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Research Article

Family Temples and Religious Learning in Contemporary Japanese Buddhism

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It is well known that in the modern period, the various Buddhist schools in Japan followed the example of the Jōdo Shinshū in adopting clerical marriage and a family inheritance system for the transmission of parish temples. This article highlights the importance of family as the context in which religious professionals are produced in contemporary Japanese Temple Buddhism. I examine how temple sons become resident priests in the Rinzai Zen, Tendai, and the Jōdo Shin schools in order to demonstrate how scholarship that focuses on ordination, taking precepts, and undergoing training at a monastery tends to neglect the less formalized—and less documented—process of young successor-priests acquiring authority and expertise by virtue of their position within the temple family.

Keywords: clerical marriage; Japanese Buddhism; Jōdo Shinshū; temple succession; monastic training

A recent flurry of scholarship (for instance, Clarke, 2014; Sasson, 2013; and Wilson, 2013) has brought long overdue scholarly appreciation to the centrality of family relationships in the Buddhist tradition. Quite often such studies highlight the persistence of the Buddhist monk's identity as son to his parents despite the putative casting off of family ties that comes with ordination. In modern-day Japan, of course, the presence of family in and around Buddhist temples is more visible than in most other countries. It is one of the few places in the Buddhist world where monks may not only have a mother, father, sisters, and brothers, but also a wife and children who live in the temple. At least this is what is usually presumed: in fact, Shayne Clarke's recently published work suggests that in Indian monasteries at the turn of the Common Era, husbands and wives sometimes renounced as a couple, even bringing their children with them to the monastery. Clarke finds in the pages of various *Vinaya* editions a "family-friendly monasticism" that, while long invisible to scholars, may have been just as well accepted as the solitary ascetic ideal described in the *Rhinoceros Horn Sūtra* (Clarke, 2014: 152–3). The revelation that Japan may not be as unique as is commonly thought in this respect represents a moment of opportunity to revisit the scholarship on contemporary Japanese Buddhism, this time viewing it through the lens of family.

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This article will explore one particular component of Japan's family temple system: the education and training of young Buddhist priests (primarily temple sons) within the clerical family.[1] Drawing on research by Stephen G. Covell and Jørn Borup on life in contemporary Tendai and Rinzai temples, respectively, and my own fieldwork among Jōdo Shinshū temple families,[2] I analyze the process by which a temple son becomes a temple's resident priest or *jūshoku* in these three schools of Buddhism, which collectively possess somewhere around 26,000 parish temples across Japan. While scholars tend to assume that religious training takes place at a central location such as a monastery or another educational facility, by shifting our focus to the family as the context in which religious professionals are produced in contemporary Japanese Buddhism, a very different kind of learning process comes into view.

I. Background: The Normalization of Clerical Marriage in Japan

While Buddhist monasticism in ancient India may not have been exactly the family trade it eventually became in Japan, Shayne Clarke has shown that family ties were often not perfectly severed when a monk entered a monastery. Indeed, an entire chapter of his book is devoted to the analysis of *Vinaya* passages concerning "monastic motherhood," highlighting evidence that nuns were sometimes permitted to raise their biological children in the monastery (2014: 120). We can say with some certainty, then, that there were families of various sorts inhabiting Indian monasteries at the time the *Vinaya*s were compiled.[3]

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[1] A few notes on translation and word choice are necessary here. First, because of the shift to a married clergy in Japan, I will for the remainder of the article use the English translation "priest" to translate the Japanese *sōryo* (often rendered "monk"). I use the phrase "resident priest" for the administrative position of *jūshoku*, which a *sōryo* who has obtained certain additional credentials may inhabit. Finally, although I refer to temple sons as the presumed successors to family temples in Japan, is also possible for a *jūshoku*'s daughter to inherit the temple in all of the schools of Japanese Buddhism. Certainly, the dynamics of succession and training in the case of those roughly 3 percent of *jūshoku* in the Tendai, Rinzai, and Jōdo Shinshū who are female call for their own book-length study (statistics from Covell, 2005: 130). However, because the transmission of the *jūshoku* position to a son or son-in-law remains the preferred model of inheritance, I will for simplicity's sake use only the male pronoun and male examples in my discussion here of temple succession.

