

The Imperial Law and the Buddhist Law

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*Buddhism has often been regarded in purely intellectual or spiritual terms. However, especially in its institutional dimensions, Buddhism like other religious traditions has been closely associated with political authority, and to ignore this is to distort its history. To begin redressing scholarly neglect of this subject, the late Kuroda Toshio explores in this article the paired concepts of the *ōbō* (imperial law) and the *buppō* (Buddhist law) as an interpretive framework for investigating Buddhism's political role in the Japanese historical context. The doctrine of the mutual dependence of the imperial law and the Buddhist law (*ōbō buppō sōiron*) emerged toward the latter part of the eleventh century, in connection with the development of the estate system (*shōen seido*) of land tenure. As powerful landholders, the major temple-shrine complexes of Japan's early medieval period constituted a political force that periodically challenged the authority of the emperor, the court, and the leading warrior houses, but on the other hand cooperated with these influential parties in a system of shared rule. This system actively involved Buddhist institutions in maintenance of the status quo and was criticized in various ways by the leaders of the Kamakura new Buddhist movements, who asserted that the *buppō* should transcend worldly authority. However, such criticisms were never fully implemented, and after the medieval period, Buddhism came increasingly under the domination of central governing powers. The relationship of Buddhism to political authority is a troubling problem in Japanese history and remains unresolved to this day.*

BUDDHISM HAS BEEN REGARDED by the world at large as, by nature, of a dimension apart from government authority, transcending politics and divorced from power. For that reason, when one investigates the

* This article is a translation of KURODA Toshio's "Ōbō to buppō" (1983, pp. 8-22; 1994, pp. 185-96. [Translator's note: I have followed Neil McMULLIN (1984) in translating the key terms in this essay, *ōbō* and *buppō*, as "imperial law" and "Buddhist law," respectively. All footnotes have been provided by the translator. Subheaders have been added by the editors.]

relationship of Buddhism to political power in the past, there are those who frown on such endeavors as pointlessly exposing the faults of a misguided few, or as arbitrarily judging Buddhism in purely political terms. Such critics are of course at liberty to think of Buddhism in this apolitical fashion. However, like virtually all other religions, Buddhism over its long history has in various forms cooperated and negotiated with political power. Even today, there are some who assert that it should be actively joined to politics. Generally speaking, Buddhism's relationship with political power occupies an important part of its history that cannot be overlooked. The very attitude whereby one would avoid touching on this relationship may even be seen as one of the particular forms that this relationship takes.

In my view, apart from a very few individuals, the problem of Buddhism's relation to political power has on the whole not been properly addressed in modern Japan, either by the Buddhists themselves or by scholars of Buddhist history, and research in this area lags seriously behind. If anything, people seem to have thought it prudent to avoid straightforward acknowledgement of political power and thus compromise with its authority, ultimately endorsing the political system. As a result we still lack sound guidelines in research and methodology, such as the modern separation of church and state or the notion of religious freedom, for analyzing the relationship between Buddhism and political power, especially in the Japanese historical context. The theme that I propose here, that of "the imperial law (*ōbō* 王法) and the Buddhist law (*buppō* 仏法)," is in response to the problem that such guidelines are not yet firmly established.

When Buddhism began with Śākyamuni's attainment of the Way it was, needless to say, independent of all worldly authority. However, during the centuries from the emergence of early Buddhism until the development of Mahāyāna, Indian Buddhists held a well-defined position with regard to political power and to the state. An image of the ideal state was in fact repeatedly elucidated. Simply stated, this ideal regarded the people or land as central to the state; stressed the performance of rites for banishing disasters from the country; and, as for the ruler, extolled the mythical wheel-turning sage-king who pacifies the country through the spread of the Buddha-dharma—myths that some say were modeled on King Aśoka. In short, fundamental to the ideal were the protection of the people and the land from disaster and the governing of the country through the True Dharma. But even though this concept of the state was set forth, no prayers were offered for the sovereign or ruler. Such, one can say, were the characteristics of Indian Buddhism's attitude toward the state.

