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## The *Huatou* Revolution, Pure Land Practices, and Dahui's Chan Discourse on the Moment of Death

**Abstract** Song-dynasty Chan depended for its place in society and its financial resources on lay patrons. Educated gentleman-officials (*shidafu*) were the wealthiest and most powerful of men. From the time of Dahui Zonggao in the Southern Song, Linji teachers shifted from elaborate comments on *gongan* in periodic sermons to a new method of *gongan* inspection termed “critical phrase” (*kan huatou*). Scholars have argued that Dahui's invention of *huatou* practice was primarily related to internal Chan rivalries for elite patrons. I argue that Dahui's motive was also connected to a rivalry with Pure Land Buddhism over the making of appeals to lay followers among scholar-officials. Dahui was aware and tried to communicate the usefulness of *huatou* in addressing the elite laity's doubts about birth and death, and in particular their anxieties about facing the decisive moment of death. Therefore, he developed a *gongan* discourse that is related to anticipation of dying by harnessing the power of doubt to create an experience of spiritual awakening.

**Keywords** Dahui Zonggao, Song, doubt, *huatou*, *nianfo*, moment of death

Song dynasty Chan, like all of Chinese Buddhism, depended for its place in society and its financial resources on wealthy patrons. Furthermore, in the Song dynasty most monasteries were incorporated into the state, and thus the appointment of abbots depended on the recommendation of state officials to the court. Every monastery relied upon the favor of members of the educated gentleman-official (*shidafu*) class, the wealthiest and most powerful of men.

Scholars have pointed out that the outpouring of Chan literature that occurred during the Song dynasty, not only the Northern but also the Southern Song, and the incorporation of some Chan literary works into the Song editions of the Buddhist canon, reflects the taste of the *shidafu* class. Discourse records, “transmission of the flame histories,” poetic and prose commentaries on selected *gongan*, letters and personal instructions by Chan masters to monastics and

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*shidafu* students, and collections of sermons by Chan masters all circulated among literati.

Gentlemen-officials, who studied history, classics, government policy, essay writing, and poetry in order to pass government bureaucracy entrance examinations, were themselves accomplished students of poetry. They were familiar with the idea that truth can be presented through enigmatic encounters and dialogues, for this was present in classics like the *Analects of Confucius* and the *Zhuangzi*. In his description of the Chan lineage's success, Yuan dynasty Chan master Zhongfeng Mingben noted the literary qualities of Chan works: "Eloquent are their words, crafty are their techniques; lofty is their style, pleasing are their rhymes, majestic are their commands, and great is their school."<sup>1</sup> For those who read Chan literature, instead of confronting the "hammer and tongs" of a Chan master they could safely decipher the dialogues at home in their libraries.

Scholars now agree that an addition or transition in the practice methods of the prevalent Linji school of Chan occurred between the leadership of Yuanwu Keqin and Dahui Zonggao. From Dahui's time, Linji teachers shifted from elaborate comments on *gongan* in regular sermons to monastic students and lay followers combined with written commentaries on *gongan*, to a new "keyword" or "critical phrase" method of *gongan* inspection that used only a few words.<sup>2</sup>

Using the *gongan* commentaries in verse by Xuedou Chongxian<sup>3</sup> as his basic text, Yuanwu Keqin produced an intriguing collection of enigmatic exchanges with both prose and poetic commentary, the *Biyuanlu* (Blue cliff record). Yet, even though Yuanwu and Dahui wrote poetic and prose commentaries on *gongan*, the records of both masters contain criticisms of the scholar-officials' standard practice of attempting to penetrate the truths cherished by Chan masters through studying such texts. Dahui's long discursions on the faults of *shidafu* as Chan

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Natasha Heller, "The Chan Master as Illusionist: Zhongfeng Mingben's *Huanzhu Jiaxun*."

<sup>2</sup> Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty Chan*; Schlütter, "Silent Illumination, Kung-an Introspection, and the Competition for Lay Patronage in Sung-Dynasty Ch'an." On Yuanwu, see Ding-hwa Evelyn Hsieh, "Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in's (1063–1135) Teaching of Ch'an Kung-an Practice: A Transition from the Literary Study of Ch'an Kung-an to the Practical K'an-hua Ch'an." See also Miriam L. Levering, "Miao-tao and Her Teacher Dahui"; and Robert E. Buswell, Jr., "The 'Short-cut' Approach of K'an-hua Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism."

<sup>3</sup> Xuedou's anthology of poems that comment on one hundred *gongan* was published in the Northern Song and circulated widely. It is recorded in a Southern Song catalogue dated 1151. The text included in the *Sibu congkan* appears to be a Song dynasty edition; it is called *The Collection of Poetic Commentaries on the [Words of the] Ancients by the Teacher Xuedou Chongxian, also Known as the Great Teacher Mingjue (Xuedou Xianheshang Mingjue dashi songgu ji)*. It is preserved in the *Sibu congkan*, Xubian jibu, ser. 2, vol. 370.

students are anticipated in Yuanwu's discourses.

Abbots like Yuanwu and Dahui presided over large bodies of monks who would practice Chan for twenty or thirty years. Their practice could be influenced and tested by verbal expressions. As Yuanwu often said, "Words cannot express it but words must be used to teach it." Robert Sharf has pointed out that much of the constant rehearsal of encounter dialogues and the production of commentaries on Chan sayings and *gongan* in large Chan monasteries must have been for the sake of training future Chan teachers in the Chan use of words.<sup>4</sup> In Chan master Yuanwu's *Xinyao* (Essentials of the mind),<sup>5</sup> what is emphasized in his instructions to monks is a kind of mindfulness meditation focused on the present moment in which one (perhaps using *samadhi* power and growing insight into emptiness) discards delusions and attachments. As one is practicing this, he or she routinely listens to the teacher's sermons in which *gongan* are raised and hints are offered. Moreover, the teacher raises a different *gongan* with a monastic student when he enters the teacher's room, in order to test and trigger deeper awakening.<sup>6</sup> Yuanwu assured his monastic students that deep awakening will come to them if they practice in this way uninterruptedly for twenty or thirty years.

Dahui taught his monastic students in much the same way, but in addition he invented a new method of practice that does not rely on insights triggered by poetry or the contemplation of cleverly disguised Buddhist theory. In what follows, I argue that Dahui's invention, and his excitement about it, are related to its usefulness in addressing elite lay men and women's anxieties and doubts about the fate that awaited them on the other side of the grave. Where did people go after death? And would their record of selfish and unselfish deeds bring them a good rebirth?

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## Doubt and the *Huatou*

One problem that Dahui identified with the practice of almost all lay students and some monastics was that doubt was unfocused and remained undefeated. One might remain a student forever without actually experiencing awakening as an event or without freeing oneself from a deluded mind's attachment to and entanglement with the realm of illusion, i.e., *samsara*.

Although teachers such as Yuanwu and Linji always spoke of doubt as a

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<sup>4</sup> Robert H. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan *Gongan*."

