

## A brief history of the *Temple Rules*

### Vinaya

The vinaya, the monastic code, dates back to the beginning of the Buddhist monastic order. This is a legal code, listing hundreds of offenses, together with their punishments. For example, here is one rule in the monk's code (nuns have somewhat different rules and more of them) regarding sex in the *samghadisesa* category:<sup>1</sup>

Whatsoever Bhikkhu, being degraded, shall, with perverted mind, magnify, in the hearing of a woman, ministrations to himself (by saying), "This, Sister, would be the noblest of ministrations, that to so righteous and exalted a religious person as myself you should minister by that act," (meaning sexual intercourse) — that is a *samghadisesa*.

Offenses are linked into categories by punishment, i.e., all offenses in a given have the same punishment. For example, in the *samghadisesa* category, the punishment includes probation for the number of days the sin is concealed, penance for six days, and reinstated by agreement of at least 20 monks.

The list of vinaya offenses is long (about 300 for men, depending on the tradition; more for women), and they are listed in order of decreasing seriousness. Once a month (remember "every day is a good day" with its reference to the 15<sup>th</sup> of Borom?) the monastic community gathers, the possible offenses are read, and a member of the community who has transgressed is expected to confess.

### Pai-chang's temple rules

Pai-chang (a.k.a. Baizhang, 720 - 814) was famous for making his Zen community economically self-sufficient — "a day without work is a day without eating" and writing prescriptive (as opposed to the vinaya's proscriptive) rules to guide temple life. His temple rules have long been lost; 400 years after his death, they were reconstructed as *Baizhang's Zen Monastic Regulations* which you can find as a PDF online:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe13/sbe1305.htm>. Note that this is a Pali version of the vinaya; Mahayana versions in English are available, but not online. The translation here is by the great pioneer western Buddhist scholar T.W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, originally published by the Clarendon Press in 1881. You read that right: 1881!

<sup>2</sup> <http://terebeck.hu/zen/BaizhangRegulations.pdf>. The 400 year gap makes the connection with whatever Pai-chang wrote problematic.

Most of these regulations are concerned with details of ceremonies and rituals. Only on p. 237 do we have a brief passage resembling our temple rules: “Money and sexual matters are a far more serious cause of misfortunes than poisonous snakes. One should most carefully stay away from them. It is important for Buddhist practitioners to think of sentient beings with compassion, just as one might feel about one’s infant child...” and so on for one longish paragraph.

## **Korea**

Three sets of rules are required texts for all Korean monks and nuns: Chinul’s (1158 – 1210) *Admonitions to Beginners* (appended below), Wonhyo’s (617-686) *Inspiring Yourself to Practice*, and Ya-un’s *Admonitions to Myself*, gathered together as *Texts for the Beginner’s Mind*.<sup>3</sup> As Seonjoon Young writes, “They are... truly ubiquitous and foundational... in monastic culture and regulation of temple life in Korea.” Our *Temple Rules* are a pastiche of these texts together with well-known phrases from Korean Buddhist culture. For example,

But the Buddha practiced unmoving under the Bodhi tree for six years,  
And for nine years Bodhidharma sat silently in Sorim.

parallels Ya-un’s “Thus the Buddha sat unmoving for six years and Bodhidharma spent nine years in the Shaolin cave without saying a word.”

For another example,

Shouting in a valley.  
Big shout: big echo.  
Small shout: small echo.

parallels Chinul’s “Have deep faith that the response to your invocation is not spurious; it is like shadow and echo which follow form and sound.”

*by Zen Master Bon Hae (Judy Roitman)*

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<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Seonjoon Young for much of the information in this section.

*Admonitions to Beginning Students*, Pojo Chinul, tr: Robert Buswell, in *The Collected Works of Chinul*

*Note: Chinul was one of the great Buddhist teachers of the Korean Sōn tradition. This work was written in 1205 and is one of the bases for our Temple Rules*

### **Admonitions to Novices**

Beginners should keep far away from bad friends, and draw near to the virtuous and good. You should take the five or ten precepts and know well when to keep them and when to dispense with them. You are to follow only the sacred words of the golden-mouthed Buddha; do not heed the lies of ordinary men. Since you have already left home to join the pure assembly, remember always to be gentle and flexible and to harmonize well with the others; do not be proud or haughty. Those older than you are your older brothers; those younger than you are your younger brothers. If there should be a quarrel, try to reconcile the views of the two parties and bring them together by being sympathetic to both. Do not harm others with harsh speech. To slander your fellows and bicker over right and wrong — leaving the householder's life in this way is utterly without benefit.

The calamities of wealth and sex are worse than poisonous snakes. Examine yourself and be aware of your faults: you must leave them far behind.

Unless you have good reason, do not enter anyone else's room or compound. Do not pry surreptitiously into the affairs of other.

If it is not a sixth day, do not wash your underwear.<sup>4</sup>

When you wash your face or rinse your mouth, do not blow your nose loudly or spit.

When serving the formal meal, do not forget the proper sequence.

When walking around, do not open your collar or fling your arms about.

When speaking, do not laugh or joke in a loud voice.

Unless it is to attend to an important matter, do not go beyond the front gate.

If someone is sick, you must care for him with compassion.