However, after Buddhism was transmitted to China, it underwent notable changes. Chinese Buddhism had its inception in the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, but its great development occurred from the time of Wen-ti of the Sui, during the Sui, T'ang and Sung dynasties. The T'ien-t'ai school, Fa-hsiang school, Hua-yen school, esoteric teachings, Pure Land teachings, and the Ch'an school all flourished, displaying distinctively Chinese characteristics. As for Buddhism's relation to the state: state, or rather imperial, protection and control of Buddhism were conspicuous, while, on the Buddhist side, one notes corresponding ideas of protection of the nation, in the sense that prayers were offered for the imperial power to flourish. When sutras were translated into Chinese they were often altered or expanded to reflect this emphasis. A number of apocryphal scriptures dealing with nation-protection, such as the *Chin-kuang-mei ching* 金光明經 [Sutra of golden light], were also produced in China. All this represents, so to speak, Buddhism's mode of adaptation to a Chinese context in which a state system was consolidated under the immense unifying power of an absolute ruler. This state-centered orientation was also inherited by and transmitted within the Korean Buddhist tradition.

The Buddhism introduced to ancient Japan was of this Chinese and Korean type. Just as Ritsuryō code, based on the T'ang model, was adopted for political organization, so Buddhism was similarly regarded in the Chinese mode as existing for the sake of the state, meaning the emperor alone. The system of temples and orders of monks and nuns, set up and regulated by the state, were among its prominent characteristics.

However, in the Buddhism of ancient Japan, one also finds the idea of prayers offered for the state in a sense that included, not merely the emperor, but also the land and its people. It is also said that a certain degree of self-governance in routine practices was permitted in the daily life of temples, monks and nuns. In the Heian period, from the time of Saichō and Kūkai on, Buddhism for the sake of the state, i.e., the emperor, was preached on the one hand, but at the same time one also finds many cases of prayers offered for the prosperity of the people. This was the reality behind the expression "protection of the nation" (*chingo kokka* 鎮護国家). One should note that its content was not necessarily the same as that of Chinese Buddhism.

Such, in brief, was Buddhism's prior history, up until it took root on a broad scale in Japan.

The Formation of Japanese Buddhism

Opinions vary as to when a Japanese form of Buddhism actually took shape. Indeed, it is difficult to determine whether there exists something particular that should be termed “Japanese Buddhism,” and if there does, by what standard it should be so defined. For present purposes, let me take a historical overview of how Buddhism took root, not among particular thinkers or a limited ruling elite, but widely among the people of Japan. I believe it is a significant approach to consider the stages through which Buddhism passed in its formation and development in becoming thus broadly grounded.

When viewed in this way, those among the various sects of Japanese Buddhism that presently have the overwhelming numbers of temples and parishioners are those deriving from the so-called new Kamakura Buddhism. Moreover, the new Kamakura Buddhist movements were undeniably formed and developed by the thinking and social practice of Japanese people; thus at first it seems quite reasonable to regard the formation of the new Kamakura Buddhism as the formation of Japanese Buddhism itself, as is often claimed. Yet how far can the thought of the founders of the new Kamakura Buddhism and the principles of their various movements be said to have been realized in actuality? Wasn’t there, rather, some larger element shared in reality as a characteristic common to both old and new forms of Buddhism? On reconsidering the formation of Japanese Buddhism from this standpoint, I think it appropriate to focus first on Heian Buddhism and then consider Kamakura Buddhism as a second stage.

In terms of specific schools, Heian Buddhism was dominated by the two traditions of Tendai and Shingon, but these did not spread in Japan in the same form in which they had been introduced from China. From an overall perspective, Tendai, Shingon, and the Nara schools, as well as yin-yang practices (*onmyōdō* 陰陽道), cults of the kami, and in general all sorts of religious elements, were unified around esotericism to form a greater framework that may be called *kenmitsu Bukkyō* 顯密仏教 (exoteric-esoteric Buddhism), a framework within which they developed. This was the actual structure of Heian Buddhism. Deeply rooted features of Japanese religion such as apotropaic prayers and rituals (*kaji-kitō* 加持祈), the *nenbutsu*, identifications of local kami with Buddhist deities (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合), taboos (*mono-imi* 物忌み), and divination (*uranai* 占い) all continued to develop during this period and also spread among the common people.

