The Controversy over the Principal Doctrine of the Nanshan Vinaya School in the Southern Song and Japan

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1. Introduction

In the South Song, a debate within the Nanshan Vinaya school can be seen in the works of Tieweng Shouyi 鉄翁守一 (1182–ca. 1254; hereafter Shouyi) and Shangweng Miaolian 上翁妙蓮 (1182–1262; hereafter Miaolian).

The history of this *controversy* is clearly evident in Miaolian's work known as *Pengzhezhen* 蓬折箴. There was exchange of views between them for about twenty-five years beginning from around 1230 as shown in Figure 1. In the beginning, Shouyi gave Miaolian One Text 文藁一卷 around 1228–1233. Miaolian responded to him with some papers several times, but Shouyi ignored them and wrote books one after another. Miaolian finally reprimanded Shouyi by writing *Pengzhezhibian* 蓬折直弁.

Figure 1 History of the *controversy*

The controversy centered on whether the main doctrine of the Nanshan school focuses on meditation (Shouyi's position) or on maintaining the precepts (Miaolian's position).

The so-called “three points of views of the Nanshan [school]” (*nanshan sanguan* 南山三觀)¹⁾ in the Nanshan school are given as follows: (1) the “view of the emptiness of inherent nature” (*xingkong guan* 性空觀), said to be found in the teaching of the Agamas, (2) the “view of the emptiness of signs” (*xiangkong guan* 相空觀) said to be found in the teaching of Prajñāpāramitā texts, (3) the “view of consciousness-only” (*weishi guan* 唯識觀) for the deeper bodhisattva teaching. Generally, these are interpreted as practice to repent and seek forgiveness of sins, based on Daoxuan’s 道宣 (596–667) writing in the Chapter on the method for absolution chapter of XSC and JMS.

However, Shouyi equates these three points of view with the “three views of Tiantai” (*tiantai sanguan* 天台三觀), that is “contemplating” or “viewing” the “three truths” (*santi* 三諦): that is, the truths of emptiness (*kong* 空), nominal designation (*jia* 假), and the middle view (*zhong* 中) together in a single thought (a concept called *yixin sanguan* 一心三觀). That is, Shouyi insists that Daoxuan’s three points of view are also the method by which these three views of truth are acquired in one thought, at the moment one receives the precepts. To Shouyi, this drastic understanding of contemplation was what Daoxuan wanted to emphasize.

Miaolian argues that the precepts and the contemplation should be distinguished. In his view, Daoxuan’s “three views” are methods for repentance and seeking forgiveness for sins (*chanhui* 懺悔). That is, he argues that, naturally, the necessity of maintaining the precepts that Daoxuan wanted to emphasize most strongly.²⁾

In this paper, I examine when and how this debate was introduced to Japan.

2. The Debate between Shouyi and Miaolian as Seen by Japanese Buddhist Priests

Japanese monks had been sent to China alongside political envoys approximately every twenty years between the 7th and 9th century. However, this practice was abandoned to be over 9th century, and there was not the public diplomacy between the two countries by the end of the 12th century, and then monks were able to travel to China for study more freely, that is, not under the control of the government. In the 13th century, the number of Japanese students studying in China increased explosively, and many priests made a trip to the Southern Song during the period that Shouyi and Miaolian debated about the Nanshan school.³⁾

2.1. Sources from China

Shouyi’s discussion of re-taking the precepts (*Chongshoujie fu* 重受戒父^文, composed in

1233) in his work *Zhongnanjia ye* 終南家業 (“Karma in the Nanshan Tradition”) says that “the teacher Ren” (Renshi, 忍師; in Japanese, *Nin-shi*) “has now come by ship from far-off Japan to learn the Buddhist precepts.”⁴⁾

In Miaolian’s commentary, called *Pengzhezhen* 蓬折箴 (“Miaolian’s commentary on Da-xuan’s work” composed in 1255) notes that “Many people gathered [under Miaolian] from the Jiading 嘉定 to the Chunyou 淳祐 eras (1208–1252) to learn the Buddhist precepts. Only the two masters Ren 忍 (Jpn. Nin) and Jing 敬 (Jpn. Kei) discussed [with Miaolian] in detail for many years. However, two people went back to Japan before 1255, and Fan fashi 範法師 (Han-hosshi) came in 1255.”⁵⁾

