehicles.<sup>42</sup>

The reference to "self-control and self-actualization" (*jichō jishō* 自調自證) is a reference to the *śrāvaka* vehicle and its limited soteriological perspective. Eisai clearly prioritizes the bodhisattva precepts as the essential element of the bodhisattva path; however, the historical conditions of

<sup>40</sup> The importance Dōgen attaches to pure rules is evident in several fascicles of his *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye) such as "Receiving the Precepts" (*Jukai*). Yifa 2002, pp. 41–42.

<sup>41</sup> Bodiford 2012, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 20. For the scriptural origins of the term "death of the bodhisattva" (*bosatsushi* 菩薩死) see Groner (1984) 2000, p. 216.

*mappō* demand that Vinaya be utilized as skillful techniques (*hōben* 方便). Eisai justifies his position by referring to the *Nirvana Sutra* and the doctrine of the precepts that supplement buddha-nature: “The *Nirvana Sutra* contains in itself [the meaning] of the supplementary precepts. The same thing applies here. The Lesser Vehicle [precepts] are a form of skillful techniques.”<sup>43</sup>

Eisai balances the soteriological inferiority of Vinaya with its practical benefits, and interprets Vinaya practice from a Mahayana perspective. Here Eisai relies primarily on the work of the Tiantai (Jp. Tendai) scholar Zhanran (Jp. Tannen 湛然; 711–782) and Daoxuan to doctrinally justify his position. In *Kōzen gokokuron* Eisai refers to the work of Zhanran in the following context:

In morality there is no “greater” or “lesser”; this depends upon the expectation in the mind of the ordinand. Thus, the middle way does not only concern emptiness and the provisional but also the concrete [observance] of restraint; this, then, is what is called maintaining the complete precepts.<sup>44</sup>

This is a direct quote from Zhanran’s *Zhiguan fuxing zhuan hongjue* 止觀輔行傳弘決 (Jp. *Shikan bukyōden guketsumu*; Annotations on the Great Calming and Contemplation as a Means to its Propagation).<sup>45</sup> It introduces a key element: the idea that the precepts are dependent for their nature on the mind of the practitioner. It also adds a second element: the relationship between emptiness and the precepts, a key problem Eisai aims to address in his analysis. Zhanran’s wider concern in this passage regarding methods of maintaining “pure self-restraint” (Ch. *qing jingjie* 清淨戒; Jp. *shōjōkai*), is a topic that resonates with Eisai’s concern for moral purity.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, Eisai also draws on Zhanran’s interpretation of Vinaya precept practice as represented by the *Nirvana Sutra* supplementary precepts, although Eisai introduces a new element by adding Zen to the equation. Eisai highlights the overlap with Zhanran’s thought by referencing the following passage from the *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義釋籤 (Jp. *Hokke gengi shakusen*; Explanation of the Profound Meaning of the Lotus):

<sup>43</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 3, p. 116.

<sup>44</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 3, p. 113. For an overview of Zhanran’s views on the precepts, see Groner (1984) 2000, pp. 228–29.

<sup>45</sup> T no. 1912, 46: 255a10–a12.

<sup>46</sup> For an account of Zhanran’s Vinaya followers, see Tonegawa 1977.

Both the remarks which appear before and after the previous reference to the great sutra [*Nirvana Sutra*] are pointing to the teaching that supplements the precepts and speaks of what is unchanging. In the latter age [of the Dharma], there are monks who break the precepts, and even go so far as [to claim] there is no vehicle or discipline, and lose the life of eternal abiding. Through reliance on this sutra and its teaching that supplements the precepts and speaks of what is unchanging, the complete vehicle and discipline is provided.<sup>47</sup>

Where Eisai differs from Zhanran is in his interpretation of the phrase “the complete vehicle and discipline is provided,” which he regards as referring to Zen. In terms of justifying Eisai’s position regarding the relationship between Vinaya and the bodhisattva precepts, Zhanran is the key figure. When referring to the practice of Zen itself and how it integrates the two sets of precepts, Eisai turns to Vinaya commentator Daoxuan.

Eisai holds the same position as Daoxuan regarding understanding Vinaya with a Mahayana mindset:

The original intention of the Buddha was to teach by means of the instruction on avoiding evil and preventing wrongdoing. Regarding maintaining or violating the precepts in any given situation, by grasping the meaning and cultivating accordingly, are not [the vehicles] unopposed? Vinaya master Daoxuan says: “Some say I am a follower of the Greater Vehicle; I do not need to conduct myself according to the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle.” This is internally betraying the mind of the bodhisattva and externally lacking the conduct of the *śrāvaka*.<sup>48</sup>

As noted above, one of Eisai’s key definitions of Zen focused on the division between internally holding true to the bodhisattva ideal, while allowing one’s external actions to be dictated by Vinaya regulations. Eisai realizes that intention alone will not suffice to maintain discipline. Mental cultivation of certain qualities such as compassion has to be undertaken in tandem with an awareness of physical rules and procedures. There is a sense that one can abandon Vinaya rules as one develops a deeper

<sup>47</sup> T no. 1717, 33: 858b21; *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 1, p. 101.