This stage lasted a long time, from the early Heian period, around the beginning of the ninth century, through the latter half of the

twelfth century. However, its forms did not fully emerge until the eleventh century, that is, during the period spanning the transition from the Fujiwara regency (967–1068) to the Insei government (1087–1192). At this stage, formalized doctrine concerning the relationship of the state, or political power, and Buddhism defined the “imperial law” (*ōbō*) and the “Buddhist law” (*buppō*) as existing in a relationship of mutual dependence and assistance (*ōbō buppō sōi ron* 王法仏法相依論). Here, as under the Ritsuryō code in earlier times, the role of Buddhism in “protection of the nation” was stressed; Buddhism was even said to be indispensable to the state. For that reason, there is a tendency to view this doctrine as similar in nature to that of the “state Buddhism” that had existed since ancient times. However, it would appear that this was not merely an extension of *kodai* (ancient) Buddhism.

In one sense, discourse about *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence clearly did inherit the presuppositions of *kodai* Buddhism. Fundamentally, however, it took shape on the basis of new historical circumstances. As mentioned above, all religious forms were unified around esotericism into an over-arching framework called *kenmitsu* Buddhism, within which individual Buddhist traditions competed, asserting their distinctive characteristics. This system emerged fully in the eleventh century. It developed in interdependent connection with the maturing of organizations for governing landed estates (*shōen* 莊園). For that reason alone *kenmitsu* Buddhism was profoundly influenced by the order of worldly rule and the organizing principles of political power.

One aspect of such influence can be seen in the theory of *honji sui-jaku* 本地垂迹, which was established during this time. As doctrine, *honji sui-jaku* theory was consistent with Mahāyāna Buddhism, being based on the sophisticated philosophical principle of “origin and trace” found in Tendai thought. In actuality, however, at the time, the term *sui-jaku* was in many cases understood in the sense of lofty powers such as kami and Buddhas descending to specific regions and being locally enshrined. Accordingly, the native deities of each locality came to be regarded as different forms of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, who were themselves inseparable from central ruling authorities.

Another important consideration is that this system took form in conjunction with the emergence of the central, leading temple-shrine complexes (*jisha* 寺社), such as those of Nara and Mt. Hiei, which functioned as one type of social and political force in the system. As seen in the immense authority and power of their monastic warriors (*taishū* 大衆 or *shuto* 衆徒, today known generally by the term *sōhei* 僧兵), and of their shrine functionaries (*jinin* 神人), as well as in their vast estate holdings and branch temples and shrines, major temple-

shrine complexes during this period were a social and political force constituted in opposition to that of the retired emperor, the regental family, and provincial officials, repeatedly engaging them in disputes and even armed warfare. Each of these temple-shrine complexes was an entity capable of rivaling the secular ruling parties—the retired emperor, the regental family, and later, the bakufu. Moreover, these various ruling powers, which on the one hand thus continually confronted and opposed one another, existed on the other hand in a relationship of complementarity, each displaying the particular characteristics of its official functions. These various influential parties as a whole formed the ruling power of the country, a particular characteristic of Japan's medieval times from the Insei period on. Therefore, the *ōbō* actually referred to the system of power represented by the nation's sovereign (the emperor) as well as the various secular parties of influence and to their unified governance, while the *bupppō* denoted nothing less than the major temple-shrine complexes as a social and political force, as well as their activities. In short, *ōbō-bupppō* mutual dependence meant not only that Buddhism served political power but also implied a peculiar adhesion of government and religion in which Buddhism, while constituting a distinctive form of social and political force, entered into the structural principle of the state order as a whole. Such was the basis in actual events of the theory of *ōbō-bupppō* mutual dependence.

