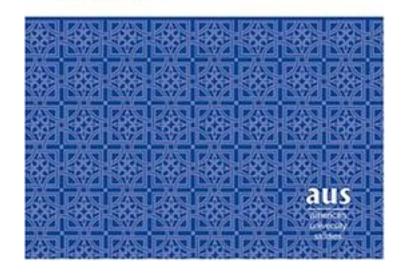
The Revival of Buddhist Monasticism in Medieval China



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HUAIYU CHEN



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Abstract:

Having recovered from political persecution and resolved problems within the sangha, Buddhism reached a summit in its development during Sui and Early Tang China (581-755). Daoxuan (596-667) played an unparalleled role in shaping the direction of Buddhist history during the medieval period through both his rich writings and his innovations of monastic rituals and regulations. This dissertation focuses on several key issues in his work, including the veneration of Buddha-relics and its relationship to the reconstruction and renovation of Buddhist monasteries as authoritative structures and as ground for the monastic community, the recreation of the ordination platform and ordination ritual, and the way in which the Buddhist community reclassified and dealt with monastic property. First, it discusses the historical background of Chinese Buddhism from the fifth to the seventh centuries. This study then argues that, in reinterpreting the image of southern Buddhism as a cultural tradition, Daoxuan sought a new model for the Chinese Buddhist tradition as a whole. More specifically, this study argues that the ritual of venerating relics as a commemorative ceremony functioned to expand the religious power of Buddhism in Chinese society and enhance the bonds within the monastic community. This study also interprets the creation of the ordination platform as a crucial element in the restoration of the Chinese monastic order. In addition, this study suggests that Daoxuan developed his new rules to create an innovative model for the Buddhist community as a ground for individual monks' spiritual progress. He did this in part by reclassifying monastic property as communal and individual property. In sum, Daoxúan created a new tradition of Chinese Buddhist monasticism.

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