<sup>5</sup> *Foguo Keqin Chanshi xinyao* (Chan master Foguo Keqin's essentials of mind), XZJ 120. Note that all citations from the Taishō (T) and *Xu Zangjing* (X) collections are from CBETA.org. Also *Xu Zangjing* (XZJ) is the Tokyo edition.

<sup>6</sup> Dahui once pointed out to Yuanwu that because Yuanwu always used the same *gongan*, the students could prepare in advance, defeating the exercise.

hindrance,<sup>7</sup> Dahui devoted his energy to explaining the need for doubt in *gongan* meditation. He may have had a precursor: passages in Yuanwu's dharma-brother Foyan Qingyuan's discourse record also suggest that most meditative *gongan* study succeeds because of doubt.<sup>8</sup> Qingyuan tells the story of his teacher Wuzu Fayuan's early studies with Fushan Fayuan, with whom he stayed for a year. Fayuan "instructed him to contemplate" (*lingkan*) the following case: "the Tathagata has esoteric teachings; Kasyapa does not conceal the treasury."<sup>9</sup> With this *gongan* unresolved, Fayuan sent Wuzu to Baiyun Shouduan. One day when Shouduan was giving a talk, Wuzu experienced a great awakening. Qingyuan shares with us Wuzu's thoughts at that moment: "The Tathagata has esoteric teachings; Kasyapa does not conceal the treasury. Of course! Of course!" Wuzu further recalls other puzzling phrases he had encountered in his previous studies, which he now understands as well. Qingyuan concludes the story by asking, "was that not deep doubt?"

There is nothing unusual about the story about Wuzu, but Qingyuan's concluding question is unusual. Qingyuan elsewhere spells out his insight clearly:

If you wish to understand this matter clearly, then you must give rise to doubt and investigate thoroughly. If you are deeply puzzled about this matter, then that is the precursor to *prajna*-knowledge. Why is this? The business of the wandering monk is only to put an end to the feeling of uncertainty (*yi*, doubt). If you do not give rise to doubt, then how will you put an end to the feeling of uncertainty?<sup>10</sup>

In Qingyuan's view, *gongan* may trigger insight without any new arousal of doubt, but only if faith and doubt are present. A *gongan* given to a student to ponder over a period of time definitely arouses and focuses doubt.

The problem that Dahui faced so squarely was that not all *gongan* study as practiced in his day focused enough doubt or effectively removed entanglements with words. Dahui's method compresses and intensifies the monastic process of raising doubt through *gongan* into the practice of focusing one's attention on

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<sup>7</sup> Levering, "Ch'an Enlightenment for Laymen: The Teachings of Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089–1163)," and Ding-hwa Evelyn Hsieh, "Yuan-wu's Teaching of Ch'an Kung-an Practice."

<sup>8</sup> *Shuzhou Longmen Foyan heshang pushuo yulu*, X68, no. 1315.32.207a10ff. In *Gu zunsu yulu* (Discourse records by ancient masters). I am indebted here to Alan Gerard Wagner's 2008 Harvard University dissertation, "Practice and Emptiness in the Discourse Record of Ruru Jushi, Yan Bing (d. 1212), a Chan Buddhist Layman of the Southern Song." Wagner's dissertation is available online at [http://rurujushi.com/Wagner\\_thesis\\_Ruru\\_Jushi\\_2008-10-07.pdf](http://rurujushi.com/Wagner_thesis_Ruru_Jushi_2008-10-07.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> X1315.xxxii.68.211c9–10.

<sup>10</sup> X1315.xxxii.68.211b19–22. Translated by Wagner, *Practice and Emptiness*, 66.

observing the “key” or “critical” phrase (*kan huatou*) of a Chan “case” (*gongan*). This method emphasizes doubt while avoiding intellectual and emotional entanglements.

Dahui invented a non-discursive method of practice that does not rely on command of poetic skills or insights triggered by poetry, wrestling with Buddhist theory, or even words. One has to have some familiarity with the case. One then has to focus on the central question of the case, expressed in the “keyword,” to arouse doubt. But one does not respond with verbal thought or imagination to the words contained in the “critical phrase.” All “affective thinking,” that is, verbal thought and imagination, must cease before awakening can happen.

This invention by Dahui, a serious attempt to imagine different functions for language, either required or inspired serious philosophical engagement on Dahui’s part, as can be seen in Dahui’s explanations in both his *Letters (shu)* and *Individual Instructions (fayu)*. His philosophical insights are reflected in his practice instructions to students, which are designed to wall off any entanglement with words or meaning as one continues to concentrate on inspecting the *huatou*. Dahui explains the process as follows:

Here just observe the *huatou*. A monk asked Zhaozhou, “Does a dog have buddha-nature or does it lack it?” Zhaozhou said, “It lacks it (*wu*).” When you observe it, do not use extensive evaluation, do not try to explicate it, do not seek for understanding, do not take it up when you open your mouth, do not make meaning when you raise it, do not fall into vacuity, do not hold onto your mind waiting for enlightenment, do not catch a hold of it when your teacher speaks, and do not lodge in a shell of no concerns. But keep hold of it at all times, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. “Does a dog have buddha-nature or not?” Hold onto this “it lacks it” until it gets ripe, where verbal discussion and mental evaluation cannot reach. The square inch of your mind will be in a muddle. When it is as if you have clamped your teeth around a tasteless piece of iron and your will does not retreat—when it is like this, then that is good news!<sup>11</sup>

As Natasha Heller points out, the procedure for using the *huatou* is largely explained here by negation: One is not to evaluate or subject the *huatou* to interpretation, or to figure it out through exchanges with one’s teacher in the teacher’s room. Dahui’s instructions tie the practice to the removal of illusion/delusion with no possible generation of attachment to a new delusion:

The practice of observing the word is significant in that it does not eschew

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<sup>11</sup> T1998, 47:901c27–902a6. Translated by Natasha Heller, “The Chan Master as Illusionist,” 301.

language and does not claim that language is always an obstruction. Rather, it indicates that one must approach words in a certain way. As Zhongfeng Mingben says, “You should know that the teaching of great illusion is under your feet; you do not need to move in the least. Only wait for your emotions to dissipate and your views to be extinguished, and you will tread on it as you walk.”<sup>12</sup>

Here Zhongfeng Mingben is in definite accord with his predecessor Dahui.

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### Did Dahui Burn the *Biyantu*? and If So, Why?

Although the contemporary evidence for Dahui's act is slight, the facts are that the *Biyantu* disappeared from use for more than a century, and that Dahui is the only person mentioned in connection with its disappearance. Scholars are inclined to accept that Dahui burned the woodblocks that made wide circulation of the *Biyantu* possible.<sup>13</sup> But why? Why single out the *Biyantu* among the many Chan published works that distracted literati and monastics from breaking through the delusion of *samsara*? Dahui had himself demonstrated understanding of old cases by writing poetic commentaries.<sup>14</sup> He also understood the value of making a collection of cases for his own study and use, as he did in creating his *Zhengfayanrang* (J. Shobogenzo), *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*.

