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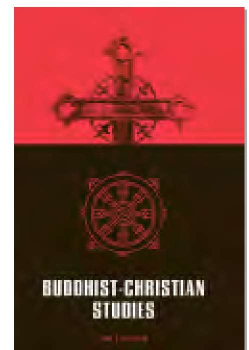

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Buddhist-Christian Studies, Volume 37, 2017, pp. 209-221 (Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2017.0015

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Reading Chan Encounter Dialogue during the Song Dynasty: *The Record of Linji*, the *Lotus Sutra*, and the Sinification of Buddhism

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Consider the following story:

> Counselor Wang the Prefectural Governor, and the other officials requested the Master to address them. The Master took the high seat in the Dharma Hall and said: "Today, I, this mountain monk, having no choice in the matter, have perforce yielded to customary etiquette and taken this seat. If I were to demonstrate the Great Matter in strict keeping with the teaching of the Patriarchal School, I simply couldn't open my mouth and there wouldn't be any place for you to find footing. But since I've been so earnestly entreated today by the Counselor, why should I conceal the essential doctrine of our School? Now is there any adept warrior who forthwith can array his battle-line and unfurl his banners here before me? Let him try proving himself before the assembly!"
>
> A monk asked, "What about the cardinal principle of the Buddha-dharma?"
>
> The Master gave a shout.
>
> The monk bowed low.
>
> "As an opponent in argument this young reverend is rather good," said the Master.[1]

This passage opens the *Record of Linji*, a compilation of dialogues, anecdotes, and speeches published during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE). In this text, the "Master" is Linji Yixuan (臨濟義玄; d. 866 CE) himself, one of the legendary sages of Chinese Zen or Chan Buddhism. And this is not the only time he will shout: from the many fragments collected in the *Record*, it appears to be one of his favorite pastimes. Despite this strange personality trait, Linji is a figure of towering importance in Chan: Heinrich Dumoulin is not alone when he claims that with Linji, Chan reached its "unsurpassed zenith."[2] More recently, John McRae has called the *Record* "one of the most important Chan texts of all time."[3] Over time, Linji's exploits and the actions of other famous Chan masters have become matters for reflection in Chan ritual and

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practice. For someone unfamiliar with this school, the story quoted above might seem odd. Such a person could wonder how a text that somewhat resembles Dadaist drama could possibly function as religious scripture. This article will take a step toward understanding this problem by connecting the formal features of the *Record* to the historical and institutional contexts in which the text originated. These contexts, namely the Song dynasty and the Chan school, require some introduction first.

During the Song, Buddhism in China underwent momentous changes, turning away from what had until then been considered the motherland of the religion: India. Examining the remarkable lack of Indian sutra translations during the Song, Tansen Sen concludes that Indian Buddhism was not important anymore for Chinese Buddhists. Instead, the interest of both laity and clergy turned to distinctly domestic Buddhist schools and texts.[4] During the Song, Buddhism thus completed its Sinification, a process that arguably started with the very first translation of Buddhist doctrine into the Chinese language.[5]

In this period of innovation, Chan became "the dominant form of elite monastic Buddhism."[6] The Chinese character *chan* (禪) means meditation, and it should be no surprise that the school that took this term as its name would attach greater importance to contemplative practice than religious doctrine (at least in theory). Having emerged as early as the sixth century CE, Chan gradually distinguished itself from other Chinese schools of Buddhism by stressing a "special transmission outside the scriptures." Chan Buddhists claimed they did not need to study texts to understand what Buddhism was. Not even the words of Shakyamuni Buddha himself as they were encoded in the sutras transmitted from India were deemed necessary for spiritual attainment. Instead, Chan Buddhists claimed that their masters had received a special instruction from the Buddha, a teaching beyond words. This instruction was far superior to textual explications of Buddhism, they said, and had been transmitted across the ages in an enduring lineage of extraordinary men called "patriarchs" (*zushi* 祖師).[7]

Although Chan Buddhists thus based their lineage upon transmitted nonverbal teachings, this was a largely rhetorical move.[8] Indeed, Chan literature—which would soon constitute the largest body of all Chinese Buddhist literature—often refers as much to famous sutras as to the words of Chan masters. For example, Linji himself repeatedly demonstrates his familiarity with sutra literature, referring to the *Vimalakirti-sutra* alone more than ten times in the *Record*.[9] Moreover, historical research shows that Chan Buddhist monastic practice was hardly different from that of other Chinese Buddhist schools, disproving that this ideology had much effect on monastic practice.[10]

