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Imagining Indian Zen: Tōrei's Commentary on the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* and the Rediscovery of Early Meditation Techniques during the Tokugawa Era

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The *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* (T 15 no. 618), the Chinese translation of a canonical text primarily concerned with essential Buddhist meditation techniques,¹ is a little-known sūtra that has nevertheless played an interesting role in the development of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist traditions, particularly the Ch'an/Zen schools. At first glance, the story of this text seems relatively simple. We have an Indian meditation treatise that was translated into Chinese in the early fifth century C.E., which attracted renewed interest among Sung Ch'an people as a text associated with Bodhidharma, and that was transmitted to Japan and later "rediscovered" by the eighteenth-century Japanese Zen teacher Tōrei Enji (1721–1792). The result of this encounter is his voluminous commentary entitled *Darumatarā zenkyō settsū kōsho*, first published in 1784.² Despite the importance of Tōrei in Rinzai Zen and the erudition of his commentary, there is no modern printed edition of the text³ and, to the best of my knowledge, no in-depth study of it.⁴

Examining the reasons for this neglect is my first duty, for it immediately brings up some of the "hot topics" so harshly debated today. One such topic is the sectarian self-understanding and ideology

of the present Japanese Zen schools, each of which claims the highest degree of authenticity as the true recipient of the historical Buddha's legacy, the famous "special transmission outside [scholastic] teachings" (*kyōge betsudēn*).⁵ In many respects, the eighteenth-century Japanese perception of Indian Buddhism, with its many mythicized images, remains the most prevalent view. Among these images is that of the supposed founder Bodhidharma, whose enigmatic character has served as a screen upon which the retrospective quest for legitimacy could make its projections. For those unable to satisfy themselves with popular legends, Bodhidharma has remained a source of frustration, causing scholarly monks to search for textual evidence that would better support the historicity of their founding patriarch.

Tōrei's commentary can be seen in precisely these terms: as a quest for Bodhidharma beyond the usual *Image d'Épinal*. His scholarship is not devoid of naive assumptions, of course, and as one is now perhaps a bit more aware, his "search for the real Bodhidharma" is meaningful chiefly as a legitimization of the Zen tradition.⁶ Nevertheless, in view of some of the excesses of twentieth-century scholarship, such as the simplifications of so-called "Critical Buddhism," one cannot help being struck by the modesty of such Tokugawa monks as Tōrei, who were often sincerely trying to unravel the maze of remaining sources *before* presenting their own interpretations. Not only does Tōrei's mastery of Buddhist and non-Buddhist literature go beyond that of the average cleric, but his commentary builds on the meticulous philological approach seen in the work of Dokuan Genkō⁷ and Mujaku Dōchū.⁸ It is striking to encounter such scholarly endeavors in the Tokugawa period, prior to similar developments that emerged on the Chinese continent with the surge of textual exegesis known as *Hsün-ku hsüeh* (J. *Kunkogaku*).

Two main reasons may be inferred as to why Tōrei's *Darumatara zenkyō settsū kōsho* (abbreviated hereafter as the *Commentary*) has been so neglected by modern buddhologists. First, on a scholarly level, the fact is that Tōrei, who quotes from a wide range of sources (including obscure Shinto texts),⁹ goes far beyond the usual borders of Japanese Buddhist studies. Academics have thus avoided any investigation of the *Commentary*, because it would mean venturing into unknown territory. Second, on a sectarian level, the qualified picture of Bodhidharma that emerges in Tōrei's account is less convenient for proselytical purposes than the image of Bodhidharma that already exists in the popular imagination.¹⁰

In this sense the *Commentary* offers new insights on the extent to which Tokugawa "scholar-monks" shaped our present understanding of the Zen tradition, particularly with regard to its avowedly Indian origins. Their presentation of the tradition was taken a step further in the post-Tokugawa philosophical development known as *Zen shisō* (Zen thought),¹¹ which relied heavily on such premises of Indian roots. The importance of the *Commentary* to Meiji-

era Rinzai teachers is reflected in the fact that the Meiji reprint contains a preface by Kōgaku Sōen (Shaku; 1860–1919) and introductory material by several other high-ranking priests.¹² The text seems to have been especially valued as a counteragent to the distrust of traditional values brought by the collision with modernity.

Nevertheless, Tōrei's *Commentary* is only the most recent of the multifarious layers of interpretation that have been added onto the original text of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*. An examination of the various issues involved leads not only to matters of textual interpretation but also to a consideration of some of the questions that generations of Buddhist readers of this text have asked themselves, such as, "Which types of meditation did the historical Buddha practice?" "Which types of meditation did he teach?" and "How did Mahayāna assert its specificity in regard to meditation?"

I obviously cannot answer these highly speculative issues here;¹³ rather, I will attempt to clarify how Tōrei and his predecessors understood the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* with these concerns in the back of their minds. We are, of course, not bound to their views; indeed, the task of reading the commentaries of Tōrei and his predecessors implies a questioning of the authors' hidden motivations. Let us first look at the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* and at its place in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist history, then examine its contents, and finally try to assess the significance of Tōrei's *Commentary* today.

I have chosen to speak of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*—that is, to treat it as a Chinese document—rather than adopt the hypothetical reconstruction "The Sūtra of Dharmatrāta,"¹⁴ because so little is visible beyond the horizon of Chinese sources; I will examine this issue further in the section entitled "The False Issue of the Title." For the same reason, the section following this one is cautiously entitled "The Pseudo-Indian Context."

The *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*: Translation and Context

The Pseudo-Indian Context

Our knowledge of the time and place when a lost Indian meditation treatise was translated or condensed into the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* essentially derives from the preface of Hui-yüan (334–416 var. 415 or 417) of Mount Lu. The full text of this preface is also found in the *Ch'u san-tsang chi chi* by Seng-yu (445–518), albeit with a different title.¹⁵ The same catalogue also contains another preface, ascribed to Huiguan (n.d.).¹⁶

The translation of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* is attributed to Buddhahadra (359–429) and was completed about 413.¹⁷ The title of the original text was, apparently, *Yogācārabhūmi*, one of many treatises bearing the same name.¹⁸ From what can be inferred through its Chinese translation, the original *Yogā-*

cārabhūmi text belonged to a relatively early phase of Indian Buddhism. In content, it fits what Zürcher writes concerning the Buddhist meditation techniques transmitted to China:

The system of mental exercises commonly called *dhyāna* [*ch'an*] in Chinese sources, but which is more adequately covered by the term 'Buddhist yoga,' comprises such practices as the preparatory technique of counting the respirations leading to mental concentration [*anapanasmṛti*]; the contemplation of the body as being perishable, composed of elements, impure and full of suffering; the visualization of internal and external images or various colours, etc.¹⁹

The *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* was either the Chinese translation of one of the meditation treatises brought from India or Central Asia, or a compilation from existing Indian sources. No Sanskrit original remains, unfortunately, so we must rely on the Chinese rendition. Despite this limitation, the comparative study of this and other such treatises remains a very promising field, one that throws much light on the development of Indian Buddhism. It shows in particular the coexistence of two different trends in the understanding of practice, which were later to develop into the Hīnayāna and Mahayāna traditions.²⁰ Thus, despite the presence of the character *ch'an* in the title of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, we are obviously dealing with a document belonging to a period when there was still nothing close to a "Ch'an tradition" in China, although the practice of meditation was central to many Buddhist teachers. When considering the circumstances surrounding the translation of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, one should avoid being influenced by later Ch'an and Zen "filters," including Tōrei's *Commentary*.

It is not possible here to embark on a detailed study of these early meditation texts,²¹ but to understand the significance of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* we need to have at least a general idea of the type of meditation treatises prevalent in China when Buddhahadra's translation was made. Roughly speaking, it is possible to identify three main groups of closely related texts: (1) early Chinese translations by An Shih-kao and subsequent translations by Dharmarakṣa and Buddhahadra; (2) similar texts translated by Kumārajīva; and (3) fundamental Yogācāra scriptures composed in Gandhāra.

These documents appear to represent different facets of a general movement aimed at systematizing Buddhist practice. The teachers and translators who contributed to their redaction not only were concerned with doctrinal matters but were themselves deeply involved in practice. This fact is becoming increasingly obvious thanks to the work of scholars such as Yamabe Nobuyoshi, who has discussed, for instance, the example of the fifth-century monks Dharmakṣema and his disciple Tao-chin. For Dharmakṣema, obtaining a personal vision of the Buddha was a necessary prerequisite for receiving the Bo-

dhisattva precepts or realizing true repentance.²² Let us further examine the outline of these three groups of “meditation sūtras” translated into Chinese.

