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Discipline and Enlightenment: Hanyue Fazang 漢月法藏 (1573-1635) and the Spread of the
Triple Platform Ordination Ceremony in Seventeenth-Century China

(Draft only)

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There is an inherent contradiction between Chan Buddhism and the Vinaya tradition. While Chan masters advocate the spontaneous emancipation of the mind in their enlightenment experience, the Vinaya teachers enforce monastic disciplines to all members of the community. As long as Chan masters remain in the established monastic order and do not seek a complete breakup from the disciplinary conventions, they have to cope with precepts and even find a way to mitigate the tension between them. Thus, Chan and Vinaya have a complicated history in East Asia. It has been hinted by scholars such as John McRae and William Bodiford that Chan Buddhists had already deeply involved in the “Ordination Platform Movement” in medieval China since the time of Daoxuan 道宣 and continued to keep the Vinaya tradition at the core of their monastic practice, especially in Japan.¹ However, it is still unclear how Chan monks solve this intrinsic contradiction in theory and practice.

¹ See McRae, “Daoxuan’s Vision of Jetavana;” Bodiford, “Bodhidharma’s Precepts in Japan.”

In particular, the Vinaya tradition has long been regarded as declining in late imperial China. Some scholars such as Tso Tze-bong 曹仕邦 attributed this decline to the political intervention of the Chinese state;² some such as Ven. Hongyi 弘一 considered the loss of major Vinaya texts and commentaries as the major reason for the neglect of the Vinaya learning.³ However, the Vinaya revival movement and the reformulation of the ordination ceremony in the seventeenth century are the overlooked evidence to rebut such a popular view of Vinaya decline.

One of the attempts occurred during the seventeenth century when Chan Buddhism emerged as a reformative force in China and Chan masters controlled many monasteries. Meanwhile, the Vinaya tradition, after the temporary suspension of the state ordination ceremony in the mid-Sixteenth century, was revived in response to the lack of discipline and proper ordination ceremony, leading to the invention of the Triple Platform Ceremony (*santan dajie* 三壇大戒) which is still being practiced today in Chinese monastic communities. (Basically, three major ceremonies, novice, full precept, and Bodhisattva ordinations, were convened together within a short period time.) The rise of Chan and Vinaya and their coexistence in the monastic setting thus led to new attempts to negotiate the relationship between enlightenment and discipline, the two seemingly contradictory spiritual goals. One of the crucial figures was Hanyue Fazang 漢月法藏 (1573-1635), a self-claimed but also certified Chan master and a student of the Vinaya tradition as well. He authored a two-fascicle text entitled *Ritual Procedures of Propagating the Ordination Ceremony* (*Hongjie fayi* 弘戒法儀, X60n1126), in

² Tso Sze-bong, "The Decline of Buddhist Vinaya in China." It is interesting to note that Bodiford cited that recent Japanese scholarship failed to find the evidence that precept initiations remained essential in Chinese Chan, especially during the seventeenth century. See *Ibid*, p. 199.

³ Hongyi, *Lüxue jianglu sa san zhong hedingben*, p. 229

which he intended to synthesize Chan and Vinaya.⁴ In this paper, I introduce this work to the scholarly community through my preliminary research. Not only is the content of the book summarized and its textual history clarified, I also give it a humanistic reading in light of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's work on monastic rules. I suggest that Hanyue Fazang's ordination manual can be similarly understood as what Agamben calls the "Form-of-Life." This humanistic reading may also provide a methodological perspective to understand the importance of Buddhist Vinaya in China.

Hanyue Fazang betwixt Chan, Tantrism, and Vinaya

Hanyue Fazang was a fascinating Buddhist character in the seventeenth century and was perhaps the most original Buddhist thinker in his time. He was born into a literati family at the end of the sixteenth century when China was undergoing an intellectual change toward a more liberal and individualist interpretation of its past, heralded by Wang Yangming 王陽明 and his followers. Hanyue joined the Buddhist order in a very young age and received his training in the traditional monastic setting which emphasized liturgical and ritual services stipulated by the Ming state. Although he later became a Chan master, his early training in Buddhist ritualism had a long lasting effect in his syncretic attempt to integrate Chan teaching into the monastic routine of liturgy and ritual.⁵

⁴ This text has been studied briefly by Liu Xiaoyu, *Ming Qing zhiji lüzong zhongxing yundong kaocha*, pp. 180-185.

⁵ I have summarized Hanyue's biography and his teaching in my book *Enlightenment in Dispute*, especially pp. 88-90.

Hanyue also received secular education during his youth and showed his talent as a poet and literary man. He associated himself with famous literati in the Jiangnan area and gained literary fame as a young monk. However, he set his mind on reaching enlightenment, inspired by Chan masters in previous dynasties, especially the Song Chan Buddhist Juefan Huihong 覺范慧洪, whose work such as *Biography of Wisdom and Attestment* (*Zhizheng zhuan* 智証傳) was reprinted and widely distributed in the late Ming. Without the guidance of a qualified Chan teacher, Hanyue strived to reach enlightenment and finally had an enlightenment experience when he accidentally heard the sound of bamboo cracking during his meditation. For him, his personal experience proves the importance of enlightenment through one's own effort rather than blindly relying on the teacher. This meditation experience has been translated in Charles Luk's book on Chinese meditation.⁶

