
FOLLOWING TRACES: THE TEN OX-HERDING PICTURES AND RINZAI ZEN IN NORTH AMERICA

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Students find themselves following a winding gravel road through the dense Catskills forest. They do not know what they are looking for, but there is a sense that coming to this mountain will help them find an answer. Slowly the student rises up the mountain, past streams and signs. Buddha statues begin to appear on the sides of the road, and the student knows that something is coming up very soon. Suddenly, the forest bursts open into a lake. By looking closely through the surrounding trees, the student can glimpse the roof of a Japanese-style temple, International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji (DBZ), one of the only Rinzai Zen Buddhist temples in North America. This temple is a syncretic blend of western culture and over two thousand years of Buddhist practice, transmission, and transformation.

The practices of the temple are strict, but for anyone who is willing to devote themselves fully, the doors are open. As much as the practitioners are alive and working, the paintings on the walls are living teachings, waiting for a viewer. One of those paintings, depicting an ox, represents a Chinese allegory comparing Zen practice to taming an ox. When the student investigates this story further, they discover that there are more pictures of this ox in the temple which have aided previous practitioners in their meditative journeys. A set of ten pictures exists today, known as the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, and it is an artistic representation of the process of Rinzai Zen enlightenment practice. The student stands before the ox and realizes that there is a long journey ahead before they can grasp it.

As Buddhism spread from the homeland of the Buddha, the practices and knowledge of Buddhist teachings evolved to fit into the

cultures which it met. When Zen Buddhism reached North America, it was no exception to this phenomenon. In the case of DBZ, North Americans have taken a particular interest in the philosophical, direct experience of meditative practice. Their understanding of the meditative path of Buddhist practice differs slightly from that of their Japanese counterparts. By examining a common Buddhist allegory for meditative practice, the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, from a North American perspective, it is possible to see the subtle changes that have taken place in how Buddhist meditative practice is understood during its adoption in America.

Scholarship of Buddhism in North America is largely fixated on the specific teachings of the different established masters. This essay aims to focus on the location of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, rather than any particular master. DBZ will act as a case study for the development of American Rinzai Zen Buddhism, and the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures will be used to demonstrate the developing understanding of Rinzai Zen Buddhist practice. Looking at the historical sources for Rinzai Zen practice will indicate how Buddhism has evolved as it has been adopted by practitioners from Western cultures.

This essay will discuss the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures through the lens of Rinzai Zen Buddhism, and specifically that of DBZ, by drawing on commentaries and interviews from several teachers from the lineage. The pictures will be examined individually, and then overarching themes will be discussed. Prior to discussing the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, it is important to understand the history of Zen art and the development of the Ox-Herding Pictures into its present-day form. It is also important to understand the development of Rinzai Zen koan

practice, and this will be examined through DBZ's dharma lineage.

Tracing the Ox

When a viewer observes a work of Zen art, it is clear that the artist intended for the ink on the page to come alive. The artist drew flowing lines and colours across the page to denote a meaning that is just out of reach. Just as the philosophy and practice of Zen Buddhism has changed over time, however, Zen art has developed, even while presenting the same general themes: displaying lineage and demonstrating enlightenment. This section will discuss the development of these themes in Zen art and calligraphy through the Chinese and Japanese periods, with a primary focus on the development of Ox-Herding Pictures. Long before the first stroke of any of the Ox-Herding Pictures, Chan¹ monks were painting calligraphy in temples and on the walls of the patriarchs.

Zen calligraphy and art have their roots in Chinese Chan culture. The earliest sources stretch back to the time of Huineng (638–713 CE).² At this time, Chan was a relatively new sect and competed with other forms of Buddhism, such as Tiantai, which drew its legitimacy from a direct lineage to Nāgārjuna.³ As a way to compete, Chan monks drew their

lineage of dharma transmission directly through the Chinese Patriarchs and Indian Patriarchs to Sakyamuni Buddha.⁴ In line with this preoccupation with creating legitimacy, Chan monks began painting pictures of the dharma transmissions of the Chinese Patriarchs.

[T]hey intended to have scenes from the Laṅkāvatrāra Sūtra painted as an act of devotion. They also wanted paintings of the Five Patriarchs Transmitting the Robe [of Bodhidharma] and the Law in order to spread knowledge about them and as a record for later generations (*Platform Sutra* 5).⁵

The paintings of the five patriarchs mentioned in the Platform Sutra were never completed due to events in Huineng's life, but the sutra's intent of creating art about previous masters places the theme of lineage in Chan art as early as the seventh century.⁶ Guànxīū (832–912) was one of the first notable artists who painted in this Chan style.⁷ His paintings abandoned the orthodox styles of realism and painting with colour, and instead employed monochromatic ink lines painted with a single brush. His style was representative of a new and growing style of painting known as *yipin*, as exhibited in Figure 1, which did not conform to the standard methods of painting of the time.⁸

¹ Zen is the Japanese form of Chan Buddhism in China that emerged in the 12th century CE following the travels of Myōan Eisai (1141–1215). This essay will use Chan when referring to developments in China, and Zen when referring to developments in Japan and North America.

² Jan Fontein and Money Hickman, *Zen: Painting & Calligraphy* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1970), xvi; For the purposes of this essay, Chinese and Japanese names will be written using English stylistic conventions.

³ Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History: India and China* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 102.

⁴ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xvii.

⁵ Huineng, *The Platform Scripture*, trans. Wing-tsit Chan (New York: St. John's University Press, 1963).

⁶ Huineng, *The Platform Scripture*, 29–43; Dumoulin, *India and China*, 137–138; According to the *Platform*

Sutra, Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism, is credited as the promulgator of the tradition of sudden enlightenment in Southern Chan Buddhism. After he obtained the title of Sixth Patriarch, Huineng was forced to flee from his home temple and seek new places to teach and practice. His school of practice is the only surviving school of Chan which has survived to the present day. Huineng's doctrines were transmitted through the use of the *Diamond Sutra* and *Platform Sutra*.

⁷ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xix.

⁸ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xix; this painting has been graciously provided by the Tokyo National Museum for publication with this academic project. The image has been cropped to present the painting inside its framing. The image source may be found at <https://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/C0094185>.

During his period, Chan Buddhism had established itself as a strong sect of Buddhism with many temples. This temple system, known as the “Five Mountains and Ten Temples,” allowed Chan monks to devote themselves to their practice, and Chan art to flourish in the literary culture of the Song Period (960–1279).⁹

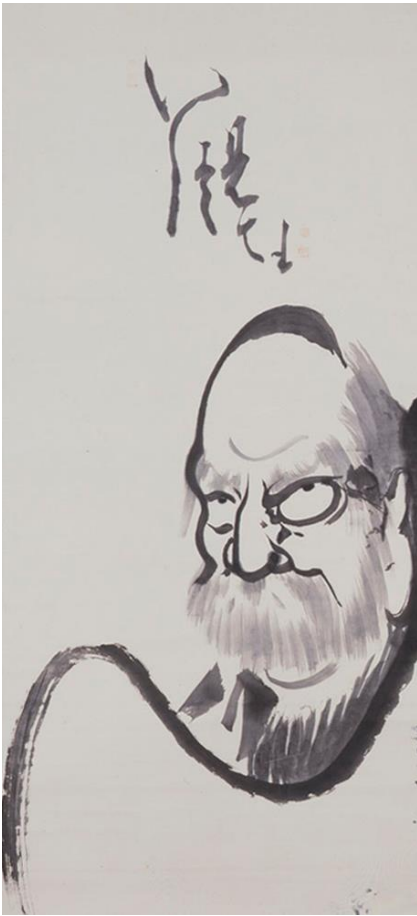


Figure 1: Hakuin Ekaku, *Tadashi Daishi*, 18th c., ink on paper, Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

The Song Period also saw the beginning of koan collections in Chan Buddhism. These paradoxical sayings were rendered in Chan calligraphy and art.¹⁰ This literary culture created a form of living Chan calligraphy known as *moji* (Japanese: *bokuseki*), in which the sayings and koans themselves were written in a decorative form.¹¹ One of the most famous forms of *moji* is the *ensō*, a particularly popular practice in China and Japan (Figure 2).¹² An *ensō* is created by a singular brushstroke in the form of a circle. It was supposed to signify enlightenment, power, and the universe itself.¹³ *Ensō* embody the living art form of *moji*, and would translate into other forms of Zen art, such as *zenkiga*.¹⁴

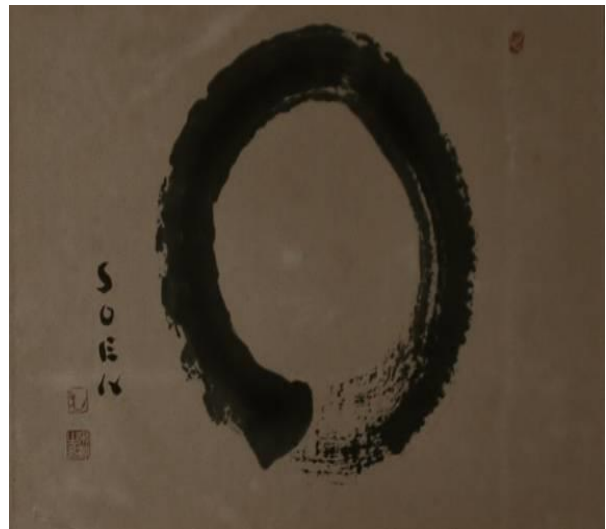


Figure 2: Soen Nakagawa Roshi, *Enso*, 1907-1984, ink on paper, International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji, Livingston Manor, New York.

