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# *Mazu yulu* and the Creation of the Chan Records of Sayings

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Over recent decades, the study of medieval Chan literature made considerable progress, which enabled scholars working in this area to reassess important issues and events in early Chan history. They have been able to focus attention on topics that have not been addressed by traditional Buddhist scholarship. This was possible in part due to an increased access to Chan texts and other relevant documents, which included the Dunhuang manuscripts and other texts such as *Zutang ji* (Hall of the Patriarchs collection), which were rediscovered after having been lost for a number of centuries. Chan scholarship also benefited from the application of modern research methodologies adopted from relevant academic disciplines. As a result, Chan/Zen scholars have been able to rewrite important chapters of the story about the early formation of the Chan tradition and its subsequent emergence as a major school of East Asian Buddhism. Notwithstanding the substantial progress made so far, however, there is still much work that needs to be done in a number of areas pertinent to the historical study of classical Chan. Major areas that require further research include the origins, contents, and functions of important Chan texts that are used as sources of historical data, and the provenance and main characteristics of the distinct literary genres in which such texts were composed.

The lack of meaningful consideration of basic problems pertaining to the formation and functions of individual genres is a case in point that highlights the fragmented nature of scholarly approaches to the study of early Chan literature. There seems to be no clear set of criteria for defining the basic features that constitute a particular

Chan genre, even though various terms that refer to specific genres are widely used in both popular and scholarly writings about Chan literature and history. A pertinent example of the tendency to blur the distinctions between different Chan genres is the use of the term “records of sayings” (*yulu*). Although the term is the name of a specific Chan genre, very often it is used in broad and vague manner, so the meaning roughly corresponds to such general terms as “Chan literature” or “Chan text.”<sup>1</sup> Such lack of precision obscures the prolific variety of writings that form classical Chan literature, and imputes uniformity to a wide array of diverse texts composed over a long period of time. The imprecision implicit in this usage is to a certain extent based on a problematic assumption that there are widely accepted and self-evident, albeit unstated, criteria for identifying given texts as belonging to a supposedly homogeneous corpus of Chinese religious writings that we associate with the Chan school. Even though the boundaries that delimit the Chan canon are not clearly articulated, it is at least tacitly assumed, and not infrequently explicitly asserted, that its texts clearly stand apart from the literary artifacts of the rest of Chinese Buddhism.

As a result of the dearth of exactness in regard to the classification of the different types of texts that constitute the larger body of classical Chan literature, often there is a marked lack of differentiation among dissimilar genres and insufficient awareness of the diverse origins, contents, and literary formats of texts that belong to them. Texts written in completely different genres are often mixed together as equally representative records of Chan religiosity, which is typically construed as a coherent spiritual universe centered on uniform yet deeply personal experiences of timeless truth(s). That is usually done despite the fact that the great differences in the literary format, contents, and dating of individual texts indicate that they are products of quite different religious and social milieus. To further complicate matters, despite the pretense of being coherent and homogeneous narratives, most classical Chan texts are somewhat unwieldy compilations formed from several different types of earlier textual and oral sources, all of which had independent origins.

Some of the issues that were at play in the creation of Chan literature come more clearly into focus through closer analysis of specific texts, set against the backdrop of the conventions of the genres in which they were written. In this chapter I examine one such text, *Jiangxi Mazu Daoyi chanshi yulu* (“Record of the sayings of Chan Master Mazu Daoyi of Jiangsi,” hereafter referred to as *Mazu yulu*), one of the most influential texts of the records of sayings genre.<sup>2</sup> This text purports to be a record of the life and teachings of Mazu Daoyi (709–788), the renowned leader of the Hongzhou school and arguably one of the most important monks in the whole history of Chan. By the early ninth century, the various fragmented schools of early Chan were replaced by a new orthodoxy centered on the Southern school, which for all practical purposes came to be identified with Mazu’s Hongzhou school. He

was thus a central figure in a key phase of Chan history, which retroactively came to be recognized as the tradition's "golden age," and in that role he was remembered as one of the main protagonists in the incipient ascendancy of Chan as the elite tradition of Chinese Buddhism. Consequently, he is still widely esteemed as one of the most important Chan/Zen "patriarchs," and his record is held in high esteem as an authoritative source of authentic Chan teachings.