Ōbō and Bupppō

In terms of the meaning of the word itself, the *ōbō* refers to worldly authority and order, while the *bupppō* indicates the profound philosophy of Buddhism and the activities of the Buddhist community. Because the *ōbō* and the *bupppō* were said to be in a relationship of mutual aid and dependence, the *ōbō* here denotes, not worldly power as it actually is in all its naked self-interest, but rather a notion of power as it should be, conceptualized in Buddhist terms. On the whole, it is clear that it represents a conception or assertion originating from the side of Buddhism.

Arguments about what positive meaning Buddhism held for the state had been put forth repeatedly since the ancient period, but discussions that pair the *ōbō* and the *bupppō* evidently appear from around the beginning of the eleventh century. The *Kōryō-ji* [*Shitennō-ji*] *goshuin engi* 荒陵寺 (四天王寺) 御手印縁起 [Origin narrative of the *Kōryō-ji* (*Shitennō-ji*), with the regental handprint], attributed to Shōtoku Taishi and said to have been “discovered” in Kankō 4 (1007), contains

the passage:

Therefore, I [Shōtoku] established the constitution in seven-
teen articles as the model of the *ōbō* and promulgated the
teachings that contravene all evils as the pillar and beams of
the *buppō*. (DNBZ 85: 307a)

As can be seen from this passage, the *ōbō* and the *buppō* had probably
emerged as paired concepts by this time.

However, the most clearly formalized expression of the relation
between the two occurs in the *Tōdai-ji ryō Mino no kuni Akanabe shōshi
jūnin tō ge* 東大寺領美濃国茜部莊司住人等解 [Appeal to the landlord,
Tōdai-ji, from the managers and inhabitants of the Akanabe estate in
Mino Province], dated the seventh month of Tengi 1 (1053), which
reads in part:

In the present age, the *ōbō* and the *buppō* correspond like the
two wheels of a cart or the two wings of a bird. If one should
be lacking, then the bird could not fly, nor could the cart run.
Without the Buddhist law, how should the *ōbō* exist? Without
the *ōbō*, how should the *buppō* exist? Accordingly, because the
[Buddhist] law prospers, the *ōbō* flourishes greatly.

(*Heian ibun* 3, no. 702, p. 835b)

Also, in the *Shirakawa hōō kōmon* 白河法皇告文 [Proclamation from the
tensured emperor Shirakawa] addressed to the Iwashimizu Hachiman
Shrine on the seventh month of Hōan 4 (1123), we read:

When one humbly considers the matter, the *ōbō* is such that
the ruler of the country prospers by virtue of what has been
transmitted by the Tathāgata. For this reason, the *buppō*
spreads precisely by protecting the *ōbō*.

(*Heian ibun* 5, no. 1993, p. 1728b)

Here one can see the Indian ideal of the wheel-turning sage-king—in
fact, there are several descriptions from this period that liken the
ruler to this mythical figure. In this context, the *buppō* is not only
placed on the same footing as the *ōbō*; in theory, it is superior.

Such expressions occur in a number of texts. The *Mongaku shijū
gokajō* 文覚四十五箇条 [Mongaku's forty-five articles] of Genryaku 2
(1185) states, "The *buppō* spreads by means of the *ōbō*, and the *ōbō* is
maintained by means of the *buppō*" (DNBZ 83: 258a). The *Kōfuku-ji
sōjō* 興福寺奏状 [Kōfuku-ji petition] of Genkyū 2 (1205) says, "The
buppō and the *ōbō* are like body and mind" (article 9; NST 15: 41). The
Gukanshō 愚管抄 [My foolish views] says, "The *ōbō* and the *buppō* are
like the [two] horns of an ox" (*maki* 5 ["Antoku"], NKBT 86: 250).

And in the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 [Tale of the Heike], we read the same analogy, “The *buppō* and the *ōbō* are like the [two] horns of an ox,” as well as, “It is said that when the *ōbō* comes to an end, the *buppō* will first perish” (NKBT 32: 148, 198). More examples could be cited, but they have largely the same purport.