However, even with the confidence of reaching enlightenment, Hanyue realized that he could not become an “authentic” Chan master without proper dharma transmission. Having already established himself as an eminent monk, he searched for qualified Chan masters with “authentic” dharma transmission for himself to inherit. During the time he was active, Chan Buddhism was revived with institutional vigor through the propagation of dharma transmission from a few influential Chan figures. One of the most prominent Chan masters was Miyun Yuanwu 密雲圓悟 who not only claimed to have inherited the “authentic” Linji transmission but was also able to demonstrate his spontaneous Chan spirit through the “bold” performance of beating and shouting. Considering Miyun as the legitimate Chan master, Hanyue requested dharma transmission from Miyun. After a quick meeting and encounter during the formal ritual

⁶ Luk, *Secrets of Chinese Meditation*.

of “ascending the hall” (*shangtang* 上堂), Miyun reluctantly satisfied Hanyue’s request and offered him the certificate of dharma transmission. However, as I have investigated fully in my book *Enlightenment in Dispute*, in Hanyue’s eyes, the transmission only concerned the offering of a nominal certificate but did not affect his own right to propagate his understanding of “Chan principle” (*Zongzhi* 宗旨), which is significantly different from Miyun’s. The two quickly engaged into a controversy which resulted in a series of polemical writing in 1630s and maybe the first of a series of Buddhist controversies in the seventeenth century. The most unthinkable is that even after the dispute elapsed for a hundred year, it was rekindled by the Manchu emperor Yongzheng 雍正, a devoted Chan practitioner. The emperor wrote an eight-volume polemical book to denounce Hanyue and deprived his dharma heirs of the right to hold abbot positions in major monasteries.⁷

In the Chan world, it is no doubt that Hanyue was famously or notoriously controversial exactly because of the originality of his thought and his attempt to mitigate the difference among various Chan traditions. It is less known, however, he also excelled in ritual performance and had authored a few seminal ritual manuals including the subject matter of this study. In my previous study *Enlightenment in Dispute*, I have revealed the esoteric side of Hanyue’s thought by analyzing his writing on the Tantric ritual of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts (*shishi* 施食), which he interpreted by using Chan terminology. Basically, he argued that the Tantric practice was also Chan practice and performing the ritual of Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts needs to be

⁷ See Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 163-183.

accompanied by Chan enlightenment.⁸ In this paper, we will see that Hanyue used the same interpretative strategy to expound the meaning of ordination and discipline.

I have alluded in my previous book that Hanyue was a Vinaya master as well but did not explore this aspect further. The truth is, in addition to his established status in the Chan community, he was also recognized in the revived Vinaya tradition in the late Ming. In the major genealogical work of the Vinaya school such as *Nanshan zongtong* 南山宗統 and *Lüzong dengpu* 律宗燈譜,⁹ he was listed as one of the handful heirs of the late Ming Vinaya master Guxin Ruxin 古心如馨 (1541—1615), who was attributed with reviving the ordination ceremony disrupted during the suppression of Buddhism in the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign by inventing the Triple Ordination Ceremony. Guxin, as an ordination master, did not leave any writing on the actual procedure of this important ritual.¹⁰ The earliest extant ritual manual was Hanyue's *Hongjie fayi*, which predates the most renowned ordination master Jianyue Duti's 見月讀體 work on the Triple Platform Ceremony by about fifty years.¹¹ Moreover, an abbreviated version of his

⁸ See Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 147-151.

⁹ See Sengkai, "Mingmo Qingchu lüzong chuanbo qingkuang yu tedian."

¹⁰ According to his biography, Guxin Ruxin was born into the Yang family and entered the saṅgha at an early age. He first became a novice under Master Su'an Zhenjie 素庵真界 (1519-93). Hasebe Yūkei questioned whether Ruxin received proper ordination from him. See Hasebe Yūkei 長谷部 幽蹊, "Min Shin jidai ni okeru Zen Ritsu ryōshū kōka no dōkō" 明清時代における禅律両宗弘化の動向, *Zen kenkyūsho kiyō* (Aichi daigaku) 20 (March 1992): 183-203, especially 194-196. I have provided a short biography about him in my *Enlightenment in Dispute*. Guxin left only one work which does not deal with the Triple Platform Ceremony. See Guxin Ruxin 古心如馨, *Rituals of Chanting Precepts from Sutra and Vinaya (Upavasatha)* 《经律戒相布萨轨仪》, X no. 1136, vol. 60. 《卍续藏经》第六十册.

¹¹ Jianyue's *Correct Rules for Triple Platform Ordination Ceremony* 《三壇傳戒正範》 has been regarded as the only authority in ordination from the late Ming. Jianyue's work was regarded highly by modern and contemporary Buddhist leaders such as Master Hongyi. 「從明末至今，傳戒之書獨此一部。傳戒尚存一線曙光之不絕，唯賴此書。」 See Hongyi, "Lüxue yaolue" 律學要略, *Lüxue jianglu*, p. 229. For the comparison between Jiayue's and Hanyue's ordination manuals, see Liu Xiaoyu, *Ming Qing zhiji lüzong zhongxing yundong kaocha*, pp. 190-203.

The content of the four fascicles are as follows:

manual was adopted by his dharma nephew Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 who went to Japan in 1654 and founded the Ōbaku school 黃檗宗 there. Yinyuan introduced Triple Ordination Ceremony to Japan, which became a powerful proselytizing tool. However, Hanyue's contribution to the spread of the Triple Platform Ceremony was largely forgotten by modern and contemporary Buddhist teachers and scholars. It is the time to revisit his manual and reevaluate his role in the Vinaya revival movement.¹²

Hanyue Fazang and His Ordination Manual

Why would Hanyue write this manual and what authority enabled him to write as an expert of Vinaya? The only possible explanation is that in addition to his outward display as a Chan master, he was brought up in a monastic setting specialized in Buddhist ritual routines and was trained as a ritual master. This has to do with the institutional division of Buddhist temples into Chan, Doctrinal, and “Teaching” (Yoga) monasteries in the early Ming. The Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 intended to designate Buddhist institutions into different functional