Instead of therefore explaining Chan lineages as reflecting a historically accurate narrative on the origins of Chan doctrine and practice, scholars have suggested that the "special transmission" was motivated by other concerns. In an oft-cited 1987 article, John Jorgensen suggested that Chan lineages came about as an attempt to make Buddhism compatible with Chinese ancestor worship, thus making it less vulnerable to common criticisms that called it "foreign," and fitting the Song turn to native Buddhist schools.[11] More recently, McRae has reiterated the claim that Chan's stress

on lineage allows for a new form of filiation, one alien to the Buddhist tradition in India but in keeping with the Chinese tradition of ancestor worship.[12] Finally, Benjamin Brose has shown that in the period that preceded the Song, Chan Buddhists increasingly sought political power through the strategic use of lineage claims: the determination of one's spiritual successor was a matter to be decided in collaboration with nonmonastic power brokers, a strategy that would allow for Chan's ascent to the pinnacle of power during the Song.[13] All these contributions maintain the political and cultural usefulness of Chan lineage in presenting the school as more Chinese than Indian. What they do not examine in detail, though, is what role the particular form of the emerging Chan literature played in this process.

The most important literary innovation of Chan can be easily connected to lineage claims. During the Song, "records of sayings" (*yulu* 語錄) collections, which presented themselves as recorded accounts of the actions of the patriarchs, began to circulate.[14] The *Record of Linji* is a prime example of this literature, which appealed greatly to the taste of the educated upper class of the Song (commonly called the "literati" in English).[15] A large part of these texts presented encounters between a master and a student (the former often dominating the latter), and so it is no wonder that the dialogues contained in records of sayings have come to be called "encounter dialogues."[16] After the circulation of "records of sayings" collections, encounter dialogues were excerpted in so-called *gongan* (公案 J. kōan) collections, a term under which they are perhaps better known.

Because they explicitly focused on the lives of the patriarchs, "encounter dialogues" are therefore intricately connected with Chan's lineage claims. However, I argue that, in addition to the contents, the form of this genre supports lineage claims as well. Encounter dialogue's vividness, omissions, and focus on action allow the readers or meditators to imagine themselves in the presence of their lineage ancestors, thus playing a key role in the creation of a lineage imaginary and the Sinification of Chan Buddhism. In this manner, the *Record* functions differently from Buddhist texts of Indian origin. Mahayana sutras such as the *Lotus Sutra* prevent readers from imagining themselves in the presence of the legendary assembly by describing every event in immense detail. I explain this difference by analyzing the *Record* and *Lotus* within a typology of literary texts pioneered by Erich Auerbach.

By putting the formal qualities of encounter dialogue in a comparative schema, I am taking a step toward a formal description of the genre. Thus far, encounter dialogue has not received formal treatment of this sort; a lacuna that has been felt by other scholars as well. Most recently, Christian Wittern has called for this type of study.[17] Likewise, Juhn Ahn and Alan Cole have called attention to the lack of scholarship on the act of reading within Chan.[18] That is, despite a number of recent articles on how encounter dialogues were ritually performed, we still do not know how they were read.[19]

My discussion ends with a rereading of a famous *gongan* collection, the *Gateless Barrier* or *wumenguan*. Comments made by Wumen Huikai (無門慧開; 1183–1260 CE) offer the best direct evidence for the thesis that in the Song, Chan authors conceived the process of gaining insight in encounter dialogues as the equivalent to

seeing and encountering one's lineage ancestors. For example, commenting on the *gongan* "The Barbarian has no beard" (*huzi wuxu* 胡子無鬚), Wumen writes: "This barbarian [= Bodhidharma]. you absolutely must intimately see him one time, and you will begin to get it" (者箇胡子。直須親見一回始得).[20] The idea that *gongan* contemplation involves seeing eye-to-eye with the Chan masters of old proves that the Chan school did not necessarily see *gongan* as just riddles to be solved in an illogical and spontaneous manner, still a popular idea today. Instead, considering encounter dialogues as a manner for monastics to imagine themselves in the presence of lineage ancestors allows us to discover a hitherto neglected dimension of Chan literature during the Song dynasty.

