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Venerable Yin-shun. *The Way to Buddhahood: Instructions from a Modern Chinese Master*. Translated by Wing H. Yeung, M.D. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1998, xxii + 358 pages, ISBN 0–86171–133–5 (paperback), US $19.95.

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Yin–shun introduces his book, *The Way to Buddhahood: Instructions from a Modern Chinese Master*, with the line, "Buddhism is a religion of reason and not just a religion of faith" (p. ix). Both the content of the work and its organization underscore this belief; it is intended as a step–by–step catechism for enlightenment. General readers will find the work compelling as one of the few modern Chinese Buddhist perspectives on enlightenment and for its inclusive organization of many different Buddhist schools. This coverage can provide the reader with at least one systematic approach to the sometimes bewildering profusion of ideas under the umbrella of Buddhism. Scholars will find interest in the intellectual and simultaneously religious perspective that seeks to conjoin Buddhism into a syncretic whole.

Using the traditional structure of verse passage followed by commentary, Yin–shun builds his case for a Buddhism that accepts all traditions (though never capitulating the Great Vehicle's preeminence). He states in his introduction, "I thought I should set out my objective: to interconnect all Buddhist teachings and turn them toward the Buddha way" (p. xii). The book strives to show how all soteriological methodologies can be fitted together, beginning with the "Dharma Common to the Five Vehicles" (which includes the goal of heavenly rebirth in the world's other religions), and ending with the "Distinctive Dharma of the Great Vehicle." Rather than adhere to one party line, Yin–shun dips into a number of schools to eluci-

date his overarching vision of a reconciled, progressive Buddhism, an idea developed directly from his own teacher Taixu, and following such traditions as the Tiantai and the Huayan Schools: "The masters of these traditions have integrated the Buddhist teachings and organized them into courses with graduated practices" (p. x).

The book is broken down into two parts: "The Preliminaries" and "The Divisions of the Teachings." The first part contains two chapters: "Taking Refuge in the Dharma" and "Attending to the Dharma." Both are intended to provide the initiate with the proper spiritual basis for more advanced study beginning with the second part. Yin–shun refers to the sequence offered in the *Āgamasūtra* for the origination of this system (p. 43). The first chapter begins with an elaboration of the Three Treasures and an argument for their superiority to all other forms of refuge, such as family or material success. This presentation of a tenet followed by rigorous, legalistic argument against any secular alternative continues throughout the book. Once the first section establishes the authority of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, the second chapter outlines the means to fully realize the Three Treasures' benefits. These include such practical matters as being born in human form, associating with good people, and avoiding the Eight Obstacles.

The last section of the second chapter addresses the issue of skill in means, an idea Yin–shun mentions frequently to explain his use of numerous, sometimes conflicting philosophies within his vision of Buddhism. Here he outlines his argument that the various teachings he has culled from disparate traditions represent the same ultimate truth, but differ based on the sophistication of the audience. But Yin–shun does differentiate his Buddhism from its historically frequent confluence with other Chinese philosophies. For example, while Yin–shun uses the technique begun with Zhu Fa–ya of *ge–yi*, or employing traditional Chinese terms and aphorisms to explain Buddhism, he delineates clearly between Buddhism and the oft–aligned Confucianism: "In the past there were masters who missed the point, thinking that the 'happy state' of Confucius and his student Yan — the manifestation of the highest virtues in the Great Learning — and the extending of one's conscience as taught by Mencius were identical with the main ideas of Buddhism that came from the West" (p. 180).

The second part of the book, "The Divisions of the Teachings," begins in earnest to describe Yin–shun's perspective on the means to enlightenment, complete with graphs and charts. Just as the first part laid a foundation for the second, the second part of the book builds in sophistication, commencing with "The Dharma Common to the Five Vehicles," moving to "The Dharma Common to the Three Vehicles," and culminating in the

"The Dharma Distinctive of the Great Vehicle." As the names imply, the "Dharma Common to the Five Vehicles" and the "Dharma Common to the Three Vehicles" chart an upward trajectory, building in complexity and laying the basis for the concluding chapter. Along the way many issues are explicated, notably the issue of karma, both good and bad, and the means to mitigate it. This leads to discussion of the Five Precepts, meditation, and to the ameliorative effects of right recollection of Maitreya Buddha as explained in the sutras *Mi le xia sheng cheng fo jing* and *Mi le pu sa shang sheng jing* (p. 103).

In the next chapter, the "Dharma Common to the Three Vehicles," the eponymous Three Vehicles serve as the progressive means to the great distinctive Dharma of the final section. Here Indian *Mahāyāna* thought, while evident throughout the work, takes to the fore. Besides elucidating the issues of dependent origination, and the three studies interwoven with the Eight–Fold Path, Yin–shun explains these topics' relations to the *Saṃyuktāgama*'s fruitions of the *śrāvakas: srotāpanna*, *sakṛdāgāmin*, *anāgāmin*, and arhatship. The related but distinct roles of *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *bodhisattvas* are also enumerated, as well as their relationship to one another and the goal of complete enlightenment in the *Mahāyāna* tradition.

Yin–shun sums up his belief at the beginning of the fifth and final chapter: "Therefore, only the great vehicle doctrine . . . is the real meaning of the Buddha Dharma and the real purpose of the Tathāgata's teaching" (p. 203). Here readers will observe how the author positions *Mahāyāna* beliefs as the highest expression of Buddhist thought. First, the Buddha nature is described using a *Mādhyamika* perspective, and the *pāramitās* are catalogued exhaustively. Within the discussion of the realization of *prajñāpāramitā*, Yin–shun weaves a comparative analysis of *Yogācāra*, *Mādhyamika*, and *Tathāgatagarbha* systems using the treatises of Nāgārjuna, his teacher Taixu, and his own close readings of scriptures to reach the conclusion, "Thus, it can be inferred that the Buddha's teaching was originally of one flavor" (p. 294). This section will particularly interest scholars, for here Yin–shun delves deeply into epistemological and phenomenological issues of self and the nature of reality, drawing extensively on such scriptures as the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Mūlamadhyamaka–kārikā*, *Saṃdhinirmocana*, and the *Ru lai zang*.

In *The Way to Buddhahood: Instructions from a Chinese Master*, readers will enjoy the traits of Yin–shun that set him apart from most traditional monk–scholars: his reliance upon diverse sources and traditions, coupled with a highly precise, scholastic examination. But scholars will also find interest in how his book reveals the etiology of the Chinese

Tripiṭaka, while never cleaving to any particular school, since all point toward the Buddha way. For Yin–shun, it is a matter of skillful means: all the ideas presented are legitimate, from Pure Land to the School of Mere Consciousness, their efficacy simply depending on the user's sophistication. General readers, particularly students, will enjoy how this philosophy creates a survey of Buddhist belief in the Chinese vein, while academics will be interested in how such a survey places his thought within the intellectual tradition of Chinese Buddhism.