Fasc. 1: Repentance Ritual before the first platform of novice ordination 卷一「初壇授沙彌戒前請戒懺悔儀」

Fasc. 2: Repentance Ritual before the second platform of full monk ordination 卷二「二壇授比丘戒前請戒懺悔儀」

Fasc. 3: Repentance Ritual before the third platform of Bodhisattva ordination 卷三「三壇授菩薩戒前請戒懺悔儀」

Fasc. 4 . Correct Rules for all the three platforms. 卷四「初壇傳授沙彌戒正範」、「二壇傳授比丘戒正範」、「三壇傳授菩薩戒正範」

¹² For example, Ven. Sheng Yen 聖嚴 mentioned the contribution of Ouyi Zhixu, Zhuhong, Hongzan, Yongjue Yuanxian, Guxin Ruxin and his disciples Sanmei Jiguang and Jianyue Duti without any reference to Hanyue Fazang. See Sheng Yen, *Jielixue gangyao*, p. 21. Ven. Hongyi only recognized Ouyi Zhixu and Jianyue Duti. See Hongyi, “Lixue yaolue” 律學要略, *Lixue jianglu*, p. 229.

categories to ensure that these institutions won't interfere with politics. Among these, the category of "Teaching" monasteries is a special creation to accommodate the so-called Yoga Teaching, or Yuqiejiao 瑜伽教, literally referring to the practice of the esoteric mortuary ritual service carried out by the majority of the monks as a way of living.

It was already a reality at the beginning of the Ming that most monks engaged in ritual service, especially esoteric rituals, for the dead as a way of supporting themselves. To respond to this reality, not only a set of standard liturgy was stipulated by the Ming state, even the price of the services was fixed. This led to a group of monks living in the "Teaching" monasteries to take ritual performance as their profession. Hanyue grew up in this type of monasteries and must have been familiar with these rituals since his youth. For example, his esoteric writing on the Rite of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts contains such detailed description about the esoteric ritual performance involving complicated combinations of hand gestures (*mudra*), chanting magic spells (*dharani*), and visualization of *bija* characters 种子. Without personal experience and training in these performances, it was impossible for an outsider to give such vivid accounts of a secretly transmitted ritual.

His interest in ordination ritual is no surprise either. Although he lived in a monastery as novice at an early age, he was not able to receive the full ordination in his adulthood because the official state ordination platform was closed by the "Daoist" Jiajing emperor in 1526, 1546 and 1566 and was not reopened even after his death. He actually wrote this event in his ordination manual and thus provided an eyewitness account of the dire situation for monks to seek proper ordination. (Section 24) He first requested ordination from Zhuhong, one of the eminent monks in his time, but Zhuhong did not dare to break the law to offer the full ordination to his disciples. Instead, he could only offer a novice ordination ceremony he invented (Xicijie 息慈戒). The true

breakthrough happened a few years later in 1609 when Guxin Ruxin publicly offered the Triple Ordination Ceremony under the urge of his fellow monks, ignoring the prohibition. The reason of this boldness was that Guxin claimed that he had been ordained by Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī during his pilgrimage at Mount Wutai and later he was asked by Emperor Wanli 萬曆 to offer all the three ordination ceremonies in a “convenient” way, which means to offer novice, full, and Bodhisattva ordination ceremonies in a row within a short period of time.¹³ Hanyue thus went to Guxin in Nanjing and completed the ordination ceremony under him. It is very likely that Hanyue created his manual based on his experience of ordination.

Although the Triple Platform Ordination Ceremony was later accepted by the Chinese Buddhist communities as the standard and quintessential way of receiving proper ordination, it is not clear how this ritual was evolved in the last four hundred year, especially the initial offering during Guxin’s time. It seems that there is no any earlier manual on this ritual except Hanyue’s *Hongjie fayi*. It is thus important for us to take this work seriously.

The Textual History of *Hongjie fayi*

The origin of Hanyue’s ordination manual is not clear but he gave some clues in his own writing. The reason for his compilation of this work is because of the closure of the ordination platform during the Jiajing period as he mentioned in his manual. Although his manual is the first systematic description of the ceremony, he did not start it from scratch. Rather, he claimed

¹³ See my *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 28-31.

that he had obtained an “ancient regulation” 古規 from the southern platform 南壇, which is probably Zhaoqing monastery 昭慶寺 in Hangzhou. This ancient version contains the procedures for the novice and full monk ordinations. In his remaining work, Hanyue Fazang marked the places which formed the core of the full ordination, where he copied from the ancient version. For example, the ceremony of offering the Five and Eight Precepts to the monk and lay assemblies 授出家在家五戒八戒法儀第三 was marked as originating from the ancient edition with additions of eulogy and the method of offering the Eight Precepts 出戒壇古本補讚附 補授八戒法. Based on this early edition, Hanyue Fazang absorbed the bodhisattva ordination ceremony and its commentaries to complete it.