Meditation Treatises Translated by An Shih-kao, Dharmarakṣa, and Buddhābhaddra

The corpus of sūtras translated into Chinese during the Han Dynasty by the Parthian prince An Shih-kao and his team represents one of the earliest stages in the assimilation of Indian Buddhist texts. This occurred some time after the initial transmission of Buddhism from India; Zürcher notes that there was “a gap of about eight decades between the first unquestionable sign of Buddhism in China (65 A.D.) and the arrival of An Shih-kao in Luoyang (148 A.D.), [which] marks the beginning of regular translation activities.”²³

These early translations are now being reexamined from the viewpoint of their linguistic features. Although translations attributed to An Shih-kao have grown to 179 works, one of the conclusions of this reevaluation is that “the oldest and most primitive nucleus in our materials is formed by the sixteen short scriptures which may be regarded as genuine products of An Shih-kao and his collaborators. It is a very homogeneous group of texts, clearly recognizable by their linguistic and stylistic features.”²⁴ What is relevant for this study is that among these sixteen scriptures is the *Daodijing* (T 15 no. 607), one of the *Yogācārabhūmi* texts that later evolved into the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*. The original *Yogācārabhūmi* treatise is attributed to Saṃgharakṣa, a teacher from Kashmir who is supposed to have taught the emperor Kaniṣka. This attribution suggests the strong connection of these meditation treatises with the Sarvāstivādin of Kashmir.²⁵ Tao-an (314–385) wrote a preface to the *Daodijing* in which he asserts that the original *Yogācārabhūmi* text translated by An Shih-kao contained twenty-seven chapters, and that this was summarized by Shih-kao into seven chapters.²⁶

This brings us to the second important translator, Dharmarakṣa, who attempted to provide a more complete Chinese version of the original *Yogācārabhūmi* treatise that included all twenty-seven chapters. The product of this translation work, dated 284 C.E., contains, in fact, thirty chapters, but the last three appear to be a later addition, which Demiéville identifies as the text's “Mahayanist appendix.” Dharmarakṣa's translation may be regarded as an expanded version of An Shih-kao's pioneering work—indeed, some passages are so close that they can be compared line by line. Demiéville's partial translation and analysis still provides an excellent outline of the entire thirty-chapter sūtra.²⁷

Buddhābhaddra, the translator of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, is one of the few Indian figures of that time whose dates are known and whose profile has

some degree of reliability, thanks to the details provided in Hui-yüan's preface and in the *Biography of Eminent Monks* by Hui-chiao (497–554).²⁸ The pivotal place accorded to Buddhahadra in Chinese historical records is not surprising, since he is credited also with translating the 60-fascicle *Flower Ornament Sūtra* (T 9 no. 278) and several other important scriptures. However, Buddhahadra's biography recounts that before being recognized for these accomplishments, he had to leave northern China with his disciples²⁹—the victim, apparently, of obscure dissensions with Kumārajīva's followers³⁰—and subsequently moved to Mount Lu in the south. There Hui-yüan not only welcomed him but provided him with all facilities to engage in translating activities. "Hui-yüan then asked him to translate several sūtras [about] meditation and the Abhidharma" (C. *ch'an-shu chu ching*; J. *zenshu no shokyō*).³¹ One of the results of this work was the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, which represents a blend of Indian Buddhism slightly different from the one introduced in northern China by Kumārajīva and his disciples. The redaction of the sūtra translated by Buddhahadra is attributed to his teacher Buddhasena, but too little is known about this figure to speculate about this assertion.³²

Meditation Treatises Translated by Kumārajīva

Kumārajīva (344–413),³³ probably the best-known translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese, is known for his elegant prose and verse, and his redactions have generally been preferred over all others in China and the rest of East Asia. The study of his prodigious output of translations is interesting in itself, but here I wish to focus on his translation of meditation treatises. There are several works belonging to this category of scriptures,³⁴ but the most important for this discussion of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* is the *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei fa-men ching* (*Sūtra on the Approach to Samadhi [through] Seated Meditation*; T 15 no. 614). Tōrei confesses in the introduction to his *Commentary* that upon first reading the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* in 1762, "I couldn't understand its meaning" but that when "I finally obtained the *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei [fa-men] ching*, the meaning [of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*] became increasingly clear."³⁵

Comparison of the *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei fa-men ching* and the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, translated respectively in 407 and in 413, reveals the different approaches to meditation transmitted by Kumārajīva, working under official patronage at Chang'an in the north, and by Buddhahadra, working under Hui-yüan on Mount Lu in the south. These two approaches to the Chinese reception and reinterpretation of the Indian tradition have been characterized by Satō Taishun as, respectively, "the meditation sūtra from the capital" (*kanchū no zenkyō*) and the "the meditation sūtra from Mount Lu" (*Rozan no zenkyō*).³⁶

While both sūtras give meticulous descriptions of the various techniques for focusing the mind, it is interesting to note that the *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei fa-men ching* divides these techniques into five main rubrics: (1) the practice to

cure greed (*chih t'an-yü fa-men*), which involves contemplation of foulness (*pu-ching kuan*);³⁷ (2) the practice to cure hate (*chih ch'en-hui fa-men*), which requires developing a compassionate mind (*tz'u-hsin*); (3) the practice to cure stupidity (*chih yü-ch'ih fa-men*), which amounts to examining dependent origination (*yin-yüan*); (4) the practice to cure [excessive] reasoning (*chih szu-chüeh fa-men*), which implies concentration on mindful breathing (*a-na pan-na san-mei*); and (5) the practice to cure [the sentient beings'] equal share [of delusion]³⁸ (*chih teng-fen fa-men*), which uses concentration on the Buddha (*nien-fo san-mei*). These five types of practice later came to be known as the "five contemplations [for] stopping [the perverted] mind" (C. *wu t'ing-hsin kuan*; J. *gojōsh-inkan*).³⁹ The interesting point about these five approaches is that, despite minor variations, they appear to have also been core teachings of the *Yogācārabhūmi-sāstra* (T 30 no. 1579).

In contrast to the well-organized *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei fa-men ching*, the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* seems more practical in orientation and goes into detail only on the practices of mindful breathing (*an-pan-nien*)⁴⁰ and on the contemplation of foulness; no mention is made of the remembrance of the Buddha.⁴¹ In this point the two texts seem to fit Odani's argument for a development in three stages, from (1) diverging expressions of these five contemplations, to (2) their standardization, to (3) their simplification into the two main items of mindful breathing and the contemplation of foulness.⁴² Yet this process doesn't seem to reflect a linear historical evolution. In any event, given the proximity in the dates of the two works, one would expect that Buddhahadra knew of Kumārajīva's translation, or even that Buddhahadra's text would have constituted a response to Kumārajīva's description of meditation techniques, but in fact there is no evidence of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* borrowing from or reacting to the former translation. Tōrei reached the conclusion that the father of the *Ch'an ching*, whom he supposed to be Bodhidharma, had known of the *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei fa-men ching*.

Conversely, Kumārajīva's translation seems to reflect more acutely the trends of his time. For example, after giving a first description of the five practices, Kumārajīva's text repeats them with different headings beginning with the word "bodhisattva." To emphasize that the meditation techniques described belong to the Mahayāna, it would take the trouble to add the word "bodhisattva" whenever possible. For instance, in discussing contemplation of the "twelve links of dependent origination" the text explicitly says, "The bodhisattva contemplates the twelve links of dependent origination," to be sure that the practice won't be mistaken for a technique of the so-called "lesser vehicle" (T 15 no. 614 p. 283b15–b16). This approach is in striking contrast to the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, in which bodhisattvas are scarcely mentioned (one can find only two occurrences of this term in the whole text, in the very last chapter; T 15 no. 618 p. 324b07–b08).

Another element that deserves scrutiny is the apparent relationship be-

tween Buddhabhadra and the cult of Maitreya,⁴³ which was widespread in the Gandhāra or Kashmir areas and appears to have coincided with the emergence of Yogācāra as a distinctive school—indeed, Maitreya was regarded as Yogācāra's founding patriarch and the transmitter of its teachings.⁴⁴

Early Yogācāra Texts

The origins of the Yogācāra school still remain shrouded in mist, especially because of the fuzzy hagiographical accounts of two of its cardinal proponents, Āśvaghoṣa and Asaṅga. The filiation between Yogācāra-school texts and various earlier Yogācārabhūmi scriptures is in little doubt, in view of the many common terms, concepts, and contents.⁴⁵ For example, with regard to the Yogācārabhūmi-sāstra (T 30 no. 1579) and the Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya (T 31 no. 1604), the central texts attributed to Asaṅga, Demiéville concludes that, “the Yogācārabhūmi of Saṃgharakṣa must have been the major Hinayanist prototype, and probably the oldest.”⁴⁶ Another feature that suggests a close relation between the early Yogācāra practitioners and the translators of these meditation sūtras is the aforementioned connection with Maitreya. I cannot engage here in a detailed examination of these various links, but figure 7.1 might help summarize the complex relationships before we move to an examination of the Chinese context.