[2] I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Japan from March 2009 to July 2011. During this time I interviewed members of sixty different temple families, primarily temple women (the wives, daughters, mothers and mothers-in-law of resident priests), and conducted participant observation at temples in Kyoto, Osaka, Shiga Prefecture, Mie Prefecture, Niigata Prefecture, and various parts of Kyushu.

[3] While the dating of the composition of the *Vinaya*s is problematic, Clarke draws from all six extant monastic codes (Dharmaguptaka, Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda) and supposes that they most likely came into existence "in the first few centuries of the Common Era," give or take a few centuries (2014: 18–21). This is, at present, the oldest reliable vision of Buddhist monasticism that scholars can access.

In Japan, as in India, family has never been completely out of the picture of Buddhist monasticism. Although there is a tendency to view the temple inheritance system as if it were a uniquely modern development, in fact the Buddhist priesthood was in many cases conceived of as a "family trade" in premodern Japan. As Nishiguchi Junko (1987) has shown, examples of the transmission of temples and teaching lineages along hereditary lines can readily be found in the Nara period (710–794). Lori Meeks has concluded that in medieval Japan, what distinguished a respected priest was not the observance of celibacy, but rather the "accumulation and exercise of technical knowledge associated with the work of the priesthood—technical knowledge that, like other forms of knowledge in premodern Japan, was typically passed down within the family" (2013: 271). Although Meeks is describing the situation of scholar-priests in the medieval and early modern periods, her observation might well apply to the family trade of the contemporary Japanese priesthood.

The complete normalization of clerical marriage and temple inheritance in Japan took place in the Meiji period (1868–1912). Richard Jaffe (2001) and Pham Thi Thu Giang (2011) have detailed the course of the public debate on priestly marriage during this period. In the wake of the Meiji state's 1872 elimination of the law penalizing the transgression of Buddhist precepts, Buddhist leaders variously responded with conservative zeal to return to stricter observation of the precepts, despair at the lax clerical behavior that would inevitably result from such deregulation, and positive justifications on various grounds for the adoption of a married clergy. By the turn of the twentieth century, all the Buddhist schools had resigned to officially permitting priests to marry. However, in all but the Jōdo Shinshū, the fact of monks marrying, eating meat, and sometimes not maintaining a clean-shaved head has proven an inconvenient truth for Buddhist officials and resulted in a bifurcation of the standards for priestly authenticity.

In his 2005 study of contemporary Tendai temples, Stephen G. Covell identified two competing models for priestly authenticity in Japanese Buddhism today. The first is that of the world-renouncing religious virtuoso. This standard requires that priests be free of political and economic entanglements, devoting themselves full time to the pursuit of enlightenment and the practice of "true Buddhism" through meditation and precept observance (Covell, 2005: 89). This ideal type is most vividly embodied by those few ascetics in Japan who, for instance, successfully complete the grueling *kaigyōhō* walking circuit around Mt. Hiei in Kyoto (Covell, 2004; and 2005: 78). Performing funerals and memorial services, which is in fact the major occupation of parish temple priests in Japan, tends to be seen as a degradation of the ideal vocation of the Buddhist monk.

The second model of priestly authenticity that Covell discusses is that of the family man and ritual specialist. This type is embodied by the resident priest or *jūshoku* of the local parish temple (*dankadera*), who ritually cares for parishioners' deceased ancestors and passes on the leadership of the temple to his son. While in reality priests who conform to this image are far more numerous than the elite monks noted above, married temple priests are still haunted by the persistence of the ascetic ideal. Covell notes that contemporary Tendai priests are confronted with the negative and widespread "image of a funeral Buddhism whose priests are seen as funeral ritual specialists. The ritual specialist image is not easily overcome, for even as the mass media and scholars

portrayed it negatively, it is in demand by those who support the temple—the [parishioners]" (2005: 89). As we shall see, temple parishioners not only demand ritual services such as funerals, but they also expect the resident priest's son to succeed him as priest. At the same time, laypeople often view contemporary priests with some cynicism because of their non-monastic lifestyles. In this they are joined by much of the scholarly world and monks in many other Buddhist countries.