The examination of Mazu's record presented in the following pages has two objectives. First, in accord with the general tenor of the present volume, this chapter is meant to offer general information about the *Mazu yulu*. That includes information about the text's provenance, literary structure and style, contents, and status and function within the later Chan/Zen traditions. Second, by using Mazu's record as an example of the record of sayings genre, the chapter also engages in preliminary consideration of broader issues about the creation of texts that belong to this genre and their use as historical sources about the Chan religious movement in the Tang dynasty (618–907).

### Compilation of Mazu's Record of Sayings

Although *Mazu yulu* is usually regarded as the main record about Mazu's life and teachings, the text is of a quite late provenance. It was first published during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126) as a part of *Sijia yulu* (Records of the sayings of four masters), the earliest version of which is now extant only in a late Ming (1368–1644) edition. In addition to Mazu's record, this collection also includes the records of Baizhang Huaihai (749–814), Huangbo Xiyun (d. 850?), and Linji Yixuan (d. 866), who represent the first three generations of Mazu's direct spiritual descendants. The date of the compilation of *Sijia yulu* can be established on the basis of Yang Jie's preface, a portion of which is preserved in a Ming edition of the text. This preface is dated the first day of the eleventh month of the eighth year of the Yuanfeng period, which corresponds to November 20, 1085.<sup>3</sup> According to Yang, the collection was edited by Huanglong Huian (1002–1069), a noted Chan teacher in the Linji lineage, presumably during the final years of his life.<sup>4</sup>

The different texts that comprise the *Sijia yulu* collection have varied histories. Mazu's record of sayings does not have a documented history as an independent text prior to its inclusion in this collection, and in all probability it appeared as a whole text for the first time as a part of *Sijia yulu*. That means that the text was compiled almost three centuries after Mazu's death. Like Mazu's text, Linji's record of sayings, *Linji yulu* (Record of the sayings of Linji), is also of a relatively late date. Though this text seems to have existed independently before the compilation of *Sijia yulu*, it first appeared only during the Northern Song period, not long before its inclusion in the collection.<sup>5</sup>

Compared to the records of the sayings of Mazu and Linji, Huangbo's two records—*Chuanxin fayao* (The essentials of the transmission of mind) and *Wanling lu* (Wanling record)—and Baizhang's *Baizhang guanglu* (Baizhang's extensive record) are much older. Although there are no surviving manuscripts from the Tang period, it is known that parts of *Chuanxin fayao* and *Wanling lu* were recorded by the prominent official Pei Xiu (787–860) during the late 840s. The texts are based on Pei's personal notes taken during two periods when he served as a government official in the south, where he met Huangbo and studied Buddhism with him.<sup>6</sup> The final versions of both texts seem to have been compiled from Pei Xiu's notes and the notes of other disciples not long after the death of Huangbo (discussed in chapter 4 below), although additional materials might have crept into later editions of the text.<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, there is evidence that *Baizhang guanglu*, which consists of transcripts of Baizhang's talks and conversations with his students, was compiled soon after Baizhang's death.<sup>8</sup>

Although these two texts are regularly referred to as “records of sayings,” they were created before the evolution of the mature records of sayings genre, and they lack many of the features that are characteristic of texts composed in this genre.<sup>9</sup> In both texts the omission of biographical sketches is conspicuous; these are a common feature of the records of sayings genre. Even more significant is the fact that neither text contains any examples of classical “encounter dialogues.” As we will see shortly, the Hongzhou school was an iconoclastic tradition that introduced that novel mode of religious communication and practice.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the second of Baizhang's two records included in the *Sijia yulu* collection, the *Baizhang yulu*, which is much shorter than the *Baizhang guanglu*, is clearly a product of the Song period. Its contents and literary format are closer to Mazu's and Linji's records, which are typical Song *yulu* texts. It is interesting to note that the earlier of these texts, the two records of Huangbo and Baizhang's *Guanglu*, are noticeably more conservative in their approach to Chan soteriology than the later texts included in *Sijia yulu*.