The Chinese Context

The False Issue of the Title

Let us now focus more closely on the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*. The presence of the name “Ta-mo-to-lo” in the title has led to much speculation⁴⁷ about who this figure might be. The speculation has centered on whether Ta-mo-to-lo is the transliterated name of a certain Dharmatrāta, and whether this Dharmatrāta could be the same person as Fa-chiu, the author of the *Tsa-a-p'i-t'an hsin-lun* (T 28 no. 1552).⁴⁸ One recent suggestion is that there were, at different times, no less than three figures bearing the name Dharmatrāta.⁴⁹ Other scholars are skeptical of the attribution of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* to this highly hypothetical figure, regarding the creation of such an Indian lineage as a convenient way to justify the orthodoxy of early Ch'an. Yanagida Seizan takes this standpoint by arguing that “Shen-hui, relying on the main text of the *Ch'an ching*, changed Ta-mo-to-lo into P'u-t'i-ta-mo, clearly emphasizing the transmission of the flame by eight Indian patriarchs. His alteration in [presenting] six Chinese patriarchs is obvious, but accurately speaking one can also consider that the theory of a patriarchal lineage among Ch'an followers began at precisely that time.”⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the traditional Buddhist scholar-monks that studied the *Ta-*

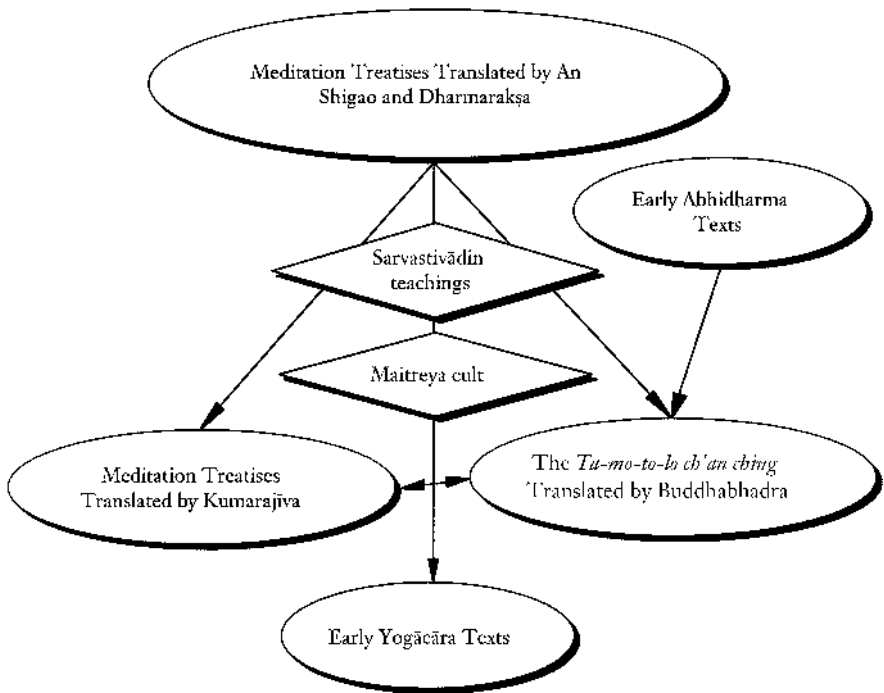


FIGURE 7.1. Relationships between early Yogācāra practitioners and translators of meditation sūtras. (The *Damoduolo chanjing* = *Ta-mo-to-lo cha'an ching*.)

mo-to-lo ch'an ching, particularly Fo-jih Ch'i-sung (1007–1072) and Tōrei, apparently had no doubt that Ta-mo-to-lo was Bodhidharma (P'u-t'i-ta-mo), and their understanding of the Ch'an tradition doesn't seem to have been simply a strategic device. Therefore, it appears safer to assume that they genuinely believed Bodhidharma to have been the source of this document, written by his fellow disciple Buddhasena and transmitted by Buddhahadra. Tōrei, who borrows much of his information from Fo-jih Ch'i-sung, explains, for example, “in his childhood [the master's] name was P'u-t'i-to-lo. He then became a disciple of Po-je-to-lo. When the patriarch transmitted to him the seal of Dharma, the robe and the bowl, he said [to his disciple]: ‘You should now take the name P'u-t'i-ta-mo.’” Tōrei explains that Ta-mo-to-lo results from the conjunction of the last two syllables of his newly attributed name, P'u-t'i-ta-mo, with the last two syllables of his childhood name, P'u-t'i-to-lo. Tōrei also specifies that since there were many meditation sūtras, the name of Ta-mo-to-lo was appended to differentiate it from similar treatises.⁵¹

In summary, polemics about the identity of a supposed “Dharmatrāta” do not appear entirely relevant here, because traditional accounts simply assume this figure to be another name for Bodhidharma. Consequently, should we

translate the title of this text; it might as well be rendered *The Bodhidharma Sūtra*. Even if we could give credentials to Dharmatrāta as a historical figure (one among two or three different persons), it is highly probable that his name was borrowed at a certain stage to give more weight to the authority of this scripture. After taking these few precautions, let us now make a leap in time and have a closer look at the developments within the Chinese sphere during and after the Sung dynasty.

Rediscovery of the Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching during the Sung

Among peculiarities of the religious environment under the Sung dynasty, verbal attacks on the Buddhist clergy by Confucian teachers, or controversies between Ch'an and T'ien-t'ai monks, have already received considerable attention.⁵² No doubt these external factors have contributed to reinforcing the need for orthodoxy and to producing various scholarly responses. One such reaction is embodied in the vast literary production of Fo-jih Ch'i-sung. Ch'i-sung, besides trying to show that the three teachings fundamentally didn't contradict each other, devoted remarkable energy to linking the Ch'an lineages to Indian patriarchs. He was neither the first nor the last monk to engage in this activity, but his originality was in going one step further than Shen-hui in systematically using the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* as a central piece of evidence.

To condense Ch'i-sung's argument: like Shen-hui, he reasserted that there was no breach in the transmission of the Dharma from India to China. He maintained that the Ch'an teachings and practice represented the legitimate legacy of a lineage including twenty-eight Indian patriarchs, in contradistinction to his T'ien-t'ai opponents who maintained the existence of only twenty-four Indian patriarchs. For this claim, Ch'i-sung relied on the *Pao-lin Tradition* and on the *Ching-te Record of the Transmission of the Flame*, but he also quotes extensively from the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* to support his claim. The authority conferred by Hui-yüan's venerable and cryptic Preface served to undermine the views of his T'ien-t'ai adversaries, even though the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* mentions only nine of the Indian figures who are supposed to belong to this lineage.⁵³

As Griffith Foulk puts it, "Ch'i-sung's polemical strategy would thus appear to be threefold: (1) to use historical arguments that could not be denied by T'ien-t'ai critics of the Ch'an lore, (2) to concede that certain aspects of the Ch'an transmission lore could not be substantiated historically, and (3) to evoke the special nature of dharma transmission in Ch'an in order to shield it from the very sort of historical criticism that he himself employed."⁵⁴

What eventually contributed to Ch'i-sung's success in these polemics was his literary skill and the support he gained from the emperor,⁵⁵ but his work illustrates the extent of the Sung obsession with lineages. Nowhere in his writings do we see an analysis of the contents of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*

and of its emphasis on meditative practice. In this regard, Tōrei's *Commentary*, because it follows the text paragraph by paragraph, gives a better idea of the purpose of Buddhahadra's translation. As will be seen, Tōrei was, however, not the first Japanese monk to be impressed by the detailed descriptions found in this sūtra.

Japanese Developments

Myōe Shōnin

The *Genkō shakusho*, a collection of biographies of eminent Japanese priests compiled during the Genkō era (1321–1324), contains a perspicuous pronouncement by Myōe Kōben (1173–1232) about the state of Buddhism in his time:

In our country, there are many wise and learned individuals [*egaku no mono*], but those who practice meditation [*jōshu no hito*] are extremely rare.⁵⁶ For some reason the approach of realization [*shōdō no mon*] is missing among practitioners; this is my great distress and the evil of this final period of the Law.⁵⁷

The biography goes on to tell that “Myōe settled in a cave in the northern mountains [of Kyoto], building a temple where he would [absorb himself in] still meditation [*zen'en*] and thinking [*shiyui*], taking the *Wumen chanyao*⁵⁸ and the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* as a means [to train his] mind [*shinjutsu*].”

This account does not allow us to infer the extent of Myōe's involvement in the study of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, but it suggests that he used this text as a manual to deepen his own training. During his days as a young monk, Myōe seems to have been unable to find a human teacher who would match his expectations, and he recalls turning to the meditation sūtras, reading first the *Chanfa yaojie* (T 15 no. 616) in 1191.⁵⁹ Myōe's case implies that some monks of the Kamakura period, whether or not affiliated with the Zen traditions,⁶⁰ were reading such sūtras and trying to put them into practice.

Tokugawa Zen Figures

If we now turn to the Tokugawa period, Dokuan Genkō (1630–1698) provides an illustration of how the contemplation of foulness (*fujōkan*) was still used for both proselytizing purposes and meditation. Among Dokuan's works, the *Kinzan Dokuansō gohōshū hannya kusōzu* (“The nine visualizations [taught in the] *Prajñā* [*pāramitā-sūtra*]”) deals specifically with this subject (fig. 7.2). This text, published in 1692, contains realistic black and white representations of the nine stages in the decomposition of a corpse, illustrated by the painter Terada Masanobu (n.d.).⁶¹ According to Dokuan's own explanations, he decided