COMPARISON: THE *LOTUS SUTRA*

I will now compare the opening dialogue of the *Record of Linji* with the beginning of the *Lotus Sutra*. This will illuminate how different encounter dialogues must have seemed to Chinese readers accustomed to Indian sutras, and will thereby allow me to explore the most important formal characteristics of the *Record*. By mapping these differences, we can gain insight in how encounter dialogues played a role in Chan's Sinification. Both by distancing themselves formally from Indian sutras and by creating a Chan lineage imaginary, these texts fit the inward turn of Song dynasty Chan Buddhism.

Why compare the *Record* to the *Lotus* in particular? For this comparison to work, we need a text of Indian origin that Song literati or Chinese Buddhist monks (two types of target audiences of the *Record*)[21] would have known, or at least known in part. Given that the *Lotus* is considered "the most influential book in all of premodern Asia,"[22] it would seem the ideal choice. During the Song, the most popular translation of this sutra must have been the one produced by Kumarajiva, a Kushan monk who stood at the center of one of the early Chinese translation bureaus.[23]

The *Lotus* begins as follows: "Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was staying in the city of King's House (Rājagṛha), on Gṛdhrakūṭa mountain, together with twelve thousand great *bhikṣus*, all of whom were *arhants,* their outflows already exhausted, never again subject to anguish (*kleśa*), they had achieved their own advantage and annihilated the bonds of existence, and their minds had achieved self-mastery. Their names were . . ."[24] What follows is an enumeration of the names of the *arhats* present, then an enumeration of the bodhisattvas and their qualities, and names; then a description of the attendant gods and their names; and finally a description of the kings in attendance and their names. However, even after this lengthy introduction, Shakyamuni Buddha does not yet begin to speak or preach. Rather, the Buddha enters into a *samadhi* (or concentration state), during which he emits a brilliant ray of light. As everyone present begins to speculate about the reason for this luminous display, a dialogue ensues between the future Buddha Maitreya and the bodhisattva Manjushri about the meaning of the ray. Their dialogue takes us back to the ancient precedents for this event. Past Buddhas, so Manjushri assures the audience, have always emitted such a ray before preaching the *Lotus Sutra*. This

exploration of historical precedents takes up a significant amount of text before Shakyamuni Buddha will finally start addressing the audience in person.

Putting the openings of the *Lotus* and the *Record* side by side, some similarities become apparent. In both texts a being deemed to be of high value sits on a throne in the presence of political authority figures (a "Counselor Wang" in the former and a crowd of kings in the latter). The highly valued being is initially reticent, but is then requested to teach. This is where the similarities end. And they seem tiny compared to the vast differences. In the *Lotus*, we are offered a minutely detailed scene. We know the identities of everyone in attendance, their names and degrees of spiritual attainment. We also know the precedents for the ray of light the Buddha emits. This amount of detail prevents the narrative from focusing on any particular action: if we were given less detail, such elements as the ray of light would have appeared a lot more striking. Instead, the narrative seems slowed down. The *Record* is the opposite of this. Dispensing with detail, the narrator immediately proceeds to Linji's speech and his interactions with the audience. We do not know anything about the members of this audience, let alone about Linji's monk challenger.

The differences between the opening of the *Lotus* and *Record* can be further clarified by a visual comparison. The *Lotus* is similar to the Breughel painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*. In this vast medieval landscape, where ships take to sea, farmers till their soil, and faraway cities enjoy the last light of dusk, the dramatic death of the overconfident youth, Icarus, becomes a footnote. We have to look very carefully to see his two legs splashing in the water. Visually, it is comparable to the Hellenistic statue *Laocoön and His Sons*: in this statue, the focus is on the characters, whose muscles are bulging and tense, and the action, as if at any moment they might continue their hopeless struggle against the serpents entangling their bodies from all sides.

Nor are the openings of both texts unique in possessing the features I have just outlined. After Linji has praised his monk challenger in the opening of the *Record*, another—anonymous—monk inquires about Linji's lineage: "A monk asked, 'Master, of what house is the tune you sing? To whose style of Chan do you succeed?' The master said, 'When I was staying with Huangbo I questioned him three times and was hit three times.' The monk hesitated. The master gave a shout and then struck him, saying, 'You can't drive a stake into the empty sky.'"[25] Here we see the quick succession of actions and omission of detail we identified in the opening. The only passages in the *Record* that show a narrative style different from this are Linji's longer dharma lectures. Most of the *Record* follows the pattern I have described.

