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The Cultural and Religious Significance of Japanese Buddhist Vestments

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in East Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Diane Elizabeth Riggs

2010

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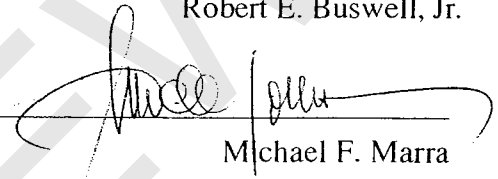
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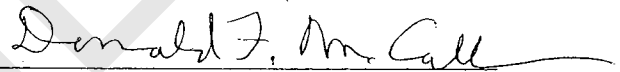
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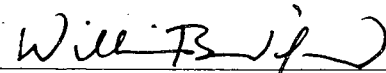
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2010

For Sakai Joshin, who showed the way
And for Suzuki Mitsu, who showed the heart of Buddhist life

PREVIEW

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Abbreviations

- BD *Bukkyō daijiten* 佛教大辞典. 10 vols. Edited by Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨 . Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai, 1933-1936; 1958-1963.
- DDZ *Dengyō daishi zenshō*. 傳教大師全集. 5 vols. Edited by Hieizan Senshuin nai Eizan Gakuin. 比叡山專修院内叡山學院. Tokyo: Tendaishū Shūten Kankōkai, 1912.
- DNB *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書. 100 vols. Edited by Bussho Kankōkai 佛書刊行會, 1912-1922. revised by Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan 鈴木學術財団. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1972-1975.
- DZZ *Dōgen zenji zenshū* 道元禪師全集. 2 vols. Edited by Ōkubo Dōshū 大久保道舟. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969-1970.
- IBK *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū*.
- JIABS *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*.
- JSZ *Jiun Sonja zenshū*. 慈雲尊者全集. 19 vols. Edited by Hase Hōshū 長谷寶秀. Kyōto: Shibun kaku, 1974 (1922-26).
- NKBT *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系. 100 vols. and index 2 vols. Iwanami Shoten, 1957-1967.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 100 vols. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡邊海旭. Tokyo: Daizō kyōkai, 1924-1935.
- SSZ *Sōtō shū zensho* 曹洞宗全書. 20 vols. Edited by Sōtō shū zensho kankōkai 曹洞宗全書刊行會. Tokyo: Sōtō shū kankōkai.

- ZGD *Zengaku Daijiten* 禪學大辭典. Komazawa Daigakunai Zengaku Dai Jiten Hensanjo, ed. 駒澤大学禪學大辭典編纂所. Tokyo: Taishukan Shoten, 1978.
- ZSSZ *Zoku Sōtō shū zensho* 続曹洞宗全書. Edited by Sōtōshū Zensho Kankōkai 曹洞宗全書刊行會. Tokyo: Sōtōshū Shūmuchō, 1974-1977.
- ZZGR *Zokuzoku Gunsho ruijū* 續々群諸類從. 17 vols. *Zoku Gunsho Ruiju* Kanseikai 續群諸類縱完成会. 1969-1970. Also, earlier edition published by Kokusho Kankōkai 国書刊行會. 1906-1909.

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- Riggs, Diane E. "Hand-sewn Buddhist Robes in Contemporary Japan and the Rhetoric of Authenticity." International Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto. September 4, 2004.
- "Fukudenkai: Sewing the Buddha's robe in Contemporary Japanese Buddhist practice." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 31, no. 2 (2004): 315-360.
- Riggs, Diane. "The Material of the *Kesa*: Rag Robes and Daoxuan's prohibition of silk." Paper presented at the conference of Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies, Taishō University, Tokyo. September 13, 2006.
- "Robes of Rags and Silk in the Edo Period: Menzan Zuihō and Ueda Shōhen Interpret the Practice of the Buddhist Robe." *Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 55 (2006): 1161-1166.
- "Shaping Aesthetic Response to the Buddhist Robe." Presentation given at Oberlin Symposium: "Dressing up Japanese History: Gender, Class, and Clothing from Premodern to Present." Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. September 8, 2007.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Cultural and Religious Significance of Japanese Buddhist Vestments

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in East Asian Languages and Cultures

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Buddhist literature attributes the origin of monks' robes to the historical Buddha. The robes are thus imbued with the wisdom of the Buddha. Indian monastic codes distinguished between the ascetic practice of wearing robes made from discarded rags picked up from the road, and the monastic practice of wearing robes made from donated cloth. As Buddhism spread, robes were adapted to different cultures, often with minimal reference to monastic codes. The history of this adaptation in Japan, the subject of this research, is revealed by investigating examples of garments, depictions of robes in Buddhist art, and a rich literary tradition about the spiritual power of the robe.