2.2. Sources from Japan

In Gyonen’s 凝然 (1240–1321) work on the Vinaya School, the *Risshū kōyō* 律宗綱要, we find the following passage describing another priest who studied under Miaolian:

A Japanese *ritsu* priest Shinsho 真照律師 learned the Buddhist precepts under Miaolian in Southern Song. Furthermore, he continued learning under Shilin Xingju 石林行居 and solved a question. He was in the Southern Song for three years, between the Zhengyuan 正元 and Hongchang 弘長 eras (1259–1264).⁶⁾

Furthermore, in the Japanese Zen priest Unsen Taikyoku’s 雲泉太極 (1421–?) diary known as the *Hekizan nichiroku* 碧山日錄, his entry from the fourth month 28, 1459 quotes the biography of the monk Donshō 曇照 as follows:

[Donshō] learned the Vinaya under Shouyi in Kaiguang tapo lüsi 戒光塔婆律寺. [Shouyi] saw his [Donshō’s] erudition and taught him enthusiastically. [Donshō] inherited all of Shouyi’s teaching and returned to the East (i.e., Japan).⁷⁾

In this way, even if their record only remains in the works of other contemporaries, we can see that many monks from Japan studied under these two masters. “Nin-shi” and “Donshō”⁸⁾ seem to have studied under Shouyi, while “Nin-hosshi,” “Kei-hosshi,” “Han-hosshi,” and “Shinshō” seem to have studied under Miaolian. Because the debate between Shouyi and Miaolian became well-known in Japan, it may indicate that there were more Japanese who went to study under Shouyi and Miaolian than remaining materials attest. Furthermore, because of Japanese monks studying with Shouyi and Miaolian, it is thought that these monks conveyed this debate to the Japanese Buddhist world in real-time, while it was developing in China.

3. Descriptions of the Debate in Japanese Works

How did Japanese monks report the salient points of this debate? Below we find four descriptions from the writings of Japanese monks describing this debate.

First, in the 8th scroll of Gyōnen's *Bonmō kaihonsho Nichijushō* 梵網戒本疏日珠鈔 (composed 1276; revised 1283), a commentary on the precepts from the *Brahma's Net Sūtra*. The following passage is found:

Yuanzhao 元照 asked two questions. ... The second question is whether or not we must receive the Bodhisattva precepts after we [receive the bhikṣu precepts]. The theories of Southern Song Masters are not unified [on this matter]. In one theory, there is no need to receive the Bodhisattva precepts after [one receives the full bhikṣu precepts]. This is Shouyi's theory. [But] In one [other] theory, it is necessary to receive the Bodhisattva precepts after [receiving the bhikṣu precepts]. This is Miaolian's theory.⁹⁾

Secondly, in Shōon's 照遠 (1302–1361–?) sub-commentary to Daoxuan's *XSC*, the *Shigyō shō* 資行鈔 (established in 1349). The following passage is found:

Yuanzhao's 元照 commentary [on Daoxuan's *XSC*], the *Sifenlü xingshichao zichiji* 四分律行事鈔資持記 (*ZCJ*) writes “向不緣慈，如何容大，意在後也。” In Shouyi's interpretation: *xiang* 向 means that before [receive full bhikṣu precepts] by a four-fold act with a declaration (*baisi jiemo* 白四羯磨). *Rong da* 容大 means that the *avijñapti* (*wubiao* 無表) (activity of the precepts essence) that is generated on the ordination platform will fully generated the three types of pure [Bodhisattva] precepts 三聚淨戒. That is why it is called *rong da* 容大 (containing what is great). *Zaihou* 在後 is the time at the mind arises. The time of receiving [the full bhikṣu precepts by a] four-fold act with a declaration is called *hou* 後 (after). On the other hand, in Miaolian's interpretation: *yuanqi* 緣慈 refers to the receiving the Bodhisattva precepts later. This is called *xiang* 向. *Rong da* 容大 and *zaihou* 在後 refers to receiving the Bodhisattva precepts after [receiving the bhikṣu precepts].¹⁰⁾

Here the topic is the interpretation of the passage “向不緣慈，如何容大，意在後也” from Yuanzhao's *ZCJ*. According to Shōon, Shouyi interprets this sentence as evidence that Bodhisattva precepts are attained at the time receiving the full bhikṣu precepts. On the other, he claims Miaolian interprets this sentence as evidence that one needs to receive the Bodhisattva precepts after receiving the bhikṣu precepts.