In addition, Hanyue consulted a variety of Buddhist sources on Vinaya and I listed them in the following:

Supplementary Praise to Baizhang’s Pure Regulation 百丈清規補讚

Quick Primer of Full Ordination by Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲具戒便蒙

Brahma’s Net Scripture 梵網經

Bodhisattva Adornment Sutra 瓔珞經

Principles of the Five Chan Houses 五家宗旨

Monk’s Staff Sutra (得道梯橙) 錫杖經

Essentials of Novice Rules and Rituals by Yunqi Zhuhong 云棲沙彌律儀要略

Best Edition of Brahman’s Net Sutra Collated by Yunqi Zhuhong 云棲較正梵網經善本

Monk's Precepts (in Four Parts) 比丘戒本

However, the current edition in the Manji Supplementary Canon is not complete. At the end of his preface, Hanyue Fazang said that he completed the work in 1623 (the third year of the Tianqi reign) in the Jinwa Hall of Beichan monastery 北禪寺禁蛙堂 which should be in Suzhou. In the *Jiaying Canon*, we can find the same two-fascicle edition as well. But Hanyue mentioned that the whole work amounts to one case, which should be close to ten fascicles.¹⁴ According to Fazang, his original work actually includes the following components:

1. Three refuges, Five and Eight precepts, and the Ten precepts for ordination, 三歸五戒八戒剃度十戒, Monk's Four Vinaya assemblies (*jiemo*) 比丘白四羯磨, and the Bodhisattva Precepts 菩薩戒
2. Incorporating three Vinaya books for chanting: Outline of Novice Precepts 沙彌律儀要略, Bhikkhu's Precepts 比丘戒本, and the Brahma's Net Scripture 梵網經
3. *Suiji Jiemo* 隨機羯磨, likely by Daoxuan, which was used as monk's rules.¹⁵
4. To demonstrate Chan and Vinaya as the teaching of one mind, he also wrote the work *One String of the Fanwang Scripture* 梵網一線 in two fascicles.
5. In addition, there are four fascicles of Buddhist scriptures from the canon, whose titles we don't know. (X60n1126_001)

¹⁴ According to the recent Chinese survey of rare books, in Qinghai provincial library, there is the edition of 1623 in 33 fascicles. Search through website of National Rare Books Survey. However, Prof. Huang Yi-shun 黃繹勳 informed me that it is the same edition as the one preserved in the *Xuzangjing*.

¹⁵ It is possible that this ritual has been based on a commentary by Yuanzhao 元照 in Hangzhou. See *Shi Sifenlv shanbu sui ji jiemo shuke* 釋四分律刪補隨機羯磨疏科, X41n0727.

Hanyue Fazang clearly indicated that he included all the above in one case (likely in ten fascicles) for printing. According to the table of content of the received edition, there is 33 sections in total with the *Fanwang yixian* as sections 32 and 33. In addition, there are four fascicles of Buddhist scriptures from the canon, whose titles we don't know. However, the current edition of *Hongjie fayi* only includes two fascicles and ended with section 26 衣鉢總持. Therefore the current edition is not the complete replica of the original. Especially it seems that his work *Fanwang yixian* has been lost.

The missing sections of the received edition are listed in the following:

No. 27 Procedure of Requesting 登壇授戒引請法儀第二十七(法儀全在引請提唱。始得整飭。故備於此)

No. 28 Illustration of Garment 衣圖第二十八

No. 29 Platform Procedures 壇儀第二十九

No. 30 Monk's Assembly Rules 比丘羯磨法第三十(比丘日用者不可不知)

No. 31 Bodhisattva Rules 菩薩羯磨法第三十一(當依大乘諸律。不得用比丘法混濫)

No. 32 *One Thread of the Brahma's Net Sutra* in two fascicles 梵網經一線上下卷第三十二(因闡禪律同宗故註)

No. 33 Scriptures in the Buddhist Canon 佛藏經第三十三(因今人不知實相為禪為教為律。而分為三家。以起鬪爭堅固。故當流通。以警三種匪人)

Hanyue's work is different from a simple book of the rule. He was aware of the decline of Vinaya in his time and briefly reviewed the revival of the Vinaya in his time. According to him, the ordination platform was first started in 1377 and continued in the beginning of the Ming dynasty in 1387 and 1407. However, during the early years of the Jiajing reign (1522), the ordination platform was still open and the Caodong master from Shaolin monastery Xiaoshan Zongshu 小山宗書 was selected as the Vinaya master. However, the platform was closed down in the late Jiajing period. During the Wanli reign, Emperor Wanli revived the ordination in Wutai.

Hanyue Fazang also mentioned a genealogy of Vinaya which is not clear to me for now. He listed a string of teachers which seems to have formed a transmission line, starting with Daoxuan 道宣, referred to as Patriarch of Nanshan 南山教主. Following him, Hanyue mentioned the following successors which have dubious identity: Sagely Master Chengzhao 澄照聖師, the Japanese commentator 日本記主, Vinaya Master Zhenwu 真悟律師, commentator Linzhi 靈芝記主, Vinaya master Jieguan 戒光律師. (Section 3, part 3.) Among the above list, only the commentator Lingzhi has some credibility: he was most likely the Vinaya master Yuanzhao, who revived the Vinaya tradition in Zhaoqing monastery and left many commentaries.¹⁶ Hanyue's manual has a clear mark of his time as he particularly warned the new initiands about the potential threat from the White Lotus Heresy 白蓮邪教, the *Five Books and Six Volumes* 五部六冊 of the "Non-Action Teaching" by Luo Qing 羅清, and the newly arrived Christianity---The Teaching of the Lord 天主教.

¹⁶ I haven't been able to identify all the names in this list. For the history of the Vinaya tradition in Zhaoqing monastery, see Liu Xiaoyu, *Ming Qing zhiji Lüzong zhongxing yundong kaocha*, 99-101.