The form of both rag robes and monastic robes changed in East Asia. Robes sewn from colorful pieces of fabric imitated robes made of discarded rags. In Japan, such robes were used in rituals for the preservation of the state, given as gifts to the monarch, and preserved at the treasury of the eighth century monarch, Shōmu and other temples. Portraits of eminent Buddhist teachers depict them wearing these multi-colored robes. The monastic robe also changed as Buddhist clerics at court were required to wear robes in the

color of their court rank rather than the subdued colors prescribed by monastic codes.

Seventeenth century reformers attempted to reshape Japanese Buddhist robes to fit the prescriptions of ancient monastic codes. The Shingon Buddhist teacher, Jiun Onkō, supplemented this kind of textual study by examining art and ancient robes. He taught his followers to make monastic robes according to the codes, and robes that he identified as "rag robes," using the ancient multi-colored pieced robes preserved in Japan as a model. The monastic and rag robes made by Jiun's followers inspired the twentieth century Sōtō Zen priest, Sawaki Kōdō, to popularize sewing robes. Following the teachings of Dōgen, the founder of Sōtō Zen, Sawaki encouraged lay and ordained men and women to sew and wear their own robes as a return to fundamental Buddhist practice, an approach at odds with the customs of Sōtō Zen.

The interdisciplinary approach of this dissertation reveals the dynamic interplay between text, art, and textiles that created a vibrant material culture of Japanese Buddhist vestments.

Introduction

Since the sixth century when Buddhism was introduced to the Japanese islands, Buddhist garments have provided a fertile ground for the interplay between material expression and religious belief. Inheriting a tradition that was already a thousand years in the making, Japanese Buddhists followed a trajectory of adapting and interpreting the Buddhist robe that began with the earliest practice communities. Buddhist robes are garments for the body, but they are also the expression of the religious imagination seen in teachings and ritual practices. The Buddhist robe is thus a potent world of meaning that has been continually renewed by Buddhist communities of the past and present.

The twenty five hundred year tradition of interpreting the meaning of Buddhist garments provides a rich source of material for understanding the nature of dress in human culture. Early Buddhist communities arose in a religious culture where any clothing at all was viewed as optional. Buddhist texts attribute the adoption of robes as a way to distinguish themselves from other ascetic groups. For example, certain strands of Jainism, in many ways similar in doctrines and practices of Buddhism, promoted a form of naked asceticism. Buddhists claimed that certain uses of their robes were an ascetic practice. The fact that both wearing and not wearing clothes were claimed as an ascetic practice suggests that asceticism may have had less to do with physical privation than is usually thought. This is one example among many where the study of Buddhist clothing provides a new perspective into the role of dress in human culture. Several hundred years after the death of the Buddha, around the beginning of the common era, when monastic regulations were first codified and recorded, Buddhists had already developed a complex social and ritual world of making, bestowing, receiving and wearing robes. Because this Buddhist sartorial tradition so deliberately and self-consciously explores the meaning of clothing in a religious context it provides a large body of data that will interest scholars of

cultural dress theory as well as religious studies.

Just as scriptures were translated as Buddhism moved into different cultures, Buddhist garments also had to be translated into the sartorial vernacular of each culture. The Japanese obtained the Buddhist robe through successive importations of garments and texts from the East Asian continent. These continental cultures had mediated both the physical garments and their representation in sculpture and painting as well as the translation and interpretation of Buddhist literature concerning the robe. The actual physical garments and their artistic representation were introduced before the texts, so these artifacts were the foundation. Actual garments and art works depicting garments are similar to texts in their ability to project an ideal of the Buddhist robe as it was worn during the lifetime of Śākyamuni Buddha. The concrete details of physical materials, color and structure of the garment as well as its use and meaning for Buddhist monks can be expressed in artifact, artistic representation and textual prescription and interpretation. Buddhist robes are thus a product of a dynamic between these three modes and I have attempted to give equal weight to each without privileging one over the other.

This approach is made more difficult by a revisionary strain that runs through the textual tradition of the Buddhist robe. When texts classify adaptations of the Buddhist robes as unorthodox they place themselves at the top of a hierarchy of significance. Revisionary texts often take a tone of reproach toward contemporary cultural forms, rejecting these forms as inconsistent with the true form of the Buddhist robe and identifying the indigenous robe culture as inferior to the original foreign culture.