Given that *Sijia yulu* was compiled by the Song Linji school, its main ideological function was to buttress that school's claim that Linji, the school's putative founder, was the orthodox heir of Mazu's Chan lineage, and by extension that the Linji lineage was the authentic transmission of Chan. The collection is of undoubtedly great historical importance, since it includes materials about the four best-known monks associated with the Hongzhou school. At the same time, *Sijia yulu*'s late date of compilation and the diverse literary and historical origins of the texts that constitute it indicate that we must exercise caution in using the collection as a source for the historical study of Tang Chan. That is especially the case with the three texts that were compiled during the Song, the records of the sayings of Mazu, Baizhang, and Linji. Concerning Mazu's record, the three-century gap between Mazu's death and the compila-

tion of *Mazu yulu* is a very long period, which makes the authenticity of the text suspect.

The late provenance of *Mazu yulu* and other similar texts should not, however, be used hastily as “evidence” that they are works of fiction whose contents are inadmissible as sources of information about Tang Chan. It is of course, patently naïve to accept the contents of these texts at face value as records of the sayings and deeds of the great Chan teachers from the Tang period. Historical research on Tang Chan should primarily be based on the earliest strata of epigraphic and other pertinent textual sources. At the same time, we should also be apprehensive about falling into the kind of unwarranted historical revisionism that is predicated on a notion that the records of Tang Chan teachers are merely products of Song Chan ideology. We should not presume, following Griffith Foulk’s suggestion, that these texts constituted “a body of religious mythology, a sacred history that served polemical, ritual, and didactic functions in the world of Song Chan,” and thus deduce that their contents are directly relevant for studies of Chan during the period when they were compiled and bear little (if any) relevance to the study of Tang Chan.<sup>11</sup>

A prudent approach to the study of these texts should avoid both forms of reductionism, naïve acceptance of their contents as authentic historical records and the characterization of them as products of Song Chan ideology that invented the mythical “golden age” ushered by Mazu and his followers and thereby “drew attention away from its own creativity.”<sup>12</sup> Although the compilation of a records of sayings such as *Mazu yulu* was undeniably influenced by concerns and issues unique to the eleventh-century Chan milieu, in fact virtually all of the materials that were used by the text’s compiler(s) can be found in earlier texts. The Song editor(s) merely collected all materials about Mazu they could lay their hands on, ostensibly without making serious attempts to establish the provenance and historical accuracy of the various sources they were drawing from. In the following pages I will examine the various pre-Song sources that contain earlier versions of the materials that constitute Mazu’s record and trace the earliest appearance of the contents of each of its constituent parts. Before doing that, it will be helpful to provide a brief overview of the *Mazu yulu*.

## Structure and Contents

The structure and content of *Mazu yulu* described below are representative of the recorded sayings genre. A text composed in this genre was originally meant to serve as an inclusive record of the life and teachings of a noted Chan teacher, whose words and deeds were presented as paradigmatic models of authentic religiosity unique to the Chan school. These texts typically include biographical

information, short sermons and conventional dialogues, encounter dialogues and other stories that illustrate a Chan teachers' lively manifestations of their spiritual insights, and occasional poems. Although there are some variations in terms of literary format and style among the various texts that belong to this genre, for the most part those differences are minor. For instance, in *Linji yulu* the biographical material is placed at the end, instead at the beginning, where it is usually found.<sup>13</sup> Such somewhat unusual placement of the *xinglu* (lit., "record of acts") at the end of the text can also be found in *Yunmen guanglu* (The Extensive Record of Yunmen), which was compiled at about the same time as *Linji yulu*.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding slight variations of this sort, we can say that the records of the sayings of Mazu and other late Tang Chan teachers, most of which were initially compiled during the Northern Song period, constitute a collection of texts that is quite homogeneous in literary structure and contents.