In contrast to the *Record*, the *Lotus* remains true to a slow progression. One of the famous scenes of this text is the moment when a "treasure tower" suddenly appears in the sky over the congregation.[26] After describing the adornments of said tower in great detail, the text tells us that a voice praises Shakyamuni from inside the tower. Because this unknown factor apparently requires immediate explanation, Shakyamuni embarks upon a full biography of the speaker of this praise, who is another Buddha named the "Thus Come One Many Jewels." Shakyamuni concludes this overview with the remark that "Thus Come One Many Jewels" will only show himself on the condition that all emanations of Shakyamuni, who are busy preaching in other

worlds, gather in the same place. Anticipating the question what those worlds might look like, Shakyamuni illuminates them with his superpowers, allowing the whole assembly to see the works of his emanations, which are then described in detail. This omniscient view can easily be read as a metaphor for the world the *Lotus* describes. Like the Buddha's audience, readers of the *Lotus* are presented with a complete reality. Very little remains hidden from their gaze. This is only one of many possible examples pointing to the fact that the stylistic difference between *Record* and *Lotus* is not unique to their openings, but is maintained throughout both texts.

HISTORY AND LEGEND

To further analyze the distinct literary characteristics of both texts, I draw on Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. In the opening chapter, titled "Odysseus Scar," Auerbach compares the rhetoric of the Old Testament with Homeric poetry (the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*).[27] Such a comparison may be called daring, but it allows Auerbach to distinguish two very different methods of representing reality, methods that he claims are used time and time again throughout the history of Western literature. After outlining his argument, I will show that, with some modifications, Auerbach's model is also of great value when analyzing the differences between the *Record* and the *Lotus*.

The two ways of representing reality that, Auerbach claims, set the model for all subsequent western literature, are called the "legendary" and the "historical." In Auerbach's usage, these two terms do not carry their everyday meanings. Legend, or the "legendary," is characterized by a manifest lack of hidden elements within the narrative: "Clearly outlined, brightly and uniformly illuminated, men and things stand out in a realm where everything is visible; and not less clear—wholly expressed, orderly even in their ardor—are the feelings and thoughts of the persons involved."[28] Auerbach's main example of this technique is the moment that the Greek hero Odysseus, who is trying to hide his identity from his own family in order to kill the suitors beleaguering his wife, Penelope, is recognized by his childhood nurse by means of a scar on his leg. The moment the scar is revealed, Homer interrupts the narrative to insert an exposition of the scar's origins, namely a boar hunt with his grandfather Autolycus. We are given a full description of this grandfather, the hunt, how Odysseus came to participate in the hunt, and how he explained the scar to his parents. Homer also does not omit what Autolycus's house looks like, what kind of person he is, or how he behaved after Odysseus was born. The main narrative proceeds only after providing this complete background. Although one might imagine that such a caesura in the plot's forward momentum would function to heighten dramatic tension, Auerbach avers that this is not so. On the contrary, this is Homer at his most typical: since the scar is a new element in the story, it requires full explanation. In Homer's universe, nothing remains unknown; everything is brought to the foreground.

The second mode of representing reality, called the "historical," differs from the legendary in that it gives minimal detail about the characters and the world they

inhabit. The background is immensely important but at the same time invisible: the reader, on whom many more demands are made, supplies it, bringing the text to life. At the same time, the omission of details draws great attention to the action. The author of "The Story of Isaac" (where YHWH asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son to him; Gen. 22:1–12) tells us nearly nothing: we do not know where Abraham is when God first talks to him; we barely know anything about the land of Moriah he is supposed to take Isaac to; three days pass during which we do not know what happens; and so forth. The few details that are provided thus get the reader's full attention: the fact that Abraham loves his only son is all the more striking because we know little else about his relation to Isaac. About Abraham himself, however, we know a great deal: we know his forefathers have been cast out of Paradise by the same God that now calls on him to sacrifice his son; we know that God promised Abraham's people would be unique in his eyes, and we know that these people would be protected as long as they obey the divine commands. Thus, the story features an enormous background. The whole world of the Old Testament is present in everything Abraham does; yet Abraham has great individuality. The omissions, Auerbach suggests, allow us to intuit the mental conflict within Abraham. Does he choose to disobey his God, or does he choose to slay his only son? But if he chooses the latter, and kills his child, how can Abraham's descendants inherit the land promised?