Reformers of robe practice in Japan found their ultimate authority in monastic codes. If the goal is to reproduce the same type of garments that Śākyamuni wore, however, these monastic codes, which began to be written down nearly five hundred years after the death of the Buddha, can at best express an ideal of the Buddhist life. To

take them literally as an accurate picture of the practice of the robe during the life of the Buddha misses one of the greatest teachings they have to offer: how do Buddhists adapt and evolve the ideals of the religion to address present social and cultural conditions? The codes, which were translated into Chinese over a period of several centuries, continued to be at the center of a process of cultural modification. In the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, when monastic codes were most assiduously studied in Japan, criticism of contemporary practices of the Buddhist robe was severe. On the other hand, the fact that this era of self-consciousness came more than a thousand years after the introduction of Buddhism to the Yamato court makes clear the crucial role that artifacts and art had played in shaping the native conception of the Buddhist robe, and the fairly minor role of monastic codes through most of Japanese Buddhist history.

Another problematic area is the relationship between text and artistic representation. Aspects of the physical garment, for example, stitching lines, that are prescribed in monastic codes were depicted in art. It is tempting, perhaps, to conclude that artists followed the text, but one could equally say that the artist followed the actual garments or other artistic representations. Each case must be taken on its own terms and without solid documentation it is difficult to make a decisive case for either artifact, art or text being the dominant influence on how garments were represented. The evidence that I will present suggests that the culture in which the art was produced valued these physical aspects so much that the artist meticulously represented the details in paintings and sculpture. In addition to the facial expression and physical shape the depiction of the robes in painting or the drapery of the statue provides a wealth of information about the place of this figure in the Buddhist world.

The Buddhist robe has attracted little interest from Western scholars until the last fifteen years. Most of the studies are short articles, not full-length works. A few early

works treat the robe as part of a larger religious cultural context, such as Johannes Prip-Møller's (1937) study of Chinese Buddhist monasteries and Alan Priest's (1935) museum catalogue for a display of Buddhist and Noh garments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1957 Chang Kun published his study of the *kathinavastu*, a compilation of texts that prescribe rules for the ancient ritual offering of cloth from the laity to the monks after the rainy season retreat and the subsequent period of sewing robes. The *kathina* ceremony is still practiced in Southeast Asian Buddhism as well as in Western countries where Southeast Asian Buddhist centers have been established. Chang's composite translation offers a glimpse into the procedures for making the robes, including the prescription that the leader of the sewing project should make a threefold resolution for each stage of the process from receiving the cloth to washing, dyeing, measuring, cutting, basting and sewing the robes. In spite of the fact that this is still a living practice, Chang's study remains the only one of its kind.

There was no thorough attempt to understand the manner of wearing Buddhist robes until Alexander Griswold's study of drapery on Buddhist statues in 1963. Griswold sought to counter the criticism that artistic representations were necessarily inaccurate depictions of the garments that the Buddha had worn. He undertook the problem of reconciling the apparent discrepancies between the garments worn by contemporary Theravādin monks and the apparently sleeved Buddhist garments as depicted in Chinese art. Concluding that what appeared to be sleeves were in fact drapery he laid out the idealistic premise of his approach: "Both magic and common sense required every Buddha image to be a copy of an older one, purportedly tracing back through no matter how many removes to an original made in India by some artist who was perfectly acquainted with the Buddha's Person" (Griswold 1963, 85). Griswold used Isaline B. Horner's translations of Pali monastic regulations as a basis for understanding the fundamentals of how the robes were worn, and then interviewed contemporary monks to

correct or confirm his understanding, expressing no awareness of the problems of this methodology.

In spite of its uncritical character, Griswold's study stood for three decades as the only serious study of the Buddhist robe until the publication of several articles during the 1990s by scholars who approached the robe as a textile: first, Alan Kennedy's (1993) study of Japanese *kesa* 袈裟, followed by Barry Till and Paula Swart's (1997) study. Kennedy's work opened up the study of Japanese robes and his descriptions of the textiles were used by later scholars. Kennedy presents a chronological, developmental model for understanding the *kesa* in Japanese historical context. His account is marred, however, by the assumption that ancient garments are more authentic than those worn in later periods. This bias confuses his descriptions of both the construction and the religious meaning of the garments. Kennedy also appears to be limited to English language sources.