FIGURE 7.2. Pictures found in Dokuan's work. Dokuan Genkō (1630–1698) provides an illustration of how the contemplation of foulness (*fujōkan*) was still used for both proselytizing purposes and meditation. Among Dokuan's works, the *Kinzan Dokuansō gohōshū hannya kusōzu* ("The nine visualizations [taught in the] *Prajñā* [*-pāramitā-sūtra*]") deals specifically with this subject. This text, published in 1692, contains realistic black and white representations of the nine stages in the decomposition of a corpse, illustrated by the painter Terada Masanobu (n.d.). The nine stages are as follows: top row: left: (1) visualization (of the corpse) swelling (*chōsō*, Skt. *vyādhmātaka-saṃjñā*); center: (2) visualization (of the corpse) breaking up (*kaisō*, Skt. *vipaśumaka-saṃjñā*); right: (3) visualization of the blood spreading (on the ground) (*kettsō*, Skt. *vilohitaka-saṃjñā*); middle row: left: (4) visualization of the (corpse) purulent and dislocating *nōransō*, Skt. *vipūyaka-saṃjñā*); center: (5)

to write this manual for two of his young disciples who were in danger of infringing the precepts. At the beginning of his text, Dokuan mentions the passages of the *Large Prajñā pāramitā sūtra* describing these nine stages.⁶² He further quotes the *Treatise of the Great Virtue of Wisdom*, which develops this method of contemplation.⁶³ One of the interesting features of Dokuan's text is that he confesses that he had tried to use the poems of Su Shih (1036–1101), *T'ung-p'o chiu- hsiang- shih* (J. *Tōba kusōshi*) but that they were too difficult for his young pupils.⁶⁴

This work, including visual representations aimed at helping both monks and laypersons to become aware of impermanence, seems to be one of the last examples of this type of Buddhist painting. In Japanese art history there has been a long tradition of painted scrolls representing these nine successive aspects of the dead body (*kusōshi emaki*), at least since the Kamakura period,⁶⁵ but the traditional aversion toward death seems to have gradually contributed to its disappearance. Apparently, there is no trace of such artworks after the Tokugawa period, and to my knowledge no contemporary Japanese monk mentions it. My suspicion is that the fading of this practice may have been proportional to the rise of clerical marriage since the Meiji era.⁶⁶ One indication that supports this view is that in other East Asian countries some contemporary Buddhist orders emphasizing celibacy are still widely using the imagery of dead (female) bodies as an antidote to the monks' temptations.⁶⁷

Tōrei's Commentary

The Autobiographical Dimension

By now Tōrei's prominent place among the successors of Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769) might be known to some extent. Since my first inquiry concerning Tōrei's discovery of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*,⁶⁸ the circumstances of his encounter with this text have become increasingly clear. Tōrei's introduction to his *Commentary* provides the fullest account:

visualization of the (corpse) blue and soiled (*seiosō*, Skt. *vinīlaka sañjñā*); right: (6) visualization of the (corpse) being eaten (by animals) (*tansō*, Skt. *vikhāditaka-sañjñā*); bottom row: left: (7) visualization of the (corpse) being dispersed (*sansō*, Skt. *vikṣiptaka-sañjñā*); center: (8) visualization of the bones (*kossō*, Skt. *asthi-sañjñā*); right: (9) visualization of the cremation (*shōsō*, Skt. *vidagdhaka-sañjñā*). The Sanskrit equivalents follow Nakamura Hajime, ed. *Kōsetsu bukk'yōgo daijiten* (Tokyo: Tōkyō shoseki, 2001), p. 336, where the nine stages are given in a different order. See also Tsukamoto Zenryū, ed., *Mochizuki bukk'yō daijiten*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Sekai seiten kankōkyōkai, 1973), pp. 678–679.

[Since] I left the house to become a monk at a young age, I have [always] had an especially [strong] faith in Bodhidharma [*daishi*], and for many years I have been searching for a sūtra [including] his teachings. When I incidentally read the biography of Saint Myōe in the *Genkō shakusho*, it included the title of this sūtra. I was deeply longing for it, but since nobody recommended or mentioned it, [I thought that] I couldn't trust [Myōe's story]. For a while I obtained the *Anthology of the Six Entrances by Bodhidharma* [C. *Shao-shih liu-men chi*; J. *Shōshitsu rokumonshū*]⁶⁹ and [used it to] atone for my original intention.

However, there were people saying that this [anthology] didn't contain the teachings of Bodhidharma. While I got depressed by this for three or four years, I asked the painter Aoki to draw a picture of Bodhidharma [for me]. I always kept it in my pocket and made prostrations [in front of this image] for a thousand days. Additionally, I wrote a Eulogy [*raimon*] and prayed [to obtain his] inspiration [*kannō*]. When I later saw that the late master [Hakuin] quoted this [text] in his *Sokkōroku kaien fusetsu*, I asked [him] his opinion [concerning the anthology]. He said: "Even if it would not be the teachings of Bodhidharma, as long as [the author] was someone endowed with his insight, there is no point in arguing about it." This persuaded me to make up my mind, and I faithfully received [this text], relishing [its contents].

In this connection, I received a small statue of Bodhidharma on the fifth day of the fifth month of 1746. While I was absorbed in seated meditation after having made prostrations [in front of the statue], I suddenly entered the ineffable melody of the flute without holes [*mukuteki no myōchō*].⁷⁰

In the fall of 1762, I got for the first time [a copy] of the *Ch'an ching* but couldn't understand its meaning. Then, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month of 1765, I had a great insight [*ōini tokusho ari*]. From that time on, I kept reflecting [about this text] on every possible occasion. In the summer of 1774, I gave for the first time a lecture [on it] at Shōsen-ji in the country of Kōshū [present Shiga Prefecture]. Then [I lectured] once at Ryūtaku-ji [Entsū-zan] and once at Chōju-ji in Asakusa [Buryō]. After having eventually lectured three times [on this sūtra], I thought that I had done my best [with it]. In the winter of 1776, since the temple [where the *Commentary* was kept] suffered a fire and the text was burned into ashes,⁷¹ I had to gather all my energy again and to renew my great vow. Forgetting tiredness for this research, I finally obtained [a copy of] the *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei ching*, and the meaning [of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*] became increasingly clear.⁷²

In this account Tōrei discloses the main personal factors that led to his passionate study of the *Ch'an ching*. The way Hakuin eludes the issue of authorship is very instructive, but Tōrei's intellectual curiosity kept pushing him to gather any possible piece of evidence to clarify the origins of this text. Yet, since Tōrei used the same sources as Ch'i-sung, it is not surprising that most of his conclusions would closely follow those of his predecessor.

Tōrei's Understanding of Bodhidharma Alias Dharmatrāta

Tōrei gives, for example, the following assessment concerning the Preface of the *Ch'an ching* by Hui-yüan:

First, we have seen from the main text of Hui-yüan's Preface that this sūtra definitely has been taught [*toku tokoro*] by Bodhidharma and compiled [*amu tokoro*] by Buddhasena. Secondly, even if we consider this sūtra to have been taught by Bodhidharma before [the age of] twenty-seven, it is clear that it [represents a phase] posterior to his encounter with Prajñātāra and the [ensuing] transmission of the seal of the Buddha-mind. Otherwise, how would it have been possible for Hui-yüan to say that they were "the most talented [teachers] of the Western region, the founders of the meditation teachings" [*hsiyü chih chün, ch'an-hsün chih tsung*]?⁷³

According to this passage, Tōrei had a very precise idea of Bodhidharma/Dharmatrāta's lineage and of the timing for the transmission of the *Ch'an ching*. As will be seen, Tōrei's understanding of Bodhidharma/Dharmatrāta's characteristics was that of a master in the Abhidharma who had also become consummate in meditation and knowing human nature. It discloses a picture of Bodhidharma/Dharmatrāta much closer to that of an Indian scholar-monk than to the image of the silent thaumaturge that became widespread in the popular imagination. Tōrei gives this explanation for a passage in Ch'i-sung's work:

In other words, at that time the great teacher [Bodhidharma] had personally received the essence of the *Tsuo-ch'an san-mei chin* [T 15 no. 614] written by Saint Saṃgharakṣa [*Sogyarasha sonja*]. Then after having met with Prajñātāra and transmitted the seal of the Buddha-mind, he again exposed the essentials of meditation [*zen'yō*] for his younger brothers in the Dharma including Buddhasena and Budhabhadra, bringing [thus] to completion the purport [of the teachings he had received].⁷⁴

From the criteria of today's scholarship, Tōrei's reconstruction of these Indian master-disciple relationships appears to be a nexus for legends, especially because there is so little firm ground concerning figures such as Prajñātāra or

Samgharakṣa. On the other hand, if we put ourselves in the position of a monk living in the eighteenth century, these stories may sound plausible. After all, research done after the twentieth century has fueled doubts about all these traditional accounts but has yet to propose a credible alternative. It may appear legitimate to discard all these figures as being pure fiction, but we then have to demonstrate that the contemporary prefaces by Hui-yüan and Huiguan were forgeries. Since careful research done by Kimura Eiichi and his team⁷⁵ tends to validate the materials attributed to Hui-yüan, the challenge remains intact.

Structure of the Text

Now that we have observed some of the factors related to the genesis of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* and its *Commentary*, it appears necessary to get an idea of the outline of the sūtra and of its two fascicles. The first striking mark of these seventeen chapters is that each of them begins with the word “practice” (*hsiu-hsing*). Concerning the distinction between the “expedient way” (*fang-pien tao*) and the “superior way” (*sheng tao*), it can be considered to express more or less advanced levels in the understanding of the same practice.