One Japanese Buddhist tradition, however, long ago abandoned the rhetoric of "home-leaving" (in Japanese, *shukke*). Clerical marriage in the Jōdo Shinshū dates back to the founder Shinran (1173–1263), and as a result temple inheritance along patrilineal lines has been the norm in this tradition for several centuries. The competing ideals for clerics as both world-renouncers and family men is less pronounced, and the sense of hypocrisy or illegitimacy that haunts priests in the monastic schools is felt less keenly by priests in the Jōdo Shinshū.[4] While Covell excludes the Jōdo Shinshū from his analysis because of his focus on the conflict between Buddhism as a world-renouncing religion and the very worldly lives of its priests (2005: 7–8), I would like to reintegrate the Jōdo Shinshū into the discussion of so-called "Temple Buddhism." This very useful category was introduced by Covell in his 2005 book to address the form of Buddhism found at the vast majority of parish temples in Japan, which share a similar operational framework and a common set of concerns despite differences in doctrinal teachings and sectarian affiliation. In particular, by unthreading the various elements of the transmission of priestly knowledge and authority in Japan in fact rather than in theory, we will be able to see important similarities between the Jōdo Shinshū and the non-Shin sects. Phenomena such as mentoring within the family may occur off the radar of most studies of Buddhism, particularly those that take a top-down approach by focusing on centralized institutions and prescriptive texts; it nonetheless represents an important medium for transmitting religious authority in Japanese temples.

II. A Young Successor in the Jōdo Shinshū

In the Jōdo Shinshū, as in the other Japanese Buddhist schools, local custom is for the abbacy of small temples to pass from father to son or some other (preferably male) family member. A 2009 survey by the Honganji branch of the Jōdo Shinshū found that 86.7 percent of current *jūshoku* were related either by blood, marriage, or adoption to the previous *jūshoku*.[5] In fact, patrilineal inheritance is the normative model for succession

[4] Certainly, clerics from the non-Shin schools were known to level charges of hypocrisy and illegitimacy at priests of the Jōdo Shinshū before they themselves abandoned the practice of celibacy. On criticisms of Shin priests by non-Shin clerics during the Tokugawa period, see Jaffe (2001). Even today, it has been pointed out that many laypeople in Japan do not know *which* Buddhist sect their family belongs to, so it is likely that Shin Buddhist priests may still be measured against popular media images of the "ideal" monk as solitary ascetic, no less than priests in the traditionally monastic sects. I would like to thank Daniel Friedrich for this insight.

[5] These were primarily first-born sons but also included a daughter (2.2 percent), a second- or third-born son (11.3 percent), and an adopted son or the spouse of one of his children (collectively, 14.9 percent). Dai kyū kai shūsei kihon chōsa jisshi sentā, 2010: 15.

in the Jōdo Shinshū: the headquarters of most branches of the Jōdo Shinshū recommend temple bylaws that require the *jūshoku* to have the same surname as his predecessor.[6] Even in the Shinshū, however, in order to register as the *jūshoku* of one's temple with the sect's headquarters, an official licensure is required.

Unlike the relatively strenuous initiations required by the Rinzai Zen and Tendai schools, discussed below, the Shinshū requires neither the taking of monastic precepts (*kai*) nor the completion of monastic training (*shugyō*) in order to become a resident priest of a temple. The process varies slightly according to the branch (*ha*) to which one's parish temple belongs. Basic ordination (*tokudo*) is required to register with the sect as a priest (*sōryo*) and marks the ritualized start of one's path to becoming a professional cleric. In the Ōtani branch, the basic ordination may be taken by temple children as young as nine years old after completing a one-day study session and exam at their local district office followed by a ceremony at the head temple in Kyoto. This brief instruction is rather perfunctory, and is certainly not enough training to fully prepare one to be a religious professional. I attended two ordination ceremonies at Higashi Honganji during my fieldwork, and I was told by one official who was my guide that if a boy were in line to inherit his family's temple, he would "not be allowed to fail" the exam—in other words, he would be pushed through. The second step in the process of becoming a qualified *jūshoku* is to attain one's *kyōshi* or religious instructor degree. This can be done by taking an exam while attending a sectarian university, or by taking a one- to three-year commuter or correspondence course at one of the sect's administrative offices (*betsuin*) or seminaries (*gakuin*). Finally, when the successor is ready to take over the post of resident priest from his father, his home temple holds a small ceremony through which he is officially installed as the new *jūshoku*.