The structure of the *Mazu yulu* consists of three distinct parts: a biographical sketch of Mazu's life, numerous transcripts of his sermons, and thirty-two short dialogues between him and his disciples. Although the three parts follow each other in this order, in the original text they are presented together as a single continuous narrative in which there are no structural boundaries or explicit markings that set the three sections apart. Yet the contrast in their literary structure and, even more important, the differences in their contents are quite striking. As we will see shortly, these disparities point to the distinct origins of each of the three literary formats in which they were composed, a crucial point that has wide-ranging ramifications for the study of medieval Chan literature. The production of a text such as *Mazu yulu* was a process of editing and combining different kinds of materials, which the editors presented together as a homogeneous record of Mazu's life and teaching in a way that obscured the diverse origins of the sources on which the different parts of the text were based.

The first part of the text, Mazu's biographical sketch, follows the traditional pattern of Chinese Buddhist hagiography. Mazu's brief biography is typical of normative depictions of the life and career pattern of a noted Chan teacher. Following an established literary model, the biography mentions Mazu's youthful predisposition toward religious life, and then goes on to note the main events in his religious career, such as his ordination and early study of Buddhism, training under a Chan teacher, spiritual awakening, teaching of disciples, and gradual rise to fame. Although biographies of Chan monks such as Mazu were products of a specific Chan milieu and were informed by the internal dynamics of Chan's religious, historical, and institutional developments, they clearly reflected earlier Chinese traditions of biographical writing, both secular and Buddhist. Like the secular biographies, individual Chan biographies are not to be read as independent examinations of their subject's personal character, or even of his life.<sup>15</sup> They are to be read, rather, as formulaic depic-

tions of his performance of a specific function or role that is defined by the larger social and religious contexts in which an individual biography is presented. Whereas in the secular biographies the role is typically that of an exemplary official, as is to be expected, Chan biographies focus on their subjects' roles as enlightened monks and charismatic Chan teachers.

The information about Mazu's life presented in *Mazu Yulu* is brief. It follows the basic conventions of biographical writing such as narrative sequence, and it covers his whole life, from his birth in Sichuan until his death in Hongzhou (northern Jiangxi). In between, we are provided with concise data about his ordination, meeting and study with his teacher Huairang (677–744) at Nanyue Mountain in Hunan, establishment of monastic communities in Jiangxi, first at Gonggong Mountain and later at Kaiyuan Monastery in Hongzhou, and an exceptionally successful teaching career, during which he had 139 distinguished disciples, more than any other Chan teacher before or after him. As is customary in the biographies of noted Chan monks, Mazu's biographical sketch ends with information about his imperially bestowed posthumous title and his stupa, thus placing his life in relation to the established sociopolitical order. The life pattern presented in *Mazu yulu* has a dual point of reference and can be read at two levels: as a source of information about the historical reality of Mazu's life as a Buddhist monk and noted Chan teacher, and as an idealized depiction of his function as an archetype of a particular type of religious personality.

The second part of the *Mazu yulu* consists of transcripts of three of Mazu's sermons. The first and the third sermons are prefaced by the phrase "[Mazu] instructed the assembly, saying" (*shihzhong yun*). Together with the term *shangtang*, which literally means to "ascend the [Dharma] hall," *shizhong* is an expression that is commonly used at the beginning of the transcripts of sermons of Chan teachers. In Chan texts the two terms are used interchangeably, and they both refer to a formal occasion during which a Chan teacher would address his disciples in the main hall of the monastery for the purpose of elucidating the essentials of Buddhist soteriology—responding to the audience's questions, resolving their doubts about the Buddhist teachings, and inspiring and encouraging them to persevere in their religious practice. The second sermon is initiated by a question from an anonymous monk, another common feature of this kind of text.

In his sermons Mazu seamlessly weaves in numerous quotations from and allusions to Buddhist scriptures, usually without identifying his sources. Judging from their contents, the sermons' main function seems to have been to instruct disciples in the teachings of Buddhism and provide them with religious guidance and inspiration. The format of the sermons is traditional, and their contents do not fit the radical image of the Hongzhou school's leader, who is often depicted in modern secondary sources as a sort of religious revolutionary who was bent on overturning established traditions and transgress-

ing conventional norms of monastic behavior. Although the three sermons exhibit a conception of religious doctrine and a direct rhetorical style that were characteristic of the Hongzhou school, they belong to a hallowed tradition of Buddhist discourse that existed in China long before the emergence of the Chan school. As a matter of fact, much of the sermons' contents is little more than a string of canonical quotations and allusions, accompanied by Mazu's further elaboration of the cited passages. Let me give an example (with the information about the canonical sources added in brackets):