My hypothesis is that Dahui saw that Yuanwu's prose commentaries gave too many cases away, making it difficult for students to give rise to doubt. It is possible to acquire familiarity with Chan language and Chan metaphors for various Mahayana Buddhist concepts in a way that allows one to “get the point” of Chan cases without actually being freed from affective thinking. Perhaps to Dahui it seemed that many readers had, thanks to Yuanwu, intellectually understood Xuedou's hundred cases too well.

What needs to be better understood is Dahui's motives for creating a new verbal practice form. Why did he do it? In his book *When Zen Became Zen*, Morten Schlütter points out that Dahui started using the *huatou* as a means of instruction during the same year that he lived close to the large monastery whose

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<sup>12</sup> Heller, “The Chan Master as Illusionist,” 303.

<sup>13</sup> On this, see Ogisu Jundō, 1963, “Daie zenji no Hekigan shū shōki ni tsuite,” 115–18.

<sup>14</sup> Between 1131–33 Dahui compiled *gongan* and wrote verses for a *songgu* collection in collaboration with one of his dharma heirs, Wan'an Daoyan (1094–1164), while Dahui was living at or near the site of Yunmen Wenyan's old retreat. Each case is a verse by “Donglin” and then one by “Yunmen.” This collection is in the *Discourse Records of Ancient Worthies*, Z1315.xlvii, as the *Verses on Old Cases by the Abbot of Donglin and [the Monk] Residing at Yunmen's Retreat (Donglin heshang Yunmen anzhu songgu)*. Wagner, “Practice and Emptiness,” 74–75.

abbot was Zhenxie Qingliao, a key player in the dramatic revival of the Caodong Chan lineage during the late Northern and early Southern Song dynasty. The Caodong revival began in the lifetime of Furong Daokai, and continued as his dharma-heirs gained positions at major monasteries. This revival clearly depended on finding lay *shidafu* patrons. Schlütter argues that Dahui saw the rise of the Caodong lineage teachers as a threat to the dominance of the Linji lineage, and that Dahui for that reason went on the attack against its practice method while simultaneously trying out the method of inspecting the *huatou*.

There is no historical evidence in Dahui's records to support Schlütter's proposal. The compilers of Dahui's records for inclusion in the Song dynasty official Buddhist canons would omit evidence of such worldly motivations. Another motive for Dahui's energetic teaching of *kan huatou* practice can be advanced. This motive, which I want to expand on here, is a competition that certainly existed in the Song dynasty between "orthodox" Chan practices based on the goal of completely breaking through the deluded mind of affective thinking, on the one hand, and Pure Land practices that, on the other, offered an intermediate goal of rebirth in the Pure Land due to one's preservation of Amitabha *samadhi* at the moment of death.

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## **Kan Huatou and Dahui's Discourse about the Moment of Death**

In the Pure Land scriptural tradition, single-minded devotion to Amitabha Buddha would enable the pious to be reborn in his Buddha-land, known as the Pure Land. In the Song dynasty there was not an independent Pure Land school with separate patriarchs, lineages, monasteries, and so forth. Monks in any school could trust in Amitabha Buddha and his vows and undertake Pure Land practices in addition to others. Monks could organize societies of Pure Land practitioners, as could lay people. Ritual practices varied within the general rubric of *nianfo samadhi*, i.e., visualizing Amitabha Buddha or becoming mindful of him by reciting his name.<sup>15</sup> Performance of these practices on one's deathbed was particularly important, for maintaining one's concentration on Amitabha in the final moments could result in rebirth in his land despite many misdeeds. *Nianfo* could result in visionary encounters with Amitabha Buddha, as well as visions of golden lotuses, marvelous fragrances, lights, and enchanted music, all drawn from imagery found in Pure Land scriptures. Such miracles confirmed the promise that the efforts of practitioners would result in their

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<sup>15</sup> For an introduction to Pure Land practices germane to this discussion, see Daniel B. Stevenson, "Pure Land Worship and Meditation in China," and "Deathbed Testimonials of the Pure Land Faithful."

rebirth in the Pure Land.<sup>16</sup>

These practices saw considerable revision and revitalization in the Song dynasty as part of the reemergence and expansion of Pure Land devotion and organization, seen especially in South China.<sup>17</sup> Lay people participated extensively in this movement, either individually or in groups. Clergy of various Buddhist traditions, including Chan, responded by composing new texts and liturgies that replaced those lost in the late Tang period. These new texts included liturgies for laity. Among the most important figures in this movement were the Chan cleric Changlu Zongze, author of the *Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery* (*Chanyuan qinggui*), compiled in 1103, and also many Pure Land texts. Another important figure was the Tiantai cleric Ciyun Zunshi.<sup>18</sup> Zunshi also wrote many Pure Land ritual and meditational manuals, including one for laity that included a regular practice of “ten moments of mindfulness of Amitabha,” which entailed a tenfold verbal recitation of Amitabha’s name.<sup>19</sup> According to Daniel Stevenson, Zunshi “designed this simple formula both as a minimum daily quota of Pure Land practice and a dress rehearsal for the deathbed.”<sup>20</sup> This ritual for laity was prefaced by prayers for a clear and peaceful mind at death, accompanied by all the auspicious signs of immediate rebirth in Amitabha’s Pure Land, and included the basic ritual elements of ritual purification, worship, confession, and vow.

Many *shidafu* and their female relatives participated in these practices. Devotees displayed the fruits of their piety in their unshaken mindfulness of Amitabha and his Buddha-land at the moment of death. How popular were these practices among *shidafu*? Many more collections of “exemplary deaths” through Pure Land devotion and practice were produced in the Song than in other periods, compiled of course by *shidafu*.<sup>21</sup> Those compiled in the Song were conspicuously longer, with more exemplary individual cases. Here are the dates

<sup>16</sup> I have availed myself here of Mark Halperin’s useful summary in his “Domesticity and the Dharma: Portraits of Buddhist Laywomen in Sung China,” 50–100, esp. 86–90.

<sup>17</sup> See Daniel A. Getz, “T’ien-t’ai Pure Land Societies and the Creation of the Pure Land Patriarchate”; and Daniel B. Stevenson, “Protocols of Power: Tsu-yun Tsun-shih and T’ien-t’ai Lay Buddhist Ritual in the Sung,” 359–63.

<sup>18</sup> On Changlu Zongze, see Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan Qinggui*.

<sup>19</sup> The ten recitations (*shinian*) of Amitabha’s name draw from passages in Pure Land scriptures. See Jacqueline L. Stone, “By the Power of One’s Last Nenbutsu: Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan,” 81. For more on Zunshi and his liturgies on behalf of the laity, see Stevenson, “Protocols of Power.”