In the discourse of the *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence, one also finds what might be called transformations and adaptations. Emperor Toba’s proclamation to the Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine in the fourth month of Ten’ei 4 (1113) says,

Our realm is a country where the foundation is sustained by the way of the kami, a land where the Buddha has left his traces. The kami confer their majesty by means of the imperial majesty, and the kami’s radiance increases when drawn forth by the imperial radiance. The kami are not noble in themselves but become so by the virtue of the person. The [Buddhist] teaching does not spread by itself but spreads by virtue of the person. (*Heian ibun* 4, no. 1793, p. 1717b)

This can be understood to mean that the “way of the kami” (Shinto) and the kami themselves are particular expressions and forms, manifested in Japan, of the compassion of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and exist in a relationship of mutual dependence with the emperor, or in other words, “the person,” or the *ōbō*. Article 1 of the *Kantō goseibai shikimoku* 関東御成敗式目 [Kantō formulary of judgments] opens with a passage that conveys the same meaning: “The kami increase their might by virtue of the reverence extended by persons, and persons fulfill their destiny by means of the kami’s virtue” (DNS 5-8, p. 121).

Also worthy of note are the phrases “prosperity of the Buddhist law and the human law” (*buppō ninpō no kōryū* 仏法人法の興隆) and “the flourishing of the Buddhist law and the human law” (*buppō ninpō no hanjō* 仏法人法の繁昌) that occur frequently in documents of the Kamakura period related to such institutions as Mt. Hiei and Mt. Kōya.¹ In his *Musōki* 夢想記, Jien 慈円 (1155–1225) wrote of the sacred imperial regalia:

That which perfectly encompasses their inner enlightenment and outward functions, as well as their naturally endowed merits;

¹ *Ninpō* 人法 may be understood in either the singular or plural, depending on whether it indicates solely the emperor or retired emperor, or a larger group of persons. In some documents it seems to refer to the monks of a particular temple-shrine complex or to the larger community of persons under its governance. In the passage from Jien cited here, it indicates all the persons of Japan. For further discussion of the meanings of *ninpō* in medieval documents, see SATO 1987, pp. 27–34. In many cases, the character *hō* seems to have been added chiefly in order to form a term paralleling *buppō*.

that which governs the country and pacifies the people, banishes disasters and invites good fortune, thus fulfilling the *ninpō* of the land, is the enlightenment of the esoteric doctrines.²

As this passage suggests, to bring about “the governing of the country and the pacifying of its people, the banishing of disasters and the inviting of good fortune” is to “fulfill the *ninpō*.” In other words, the term *ninpō* connotes the regulation and order of secular life. In comparison to the term *ōbō*, which within the Buddhist concept of the state emphasizes the ruler or sovereign, it places greater weight on the people and the land, though it is a concept closely related to the *ōbō*.

In Emperor Shijō’s edict to the Kasuga Shrine in the eighth month of Katei 1 (1235), it is stated, “The prosperity of the *buppō* and of the *ninpō* is due solely to the aid of the kami” (*Tendai zasu ki*, in DNS 5-10, p. 208). The *Kōyasan Kongōzanmai-in sōsō no kotogaki chūshinjō* 高野山金剛三昧院草創事書注進狀, dated the third month of Kōan 4 (1281), says, “Now the *buppō* invariably displays its power by means of the *ninpō*, while the *ninpō* upholds its destiny by means of the *buppō*” (*Kamakura ibun* 19, no. 14269, p. 167a). Here the *buppō*, the *ninpō*, and also the kami are placed in a relationship of mutual dependence. It is of great interest that the discourse of *buppō-ninpō* mutual dependence originated as an expansion or adaptation of the discourse of the mutual dependence of the *ōbō* and the *buppō*.

