

Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism

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A Comparative Approach to Śubhakarasiṃha's (637–735) “Essentials of Meditation”: Meditation and Precepts in Eighth-Century China

Lin Pei-ying

This chapter examines the procedure of precept conferral in Śubhakarasiṃha's (637–735) *Essentials of Meditation* (Ch. *Wuwei sanzang chanyao* 無畏三藏禪要, *T* 917, 18: 942b–46a): repentance, proclamation of vows, *dhāraṇī* recitation, and meditation. An Esoteric practitioner must achieve and practice all these steps to receive bodhisattva precepts. I will also present, as the title of Śubhakarasiṃha's manual suggests, an alternative analysis of this text that argues that its purpose was rather an initiation into this type of meditation.

To gain a better understanding of Śubhakarasiṃha's perceptions in relation to contemporaneous Chinese Buddhism, I investigate other eighth-century texts with similar contents, including (a) *Five Skillful Means of Mahāyāna*; (b) Amoghavajra's *Manual of Receiving Bodhicitta Precepts*; and (c) Zhanran's 湛然 *Manual of Bodhisattva Precepts Conferral*. In comparing Śubhakarasiṃha's text with the others, similarities emerge among Tiantai, early Chan, and Esoteric Buddhism. The notions of “pure precepts” and “purified meditation” played essential roles in the precept-conferral ceremony across these texts. Moreover, the comparison yields the sense of a rather fluid religious environment in eighth-century China, in which different branches of Buddhist communities shared many doctrines.

First, I will examine the precept-conferral procedure itself. As Śubhakarasiṃha specified in his manual, an esoteric practitioner must complete each of the requisite steps in order to attain bodhisattva precepts. The whole procedure runs in chronological order: repentance, proclamation of vows, *dhāraṇī* recitation, and meditation. The combination of *dhāraṇī* and meditation features Esoteric and (Northern) Chan characteristics and deserves further investigation. However, systematic analysis of the texts makes it clear that each step of the procedure has an important function for practice, just as Śubhakarasiṃha explained in his text. These steps constitute crucial components of his esoteric praxis, which focuses on the theme of “purification of the mind.”

This set of procedures, however, was not necessarily exclusive to esoteric teachings in this place and at this time, and repentance and proclamation of

vows have been widely practiced in all Chinese Buddhist traditions. This leads to further questions, particularly regarding how the precept-conferral ritual procedures produced the purity of the practitioners. What functions did repentance play in the procedure? How was the idea of purity of mind manifested in early Chan, Tiantai, and Esoteric traditions? Daniel Stevenson, in his extensive research on the Tiantai Four Forms of *Samādhi*, argued that devotional practices in sixth- to eighth-century China were not as diverse as we may have imagined (1987, 249). He also insightfully noted that the shared patterns of devotional practice reflect the belief systems of a common soteriological vision (256). But there is still a need to reassess the implications of the commonly practiced devotional meditations and to determine the precise nature of the shared soteriological theory. Of particular interest are the doctrinal underpinnings of the connection between meditation and precepts in Śubhakarasiṃha's manual, and how they compare to parallel doctrinal foundations in other texts.

The Main Sources

The four texts regarding the precept-conferral procedure that will be analyzed in this chapter are the following:

- a. Śubhakarasiṃha's (Ch. Shan Wuwei 善無畏, 637–735) *Essentials of Meditation* (Ch. *Wuwei sanzang chanyao* 無畏三藏禪要, T 917, 18: 942b–46a).¹
- b. Amoghavajra's (Ch. Bukong 不空, 705–774) *Manual of Receiving Bodhicitta Precepts* (Ch. *Shou putixin jieyi* 受菩提心戒儀, T 915, 18: 940b–41b).
- c. Shenxiu's 神秀 (606–706) *Gateway to the Mahāyāna Skillful Means for Non-birth* (Ch. *Dasheng wusheng fangbian men* 大乘無生方便門, hereafter *Gateway*) (Magnin 1979, 117–28). The *Dasheng wusheng fangbian men* is also called *Dasheng wufangbian* 大乘五方便 (*Five Skillful Means of Mahāyāna*). T 2834, 85: 1273a–78b.²
- d. Zhanran's 湛然 (711–782) *Manual of Bodhisattva Precepts Conferral* (Ch. *Shou pusa jieyi* 授菩薩戒儀, X 1086, 59: 354b–57a).

1 The *Essentials of Meditation* was probably narrated by Śubhakarasiṃha and was actually written by Jingxian 敬賢 (660–722) during 716–35 CE in Chang'an. For a concise introduction to these texts, see Ōno 1954, 431–35. Cf. Sharf's chapter in this volume, note 33.

2 Cf. Sharf's chapter in this volume, note 34.

Precept-Conferral Manuals

Precept-conferral manuals are relatively short texts intended for practical use. There have been few studies of this type of liturgical texts, probably because of the problematic nature of the devotional texts, which usually lack the contextual information to place them in the broader religious background, as Stevenson has noted (1987, 259–69). There are, however, excellent studies of the historical backgrounds of the uses of these manuals. For instance, on the basis of Tsuchihashi Shūkō’s (1966) research on the Dunhuang manuscript of a monks’ precept-conferral manual (*Chujiaren shou pusajie fa* 出家人受菩薩戒法, P. 2196), Paul Groner has conducted an extensive investigation of the bodhisattva precepts in medieval China and Japan (1984, 98–148). Funayama Tōru has elucidated the circulation and development of the bodhisattva precepts during the Chinese Southern dynasties (1995, 1–135). Taking an alternative approach, this chapter treats the doctrinal ground of these manuals rather than the actual devotional practices detailed in them.

Before I begin, it will be instructive to distinguish the *texts of* bodhisattva precepts from the manuals of precept conferral. Tadeusz Skorupski discussed two types of ritual texts for taking the vow of bodhisattva morality (2001, 15–23):

- a. Those that outline the basic principles but do not state rules
- b. Those that state rules but do not discuss principles

The first type is exemplified by the writings of the Indian philosopher Candragomin (seventh century) and the Chinese *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* (Skorupski 2001, 17). The second type—that of concrete rules—has played a major role in bodhisattva ordinations across Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Additionally, in regard to doctrinal development, there are two systems of bodhisattva precepts in China:

- a. The *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra*, which is associated with the *Sūtra on Original Acts That Serve as Necklaces for the Bodhisattvas* (Ch. *Pusa yingluobenye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經, T 1485). This system emphasizes the arousal of *bodhicitta* and avoidance of the ten grave transgressions.
- b. The *Sūtra on the Spiritual States of the Bodhisattva* (Ch. *Pusa dichi jing* 菩薩地持經, Skt. *Bodhisattvabhūmi Sūtra*), which is affiliated with the *Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* (*Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師第論, Skt. *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*). This system emphasizes the “three clusters of pure precepts” (Satō 1986, 347–60).