<sup>20</sup> For Stevenson’s comment that this short but frequently performed ritual was a rehearsal for the moment of death, see Stevenson, “Protocols of Power,” 362.

<sup>21</sup> See Stevenson, “Deathbed Testimonials,” 593–602. An excellent review of the development of this literature, and of what little is known about lay Pure Land practice in the Song, is provided by Robert H. Sharf in “On Pure Land Buddhism and Ch’an/Pure Land Syncretism in Medieval China.”



of Chinese collections of accounts of auspicious deaths followed by signs of assured rebirth in the Pure Land (*Jingtu wangsheng zhuan*):

Pre-Song dynasty texts:

1. After 653: *Treatise on the Pure Land (Jingtulun)* compiled by Jiakai. T.1963.
2. In 785, probably expanded in the Five dynasties period: *Accounts of Auspicious Responses Accompanying Birth in the Western Pure Land (Wangsheng xifang jingtu ruiying zhuan)*, T.2070.

Song dynasty texts:

3. 1064: *Biographies of Those Reborn in the Pure Land (Jingtu wangsheng zhuan)* compiled by Jiezhū (985–1077), T.2071.
4. Material before 1063: *Biographies of Those Reborn in the Pure Land (Wangsheng jingtu zhuan)*. Probably compiled in Japan from material from Feizhu's (?–1063) lost *Compilation of those reborn [in the Pure Land] following their karmic conditions (Suiyuan wangsheng ji)*.
5. 1084: *Newly Compiled Biographies of Those Who Attained Deliverance in the Pure Land (Xinxiu wangsheng zhuan)* compiled by Wang Gu.
6. 1155: *Newly Edited Compilation of Precious Pearls of Ancient and Modern Rebirth in the Pure Land (Xinbian gujin wangsheng jingtu baozhu ji)* compiled by Lu Shishou.
7. 1160: Wang Rixiu's (?–1173) [Layman] *Longshu's Pure Land Anthology (Longshu jingtu wen)*, T.1970.
8. 1200: Zongxiao's (1151–1214) *Topical Anthology of the Land of Bliss (Lebang wenlei)*, T.1969.
9. 1269: *Record of the Establishment of the Teaching Concerning the Pure Land (Jingtu lijiao zhi)*. This was actually a collection of biographies compiled by Zhipan. T.2035. Included in the *Fozu tongji*.

Yuan dynasty texts:

10. Date and compiler unknown. *Han Family Classified Biographies of Persons Reborn in the Pure Land (Hanjia leiju wangsheng zhuan)*.
11. 1381: *Various Poems about People of Supreme Goodness (Zhu shang shanrenyong)* compiled by Daoyuan.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the fact that he disliked them, a *shidafu* testified to the popularity of

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<sup>22</sup> I have supplemented a list provided by Christoph Kleine in his "Portraits of Pious Women in East Asian Buddhist Hagiography: A Study of Accounts of Women who Attained Birth in Amida's Pure Land."

these practices among his class. Ye Shi wrote an epitaph (*muzhiming*) for one Madame Lou, a member of a prominent clan of that name and niece of a high official. Madame Lou devotedly followed Buddhist ways, often sitting in meditation and eating only half a bowl of coarse fare. After falling very ill, she refused to take any medicine. She bathed, changed her clothes, and bid her mother-in-law farewell, saying she had nothing to do with the luxurious superficiality of this world. Soon she died. Her daughters in their grief stamped their feet, shook the bed, slapped her shoulders, and bit her arms. During the commotion Madame Lou came back to life. She opened her eyes and said, "You don't understand the world. Let go of me." She then assumed a cross-legged posture and began chanting the Buddha Amitabha's name, passing away the next day with a vision of Amitabha Buddha.<sup>23</sup> At the end of his epitaph Ye Shi denounced Buddhism, lamenting how intelligent, energetic literati had fallen prey to its bizarre notions. When death arrived, however, few could maintain their composure.<sup>24</sup>

Barend Ter Haar, in a survey of Buddhist aspects of lay religious life in the lower Yangzi river valley from 1100 until 1340 that draws on a wide range of sources, reports that a burning concern for many people was the moment of death (*linzhong*). Ter Haar mentions that the Yuan monk Pudu wrote about how devout believers were often extremely afraid of the moment of death, but they would put off preparing for it. They counted on the efficacy of ten recitations of Amitabha Buddha's name at the moment of death, but they would wait until almost their last breath "before they started the ten recitations to sound the bell, just like closing the door after the thief has gone."<sup>25</sup>

Even though Dahui Zonggao lived in a world flooded with Pure Land compilations, he did not himself believe in the effectiveness of Pure Land practice at the moment of death, as this practice presupposes a "real" Pure Land in the West.<sup>26</sup> Dahui held the doctrinal position that the Pure Land is only in the mind (*weixin jingtu*), which also can be stated as "when the mind is pure, the land is pure." This doctrinal position has a long history in China, but in the Chan context came to the fore again during the Five dynasties in the writings of Yongming Yanshou, and was held by Chan teachers who adopted Pure Land practices alongside Chan ones, such as Changlu Zongze.

Those who held the doctrinal position that "the Pure Land is only in the mind and Amitabha Buddha is your own Nature" fell into one of three categories with

<sup>23</sup> Halperin, "Domesticity and the Dharma," 94–95.

<sup>24</sup> *Ye Shi ji*, 423–24. This summary is taken from Halperin, "Domesticity and the Dharma," 95.

<sup>25</sup> Barend Ter Haar, "Buddhist-Inspired Options: Aspects of Lay Religious Life in the Lower Yangzi from 1100 until 1340." *T'oung Pao*, second series, vol. 87, Fasc. 1/3 (2001), 124.

<sup>26</sup> On this point I am indebted to Dr. Jeong Young-Sik's 2006 doctoral dissertation at Tokyo University, "Daie Soko to Kankoku kōan Zen no tenkai," 60–65.

respect to the “real” existence of the Western Pure Land. First, some denied the “real” existence of the Western Pure Land, saying that only naïve people believed in it. Second, others believed that as an *upaya*, those of middling or inferior roots should be taught that Amitabha’s Pure Land exists in the West. Third, some of those who held the “mind only Pure Land” position recognized that it also existed in the West on the phenomenal or provisional level, just as the chair you are sitting on has no permanent or “ultimately real” existence, but has a temporary existence in the realm of things. Judging by his writings Dahui clearly belonged to the first category, as the 18<sup>th</sup> century Zen master Hakuin Ekaku later insisted.<sup>27</sup>

Occasionally Dahui seemed to act as though he belonged to the second category, which may be evidence that the Pure Land beliefs and practices of *shidafu* put him under some pressure. After Dahui returned from exile he was a highly esteemed abbot, given special favor by the court. In many recorded instances he was asked by prominent *shidafu* to conduct funereal merit-making services for recently deceased relatives. In a few instances those educated gentlemen-officials wanted Dahui to publically recognize in the service the Pure Land piety of the deceased and the auspicious signs of rebirth in the Western Pure Land that occurred on her or his deathbed. Dahui accommodated those laymen, saying also that if heavens exist, then good people will enter them.<sup>28</sup>