In this way, the discourse of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence developed from a fundamental pattern to produce various transformed or adapted patterns, but in most cases it was employed as a kind of catchphrase. Behind such usage, however, lay the actual system and thought that allowed it to have currency. While I will not go into detail here, I would like to point out that, as far as I have seen, Jien’s *Gukanshō* should be mentioned as the first work setting forth this thought in a very concrete and systematized fashion.³

Ōbō, Buppō, and Kamakura Buddhism

As indicated above, the discourse of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence originated in the initiative of the Buddhist side, in conjunction with the establishment of the system in which *kenmitsu* Buddhism became

² The *Jichin oshō musō ki* 慈鎮和尚夢想記, reproduced in AKAMATSU 1965, p. 321.

³ For details see “*Gukanshō to Jinnō shōtōki*” in *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō* (KURODA 1975, pp. 219–51), and “*Gukanshō ni okeru seiji to rekishi no ninshiki*” (KURODA 1983, pp. 23–51).

linked to worldly power. The *buppō* in this sense was not confined to the term's abstract or conceptual meaning but in reality indicated a social and political force that possessed vast numbers of temple buildings, landed estates, and branch temples, along with numerous monastic warriors and shrine functionaries, and that did not hesitate to make forcible demands of the court or to engage in armed conflict. *Ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence was related to such actual forces in the system of the state and society. Throughout the medieval period, these temple-shrine complexes maintained their power in relative independence from both aristocratic and warrior governments. Moreover, as indicated by the various examples cited thus far, this system linking *kenmitsu* Buddhism to worldly power and the body of thought underlying it were recognized and upheld not only by the emperor, the court, and the various influential factions among the nobility, but also by the Kamakura bakufu, that is, by the warrior houses. Even up through the time of the Muromachi bakufu, they could not be completely denied. The decisive rejection of this system had to await Nobunaga's burning of Enryaku-ji and Hideyoshi's destruction of Negoro-ji, along with the accompanying massacres. Therefore, along with *kenmitsu* Buddhism, the concept of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence must be said to have occupied a position central to the medieval system of state and religion.

However, it should be noted that from quite early on there were also modes of thinking that were critical of this relationship between the *ōbō* and the *buppō* in both its organizational and intellectual aspects. For example, one can turn to the *hijiri* 聖 (holy men) independent of official monastic establishments, many of whose biographies have been handed down in the form of tales (*setsuwa* 説話) and accounts of those born in the Pure Land (*ōjōden* 往生伝) of the Insei period. Although indirectly, their words and actions clearly incorporated such elements of criticism.

Needless to say, it was with the Buddhist reform movements of the new Kamakura Buddhism that such criticism emerged in earnest. What attitude each of the individual figures within these movements adopted toward the doctrine of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence remains to be investigated; however, whatever their position may have been with regard to the doctrine itself, the obvious corruption resulting from it drew their severe criticism. Hōnen asserted that the path leading to birth in the Pure Land for the many "ordinary worldlings" was none other than the exclusive *nenbutsu*, and not the cultivation of good through miscellaneous practices, such as building statues or pagodas, or developing wisdom and talent. This amounted to a cri-

tique of the overly elaborated Buddhism of the Insei period. From an outside perspective, as indicated in the Kōfuku-ji Petition, Hōnen's assertion was seen as bringing disorder to the country, wherein the *ōbō* and the *buppō* were supposed to be connected like body and mind. In other words, it was a censure of the system. Shinran, denouncing the persecution of Hōnen's followers who had advocated "the true Buddhist teaching," said that "the ruler and his ministers have all turned their backs on the dharma and gone against righteousness" (*Kyōgyōshinshō*, *maki* 6 ["Keshindo"], in KANEKO 1964, p. 340). He also taught that the *nenbutsu* should not be spread by relying on the influence (*gōen* 強縁) held by local lords over those on their lands. These too were criticisms directed at the real-world dimensions of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence.