The Joint Practice of Chan and Vinaya

The seventeenth century was a great period of synthesis in China. The most famous slogan “Unification of the Three Teachings” (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一) characterized the life and thought of many Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist figures. Although such claims already occurred in early Chinese history, the unique teaching in the late Ming was that people truly believed that the “Three Teachings” are mutually inclusive and there was no difference among each other. This is what Edward Ch’ien 錢新祖 characterized as the “non-compartmentalization” model.¹⁷

Within the Buddhist world, the revival of Buddhist monasticism created the need to synthesize monastic rituals and practices. A popular version of synthesis was the joint practice of Chan and Pure Land as promoted by Zhuhong 祿宏, which lay down the foundation for Chinese Buddhism in modern and contemporary periods. However, although the Triple Platform Ordination Ceremony has been revived and Chan masters often acted as Vinaya teachers during the ceremony, the claim of the joint practice of Chan and Vinaya was not widely known and espoused.¹⁸

Hanyue Fazang was perhaps an outlier and may be the only Buddhist thinker who had the vision of such a joint practice. Its justification is the central theme of his ordination manual and

¹⁷ Ch’ien, *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming*.

¹⁸ This phenomenon has been studied by Hasebe Yūkei. In Hanyue’s manual, there are abundant evident that Chan monks have been involved in ordination.

is perhaps more important for him than the actual ritual procedures. His approach is also consistent with his other claims, such as the joint practice of Chan and Esotericism, as I have already explored in my book *Enlightenment in Dispute*.¹⁹

In Section 24 entitled “Discussion about Offering Precepts” 授戒辨, Hanyue Fazang systematically expressed his view about the necessity of such a joint practice. He believes that Chan and Vinaya can be practiced together and does not approve the one-sided emphasis on either of them. In this way, it can be argued that his model of synthesis is the one of the “non-compartmentalization” examples in Edward Ch’ien’s words. As he sees it, the ordination practice in his time had a serious problem: “Vinaya teachers do not understand the School of the Mind.” “律家不悟心宗” Moreover, “the Chan school transmits the dharma and the mind instead of petty rules.”, “禅宗传法传心而不传小律.” Here he blames both Vinaya and Chan teachers for not transmitting the teaching of both: “Chan people ignore the rules but stress the mind; Precept teachers attach to appearance but forget the substance.” 禅人忽律而重心，戒师执相而遗体。 This bias or one-sidedness led his contemporaries to the “small-vehicle teaching”: “The small vehicle does not understand that Chan and Vinaya share the same principle.” 小乘不知禅律同宗

For a qualified Buddhist teacher, his expectation is the joint transmission of Chan, Dharma Transmission, and Vinaya 禅法律并传, which means a great synthesis of all the major Buddhist traditions. For Hanyue Fazang, as he had made clear in his other writings which I have studied previously, enlightenment can be only achieved by one’s self-effort while the teacher’s role is to transmit the dharma through “attestation” (*yinke* 印可 or commonly known as *inka* in

¹⁹ Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 144-151.

Japanese).²⁰ For him, Chan teaching is what he called the Patriarch Chan (Zushi chan 祖師禪), the ultimate stage superior to the Tathagatha Chan (Rulai chan 如來禪).²¹ Here he expressed his own thought: “It is so that the teaching for attesting to the mind is the Patriarch Chan which I am contemplating.” 蓋印心之法著，即今所參之祖師禪是也 He made it clear further that “Taking refuge in yourself is the uplifting Patriarch Chan.” 自歸者直提向上祖師禪也 What is unusual is that he added Vinaya as one of the components of synthesis. The reason for such a great synthesis, according to him, is that the essence of the three, Chan, dharma transmission, and Vinaya, is the “marvelous mind of nirvana as reality without characteristics” 實相無相涅槃妙心. Buddhist teachings, no matter realized in the world “with characteristics” like Vinaya or “without characteristics” like Chan, have no fundamental difference. Therefore, he advocated the “identical source of Chan and Vinaya” 禪律同宗. This claim is rather astonishing for most of the Chinese Buddhist practitioners because for a long time Vinaya has been treated as a separate tradition and more uncomfortably the Chinese Buddhists adopted the *Dharmagupta Four-Section Vinaya* which belongs to the “Small Vehicle” except the adoption of the Bodhisattva Ordination based on the Brahma’s Net Sutra (*Fanwangjing* 梵網經). Now, for Hanyue Fazang, Vinaya is an indispensable component of Chan training and percept is none other than Chan contemplation itself. He said: “Precepts do not exist outside Chan and Chan contemplation is the true precept.” 戒非在禪外也，參禪是真戒也. “Therefore those who receive precepts must contemplate Chan

²⁰ Similar thought can be found elsewhere in this work. For example, in Section 20 about the use of patriarch’s staff 錫杖法, he expressed the same idea. 人惟自悟 師以傳法.

²¹ Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute*, pp. 114-118.

and those practice Chan contemplation must uphold precepts. Then they can become Buddha's disciples.” 故受戒必參禪，參禪必持戒，而後為佛子也。

Discipline and Enlightenment: A Humanistic Reading

Monasticism, including the rules and precepts resulting from the monastic life, is not sufficiently studied in the field of Chinese Buddhism.²² Traditionally, these rules and precepts are grouped as the study of Vinaya which was dominated by meticulous studies and commentaries on Vinaya literature translated from Indian and Central Asia. Recently, Vinaya literature has become the primary source for social and historical inquiry of Buddhism.²³ It is well-known that Chinese Buddhism, though adopting the Mahayana doctrine, follows the *Dharmagupta Vinaya* 四分律 which is actually the “Hinayana” practice. Even the doctrinal issues have been laboriously discussed in monk-scholar's commentaries, it is still unclear how the rules and precepts, especially the ordination ceremonies, were performed on the ground and what the significance for common people to understand these rules stipulated for the few ordained. In the late imperial and modern China, there is even a tendency to mystify the Vinaya rules in the popular lore that lay Buddhists are forbidden to study Vinaya precepts. One of the reasons for this lack of Vinaya research and understanding, as far as I can see, is that scholars lack an intellectual “handle” to decipher the meaning of these rules.