⁹ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xlv.

¹⁰ Dumoulin, *India and China*, 179.

¹¹ Christopher J. Earnshaw, *Sho: Japanese Calligraphy* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1988), 98.

¹² This painting has been graciously provided by the Zen Studies Society from their collection at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji for this academic project.

¹³ Audrey Seo, *Enso: Zen Circles of Enlightenment* (Boston: Weatherhill, 2007), xi.

¹⁴ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xxvi.

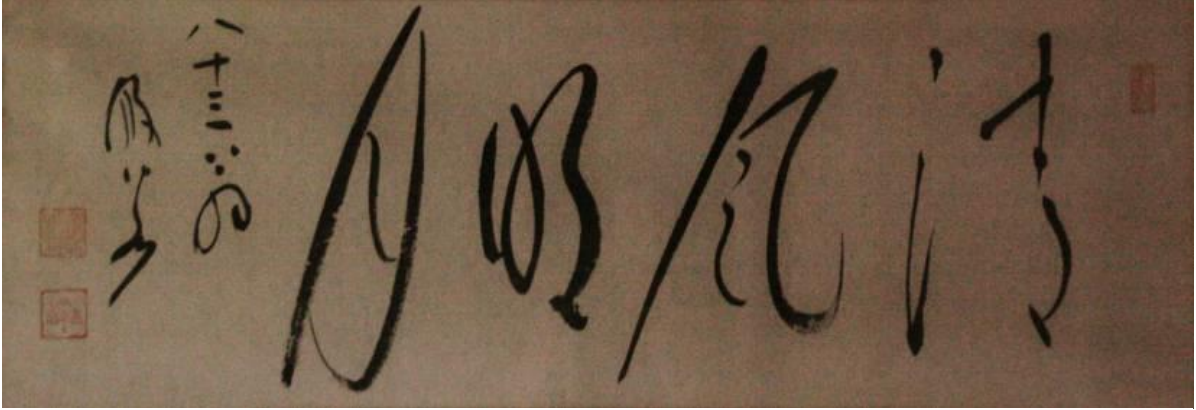


Figure 3: Gempo Yamamoto Roshi, *Pure Wind, Bright Moon*, c. 1866-1961, ink on paper, International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji, Livingston Manor, New York.

Paintings were also created to illustrate the numerous songs and sayings that were being written down at the time. This form of art was known as *zenkiga*.¹⁵ These paintings and calligraphies, much like the koans that they were based on, were meant to point the viewer towards the path of enlightenment.¹⁶ One of the most famous koans at the time was that of Baizhuang Huaihai (720–814), which compared the search for Buddhahood to the paradox of searching for an ox while riding on its back.¹⁷ Several songs had been written depicting this allegory of an oxherd and his ox. Pictures were painted to depict these songs, and it is in this context that the Ox-Herding Pictures first appeared.¹⁸ There are four versions of the Ox-Herding Pictures that were painted during the Song Period. The first, a set of five painted by Qing-zhu (c. 1050), depicts the taming of an ox, and ends with an *ensō*.¹⁹ The second, a set of six adapted from those of Qing-zhu, was painted by Zi-te (c. 12th century).²⁰ A third set, consisting of ten pictures attributed to Pu-ming (c. 11th century), depicts the central

figure of the ox as pitch black in the first picture, and slowly transitioning to pure white over the course of the series, until it completely disappears in the final picture.²¹ Both the second and third sets also end with an *ensō*.²² The fourth set, painted by Guo-an (c. 1150) and accompanied by a set of matching verses, consists of ten pictures as well, and their defining feature is similar to the last two sets. Instead of ending with an *ensō*, however, Guo-an stressed the importance of life after enlightenment by depicting the return into the community.²³ All four sets of the Ox-Herding Pictures were said to have been painted in the monochromatic style of *yipin*, so they were very easy to reproduce.²⁴ In China, Pu-ming's versions of the Ox-Herding Pictures were the most popular, and they were

¹⁵ *Zenkiga* had its roots in Song Period, but it was not characterized as an independent form of art until it arrived in Japan. Because of this, it will be described using Japanese terminology in this essay.

¹⁶ Earnshaw, *Sho*, 99.

¹⁷ Master Sheng-Yen, *Ox Herding at Morgan's Bay*, eds. Mark Baldwin and Christopher Marano (Elmhurst: Dharma Drum Publications, 1988), 1.

¹⁸ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman: A Chinese Zen Text*, ed. Master D. R. Otsu and trans. M. H. Trevor, (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1969), v.

¹⁹ Dumoulin, *India and China*, 280.

²⁰ Guo-an, *Ox and Herdsman*, v.

²¹ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, 116.

²² Dumoulin, *India and China*, 292.

²³ Guo-an, *Ox and Herdsman*, v.

²⁴ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, 113.



Figure 4: Shuban, Landscape of the Four Seasons, 15th c., ink on paper, Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

reprinted across the country for use in Chan practice.²⁵ Guo-an's version, on the other hand, defined the Japanese motif of the Ox-Herding Pictures, as it was the only version that travelled to Japan.²⁶

During the Heian (794-1185) and Kamakura (1185-1333) periods, Japanese Buddhist monastics often travelled to China in order to study Chinese Buddhist traditions at the source and bring their teachings back to Japan. The Japanese monastics would train under Chinese masters, and in order to show off what they had learned, they would return to Japan with art and texts.²⁷ The interest of these Japanese monastics, along with the introduction of Chan texts and art, were driving forces in the establishment of Zen Buddhism in Japan. These early Japanese Zen Buddhists modelled their temple system after the

one in China, with five central temples and ten subsidiary temples, and named them the Gozan temples.²⁸ At these temples, Japanese Zen monks would create their own art style by reproducing Chan art. Chan clearly had a strong influence on the art of Japanese Zen monks; they continued to paint in the monochromatic style of *yipin* with the themes of lineage and enlightenment.²⁹ Despite the influence, Japanese Zen monks developed their own blended style of monochromatic *bokuseki* (see Figure 3) and *zenkiga* ("Zen-in-action paintings") known as *suiboku* (Zen ink-wash subject painting).³⁰ Beginning in the fourteenth century, monks painted *suiboku* works. These artist monks were highly specialized in their craft and spent all of their time creating artworks for their temples.³¹

²⁵ Dumoulin, *India and China*, 292.

²⁶ Roshi Philip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen: Revised and Expanded* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1980), 313.

²⁷ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xxxix.

²⁸ H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity*, 3rd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982), 99; Gozan roughly translates to "Five Mountains" which refers to the five significant Rinzai temples that were established in Kyoto. The specific temples changed over time in accordance with the favour of the ruler, but all five of these temples were

known for being centres of the Chinese arts; calligraphy, tea ceremony, poetry, etc.

²⁹ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xlv.

³⁰ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, xlvi; Dumoulin, *India and China*, 278; this painting has been graciously provided by the Zen Studies Society from their collection at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji for this academic project.