[The *Vimalakīrti Scripture* says,] "Those who seek the Dharma should not seek for anything." [As it is taught in the *Huayan Scripture*,] Outside of mind there is no other Buddha, outside of Buddha there is no other mind. Not attaching to good and not rejecting evil, without reliance on either purity or defilement, one realizes that the nature of offense is empty: it cannot be found in each thought because it is without self-nature. Therefore [as explained in the *Huayan* and *Lankāvātāra* scriptures], "the three realms are mind-only," and [as stated in the *Faju jing*] "all phenomena in the universe are marked by a single Dharma." Whenever we see form, it is just seeing the mind. The mind does not exist by itself; its existence is due to form. Whatever you are saying, it is just [what Dushun's *Fajie guanmen* refers to as] "a phenomenon, which is identical with the principle." They are all without obstruction, and the fruit of the way to awakening is also like that.<sup>16</sup>

The use of sermons as a medium of religious instruction was a tradition that was not unique to Chinese Buddhism. As can be seen from the earliest Buddhist scriptures, like those preserved in the Pali canon, the sermon was one of the main forms of religious instructions practiced by the Buddhist community ever since its early inception in northern India. During the medieval period, sermons of eminent monks often drew large audiences and were a ubiquitous feature of Chinese Buddhism. Very often the sermons consisted of the exegesis of Mahāyāna scriptures, delivered by erudite monks identified as *jiangshi* (lit., "lecturer"), or by some similar title.<sup>17</sup> Closer to the teaching format used by Chan monks were the sermons of a class of Buddhist teachers called *changdaoshi*, who propagated Buddhist teachings without relying on a specific text.<sup>18</sup> Some *changdaoshi* presented their sermons in a simple language that was accessible to the masses, whereas some were adept at presenting Buddhist teachings in ways that were appealing to the educated elites, both lay and monastic. The sermons of Chan monks such as Mazu were therefore presented in a format that was highly conventional and widely recognized by the mainstream traditions of medieval Chinese Buddhism.<sup>19</sup> In his sermons, Mazu assumes



the traditional function of a Dharma teacher (*fashi*), as many Chinese monks—such as the renowned Tiantai “patriarch” Zhiyi (538–597), for example—had done before him, and as many continued to do after him.

The picture changes dramatically when we come to the third part of the *Mazu yulu*, which consists of dialogues between Mazu and his monastic and lay disciples. The thirty-two dialogues that appear in the text are brief records of Mazu’s interaction with his disciples, many of whom entered the ranks of the most distinguished Chan teachers of their time. In pithy exchanges that have been made by far the best-known part of Chan lore by both popular and scholarly works on Chan/Zen, Mazu answers his disciples’ questions in unusual ways and uses unconventional pedagogical techniques, such as shouting and beating, to lead them to awakening. The stories are written in a manner suggestive of actual speech. Although we are dealing with written narratives, they are presented as bare transcripts of oral narratives, which supposedly capture the essence of actual events. The impression/illusion of oral narrative is further reinforced by the employment of a vernacular style of rhetoric. The interlocutors are directly relating not only to each other but also to the situation, surroundings, and circumstantial milieu of their discourse, with brief descriptions of everyday scenes from medieval monastic life serving as a backdrop for the actual dialogues. Their communication becomes fully meaningful in relation to the milieu.<sup>20</sup> All this is done without the author of the story revealing any traces of his identity or agenda. The author is obscured, and we are only left with the story as a verbatim record of a putative event/dialogue, with no clues about its origins.

The dialogues are written in such a way as to suggest that together they represent a pious record of a great teacher’s enlightened activity, which is presented as a direct expression of the essence of the Buddhist way in the midst of everyday situations typical of medieval monastic life. In these short exchanges, traditional Buddhist discourse is completely forsaken, and there is hardly any mention of common Buddhist doctrines and practices. Instead, the text presents brief stories that depict Mazu’s lively and unpredictable, ostensibly spontaneous interaction with his disciples. A classic example is the short story that supposedly depicts Shuilao’s awakening as a direct result of Mazu’s unusual “teaching.”