In the other major branch of the Jōdo Shinshū, the Honganji-ha, the process is very similar, although the training retreat for the *tokudo* ordination is slightly longer (ten days) and initiates have to be somewhat older to take it (fifteen years old, rather than nine). The relative unimportance of centralized training and credentials in the case of recognized temple successors, who have learned the ropes of the temple somewhat unconsciously throughout their childhood, is evident in the story of one of my informants, whom I shall call Ryūichi.

Ryūichi is a thirty-three-year-old civil servant and an ordained Shinshū priest in line to inherit his family's temple. Although my research at that time focused on the role of temple wives, I was introduced to Ryūichi in 2010 through his wife Mari, whom I interviewed a number of times over the course of my fieldwork, and who invited me to dinner with her and husband so that I could hear about his upbringing in more detail. Over *sake* and appetizers at a cavernous Kyoto pub, Ryūichi filled me in on his path to the Buddhist priesthood. He and Mari had met at university in Tokyo and had moved to Kyoto shortly after getting married in their late twenties. When I knew them in Kyoto, they were both working at secular jobs and enjoying their distance from Ryūichi's family's temple until it came time for him to take over as *jūshoku*.

[6] Each individual temple has the ability to amend their own bylaws with the majority vote of the *sekinin yakuin* or responsible officers of the temple.

Ryūichi's mother had been one of three girls born into a temple family in Shikoku; they had no brothers. Their father, Ryūichi's grandfather, was extraordinarily fervent in his faith and strict, if idiosyncratic, in his running of the temple. His mother developed a distaste for the harsh temple lifestyle of early rising, endless cleaning, and a public existence that was under constant scrutiny by parishioners. She married someone outside of the temple world (a "salaryman" or company worker), and had no plans to become a temple wife. However, her father eventually began to look ahead to his retirement, and started pressing his three daughters, who all had children, to provide him with a successor for the temple. A conversation was held among Ryūichi's mother and his aunts and uncles, and Ryūichi himself decided he would volunteer to take responsibility for the temple. He was eleven years old.

In high school, Ryūichi traveled to Kyoto for what he called a summer "field trip" (*shūgaku ryokō*) for young temple successors. This administration of the initial ordination or *tokudo* training retreat was scheduled in August, during school vacation, specifically for boys who were in line to inherit their family's temple. This was Ryūichi's first time studying doctrine or ritual outside of his home, and it lasted for ten hot days. He was instructed in proper chanting techniques and the basics of Jōdo Shinshū beliefs and history. His primary memory of that training, however, is of being bussed around along with the other fifteen-year-old temple sons to the major landmarks of Jōdo Shinshū history: Mt. Hiei, where the founder Shinran trained as a young monk; the temple in southeast Kyoto where Shinran's remains are said to be housed; and Rokkakudō Temple, where Shinran received his legendary dream revelation from Prince Shōtoku/Kannon (Avalokiteśvara). During the ten days of training at Nishi Honganji's retreat temple southwest of Kyoto, Ryūichi and his classmates complained to each other about the excruciatingly hot weather and the extended periods of *seiza* (sitting on one's knees) during their ritual practice.

When it came time for Ryūichi to pick a college, he decided he wanted to explore the world beyond the Shinshū by attending a college that was not affiliated with his sect. His grandfather strongly wished for him to go to Ryūkoku University, as he had done. Instead, Ryūichi opted to go to an elite Tokyo university and study Buddhism there. Ryūichi went on to obtain his master's degree in Buddhist Studies. It is noteworthy that in Japan Buddhist Studies is distinct from Shin Buddhist Studies, which focuses on sectarian doctrine and history, and would be a more common major for temple successors in this sect. Ryūichi is theoretically minded, interested in Buddhist logic and doctrine, and detests performing rituals.