First fascicle:

1. Practice of the expedient way—backslide in mindful breathing
2. Practice of the superior way—backslide
3. Practice of the expedient way—stagnation⁷⁶ in mindful breathing
4. Practice of the superior way—stagnation
5. Practice of the expedient way—progress
6. Practice of the superior way—progress
7. Practice of the expedient way—decisive [stage] in mindful breathing
8. Practice of the superior way—decisive [stage]

Second fascicle:

9. Practice of the expedient way—backslide in the contemplation of foulness
10. Practice of the expedient way—stagnation in the contemplation of foulness
11. Practice of the expedient way—progress in the contemplation of foulness
12. Practice of the expedient way—decisive [stage] in the contemplation of foulness
13. Practice of contemplating the constituents (*dhātu*)
14. Practice of the samadhi of the four boundless [qualities] (*apramāṇa*)
15. Practice of contemplating the aggregates (*skandha*)
16. Practice of contemplating the sense—data (*āyatana*)
17. Practice of contemplating the twelve links of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*).

This table of contents shows a relatively simple structure, the most substantial part (the first eight chapters) being dedicated to presenting the different modalities and obstacles in mastering mindful breathing. In Tōrei's *Commentary*, three of the six volumes are thus devoted to examining this topic. The next four chapters describe the contemplation of foulness, with a similar progression from backslide (failure in practicing correctly) to the decisive stage, which represents mastery of that technique. Finally, the last five chapters focus on different doctrinal topics intended to develop further the wisdom (*prajñā*) of the practitioner. The sequence of these seventeen chapters is clearly intended to propose a progression, which culminates with the full understanding of the root of all dis-ease (*duhkha*): ignorance, and its manifold correlates.

Explicit and Implicit Purposes of Tōrei's Commentary

Given the present limits of speculations about the historicity of the various characters who appear on the stage of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* and its *Commentary*, I shall now concentrate on the significance of this text for Tōrei and his time.

In the autobiographical section translated earlier, it was seen that Tōrei had been attracted to the figure of Bodhidharma since he had become a monk. Even after meeting Hakuin at the age of twenty-three and after having received his certification at the age of twenty-nine, Tōrei's interest in Bodhidharma did not abate; it was indeed multiplied after he obtained the copy of the *Ch'an ching* at the age of forty-two. During his own training under the guidance of Hakuin, Tōrei was assigned kōans, and his biography tells how on several occasions he reached a deep insight into these old cases. Why then could he have been so fascinated by a text giving a rather down-to-earth description of mindful breathing, contemplation of foulness, or other topics of ancient Buddhist meditation?

Elsewhere I have mentioned Tōrei's propensity to emphasize the inseparability of Buddhist canonical teachings and the meditative approach.⁷⁷ Tōrei was not the first one to face this difficulty, but such a statement implies a dilemma: The postulate is that the teachings of early Buddhism are the closest to the historical Buddha and therefore should represent most faithfully his approach to practicing the way and realizing it. On the other hand, Ch'an teachers since the T'ang dynasty have claimed to be the only recipients of the essence of the original teachings, thus representing an antithesis to T'ien-t'ai and other scholastic schools. With the emergence of the Ch'an tradition as a distinctive group and its search for official support, this claim has evolved into the exclusive expression "Pure Ch'an of the Tathāgata" (*ju-lai ch'an*) used by Kui-feng Tsung-mi (780–841),⁷⁸ and then in its remolding as "Ch'an of the patriarchs" (*tsu-shih ch'an*). These hallmark slogans obviously imply uniqueness and superiority, or greater orthodoxy. However, reverence for the founder

(Śākyamuni Buddha) forbids contending that later generations have reached a deeper understanding. How did Tōrei resolve this apparent contradiction?

As a first measure, Tōrei espoused the classical view of the Buddha's teachings being divided into different periods and adapted to the capacities of his auditors. The innovation came when Tōrei resorted to no less than establishing his own classification of the teachings (*hankyō*), which comprises seven periods:⁷⁹

1. The *Flower Ornament Sūtra* (*Avatamsaka*)
2. The Deer Park (*Agamas*)
3. The Developed sūtras (*vaipulya*)
4. The Perfection of Wisdom sūtras (*Prajñā-pāramitā*)
5. The *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*) and the *Extinction Sūtra* (*Nirvāṇa*)
6. Shingon esoterism (Hidden splendor)
7. The Ch'an/Zen tradition (Going beyond).

We can easily recognize here the five periods (*goji*) taught in Tendai/T'ien-t'ai,⁸⁰ to which Tōrei added the categories 6 and 7.

One might ask whether Tōrei considered the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* a classical sūtra belonging to one of the first five categories. Since he believed it to contain the teachings of Bodhidharma, the answer is negative. In his *Commentary*, Tōrei establishes detailed correspondences between the descriptions found in the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* and the practice in his own Rinzai tradition, an indication of the fact that he considered this sūtra to belong to the seventh category of the Ch'an/Zen tradition. As an example, Tōrei would give this comment:

The sixth chapter, "Practice of the superior way—progress," clarifies post-awakening [practice] [*gogo*], consultation [of a teacher] [*shin'eki*], passing the barriers [of kōans] [*tōkan*], and delving [*sensaku*]. It corresponds to what is described in the *Record of Lin-chi* by saying, "With further delving, when he becomes a great tree . . ." ⁸¹

From our perspective, this type of exegesis appears to be a retrospective projection of Ch'an/Zen understanding and terminology onto the original text of the sūtra, but Tōrei seems completely comfortable with his interpretation. His explicit purpose is to unfold the meaning of a canonical text that would have already subsumed the whole curriculum assigned to Zen practitioners in the Tokugawa Rinzai school. We should also remember that the *Commentary* is the result of three rounds of oral teachings (*teishō*) given to the monastic community, with probably some lay audience. Tōrei's intention in using this sūtra was thus to spend time with his auditors pondering the fundamentals of meditation practice, with the greatest emphasis on mindful breathing and the contemplation on foulness. Since Tōrei was simultaneously instructing his disci-

ples in using kōans, this return to the essentials of meditation must have been meant as a way to avoid one of the most frequent dangers of kōan practice: its falling into a mere literary exercise. He says in his other major work: "After having broken through the multiple solid barriers [of the kōans] [*rōkan*], when you return to the examination of the sūtras and treatises, it is as if you were yourself teaching [these texts]." ⁸²

If we go one step further in questioning some of the implicit agendas of Tōrei's *Commentary*, we can surmise his intention of using the prestige of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* to enhance the respectability of the tradition he represents. Much in the same way as Ch'i-sung did during the Sung period, Tōrei had to use scholarly skills to demonstrate that his school was the recipient of a tradition stemming directly from the historical Buddha. During Tōrei's abbacy, the Ryūtaku-ji was actually meant to become a central practice center for the whole country (*konpon dōjō*), fulfilling the role that Mount Hiei had played in the past.⁸³ In the *Commentary* as well as in Tōrei's other works, one sees a commitment to describe a religious path that would even go beyond the borders of Buddhism and encompass all the other religions of which he was aware:

In the case of the teachings by Confucius or Lao-tzu, as well as in the Way of the *kamis*, they were all bodhisattvas [having attained] equal awakening [*tōgaku*]. Hiding their virtue and concealing their brightness, they [appeared] similar to human beings. They taught according to circumstances; inside, they spontaneously encouraged the approach by the unique vehicle of *kenshō*; outside, they gave to the world everlasting models.⁸⁴

In this regard, the importance Tōrei gave to Shinto is a conspicuous dimension of his life, one that regularly surfaces in the *Commentary*.

Importance of the Shinto Dimension

Tōrei's biography reminds us that his interest in Shinto scriptures goes back to his days as a young monk, when he practiced in the community of Kogetsu Zenzai (1667–1751). Kogetsu had suggested that he study the *Daiseikyō* whenever he found some spare time. The biography adds that Tōrei later heard about this text, which Chōon Dōkai (1628–1695) of Kurotaki had received from Nagano Uneme (1616–1687), but that he could not procure it until 1764, when he met a man named Hakuō (n.d.), Nagano's descendent in the seventh generation.⁸⁵ Almost one century had elapsed since the publication of the *Sendai kujihongi daiseikyō* and its subsequent interdiction by the Bakufu, so it was perhaps less dangerous to study or quote this scripture.

In Tōrei's *Commentary*, the Introduction contains several quotations of the *Sendai kujihongi daiseikyō*, which are in particular related to the legend of Bodhidharma's being reborn in Japan. The whole story presupposes another tra-

dition that considered Shōtoku Taishi to have been a reincarnation of the T'ien-t'ai patriarch Hui-szu (515–577).⁸⁶ The legend as recounted by Tōrei and his sources distinguishes four phases in Bodhidharma's Japanese manifestations.

First, he proceeded to the northeast of Japan, "concealing his brilliance and hiding his traces in Matsushima for thirty years."⁸⁷ Then, seeing that the birth of Shōtoku was imminent and that the time was ripe, Bodhidharma "came flying and instantly transformed into a swift horse, which was fostered by Tachibana no Toyohinomiya."⁸⁸ One day, "when [the pregnant mother of Shōtoku] Princess Hashibito⁸⁹ passed in front of the [Imperial] Mews, the horse bent its knees and gave three [loud] neighs. Upon [hearing] this, the Princess gave birth to [Shōtoku] Taishi without being aware of it. The horse immediately transformed into a maid, who took the baby in her arms and entered the main aisle of the palace."⁹⁰

The fourth extraordinary event is related to the encounter with a beggarlike figure who was lying on the roadside: "On his way back [Shōtoku] made a detour and entered Kataokayama. On the road there was a starving man [*uebito*]. [The imperial train] had barely progressed three *jō* [about ten yards] when [Shōtoku's horse] Kurogoma approached [the man] and wouldn't move [an inch]."⁹¹ Finally, Shōtoku alit from his horse, questioned the man about his whereabouts, and asked why he was lying there. The prince also took off his own attire to cover the starving man. They exchanged a few words, but although the attendants heard the conversation they did not understand its meaning. Eventually Shōtoku Taishi composed a poem, the man raised his head and offered his reply in verses. The following day, retainers sent to examine the site where the starving man was lying reported him to be dead. Shōtoku lamented and ordered his ministers to build a grave. Shōtoku's unusual solicitude for a man of such poor extraction provoked dissidence among members of the Court. To settle the matter, Shōtoku commanded the enraged ministers to go and inspect the grave. They found the grave to be perfectly sealed; although the coffin was intact, no corpse was found. Instead the coffin was filled with an extraordinary fragrance and they found Shōtoku's attire folded on the coffin.