However, one should not expect to find in these new Kamakura Buddhist founders an attitude that would thoroughly deny the logic of this mutual dependence. Although the concept of *ōbō* leaned toward a view centered around the ruling order of those in power, in that its meaning could encompass the land and its people, it was almost inevitable in the medieval context that desires for "peace of the world and the spread of the Buddha-dharma" would find expression, as in Shinran's case, in the form of "saying the *nenbutsu* for the sake of the imperial house and for the sake of the people of the country."⁴ According to Shinran's teaching, the doctrine of the Buddha's transformation body and land (*keshindo* 化身土), which he associated with the Path of the Sages and the Pure Land teachings that emphasize self-power, is merely a skillful means leading toward true reality; thus in essence, his message stressed only the true Buddhist teaching, divorced from the *ōbō*. Even so, as is only to be expected, Shinran did not expressly urge a rupture or confrontation with the *ōbō*. I believe the same observation can also be made with respect to others such as Dōgen and Ippen, who separated themselves from worldly power.

However, responses to *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence that differ from Shinran's can also be seen within the new Kamakura Buddhism. Eisai linked Zen and the state in the *Kozen gokoku ron* 興禪護国論 [The promulgation of Zen for the protection of the nation], and his *Nihon Buppō chūko ganmon* 日本仏法中興願文 [Vow to restore the Buddha-dharma of Japan] says, "The *ōbō* is the lord of the *buppō*, and the *buppō* is the treasure of the *ōbō*." He also presented the Zen precepts as serving "the renewed prosperity of the *buppō*, and the eternal preservation of the *ōbō*" (DNBZ 41: 351a). In the latter part of the Kamakura period,

⁴ "Letter to Shōshin," in KANEKO 1964 (p. 622).

Lan-ch'i Tao-lung 蘭溪道隆 and other Ch'an monks from the continent came to Japan and initiated Kamakura Zen under the protection of the bakufu; carrying on Sung custom, they offered prayers for the long life of the emperor. Needless to say, their position differed from that of the powers represented by the temple-shrine complexes of Nara and Mt. Hiei, and there is no need to doubt their passion for the reform of Buddhism. However, in regard to this point of prayers for imperial prosperity, they may be seen as having something in common with Shunjō 俊苒, Kōben 高弁, Jōkei 貞慶, Eison 叡尊 and others teachers who sought to revive the precepts in association with *kenmitsu* Buddhism.

The case of Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-1282) differs yet again. Nichiren set out with the aim of reviving Tendai Buddhism based on the *Lotus Sūtra*, and his assertion of the principle of "establishing the correct [dharma] and bringing peace to the country" (*risshō ankoku* 立正安国) takes as its basis the idea of governing the country by means of the True Dharma. Thus, as a matter of course, he held that the *ōbō* and the *buppō* should agree—or, more precisely, that the *ōbō* should spread the correct *buppō*, and the *buppō* should inform the content of the *ōbō*. Nichiren's thought strongly emphasizes the centrality of the *buppō*; however, in that it positively asserts that the *buppō* should be united with the *ōbō*, it takes a position diametrically opposed to that of the new Pure Land movements.

In this way, the attitude seen in the new Kamakura Buddhist reform movements toward the theory of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence was subtle and complex, and varied in its forms and extent. At the very least, however, there was wide recognition of the principle that the Buddhist law should be the foundation (*buppō ihon* 仏法為本), which may be deemed an important characteristic of those movements. As is well known, this principle was sustained by a broad social movement among the common people and, in this regard, its significance as an intellectual achievement of the age must be pointed out. Moreover, when compared to the relationship between Buddhism and the state in China and Korea that has been touched upon above, one must note that it holds a unique significance in the history of Asian Buddhism.

Post-Kamakura Ōbō and Buppō

To what extent, however, was the principle of *buppō ihon* put into practice after the time of the new Kamakura Buddhist founders?