Rather than being mutually exclusive, the above two traditions share traits, but ascribe slightly different weight to those traits. Meditation and gradual practice, for example, are highlighted in both traditions. Both sets of scriptures are concerned with moral conduct but also with the supposed consciousness of the bodhisattva, and both place much emphasis on the diligent practice of meditation. For example, in the two esoteric sources studied in this chapter, different aspects of the same requirement for the precept-conferral ritual are foregrounded. The following chart illustrates:

	Ten grave transgressions	Three clusters of pure precepts
Abstract principles	<i>Brahmā's Net Sūtra</i> ; <i>Sūtra of Necklaces</i>	<i>Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra</i> ; <i>Bodhisattvabhūmi Sūtra</i>
Concrete rules	(Manuals of precept conferral) Amoghavajra's manual	(Manuals of precept conferral) Śubhakarasiṃha's manual

In short, the concept of bodhisattva precepts in China originated from two strands during the fifth century, the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* and the Yogācāra school. The strands differ in that *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* relies on Vairocana Buddha as its sole authority (*T* 1484, 24: 997c11–14) and expounds the ten stages of achievement in meditation; this scripture attracted substantial attention from the aristocracy in southern China. Yet the influence of the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* should not be underestimated. Nobuyoshi Yamabe has demonstrated the Chinese Yogācāra elements, particularly those of the Faxiang school, in meditation theories of the early Chan school(s), and precept-conferral rituals confirm similar trends (2014, 250–314). As this chapter will demonstrate, the concept of the “three clusters of pure precepts” (Ch. *Sanju jingjie*, Jp. *Sanju jōkai* 三聚淨戒) of the bodhisattva path is the foundation of Śubhakarasiṃha's manual, as well as the Tiantai and Northern Chan traditions.

The Three Clusters of Pure Precepts

The Mahāyāna adoption of the Hīnayāna precepts helped to resolve the competition between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna Buddhism. Such incorporation is well illustrated in the following three “clusters” of precepts: (1) the prevention of evil, (2) the promotion of good, and (3) the salvation of sentient beings.³

3 Detailed explanations can be found in the Chinese versions of Yogācāra scriptures: *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, *T* 1581, 30: 910b–c; *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*, *T* 1579, 30: 511a.

Among the three clusters, the prevention of evil may be identified with Hīnayāna *Vinaya* and the promotion of good with Mahāyāna precepts. The third cluster is identifiable with both Hīnayāna *Vinaya* and Mahāyāna precepts.

The three clusters of pure precepts are tightly tied to the notion of a purified mind. In Esoteric Buddhist doctrine, the goal of a purified mind makes meditation and precept conferral inseparable in practice, as mentioned above. Thus we see that purification of the mind is the ultimate goal of observing the precepts. This concept of three clusters of pure precepts soon became the foundation of Esoteric Buddhism.

Precept-Conferral Procedure

A Śubhakarasiṃha's *Essentials of Meditation*

The procedure of precept conferral in Śubhakarasiṃha's *Essentials of Meditation* runs as follows:

1. Arousal of the mind
2. Offering in visualization
3. **Recitation of one's name and performance of repentance**
4. Three refuges
5. Arousal of *bodhicitta*
6. Questions about the seven transgressions of precepts
7. A request that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas be preceptors and witnesses
8. A ritualized sermon on the *karman*
9. Completion of precept conferral
10. Practice of the four governing acts
11. Prohibition of ten grave transgressions

The three clusters of pure precepts have been conferred by this stage, which is followed by meditation instruction. The numbering of the following procedures is not in the original text.

12. **Sitting meditation**
13. **Conferral of five *dhāraṇīs***
14. **Sermon on *samādhi*⁴**

4 The Chinese original text specified eleven steps: 1. 發心, 2. 供養, 3. 懺悔, 4. 歸依, 5. 發菩提心, 6. 問遮難, 7. 請師, 8. 羯磨, 9. 結界, 10. 修四攝, 11. 十重戒.

The structure of the manual is laid out according to the serial consequences of the precept-conferral ritual. However, the purpose of the ritual and the sermon was, as proclaimed at the very beginning of the text, to facilitate bringing all beings to speedy enlightenment by opening up their mind sphere (*T* 917, 18: 942c4). In what follows, the Great Vehicle approach is emphasized, and so is *bodhicitta* (“mind of enlightenment”); these are two defining features of the bodhisattva path.

Those who wish to enter the Dharma of Great Vehicle must first arouse the supreme *bodhicitta* and receive the bodhisattava precepts. Only after the body vessel is purified can they receive the Dharma.⁵

This short but expressive statement shows clearly that to enter the Dharma of Great Vehicle or to embark on a bodhisattva path, one must first arouse *bodhicitta*, then receive the bodhisattva precepts, and finally purify the container of his or her body.

In the following procedure, after two quick steps of prostration for worship and visualization of offerings to buddhas and bodhisattvas from the ten directions, repentance is performed. This will be mentioned again later in the manual. The practitioner is to recite the verse verbatim according to the manual. Here the repentance concerns acts committed in the past. The impure acts were countless, as well as forgotten, since they occurred long ago. Upon recognizing that in one’s forgotten past, he or she committed wrongdoings toward other sentient beings, a sincere and honest repentance (*fa lu chan hui* 發露懺悔) becomes necessary. This step is a prerequisite before continuing to pay homage to the three jewels and to arouse *bodhicitta*.

Arousal of the *bodhicitta* entails a vow to save all sentient beings, but at the same time, such arousal relies on the mercy of other advanced bodhisattvas. The bodhisattvas will attest one’s sincerity in the performance of repentance; therefore, the next step is a further inquiry concerning past wrongdoings in the form of an interrogation. If one committed any of the seven grave misdeeds, an extended period of repentance from seven to seventy-seven days is required. It is demanded at this stage that the disciple be honest and regretful about the misdeeds. Any attempt to conceal the felonies will lead to interminable hell, but sincere repentance conforming to Buddhist liturgy will relieve one of any bad karma, enabling the repentant to regain a purified body (*T* 917, 18: 943a22–943b2).

5 夫欲入大乘法者，先須發無上菩提心，受大菩薩戒。身器清淨，然後受法。 *T* 917, 18: 942c6–7.

At this point in the liturgy, one can finally receive the three clusters of pure precepts. These precepts are for the benefit of other beings and also rely on the blessings of buddhas and bodhisattvas; hence the next step is an invitation to all enlightened beings from ten directions. This step is followed by a proclamation to receive the *karman* precepts: the real contents of this step are the three clusters of pure precepts.⁶ By reciting the passage of receiving these precepts, one actually takes a vow to benefit other sentient beings. This completes the reception of the pure precepts, and *bodhicitta* is aroused.