The prototype of this story is already included in the *Nihonshoki*,⁹² but one of the characteristics of the *Sendai kujihongi daiseikyō* is to associate this enigmatic figure with Bodhidharma:

One day, the Emperor [Shōtoku] asked his attendants, "What was the name of the starving man of Kataokayama?"

The attendants: "We ignore it, but [the diviner] Hitoatomi no Ichihi is the only person who might know it." The Emperor summoned him and asked [the same question]. Ichihi prostrated himself and said, "I have heard words whispered by a divine being [*kanto no*

hito]. It may have been the Brahman-monk Bodhidharma [*Bara-monsō Bodaidaruma*]⁹³ from the most remote Western [land].”⁹⁴

Apparently annoyed by this evasive reply, Shōtoku inquires whether there is any deity in the palace. Thereupon, a kami materializes in the form of an aged duke who claims to be Sumiyoshi no kami. Shōtoku asks again for the confirmation of the identity of the starving man. The deity gives a hearty laugh and throws off an auspicious poem, giving a concluding verse to which he asks Shōtoku to append the first verse. This ending in the form of a literary pirouette contributes a further touch of mystery to the whole tale of the starving man, alias Bodhidharma.

These accounts conclude Tōrei's Introduction and are given without comments. They reveal a facet of Tōrei's fascination for Shinto teachings that is quite different from the more philosophical dimension, about which he provided original interpretations. In his comments on texts belonging to the Five Ise Scriptures of the Watarai school, Tōrei has in particular established a strict equivalence between primeval chaos (*konton*) and the realization of one's intrinsic nature (*kenshō*).⁹⁵

One might therefore wonder to what extent Tōrei believed in such stories. In other words, his choice to include these legends in his *Commentary* suggests three main hypotheses: (1) He believed them and wanted to share them with his auditors; (2) he accepted them as belonging to the lore but mentioned them to make his teaching more accessible to his Japanese audience; (3) he understood that they represented sheer legend but chose to cite them to underline that the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* does not represent purely foreign teachings but also comprises an indigenous dimension.

The lack of Tōrei's comments on these Shinto sources seems to denote his distance, and I would be inclined to adopt the third hypothesis, but in these subjective interpretations it is always safer to suppose the “worst,” namely the first hypothesis. In any event, these Japanese narratives relating to Bodhidharma illustrate the indigenization process of Buddhist doctrines, practices, and symbols. They also demonstrate that during the Tokugawa period the propagation of teachings that suggest an alien or Indian dimension, such as mindful breathing or contemplation of foulness, had to be put into relation with anecdotic, “local” events, to make people feel that they were dealing with something “close at hand” and not with some exotic meditation practice. The whole equilibrium between “familiarity” and “strangeness” is precisely one of the parameters that was to change, at least on the surface, with the advent of the Meiji Reformation.

Conclusions

This limited journey back and forth between the eighteenth and the fifth centuries leaves little doubt about the fact that the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* belongs to a relatively early stage in the development of Chinese Buddhism. It systematically presents some of the meditation techniques used around the beginning of the fifth century and before, allowing us to get a glimpse of Buddhist practice before the emergence of the T'ien-t'ai and Ch'an schools. Tōrei's fascination with that period and that peculiar text might be related to the assumption that it represents a stage of Chinese Buddhism before the most visible rise of sectarian rivalries. Although Tōrei's affiliation makes him fully endorse the legend of twenty-eight Indian patriarchs culminating with Bodhidharma, one can presume that his level of scholarship made him aware that it did not necessarily represent factual history. If the distinction between sacred history and factual history had a meaning at his time, he deliberately chose to tell sacred history to his auditors while digging out for himself what he could glean from remaining documents. What he tells about Bodhidharma does appear naïve, essentially because he cannot reassess the true character of the patriarch. Nevertheless, the figure of Bodhidharma is *useful* for conveying his own message to the public. In other words, the enigmatic figure of Bodhidharma alias Dharmatrāta is ideal for proposing reform of his school—that is, a return to the essentials of Buddhist practice—or even enlarging it in the direction of a pan-Buddhist movement as seen in the ambitious aim for Ryūtakujī.

At the level of practice, Tōrei's *Commentary* can be read as a quest for the roots of Zen in early meditation techniques. The original *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* itself already provides a testimony to the perception that meditation techniques do exist independently from doctrinal contents. Mindful breathing or contemplation on foulness was sometimes labeled Hīnayāna, sometimes Mahayāna. Later they would be incorporated into the practice of Ch'an/Zen adepts, and now mindful breathing is still widely practiced in Theravāda circles or in many Zen congregations; the labels are changing, but for those immersed in such concentration exercises, the focus of the mind is identical. Since ancient times, meditative absorption (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) have been depicted as complementary, like the two "wings of awakening" (*bodhipakṣa*).⁹⁶ The significance of Tōrei's *Commentary* today is related to the understanding of the place of meditation within the whole framework of Buddhist practice. At the end of his six volumes, Tōrei says, "Don't laugh [at me] for my careless commentaries: I have only opened the way, waiting for wise people to come in the future!"⁹⁷ A lot remains to be done to further pave the way.

NOTES

1. The word “meditation” will be used here as a generic term to indicate the different forms of cultivation (Skt. *bhāvanā*) taught in the texts examined in this chapter. Several titles of *sūtras* discussed here contain the Chinese characters *chanjing* or *san-meijing*, which respectively correspond to *dhyāna-sūtra* or *samādhi-sūtra*. The Sanskrit *dhyāna* and its Pāli equivalent *jhana* both refer to the *technique* of focusing the mind on one object and to the *state* of concentration obtained therefrom. There are, of course, further classifications such as the four *dhyānas* and the four *samapattis*, culminating in the “attainment of cessation” (*nirodhasamāpatti*). A useful introduction on the subject of Buddhist meditation, showing also distinctions from Christian “meditation,” is found in Griffiths 1993, pp. 34–47.

2. The text was completed in 1780 (Tenmei 1). It was first published in 1784, and one of the few copies of this first edition is kept at the Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjō in Kyoto. However, the 1894 (Meiji 27) edition can be more easily found and scrupulously reproduces the original, with a slightly different pagination. Hereafter, all the quotes of Tōrei’s *Commentary* will refer to the 1894 edition.

3. I conducted a research seminar on this text between November 1999 and February 2002. The whole work is made of six volumes in sixteen fascicles, and the first step in conducting a systematic study of this text must be its publication. The primary stages of this project having now been completed, I here present some initial results and working hypotheses.

4. There is only one article in Japanese dealing specifically with Tōrei’s text: Kimura Jōyū (1963).

5. A good literal translation for this expression is “a separate transmission apart from the teachings,” in Foulk 1999, p. 220. However, since this phrase already implies a critique of the “teachings” and challenges the reliance on mere written scriptures that are supposed to reflect the instructions of the historical Buddha, I prefer to add the adjective “scholastic.”

6. Faure 1993, p. 128.

7. See Mohr 2002.

8. Concerning Mujaku in English, see App 1987.

9. Tōrei was an expert in Watarai Shinto, and in his *Commentary* he often quotes the *Sendai kujihongi daiseikyō*, a text that was forbidden at his time and that has only recently become available in Shintō taikēi hensankai, ed. 1999. The relation between monks belonging to the Ōbaku school and this text is being reexamined. See Nogawa Hiroyuki 1999–2000, and Satō Shunkō 2002.

10. The importance of Bodhidharma, or rather its avatar as “Daruma,” in Japanese popular religion and its deep links with various beliefs coming from the theory of the “five agents” (*gogyō*) have been thoroughly examined by Yoshino 1995.

11. The concept itself is attributed to Suzuki Daisetsu (1870–1966), who shared many of his ideas with his friend Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945). I will examine the story of the emergence of “Zen thought” (*Zen shisō*) during the Meiji period in the fall 2002 issue of the journal *Shisō*.

12. The poem and the few words at the beginning of the book are signed by

Kyōdō Etan (Ashi 1809–1895), the Myōshin-ji chief-abbot, who was eighty-six years old at that time. It is followed by another foreword by Nan'in Zengu (Watanabe 1834–1904), a fellow teacher in the Rinzai school. The date of this reprint is also extremely interesting: it was the winter of 1893 (Meiji 26), a few months after the World's Parliament of Religions, where Kōgaku Sōen had for the first time represented his school abroad.