²² In addition to William Bodiford, Charles Fu, Ann Heirman has done more substantial work. For a short overview, see Heirman, “Vinaya from India to China.”

²³ For example, See Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*. Silk, *Managing Monks*.

Recently, in the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's work on European Franciscan monastic rules, *The Highest Poverty*, a new approach towards religious disciplines based on a humanistic reading shows promise. Agamben's central issue is to understand the dialectic relationship between rule and life. As exemplified in Franciscan monastic rules, he interprets the monastic life with rules as "Form-of-life," a concept borrowed from German Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, implying a "reciprocal tension" leading towards a new way of existence devoid of external imposition of laws upon one's own life, which becomes a "never-ending practice." In this sense, rule and life reach a perfect harmony to create a coexistence of "being and acting, divine and human, ontological and practical." (Agamben, xii).

As Agamben claims, "the monastic ideal is that of a total mobilization of existence through time." (Agamben, 23) The monastic life gives a new meaning to "obligatoriness" which transforms the transgression of rules and precepts from a moral sin to a legal breach which is punishable. Here, the mark to enter a monastic life is the pledge of a vow which can be viewed as an "institution." Like in many other places in his book, Agamben likens the religious vow to a legal oath and the monastic rules to legal codes, and religion to law. The issue is not to carry out the content of laws or rules literally, but to enter a "habit" or "form of life" under a set of conditions within a community.

Therefore, "Through the concept of 'form,' rule (*forma regulae*) and life (*forma vivendi*) enter into a threshold of indistinction in the monk's practice." (Agamben 60) This implies, the monastics, in his case the Franciscans, who enter the monastery, do not follow a life according to the rule but rather promise to live a life in which rules are an unconditional and indivisible part of it. Then it is not a question of practicing or acting, but a question of living. Therefore, Wittgenstein's remark makes sense here as Agamben quotes from his *Tractatus Logico-*

Philosophicus: “the pawn is the sum of the rules for its moves” (Wittgenstein 2, pp. 325-26/327). As Agamben rephrases it, “A form of life would thus be the collection of constitutive rules that define it.” (Agamben 71).

Because rule is not the concern here, life looms large in the monastic setting and should be reclaimed for modern homo sapiens as well. Agamben continues: “perhaps for the first time, what was in question in the movements was not the rule, but the life, not the ability to profess this or that article of faith, but the ability to live in a certain way, to practice joyfully and openly a certain form of life.” (Agamben 93) In his other words, “It is not a matter so much of applying a form (or norm) to life, but of living according to that form, that is of a life that, in its sequence, makes itself that very form, coincides with it.” (Agamben 99)

Agamben’s research on European monasticism and its relation to modernity provides a new perspective to the study of Chinese monasticism, especially Hanyue’s ordination manual under investigation here. The heuristic suggestion is to put monastic rules or Buddhist Vinaya under the framework of a humanistic understanding, rather than emphasizing its drastic breach from the human world as an act of renunciation and asceticism. Instead, ordination into a monastic order is not a complete cutoff of the human world but a continuation of a “form-of-life.”

From such a humanistic perspective, we see the Chinese invention of the Triple Platform Ordination has some unique emphases which may not be noticed before. First of all is its emphasis on voluntarism and consensus-building during the ordination ceremony. In late imperial and modern China, to become a Buddhist monastic was not one of the desired options of a career path. Popular Chinese culture was/is permeated with a sense of anti-clericalism as

Vincent Goossaert has studied.²⁴ The decision to enter the monastery is such a difficult one and is often subject to many practical considerations. It is incredible that in the ordination manuals of the Triple Platform, not only in Hanyue's version but also in all the later editions, the procedures were developed to confirm repeatedly that the decision of entering the monastery is completely voluntary.

The first procedural element is to take vow (*fayuan* 發願), which is the beginning of accepting a way of new life and a set of rules. The ordination manuals are full of these references and the initiands have to take and repeat their vows numerous times during the ceremony.

The second element is repentance (*chanhui* 懺悔). Sins and crimes have to be repented to renew the person of the initiands. However, taking vows and repenting are activities an individual can accomplish on his own. To become a monastic one has to “receive the precepts,” which implies a communal consensus to grant the precepts. Here, the initiands have to “request” (*qing* 請) the precepts repeatedly. This is perhaps a minor aspect which is not clearly stipulated in the main ordination procedures. However, “request” has to be made by the initiands before any ritual starts. Throughout Hanyue's ordination manual, the wording for “request” was often stated as “request earnestly” (*yinqin shenqing* 殷勤伸請), “reverently request whole-heartedly” (*yixin fengqing* 一心奉請), “invite and request” (*yinqing* 引請), “request with fragrant flowers” (*xianghua qing* 香花請), or, even more humbly “begging” (*qi* 乞). Such a frequent use of the word “request” only signifies the importance of voluntarism from the monastic-to-be. Although a social-historical reading might suggest the feeling of anxiety within the Chinese monastic community in the late imperial China to ward off any accusation from the society for “alluring”

²⁴ Goossaert, *L'anticléricisme En Chine*.

“decent” citizens into monkhood, such an emphasis has rather an individualist implication. If we accept William de Bary’s observation that individualism had burgeoned in the late Ming²⁵, the individualist focus on voluntarism seems to be a Buddhist response institutionalized in the ordination ritual.

The overly emphasized voluntariness does not stop at the act of “requesting.” Rather, it is only the beginning of a collective examination from the community of ordained teachers to attest (*zheng* 證) publicly the “genuineness” of the intention of the request. As Hanyue states clearly, an applicant should “give up falsehood and return to truthfulness; uphold the precepts by relying on teachers.” 舍妄归真 依師稟戒 Here a group of ten ordination masters (*shishi* 十師) were introduced as following the stipulation in the *Dharmagupta Vinaya*.