At the end of the Kamakura period, Shinran's descendant Zonkaku

存覚 (1290–1373), in his *Haja kenshō shō* 破邪顯正抄 [On refuting heresy and clarifying truth], rebutted criticisms that accused Shinran's followers of “destroying the *buppō* and disregarding the *ōbō*”:

The *buppō* and the *ōbō* are a single law with two aspects, like the two wings of a bird or the two wheels of a cart. It is untenable that even one should be lacking. Therefore one protects the *ōbō* by means of the *buppō*, and one reveres the *buppō* by means of the *ōbō*.... How could the followers of the Ikkō school forget this principle?... All the more so with practitioners of the exclusive *nenbutsu*, who, wherever they may live, when they drink even a single drop or receive even a single meal, believe that in general it is thanks to the favor of the nobles [of the capital and the warrior leaders of] the Kantō, and know that specifically it is due to the kindness of their local lords and estate stewards. (SSZ 3, p. 173)

Later, Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499) went even further in saying that “one should outwardly place emphasis upon the *ōbō* but cultivate the *buppō* deeply in one's heart” (*Rennyo Shōnin goichidaiki kikigaki* 141; NST 17, p. 137), and, in that sense, that “the *ōbō* should be the foundation, and precedence be given to benevolence and righteousness.”⁵ Here, phrases used in the discourse of earlier times on *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence were transformed into statements proclaiming that “followers of the *buppō*” should submissively accept the domination of the *ōbō*. One can see here a skillful combination of the ideas of the *ōbō* as being fundamental in the world and the *buppō* as being fundamental in one's heart. This is only one example suggesting to what a limited extent doctrines and ideas about the *buppō* as fundamental were sustained. Among the schools of other followers of Hōnen, and among the successors of Dōgen as well, although the forms of this erosion may have differed, the strict tension between the *buppō* and the *ōbō* was ultimately lost.

It is also necessary to consider how widely the doctrines of the new Kamakura Buddhist founders setting forth the position that the *buppō* is fundamental were actually spread during medieval times, after their first appearance in the Kamakura period. It is true that some of these doctrines garnered considerable attention and were promulgated. However, prior to the Ikkō uprisings, the various schools of *kenmitsu* Buddhism and the Zen sect—that is to say, those schools upholding

⁵ Several passages in Rennyo's *Ofumi* 御文 have this general meaning, though not the exact wording. See for example the letters dated Bunmei 6 (1474).2.16 and Bunmei 8 (1476).5.7, in INABA 1972, pp. 181, 267.

the theory of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence—retained their powerful positions of authority. Given this fact, can it possibly be said that the principle of the “*buppō* as fundamental” was actualized, or represented the mainstream, during the medieval period?

In the early modern period, with the emergence of a unified governing authority and the establishment of the *bakuhān* (shogunate-domain) system, apart from a few minor exceptions, the *buppō* was in its entirety subjugated to the *ōbō*. Then, with the persecution of Buddhism (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈) and the establishment of State Shintō in the early years of the Meiji period, the *buppō* was again subjugated to the *ōbō*. What is common to the Buddhist stance in both periods was neither outright defeat nor spiritual autonomy, but, in fact, Buddhism’s surrender, a submission to a relationship of mutual dependence in which Buddhism held the subordinate position. Compared to this state of affairs, it can be said that in the medieval discourse of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence Buddhism was supported by its distinctive power base and possessed far greater independence.

In addition, to further our understanding of this matter, in the end I believe we must acknowledge how oppressive the matter of “*ōbō* and *buppō*” has been in the history of Japanese Buddhism—a central problem from which there has been no liberation.

ABBREVIATIONS

- DNBZ *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書. 161 vols. Tokyo: Bussho Kankōkai, 1911–22. (reprint, Tokyo: Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1970–73; Tokyo: Meicho Fukyūkai, 1979)
- DNS *Dai Nihon shiryō* 大日本史料. Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, ed. Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1919–present.
- Heian ibun* *Heian ibun* 平安遺文. Takeuchi Rizō 竹内理三, ed. 11 vols. Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1965–80.
- Kamakura ibun* *Kamakura ibun* 鎌倉遺文. Takeuchi Rizō, ed. 41 vols. Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1971–90.
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系. 100 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- NST *Nihon shisō taikei* 日本思想大系. 67 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- SSZ *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* 真宗聖教全書. Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensanjo, ed., 5 vols. Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941.

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