Nonetheless, destined for the priesthood, he made an effort to attend evening classes at his sect's branch seminary in Tokyo (Tokyo Bukkyō Gakuin). Ultimately it was too much to juggle with his graduate work, and he quit. He nonetheless took the exam to receive his *kyōshi* (religious instructor) degree, which he needed in order to be installed as his family temple's resident priest (*jūshoku*) after his grandfather retired. Ryūichi remained in Tokyo throughout his 20s, flying back to his family temple once a month to assist with rituals. This middle period of a successor-priest's career usually resembles an internship, and sometimes the handover of temple duties is carried out gradually depending on the father's health and the son's availability.

Ryūichi recalls that much of his on-the-job training took place when he was living in the temple as a teenager, a time that he agrees functioned much like an internship. He learned about the basic Buddhist teachings, the execution of rituals, and the daily running of the temple. Assessing the knowledge he gained from his time at the training retreat, Ryūichi believes that he learned more there about priestly comportment (how to wear his robes, the correct posture to assume when performing rituals), chanting technique, and bureaucratic issues like temple bylaws and the legal status of Buddhist temples in Japan. Everything else he learned from his grandfather and mother at his home temple.

In the meantime, Ryūichi's father, despite having no background in temple work, volunteered to take ordination so that he could assist his father-in-law, who was beginning to show signs of infirmity. He spent one intense year at Chūō Bukkyō Gakuin, the Honganji branch's main seminary in Kyoto, to catch up on the religious learning he missed by not having grown up in a temple. Ryūichi says that his father was a much more serious student at seminary, and is a much more skilled ritual performer, than he himself is. Ryūichi's mother also has her initial ordination (*tokudo*), which allows her to help with daily temple work and performing *omairi*, the monthly service performed at each parishioner's home altar. Ryūichi continues to visit Shikoku one weekend a month to help as well; as long as his father and mother are still healthy and available to help, however, he is free to continue to live in Kyoto, where he has a full-time job as a civil servant.

Of his family's cooperation in managing temple duties, Ryūichi explains that "it's like team baseball." To understand the true degree to which running a temple is a family affair, we must also include Ryūichi's wife in the picture. Mari is, like Ryūichi's father, from a lay family, and never had personal aspirations to the priesthood. Nonetheless, she has become ordained because she felt she needed some kind of formal preparation to be qualified to perform the role of a temple wife, and potentially serve as a back-up priest for her husband. Even after a year of study at the Kyoto seminary, however, Mari remains nervous about potentially having to fill in for her husband. She has not had to perform a ritual on her own yet, and has always been accompanied by her husband when she visits his family temple in Shikoku. When she expresses this concern to me at dinner, her husband assures her: "It's okay, you can just look it up if you don't know something [about how to perform the liturgy]." His words are spoken with the easy confidence of someone with the inherited authority of the male successor's body. He clearly also does not sweat too much over the performance quality himself: Mari volunteers the opinion—and her husband quickly agrees with her—that she is actually superior to her husband at Buddhist chanting (*shōmyō*).

A young successor in the Jōdo Shinshū thus in some respects possesses the credentials of a *jūshoku* just by virtue of being the eldest son, regardless of whether he has received centralized training. If the current *jūshoku* passes away or becomes unable to perform his duties before the successor (or the temple wife) can complete their training, it is not uncommon for one of these family members to take over right away and attend to the matter of their ordination when time allows. Ryūichi witnessed this first-hand at his own *tokudo* training in 1995: it was not long after the Great Hanshin earthquake, so there were

a number of younger successors from temples in the Kobe area whose fathers had died in the disaster. These young boys had to be prepared to quickly take over their family's temple. In theory, an initiate must be fifteen years old to receive *tokudo*, but an exception is written into the sect's bylaws for successors whose fathers pass away before they have reached this age. Ryūichi observed that the requirements for the younger boys at the retreat were considerably lighter than those for the older boys; this is consistent with the information I have received from Honganji officials who are in charge of administering training for young temple successors. The continuity of local temple operations is clearly prioritized over formal learning.