There is another sign of the extent to which Pure Land beliefs not only permeated the *shidafu* world of lay patrons but also put pressure on Dahui. In 1160 Dahui wrote a postface for a deservedly famous Pure Land rebirth tale collection, *The [Layman] Longshu’s Pure Land Anthology* (see above) compiled by Wang Rixiu. Even though in his postface Dahui made his “Pure Land in mind only” position quite clear and did not endorse the “reality” of a Pure Land of Amitabha in the West, or approve of the goal of being born there, he still offered his support to the project.<sup>29</sup>

With this evidence in mind, I suggest that Dahui’s repeated insistence in his letters to elite laymen that *kan huatou* practice offers sufficient protection at the

<sup>27</sup> “Dahui and others raised up the teaching style of steepness. They never spoke of rebirth in the Pure Land.” Philip Yampolsky, trans., *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings*, 147. Also, 172: “This is because at the very understanding that any place in the ten directions was the Pure Land of the treasure trees, and that anybody at all was possessed of the complete body of the pure, golden Amida Buddha.”

<sup>28</sup> See Dahui’s *pushuo* (general sermon) requested by District Governor Sun, *Dahui Pujue Chanshi pushuo* in, *Nihon kotei daizokyo*, 1, 31, 5, *juan* 4, 477c; and Dahui’s *pushuo* for Chief Minister Tang Situi beginning at 468b. I have written about the *pushuo* sermon requested by Tang Situi in Levering, “Ta-hui and Lay Buddhists.”

<sup>29</sup> T47.1970.283b. Here, I disagree with Sharf about the meaning of Dahui’s postface. I read it as praising Wang Rixiu’s desire to help others, not as praising the collection’s contents. Dahui makes this clear by stressing at the end the goal of finding the Pure Land in one’s own mind and Amitabha in one’s own body; see Sharf, “On Pure Land Buddhism,” 291.

moment of death opens up the possibility that creating and promoting a more effective use of words in the quest for “awakening (J. *satori*) as an event” might have been a response to a rising concern of lay patrons about the moment of death. Dahui's letters and individual instructions make clear that together with his repeated criticisms of Caodong's “silent illumination” practice, Dahui simultaneously expanded and repeatedly deployed a discourse about effectiveness of *huatou* practice in preparing for the moment of death. Since Dahui was a Buddhist teacher and not just a worldly businessman, he no doubt desired to do something effective about the fact that in his world lay people and some monastics came to the moment of death without the ability to maintain the mindfulness that would enable them to negotiate that dangerous passage. But competition for lay practitioners may well have played a role. Dahui's discourse on the *huatou* and death, particularly the discourse aimed at lay recipients of his letters, took place at a time when gentry-officials were being attracted to lay Pure Land practices sponsored in part by the Tiantai school.

Dahui was not the first Chan master, and his letters and other records were not the first pieces of widely circulated Chan literature that brought up the importance of the moment of death. The *Yunmen guanglu* (Extended record of Yunmen), compiled in the Northern Song dynasty, puts these words in Yunmen's mouth:

Teachers who not even in a dream have ever seen the significance of [the teaching] of our original teacher's lineage—for what purpose do they consume the alms of the faithful? On the last day of their lives, every one of them will have to reimburse those [almsgivers].<sup>30</sup>

The phrase translated here “on the last day of their lives” literally reads: “on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the last month” (*layue sanshiri*). This is the day on which by Chinese custom all debts have to be paid. According to Chan teachers, in a similar manner on the day of one's death, indeed at the moment of death, all one's karmic debts must be paid through the judgment rendered in the assignment of one's next birth. Since, without awakening, one can spend eternity wandering in *samsara*, translated into Chinese as “birth and death (*shengsi*),” experiencing merited suffering and causing oneself new suffering, according to Chan teachers, means that “*samsara* is something one must fear.” Right now one has a human birth, which is the best condition for attaining release from *samsara*. Who knows when one will have one again?

One's circumstances and sufferings in one's next birth may be more painful than in this one. Of the six rebirth destinations, three are considerably more

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<sup>30</sup> *Yunmen guanglu*, T47.552c18–22.

painful than the best human births: the many Buddhist hells; the realm of hungry ghosts, where one insatiably suffers terrible hunger pangs; and the insect and animal realm, where intelligence is limited and one is frequently either killing or being killed. Humans experience somewhat longer life spans and much suffering mixed with fleeting pleasures; only the superior intelligence of humans that makes possible the cultivation of wisdom makes this a positive rather than negative destination. The life of *asuras*, like that of the Greek Titans, is considered “a favorable birth,” but is actually not much better—a long life span and pleasures, but constant conflict. Only the realm of the gods and goddesses has definite positive advantages: a much longer lifespan and many pleasures. Death in a state of ignorance about one’s next birth leads to fear of rebirth in the hells to suffer untold torments and be unable to cultivate the wisdom, concentration, mindfulness, and morality that lead to Buddha hood.

It is not really the last day of your life that matters, it is the last moment of your life. This is because Buddhists around the world believe that one’s next birth is determined by one’s last thought, which generates linking consciousness that, in turn, produces the first thought in one’s next birth and is the means by which one’s karmic seeds are conveyed to the next life. A common and widely used phrase in Dahui’s works, as in many other writings of his period, is “at the approach of the end of your life (*linming zhizhong*). Juefan Huihong, a good friend of Dahui from when the latter was studying with Linji-Huanglong lineage masters, quotes the *Surangama Sutra*’s summary of the central Buddhist doctrine about the moment of death: “At the near approach of the end of one’s life, all the good and bad [deeds] of a lifetime suddenly appear.”<sup>31</sup> How you respond at that moment, whether or not you form an attachment to a particular scene, determines your next birth. Anger, greed, lust, hatred, attachment, or confusion at the moment of death can override one’s many good deeds in this lifetime and turn one’s karma from earlier lifetimes directly toward one of the three unfavorable realms of rebirth. On the other hand, if one’s mind is peaceful, clear, rejoicing in the good, and pervaded by awakening rather than delusion, one can “turn” one’s karma toward rebirth in one of the three favorable realms of rebirth: human, *asura*, or god.

In his *Biyuanlu*, Yuanwu points out that Chan practice and Chan awakening bring one needed strength at the moment of death, the strength to remain mindful at a moment at which all one’s past good and evil deeds appear before one and the mind is ordinarily both weak and confused. Yuanwu writes:

Yanguan<sup>32</sup> one day called to his attendant, “Bring me my rhinoceros-horn

<sup>31</sup> Juefan Huihong, *Linjianlu*, X87n1624.270b18–20.