<sup>48</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 3, p. 116. The passage ends with a reference to Daoxuan’s *Jiaojie xinshu biqiu xinghu liuyi* 教誡新學比丘行護律儀 (Instructions for New Monks on Conduct and Maintaining Restraint; T no. 1897, 45: 869b04–06).

practice, but certainly at the beginning, Vinaya plays a key regulatory role on behavior.

The role of the precepts in Eisai's Zen centers on Vinaya regulations as dictating external conduct, while internally one cultivates the bodhisattva path of compassion. Because Zen was first brought to Japan by Saichō, it is not, according to Eisai, heterodox to suggest its use as a means to revive Vinaya practice. Nonetheless, doctrinally, Eisai is placing his interpretation of the bodhisattva precepts and its relationship to the Vinaya within the context of Perfection of Wisdom literature: "[That which] externally has the element of [the] supplementary precepts of the *Nirvana Sutra* [and] internally wisdom [that understands the world as emptiness], is none other than the Zen school."<sup>49</sup> Eisai here refers to "wisdom" (*hannya* 般若), a term which derives from the Perfection of Wisdom literature. Eisai uses this term as a synonym for emptiness, which is obvious when in *Shukke taikō* he calls to attention the fact that judgments of right and wrong are empty from the ultimate perspective.<sup>50</sup> The antinomian dangers inherent in this position are highlighted again by Eisai when he says: "If foolish people such as those described above mistakenly advocate emptiness but cannot uphold morality, this is heterodoxy, these are Māra's people."<sup>51</sup> We can see that in both *Shukke taikō* and *Kōzen gokokuron*, Eisai is attempting to close off any interpretation of emptiness as implying one can go beyond the concrete injunctions of practical morality, especially for monastic practitioners in the early stages of their path.

### *Implications and Conclusions*

By examining the practical monastic context, the ritual context, and the doctrinal context to Eisai's Zen, an image of Zen and its relationship to morality and the precepts is revealed which is in stark contrast to preconceptions concerning the nature of Zen practice that grew from the colorful and popular stories of unorthodox and inspiring Zen masters. Perhaps this is one reason why Western scholarship has largely neglected the study of Eisai as Zen master for so long. Eisai is attempting to introduce what can be called new "religious technology" from China in order to solve the major practical problem of monastic ill-discipline, which itself is linked with the soteriological problem of *mappō*. Eisai's discussion of Zen moral-

<sup>49</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, preface, p. 99.

<sup>50</sup> *Shukke taikō*, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> *Kōzen gokokuron*, fasc. 3, p. 117.

ity impacts practical issues of daily monastic conduct, which he attempts to solve by introducing the *Chanyuan qinggui* as a practical replacement for the Vinaya. In terms of ordination, Eisai suggests that the bodhisattva precepts and their ritual import should be expanded as the bodhisattva precepts ceremony includes also the Vinaya ordination—whether one has been ordained by a preceptor or one has undergone a self-ordination. Doctrinally, Eisai presents Zen, in particular the *Chanyuan qinggui*, as in line with traditional Chinese Tiantai exegesis concerning the relationship between Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts, and the issue of ritual ordination and the doctrinal problem of the relationship between the Vinaya ordination, Vinaya practice, and the bodhisattva precepts.

There are also significant questions concerning the impact of Eisai's understanding of Zen on subsequent developments in Japanese Buddhism. I have already suggested above that Eisai may well have had a bigger influence than previously thought on Dōgen's ordination ritual and subsequent monastic organization. It is also possible that Eisai played a major role linking Zen to the Japanese Vinaya school (Risshū 律宗). The most beneficial means of investigating this link may well be via Shunjō 俊苧 (1166–1227), another unorthodox Tendai monk with whom Eisai is reputed to have had a friendly acquaintance.<sup>52</sup> Comparing their views on the relationship between Vinaya and bodhisattva precepts, as well as the role played by pure rules in fostering this link, could provide an interesting framework for future research. In a more general sense, more work needs to be done on the relationship between Zen and the Risshū, two groups that have historically had strong links.<sup>53</sup> In particular, the influence of Eisai and his lineage on the movement associated with Eison and Kakujō could provide a fruitful link in terms of tracing the origins of the Vinaya revival in Kamakura Japan.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- DZZ *Dōgen zenji zensho* 道元禪師全書. Edited by Ōkubo Dōshū 大久保道舟. 2 vols. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1971.
- T *Taishō shinshu 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.

<sup>52</sup> Nakao 1982, p. 207.

<sup>53</sup> Kojima 1982, p. 634. Kojima suggests that Zen as a school may have its roots in the Tang 唐 period (616–907) when Zen sub-temples (*zen'in* 禪院) began to emerge in Vinaya temples. He suggests this may explain the origins of Zen pure rules.



- X *Manji shinsan dainihon zokuzōkyō* 卍新纂大日本續藏經. Edited by Kawamura Kōshō 河村考照, Nishi Giyū 西義雄, and Tamaki Kōshiro 玉城康四郎. 90 vols. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975–89.

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