Legendary narrative and historical narrative demand different methods of reading. While "Homer can be analyzed . . . he cannot be interpreted" because everything in Homer's poetry is clear.[29] There is no ambiguity for readers to resolve. Homer presents us with a well-defined story, set in a definite space and time with little bearing on our own existence. It is different for the Old Testament: the omissions force readers to fill in the gaps using their imagination. At the same time, Auerbach claims, these interpretations reinforce the authority that the Bible has over our lives. As the Bible's ambition is to be the definitive story of mankind, it aims to be complete, and is "tyrannical" in that "it excludes other claims": its version of the truth is the only one possible.[30] It is exactly the omissions in the narrative that make the "truth" of the Old Testament adaptable to a great number of contexts. The book and its stories function like a template. Certain fixed elements (notably YHWH, the promise of a Holy Land, etc.), combine with numerous blanks that can be filled in to match the version of reality encountered. No such thing can be said about the *Odyssey*. Though the story of Odysseus's journeys might fascinate us, it does not exert authority in the manner the Bible does.

THE *LOTUS SUTRA* AS LEGEND

The heuristic value of Auerbach's model for refining my comparison between the *Lotus* and the *Record* should be apparent. The *Lotus*—with its many details, slow narrative, and lengthy explanations—fits the category of legend, whereas the *Record*—with its skeletal structure, sparse details, but enormous background (Linji's actions refers to the history of the Chan school and Buddhist philosophy in general)—resembles

history. But for this similarity to be significant, the performative aspects that Auerbach establishes also need to be present. In other words, does the style of the *Lotus* limit the sutra's performativity? Is the *Lotus* just a story with no bearing on lived existence? And, correspondingly, does the *Record*'s form allow for a "tyrannical" imposition of itself across time and a variety of cultural contexts?

The answer is both yes and no. No, because texts like the *Lotus* do have a performative function. In *The Splendid Vision*, Richard Cohen has studied the functioning of a sutra that is formally similar to the *Lotus*. In that analysis, he calls the sutra in question a "scripture," that is to say, "a text that a community accepts as an authoritative source of information, and that the community interprets in order to maintain for itself the perception of the source's elemental accuracy."[31] Note how interpretation functions to guarantee the scripture's continued authority, something that we have also seen with Auerbach's analysis of the Isaac story. Complying with certain demands of genre, Cohen argues, further creates this authority. To prove this, he points to the use of phrases that are very common in sutras, such as the opening phrase "Thus have I heard," which implies that the sutra contains Shakyamuni's words as heard by his disciple Ananda. Once the listeners or readers of the sutra accept the notion that they are receiving the words of a divine superhuman being (or at least a very accomplished one), the sutra provides a great number of things they can do to improve their lives.[32] Cohen's main examples in *The Splendid Vision* are rituals: do this and this on such a day, and you will be able to achieve your wildest dreams. The *Lotus*, of course, also has plenty of such rituals, the most famous of which is perhaps Avalokiteshvara's (C. Guanyin; 觀音) guarantee that anyone who "single-mindedly call[s] upon his name" will be rescued from dire situations and brought to "deliverance."[33] That such rituals are indeed performed can be ascertained in East Asian Buddhist temples today.

Thus, if we are going to cast sutras that provide exhaustive detail like the *Lotus* as Auerbach's "legend," then we need to acknowledge that legends also impose a version of the truth on the listeners or readers. In Cohen's analysis, this authority depends to a large degree on compliance with certain demands of genre: the *Lotus* can prescribe things because it self-identifies as a sutra and, thus, the word of the Buddha, making it seem "possessed of exceptional, universal, or superhuman value."[34] This, in turn, leads to an interpretation of the sutra that matches the existent circumstances one lives in, and in some cases to a performance of the rituals in the sutra.

THE *RECORD OF LINJI* AS HISTORY

Whereas the *Lotus* prescribes certain activities in enormous detail, the *Record* prescribes very little. Instead, it offers a direct narrative that is brought alive by our imagination (we fill in the gaps as in the story of Isaac), while at the same time focusing our attention on the action. Hence the comparative immediacy of this text: the narration limits itself to telling us what Linji does, namely taking "the high seat in the Dharma Hall," and, later on, shouting. There is minimal interference that would draw our attention away from the interaction between Linji and his interlocutor. Thus far, the *Record*

seems to be merely an account of an exchange, not much more. What religious or "tyrannical" meaning (following Auerbach) could it possibly harbor?