Ryūichi's story reveals, among other things, that the training provided by the sect operates differently for presumed temple successors than for those who come from lay families. Training is a much more significant source of knowledge and technical skills for those who come from lay families (*zaike shusshin*) than it is for temple successors. The implicit importance of a temple upbringing as the foundation of a priestly education becomes apparent when viewed from the perspective of these outsiders. Ryūichi's wife, for instance, despite having equal credentials and *more* formal training than her husband, feels unprepared and uncertain about acting as a priest. Her husband has no concern about his ritual performance, even though he knows it is lacking. Another laywoman I interviewed who had married a temple successor complained that her own husband was unable to explain anything to her about Buddhism: "It is so natural to him, he cannot understand what a layperson might not already know." It is, in a word, ingrained.

In a follow-up email to me about his experience of learning to become a priest, Ryūichi reflected on how one becomes a *jūshoku*:

> There are numerous paths to receiving the training and *kyōshi* degree that allow you to become a *jūshoku* in my sect. Some of these paths are easier than others, and I imagine the quality of the priests who take these paths are all over the map, as well. However, it isn't the case that getting your credentials to be a priest is the end of the path. It's actually just the starting point.

Ryūichi goes on to emphasize that the will to improve and learn from experience is what is necessary to become a "good" *jūshoku*; in his view, this all depends on a person's character. Presumably Ryūichi focuses on internal qualifications like character and devotion to the job because the external qualifications are, for him, already in the bag. For temple successors, there is no possibility of being unqualified—rather, the choice is between trying to be a good priest, or not.

It may be difficult for Ryūichi to see what is more evident to his father and wife, who both come from lay families. These married-in members of the temple family have experienced acutely the need to obtain the recognition of the temple's lay parishioners in order for them to embody priestly authority.This means having personal familiarity with the lay community, visually conforming to their expectations of who their successor-priest should be, and having expertise regarding how things are done at that particular temple. These things are all handed down within the temple family and

can sometimes be obtained through hard work by newcomers who join the temple family through marriage. They are difficult, if not impossible, to acquire by attending a central training facility like a seminary.

III. Religious Learning and Priestly Authenticity in the Traditionally Monastic Schools

Because clerical marriage and temple inheritance is now universal at parish temples in Japan, the local definition of an authentic *jūshoku* is bound to be very similar across all of the different sects: parishioners simply expect their local temple to be passed from father to son. So as not to overwhelm the reader with data from the myriad Buddhist denominations that exist in Japan today, I focus here on the two traditions that feature in book-length English studies: the Myōshinji branch of the Rinzai Zen school (Borup, 2008), and the Tendai school (Covell, 2005). My examination of these two schools will necessarily be somewhat skeletal, but I wish to include them in order to pave the way for further studies that analyze the Jōdo Shinshū alongside the traditionally monastic schools of Temple Buddhism.

Jørn Borup notes that in the Myōshinji branch of Rinzai Zen, 73 percent of parishioners expect their resident priest to marry, and that most problems in the transmission and assertion of authority occur when someone outside of the temple family assumes the resident priest position (2012: 119–121). In his study of the Tendai, Covell finds that roughly "74 percent of male priests are from temple households ... [and] virtually all economically viable temples are passed on from father to son and are not open to competition" (2005: 82). Although the Tendai administration has made rigorous efforts to recruit "fresh blood" in the form of priests who were not born into a temple, Covell notes the difficulties these lay-born priests face in finding a religious teacher and, ultimately, a professional post. All of these indicators point to the momentum of the family temple system in transmitting authority from one generation of priests to the next.