According to this manual, the practitioner should next perform the four governing acts and uphold the ten grave precepts. The four governing acts, or the four methods that bodhisattvas employ to approach and save people (Skt. *catuḥ-saṃgraha-vastu*; Ch. *sishe fa* 四攝法) are “charitable offerings,” “loving words” (Skt. *priyavacana*; Ch. *aiyu* 愛語), “beneficial conduct” (Skt. *arthakṛtya*; Ch. *lixing* 利行), and “working together” (Skt. *samānārthatā*; Ch. *tongshi* 同事).⁷ These compassionate bodhisattva acts will enhance the cultivation of *bodhicitta*.

The eleventh step addresses the ten grave precepts that must be upheld. This set of ten precepts is as follows:

1. Not to renounce aspirations for enlightenment
2. Not to abandon the right law
3. Not to denigrate any of the teachings and the three jewels
4. Not to doubt difficult teachings in the Great Vehicle scriptures
5. Not to discourage anyone who has aroused *bodhicitta*
6. Not to preach to those who have not aroused *bodhicitta*
7. To expound the Great Vehicle doctrine even to the followers of the Lesser Vehicles
8. Not to harbor false ideas

6 The reference to *karman* precepts probably came from the title of the *Dharmagupta-bhikṣuṇī-karman Sifen biqiuni jiemofa* (四分比丘尼羯磨法), translated by Gunavarman in 431 CE. From then on, in the Chinese context, *karman* precepts and the *karman* method were usually related to the ritual of repentance.

7 “Charitable offerings” can be either material or nonmaterial, such as preaching the Dharma or giving what others like in order to lead them to love and receive the truth. “Loving words” means using kind words to guide people. “Beneficial conduct” means benefiting sentient beings through one’s acts of body, speech, and mind. “Working together” means putting oneself on the same level as others and participating alongside them in activities; for a bodhisattva, therefore, it can mean assuming the same form as the sentient beings to be saved (*Digital Dictionary of Buddhism [DDB]*).

9. Not to claim processing the supreme precepts in front of non-Buddhist people
10. Always to practice almsgiving to bodhisattvas

These ten grave precepts are significantly different from those found in the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*. These follow the esoteric tradition: one is to be extremely careful to refrain from discussing the teachings in front of those who have not aroused *bodhicitta* and those of different schools of Buddhist or non-Buddhist traditions.

The ten principal precepts in the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* have a wider currency than the above set of rules, even though this *Sūtra* gives only a brief introduction for each of the ten precepts. Thus, in the subsequent East Asian tradition, Buddhists relied on the major commentators, such as Fazang 法藏 (643–712), Zhiyi 智顛 (539–598), Mingkuang 明曠 (late eighth century), Seungjang 勝莊 (fl. 699–714), and Daehyeon 大賢 (fl. 752–754) for more detailed explanations. According to Charles Muller, the explanations given by Daehyeon are considered the most descriptive of the actual content of each precept.⁸ Daehyeon's commentary on the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, titled *Beommanggyeong gojeokgi* 梵網經古迹記 (*Exposition of the Sūtra of Brahmā Net*), was evaluated by most Japanese Vinaya masters from the Heian and Kamakura periods as being superior to Zhiyi and Fazang's commentaries. According to Daehyeon, the ten grave crimes are the following:

1. Taking pleasure in killing
2. Stealing the property of others
3. The heartless pursuit of lust
4. Intentional lying
5. The sale of alcohol
6. Speaking of the faults of others
7. Praising oneself and disparaging others
8. Stinginess and abuse of others
9. Holding resentments and not accepting apologies
10. Denigrating the three treasures

Although these precepts appear to be general, they can be easily distinguished from the ten basic precepts for the Hīnayāna *saṃgha* and differentiated from the ten benevolent precepts (*shishan jie* 十善戒) for laypersons. Daehyeon's version of the ten precepts is straightforward, and it is evident that the purpose

⁸ See Muller's (2012) translation of Daehyeon's commentary, *Exposition of the Sūtra of Brahmā Net*.

is to prevent the performance of wrongdoing and experiencing the consequent bad karma associated with them. Upholding righteousness in this way is essential for preserving one’s integrity. Śubhakarasiṃha’s version, in contrast, aims more at benefiting others and not causing any harm to others out of ignorance (as we can tell from Śubhakarasiṃha’s explanation under the entry of each precept). His ten precepts are consistent with the four governing acts, or the four methods that bodhisattvas employ to approach and save people, as mentioned earlier. The aspect of compassion is thereby strongly emphasized in this Tantric tradition.

Śubhakarasiṃha’s manual states that the three clusters of pure precepts have been fully conferred upon completion of the eleventh step (*T* 943, 18: 944a7). Interestingly enough, after receiving the bodhisattva precepts, one is to continue to receive esoteric teaching on meditation and *samādhi*. This expectation is in line with the text’s title, which explicitly mentions meditation. This meditation teaching is, however, deemed to be esoteric, as not every practitioner is ready to receive it. Some practitioners may achieve enlightenment simply by holding on to the virtue of generosity, while others rely on upholding precepts. The manual states that the skillful means (Skt. *upāya*, Ch. *fāngbian* 方便) that Śubhakarasiṃha counted on are based on the *Vajraśekhara-sūtra* (Ch. *Jingangding jing* 金剛頂經) (*T* 943, 18: 944a17).⁹ In other words, for Śubhakarasiṃha’s followers, this scripture was chosen to be the apparatus leading to enlightenment. Śubhakarasiṃha proclaimed that one should then make the mind tranquil upon hearing this, sitting still in the pose of deep meditation (*T* 943, 18: 944a18).

Upon receiving the pure bodhisattva precepts, the practitioner must again receive the “internally attested pure precepts” (*neizheng wulou qingjing fajie* 內證無漏清淨法戒), which are also known as the *Samaya* precepts of the Tantric system. This set of vows is essential to the foundation of the Tantric initiation ceremony, and it is a prerequisite for “entering the meditation gate” (*ru chanmen* 入禪門). The entire ritual is concluded with *dhāraṇī* recitation. There are six *dhāraṇī* included here, and each represents a different purpose. The list of the *dhāraṇī* appears to complete the precept-conferral ceremony, but it is not the end of the manual. Following the *dhāraṇī* list, Śubhakarasiṃha provides further instruction on meditation practice.

In the following part of the manual, instructions for meditation practice are further elaborated:

9 See also Orzech and Sharf’s chapters in this volume for the *Vajraśekhara-sūtra*. Orzech takes the example of Amoghavajra’s translation of this *sūtra* (*T* 865) to analyze the liturgical context. Sharf examines the notion of the naturally luminous mind in the same text.