³¹ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, liii; This culture lead to the Japanese Zen monastery paradigm to divide the temple residents into "east" and "west." This

Shuban (c. 15th century) was a Zen monk who practiced *suiboku*. He created hundreds of artworks in its monochromatic style, including a reproduction of Guo-an's Ox-Herding Pictures.³² Shuban's reproduction is the oldest extant version of Guo-an's Ox-Herding Pictures currently known.³³ Shuban and his peers are representative of the flourishing of Zen art in Japan during the Muromachi Period (1336–1573) (Figure 4).³⁴ Shuban died not long before Japan entered the Edo (or Tokugawa) Period (1603–1868), during which Zen Buddhism suffered from a severe lack of funding.³⁵ Economic support from the government for Buddhist temples was nearly non-existent for most Buddhist temples in Japan during this time. In order for the Buddhist organizations to continue, each temple needed to find a patron household to provide economic support. In exchange, the Buddhist temples would perform daily religious rituals and practices, such as funerals, on the household's behalf.³⁶ Due to the restrictions of the *danka* (affiliation) system during the Tokugawa period, Buddhist practitioners were required to focus their daily work on performing these ritual duties for the continuation of their temples, leaving little time for monastics to create Zen art. As a result, the government-supported Gozan monasteries declined, and Zen art stagnated. Zen art was no longer institutionalized, so resources for the creation of art were severely restricted. Zen artists that did produce during this period relied heavily on the patronage of individuals. Those patrons tended to fund reproductions rather than

new works of art, further reducing the creative development of Zen art in Japan.³⁷ Through this patronage, however, the works of Zen artists have survived to the present day.

Throughout its development, Chan and Zen art were used as a method for masters to teach their students about enlightenment. They drew on the stories of their ancestors and used allegories to point their students towards enlightenment. The Ox-Herding Pictures are one of the prime examples of this movement, and they continue to be reproduced today. Copies of the Ox-Herding Pictures can be seen all over the world, including in the halls of International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji. With an understanding of the development of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures in mind, it is important to discuss the development of the understanding of Zen in the DBZ.

Tracing the Lineage

Since the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures are used throughout most schools of Zen Buddhism, their interpretations vary greatly depending on the philosophical influences of the school. Discussing the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures requires a basic understanding of these philosophical concepts, and the best way to look at their development is through lineage. This essay will discuss the pictures from the point of view of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and in order to gain an understanding of the foundational standpoint of DBZ, it is useful to follow the lineage of their tradition to see what influenced their practice.

distinction separated those who performed the administrative and maintenance duties from those who practiced disciplines that would lead towards enlightenment.

³² Richard Jaffe, ed., *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, Vol. 1 (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 151.

³³ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, 113; Shuban's reproductions are currently available for viewing in the collection of Shokoku-ji in Kyoto.

³⁴ This set of paintings has been graciously provided by the Tokyo National Museum for publication with this academic project. The full image of six panels has been

combined from three separate images provided by the museum. The image sources may be found at <https://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/E0021926>, <https://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/E0021925>, and <https://webarchives.tnm.jp/imgsearch/show/E0021924>.

³⁵ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, liii.

³⁶ Kenneth Marcure, "The Danka System," *Monumenta Nipponica* 40, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 43.

³⁷ Fontein, *Painting & Calligraphy*, liv.

Appendix 1 is a visual interpretation of the Tei Dai Denpo chant. It is considered to be a chronological catalogue of dharma heirs that directly connects DBZ's founders to Sakyamuni Buddha through direct heart-mind to heart-mind dharma transmission.³⁸ The tradition of DBZ explains that this form of dharma transmission is considered the complete and perfect transmission of the dharma directly from the mind of the master to the mind of the student. The chart follows the transmission of dharma teachings across India, China, Japan, and North America. Although this essay will focus on those from China, Japan, and North America, the chart includes several famous Buddhist masters who developed the practice of Zen. Furthermore, several dedications used in services include Zen Buddhist individuals who do not fall into the lineage but still have influenced their practice.³⁹ These include: Myoan Eisai, D. T. Suzuki, and Nyogen Senzaki. Although not all of these individuals can be confirmed as direct connections to DBZ, their presence in the lineage demonstrates their use as legitimizing factors in their practices. This essay will focus on the masters who influenced Rinzai Zen koan practice and those directly related to DBZ. Looking at these individuals chronologically will allow for a deeper understanding of DBZ's meditative practice.

China

Koan practice has its origins in the Southern School of Chan promulgated by Huineng.⁴⁰

These paradoxical sayings were compiled from the teachings of Chan masters. One of his dharma descendents in particular, Linji Yixuan (d. 867), was known for his use of paradoxical sayings which inspire enlightenment. Linji Yixuan was the propagator of the Linji House of Chan Buddhism during a time of its persecution.⁴¹ He developed his practice by drawing on Huineng's philosophy of sudden enlightenment while mixing it with the teaching practices of his dharma ancestors.⁴² Linji was directly connected to the sixth patriarch through a lineage characterized by exuberant and confusing actions.⁴³ Masters would suddenly hit students, shout, and answer questions paradoxically.⁴⁴ Linji constantly retold the story of his first meetings with his teacher Huangbo:

The Master said to the assembled monks, "Listen! Those of you who devote yourselves to the Dharma must not be afraid of losing your bodies and your lives. Twenty years ago, when I was at Master Obaku's [Huangbo] place, I asked three times, 'What is the ultimate essence of Buddha-Dharma?' and I was honored to receive his stick three times. But it felt like being touched by a soft branch of mugwort."⁴⁵

Just like his teacher, Linji is described as having hit his students on several occasions.⁴⁶ Along with hitting students, Linji would suddenly shout *ho*.⁴⁷ This was modelled after a story of Mazu Daoyi (709–788), who shouted a thunderous *ho* (Japanese: *katsu*) that deafened his student for three days.⁴⁸ This period began a

³⁸ Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat, ed., *The Zen Studies Society Daily Sutras*, (New York: The Zen Studies Society, Inc., 2015), 17-20; Please note that the dharma lineage of DBZ is generally accepted, but it is quite possible that names very well could have been added or removed during its development.

³⁹ Chayat, *Daily Sutras*, 9, 12; Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat, ed., *Dai Bosatsu Mandala Day Dedication*. (New York: The Zen Studies Society, Inc., 2015).

⁴⁰ Huineng, *Platform*, 29-43.

⁴¹ Eido Shimano, trans., *The Book of Rinzai: The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Rinzai (Lin-chi)* (New York: The Zen Studies Society Press, 2005), xv.

⁴² Charles Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism* (Surrey: Curzon Press Ltd., 1993), 168.

⁴³ Dumoulin, *India and China*, 167.

⁴⁴ Thomas Cleary and J. C. Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), 26, 53, 73; R. H. Blythe, trans., *Mumonkan* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press), 30, 33.

⁴⁵ Shimano, trans., "Jodo," in *The Book of Rinzai*, 5.

⁴⁶ Cleary and Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record*, 32; Shimano, trans., "Kamiben," in *The Book of Rinzai*, 2.

⁴⁷ Shimano, trans., "Jodo," in *The Book of Rinzai*, 5, 6.

⁴⁸ Dumoulin, *India and China*, 180

longstanding tradition of documenting the sayings of Chan masters. Collections of paradoxical discourses (koans) would be written down, and Chan students would then meditate on them in an attempt to grasp some sort of understanding.⁴⁹ Linji provided several of these koans. The *Rinzairoku* is the current collection of his paradoxical sayings and teachings.⁵⁰ Linji's teachings were transmitted to five students, and over the next seven generations, the Linji School became one of the most prominent schools of Chan in China.⁵¹

During the eleventh century, the Linji lineage reached Yangqi Fanghui (993–1046), a Chan master who taught with a focus on meditative koan practice.⁵² He was a student of Shishuang Chuyuan (987–1040), who also taught Huanglong Huinan (1002–1069).⁵³ Shishuang's two students created a divide in the Linji house. Yangqi created the Yogi School; Huanglong created the Oryo School.⁵⁴ The Yogi School developed the practice of meditation on a koan known as *kanna* Chan. This form of practice treats the koan as a topic of meditative inquiry instead of studying it from an intellectual or literary perspective, which was common during the Song Period.⁵⁵ Because of their interest in koans, several of Yangqi's dharma descendents amassed them into koan collections.⁵⁶ The Yogi School's teachings were highly critical of the Oryo School's teachings of

literary Chan (*wenzi* Chan), which focused on the development of poetry and literary tradition rather than on koans.⁵⁷ Despite this conflict, both the Yogi and Oryo Schools were popular among the Chinese populace, and Linji Chan became one of the most popular houses of Chan during the Song Period.⁵⁸ The popularity of Linji Chan began to spread outside of China, and it attracted the attention of several Japanese people. Although many Japanese people travelled to China to train under Chinese Chan masters, two individuals became the driving force in its transmission to Japan.