Third, in Kōin's 光胤 (1394–1468) commentary, called the *Yuishikiron kikigaki* 唯識論問書. The following passage is found:

The *dokushi* 読師 (the “reader monk”; a priest who sits facing the lecturer (*kôshi* 講師) on a high seat in front of the Buddha who reads title and sentence of *sûtras* at certain Buddhist services) says “in the Nanshan school, there are two opinions: *zôju* 増受 (receive the bhikṣu precepts and then receive the Bodhisattva precepts) and *fuzôju* 不増受 (receive the precepts only once). ... Enkō 延公 says “These are opinions of two disciples of the Nanshan school, Shouyi and Miaolian.”¹¹⁾

Finally, in Kiben’s 基弁 (1718–1791) *Daijō hōon Girinjō Shishiku shō* 大乘法苑義林章師子吼鈔 (composed in 1787), a commentary on Ji’s 基 (632–682) *Dacheng fayuan yizhang* 大乘法苑義章. The following passage is found:

Some works say: “in the precepts of complete teaching (*yuanjiao* 円教), even if the precepts occurred during the ceremony of a four-fold act with a declaration, and the vow was made based on the heart, it should not be expected for eternal time. In the case of the Bodhisattva [precepts], [the precept’s function] lasts forever.” That is Shouyi’s opinion. However, Miaolian does not permit this opinion.¹²⁾

As mentioned here, it is reported that the difference in their opinions was whether it was necessary to receive the Bodhisattva precepts after receiving the full bhikṣu precepts.

As explained earlier, Shouyi and Miaolian have arguments about the main doctrine of Nanshan school, but in Japan, only the discussion about the number of times that one had to receive the precepts appears to have been the focus.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the main theme of the debate between Shouyi and Miaolian is whether the Nanshan school’s main doctrine is focused on meditation (as Shouyi believed) or on maintaining the precepts (as Miaolian argued). In contrast, however, the Japanese saw that the most important aspect of this debate was whether the monk received the precepts only once (what Kōin terms *fuzôju* 不増受, a position attributed to Shouyi) or twice, for both the full bhikṣu precepts and for the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva precepts (*zôju* 増受, the position attributed to Miaolian) in each lifetime.

In Japan, Saichō 最澄 (767–822) rejected the precepts received at the Kaidan-in 戒壇院 at Tōdaiji 東大寺 in Nara as “the hīnayāna precepts,” proposing that only the bodhisattva precepts found in the “*Brahma’s Net Sūtra*” (*bonmō kyō* 梵網經) should be used to ordain his Tendai priests. Since then, two opinions have stood alongside one another, the first being that one should receive the Bodhisattva precepts after receiving the full bhikṣu pre-

cepts (As was done in the schools of Nara), the second was that Bodhisattva precepts only needed to be received (As was promoted on Mt. Hiei).

The system *fuzōju* style was introduced by Shunjō 俊苧 (1166–1227, Study in Southern Sung: 1199–1211) to China. Shunjō studied in China under Ruan lehong 如庵了宏 (fl. ca. 1200, d. ca. 1211) who was also Shouyi's teacher. As I have argued elsewhere Shouyi was influenced by Shunjō's introduction of the system of taking the precepts only once, as found in Mt. Hiei, which appears to have been the cause of the debate between Shouyi and Miaolian.¹³⁾

However, this debate in the Southern Song was delivered in almost real-time to Japan by monks who studied with Shouyi and Miaolian, they only focused on the problem of whether it was necessary to take the precepts once or twice (i.e., *zōju* 増受 vs. *fuzōju* 不増受). It is likely that these monks introduced these topics by focusing exclusively on what was of interest to Buddhism in Japan.