To understand how encounter dialogue fits Auerbach's dichotomy, I will now turn to the usage of these texts in the Chan tradition. In doing this, I will argue that this genre interfaces with Chan ancestry as encoded in lineage. As I explained in the introduction, lineage is not only of enormous ideological importance to the Chan school, substantiating its claim to spiritual authority through the idea of a "special transmission," but it was also a key factor in the school's successful adaptation to Chinese society, what has been called its Sinification. As mentioned in the introduction, lineage contributed to Chan's Sinification in diverse ways. Encounter dialogue contributed to Chan's Sinification by creating a lineage imaginary: it allowed its readers to visualize their ancestors in a manner that other Chan literature could not. It achieved this through its form as a history in Auerbach's sense.

As Griffith Foulk and Robert Sharf, among others, have shown, during the Song study of encounter dialogues was an important part of the ritual curriculum of Chan monks.[35] After all, patriarchs like Linji (who, as was mentioned in the introduction, died over a hundred years before the *Record* was compiled) were considered to be enlightened, living Buddhas part of a "special transmission" going back to Shakyamuni. Their actions therefore merited the same status of Shakyamuni's own actions and words as recorded in sutras like the *Lotus*. Living Chan masters and abbots who wanted to be considered enlightened by others (most of all their own acolytes and political powerbrokers) therefore did well to behave like the models of enlightenment portrayed in encounter dialogues. From what we know, they did so on at least two important occasions. The first are public dharma talks, where the master or abbot addresses an audience, almost always composed of monks but with the occasional officeholder present (for example, the "Prefect Wang" in the opening of the *Record*). The second are private interviews with monks, the so-called *ducan* (獨參; J. *dokusan*). This *ducan* is a late Song development that probably began with an influential Chan monk called Dahui Zonggao (大慧宗杲; 1089–1163 CE). Dahui thought that if monks were to contemplate key parts of encounter dialogues, they would attain enlightenment. The master would be able to certify this enlightenment during the *ducan*. This practice, called *kanhua* (看話), requires monks to intently focus on a piece of a *gongan* until they awaken to enlightenment, an enlightenment that invariable had to be displayed through proper enlightened behavior.

In the Song, encounter dialogues were therefore studied because they provided models for enlightened behavior. But reading and contemplation of these dialogues also allowed monks to imaginarily encounter lineage ancestors. In 2003, McRae already suggested this possibility, but did not develop it.[36] My comparative literary analysis of encounter dialogues as history makes it plausible that during the Song, Chan monks contemplating Linji's actions and words were able to imagine themselves on the scene, face-to-face with an important patriarch of their lineage. The gaps in the historical narrative would allow them to imagine the patriarch to behave exactly how they expected. Nevertheless, the background message would be very clear: this is my patriarch, he legitimates my lineage and my place in the world,

his methods are unique, and he continues the true heritage of the founder of my religion, Shakyamuni. The Chan monks thus supply the background for the story through interpretation, and thus renew its relevance for their own existential circumstances. This process of reimagining the text's contents resembles Auerbach's "historical" representation, as encounter dialogues require the readers to actualize their contents (by acting like their lineage ancestors) and adapt them to their own worlds. By allowing monks to meet their lineage ancestors, encounter dialogue played a key role in the construction of Chan lineage, and thus in the successful sinification of the Chan school.

GONGAN PRACTICE IN THE *WUMENGUAN*

That Chan Buddhists during the Song dynasty saw encounter dialogue as a means of summoning their lineage ancestors is attested by Wumen Huikai. Commenting on a *gongan* collected in the *Gateless Barrier of the Chan School* (禅宗無門關; *Chanzong wumen guan*), he describes those who are able to break through the "gateless barrier" as "able to walk hand in hand with the patriarchs of history, intimately linked eyebrow to eyebrow. They will see with the same eyes as the patriarchs and hear with the same ears."[37] Such statements have usually been interpreted as referring to the ineffability of enlightenment,[38] but my reading of encounter dialogues in this article suggests another, non-metaphorical interpretation of Wumen's statement: when meditating on an encounter dialogue, the patriarchs are found walking beside the meditator, as if they were contemporaries.