Nonetheless, there are several centralized measures of clerical authority that function alongside the local identity of young priests as successors to their fathers. These include two levels of ordination, taking the bodhisattva precepts, and undergoing *shugyō*, or religious training at the monastery. In the Zen tradition, receiving the dharma transmission from one's teacher is also stressed. To understand how these elements of religious authority operate in the context of the family temple system, it is helpful to ask how young priests acquire, in Bourdieuian terms, the "disposition"—the "knowledge, abilities, tastes, and credentials" (Bourdieu, cited in Verter, 2003)—of a religious professional.

Precepts are not a part of the Jōdo Shinshū ordination ceremony that my informant Ryūichi underwent, but monks in the Rinzai Zen and Tendai receive the bodhisattva precepts. These were introduced to Japan in the ninth century by the Tendai school's founder Saichō (767–822) and have their origins in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* (Groner, 2000; 2014). After Saichō, influential Japanese Buddhists have continued to interpret the

precepts in innovative ways (Groner, 1990; Bodiford, 2005). William Bodiford summarizes this hermeneutic as follows:

> As a result of the establishment of separate Tendai ordinations based on these lay-oriented precepts, most ordained members of the Buddhist order in Japan were freed from having to observe the vinaya rules previously associated with monks and nuns ... On the other hand, while precepts declined in status as codes governing moral behavior, their importance as an abstract concept grew to an almost absolute degree ... Each of the individual bodhisattva precepts was (and is) conceived of as expressing a singular Buddha precept that transcends all distinctions ... Recast in these terms, this precept embodies awakening realized in one's own present body, in one's own present circumstances. This view of the precept is summed up in the phrase "Precept is the vehicle of salvation." (Bodiford, 2005: 186-8)

Japanese Buddhist institutions today continue to embrace this meaning of precepts as soteriologically instrumental—as "vehicles of salvation." Far from being seen as vows meant to literally govern monks' behavior, ordination and the bestowal of the bodhisattva precepts are depicted as being a spiritual "starting point" for initiates' continued deepening Buddhist awareness (Covell, 2005: 77; Borup, 2012: 118).

After taking the tonsure, new priests in the traditionally monastic schools must undergo varying degrees of *shugyō*, depending on what priestly rank is being sought or what rank of temple one is seeking to take over.[7] Borup sees the *jūshoku* as being defined as a religious professional because "he reads, understands and controls the sacred texts to which only academics and the educated clergy have access, and in conducting the correct performances of rituals, his power of being an orthodox mediator to the other world makes him a living signifier of institutional power" (2008: 65–66). In this sense, the doctrinal knowledge and liturgical skills a temple son acquires at the monastery endorse his authority as a conveyor of the Buddhist teachings and performer of its rituals upon his return to his home temple. Borup also suggests that young monks' time in a monastery fulfills the characteristics of Victor Turner's notion of "liminality," changing their status from novice to professional priest as they reintegrate into the local temple community. However, he stops short of providing ethnographic detail as to the quality of this change in status, and how important, in practical terms, the young monk's time at the monastery really is.

Taking a more local view would help to highlight the continuity of the young priest's identity as successor as well as the instrumentality of his family in his lifelong process of learning about Buddhist teachings and ritual procedures, both before and after he takes initial ordination and completes training at the monastery. The de facto clerical identity of a temple son from the time he is young is manifest in many ways. The eldest son of a temple family is often referred to by parishioners as "successor" (*atotsugi*) or "little priest" (*kozō*), regardless of his ordination status. Jørn Borup notes that along with *kozō* and *hinasō* (another term for "little monk") the term *gakuto* is often used in Rinzai Zen to

[7] For more detail, see Borup 2008.

refer to temple sons. Technically the term in the Rinzai Zen context denotes "a person who has received the robe and bowl and a Buddhist name from his preceptor, having the rank below *shuzashoku*," but in the social context of family temples the boy's identity as a likely successor seems to serve the same function as the transferring of the robes and bowl: Borup explains that "in practice the status is often used as a designation for the temple son in general" (2008: 123–4).