When Rev. Shuilao of Hongzhou came to see the Patriarch (i.e., Mazu) for the first time, he asked, “What is the meaning of [Bodhidharma’s] coming from the West?” The Patriarch said, “Bow down!” As soon as Shuilao went down to bow, the Patriarch kicked him. Shuilao had great awakening. He rose up clapping his hands and laughing heartily, and said, “Wonderful! Wonderful! The source of myriad samādhis and limitless subtle meanings can all be realized

on the tip of a single hair.” He then paid his respects to the Patriarch and withdrew. Later he told the assembly [at his monastery], “Since the day I was kicked by Master Ma, I have not stopped laughing.”<sup>21</sup>

In this and other similar stories, instead of being portrayed as an abbot of a public monastery and an exemplar of proper moral behavior to a large monastic community, Mazu is depicted as an iconoclast par excellence. In most stories that supposedly recount the interaction between him and his disciples, Mazu comes across as a radical religious leader who challenged established norms of conventional behavior and introduced new forms of religious expression that were at conspicuous variance with the prevalent monastic mores of his time.

### Contrasting Images of Patriarch Ma

The contrast between the images of Mazu conveyed by his sermons and dialogues is quite striking. In the sermons he assumes a somewhat traditional role of a teacher of Buddhist doctrine (albeit of the Chan variety). There he comes across as a fairly conventional religious figure, someone who is well versed in canonical texts and traditions and who adopts a time-honored mode of religious instruction. In the dialogues, on the other hand, he seems to be a strikingly unconventional figure and assumes the role of an iconoclastic Chan master who engages in spontaneous and often seemingly eccentric exchanges that subvert the established mores of his time. Under the influence of popular lore about the ancient “Zen masters,” both Zen adherents and scholars have so far chosen to focus on the image of Mazu depicted in the dialogues. They have also tended to gloss over or ignore the discrepancies between the iconoclastic character depicted in the dialogues and the conservative disposition evidenced in the sermons. As a result, the popular image of Mazu conveyed in numerous Zen books is that of an iconoclast, a radical figure who embodies a classical Chan tradition that to a large extent was created by him.

Since iconoclastic Chan dialogues appear in the records of Mazu and other monks who belonged to the Hongzhou school, but do not appear in the records of other Chan monks who lived prior to Mazu, Japanese scholars have assumed that the encounter dialogue format that figures so prominently in Song Chan text was invented by Mazu and his followers. In keeping with prevalent notions about the central role of the encounter dialogues as essential records that epitomized a new type of Chan religiosity, the evidence behind such attribution to Mazu and his Hongzhou school of the historical origins of what is probably the best-known feature of classical Chan has received relatively little scrutiny.

According to Yanagida Seizan's widely accepted interpretation, having rejected all established forms of Buddhist practice, including the practice of formal meditation that characterized early Chan, under Mazu's leadership the Hongzhou school developed the new encounter dialogue (also referred to as "question and answer") model of practice, which became the centerpiece of its bold new approach to religious training. According to this explanation, also reflected in the writing of other Japanese scholars, the spontaneous patterns of interaction between Chan teachers and their disciples become the main or perhaps even exclusive foci of spiritual discipline. This putative paradigm of religious training supposedly freed Chan teachers to communicate directly the deepest truths of enlightenment in ways that often defied reason and logic. As a result, the focus shifted away from the teachings and practices that typified canonical Buddhism, and toward the actual human words and actions of enlightened Chan teachers. That new approach stood in sharp contrast to the *mārga*-centric soteriological schemata of all earlier Indian and Chinese Buddhism, and was tantamount to radical remaking of the basic character of Chinese Buddhism.<sup>22</sup>

But is there really any convincing proof for the putative link between the encounter dialogue model of religious communication and practice on the one hand, and Mazu and the rest of Tang Chan on the other hand? Can the copious presence of encounter dialogue stories in Mazu's record be taken as adequate evidence in support of Yanagida's theory? Because the encounter dialogue stories dominate current (mis)interpretations of classical Chan as a unique Sinitic religious movement with strong iconoclastic tendencies, if these questions were to be answered in the negative that would have important ramifications for our understanding of key elements of Chan history, doctrine, and practice.