Although this rule has been clearly articulated in the translated rules, its importance could be easily overshadowed by the official adoption of the ordination ritual by the government. Prior to the invention of the Triple Platform ceremony, the ordination ceremony is tightly controlled by the government for both political and economic reasons. Politically, the court would exercise control over monastic affairs to avoid any subversive efforts. Economically, in times of need, the court would charge fees as a means to raise fund for spending purposes. As I have explained previously, the closedown of the ordination platform by the government was one of the primary reasons for Chinese Buddhists to invent the Triple Platform Ceremony. The result of this invention is the demand of self-governance and autonomy from the government control, leading to the final abolishing of the official ordination system around 1735 during the Yongzheng period. Here, in the ordination manual, the role of the ten teachers, rather than the government

²⁵ De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism in late Ming thought.”

approval, become the key of the testing process. Therefore, the ordination ceremony was also referred to as “obtaining precepts with proofs and testing” (*zhengming shoujie* 證明受戒).

Ordination Ritual is a public performance including a large group of initiands and teachers through interactions in a ritual arena. The process of attesting is conducted through cross examination and question-answers. The questions are often related to the request for confirming the initiands’ commitment to the Vinaya rules. As a ritual performance, the procedure of carrying out these questions and answers (*wenda* 問答) have been written down and this written version serves as the script for the actual performance. The only information which needs to be supplied is the initiand’s name which can be filled in on the spot. During this process, it is striking to note how many times the teachers asked the initiands to verbally confirm their acceptance of the rules by announcing their names loudly. These are marked in the text as “announce” (*chang* 唱), “say” (*bai* 白), or “annouce your name” 稱自己名字, etc. This is another sign of the emphasis on voluntariness.

This emphasis on voluntariness is thus the transformation of the Chinese Vinaya in early modern and modern times. For Hanyue, the uniqueness is the joint practice of Chan and Vinaya, which is most closely related to Argamben’s idea of “form-of-life” because Hanyue did not want to see that entering the monastic life becomes simply the adoption of a regulated regiment bound by rules. Rather, as an “enlightened” Chan teacher, he wanted to give “life” back to rules. For him, the goal of pursuing Chan enlightenment gives life to the rules.

To sum up, it might not be an exaggeration to observe that Vinaya is Form-of-Life imbued with a sense of enlightenment. For Hanyue, entering the monkhood through the Triple Platform Ceremony is to follow a life of “discipline-as-enlightenment.”

Conclusion

Hanyue Fazang's Ordination Manual is the first systematic explanation of the newly invented Triple Platform Ceremony in the late Ming dynasty and was subsequently adopted in many Buddhist communities. Its publication is at least fifty years ahead of Jianyu Duti's reformation of the ritual, which becomes the standard for Chinese monastic practice in the modern and contemporary period, including both the mainland and Taiwan. Its influence was even spread to Japan with Yinyuan Longqi's arrival in Nagasaki in 1654. The new Ōbaku sect in Japan, led by Chinese monks, vigorously promoted Triple Platform Ceremony in Japan based on Hanyue's manual: an abridged version was published in Japan under the same title *Hongjie fayi*.²⁶ It has to be mentioned that Hanyue's manual even influenced his contemporary Daoist revivalists such as Wang Changyue 王常月 in Nanjing, who reformulated the Daoist ordination

²⁶ Hanyue Fazang's work was reprinted in JXZ no. 397, 37: 735-744. Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 (1592—1673) also wrote a version of the *Hongjie fayi* based on Hanyue's work as *Ritual and Procedure of Spreading the Ordination* 《弘戒法儀》 (one fascicle). It was reprinted in *Zengaku taikai* 禪學大系 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1913), vol. 7, pp. 1-68. For a textual analysis of these two works, see Hasebe Yūkei, "Gukai hōgi," *Min Shin Bukkyō kenkyū shiryō* 明清佛教研究資料 (Nagoya: 1987), pp. 95-100. Hanyue Fazang's *Hongjie fayi* was the first work to outline the procedure for the Triple Platform Ordination Ceremony. For a detailed study of this work and other similar works on the invention of the ordination ceremony in Ming and Qing dynasties, see Hasebe Yūkei, *Min Shin Bukkyō kyōdan shi kenkyū*, pp. 157-68; and Baroni, *Obaku Zen*, pp. 94-98. Hanyue's manual was still popular in the late seventeenth century. See Chaoyuan 超遠 (1688), ed. *Ritual and Procedure of Offering Triple Platform Ordination* 《传授三坛弘戒法儀》 (3 fascicles) X60.

ceremony based on the structure of the Buddhist Triple Platform Ceremony as articulated in Hanyue's manual.²⁷

This paper intends to reevaluate Hanyue's contribution to the creation of the Triple Platform Ceremony. His importance became self-evident when we situate his work in history. More important, perhaps, is the significance of Hanyue's work in the contemporary world when there is the need to reexamine the meaning of Chinese monasticism. Hanyue's work, unlike the other ordination manuals which only provide "dry" descriptions of ritual procedures, adds inspiration to monastic life by injecting the meaning of enlightenment to the mere observance of discipline.