1. Conferral of *dhāraṇī* verses
2. Preparation for foot and hand posture
3. Performance of esoteric visualization for repentance
4. Proclamation of universal vows
5. Concentration on breath
6. Visualization of the moon to attain *samādhi*
7. Recitation of *dhāraṇī* verses

This part of the text comprises structural steps for meditation practice and a sermon on the innate luminous mind, but it seems to be attached to the manual as an appendix. It is likely that it was added to an earlier edition, given the mention of the previous compiler, Chan master Huijing 慧警 of Ximing Monastery 西明寺 (*T* 917, 18: 946a20). This sermon is an important source for understanding the esoteric approach to meditation, as Orzech and Sharf demonstrate in their respective chapters. Orzech points out that the visualization of the heart as a lunar disk is a typical liturgical practice and by no means a unique meditative experience.¹⁰ Sharf, for his part, analyzes the esoteric notion of an innately luminous mind as described in this text (*T* 917, 18: 945b22–29). The sermon on meditation certainly emphasizes a luminous mind, innately pure and “clean” like a moon. As such, this practice ought to be exercised through visualization of the moon and conceptualization of one’s innate pure nature.

These instructions are logically consistent with the previous section concerning precepts and esoteric Buddhism. In fact, the entire procedure, including the precept conferral, seems to have been a prerequisite for meditation practice. The question, then, is why one must receive precepts before engaging in meditation. The attainment of purity is likely at issue, and repentance and *dhāraṇī* are considered efficient means to achieve such a goal.

B Amoghavajra’s *Shou putixin jieyi* 受菩提心戒儀

Amoghavajra’s *Shou putixin jieyi* is a major example of a Tantric ritual manual. The procedure of precept conferral in this text is quite simple, consisting of only five steps, each of which is followed by a *dhāraṇī* verse:

1. Paying homage to the Buddha
2. Offering
3. Performance of repentance

¹⁰ Also see Eric Greene’s (2012) dissertation on the contemplation sūtras and the practice of visualization.

4. Taking three refuges
5. Arousal of *bodhicitta* and completion of precept conferral¹¹

This set of procedures parallels the first five steps in Śubhakarasiṃha’s manual, thus confirming that the basic requirements for the arousal of *bodhicitta* in the Tantric tradition are identical across texts. Despite the fact that our set of procedures is shorter and looks simpler, Amoghavajra’s work was later than that of Śubhakarasiṃha. This further attests that Śubhakarasiṃha followed the standard procedure regarding the arousal of *bodhicitta*, and that the following steps—the three clusters of pure precepts, the ten grave precepts, and meditation—were built upon it.

Along with the pure precepts, purity of mind is strongly emphasized in the Esoteric tradition. According to Amoghavajra, the most important factor in receiving bodhisattva precepts is arousing and maintaining *bodhicitta*. By the same rationale, Amoghavajra’s *Text for the Highest Vehicle Arousal of Bodhisattva Mind Precept and Repentance* (*Zuishang shengjiao shoufa puti xinjie chanhui wen* 最上乘教受發菩提心戒懺悔文, *T* 915, 18: 940b–1b), attached after the *Shou putixin jieyi* in the manual, is also devoted to explaining how one arouses the mind of enlightenment (*fa puti xin* 發菩提心, Skt. *bodhicittotpāda*, *T* 915, 18: 941b14), acts out repentance, and then receives the precepts. Repentance of previous sins is essential for purifying one’s mind in this regard.

C The Gateway

The procedure of precept conferral in the *Gateway* consists of eight parts:

1. Recitation of four bodhisattva vows
2. A request that the buddhas be preceptors and witnesses
3. Three refuges
4. Questions about the five capabilities
5. **Recitation of one’s name and performance of repentance**
6. Encouragement to hold the precepts of the mind
7. **Meditation**
8. A ritualized sermon on the perfection of wisdom¹²

The steps to be highlighted here are the fifth and seventh, to wit, repentance and meditation. Repentance is performed at one point in the sequence in the *Gateway* and at another point in the sequence in Śubhakarasiṃha’s manual. In

¹¹ The Chinese original is 1. 禮佛, 2. 供養, 3. 懺悔, 4. 三歸依, 5. 受菩提心戒.

¹² *T* 2834; translation based on Groner 2012, 145–46.

other words, Śubhakarasiṃha includes repentance before the step of taking three refuges, while the *Gateway* has this step *after* taking three refuges. This is a notable difference that holds deep significance, and it will be discussed in more detail later, in a comparison of all four texts. Step seven is meditation, which is not found in most precept-conferral manuals. Its appearance here, however, coincides with Śubhakarasiṃha's manual in that meditation is placed at the very end of the procedure in both texts. Thus the conferral of bodhisattva precepts seems tightly linked to meditation, even though the latter was not invariably embraced by other Buddhist schools.

A long sermon on the perfection of wisdom follows this list of steps. As stated in this manual, the bodhisattva precepts are “pure precepts” (*jingjie* 淨戒) for the mind. When the mind is clean, it preserves the Buddha nature; it then reflects outer phenomena corresponding to the perfection of wisdom. Therefore, the perfection of wisdom is bound to a purified mind. After performing this procedure, one can be ready to listen to the sermon; in other words, this precept-conferral ritual was designed to ensure the purification of the mind of the practitioner. This logic is essentially consistent with that of the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*.

Śubhakarasiṃha	The <i>Gateway</i>
1. Arousal of the mind	1. Recitation of four bodhisattva vows
2. Offering in visualization	2. A request that the Buddhas be preceptors and witnesses
3. Recitation of one's name and performance of repentance	3. Three refuges
4. Three refuges	4. Questions about the five capabilities
5. Arousal of <i>bodhicitta</i>	5. Recitation of one's name and performance of repentance
6. Questions about the seven transgressions of precepts	6. Encouragement to hold the precepts of the mind
7. A request that the buddhas and bodhisattvas be preceptors and witnesses	7. Meditation
8. A ritualized sermon on the <i>karman</i>	8. A ritualized sermon on the perfection of wisdom
9. Completion of precept conferral	
10. Practice of four governing acts	
11. Prohibition of ten grave precepts (The three clusters of pure precepts have been conferred by this stage.)	
12. Sitting meditation	
13. Conferral of five <i>dhāraṇīs</i>	
14. Sermon on <i>samādhi</i>	

In this process of precept conferral, repentance and meditation together serve the function of purification and prepare practitioners to receive the precepts of the mind and the perfection of wisdom. The same connection between the precepts and the purification of the mind is evident in the Chan School, which gradually took shape from the seventh century onward. Even though the conferral procedure became increasingly simplified in later Chan texts, the latest being the notable *Platform Sūtra*, there is an evident and strong continuity.¹³ I will discuss the connection between Chan and Esoteric teachings in further detail later in this chapter.