Studies of the religious and symbolic aspects of the Buddhist robe also appeared during the 1990s. Bernard Faure (1994), using Kennedy for a description of the physical robe, interpreted the symbolism of the robe. He used an unpublished work of Anna Seidel (written in 1983; published in 2003) about the similarity between Chinese Buddhist attitudes toward the robe and the theme of dynastic treasure in Chinese culture. Faure also incorporated the work of the Japanese Buddhist scholar Ishikawa Rikizan 石川力山 (1985) about Sōtō Zen initiation documents (*kirikami* 切り紙) concerning the Buddhist robe as a symbolic map of the spiritual universe (*maṇḍala*). Faure's work was a great advance because he was able to use Japanese sources. John Kieschnik (1999), building on Faure's article, discussed the symbolism of the monk's robe in China: transmission accounts, the purple robe bestowed on the eminent monk, symbolic interpretations of the number of strips that made up the garment and other aspects. Faure and Kieschnik's work at last brought the Buddhist robe into religious studies. Their

purpose was not to construct an overall model for understanding the Buddhist robe. Rather, in their work the robe is treated as a symbolic object without analysis of its function in the history of Buddhism or as a garment in daily religious practice and ritual. From the point of view of religious studies, a more useful approach is that taken by John Strong (2004) who analyzes the meaning of the Buddhist robe as an aspect of relic veneration, an ancient and fundamental aspect of Buddhist piety.

At the beginning of the new century, important textual studies of the Buddhist robe have helped to rectify this problem. Wendy Adamek's study (2000) picked up one of the references cited by Seidel for further investigation. She analyzed how the rhetoric of transmission and the bestowal of the robe became part of a legitimation strategy in Chan. By clarifying the political connections implicit in this rhetoric Adamek points out an important dynamic in East Asian attitudes towards the Buddhist robe. Koichi Shinohara's (2000) study uses a description of the robe in a vision recorded in a seventh century Chinese encyclopedia of Buddhism, *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠琳. This vision, said to have been dreamed by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667), the Chinese master of monastic codes, in the last year of his life, offers an eschatological tale about the power of the robe to preserve and propagate the Buddhist teaching in times of persecution. Antonino Forte's (2001) article about the ruler's bestowal of the purple robe on worthy clerics uses meticulous textual work to correct misperceptions about this practice in East Asian Buddhism. Forte found that the first occasion of the bestowal of the purple robe was concerned with court protocol and only later became a sign of the ruler's approval for favors done by the priests. Finally, Jonathan Silk (2003) published a detailed article that clarifies the various accounts in Pali, Sanskrit and Chinese Buddhist literature of an exchange of robes between Śākyamuni Buddha and his disciple, Mahākāśyapa. Most of these careful textual studies, however, are focused on Chinese sources and religious concerns, with limited reference to Indian sources.

The earliest treatment of the Buddhist robe in an encyclopedia format is contained in the article on "clothing" Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1908-1926). By far the most careful and concise depiction of the Buddhist robe is Willa Tanabe's (2003) article in the *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. None of the foregoing studies, however, comprise more than forty pages, and the wealth of original materials and secondary sources in Japanese has barely been touched. Most studies leave the physical description of Buddhist robes in the hands of textile historians who do not read primary Buddhist sources and rely on translations of secondary sources. Only Griswold's study, in spite of its lack of critical distance, manages a more holistic approach that incorporates art, text and living informants. The result is that errors in these descriptions and unexamined assumptions about the meaning of the garments continue to be perpetuated in other scholar's works.

This dissertation is the first full-length work in English on the religious significance and the practice of the Buddhist robe in Japan. The methodology that I have developed over the course of this research coordinates data from ancient artifacts, art and textual sources. The synergy between these three modes drives the religious meaning of the Buddhist robe in Japan, making it a vital practice that continues to evolve. The contradictions and ambiguities between textual prescriptions and robe practice stimulate the growing point of the religion where the process of adoption and transformation takes place. Similarly, the depiction of the robe in art presents an ideal that can be immediately perceived and provides information that is very difficult to convey through text. As my research will show, these artistic depictions have inspired faith in the robe as well as challenged people's ideas about what the authentic robe is.

In the first chapter I discuss the different authorities on which the ideal robe is based. I introduce the term *nyohō e* 如法衣, which means "the robe that accords with

the *dharma*." In Japanese Buddhist literature this term appears in many different contexts with different meanings. I avoid translating this term as orthodox, which brings its own freight from other contexts. This chapter introduces three paradigms of the Buddhist robe in regard to physical form: the rag robe that is the mark of ascetic practice, the monastic robe that was developed by settled monastic and lay communities and the golden robe that is closely associated with the Buddha. These three models of the physical robe at times appear to be distinct, but at other times the borders between them dissolve. I also introduce a distinction between the ritually defined rag robe and a type of monastic robe that is made from colored bits of cloth called the multi-colored pieced robe. This distinction is particularly important for understanding the ancient *kesa* textiles found in Japan and the lineage of robes that they inspired. Finally, I discuss the implications of the disjunction between the set of three robes as prescribed in the monastic codes and the reality of Japanese robe practice where a single rectangular *kesa* is worn over a set of sleeved robes derived from Chinese and Japanese garments.