<sup>32</sup> Yanguan Qi’an (?–842) was a student of Mazu.

fan.” Although This Matter [what Chan insight discovers and the subject of such insight embodies] does not lie in words and phrases, yet if you want to test someone's ordinary disposition and clever tricks, it is necessary to make them evident by using words in this way.<sup>33</sup> If on the last day of your life [i.e., the thirtieth day of the last month of the year] you can exert the power you have obtained, and master the situation by holding on firmly, so that even when a myriad visions [of your past deeds] appear in profusion, you can look upon them without being moved, then this can be called accomplishment without accomplishment, effortless power/strength (*li*).<sup>34</sup>

Yuanwu's *Xinyao* is mostly composed of instructions to individual monastics, male and female. In those he writes that his style of Linji Chan practice is “Chan for the Nirvana Hall,” that is, for the monk or nun who is close to death, and who therefore resides in a special hall prepared for those who are dying. His style of Chan will prepare the monastic for the moment of death. He attributes the phrase “Chan for the Nirvana Hall” to his teacher Wuzu Fayan.<sup>35</sup> He also urges his monastic students to awaken (*wu*) and then continue with their cultivation of all kinds of good actions. If the monk or nun does so, he or she will be able to avoid rebirth in any of the three undesirable realms:

You must awaken to this mind first, and afterward cultivate all forms of good.... We must search out our faults and cultivate practice; this is like the eyes and the feet depending on each other. If you are able to refrain from doing any evil and refine your practice of the many forms of good, even if you only uphold the elementary forms of discipline and virtue, you will be able to avoid sinking down to the [rebirth destinations] of animals, hungry ghosts and hell-beings. This is even more the case if you first awaken to the indestructible essence of the wondrous, illuminated true mind and after that cultivate practice to the best of your ability and carry out all forms of virtuous conduct.

Let no one be deluded about cause and effect. You must realize that the causal basis of the hells and the heavens is all formed by your own inherent mind. You must keep this mind balanced and in equanimity, without deluded ideas of self and others, without arbitrary loves and hates, without grasping and rejecting, without notions of gain and loss. Go on gradually nurturing

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<sup>33</sup> In the story Yanguan is testing the Chan insight of his attendant, who is one of his most advanced students, by calling for his fan. When the attendant replies that the fan is broken, Yanguan says, “If the fan is broken, then bring me the rhinoceros.”

<sup>34</sup> This is from Case 91 in the *Biyanlu*, T48n2003.215c13–17. The translation is from Thomas and J. C. Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record*, 584, with a few changes.

<sup>35</sup> Yuanwu, *Zen Letters*, 86–87.

this for a long time, perhaps twenty or thirty years. Whether you encounter favorable or adverse conditions, do not retreat or regress—then when you come to the juncture between life and death [the last moment of your life], you will naturally be set free and not be afraid.<sup>36</sup>

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## Dahui's Letters to Lay Followers

Dahui was the dharma-heir of Yuanwu, from whom he may have picked up this rhetoric of promise and exhortation. But it is far more prominent in Dahui's writings than in Yuanwu's. Dahui's letters, which were collected and circulated separately soon after his death, and which thereafter entered Song dynasty Buddhist canons as part of his *Recorded Sayings* (*yulu*) in 30 fascicles, make clear how uncertainty about one's fate at the moment of death and *huatou* practice should connect in the mind of the layman.<sup>37</sup> From the extant letters that Dahui's students wrote to him and those he sent to them we can see the power that the fear of dying as a deluded, self-centered being had on members of the elite in his day. A common sentiment expressed in letters to Dahui is that the writer is now retired or relatively free from time-consuming worldly affairs. Looking back, he can see that he has wasted his life thus far in pursuit of wealth, fame, status, and security for his family. He is now aware that none of these efforts fall outside the realm of the self-centered pursuit of illusory satisfactions. Deluded about life's goals, he has not pursued Buddhist practice wholeheartedly enough to become an awakened buddha. Perhaps his behavior has not been such as to avoid an unfavorable rebirth. He now wants to make a final effort to master himself and break through the deluded mind of life and death (*samsara*), and asks for Dahui's guidance.

The very first letter in Dahui's *Letters* sent to Zeng Kai (*zi* Tianyou), falls into this category.<sup>38</sup> So does Letter 24, an answer by Dahui to Judicial Commissioner Zhang (*zi* Yangshu) that quotes Zhang's letter to Dahui. Also similar is Letter 10, an answer to Fu Zhirou (*zi* Jishen). In all of these letters Dahui instructs the layman to use a *huatou* to break through to awakening, which equals freedom from *samsara*. In his first letter to Zeng Kai, Dahui urges this layman who has in the past studied with Yuanwu, and who, now old, wants to take up serious

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> *Dahui Pujue Chanshi shu* (Letters of the Chan Teacher Dahui Pujue), today is still a fundamental text of Chan, Son, and Zen. Hakuin Ekaku lectured on it. Woodblocks for an 1166 edition were carved after Dahui's death at the Miaoxi-an at Mt. Jing. No Song dynasty text is extant. A reliable text is found in T 47.1998, *juan* 25–30, and in Araki Kengo, *Daie sho*.

<sup>38</sup> Zeng served as Vice Minister of Rites. His biography is found in the *Songshi* (Song dynasty history), fascicle 382. An entry on Zeng Kai is also found in the *Song Yuan Xue'an* (Philosophical record of Song and Yuan scholars), *juan* 26.

practice again after years of intermittent neglect as follows:

Only push your investigation to the limit, and at all times in the midst of surpassing stillness, at all costs do not forget these two *huatou*: [Yunmen's] "Mt. Sumeru" and [Zhaozhou's] "Drop all attachments." Only grasp the reality that comes from the bottom of your own feet and work on. You must not be fearful about what has already passed in your life, nor do you need to think about those things. Thought and fear obstruct the Way. Only make a great vow before all the buddhas. Vow that your mind [your intention] will be firm, and that you will never retreat or lose this intention, that you will depend on the protection of all the buddhas, and that when you meet a good teacher [*kalyanamitra*], at the utterance of a single word you will suddenly forget life and death, be enlightened to and authenticate the peerless true Awakening, and continue the life of the wisdom of the buddhas, so that you may repay the unsurpassed favor of all the buddhas. If you make such a vow and persevere like this, then there is no reason why in time you should not be enlightened.<sup>39</sup>

In Letter 2, his answer to Zeng Kai's second letter, Dahui repeats that Chan practice promises awakening and buddhahood. Zeng, even though he is a lay student and not a monk, should not be satisfied with any other goal:

If you are a man with bones and sinews, as soon as you hear [a *gongan*] mentioned, you will immediately take up the treasure sword of the Diamond King and with one blow cut off the four entangling paths of conflicting words—thus the road of births and deaths is cut off, the road of spiritual and worldly is cut off, the road of comparative calculation and discriminating thought is cut off, and the road of gain and loss and right and wrong is cut off too. Where that man stands on his feet, he is pure and naked, totally free. There is nothing to grab onto. Wouldn't this be delightful? Isn't this happiness? If you can have sufficient faith in this practice to attain penetration into true reality, you will be a person who attains a great freedom from life and death.<sup>40</sup>