D Zhanran's *Manual of Bodhisattva Precepts Conferral*

At the beginning of the manual *Shou pusa jieyi*, Zhanran specified that he followed the textual source of the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, *Original Acts That Serve as Necklaces for the Bodhisattvas*, *Bodhisattvabhūmi Sūtra*, and the Gaochang 高昌 edition of the precept-conferral manual.¹⁴ In other words, Zhanran adopted both of the main systems of bodhisattva precepts in China. Following this introduction, he provided this procedure of precept conferral:

1. Encouragement for receiving precepts
2. Three refuges
3. A request that the buddhas and bodhisattvas be preceptors
4. **Recitation of one's name and performance of repentance**
5. Arousal of *bodhicitta*
6. **Questions about the seven transgressions of precepts**
7. **Recitation of three clusters of bodhisattva precepts**
8. **Completion and confirmation of precept conferral**
9. Validation of three phenomena
10. A sermon on ten critical transgressions
11. Proclamation of great vows
12. Admonition on upholding the precepts¹⁵

In this procedure, one can easily discern both the system of the ten grave transgressions of the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* and that of the three clusters of

13 This point was convincingly put forward by Groner 2012, in which he compared the contents and structure of the *Gateway* to the *Platform Sūtra*.

14 This is also known as Master Chang's edition (*Chang fashi ben* 暢法師本), which is based on the *Bodhisattvabhūmi-sūtra* with modifications.

15 The Chinese original is 1. 開導, 2. 三歸, 3. 請師, 4. 懺悔, 5. 發心, 6. 問遮, 7. 授戒, 8. 證明, 9. 現相, 10. 說相, 11. 廣願, 12. 勸持.

bodhisattva precepts of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi Sūtra*. The major difference between Zhanran and Śubhakarasiṃha lies in the selection of the ten grave transgressions: the former followed the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, while the latter did not. In both manuals, however, the three clusters of bodhisattva precepts are indispensable.

Zhanran followed Zhiyi's teachings by giving the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* primacy while, at the same time, incorporating the three clusters of bodhisattva precepts into a comprehensive precept system. This precept-conferral procedure illustrates the theoretical underpinning of Tiantai precepts.

With this grounding in mind, I shall now bring Zhiyi's thought into the discussion. In keeping with the Chinese tradition of making doctrinal classifications, the Chinese master Zhiyi designed a sophisticated hierarchy that positions the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* as the last sermon by the Buddha. This was in response to the inconsistencies within Buddhist teachings and the dispute over the status of and relations between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna Buddhism. During Zhiyi's time, Mahāyāna precepts provoked a great deal of dispute, whereas the Hīnayāna *Vinaya* alone did not have many advocates.¹⁶ The earliest Mahāyāna texts, easily available in Chinese, already displayed a dialectical relationship with Hīnayāna schools such as the Sarvāstivāda. The bodhisattva path was almost universally accepted as the highest approach to enlightenment, and Chinese Buddhists accepted this because they read in the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Flower Garland Sūtra* (*Huayan jing* 華嚴經, Skt. *Avatamsaka Sūtra*) that the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas*, unlike the bodhisattvas, have insufficient faculties to understand the Buddha's teachings fully.

At the same time, the Hīnayāna traditions were brought into the country with all the rest, so how was their status to be understood? In solving the conflicting ideas regarding various vehicles, Zhiyi maintained that a Mahāyāna monk could observe Hīnayāna precepts with a Mahāyāna mind. The Hīnayāna *Vinaya* had been devised for the purpose of leading people to Buddhahood, and it would potentially reveal that final goal, so there was no conflict between the *Vinaya* and a Mahāyāna goal. The debate between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna precepts thus led to a conceptual change: the *Vinaya*, combined with bodhisattva vows, could be transformed into Mahāyāna precepts (Hirakawa 1997, 1–26). This explanation was called “disclosing and harmonizing” (Groner 1984, 199). In this vein, in highlighting the bodhisattvas, in the *Commentary on the Tiantai Bodhisattva Precepts* (*Tiantai pusa jie shu* 天台菩薩戒疏, T 1812), which was narrated by Zhiyi and edited by Mingkuang, Zhiyi differentiated Mahāyāna

16 For a full collection of scriptures concerning Buddhist precepts and *Vinayas*, see Ōno 1954.

from Hīnayāna precepts and further advocated the bodhisattva precepts as found in the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* (T 1812, 40: 580c–584a).

A prominent feature of Zhiyi's teaching on precepts is his Madyamaka thought, which is reflected in his integration of various systems of precepts as based on the philosophy and the perfection of wisdom.¹⁷ Although Zhiyi placed much emphasis on the ten grave transgressions of the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, he also interpreted the three clusters of pure precepts along the same lines of “harmonization.” The difference in the two systems, the three clusters of pure precepts and the ten grave transgressions, is not difficult to deal with:

The three clusters of precepts harmonize with each other; the three contemplations and the three bodies relate to each other. Superiority is not an issue among these three clusters or the three bodies. Likewise, both the ten grave precepts and the forty-eight minor transgressions ought to be upheld equally. How can one assume any different level regarding the depth of mind-nature?¹⁸

Therefore, Zhiyi's *Commentary on the Meaning of Bodhisattva Precepts* distinguished and classified these two Chinese systems of bodhisattva precepts and also integrated both systems into his “round and prefect” precepts (*yuanyong pusajie* 圓融菩薩戒).

[We] expediently assign “vehicle” and “precepts” two separate labels, but both of them are true phenomena; such is the [proper understanding of] round and prefect bodhisattva precepts. Hence the preface says, “Any form or mind, whether at this circumstance or in this mind, falls in the category of Buddha-nature precepts. These words are verifiable.”¹⁹

Here the distinction between “vehicle” and “precepts” is mentioned. Zhiyi's motive, however, is not to intensify the distinction but to integrate them into the system of Buddha-nature precepts, which had been greatly emphasized in the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* and the *Sūtra on Original Acts That Serve as Necklaces for the Bodhisattvas*. In this vein, the Tiantai round and prefect precepts may be

¹⁷ For example, see Zhiyi's citation of Madyamaka in his commentary, T 1812, 40: 581a17.

¹⁸ 戒戒三聚互融，三觀三身相即，三聚三身既無優劣，四十八輕十重等持，心性寧有淺深。T 1812, 40:584b7–9.