Japan

Myoan Eisai (1141–1215) travelled to China in 1191 CE to study under Xutang Zhiyu, a Chinese Zen master of the Oryo line of Rinzai.⁵⁹ Eisai made his pilgrimage as a reformer because he was very disheartened by the decadence and pessimism in Japanese Buddhism at the time. It was a way for him to return to the origins of Buddhist practice.⁶⁰ He was not the first Japanese person to travel to China in search of Buddhist reform, but because of his upbringing in the Tendai Sect of Buddhism, Eisai's teachings were heavily influenced by tantric practices. With the blend of Tendai and Zen practices, he was the first to be able to establish any kind of Zen

⁴⁹ Dumoulin, *India and China*, 179.

⁵⁰ Shimano, trans., *Book of Rinzai*, xviii.

⁵¹ Dumoulin, *India and China*, 188.

⁵² Morten Schlutter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 25.

⁵³ Chun-Fang Yu, "Ta-hui Tsung-kao and Kung-an Ch'an," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 6 (1979): 213.

⁵⁴ Schlutter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 25.

⁵⁵ 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," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17 no. 1 (1994): 66.

⁵⁶ Hsieh, "Kung-an Practice," 67; Yang-ch'i's fourth generation descendent, Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in (1089–

1163 CE), is credited with compiling the *Blue Cliff Record*, and Yang-ch'i's seventh generation descendent, Wu-men Hui-k'ai (1183–1260), is credited with compiling the *Mumonkan*.

⁵⁷ Schlutter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 25.

⁵⁸ Hsieh, "Kung-an Practice," 91.

⁵⁹ T. Griffith Foulk and Dale S. Wright, "'Rules of Purity' in Japanese Zen," in *Zen Classics: Formative Texts in the History of Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 139; Eisai is also suggested to have begun the tradition of tea in Japan after he brought several seeds back from China.

⁶⁰ Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History: Japan* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), 16.

system in Japan.⁶¹ The primary followers Eisai attracted were those of the rich Kamakura military class who at that time held total political power.⁶² With the support of the Kamakura *bafuku*, he was able to build the first Japanese Zen temples in Kyushu, Kamakura, and Kyoto, all of which later became part of the Gozan temple system.⁶³ Following the establishment of the Rinzai School of Zen in Japan, Nampo Jomyo (1235–1309) of the Otokan line was able to travel to China and bring what he learned there back to Japan.

Nampo Jomyo, Shuho Myodo, and Kanzan Egen, known as the Otokan lineage, were the three promulgators of koan practice in Japan. They brought to Japan the Yogi Rinzai Zen that, in very few generations, overtook the Oryo Rinzai Zen lineage of Myoan Eisai.⁶⁴ Nampo Jomyo studied under Hsu-t'ang Chih-yu (1185–1269), who was a lineage holder of the Yogi line of Rinzai. Unlike Myoan Eisai, Nampo Jomyo had not studied in any of the other schools of Japanese Buddhism, and had only received teachings in the Yogi lineage of Rinzai Zen.⁶⁵ With his dharma transmission, Nampo Jomyo brought the strict meditative koan practice of the Yogi line to Japan and worked as abbot of several Zen monasteries in Kyoto and Kamakura. He even held the office of abbot at Kencho-ji, which was the most important Zen temple in Japan at the time, for one year before his death.⁶⁶ After his death, Nampo Jomyo was given the title of Daio Kokushi. Nampo Jomyo transmitted the dharma

to Shuho Myodo (1282–1338), who was more commonly known as Daito Kokushi.⁶⁷

Shuho Myodo established Daitoku-ji in Kyoto in 1315 CE, and for the remainder of his life, he gained further support from the ruling class. At one point Daitoku-ji even held the head position in the Gozan temple system.⁶⁸ At this temple, Shuho Myodo guided students through zazen and koan practice towards *satori*.⁶⁹ Shuho Myodo transmitted the dharma to Kanzan Egen (1277–1360), who established Myoshin-ji in 1342.⁷⁰ At Myoshin-ji, Kanzan Egen taught a practice similar to that of Shuho Myodo, which drew legitimacy from the Chinese Patriarchs.⁷¹ Despite political turmoil, Kanzan Egen's temple, Myoshin-ji, was the central temple for the Otokan lineage for several hundred years. The Otokan lineage maintained the patronage of the military and government classes, which made up most of their followers at this time.⁷² The working class, however, had a greater interest in the Zen Buddhism of Dogen (1200–1253), the Soto School.⁷³ The Edo period found Rinzai Zen in a tough position. They lost the economic and political support of the warrior class and were left with a severe decrease in practitioners.⁷⁴ Rinzai Zen needed to become attractive to the common populace of Japan so that it could compete with the Soto School. Rinzai Zen's survival during this decline is attributed to Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769), one of the most influential Zen masters in modern Rinzaï Zen history.

⁶¹ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 15.

⁶² Bodiford, William, "Zen Buddhism," in *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 1: From Earliest Times to 1600*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur Tiedemann (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 311.

⁶³ Earhart, *Japanese Religion*, 99.

⁶⁴ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 186.

⁶⁵ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 39.

⁶⁶ Isshu Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen Dust: The History of the Koan and Koan Study in Rinzaï Zen*, (New York: First Zen Institute of America in Japan, 1966), 206.

⁶⁷ Jorn Borup, *Japanese Rinzaï Zen Buddhism: Myoshinji, a Living Religion*, (Boston: Brill, 2008), 16.

⁶⁸ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 187.

⁶⁹ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 188.

⁷⁰ Miura, *Zen Dust*, 217-218.

⁷¹ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 192.

⁷² Borup, *Japanese Rinzaï*, 16.

⁷³ Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzaï Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 29.; For more information on Dogen and the Soto School, see Dumoulin, *Japan*; Kitagawa 1966; and Luk 1961.

⁷⁴ Borup, *Japanese Rinzaï*, 18.

Hakuin Ekaku was born in the small town of Hara in the district of Shizuoka, where he also taught and later died.⁷⁵ He was a Zen master of the rural community, and because of his actions, Rinzai Zen was able to proliferate in rural communities effectively.⁷⁶ Hakuin taught with the use of poetry, songs, and calligraphy in a witty and inspirational style that appealed to those with an eighteenth century farmer's education.⁷⁷ His songs about enlightening the mind were simple, and so they were easily memorized by working farmers.⁷⁸ For example, his "Song of the Weeds" urges farmers to cut passions at the root, just as they would weeds.⁷⁹ With this new style of teaching, Hakuin stressed the importance of meditation and koan practice as the best way to see "one's own true nature."⁸⁰

What is true meditation? It is to make everything: coughing, swallowing, waving the arms, motion, stillness, words, action, the evil and the good, prosperity and shame, gain and loss, right and wrong, into one single koan.⁸¹

As seen in this quote, Hakuin's form of koan meditation was not simply sitting zazen, but bringing the mind of koan meditation to all parts of life; work, talking, eating, and standing.⁸² The *mu* koan was one of great importance in Hakuin's enlightenment, so it became central in his style of practice.⁸³ Hakuin wrote hundreds of songs that encompassed his teachings, but "The

Song of Zazen" culminated his teachings of true nature, and represented the Rinzai Zen nature of Mahayana.⁸⁴ He also found that the *Lotus Sutra* was helpful in Zen practice, so it should be chanted whenever possible.⁸⁵ Hakuin transmitted his teachings to several disciples, and many of them were great teachers in their own right. However, Gasan Jito's (1727–1797) lineage is the only line that is still alive today. At the cusp the 20th century, Hakuin's lineage was brought overseas to North America.⁸⁶

North America

Zen Buddhism was brought to North America by several Japanese Rinzai and Soto masters and practitioners in the early twentieth century, but D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966) is most relevant to the transmission of Rinzai Zen into the Zen Studies Society. He travelled to North America several times in the early twentieth century with the support of Cornelius Crane, and he wrote several English works on Zen Buddhism in North America.⁸⁷ His books were the first seminal English works on Zen Buddhism to have been written by a Japanese writer, and through his writing, the American public gained a Japanese perspective on Zen Buddhism, which had not been accessible to them before.⁸⁸ D. T. Suzuki's writings on Zen Buddhism were deeply rooted in his extensive study of Zen texts and his Rinzai Zen training

⁷⁵ Norman Waddell, trans., *The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), xvi.

⁷⁶ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 385; Although he did teach in the small village Hara for most of his life, this was done by choice. Because of his spiritual attainment and teaching skills, he was offered the position of abbot at Myoshin-ji, but he had no desire to take it. Hakuin decided to teach at Shoin-ji in Hara, instead.