In his answer to Zeng Kai's sixth letter, Dahui brings up the dreaded moment at which Yama sends his servants to drag the newly dead down into the hells for judgment:

I have read your letter several times in detail. I can see that your mind is like

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<sup>39</sup> Araki, *Daie sho*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.



iron or stone, that you have established a firm resolution and that you are completely unperturbed. If you continue to study like this, you will be a good match for King Yama at the time of your death (*layue sanshiri*).<sup>41</sup>

Someone who has awakened and sees his true nature as buddhahood is sure not to end up in the hells. Given the seriousness of Zeng's practice and commitment, Dahui sees him as on a path to awakening. In Letter 6, Dahui contrasts what Zeng is doing now with a popular alternative somewhat reminiscent of Zunshi's ritual for lay Pure Land practice:

There are some who say that to set aside all external matters, sit in silence and embody the ultimate is to waste time; it is better to read a few chapters of Buddhist sutras, recite a buddha's name a few times, bow a few more times to the buddhas, and confess and repent the faults one has committed in one's ordinary life, in order to avoid when you die having to suffer from the iron rod in King Yama's hand. This is something stupid people do.<sup>42</sup>

Toward the end of his sixth letter to Zeng, Dahui reassures him that even if he does not awaken during this lifetime, his *huatou* practice will ensure that he will not fall into one of the three unfavorable rebirth destinations:

If from moment to moment you do not retreat from your first aspiration to seek awakening, and take your own mind that attaches itself to all the different mental afflictions of the world, and turn it around so that it firmly rests on *prajna*, then, even if in this lifetime you are unable to reach a thoroughgoing liberation, still, when you reach the end of your life, you definitely will not be dragged off by the karmic fruit of evil deeds, and end up being reborn in an evil form of rebirth.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout this sequence of letters, Dahui advocates *kan huatou* practice for Zeng Kai. But Dahui's fifth letter to Zeng Kai reveals that in Dahui's opinion Zeng Kai has reached a point in his practice where the method of reaching insight that he has practiced through holding the *huatou* can be used with more discursive texts:

If you had not set your mind on *prajna* and continued mindfully in *prajna* from thought to thought without any interruption, you would not be able to

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

comprehend clearly all the various expedient methods of the past patriarchs and buddhas. You have already grasped the handle [to awakening]. Simply practice as you are doing. When you read sutras and teachings and all of the discourse records (*yulu*) of the ancients with their various verbal distinctions, also simply practice as you are doing. With respect to stories/phrases (*hua*)<sup>44</sup> like “Mount Sumeru,” “put it down,” “a dog lacks buddha nature,” “the bamboo whisk,” the story/phrase “with one gulp swallowing completely the waters of the West river,” the story/phrase “the cypress tree in the garden,” also just practice as you are doing. You must not give rise to some other interpretations, otherwise seek principles, or otherwise do calculations. You are able to practice like this from moment to moment in the midst of the stream [of activities]. If you were now to accomplish nothing on the path, then the Buddha's Dharma would be seen to have no miraculous power.<sup>45</sup>

Another category of letter is one in which the person to whom Dahui is writing is practicing, but not effectively or with great energy and determination. Here, Dahui uses the approach of the moment of death to light a fire under the recipient to motivate him to hold on to a *huatou*. Although Dahui discourages any preoccupation with one's failings in the past, he does encourage the eagerness of a student to devote himself to practice. He also supports and fosters his perception of the moment of death as a momentous final exam on the success of his practice, an exam that will determine his fate. This is Dahui's strategy, particularly if the letter's recipient is not young.

Dahui responds to letters from laymen who need to become serious about their practice with reminders that death is coming. For example, in Letter 30, in answer to Bureau Director Lü (*zi* Longli), Dahui writes:

I received two letters from your elder brother Lü Juren (1048–1145) [whose given name is Lü Benzong], saying that he was very busy with his practice concerning this Task. He should hasten. He is already sixty years old and retired from government service. What is the point of waiting any longer? If he doesn't hurry up, how can he deal with things on the last day of his life (*layue sanshiri*)? I heard that you were also busy with practice these days, but the only thing you should be busy with is the matter of the last day of your life. [A monk asked Yunmen,] “What is the Buddha?” [Yunmen replied:] “A dried stick of shit.” If you don't penetrate into this [*huatou*], what difference will there be between the way you are now and the way you

<sup>44</sup> Araki uses “*huatou*” for all these instances of “*hua*.” There are passages in Dahui's records in which “*hua*” or even “*huatou*” may best be read as “story” or “*gongan*.”

<sup>45</sup> Araki, *Daie sho*, 27.

will be on the day of your death?<sup>46</sup>

In Letter 19 Dahui writes to Liu Ziyu (*zi* Yanxiu) about his brother, Liu Zihui (*zi* Yanchong), famous as the Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi's early tutor:

Yanchong in fact doesn't have various vexing confusions, it is only that he has been deeply affected by the poison [ous teachings of the false (Caodong) teachers], so all he does is wander around confusedly on the outside edges of the truth, talking about motion and stillness, words and silence, gain and loss.... He (Yanchong) has not yet cut through the *gongan* of birth and death (*samsara*) that is impenetrable by thought. How can he settle [his accounts] and depart at the moment of death? It will be impossible, when he is losing the light of his eyes just before its complete disappearance, for him to say to the King of Hell, "I will see you later, when I regain clear consciousness and composure." However free and fluent his words are or however hard his mind is, even if it is like sticks and stones, they will be useless for getting him through that moment. The only thing that will help for him is to break through and destroy the deluded mind of life and death.<sup>47</sup>

Here again Dahui advocates using a *huatou*. In Letter 30 from Dahui to Lü Longli, Lü Juren's brother, which is partially quoted above, Dahui lays out the connection between the sensation of doubt and the *huatou*. He emphasizes the importance of concentrating the many doubts into one doubt raised by the *huatou*. By breaking through the concentrated sensation of doubt, all doubts will be resolved; when all doubts disappear, that is awakening, the end of the affective thinking. Dahui writes:

[*Shidafu*] having wasted their lives in this world, when they cast off their bodies do not know where they will find themselves next, whether in a heaven or a hell. They do not know that "this being" continues to flow into different realms as a result of its karma; nevertheless there is nothing that they don't know about the business of others, whether significant or insignificant.<sup>48</sup> ... If you don't destroy the sensation of doubt, *samsara* will afflict you over and over.<sup>49</sup>

Lü Juren has written Dahui asking the following:

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 130.