We can assume that stories such as the one about Shuilao's awakening tell us something about Chan Buddhism at the time they were created, but *when* was that? Should the contents of stories of this kind be taken at face value as revealing anything about the views and practices of the monks who appear in them, or could it be that they are reflections of later images of classical Chan that might not have much to do with what monks such as Mazu and Shuilao actually did in the course of their religious careers? To rephrase the question slightly: are both traditional and contemporary writers about Chan justified when they use these stories as historical records about the classical Chan tradition, or are they perhaps mistakenly basing their interpretations on apocryphal textual materials that bear no direct relevance to the tradition they are supposed to describe? In order to answer these questions, and try to solve the already noted incongruity that arises from the contrasting images of Mazu conveyed by his sermons and dialogues, we have to examine the origins of the records where these divergent images first appear.

## Origins of the Three Parts of the Text

Closer examination of Chan literature reveals, among other things, the composite structure of the texts that were composed in the main Chan literary genres. Despite their compilers' best efforts to construct seemingly coherent narratives that illumine a Chan monk's search and realization of religious awakening, texts such as Mazu's record of sayings bear a resemblance to quilts. They are essentially like multicolored patchworks, collections of miscellaneous and often incongruous parts. That is the case with all texts composed in the recorded sayings genre and the large historical chronicles written in the transmission of the lamp genre. In fact, there is substantial correspondence and overlap between the two genres, since the editors and compilers of texts composed in both genres used much the same materials, albeit in somewhat distinctive ways and for slightly different purposes. The basic materials used for the composition of both the transmission of the lamp chronicles and the recorded sayings primarily consisted of biographical sketches, transcripts of sermons, and stories that feature encounter dialogues. There was substantial direct borrowing between texts that belong to the two genres, as well as utilization of the same primary sources. For that reason, it is possible to say that in terms of their contents, the transmission of the lamp chronicles are compilations of abbreviated records of sayings of individual masters that are organized in a genealogical form that tracks the various Chan lineages of ancestral transmission.

Once we let go of normative notions of classical Chan records consisting of coherent and homogeneous accounts of Chan teachers' lively and spontaneous communications of ineffable truths, it becomes possible to seriously examine the Chan genres as composite narratives created from diverse literary formats. As it turns out, each of the different literary formats had its own separate history prior to its use as a building block for the construction of a specific genre. In order to better understand these texts we must determine the specific historical origins of each of the main literary formats that compose them. In the following pages I will address this issue by tracing the oldest textual sources that contain versions of the materials that compose each of the Mazu record's three constituent parts (biographical sketch, sermons, dialogues), and by tracking down the earliest appearance of the contents of each of the three parts.

First, Mazu's biography in *Mazu yulu*, as well as his biographies in other Chan texts, were primarily based on the two inscriptions composed by Quan Deyu (759–818) and Bao Ji (d. 792), two renowned literati and officials. Both men, who were good friends, became personally acquainted with Mazu during tours of government duty in Jiangxi. Quan's stele inscription, *Tang gu Hongzhou Kaiyuansi Shimen Daoyi chanshi beiming bingxu*, was composed in 791,

only three years after Mazu's death, and Bao's memorial inscription soon thereafter.<sup>23</sup> In addition, a short stone inscription was discovered in 1966 underneath Mazu's memorial pagoda located on the grounds of Baofeng monastery in Jingan county, Jiangxi province. This inscription was also composed in 791, on the occasion of the formal opening of the memorial pagoda.<sup>24</sup> Bao's inscription is no longer extant, but its existence is mentioned in Mazu's biography in *Song gaoseng zhuan* (Song biographies of eminent monks), which was probably in part based on it.<sup>25</sup> Since Quan was on familiar terms with Mazu and his close disciples, he knew well the basic biographical details about his life.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding the presence of formulaic topoi and hagiographic embellishments of the kinds that are common in commemorative inscriptions written for medieval religious leaders, we can assume with reasonable certainty that the basic outline of Mazu's life presented in these almost contemporary sources is fairly accurate.