⁷⁷ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 386.

⁷⁸ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 386.

⁷⁹ Goto Koson, ed., *Hakuin Osho Zenshu*, Vol. 6 (Tokyo: Self Published, 1934–1935), 263–268.

⁸⁰ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 380.

⁸¹ Ekaku Hakuin, "Orategama I," in *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings*, trans. Philip Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 58.

⁸² Waddell, *Essential Teachings*, xx.

⁸³ Conrad Hyers, *Once-Born, Twice-Born Zen: The Soto and Rinzai Schools of Japanese Zen* (Wolfeboro, NH: Longwood Publishing Group, 1989), 30.

⁸⁴ For a full translation of "The Song of Zazen" please see, Chayat, *Daily Sutras*, 23–24.

⁸⁵ Hakuin, *Master Hakuin*, 88.

⁸⁶ Dumoulin, *Japan*, 392; Soen Nakagawa, Nyogen Senzaki, and Eido Shimano, *Namu Dai Bosa: A Transmission of Zen Buddhism to America* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), xxix.

⁸⁷ Jaffe, *Suzuki*, Vol. 1, xxxvi.

⁸⁸ Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, (London: Random Century Group Ltd., 1991), 6.

under Soyen Shaku (1859–1919), who was a lineage holder of the Inzan line.⁸⁹ Suzuki stressed the importance of zazen and koan practice for an individual to gain any understanding of Zen, which was very similar to that of Hakuin's Zen.⁹⁰

Even when the koan is understood, its deep spiritual truth will not be driven home to the mind of the Zen student if he is not thoroughly trained in zazen. Koan and zazen are the two handmaids of Zen; the first is the eye and the second is the foot.⁹¹

Suzuki's writings were very popular among Americans, and while he was in North America, Cornelius Crane supported him in his writing by creating the Zen Studies Society in 1956.⁹² The purpose of the Zen Studies Society was "to introduce the cultural, educational, and spiritual aspects of Zen Buddhism to the West."⁹³ Through the work of their board members, the Zen Studies Society supported Suzuki in his American endeavours until he left for Japan in 1962. The Zen Studies Society soon met three other Zen practitioners of the Takuju line and the Inzan line who would aid in the establishment of a monastery in America.⁹⁴

When Nyogen Senszaki (1876–1958) first read the poetry of Soen Nakagawa Roshi (1907–1984), he knew that he had found someone who also understood the dharma.⁹⁵ Nyogen Senszaki, another student of Soyen Shaku, moved to California from Japan because he was disheartened by the lack of interest in Zen practice in Japan and was excited by the interest

he saw among Americans.⁹⁶ He became the first resident Zen teacher in America and taught Rinzai Zen through zazen practice and translating several Zen texts into English.⁹⁷ Nyogen Senszaki and Soen Nakagawa Roshi wrote to each other for many years and discussed their ideas of poetry and Zen practice in America, despite never having met.⁹⁸ In 1957, Soen Nakagawa Roshi sent his student Eido Shimano Roshi (1932–2018) to be Nyogen Senszaki's attendant, but unfortunately Nyogen Senszaki died not much later.⁹⁹ Eido Shimano Roshi eventually connected with the dormant Zen Studies Society and started a zendo in New York.¹⁰⁰ He opened New York Zendo Shobo-ji in 1968 and began work on building a country monastery where American students could train.¹⁰¹ With the help and financial support of hundreds of people with an interest in Zen in America, International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji was officially opened in 1976 next to Beecher Lake in the Catskills Mountains.¹⁰² Nyogen Senszaki was named Honorary Founding Abbot, Soen Nakagawa Roshi was named Founding Abbot, and Eido Shimano Roshi was named Abbot of International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji and New York Zendo Shobo-ji.¹⁰³ Throughout the zendos of the Zen Studies Society, Eido Shimano Roshi taught Rinzai Zen to several hundred American students. One of those students was Shinge Sherry Chayat Roshi (b. 1943), who entered the practice in 1967. In 2011, she would become the second Abbot of the Zen Studies Society, and the first woman ever to receive *inka* (formal recognition of authentic

⁸⁹ Jaffe, *Suzuki*, Vol. 1, xii.

⁹⁰ Jaffe, *Suzuki*, Vol. 1, 1.

⁹¹ Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, (London: Random Century Group Ltd., 1991), 101.

⁹² Shinge Sherry Chayat, ed., *Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji: 40th Anniversary*, (New York: Zen Studies Society, 2016), 2.

⁹³ Nakagawa, Senszaki, and Shimano, *Namu Dai Bosa*, 196.

⁹⁴ Nakagawa, Senszaki, and Shimano, *Namu Dai Bosa*, 192.

⁹⁵ Chayat, *40th Anniversary*, 4.

⁹⁶ Kazuaki Tanahashi and Roko Sherry Chayat, eds., *Endless Vow: The Zen Path of Soen Nakagawa* (London: Shambhala Publications Ltd., 1996), 6.

⁹⁷ Tanahashi and Chayat, *Endless Vow*, 7.

⁹⁸ Tanahashi and Chayat, *Endless Vow*, 21.

⁹⁹ Chayat, *40th Anniversary*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Nakagawa, Senszaki, and Shimano, *Namu Dai Bosa*, 194.

¹⁰¹ Chayat, *40th Anniversary*, 6.

¹⁰² Nakagawa, Senszaki, and Shimano, *Namu Dai Bosa*, 214.

¹⁰³ Chayat, *40th Anniversary*, 25.

enlightenment) in the Rinzai Zen lineage.¹⁰⁴ She continues to lead with compassion and wisdom and teaches her numerous students through zazen and koan practice.

So you choose the best parents, the best circumstances to continue practice. This is the point, right? We're not practicing for some self-centred, short-lived alleviation of suffering, but for positive transformation. Each one of us has chosen this life. Your good karma brought you to this practice. You may not realize it; you may still be kicking and screaming in resistance. Nonetheless, there's something that brought you here from the past. And here we are, living this life of practice together. Isn't it wonderful?¹⁰⁵

The peaceful environment of the monastery on Beecher Lake is meant to recall a rich history for North American Rinzai Zen practitioners. At International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji, the influences of this dharma lineage echo down the long halls. The koan collections written by Yang'ch'i's dharma descendents fill the library shelves and the minds of students. The paradoxical words of DBZ's dharma ancestors, including Huineg and Linji, ring from the mouth of Shinge Roshi as she gives her lectures. Presenting these koans with ample context and discussion, she inspires students to take on the rigorous path of koan practice. They walk to halls contemplating the paradoxical words, and the paintings of oxen that periodically decorate the walls of the temple also remind the students of directions described by their masters. Applying the paradoxical discourses to their daily life like Hakuin, students hope to attain some moment of *satori* (Chinese: *wu*) (understanding) along the path of their practice. With this understanding of the development of

Rinzai Zen practice and the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, there is potential to see through the lens of DBZ's philosophical understanding of Rinzai Zen Buddhism. By taking these philosophical concepts, it is possible to look past the lines of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures and discuss their relevance to Zen practice at Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

Meditating on the Ox

In this section, woodblock prints of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures by Tokuiki Tomikichiro will be shown individually alongside a discussion of each picture's meaning.¹⁰⁶ First, Guo-an's original verses for each picture, translated from the original Chinese, will be presented along with his traditional Chinese Linji Chan commentary of the pictures. These will then be compared to commentaries by D. T. Suzuki, Eido Shimano Roshi, and Shinge Sherry Chayat Roshi to glean the changes of focus in North American Rinzai Zen. Through the lens of DBZ, the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures evoke a much more personal tone of progress and enlightenment. The ten pictures do not depict a stream of events that lead to a singular event of enlightenment, but rather represent individual instances of sudden realization in a process. These illuminating events are attained through strict adherence to intense practice. By climbing this steep mountain of practice, a Rinzai practitioner is supposed to obtain understanding at the various peaks along the way.

¹⁰⁴ Chayat, *40th Anniversary*, 34; John Bowker, ed., "Inka (-shōmei)," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 175.

¹⁰⁵ Shinge Sherry Chayat, "Train Thus," in *Teachings by Shinge Sherry Chayat* (New York: Zen Studies Society, 2016), 4.

¹⁰⁶ The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures shown with this essay were photographed by Ragnar Naess during his time at DBZ, and he has graciously allowed their publication inside this academic project. This particular version of the pictures was available at the DBZ alongside commentaries by Eido Shimano Roshi.