In the second chapter I introduce ancient *kesa* artifacts and artworks that have played a significant role in the imagination of the multi-colored pieced robe in Japanese thought and practice. The ancient *kesa* textiles come from collections at major temples in Japan that date to the eighth century. Beginning in the ninth century these *kesa* began to acquire textual histories that became more and more elaborate as time went on. These histories had the effect of identifying certain *kesa* textiles as important treasures, and as these *kesa* began to be included in public exhibitions during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, they came to be seen as important treasures of the Japanese nation. For examples in art, I use important cultural icons that reveal how the portrayal of the multi-colored pieced *kesa* contributes to the meaning of the figure that is depicted. This chapter also investigates the blurring of the distinction between the two paradigms of the rag robe and the monastic multi-colored pieced robe during the nineteenth century. The

premodern terminology used to refer to these robes indicates that they were originally understood to be a form of monastic robes. The distinction between these two kinds of robes was maintained, at least by custom if not by understanding, until the late nineteenth century when the distinction was lost.

The third chapter turns toward texts in order to discuss beliefs concerning the power of the *kesa* to overcome hindrances in practice, including being born in an impure world or in the period of the degeneration of the *dharmā*. The texts in this chapter date from the late Heian through Muromachi period. Tale literature reveals a pattern of ambivalence toward the robe. The Buddhist robe is a force for good as it is believed to have the power to protect the wearer, but on the other hand, the robe may disguise those with evil intent. Another theme is the role that the robe assumes during the age of the degenerate *dharmā* as portrayed by the compilation, *Lamplight of the Latter Dharmā*. In an era when not even monks can keep the precepts, the Buddhist robe becomes the lone signifier of the Buddhist monk. In this text as well, both positive and negative views of the *kesa* are voiced. Finally, I discuss the appeal of the *Compassionate Lotus Scripture* during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries and its teaching of the five virtues of the *kesa* based on the vows made in a former life of Śākyamuni Buddha. The vows imbue the *kesa* with the power to allow a wavering monk to at last achieve awakening, but they also promise more mundane benefits such as freedom from hunger and protection in battle. The beliefs developed during this period continue to have a role in contemporary Buddhist practice.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the changing understanding of the Buddhist robe in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. During this period, in part because of the encouragement of the government, scholar-monks began a serious study of monastic codes and sought to put into practice its teachings about the monastic robe. At first the

reformers envisioned a transformation of Japanese Buddhist practice in which monks would follow the same code of behavior, including dress, while retaining the teachings of their individual schools. During the mid-eighteenth century, however, increasing sectarianism erased this dream and the reformers themselves were viewed as subsets within each school. Despite this, the Shingon cleric, Jiun Onkō 慈雲飲光 (1718-1804) continued to work towards the goal of one monastic robe that would unite at least the practice of the robe. Jiun's project of making one thousand *kesa* that conformed to the prescriptions of the monastic codes was undertaken by his disciples and lay followers. Over a period of forty years nuns, court ladies and local wives sewed *kesa* according to Jiun's instructions in his monumental studies of the *kesa*. Perhaps more than any other act, this project produced an unprecedented level of knowledge of the *kesa* in lay believers, and inspired twentieth century Sōtō Zen clerics and lay people to learn about the *kesa*.

The fifth chapter addresses the question of how the Sōtō Zen school developed its own interpretation of the "robe according to the *dharma*" during the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Due to the emphasis on Dōgen as the source of authority, Sōtō Zen scholar-monks had to decide to what degree the gaps in Dōgen's descriptions could be supplemented with monastic codes. I compare the writings of two scholar monks who answer this question in very different ways. Unlike reformers in other schools who did not seek institutional change, when disagreements arose concerning Dōgen's view of the Buddhist robe, it threatened the institutional integrity of the Sōtō Zen school. Conflicting interpretations of the Buddhist robe developed into a bitter dispute between rival temples in the middle of the nineteenth century and had to be resolved by the Tokugawa bakufu. The compromise achieved in the late nineteenth century resulted in a code of dress that was dictated by committees and compromise, not scholarship and custom. The movement to bring Sōtō robes closer to the prescriptions of monastic codes did not,