When guests visit, you should welcome them gladly.

When you come upon a senior monk, you must respectfully make way for him.

When using utensils, you should be frugal and content with what you have.

During the meal, do not make any noise while drinking or sipping.

In raising or putting down utensils, do it calmly and carefully. Do not raise your head and look around. Do not relish the fine food and despise the coarse. Remain quiet and say nothing; guard against distracting thoughts. Remember that you only take food to protect the body from withering away so that you can attain the path. To ensure that your practice of the path does not go awry, recite the *Heart Sutra* to yourself and contemplate the fact that the three wheels [donor, recipient, and object donated] are pure.

You must be conscientious about attending services in the morning and evening, and chide your own laziness. Know the proper order of procession so that you make no disturbance. During chanting or invocations, you should recite the text while contemplating the meaning; do not simply follow the melody, and do not sing out of key. When gazing reverently at a holy image, do not let your mind wander to other things. You must understand that the karmic obstacles created by your own misdeeds are like the mountains or the sea; you must know that they can be dissolved through noumenal and phenomenal repentance.<sup>5</sup> Deeply contemplate the fact that both the worshiper and the worshiped are conditionally arisen from the

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<sup>4</sup> This is because by washing underwear you might kill lice, and on a sixth day insects can be reborn into the Pure Land.

<sup>5</sup> noumenal = absolute

true nature. Have deep faith in the fact that the response to your invocation is not spurious; it is like shadow and echo which follow form and sound.

### **Admonition to monks**

When residing in the dormitories, you should defer to one another and pick no quarrels. You must help and support one another. Guard against trying to win arguments. Refrain from gathering for idle talk. Be careful not to put on someone else's shoes by mistake. Be careful to sit or lie down in the proper place.

When speaking with guests do not spread tales about the faults of your own house; simply praise the Buddhist functions carried on in the monastery.

You should not go to the storeroom, or look at or listen to anything which could cause you to have doubts.

Unless it is for something important, do not travel around the countryside or associate with laypeople; you could incur the enmity of others and lose your desire for cultivation of the path. Even if you have to go out on important business, inform the abbot or the provost and let him know of your destination. If you enter a layperson's house, you must firmly keep right mindfulness. Be careful not to let your mind become dissolute by the signs and sounds around you, let alone loosen your clothing, laugh and joke, talk distractedly of trivial matters, or eat or drink at improper times. Do not wrongly assume that, thereby, you are performing "unhindered practice" when actually you are deviating dangerously from the Buddhist precepts. Once you have aroused the suspicions of virtuous and good people, how can you possibly be considered wise again?

### **Admonitions to Sōn monks**

When residing in the meditation hall, refrain from keeping company with novices. Refrain from going in and out to greet people. Refrain from noticing the good and bad qualities of others. Refrain from zealously pursuing words and letters. Refrain from oversleeping. Refrain from distracting yourself with too many unnecessary activities.

When the master goes up to his seat to preach the dharma, do not be overawed by it and, as before a steep precipice, turn away. On the other hand, do not think that you are already familiar with it and become complacent. Listen to the sermon with an empty mind; then it will certainly be an occasion for you to attain enlightenment. Do not be like those sophists who have studied rhetoric and judge a person's wisdom only by his eloquence. As it is said, "A snake drinks water and produces poison; a cow drinks water and produces milk." If you train wisely, *bodhi* is produced; if you train stupidly, *samsara* is produced — this is my meaning. Furthermore, do not think slightingly of your dharma instructors. By doing so, you create obstacles on the path and your cultivation cannot progress. You must be careful about this! The sastras say, "It is like a man traveling at night with a wicked person who carries a torch to show the way. If the man will not accept the service of his light because the person is bad, he could fall in a hole or drop into a pit." Listening to the dharma is like treading on thin ice: you must direct your eyes and ears and listen to the profound words. Clear your thoughts of emotions and sense-objects and appreciate the recondite meaning. After the master has left the hall, sit silently and reflect upon his lecture. If you have any doubts, consult those who have understood. Ponder it in the evening; inquire about it in the morning. Try not to fall short in your understanding by so much as a strand of silk or hair. If you practice in this way, you will be able to develop right faith and be one who has embraced the path.

The beginningless habits of lust, desire, anger, and delusion bind the mind-ground; although temporarily they seem to be subdued, they arise again like malaria which strikes on alternate days. At all times you must make use of the power of the skillful means and wisdom of applied practice; take pains to guard your mind against the arising of defilements. How can you look for a way to salvation while wasting time with pointless chatter and turning your back on the mind-doctrine of Sōn?

Strengthen your will; reprimand yourself; reprove your own laziness. Know your faults and turn toward what is good. Reform and repent [your bad conduct]; train and control [your mind]. Cultivate earnestly and the power of contemplation will grow; train continuously and your practice will become increasingly pure. If you think constantly about how difficult it is to meet the dharma, the work of enlightenment will always seem fresh. If you always remember your good fortune, you will never backslide. If you persevere in this way for a long time, naturally samadhi and prajna will become full and bright and you will see your own mind-nature; you will use compassion and wisdom like sorcery and ferry across sentient beings; you will become a great field of merit for men and gods.

I urge you to exert yourselves!