13. An interesting approach to these issues can be found in Bronkhorst 1993, 1998.

14. See McRae 1986, pp. 80–82. McRae focuses on the role of this sūtra in the theory of patriarchal lineages, saying that “Buddhabhadra’s *Ta-mo-to-lo ch’an ching* and its prefaces by Hui-yuan and Hui-kuan constitute a very important source for the development of the Ch’an transmission theory,” p. 80. The focus on this aspect of the text can also be found in Yanagida 1983, pp. 27–29.

15. T 55 no. 2145: 65b22–66a23. The pioneer studies of Kimura 1960 and 1962 remain important resources for the study of Hui-yūan, including his preface.

16. It bears the title *Hsiu-hsing-ti pu-ching hsü* (Preface to the Yogacarabhūmi [on] the Contemplation of Foulness) but apparently refers to the same text (T 55 no. 2145: 66b03–67a13). See also Lin 1949, pp. 348–349, for a partial translation of this preface.

17. There is a whole section in Tōrei’s *Commentary* entitled “Reflections about Dates” (*nenkō*) in the Introduction, pp. 34b–37a. Tōrei carefully avoids being too affirmative and says: “We can infer from [Ch’i-sung’s] *Discussion of the True Lineage of Dharma Transmission* [Ch’uan-fa chen-tsung lun] that the time Hui-yūan wrote his Preface and circulated this sūtra corresponds to the seventh or eighth year of the I-hsi era (412–413), during the reign of the Emperor An of the Eastern Chin (317–420) dynasty.” The capital was Chien-k’ang, present Nan-ching. Tōrei adds further references to show that this year 412 corresponds to that of the translation of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* by T’an-wu-ch’en (Dharmakṣema), and he also mentions that the next year (413) saw the demise of Kumārajīva.

18. The Chinese phonetic equivalent of the Sanskrit title is mentioned by Hui-yūan in his Preface T 15 no. 618: 301b22. For a recent state of the question concerning the different *Yogācārabhūmi* texts, see Odani Nobuchiyo 2000, p. 177. At least one other text translated by Buddhabhadra, the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*, has been rendered into English, but I cannot help having serious reservations on some passages in Grosnick 1995.

19. Zürcher 1972, p. 33.

20. Since the pioneering works of Ui Hakuju and Paul Demiéville, some progress has been made in this area, with recent scholarship favoring Demiéville’s interpretation of a gradual incorporation of Mahayanist concepts into basically Hinayanist techniques. Odani 2000, pp. 170–180.

21. One of the most comprehensive surveys to date is found in Yamabe 1999.

22. Yamabe 2000, pp. 208–216.

23. Zürcher 1991, p. 282.

24. Zürcher 1991, p. 283.

25. There were actually two different groups within the Sarvāstivādin school, with slight differences in their teachings. See Hirakawa and Groner 1990, p. 135.

26. T 55 no. 2145: 69b14–15 and b21. See the partial translation in Demiéville 1954, pp. 346–347.
27. Demiéville 1954, pp. 397–434.
28. T 50 no. 2059: 334b26–335c14.
29. T 50 no. 2059: 335b02–b15.
30. The *Biography of Eminent Monks* gives a rather positive account of the meeting between Buddhahadra and Kumārajīva in Ch'ang-an, relating that “Kumārajīva was delighted [of this encounter]. They discussed together the Yogācāra (*fa-hsiang*) [doctrines], and [their] unveiling of the most subtle [aspects] brought many enlightening benefits” (T 50 no. 2059: 335a04–a05). The biography even hints at Buddhahadra's superiority by saying that “whenever Kumārajīva had a doubt, he would unfailingly discuss it [with Buddhahadra] and settle [the matter]” (ibid., p. 335a04–a07). Finally, the ruler took interest in these two Indian teachers, organizing a public debate between them, which met with great success. This apparently caused jealousy among the monks who had been residing in Ch'ang-an for longer, so that “they expressed their disagreement and deceived the people” (ibid., p. 335a22–a23). As a result of further maneuvers, Buddhahadra was forced to leave Ch'ang-an with his disciple Hui-kuan and about forty followers (ibid., p. 335b03–b06). This episode is also summarized in the *Record of the True Lineage of Dharma Transmission* (*Ch'uan-fa chen-tsung chi*) by Fo-jih Ch'i-sung (1007–1072; T. 51 no. 2078: 767c09–c11). Tōrei incorporates Ch'i-sung's version in his own *Commentary* (fascicle 1, p. 1a). Later, Hui-yüan personally wrote a letter to the ruler Yao Hsing, asking him to revoke the verdict of the unjust expulsion of Buddhahadra in 410 C.E. (T 50 no. 2059: 335b14–b15; Zürcher 1972, p. 212 and note 185, p. 397).
31. T 50 no. 2059: 335b16.
32. There are a few mentions of Buddhasena in the *Ch'u san-tsang chi chi* (T 55 no. 2145: 66a26, 66c25, 66c26, 67a03, 67a04, 106b29), three of them being from Hui-yüan's preface to the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*. The name of Buddhasena also appears in the *Mochizuki bukk'yō daijiten*, Tsukamoto 1973, vol. 5, pp. 4262b and 4467b, but only marginally in articles on other figures. See also Zürcher 1972, p. 223, and Akanuma 1979, p. 107b. In his dictionary, Saigusa Mitsuyoshi (1987, pp. 222b–223a) also mentions Buddhasimha, who might be related to Buddhasena.
33. See Watson 1993, pp. xxiv–xxv for a succinct biography of Kumārajīva. For the sake of simplification, I have adopted the dates given by Watson 1993, pp. xxv. There are, however, many variants and no agreement has been reached yet. See Demiéville 1978, p. 267, and Kamata 1981, pp. 75–77.
34. In particular the *Ch'an mi-yao-fa ching* (T 15 no. 613), a translation that might have been wrongly attributed to Kumārajīva, and the *Ch'an fa-yao chieh* (T 15 no. 616).
35. *Commentary*, fascicle 1, p. 10a. The full passage is translated on page 228.
36. Satō 1984, pp. 348–349.
37. For the translation of *pu-ching kuan* (Skt. *aśubhabhāvanā*, Pāli *asubhabhavana*), I have followed Buddhaghosa, and Ñāṇamoli 1999 and Wilson 1996. The Indian words denote the negation of “beauty,” “radiance” (Skt. *śubha*, Pāli *subha*), and evoke something “repulsive” or “horrible” in Wilson 1996, p. 103, while the Chinese expression is constructed with two characters indicating the negation of “purity.”

38. This is a tentative translation for *teng-fen*, which is the equivalent of *t'ung-fen* and corresponds to the Sanskrit *sabhāga* in *Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten*, vol. 5 p. 4320a.

39. See Nakamura 2001, p. 486c. The first use of the term *wu t'ing-hsin kuan* is credited to the other Hui-yüan (523–592) in his *Ta-ch'eng i-chang* (T 44 no. 1851: 658a08, 668b16–b19, 755c07), but the techniques themselves had been employed before him. A discussion of these parallels is found in Odani 2000, pp. 137–142. There are unmistakable correspondences with the six kinds of temperament taught in the Pāli sources and summarized in the *Visuddhimagga*. They are “greedy temperament, hating temperament, deluded temperament, faithful temperament, intelligent temperament, and speculative temperament,” according to Buddhaghosa, and Ñānamoli 1999, p. 101.

40. Among the meditation sūtras included in T 15, the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* is the only text to use the term *an-pan-nien*, a phonetic rendering for mindful breathing that corresponds to the Sanskrit *ānāpānasmṛti*. The other texts sometimes use the longer form *a-na pan-na* but most often employ the Chinese translation *shu-hsi*, which literally indicates “counting the breath” but refers to the same technique.

41. T 15 no. 618: 301c02.

42. Odani 2000, pp. 138–139. However, Odani's contention that the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching*, although it focuses on mindful breathing and the contemplation of foulness, contains all five contemplations, is not entirely convincing (p. 185). The main reason is that concentration on the Buddha cannot be found in this text.

43. An anecdote in Buddhābhaddra's biography recounts that his friend Datta was once absorbed in seated meditation within a closed room when he suddenly saw Buddhābhaddra approaching. Datta asked how he came to be there, and Buddhābhaddra replied that he had just been to the Tusita Heaven to pay his respects to Maitreya. As soon as he said these words, he vanished. *Kao-seng-chuan* 2, T 50 no. 2059: 334c09–cii.

44. See Takasaki 1982, pp. 2–42.

45. These features are well summarized by Odani 2000.

46. “De la grande somme mahayaniste d'Asanga, c'est donc la *Yogacarabhumī* de Sangharaksa qui devait être le prototype hīnayāniste le plus considérable et sans doute le plus ancien.” Demiéville 1954, p. 396.

47. See in particular Lin 1949 and Demiéville 1978.

48. The common view on Fa-chiu is that he was the first patriarch of the Sarvāstivādin school in India and probably lived around the second century c.e. Charles Muller, ed. *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* (<http://www.acmuller.net/ddb/index.html>). He is also considered the author of the *Wu-shih p'i-p'o-sha lun* (T 28 no. 1555).

49. Kodama. 1993, p. 168.

50. Yanagida 1999, p. 595; reprint of *Tōshi no keifu* 1954. Concerning the dates for Heze Shenhui (684–758), see Faure 1988 and its English translation in Faure 1997.

51. *Commentary* fascicle 1, p. 1a.