Notes

1) The discussion of the "Three Views of Nanshan" can be found in the chapter 28, on the training of *śrāmaṇerikā* (*shami biexing pian* 沙弥别行篇; T no. 1804, 40, 149a21–27) as well as chapter 16, on the method of repentance (*chan liu ju fa pian* 懺六聚法篇; T no. 1804, 40, 96a13–18) of Daoxuan's *Sifenlü shanfan buque xingshichao* 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔 (XSC). Additionally, it can be found in chapter 3, on receiving the precepts (*zhu jie shoufa pian* 諸戒受法; X no. 0728, 41, 198c24–199a11) and chapter 9, on the method of repentance (*chan liu ju fa pian* 懺六聚法篇 X no. 0728, 41, 336b21–c6) in Daoxuan's *Sifenlü shanbu suiji jiemoshu* 四分律刪補隨機羯磨疏 (JMS) (It is cited in *Sifenlü shanbu suiji jiemoshu Jiyuanji* 四分律刪補隨機羯磨疏濟緣記" by Yuanzhao 元照).

2) See Ôtani forthcoming a, Ôtani forthcoming b for more information about the above-mentioned consideration.

3) See Enomoto 2010.

4) “今因日本忍師，泛舶遠來，探閱律藏。” (X59, 736a3–4).

5) “嘉定至於淳祐，果有學律者來。唯忍敬二法師，相聚連年，與之義論，頗得稠密。一別再化各處天一涯，不知其回國之道況何如。今有範法師到來，疊衣過，我曾出疑難有可，答者忽問。” (X60, 91c12–15).

6) “日本眞照律師，入大宋朝，隨蓮宗師，受戒問律。隨居宗師，學律決疑。在唐三年，乃正元弘長之間也。” (T no. 2348, 74, 17b7–9).

7) “依守一法師，於戒光塔婆律寺，以稟律部。一察其敏慧，厚加教誘。悉嗣其法而東歸也。” (*Zōho zoku shiryō taisei* 增補統史料大成, vol. 20, 20–21).

8) Ôtsuka 2006 writes that Donshō's *bōgō* 坊号 is Hnin 法忍, so “Nin-shi” and “Donshō” may be the same person. According to the *Hokkyō kaikōritsu-ji koki* 北京戒光律寺古記 from Kaiō-ji temple 戒光寺 we see the following passage: “字法忍，实名淨業，又云忍律法師”. According to this, rather Bōgō can be considered to Donshō. However, there are no other materials I know of that introduce Donshō as “Hōnin bō”.

9) “無照律師建立二問。... 後問即是後受菩薩大戒否也。宋朝人師異義非一。或後○必受苦薩戒，如守一

律師等所解也。或後必可受彼菩薩大戒。如妙蓮律師等所釋也。”(T no. 2247, 62, 51c22–26).

10) “記。向不緣慈如何容大意在後也云云。守一義：向者，白四已前事也。容大者，壇場所發無作，圓發三聚。故云容大。在後者，發心時。指白四之時云後也。妙蓮師義：今緣慈對後菩薩戒云向。容大・在後，俱名後菩薩戒也”。(T no. 2248, 62, 420c3–7).

11) “讀師云。於南山家，增受不增受二義アリ。… 延公云。於南山之下，^(平)修一妙蓮二人ノ論歟。云云。”(T no. 2264, 66, 895a29–b6)。

12) “於圓教戒，縱雖白四所發，誓願因心期未來際。則如菩薩。至未來際，云云。是守一義也。而妙蓮不許之。”(T no. 2323, 71, 871a2–4).

13) See Ôtani 2016.

Abbreviations

XSC *Sifenlü shanfan buque xingshichao* 四分律刪繁補闕行事鈔 by Daoxuan 道宣.

JMS *Sifenlü shanbu sui ji jiemoshu* 四分律刪補隨機羯磨疏 by Daoxuan 道宣.

ZCJ *Sifenlü xingshichao zichiji* 四分律行事鈔資持記 by Yuanzhao 元照.

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