Later in the *Barrier*, Wumen insists several times that *gongan* can transport Chan students into the presence of the ancient masters. People who gain insight in "Juzhi's lifted finger" (*juzhishuzhi*; 俱胝竪指) "are pierced and cut by one chain together with Tianlong, Juzhi, and the young boy [two ancient masters and a boy who becomes enlightened]" (若向者裡見得。天龍同俱胝并童子。與自己一串穿却).[39] Or again: "If among those facing me, there is one who obtains a turning word [a phrase that displays enlightenment], then he will see the tip of Zhaozhou's tongue is boneless" (若向者裡下得一轉語便見趙州舌頭無骨).[40] Getting such a "turning word" can even transport a monk into the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha himself, "intimately and directly seeing the whole assembly on Vulture Peak, well arranged and not yet dispersed" (親切便見靈山一會儼然未散).[41] Wumen's stress on the physicality of encountering the ancestors is remarkable: "If any among those facing me understand this clearly, then they exhale one mouth of breath together with Dongshan" (向者裡明得方與洞山出一口氣).[42] This emphasis on seeing the ancestors and establishing a visceral connection with them suggests that Wumen sees in the *gongan* exercise much more than the possibility of attaining a new understanding, however ineffable. He points to a vision of the ancestors, a vision made possible by the literary form of the encounter dialogues these *gongan* are based upon. Because these dialogues function like Auerbach's "history," they collapse time. The "gateless pass" (another possible translation of 無門關; *wumen guan*) is found in the gaps encounter dialogue provides

for the reader, in its nature as a template that renders it authoritative in any time and place.

CONCLUSION

Reading encounter dialogues in the way I have suggested allows for more insight in how Chan Buddhism came into its own during the Song dynasty. With this genre, Chan was able to make its doctrinal reliance on lineage into a literary device that not only allowed the reader to admire a novel literary character, the quirky Chan master, but actually meet him face-to-face. Translated Indian sutras such as the *Lotus Sutra* were unfit for such a new task because although they proscribe ritual usage as well, the amount of descriptive indexes they provide does not leave any omissions for the imagination to play in. They are more akin to Auerbach's "legend," whereas encounter dialogues share with the latter's "history" that they maintain authority through strategic omissions in the narrative, allowing the text to be considered authoritative in any time and place.

Despite the fact that Auerbach's categories were conceived to analyze texts that are often considered to constitute part of the "Western" cultural tradition, "history" and "legend" thus prove useful beyond Europe. These categories allow us to map and compare the different demands Buddhist texts make on their readers, connecting the formal features of these texts with their effects on historical audiences. This does not mean that the *Iliad* is the same as the *Lotus*, or that the story of Isaac is identical to *The Record of Linji*. But it does suggest fruitful avenues of future inquiry in comparative literature and comparative religion.

Interpreting encounter dialogues as "history" thus might serve to explain the appeal Chan has held for the twentieth-century Western mind. Far more than sutras, encounter dialogues have fascinated an immense number of Westerners, not least among whom are Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, and Alan Watts. I have no doubt that part of the reason for this lies in encounter dialogue's ability to adapt while maintaining authority, something that the *Lotus* is less able to do, bound as it is in a very specific imaginary encapsulated in its many details. When Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, according to Robert Sharf "no doubt the single most important figure in the spread of Zen in the West," introduces Japanese Zen to his Western twentieth-century audiences, it is mainly encounter dialogue he will rely on, not Indian sutras such as the *Heart Sutra* or the *Laṅkavatara Sutra*, which are also very important for the Zen school.[43] Surely part of the reason for Suzuki's great success has been his strategic selection of this genre.

NOTES

I would like to thank Richard Cohen, Suzanne Cahill, Nadeen Kharputly, Steven Trenson, and an anonymous reviewer for their help in building this article. Previous versions of the argument have been presented at "Network and Identity: Exchange Relations between China and the World," held at Ghent University, Belgium, and at "Buddhist Meditation: History,

Culture, Development, Science," held at the University of Virginia. I thank the organizers of these conferences for the opportunity to discuss my work, and the audience members present for their questions and suggestions.