In light of Agamben's humanistic reading of monastic rules, we can see that Hanyue has a vision of the ideal monastic life, which is the unification of disciple and enlightenment, or, at Agamben's suggestion: unification of form and life. It is no doubt that Hanyue is asking a perennial question: what is the life beyond rules? Where to find enlightenment amid discipline? To answer these questions, Hanyue's work has to be read again and again. The study of Hanyue's ordination manual leads to an even broader question: What is the role of Vinaya and Ordination in Chinese Buddhism? The contrast between the number of primary sources and the inadequacy of our understanding of them only shows how important the Vinaya literature should have become. However, efforts remain to be made on developing sound methodology to study these materials. My attempt to transform Vinaya studies into humanistic inquiries might suggest

²⁷ The Daoist Triple Platform Ceremony (*Sancengjie* 三层戒) is also composed of three steps: Precepts of Initial Truth (*Chuzhenjie* 初真戒), Precepts of the Middle Ultimate (*Zhongjijie* 中极戒), Precepts of Heavenly Immortals (*Tianxianjie* 天仙戒). Evidence shows that Wang Changyue was largely influenced by Hanyue Fazang's ordination manual to formulate the Daoism Triple Platform Ceremony. For his influence on the invention of the Daoist Triple Platform Ceremony by Wang Changyue, see Esposito, *Creative Daoism*, p. 173; and *Facets of Qing Daoism*. See also Yuria Mori, "Ō Jōgetsu no sansōkai kōsō."

a new way to look at these “tedious” materials and even shed some new light on the meaning of the monastic life.

Appendix: Procedures of Triple Platform Ceremony according to Hanyue Fazang’s Ordination Manual

I. Lay Precepts

1. Three Refugees for both laymen and lay women 授在家二眾三歸依法儀
2. Investigation Procedures for both lay and ordained people who request five and eight precepts, and the ten precepts for novice ordination 審在家出家求授五戒八戒并求剃度十戒等遮難法儀
3. Procedures of Conferring Five and Eight Precepts for both lay and ordained people 授出家在家五戒八戒法儀
4. Novice Ordination Procedures 沙彌得度法儀

II. Novice Ordination: 沙彌十戒

1. Preliminary investigation procedure before ascending the platform to receive the full ordination 將登壇授具足戒預問難法儀
2. Procedure of Conferring Four Reliance for those who are about to leave the family or to receive the full ordination 或將出家或將授具戒俱應先授四依法儀
3. Procedure of Reporting to the head monk about Novices’ reception of ten precepts before ascending the platform for full ordination 將欲登壇授具先整授沙彌十戒初稟堂頭和尚法儀

- a. Procedure for Publicly Inviting the Teacher 第一明請師法¶
 - b. Procedure for Formally Inviting the Teacher 第二正請師法¶
4. Procedure for dispatching ordination masters (ācārya) to confer ten novice ordination 次差阿闍黎授沙彌十戒法儀
- c. Instruction and Sermon 第三開導¶
 - d. Invitation of the Holy Buddha 第四請聖¶
 - e. Repentance 第五懺悔¶
 - f. Cross-examination 第六問遮難¶
 - g. Taking Refuge 第七皈依
 - h. Conclusion and Return 第八結歸¶
 - i. Lecture on the Characteristics of Precepts 第九說戒相¶
 - j. Listening to Sermons 第十聽教¶

III. Full Ordination 具足戒

5. Procedure of dispatching instructing masters to teach the method of handling robes and bowls before offering the full ordination 將授具足戒先差教授師授持衣教鉢法儀
6. Procedure for encouraging novices before ascending 將登壇授具足戒先策發沙彌法儀
7. Procedure of hearing and cross-examination (jñapticaturtha-karman) before ascending the platform to confer the great monk's full ordination 登壇授大比丘具足戒白四羯磨法儀

- a. Procedure for Publicly Inviting the Teacher 第一明請師法
 - b. Procedure for Formally Inviting the Teacher 第二正請師法
 - c. Procedure for Platform Director's Instruction 第三壇主白法
 - d. Procedure for Settling the Initiands in their own Place 第四安受戒者所在法
 - e. Procedure for Sending the Instructing Teacher 第五差教授師法
 - f. Procedure for the Instructing Teacher to stand outside the assembly and cross-examining the candidates 第六教授師出眾問遮難法
 - g. Procedure for Admitting into the Assembly 第七召入眾法
 - h. Procedure for Requesting the Precepts 第八乞授戒法
 - i. Procedure for Illuminating the Substance of the Precepts 第九明戒體法
 - j. Procedure for Formally Receiving the Precepts 第十正授戒法¶
8. Procedure for ordination masters to teach the methods of routine behaviors 比丘
白四羯磨受具足戒已次當差阿闍黎與說隨相法儀

IV. Bodhisattva Ordination 菩薩戒

- 1. First procedures for teaching various Bodhisattva precepts 說菩薩戒諸法儀開後
- 2. Procedure for dispatching ordination masters to investigate the candidate monks for conferring the Bodhisattva precepts 差阿闍黎審比丘授菩薩大戒法儀
- 3. Procedure for dispatching ordination masters to preach to the ordained to let them contemplate their own mind 將授菩薩大戒先差阿闍黎開導三自歸令參心地法儀

4. Procedure for dispatching ordination masters to investigate the seven severe sins (of the candidates) before conferring the great Bodhisattva precepts 將授菩薩大戒差阿闍黎問七遮法儀
5. Procedure for dispatching ordination masters to guide repentance of sins before conferring the great Bodhisattva precepts 將授菩薩大戒先差阿闍黎開導懺悔法儀
6. Procedure for dispatching ordination masters to teach ascetic practices before conferring the great Bodhisattva precepts 將授菩薩大戒先差阿闍黎開導苦行法儀
7. Procedure for dispatching ordination masters to guide the candidates to make great vows before conferring the great Bodhisattva precepts 將授菩薩大戒先差阿闍黎開導發大誓願法儀
8. Procedure for conferring the great Bodhisattva precepts properly 正授菩薩大戒法儀

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