Should I only focus on the *huatou*, or is there something else on which I should focus? Having not accomplished the work of “raising a great doubt” [on the *huatou*], how can I know exactly whether one is extinct or not extinct after one's death? Please do not quote from the words of scriptures and treatises, or refer to the *gongan(s)* of the ancients, but, based on what is before your eyes, show me clearly the real essence of extinction or non-extinction by analyzing and demonstrating it.<sup>50</sup>

Dahui sees in this exasperating question a student who does not have enough trust to continue with *huatou* practice, and wants his doubts dispelled without breaking through samsaric mind. In Letter 32, an answer to Lü Juren himself, Dahui brings up the urgency of the coming of the moment of death, and urges Lü to stick to *huatou* practice:

Impermanence [i.e., another word for death] comes quickly, our life of one hundred years will pass like a lightning flash, and your moment to reap the results of your karmic deeds will soon arrive. How do you understand “dried stick of shit?” If you have no grasp of it, if it has no flavor, if your stomach feels oppressed, that is very good news.

Following these words Dahui gives *huatou* practice instructions very similar to the ones above, and then writes:

When all of your cleverness is suddenly used up, then you will naturally awaken. But don't wait for awakening.

Dahui then writes:

If you practice according to my words, even though you can't thoroughly awaken [i.e., do not reach awakening as an event], you will be able to distinguish between correct and distorted, you will not be hindered by the troop of devils, and will plant seeds of wisdom deeply. Even if you cannot finish the task in this lifetime, in the next life you will certainly receive the complete functioning of wisdom without wasting your effort while being not afflicted by unwholesome karma, and will be able to turn your karma on your dying day (*linming zhongshi*).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 131–32.

<sup>51</sup> Araki, *Daie sho*, 141–42.

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## Conclusion

Examples could be further multiplied, but by now Dahui's message is clear. If the prospect of death and rebirth already motivated the layman, he recommended a *huatou* as a powerful and relatively speedy method of breaking out of *samsara*'s delusions so as to be free of King Yama's judgment. If a layman were already motivated to inspect a *huatou*, but his focus were not yet strong enough, it could be strengthened by asking him to focus doubt by contemplating the moment of death and rebirth. The practice taught by Yuanwu might take a monk or nun thirty years to complete, as he often said. The needs of elderly laymen could be met by *huatou* practice. Even if these lay people did not experience awakening as an event, they could expect rebirth in one of the three favorable realms and make a real start on deepening *prajna* in a way that would make Buddhist practice attainable and relatively easy in the next birth.

It is possible to imagine that Dahui delighted in designing and testing a new use of words to add to standard *gongan* practice. His innovative verbal tool had many advantages, particularly for lay practice. It could be done anywhere, anytime, in the midst of daily activities commonly required in lay life. It had a great power to concentrate doubt. It had great power to enable people to reach a key point—the feeling of ease that he calls “saving strength”—and beginning at that point to “gain power” from the practice. It offered a form of practice that might overcome the drifting away of lay patrons of the Linji school toward Caodong teachers. Finally, it offered an effective alternative to the Pure Land approach to a critical node in samsaric experience feared by laymen. The Pure Land approach, the cultivation of *nianfoshamadhi*, required faith and single-minded practice of an uncomplicated method. So did *huatou* practice; but *huatou* practice also harnessed the power of uncertainty and doubt. In that respect it might be expected that it suited the capacities of scholars.

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## Glossary

Baiyun Shouduan 白雲守端

*Biyanlu* 碧岩錄

Caodong 曹洞

Chan 禪

Changlu Zongze 長蘆宗曠

*Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規

Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式

Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲

*Dahui Pujue Chanshi shu* 大慧普覺  
禪師書

*Dahui Pujue Chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺  
禪師語錄

*Dahui Pujue Chanshi pushuo* 大慧普  
覺禪師普說

*Dahui Pujue Chanshi fayu* 大慧普覺  
禪師法語

- Donglin Heshang 東林和尚  
*Donglin heshang Yunmen anzhu songgu*  
 東林和尚雲門庵主頌古  
*fayu* 法語  
*Foguo Keqin Chanshi xinyao* 佛果克  
 勤禪師心要  
 Foyan Qingyuan 佛眼清遠  
*Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記  
 Fu Zhirou 富直柔 (*zi* Jishen 季申)  
 Furong Daokai 芙蓉道楷  
 Fushan Fayuan 浮山法遠 (also  
 known as Yuanjian 圓鑒)  
*gongan* 公案  
*Gu zunsu yulu* 古尊宿語錄  
 Huanglong 黃龍  
*hua* 話  
*huatou* 話頭  
*Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 印度  
 學佛教學研究  
 Jiakai 迦才  
 Jing Mt. 徑山  
*Jingtu lun* 淨土論 (by Jiakai 迦才)  
*Jingtu wangsheng zhuan* 淨土往生傳  
 Jeong Young-Sik 鄭榮植  
 Juefan Huihong 覺范慧洪  
*kan huatou* 看話頭  
*layue sanshiri* 臘月三十日  
*Lebang wenlei* 樂邦文類  
*li* 力  
*lingkan* 令看  
 Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄  
*Linjian lu* 林間錄  
*linzhong* 臨終  
*linming zhizhong* 臨命之終  
*linming zhong shi* 臨命終時  
 Liu Ziyu 劉子羽 (*zi* Yanxiu 彥修)  
 Liu Zihui 劉子翬 (*zi* Yanchong 彥沖)
- Longshu jingtu wen* 龍舒淨土文  
 Lü Benzong 呂本中 (*zi* Juren 居仁)  
 Miaoqi an 妙喜庵  
*muzhiming* 墓誌銘  
*nianfo* 念佛  
*pudu* 普度  
*shengsi* 生死  
*shidafu* 士大夫  
*shinian* 十念  
*Shuzhou Longmen Foyan heshang*  
*pushuo yulu* 舒州龍門佛眼和尚  
 普說語錄  
 Tiantai 天台  
 Wan'an Daoyan 卍庵道顏  
 Wang Gu 王古  
 Wang Rixiu 王日休  
*Wangsheng xifang jingtu ruiying*  
*zhuan* 往生西方淨土瑞應傳  
*weixin jingtu* 唯心淨土  
*wu* 無 (lacks)  
*wu* 悟 (awakening)  
 Wuzu Fayan 五祖法演  
 Xuedou Chongxian 雪竇重顯  
*Xuedou Xian heshang Mingjue dashi*  
*songgu ji* 雪竇顯和尚明覺大師頌  
 古集  
*Xinxiu jingtu wangsheng zhuan* 新修  
 淨土往生傳  
 Yanguan Qi'an 鹽官齊安  
 Ye Shi 葉適  
*yi* 疑  
 Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽  
 Yuanwu Keqin 圓悟克勤  
*Yuanwu Keqing Chanshi xinyao* 圓  
 悟克勤禪師心要  
*yulu* 語錄  
 Yunmen 雲門

*Yunmen guanglu* 雲門廣錄

Zeng Shilang 曾侍郎

Zeng Kai 曾開

Zhenxie Qingliao 真歇清了

*Zhengfayanzang* 正法眼藏

Zhipan 志盤

Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本

Zhuangzi 莊子

Zongxiao 宗曉

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