
The administration of Buddhist monasteries in India received only little attention to date. Silk’s “attempt at a systematic examination of the administrators and administrative roles of Indian Buddhist monasticism” (p. v) therefore is highly welcome. The author uses Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pāli sources and also consults Japanese secondary literature. He thus presents a huge amount of references from a wide variety of sources, literary and epigraphic, and explores “the meaning and references of several terms for monastic administrators, what might have been expected of such individuals, what their responsibilities were, and the status accorded to them” (Silk, p. 16). After a Preface (pp. v–ix), the list of Contents (pp. xi–xii), and “Technical Details and Abbreviations” (pp. xiii–xv), the author introduces the topic (ch. 1, pp. 1–16), and stresses the tension between the ideal of practicing (meditation, study) and service (administration; ch. 2, pp. 17–37). In chapters 3 to 8 he examines a number of terms employed for administrative positions, respectively words forming part of such terms, namely vaiyapryakāra (ch. 3, pp. 39–73), navakarmika (ch. 4, pp. 75–99), vārika (ch. 5, pp. 101–125), *karmadāna (ch. 6, pp. 127–135), vihārapāla (ch. 7, pp. 137–146) and mómōdī and ávāsika (ch. 8, pp. 147–158). Under the given headlines many more titles are investigated, e.g. upadhvārika (pp. 85 ff.; 103 ff., etc.), adhikaranaśamcāraka bhiksū (p. 171 f.), kukkura-posaka (p. 201) etc., for which the index of technical terms gives ample evidence. “Classified lists of administrators” are treated in chapter 9 (pp. 159–175). In chapter 10 (pp. 177–197), “Misbehaving managers”, the role of administrators in narrative literature is investigated, whereas chapter 11 (pp. 199–202) is devoted to the problems presented by Chinese and, to a minor extent, Tibetan terminology. In chapter 12, “the Administered”, Silk presents terms used in inscriptions for those who helped or worked in various capacities in a monastery (pp. 203–206). After his “Concluding Considerations” (ch. 13, pp. 207–212) he adds a “Supplementary Note” (pp. 213–217) dealing with the term dbruvabhikṣā. A collection of “Textual Materials” (pp. 219–288) contains the original texts for all longer passages quoted in translation in the main text. The book is completed by a Bibliography (pp. 289–321) and several Indices: Subjects (p. 324), Indic technical terms (pp. 324–328), Tibetan technical terms (pp. 328–330), Chinese technical terms (pp. 330–333), Texts cited (pp. 333–337), Chinese
texts by Taishō Number (pp. 337–338), and Inscriptions cited (pp. 338–341).

The investigation of the administration of Buddhist monasteries is notoriously difficult for a number of reasons: a) no authoritative statements existed prescribing the organization of monasteries, thus leaving it up to each community how to proceed; b) the types of monasteries vary considerably depending on whether they are monastic universities like Nālanda with several thousand inhabitants, provincial monasteries with perhaps only one or very few monks, city monasteries, where monks had many duties with respect to the lay population, forest monasteries, etc.; c) Buddhism expanded vastly, and the organization of monasteries most probably followed local customs; d) the structures of monasteries differed depending on size, wealth, donators and the rights maintained by them, the strictness of its inhabitants regarding Vinaya rules, etc.; e) the administrative organization developed over more than 2000 years; f) the various schools developed differently, and g) many of our sources are neither localized nor dated. The author is well aware of these difficulties, and understands his work as a starting point for further investigations of administrative roles. To that purpose, he takes into consideration canonical writings of various schools, especially the Vinayas, as well as Mahāyāna scriptures and epigraphical material. His book is designed to serve two functions. First, to provide a context for the “debate” over proper roles and vocations of a Buddhist monk, particularly in Mahāyāna sources, and secondly, to serve as a collection of materials (p. viii). On both accounts the author succeeded. My remarks below, therefore, are not intended to belittle Silk’s achievement, but are rather an expression of the interest this study aroused.  

Regarding the tension between devotion to meditation, devotion to study, and devotion to service (ch. 2) Silk gives several examples of texts rejecting administrative involvement in favour of meditative practice as the

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1) Pāli texts are quoted according to the editions of the Pali Text Society; for the Tikās I refer to the Burmese Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana edition also available on the Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana CDRom of the Vipassana Research Institute (page numbers are to the Roman script version). References for which only page numbers are given are found out by the Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana CDRom, because I did not have direct access to the editions of the Pali Text Society. From this slight dislocations of the reference (plus or minus one page) occasionally occur. The texts are abbreviated as follows: Sp = Samantapāsādikā, Vinayaṭṭhakathā, ed. J. Takakusu, M. Nagai (and K. Mizuno in vols. 5 and 7), 7 vols., London, 1924–1947 (Pali Text Society); Vjb = Vajirabuddhi, Vajirabuddhitikā, Rangoon 1960 (Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana edition, publ. Buddha Sasana Council, Rangoon); Vin = Vinaya Pitaka, ed. Hermann Oldenberg, 5 vols., London, 1879–1883. In all other cases I have given the full text name.