Figure 5: *The Search for the Ox* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture 1: The Search for the Ox

In an endless wilderness the lonely herdsman¹⁰⁷ strides through thickets of weeds, searching for his ox. Wide flows the river, far rise the mountains and ever deeper into entanglement runs the path. Utterly exhausted and in despair; even so the searching herdsman finds no guiding direction. In the evening twilight he only hears the song of the cicadas in the trees.¹⁰⁸

According to Guo-an, the ox is never lost, but a separation from their true nature causes the practitioner to wander aimlessly without any sense of direction.¹⁰⁹ The natural misconception and confusion of differentiation have left the

practitioner confused and misdirected.¹¹⁰ The first picture is meant to present the moment when an individual recognizes their confusion and their indifference to the suffering in which they have been living. Guo-an does not particularly discern when this step occurs, but Shinge Sherry Chayat Roshi points out that the search for the ox stands for the time before beginning Zen practice.¹¹¹

The commentaries by Shinge Roshi and D. T. Suzuki focus more on the inward questions that the student might address. In this stage, Shinge Roshi notes that a practitioner may discover that they have a general sense of discomfort in their life, as if there is an unknown factor that must be addressed.¹¹² There may be a desire to answer questions such as “What is my life all about?”, “What is the Truth?”, “How can I really live in a way that is authentic?” and the student begins to search for an answer.¹¹³ These questions that Shinge Roshi presents can be further contextualized by D.T. Suzuki’s commentary. He notes that the lost ox is the missing answer that the practitioner wants to find.¹¹⁴ However, the teacher can see that the answer is inside the student; the ox never went astray, but the student must discover this on their own.¹¹⁵ The drive to find this distant “ultimate reality” is what brings the Zen practitioner to the trailhead of this journey, and, through this, their search begins.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁷ Although Guo-an’s traditional narrative follows the story of a male ox-herd when comparing to the path of enlightenment, gender plays no role in DBZ’s interpretation of the process of enlightenment. This essay will use the gender-specific language for the purpose of presenting the original verses, but DBZ’s interpretation of the metaphor is entirely gender-neutral.

¹⁰⁸ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman: A Chinese Zen Text*, ed. Master D.R. Otsu and trans. M. H. Trevor, (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1969), 5.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Publishing, 1957), 138.

¹¹⁰ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 138.

¹¹¹ Roshi Shinge Sherry Chayat, interview by Edward Ross, June 10, 2016.

¹¹² Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹¹³ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹¹⁴ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 153.

¹¹⁵ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 153.

¹¹⁶ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.



Figure 6: *Finding the Traces of the Ox* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture II: Finding the Traces of the Ox

Traces of the ox are clustered here and there under the trees by the side of the water. Has the herdsman found the way among the thick, sweet grass? However far the ox may run, even to the furthest place in the mountains, his nose reaches to the sky, so that he can not conceal himself (Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman 2*).¹¹⁷

Guo-an's interpretation of the second picture discusses the initial realizations that students encounter when they first begin practice. In particular, the recognition that all things are made of similar materials, "just as many utensils are made from one metal, so too are myriad entities made of the fabric of self."¹¹⁸ That being said, the student is still unable to prevent discrimination against objects and beings.¹¹⁹ Guo-an notes that the student would have developed a sense of direction at this stage.

As in the first picture, Suzuki and Shinge Roshi take a much more personal and practical approach in their commentaries, discussing particular experiences a student might encounter as they start practicing. The practitioner, according to Suzuki, begins their journey, delving into books and sutras, and looking for teachers.¹²⁰ The words of others, however, do not seem to be effective. Shinge Roshi notes that the practitioner needs to experience the practice for themselves. At one point, the student delves into their first immersive meditation practice and experiences it first-hand.¹²¹ In this experience, the practitioner feels that there are traces of something.¹²² They do not know what it is, but this personal experience drives the student forward with a feeling that there is actually something that they can find on this journey.¹²³



Figure 7: *Finding the Ox* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

¹¹⁷ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 7.

¹¹⁸ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 139.

¹¹⁹ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 139.

¹²⁰ Jaffe, *Suzuki Vol. 1*, 154.

¹²¹ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹²² Jaffe, *Suzuki Vol. 1*, 154.

¹²³ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

Picture III: Finding the Ox

Suddenly the clear voice of the bush warbler thrills in the treetops. A warm sun shines, there is a gentle breeze, the willows by the river are green. There is no longer a place for the ox to hide. The head with the soaring horns is magnificent; it would defy any artist.¹²⁴

The third picture is the moment, according to Guo-an, when the student is able to unify their six senses and recognize things as they are for the first time.¹²⁵ He identifies the realization, “the slightest thing is not apart from self.”¹²⁶ This moment is likely an instant of *satori* that allows the student to glimpse their goal.

The commentaries of Suzuki, Shinge Roshi, and Eido Shimano Roshi follow very closely to Guo-an’s interpretation. Suzuki notes how early practice continues, and the practitioner begins to listen deeply; not simply with the ears, but with their heart, demonstrating a union of senses.¹²⁷ Eido Roshi and Shinge Roshi make note of direct examples such as, hearing the sound of a bird calling or bell ringing for the first time and seeing the oil in paint and oxygen in the air.¹²⁸ It is as if they hear directly into the origin of things.¹²⁹ Recognizing that the smallest parts are essential to the object, but they are nearly indistinguishable.¹³⁰ It is at this point that the DBZ commentaries extend beyond Guo-an’s and discuss the personal changes of attitude which likely would take place in a student at that moment. The moment of *satori* that the student experiences is magical, and suddenly the answer is not so foreign and is somewhat tangible.¹³¹ If the student is properly directed, they can see that they are looking at nothing but themselves.¹³²



Figure 8: *Catching the Ox* by Tokui Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture IV: Catching the Ox

After the greatest efforts the herdsman has caught the ox. The will is yet too obstinate and the impetus too strong, to break his wildness easily. At times the ox gets away and climbs distant plateaus. Then again he runs far off into deep places, filled with fog and clouds, and wants to hide.¹³³

It is at this stage that Guo-an notes the stubbornness and fickle nature of the ox, which must be controlled. The ox has been caught, but it must learn not to wander or to fight against its restraints.¹³⁴ Only through direct, strict force can the ox be taught to submit.¹³⁵ Guo-an’s metaphors extend to his commentary, but his intention is still directed at the mind.

The DBZ commentaries do follow Guo-an’s theme of strict practice, finding that now that a

¹²⁴ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 9.

¹²⁵ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 140.

¹²⁶ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 140.

¹²⁷ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 155; Roshi Eido Shimano, “Oxherding 3 & 4,” *The Journal of the Zen Studies Society Winter 1985* (New York: Zen Studies Society, 1985), 16.

¹²⁸ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016; Shimano, “3 & 4,” 16.

¹²⁹ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 155.

¹³⁰ Jaffe, *Suzuki*, Vol. 1, 156.

¹³¹ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹³² Jaffe, *Suzuki*, Vol. 1, 156.

¹³³ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 11.

¹³⁴ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 141.

¹³⁵ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 141.

glimpse has been seen, the practitioner must delve further into the practice in order to gain a deeper understanding.¹³⁶ Understanding comes and goes, just as the ox runs away into the mist.¹³⁷ The student must break the ox of its wild nature and keep it in line.¹³⁸ Shinge Roshi expands on the narrative noting that this wild nature represents attachment to the world of dualistic thinking.¹³⁹ Eido Roshi, at this point, presents examples of strict practice that students can relate to directly, on a personal level. He uses a particular comparison to the whip: cracking the whip takes great discipline; but cracking the whip does not mean just taking a singular hit from the *kesaku*.¹⁴⁰ Cracking the whip means sitting for many, many hours; taking several hits from the *kesaku* until the practitioner can break away from their logical way of thinking.¹⁴¹



Figure 9: *Taming the Ox* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture V: Taming the Ox

The herdsman must not for a moment drop the whip or rein. Or else the ox would stampede into the dust. But if the ox is patiently tamed and gentled he will follow the herdsman by himself without fetter or chain.¹⁴²

In the fifth picture's commentary, Guo-an steps away from his metaphorical interpretation and directly discusses the arising of thoughts.¹⁴³ He pays particular attention to the origin of said thoughts: if it "springs from enlightenment," then "all subsequent thoughts are true;" if, however, the thought comes from delusion, then all subsequent thoughts are rendered untrue.¹⁴⁴ It is for this reason that he notes that the ox must continue to be directed in order to prevent the arising of delusion.