¹⁹ 假分乘戒兩名，一一無非實相，方是圓融菩薩戒也，故序中云：一切色心，是情是心，皆入佛性戒中，言可驗矣。T 1812, 40: 584b10–12.

understood through Zhiyi's statement that the precepts are *Dharmakaya*, and wisdom is the vehicle.²⁰

Meditation in the Procedure

Significantly, in both Śubhakarasiṃha's manual and the *Gateway*, meditation is placed at the very end of the ritual procedure. The presence of meditation in these texts supports the idea that conferral of bodhisattva precepts and meditation are interrelated. Greene has conducted comprehensive research on meditation and repentance in early China (2012, 259–69); this chapter is a small attempt to further probe the doctrinal affinity between the “Northern Chan” school and Esoteric Buddhism. The shared ground between these two schools, as a bold generalization, is that the bodhisattva precepts constitute a prerequisite for efficient meditation practice.

This notion long pre-dated our manuals. In one of the earliest examples, in the fifth century, Daojin 道進 (also known as Fajin 法進) once expressed his desire to receive the bodhisattva precepts from Dharmakṣema. In response, Dharmakṣema instructed him that deep repentance and diligent meditation must be completed before receiving the bodhisattva precepts, so as to remove all karmic obstructions. This story of Daojin and Dharmakṣema is the earliest record of the appearance of bodhisattva precept-conferral in China (Yamabe 2005, 20; see also Funayama 1995, 6–20).

Both Dharmakṣema and the texts we are examining make it clear that the transmission of bodhisattva precepts was a prerequisite for purification of the mind, and that these bodhisattva precepts were not separable from meditative practice. Moreover, confession and repentance figure into the purification process in all four of these texts. The following section will examine in more detail the role of repentance and its doctrinal foundation.

²⁰ 戒即法身乘即般若. T 1812, 40: 584b4.

Amoghavajra	Śubhakarasiṃha	The Gateway	Zhanran
1. Paying homage to the Buddha	1. Arousal of the mind	1. Recitation of four bodhisattva vows	1. Encouragement for receiving precepts
2. Offering	2. Offering in visualization	2. A request that the Buddhas be preceptors and witnesses	2. Three refuges
3. Performance of repentance	3. Recitation of one's name and performance of repentance	3. Three refuges	3. A request that the buddhas and bodhisattvas be preceptors
4. Three refuges	4. Three refuges	4. Questions about the five capabilities	4. Recitation of one's name and performance of repentance
5. Arousal of <i>bodhicitta</i> and completion of precept conferral	5. Arousal of <i>bodhicitta</i>	5. Recitation of one's name and performance of repentance	5. Arousal of <i>bodhicitta</i>
	6. Questions about the seven transgressions of precepts	6. Encouragement to hold the precepts of the mind	6. Questions about the seven transgressions of precepts
	7. A request that the buddhas and bodhisattvas be preceptors and witnesses		7. Recitation of three clusters of bodhisattva precepts
	8. A ritualized sermon on the <i>karman</i>		8. Completion and confirmation of precept conferral
	9. Completion of precept conferral		9. Validation of three phenomena
	10. Practice of four governing acts		10. A sermon on ten critical transgressions
	11. Prohibition of ten grave precepts (The three clusters of pure precepts have been conferred by this stage.)	7. Meditation	11. Proclamation of great vows
	12. Meditation	8. A ritualized sermon on the perfection of wisdom	12. Admonition on upholding the precepts
	13. Conferral of five <i>dhāraṇīs</i>		
	14. Sermon on <i>samādhi</i>		

Repentance and Purity

The necessity of confession is expressed in a number of Mahāyāna texts, notably the *Sūtra of Golden Light* (T 663, 16: 336b10–339a6) (Emmerick 1970, 8–17). Kuo conducted a detailed survey of classifications of Buddhist repentance in Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667), Huisi's 慧思 (515–577), and Zhiyi's systems, respectively (1994, 36; 75–78; 61–62). Wu noted that most Chinese confessionals are formulaic (1979, 6–16). Furthermore, many Dunhuang materials show the same formula of confession that follows the verses from the *Guan Puxian puta*

jing 觀普賢菩薩經 (Stevenson 1987, 404). Yamabe (2005) also demonstrated a link between repentance and visionary experience. This visionary experience was also important in connection with meditational experience and Buddha-name chanting practice. In studying the liturgical usage of confession, Stevenson also noted that several “quasi-esoteric texts” of the sixth and seventh centuries all show particular concern for “preliminary ritual purification.”²¹ More recently, Eric Greene has provided a thorough comparison of early Chinese views of *karma* in relation to the practice of repentance.²² Here one sees how practices of Tiantai, Chan, and Esoteric Buddhism could be interwoven with one another.

In the texts under discussion, the order of repentance differs across manuals. In the Esoteric tradition, repentance is exercised before inviting the buddhas and bodhisattvas to be preceptors; both Śubhakarasiṃha’s and Amoghavajra’s manuals follow this formula. In contrast, in Zhanran’s manual, repentance comes after the invitation of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. The Esoteric tradition also includes the step of making an offering to the buddhas and bodhisattvas before the repentance step.

The *Gateway* shares the same ground with Zhanran’s manual in this aspect alone; in contrast, Śubhakarasiṃha’s manual is the same as Amoghavajra’s. In other words, the order differentiates the esoteric tradition from its exoteric counterpart: the esoteric tradition includes the act of repentance before the step of taking three refuges, while the exoteric texts have it after that step. One doctrinal explanation could be that for the esoteric tradition, it is important to remove the karmic obstruction before taking the Buddhist faith; one must be fully prepared before meeting his or her master because the master will choose teachings on the basis of the capacity of the disciple. In contrast, for the exoteric tradition, Buddhism is open to the general public, that is, to whoever wishes to receive the teaching; therefore, there should be no obstacle for one to take the three refuges.

Repentance is the most important method for removing the karmic obstruction. One is to conduct repentance at different levels according to one’s own

21 Stevenson 1987, 342. The examples he gave include *Fangdeng tuoluoni jing* 方等陀羅尼經 (*Sūtra of the Fangdeng Dhāraṇī*, T 1339), *Qing guanyin jing* 請觀音經 (*Sūtra of the Request for Avalokiteśvara*), *Shi’yi mian shenzhou jing* 十一面神咒經 (*Sūtra of the Divine Spells of Eleven-Headed [Avalokiteśvara]*), *Qi fo ba pusa shenzhou jing* 七佛八菩薩神咒經 (*Sūtra of Divine Spells for the Seven Buddhas and Eight Bodhisattvas*), and *Tuoluoni zaji* 陀羅尼雜集 (*Miscellaneous Collection of Dhāraṇī*, T 1336).