In official terms, temple sons frequently become their fathers' "disciples" (*deshi*)—this is true of at least half of Myōshinji priests and roughly two-thirds of priests in the Tendai (Borup, 2012: 59–60; Covell, 2005: 91). Unofficially, the tendency for fathers to mentor sons is even more universal. Covell notes that in Tendai temples "training starts young," with sons shadowing their fathers from late elementary school (2005: 83). Standards for ritual performance are often quite localized, and the instruction he receives from his father would likely be almost as important as that which he receives at the monastery or in his university classes.

It would be useful to have more details about family mentoring in the local temples of these traditionally monastic sects. What religious knowledge is transmitted from father to son, or from mother to son? *How* is it transmitted? Further ethnographic fieldwork in these traditionally monastic Buddhist traditions would certainly yield fascinating insights, and Mark Rowe's forthcoming work on the non-eminent monks and nuns of Temple Buddhism should illuminate some of these issues. It is likely that a young priest acquires the "knowledge, abilities, tastes, and credentials" of a Buddhist cleric as much by virtue of growing up as his father's son as he does by studying in college or at the monastery.

IV. Conclusion: Family Connections as *Innen*

The image of the idealized journey of a young man from layman to monk is easy to conjure: experiencing the transitory quality of worldly life, he awakens to the truth of the Buddhist teachings and "leaves home," taking the tonsure and devoting himself to a life of full-time Buddhist practice. Shayne Clarke notes that scholars have long been dazzled by the image of the solitary ascetic (wandering lonely as the proverbial rhinoceros horn) and have tended to look no further than this for the ideal type of Buddhist monastic. As Covell has shown, today's Japanese clerics are haunted by the uncomfortable dissonance between their own lifestyle and that of the idealized ascetic.

And yet, scholars of earlier periods in Japanese—and even Indian—Buddhist history are beginning to highlight the presence and importance of family in the life of a Buddhist priest. Among the many things that must be rethought in light of Japan's family-friendly monasticism is the process by which the individual practitioners attain Buddhist faith and the will to enlightenment (*bodaishin*). Surely, in Buddhism of all traditions we should look to karmic causes and conditions (*innen*) as the explanation for such attainment. Based on the above evidence, it would appear that the karmic conditions that give rise to Buddhist faith for most contemporary priests is the fact of their growing up in a temple family. With 74 percent of male priests in the Tendai having been born into temple

families, it seems inconceivable that the idealized sense of the Buddhist priesthood as a calling "beginning with the will to enlightenment (*bodaishin*)" could exist apart from the connection to Buddhism that a temple son has from the day he is born (Covell, 2005: 78, 82). Most young priests in all of the Buddhist schools initially undertake ordination out of a sense of duty they feel to their family and to the temple's parishioners, and the obligation to "protect the temple" (*otera o mamoru*). Covell summarizes his informants' journeys as follows: "They entered the priesthood out of duty to their parents. However, after serving as a priest for a time, and much reflection, they found faith (*shinkō*)" (ibid.: 83). In terms of occasioning the attainment of Buddhist faith, it seems clear that a monk's familial connection to the temple is as efficacious as the ordination ceremony, the taking of precepts, or time spent in the monastery.

In Japan, priestly ideals in the twentieth century have largely taken two forms: that of the renunciant religious virtuoso and that of the funeral performer and family man, the *jūshoku* of the local parish temple. As I have shown, the tension between these two ideals is in some ways a conflict between more universal concepts of clerical authenticity ("Who should be called a Buddhist monk?") and the localized definitions of who ought to be the priest of the temple in that community ("Who should be our *jūshoku*?"). The answer to the first question would likely require the observance of the Buddhist precepts, or at the very least the completion of a regimen of meditation, austerity, and study at a monastery. The answer to the second question, on the other hand, is almost sure to be, "The son of the previous *jūshoku*."

For these and other reasons, the case of family-transmitted temples in Japanese Buddhism calls for us to reconsider at what moment an individual actually becomes a religious professional, and by what means he acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and authority. It may well be that the position most crucial to endowing the priest with religious authority and faith is not his position vis-à-vis the central institution, but rather his position as a member of the temple family. To understand the dynamics of religious learning and the transfer of authority from father to son in the local context of the parish temple community, a more deliberate focus on the importance of family relationships is clearly needed.

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