Eido Roshi reiterates Guo-an's focus on attention finding that once the student has broken through the world of dualism in practice, their revelation needs to be held tight so that it will not disappear.¹⁴⁵ Eido Roshi, Shinge Roshi, and Suzuki all extend beyond the descriptions of the practice and continue to relate the philosophical implications to the experiences of students and practitioners. Their examples note that practice deepens even more, and the practitioner begins to notice their thoughts do not jump around.¹⁴⁶ They become one with their breath, and they are able simply to leave thoughts behind so they can return to their deep awareness.¹⁴⁷ This awareness spreads into the daily life of the practitioner, and they become one with their arising thoughts without a thought that it should be any other way.¹⁴⁸

¹³⁶ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹³⁷ Shimano, "3 & 4," 18.

¹³⁸ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 157.

¹³⁹ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Shimano, "3 & 4," 18.

¹⁴¹ Shimano, "3 & 4," 18.

¹⁴² Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 13.

¹⁴³ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 142.

¹⁴⁴ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 142.

¹⁴⁵ Roshi Eido Shimano, "Oxherding 5 - 7," in *The Journal of the Zen Studies Society Spring 1986*, (New York: Zen Studies Society, 1986), 11.

¹⁴⁶ Jaffe, *Suzuki*, Vol. 1, 158.

¹⁴⁷ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁴⁸ Shimano, "5 - 7," 11.



Figure 10: *Returning Home on the Back of the Ox* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture VI: Returning Home on the Back of the Ox

Slowly and steadily the herdsman rides home on the ox. In the spreading evening mist his flute sounds far into the distance. Beat by beat and verse by verse the boundless feeling of the herdsman rings out. Listening to this song there is no need to say how things are with the herdsman.¹⁴⁹

Guo-an notes in his commentary of the sixth picture that this stage marks the end of the struggle to tame the ox. The practitioner simply sings songs and is unaffected by the others.¹⁵⁰ They move forward and do not look back.¹⁵¹ This state is likely another *satori* which a practitioner attains during their progress.

The DBZ commentaries expand on Guo-an's interpretation by describing direct experiences, personalizing the learning. They indicate that the practitioner now has an inner tameness that gives

them a wonderful feeling of freedom.¹⁵² The struggle is over, and the student is focused on things not of the Earth.¹⁵³ The practitioner no longer feels as though they are overcoming obstacles, but rather feels as if they have all they need.¹⁵⁴ Their inner peace stems from the realization that they were always home in the first place but did not realize it until now.¹⁵⁵ The student is one with the treasure.¹⁵⁶ Although they feel freedom, they do not cease their practice. The Buddha's way is endless and it must be followed.¹⁵⁷

Picture VII: The Ox is Forgotten, The Ox-Herd Remains

The herdsman has come home on the back of the ox. Now there is no ox any longer. The herdsman sits alone, quiet and at leisure. He still slumbers, although the burning sun already stands high in the sky. Useless whip and rein, thrown away under the thatched roof (*Guo-an, The Ox and His Herdsman 7*).¹⁵⁸

The seventh picture marks the end of the ox in Guo-an's commentary. Using metaphors, Guo-an claims that the ox was simply a temporary subject that directed the practitioner to the answer.¹⁵⁹ The path has been revealed to the practitioner and they no longer have a need for the ox. All is one.¹⁶⁰ This is likely another higher level of *satori*.

Eido Roshi, Shinge Roshi, and Suzuki describe this picture very similarly to Guo-an, but as before, they continue to use a personal tone by relating this attainment to individual experience. Their commentaries note that the ox is gone, and the answer is gone. The practitioner finally realizes that the answer that they were looking for all this time was indeed themselves,

¹⁴⁹ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 143.

¹⁵¹ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 143.

¹⁵² Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁵³ Jaffe, *Suzuki Vol. 1*, 159.

¹⁵⁴ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁵⁵ Shimano, "5 - 7," 13.

¹⁵⁶ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁵⁷ Shimano, "5 - 7," 13.

¹⁵⁸ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 17.

¹⁵⁹ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 144.

¹⁶⁰ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 144.

and it was always there.¹⁶¹ The student is alone and one with all things at the same time.¹⁶² Along with this, the practitioner has an un-neediness due to their acceptance of things as they are. Things are not what they seem, nor are they otherwise.¹⁶³ Dualism has been completely eliminated.¹⁶⁴



Figure 11: *The Ox is Forgotten, The Ox-Herd Remains* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture VIII: Complete Oblivion of Ox and Ox-Herd

Whip and rein, ox and herdsman, have completely vanished without trace. In the vast, blue sky words can never suffice to measure him. How could snow survive in the red flame of the burning fire? Only when a person has succeeded in getting to this place can he match the old masters.¹⁶⁵

At this point in Guo-an's commentary, the practitioner no longer seeks enlightenment, nor do they "remain where no enlightenment exists."¹⁶⁶ The practitioner is unaffected by the realm of arising.¹⁶⁷ Guo-an's interpretation continues to be metaphorical and indirect with his description of this stage, but the DBZ commentaries present a much more personal approach.

Eido Roshi, Shinge Roshi, and Suzuki explain that all feelings and desires fade away with the ox and the ox-herd. There is no ox. There is no ox-herd. The earlier confusion disappears. The desire to find an answer is gone. The dharma by which the practitioner discovered this truth fades away.¹⁶⁸ Even the feeling of enlightenment is gone. There is nothing to be grasped.¹⁶⁹ All things are gone and only serenity remains.¹⁷⁰ Emptiness is both on the inside and the outside.¹⁷¹ A perfect emptiness, as represented by the *ensō*.¹⁷²

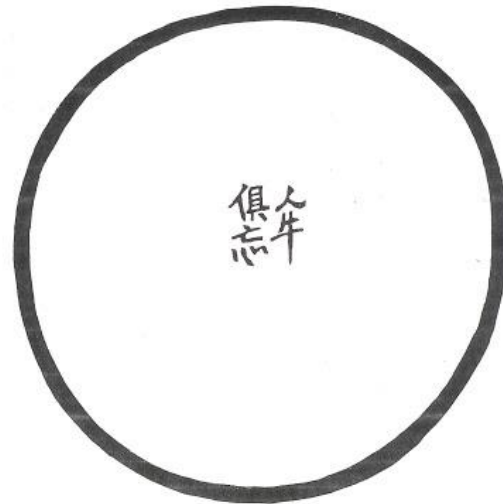


Figure 12: *Complete Oblivion of Ox and Ox-Herd* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

¹⁶¹ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 159.

¹⁶² Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁶³ Shimano, "5 - 7," 15.

¹⁶⁴ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁶⁵ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 19.

¹⁶⁶ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 145.

¹⁶⁷ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 145.

¹⁶⁸ Roshi Eido Shimano, "Oxherding 8 - 10," in *The Journal of the Zen Studies Society Spring 1987*, (New York: Zen Studies Society, 1987), 8.

¹⁶⁹ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁷⁰ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 160.

¹⁷¹ Shimano, "8 - 10," 8.

¹⁷² Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.



Figure 13: *The Return to Ground and Origin* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture IX: The Return to Ground and Origin

Returned to the ground and origin, the herdsman has completed everything. Nothing is better than on the spot to be as blind and deaf. He sits in his hut and does not see anything outside. Boundlessly flows the river, just as it flows. Red blooms the flower, just as it blooms.¹⁷³

Guo-an describes the ninth picture as the point when the practitioner is not attached and observes all things as they are.¹⁷⁴ His use of metaphor continues to point towards the stage of enlightenment whilst not directly relating the experience to the observer. Eido Roshi, Shinge Roshi, and Suzuki, however, proceed to relate direct experience in their commentaries on the pictures. They describe that, fundamentally, everything is pure, and this is now the practitioner.¹⁷⁵ The student is now exactly who they are without any trace of defilement.¹⁷⁶ The practitioner has no need to be different and is

neither superfluous nor lacking.¹⁷⁷ They merely sit and observe.¹⁷⁸ They now look out at a tree, and it is the same as looking in and seeing Buddha-nature.¹⁷⁹ Everything is the great illumination.¹⁸⁰



Figure 14: *Entering the Market with Open Hands* by Tokuiki Tomikichiro (c. 1957).