22 See Greene 2012, chap. 4; see especially 218–34 for the vision of karma in *Chan Essentials*.

circumstances. Zhiyi expounded on this in his commentary, which heavily relies on the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*:

Precepts are methods for whitening and purification, but they can be received only if one's body-container is pure and clean. Therefore, [I] must teach [practitioners] repentance to purify the mind and body. This is just as old clothes need to be washed first before they can be dyed again.²³

Again, purification of karmas is required before precept conferral:

All buddhas and bodhisattvas have great compassion and make magnificent vows to turn all sentient beings into buddhas. However, only if the practitioners have attained purified karmas can they receive the precepts.²⁴

The concept of purity was inherited by the Northern Chan text, the *Gateway*, which was composed of elements relating to repentance, pure precepts, and Buddha nature. It explains the bodhisattva precepts thus:

After your repentance, the three deeds are purified, just like a crystal, its inner and outer sphere clear and transparent. Only then are you eligible to receive “pure precepts.” [To uphold] bodhisattva precepts is to uphold “mind precepts” and to regard Buddha nature as precept nature.²⁵

Thus, repentance leads to purity, which is the necessary precondition the bestowal of the “pure precepts.”

According to the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, in advance of the precept-conferral ritual, repentance and meditation are two important requirements for receiving the bodhisattva precepts (Kuo Li-ying 1994, 57–58). The *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* maintains that “the nature of the precepts for all sentient beings is fundamentally pure.”²⁶ Its Mahāyāna characteristics lie in its claim that any sentient

23 夫戒是白淨之法，身器清淨乃可堪受。故先教懺悔洗滌身心，如浣故衣方受染色。T 1812, 40: 582b20–22.

24 諸佛菩薩大悲，弘誓欲令眾生如佛無異。然須行者三業清淨，方可得戒。T 1812, 40: 582c1–2

25 汝等懺悔，三業清淨，如淨瑠璃，內外明徹，堪受淨戒。菩薩戒是持心戒，以佛性為戒性。See Suzuki 1968, 168.

26 是一切眾生戒本源自性清淨。T 1484, 24: 1003c28.

being in possession of a mind could achieve Buddha's attainment right away upon receiving the Mahāyāna precepts:

Whoever has a mind should be governed by Buddhist precepts. Once the sentient being receives the Buddhist precepts, he attains Buddha status.²⁷

Furthermore, the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra's* precepts are easily accessible to all practitioners because the purest precepts can be conferred simply through comprehending the words of dharma masters.²⁸ The same idea is taken up by the *Necklaces Sūtra* as meaning that the bodhisattva precepts are imperishable after their conferral ceremony (*T*1485, 24: 1021b2, b22). These are the doctrinal foundations of the concept of self-ordination, which thrived in later periods. Hence the mind is the substance of precepts (*jieti* 戒體); as the *Necklaces Sūtra* says:

In the cases of both ordinary people and sages, at the bottom of precepts, the mind is the substance. Just as the mind has no ending point, neither do the precepts have an ending point.²⁹

At this point, we see that meditation, bodhisattva precepts, and repentance are linked through the procedure for the purification of mind, as shown in the ritual of precept conferral. The ideas conveyed in the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* and Zhanran's and Śubhakarasiṃha's manuals reflect a shared doctrinal ground. The following section will shed light on the Chan context.

Mind and Precepts in the Chan Tradition

In the context of Chan Buddhism, Northern Chan ideas concerning the "vehicle" definitely support doctrinal connotations of the substance of precepts; the question is how and when the emphasis on "oneness" and "single mind" was grounded in meditation teaching in the Chan and Esoteric traditions. We might also ask, how did the early Chan tradition come to be associated with the bodhisattva precepts?

27 一切有心者, 皆應攝佛戒, 眾生受佛戒, 即入諸佛位, *T*1484, 24:1004a19–20.

28 但解法師語, 盡受得戒, 皆名第一清淨者. *T*1484, 24: 1004b10.

29 故瓔珞經云: 一切凡聖戒盡以心為體, 心無盡故戒亦無盡. *T*1812, 40: 581a23–24.

Daoxin 道信 (580–651) is a seminal figure in Chan history for his teaching on meditation and bodhisattva precepts. In tracing the origins of the One Practice *Samādhi* (*yixing sanmei* 一行三昧) among the Tiantai and other schools, Stevenson noted Daoxin’s impact, especially on the Chan School (Stevenson 1987, 148). Although the historical evidence concerning his life and work is somewhat obscure, Daoxin’s teachings prominently feature the bodhisattva precepts and heavily influenced early Chan tradition during the seventh and eighth centuries.

Daoxin’s alleged Chan teaching is likewise found throughout early Chan sources. For instance, Jingjue’s 淨覺 (683–750) *Records of Masters and Disciples of the Lan-kāvātāra* (*Lengqie shizi ji* 楞伽師資記, T 2837) quotes large portions of the *Essential Expedients for Penetrating the Way and Settling the Mind* (*Rudao danxin yao fangbian famen* 入道安心要方便法門), a text attributed to Daoxin. According to Jingjue’s *Records*, Shenxiu once replied to an inquiry of Empress Wu that the core teaching of the East Mountain (*Dongshan* 東山) school was the One Practice *Samādhi* (T 2837, 85:1290a29–b4). In this way, Jingjue gave prominence to the One Practice *Samādhi* by referring to Daoxin’s *Essential Expedients for Penetrating the Way and Settling the Mind*.

In regard to the connection between the early Chan tradition and bodhisattva precepts, it is also known that in the Chan tradition, the ordination ceremony derived from the *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra* was employed by a variety of Chan groups (Tanaka 1983, 465; McRae 1987, 259–60n4). What is more relevant here, scholars generally agree that Daoxin’s *Pusa jiefa* 菩薩戒法, in particular (unfortunately now lost), seems to have been the source of a shared model of the precept-conferral ceremony followed by these diverse groups, including Hongren’s 弘忍 (602–675) East Mountain (*Dongshan* 東山) school.³⁰

Along these lines, in many mid-Tang texts of the Chan school, one can see that the term “supreme vehicle” (*zuishang sheng* 最上乘) often occurs together with the term “single mind.”³¹ In particular, the term “supreme vehicle” frequently appears in passages in the literature of the mid-Tang concerning the doctrines of *Prajñā*, Chan, and Esoteric Buddhism. The concept was likely developed during the debate on the relationship between Mahāyāna and

30 See Yanagida 1967, 186; and Chappell 1983, 90. Ibuki Atsushi (2007) has also conducted in-depth research on Daoxin’s thought, Hongren, and the East Mountain school and its relationship to the bodhisattva precepts.

31 For example, it appears in *Dasheng lichu liu polomiduo jing* 大乘理趣六波羅蜜多經 (T 261, 8: 898a), *Dunwu rudao yaomen lun* 頓悟入道要門論 (X 1223, 63: 18ab), *Luizu dashi fabao tanjing* 六祖大師法寶壇經 (T. 2008, 48: 350c), and *Zhu dasheng ru lengqie jing* 注大乘入楞伽經 (T 1791, 39: 453c). It also appears in Tang literati writings; see Li Hua’s epitaph, *Gu Zuoxi dashi bei* 故左溪大師碑 (Q7W 320), and Bai Juyi’s 白居易 (772–846) *Xijing Xingshansi chuan fatang beiming*, 西京興善寺傳法堂碑銘 (Q7W 678).