1. Translation by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *The Record of Linji*, ed. Thomas Yūhō Kirchner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 3. Translation of *Zhenzhou Linji Huizhao chanshi yulu,* 真州臨濟慧照禪師語錄, T47, no. 1985, 0496,b14–20, in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新編大藏經 (The Chinese Buddhist Canon Newly Compiled in the Taishō Era), ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次朗 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡海旭 (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932). Texts indicated by text number (T) followed by volume, page, register, and line number(s). Accessed electronically via the CBETA (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association) software.

2. Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 180.

3. *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 100.

4. "The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations during the Song Dynasty," *T'oung Pao* 88, no. 1–3 (2002): 67–72.

5. Robert H. Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 19.

6. Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China*, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 22 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 1; Albert Welter, *The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.

7. John Jorgensen, "Chan School," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr., vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 130–133.

8. Morten Schlütter suggests that "the entire lineage prior to the Song is best understood as a mythical construct, a sacred history that served to legitimize the Song Chan school and its claim to possess a special transmission," Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 15.

9. Sasaki, *The Record of Linji*, 126, 141, 187, 196, 212, 219, 244, 272, 275, 285, 291, 292.

10. T. Griffith Foulk, "Sung Controversies concerning the 'Separate Transmission' of Ch'an," in *Buddhism in the Sung*, ed. Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 13 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999); T. Griffith Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism," in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 147–208; Robert H. Sharf and T. Griffith Foulk, "On the Ritual Use of Ch'an Portraiture in Medieval China," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 7, no. 1 (1993): 149–219, doi:10.3406/asie.1993.1064.

11. John Jorgensen, "The 'Imperial' Lineage of Ch'an Buddhism: The Role of Confucian Ritual and Ancestor Worship in Ch'an's Search for Legitimation in the Mid-T'ang Dynasty," *Papers in Far Eastern History* 35 (1987): 89–133.

12. McRae, *Seeing through Zen*, 145–148.

13. Benjamin Brose, *Patrons and Patriarchs: Chan Monks and Regional Rulers during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).

14. John R McRae, "The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," in *The Koan: Text and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 47–48.

15. Albert Welter, *The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: The Development of Chan's Records of Sayings Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 70–75.

16. McRae, "The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," 47–48.

17. "Some Preliminary Remarks to a Study of Rhetorical Devices in Chan Yulu Encounter Dialogues," in *Zen Buddhist Rhetoric in China, Korea, and Japan*, ed. Christoph Anderl (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 282–283.

18. Juhn Y. Ahn, "Who Has the Last Word in Chan? Transmission, Secrecy and Reading during the Northern Song Dynasty," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 37, no. 1 (June 1, 2009): 7 n. 15, doi:10.1179/073776909803402744; Alan Cole, *Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 29.

19. Robert H. Sharf, "Ritual," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Buddhism and Modernity (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 245–270; Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism"; Barry Stephenson, "The Kōan as Ritual Performance," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73, no. 2 (2005): 475–496.

20. T48, no. 2005, 0293,b25. Translations from the *Gateless Barrier* are my own except where indicated differently.

21. Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 8; Welter, *The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy*, 70–75.

22. John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 42.

23. E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 3rd ed,, Sinica Leidensia 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 226.

24. Translation by Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, Buddhist Studies and Translations 94 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1. 妙法蓮華經, *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T09 no. 262 1c19–c22.

25. Sasaki, *The Record of Linji*, 3–4. T47, no. 1985, 496b20–b23.

26. Translation in Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, 183–185. T09 no. 262, 32b16–33a07.

27. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, 50th anniversary ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3–24.

28. Ibid., 3.

29. Ibid., 13.

30. Ibid., 14.

31. *The Splendid Vision: Reading a Buddhist Sutra* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 67.

32. Ibid., 114–145.

33. T264, 191b29–c01. Translation by Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, 311.

34. Cohen, *The Splendid Vision*, 68.

35. Foulk, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism"; Sharf, "Ritual." My overview of the ritual usage of encounter dialogues in this paragraph is based on these two sources.

36. McRae, *Seeing through Zen*, 130.

37. Translation in Welter, *The Linji Lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy*, 35. T48, no. 2005, 292c28–293a01.

38. For an example, see ibid.

39. T48, no. 2005, 0293,b17.

40. T48, no. 2005, 0294,b11.

41. T48, no. 2005, 0295c16–17.

42. T48, no. 2005, 0295,a06.

43. Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," *History of Religions* 33, no. 1 (1993): 12.