52. One of the first scholars to spotlight the depths of the Ch'an-T'ient'ai polemics was Takao 1941. Takao largely accepts the T'ient'ai critique and acknowledges the “distortions” by Fo-jih Ch'i-sung, saying that “Ch'i-sung takes Ta-mo-to-lo for P'u-t'i-ta-mo, and the passage in the fifth fascicle of his *Record of the True Lineage of Dharma*

Transmission where he considers the *Ch'an-ching* as the work of P'u-t'i-ta-mo before the age of twenty-seven is rather comical" (ibid., p. 10). In English, two collective volumes provide a good overview of the Sung period and of its Buddhist and non-Buddhist dimensions: Ebrey and Gregory 1993, and Gregory and Getz 1999.

53. This criticism is in particular expressed by the T'ien-t'ai scholar Tzu-fang, one of Ch'i-sung's opponents who had been claiming that the use of the *Ta-mo-to-lo ch'an ching* was misleading. His position is summarized in the *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi*, T 49 no. 2035: 242a03–a23. More on these debates can be found in English in Huang 1986, pp. 182–183.

54. Foulk 1999, p. 259.

55. Huang 1999, pp. 314–316.

56. Paraphrase of the words "Those who understand the Way are many, those who practice it are few. Many explain the principle, few penetrate it," which are attributed to Bodhidharma. This sentence appears in the *Tzu-t'ang chi* (Chung-wen pp. 39b10–b11) and became "canonical" after its inclusion in the *Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Flame*, (T 51 no. 2076: 219c14–c15). Tōrei also quotes the first part of it in his *Commentary* (Introduction, pp. 2b and 13b) and in his *Shūmon mujintōron* (*Treatise on the Inexhaustible Lamp of our Lineage*), T 81 no. 2575: 594c11–c12.

57. *Dainihon bukkō zensho*, vol. 101, p. 73a (Tokyo: Bussho kankōkai 1913). *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 9b.

58. The *Wu-men ch'an-ching yao-yung-fa* ("How to Use the Essentials of the Meditation Sūtra of the Five Gates," T 15 no. 619).

59. Girard 1990, pp. 74–75.

60. The affiliation of Myōe is somehow ambiguous in that regard, because although he is mainly regarded as a reviver of the Kegon school, some biographical accounts report that he received a certification from the Rinzai monk Myōan Yōsai (1141–1215). This is the case of Tōrei's *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 17b. Despite Yōsai's appearance in one of Myōe's dreams, Girard has serious reservations concerning a direct affiliation of Myōe with Yōsai. Girard 1990, pp. 255–256.

61. Yoshida Michioki 1996, p. 159.

62. T 7 no. 220: 7b24–b27 and 429c17–c19.

63. T 25 no. 1509: 217a–218d. Lamotte's French translation (1944–1981, vol. III, pp. 1311–1328).

64. *Sōtōshū zensho: Goroku 1*, p. 817b16 (Tokyo: Sōtōshū zensho kankōkai, 1931).

65. See Chin 1998.

66. This phenomenon is well depicted in Jaffe 2001.

67. See in particular the numerous figures from a contemporary illustrated edition of the *Dhammapada* printed in Taiwan, reproduced in Wilson 1996.

68. Mōru 1987.

69. See the translation and discussion of this text in Broughton 1999.

70. This metaphor also appears in Chinese sources. Like "a harp without strings," it refers to a musical instrument whose resources are limitless. See Koga Hideo 1991, p. 440. Here it is an allusion to Tōrei's state of *samādhi*.

71. This is the fire that burnt Ryūtaku-ji on the seventeenth day of the twelfth month of An'ei 5 (= January 26, 1777). The event is also recounted in Tōrei's biography, when he was fifty-six. See Nishimura Eshin 1982, p. 239.

72. *Commentary*, Introduction, pp. 9b–10a.

73. *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 31b. This passage corresponds to T 55 no. 2145 p. 66a11–a12 in Huiyan's Preface quoted in the *Chusanjang jiji*. It is repeatedly mentioned by Ch'i-sung in his works (T 51 no. 2079: 772b28, no. 2080: 776c18, 777a23, 778a26, and 780c12). See also Kimura 1960, p. 447.

74. *Commentary*, fascicle 1, p. 32a.

75. Kimura 1960 and 1962.

76. I chose to translate *chu* as “stagnation” because there are two passages in the sūtra that explicitly speak of “getting rid of the two mistakes of backslide and stagnation” (*li t'ui-chu kuo*; T 15 no. 618: 301b26 and 314b06).

77. Mohr 2000, p. 263.

78. In his *Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Ch'an* (*Ch'an-yüan chu-ch'üan-chi tu-hsu*) Tsung-mi says after describing four inferior types of meditation: “If you immediately realize that your own mind is intrinsically pure, that since the beginning, defilements never existed, that the nature of wisdom without misery has always been endowed by itself, that this mind is nothing else than Buddha, and that eventually there is no difference, and if you practice accordingly, then this is the meditation of the highest vehicle [*tsui-shang-ch'eng ch'an*]. It is also named Pure meditation of the Tathāgata [*ju-lai ch'an*] or One-practice samādhi [*i-hsing san-mei*]. The one developed and transmitted among the disciples of Bodhidharma is this type of meditation. It is only the one transmitted by Bodhidharma that is immediately identical to the essence of the Buddha (*fo-t'i*), and it differs completely from the other approaches” T 48 no. 2015: 399b16–b27. Peter Gregory mentions two dissertations containing English translations of this text, but I have not been able to consult them (1981, p. 316).

79. This classification scheme is developed in Tōrei's *Shūmon mujintōron* (*Treatise on the Inexhaustible Lamp of our Lineage*) T 81 no. 2575: 600b19–b29. Translation in Mohr 1997. A less elaborate version is found in Tōrei's *Commentary*, Introduction, pp. 12a–12b.

80. See, for instance, Chegwan and Masao 1983, pp. 31 and 57–69.

81. *Commentary*, fascicle 6, p. 1a. This corresponds to the *Record of Lin-chi* T 47 no. 1985: 504c12, containing an allusion to the future achievements of Lin-chi. The full sentence is: “In the future, with delving, he will become a great tree providing cool shade for the people of the world.” In the compound *ch'uan-tso* both characters mean “piercing,” and this expression literally indicates “digging up, deepening, searching [further],” often used with the nuance of a “useless search.” Yanagida has the note, “Open a hole. Here it means training oneself and reach perfect maturity” (1972, p. 234), hence my translation “delving.”

82. *Shūmon mujintōron* (*Treatise on the Inexhaustible Lamp of our Lineage*) T 81 no. 2575: 584a22–a23.

83. This argument is developed by Suzuki 1985.

84. *Shūmon mujintōron* T 81 no. 2575: 602b13–b16.

85. Tōrei's biography, age forty-four. See Nishimura 1982, p. 192.

86. See Durt 1985, pp. 18–19. One of the first attempts to connect the figure of Shōtoku Taishi with Hui-szu seems to be the work of the T'ien-t'ai Chinese missionary Szu-ch'a (n.d., around the eighth century), who came to Japan and wrote the *Jōgū kōtaishi bosatsu den* (included in *Dainihon bukkyō sho* vol. 112).

87. *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 39b. Here Tōrei quotes the *Daruma sanchōden*, a text attributed to Taisū (n.d.). I have recently obtained a copy of this rare book, kept at the library of Ritsumeikan University. The Preface, bearing the date 1791, specifies that it is the posthumous publication of a text left by Shikyō Eryō (1721–1787). The passage quoted here is found in the third fascicle of the *Daruma sanchōden*, pp. 1a and 5a. Tōrei must have seen an earlier version of the *Daruma sanchōden*, since his *Commentary* is dated 1780.

88. The future father of Shōtoku Taishi, who was the fourth son of Emperor Kinmei and later became Emperor Yōmei. Sanseidō henshūsho, 1988, p. 1178a.

89. Also known as Anahobe no Hashihito no himemiko. Sanseidō henshūsho, 1988, p. 36.

90. *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 39b. This quote from the *Daruma sanchōden* comes from the third fascicle p. 5a, which explicitly mentions Bodhidharma. In the second quote, except for “The horse immediately transformed into a maid,” this text repeats almost textually the account found in *Sendai kujihongi daiseikyō* fascicle 35 in Shintō taikai hensankai 1999, vol. 2, pp. 336–337.

91. *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 41. Here Tōrei quotes from the *Sendai kujihongi daiseikyō* fascicle 38 in Shintō taikai hensankai 1999, vol. 2, pp. 389–390.

92. Fascicle 22 of the *Nihonshoki*. See Kojima Noriyuki 1998, vol. 3, pp. 569–571.

93. The *Sendai kujihongi daiseikyō* has *Barasō Bodaidaruma*, where *Barasō* apparently is a mistake for *Baramonsō*. I have followed Tōrei’s correction in adding the missing character *mon*. Shintō taikai hensankai 1999, vol. 4, p. 172. *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 42a.

94. *Commentary*, Introduction, p. 42a, in Shintō taikai hensankai 1999, vol. 4, p. 172.

95. I have investigated this matter in Mōru 1995, pp. 207–238. Concerning Watarai Shinto, an excellent study is now available: Teeuwen 1996.

96. Bugault 1968, p. 56.

97. *Commentary*, fascicle 6, p. 38a.

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