Hīnayāna Buddhism in China, which must have been heated and is much discussed in Zhiyi's writing mentioned earlier.

It appears that the term "supreme vehicle" does not have a fixed definition. Daoxin's Chan teaching, however, strengthens the One Practice *Samādhi* as a form of meditation by mentioning the "supreme vehicle" and the "single mind" side by side. The simultaneous occurrence of these two terms, as Yanagida stated, demonstrates the encounter between Chan and Esoteric Buddhism (1967, 466, 470n16).

At a doctrinal level, in the interaction between Chan and Esoteric Buddhism, the following interpretations of the supreme vehicle developed:

- a. The Esoteric tradition regards the bodhisattva path as the highest approach, and hence an initiation ritual, the conferment of bodhisattva precepts, is mandatory.
- b. According to the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, the supreme vehicle is dedicated to the realisation of the "perfect realization of own nature" (Ch. *Yuan chengshi zixing* 圓成實自性).

The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* first proposes its "non-vehicle" and "one-vehicle" theory within the context of the disputation (*T* 670, 16: 497). It corresponds to the universalism of the "oneness" and "one vehicle" in the *Lotus Sūtra*, a concept that was popular in China from the introduction of Buddhism there (Nattier 2003, 88).

Scholars including Ibuki Atsushi, John McRae, Bernard Faure, and Wendi Adamek have paid particular attention to *Dasheng wusheng fangbian men*, also known as *Dasheng wu fangbian*.³² Regarding the doctrinal evolution of precepts and ordination in the Chan tradition, the doctrinal aspect of the *Gateway* that I have examined is particularly important. First, the doctrinal evolution underwent a transformation from the *Gateway* to the Dunhuang manuscript of the *Platform Sūtra* (Satō 1986, 391–94), a change that is commonly attributed to its reputed author Shenxiu. Although the authorship is debatable, the text unmistakably reflects Shenxiu and Puji's 普寂 (651–739) thought. Second, Śubhakarasiṃha's *Essentials of Meditation* shows similarities, as well as additions, to the *Gateway*. Furthermore, the biography of Śubhakarasiṃha by the Tang poet Li Hua 李華 (715–778) clearly recounts the connection between Śubhakarasiṃha and "Northern Chan" masters (*T* 2055, 50: 290a–292a). In the

32 For the evolution of this text and its association with the bodhisattva precepts in the East Mountain tradition, see Ibuki 2012. English translations and discussions can be found in McRae 1986, 171–4; Adamek 2007, 199; and Faure 1997, 106–18.

lineage chart appended to the biography, Hongren and Shenxiu are under the line of Śubhakarasiṃha, and Puji is right beneath Shenxiu (*T* 50: 292a). This evidence makes it clear that Śubhakarasiṃha’s key concepts concerning meditation and precepts were prevalent in the “Northern Chan” school in the eighth century.

Conclusion

Previous studies have explored the relationship between Chan and Esoteric Buddhism. Greene (2012) has explicated the history and terminology of visualization in meditation texts; Orzech’s chapter in this volume furthers our understanding of visualization (as in any form of meditation experience) as a shared liturgy. Meanwhile, Sharf’s chapter probes the specific notion of the innate luminous mind taken up by eighth-century Chan and Esoteric masters in China. We hence come to the understanding that the visualization of a luminous mind is by no means exclusive to any single school. My study brings to this thread of discussion a different aspect of precepts based on four precept-conferral manuals. The comparison in this study emphasizes the shared ground between Northern Chan and esoteric doctrines in the precept-conferral procedure and highlights the differences between the Chan and Tiantai Schools.

First, regarding the similarities in the precept-conferral procedure, all the texts foreground purity of mind, and this purity of mind is granted only after the repentance step is taken. This is true despite minute differences in the sequence found across texts. The two Tantric masters both emphasize the purity of the mind; however, Śubhakarasiṃha not only highlighted *bodhicitta* but also adopted the three clusters of purity precepts. In so doing, he expressed a tendency to a gradual approach, closer to the system of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi Sūtra* and the Yogācāra school. The same notion —cultivating the mind in gradual steps—is found in the *Gateway*, which was categorized as a Northern Chan text. Furthermore, it is likely that Śubhakarasiṃha composed his *Essentials of Meditation* by making additions and revisions to the *Gateway*. This strand of development suggests that some key concepts concerning meditation and precepts that were prevalent in the “Northern Chan” school also pervaded the eighth-century teachings. This may well explain why the long last part of Śubhakarasiṃha’s manual is devoted to extensive instruction in meditation. The purpose of precept conferral is most likely the same as that of meditation: to cultivate *bodhicitta* via gradual steps of purification of the mind.

Furthermore, repentance is performed to purify the mind, so as to wash away wrongdoings before receiving the bodhisattva precepts from buddhas

and bodhisattvas. This step of repentance differentiates the esoteric tradition from its exoteric counterpart. One doctrinal explanation could be that for the esoteric tradition, it is important to remove the karmic obstruction before taking the Buddhist faith, whereas for the exoteric tradition, Buddhism is open to whoever in the general public wishes to receive the teaching.

In sum, Śubhakarasiṃha's manual embraces elements similar to those representatives of Chan, Tendai and Tantric Buddhism but differs significantly from all of them. In contrast to Amoghavajra's concise Tantric precept-conferal manual, Śubhakarasiṃha's was carefully arranged to expound on the conceptual underpinnings concerning meditation and the mind. Furthermore, Zhanran's manual displays an integrated view of precepts but excludes meditation. This divided the Chan and Tiantai undertaking of precepts. In contrast, in both the Northern Chan and Śubhakarasiṃha's esoteric manuals, the bodhisattva precepts are not separated from meditational practice on the basis of the mind's purification. The position of meditation in these manuals is in accordance with Northern Chan and esoteric ideas concerning the "supreme vehicle" and the former's emphasis on "oneness" and "single mind."

Comparison of the texts discussed in this chapter hence lays out a typology of precept conferral in eighth-century China and illuminates the conceptual framework behind the texts. It points to the doctrinal affiliation between the Chan school and Esoteric Buddhism.

Abbreviations

- QTW *Quan Tang Wen* 全唐文 (1808–1814). 1,000 fascicles, compiled by Dong Gao 董誥 (1740–1818). Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (Taishō Tripitaka). 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1924 (reprinted 1962).
- X *Dai nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經. 90 vols. Kyoto: Zokyo Shoin, 1905–1912.

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