Picture X: Entering the Market with Open Hands

With bare chest and feet he enters the market. His face is smeared with earth, his head covered with ashes. A huge laugh streams over his cheeks. Without humbling himself to perform miracles or wonders, he suddenly makes the withered trees bloom.¹⁸¹

Guo-an finishes his commentary with the tenth picture, describing how the now realized practitioner leaves their sequestered garden and returns to the village.¹⁸² The practitioner travels to all walks of life to spread the teachings they have learned to those in the wine shops and the

¹⁷³ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 21.

¹⁷⁴ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 146.

¹⁷⁵ Shimano, "8 - 10," 9.

¹⁷⁶ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 161.

¹⁷⁷ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁷⁸ Jaffe, *Suzuki* Vol. 1, 162.

¹⁷⁹ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁸⁰ Shimano, "8 - 10," 10.

¹⁸¹ Guo-an, *The Ox and His Herdsman*, 23.

¹⁸² Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 147.

markets.¹⁸³ The practitioner partakes in defiled activities as an example, and since they are outside the realm of arising, the practitioner is unaffected.

The DBZ commentaries expand on Guo-an's metaphors and continue to relate the described metaphors to personal experiences. The journey is now complete, and the practitioner returns to the world from whence they came.¹⁸⁴ The student does not stay in their sequestered hut or keep this realization to themselves.¹⁸⁵ No one knows the practitioner. They are simply ordinary and embrace ordinariness.¹⁸⁶ The student brings this gift into ordinary life and uses their open hands to respond intimately to whatever is needed.¹⁸⁷ There is no self, and there is no other. All that remains is the giving.¹⁸⁸

Guo-an's descriptions of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures are highly metaphorical and point towards the stages of development in Zen practice. This observational application of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures presents a path for a student to follow, but distances the observer from the practice itself. The words of Guo-an's poetry and metaphor are beautiful, but they do not perfectly match the spiritual environment of North America. The commentaries of Eido Roshi, Shinge Roshi, and Suzuki describe the pictures from a much more experiential and personal perspective. The use of experiential metaphor allows the student to place themselves in the position of the practitioner in the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures and to internalize its meaning. This tendency suggests a focus on individual practice and experience in the minds of North American Rinzai Zen practitioners. By embodying the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, a North American practitioner is able to contextualize their practice and further press along their spiritual path.

As seen above, each step of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures broaches the idea that there are

several stages of sudden enlightenment. A sound or image sparks a realization from the countless hours of Rinzai Zen practice. Rinzai Zen practice is a multi-peaked mountain of *satori* and practice, but the practice never ends.¹⁸⁹ Even when the practitioner has realized high levels of *satori*, they must come back down the mountain and reintegrate themselves into the ordinary world so that they may extend the realization of true nature around the world. With each moment of *satori*, the practitioner will be one more step down the endless path of the Buddha.

Conclusion

The student descends the mountain. They have been exposed to an intense path of practice which is rigorous and painful, yet somehow pleasing. The beautiful art on the walls of International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji pointed the student towards the answers which they were searching for. It was the people they met, however, that truly connected them to the practice. The masters they learned from taught the insight of their dharma ancestors, but introduced it so that the student may experience the concepts themselves. Although the insight and teachings of DBZ's masters are the same as that of dharma ancestors in their essence, the method of presentation is attuned to the individualized and self-improvement-oriented nature of North American people. The practice of rote memorization common in traditional Japanese Rinzai Zen temples is not the central focus for North American students; it is merely a mode for them to experience the mental practices of Zen directly. The Ten Ox-Herding Pictures illustrate the path which North American practitioners intend to take for their practice, and the experiential metaphors used by DBZ's masters allow them to grasp it fully. For each practitioner, the practice will indeed be difficult.

¹⁸³ Reps and Senzaki, *Zen Flesh*, 147.

¹⁸⁴ Shimano, "8 - 10," 11.

¹⁸⁵ Jaffe, *Suzuki*, Vol. 1, 163.

¹⁸⁶ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁸⁷ Shimano, "8 - 10," 12.

¹⁸⁸ Shinge Roshi, interview, June 10, 2016.

¹⁸⁹ It is said that the Buddha, even after moving on into *paranirvana*, is still practicing zazen.

Long hours will be spent on the cushion toiling over countless koans, but the feeling of each *satori* will keep practitioners pushing forward. The top of the mountain will draw the students back time and time again, so that they will continue practicing. Following those traces will allow all beings to attain maturity in Buddha's wisdom.¹⁹⁰

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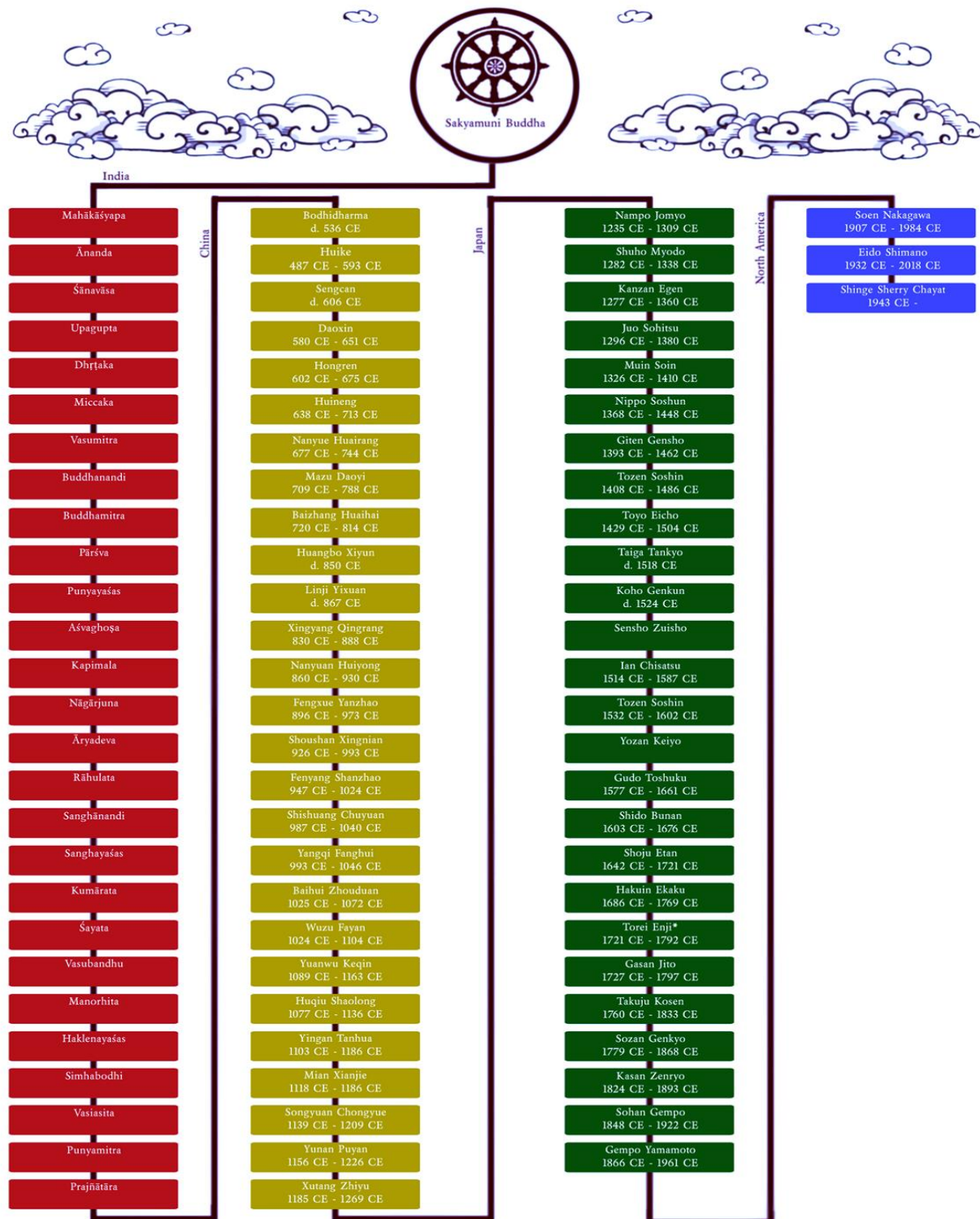
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¹⁹⁰ Chayat, *Daily Sutras*, 15.

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Appendix 1. A Rinzai Zen Lineage.



Author's note: Torei Enji was the dharma descendent of Hakuin Ekaku, but Gasan Jito did not receive dharma transmission from Torei. Instead, Gasan Jito received the dharma from Hakuin as well. The inclusion of Torei seems to have been out of respect rather than representing the direct lineage of transmission.