Although there are no extant manuscripts from the Tang period that contain Mazu's sermons, on the basis of substantial circumstantial evidence it is possible to infer that the extant sermons are based on early editions of edited transcripts of various talks Mazu gave during his long teaching career. Due to space constraints, it is not possible to provide copious quotations and detailed textual analysis of the relevant documents, but the evidence used to arrive at this conclusion can be summarized as follows. First, there are various quotations from Mazu's sermons in the records of his disciples, including mention of the existence of a record of Mazu's teachings (*yuben*) in biographies by Dongsì Ruhui (744–823) and Yangshan Huiji (807–883) in *Zutang ji*. Ruhui is recorded as saying that Mazu's *yuben* included discussion about the well-known maxim "Mind is Buddha," whereas Yangshan is cited as stating that in his sermons Mazu quoted the *Laṅkāvatāra Scripture* (*Lengqie jing*).<sup>27</sup> Both of these appear in Mazu's extant sermons. Mazu's sermons are also quoted or alluded to in other early texts, such as Huangbo's *Chuanxin fayao*, one of Wuye's sermons quoted in *Zongjing lu*,<sup>28</sup> and in the record of Baizhang.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, a close textual comparison of the description of Mazu's teachings presented in the writings of the famous Chan historian Guifeng Zongmi (780–841), composed during the 830s, with the extant version of Mazu's sermons indicates that Zongmi read Mazu's sermons during the early ninth century and drew on them in his depiction of the Hongzhou school's teachings.<sup>30</sup> Finally, in terms of their literary structure, terminology, use of canonical quotations, and doctrinal contents, Mazu's sermons closely resemble the records of his disciples' teachings that were compiled during the ninth century, such as Baizhang's *Guanglu* and Huangbo's *Chuanxin fayao*. Although each of the points above is inconclusive on its own, taken together they make a strong case for establishing the early provenance of Mazu's sermons as edited transcripts of his talks and lectures.

In conclusion, as far as the provenance of the dialogues is concerned, there

is no evidence to suggest that *any* of the dialogues that appear in *Mazu yulu* existed during the Tang period. The earliest extant text where a few of them appear, *Zutang ji*, was compiled in 952, 164 years after Mazu's death. Moreover, Mazu's biography in this text contains only five of the thirty-two dialogues that appear in *Mazu yulu*, and on the whole its contents are quite different from those of *Mazu yulu*.<sup>31</sup> *Zongjing lu*, the other Five Dynasties (907–960) Chan text that includes Tang materials contains all of Mazu's sermons (as well as excerpts from two additional sermons), but it contains only one of his dialogues.<sup>32</sup> A large number of Mazu's dialogues, including some of the best-known, appear for the first time in *Chuandeng lu*, compiled in 1004. Although there are only minor differences between these versions and the ones from *Mazu yulu*, on the whole it seems probable that the compiler of *Mazu yulu* used *Chuandeng lu*, a text composed well over two centuries after Mazu's death, as one of his main sources.

The origins of the materials that constitute the three parts of *Mazu yulu* are summarized in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1. Origins of the Materials that Constitute the Three Parts of *Mazu yulu*

Sources <sup>a</sup>	Section <sup>b</sup>		
	Biography	Sermons	Dialogues
Baofeng monastic stone inscription (791)	2/7	0	0
Quan Deyu's inscription (791)	7/7	0	0
Biography in <i>Baolin zhuan</i> (801) <sup>c</sup>	1/7 (7/7?)	0 (more?)	0
<i>Chanyuan duxu and Pei Xiu sheyiwen</i> (c. 830) <sup>d</sup>	2/7	3/3	0
Biography in <i>Zutang ji</i> (952)	5/7	1/3	5/32
<i>Zongjinglu</i> (961)	2/7	3/3 (+2)	1
Biography in <i>Song gaoseng zhuan</i> (988)	7/7	0	0
Biography in <i>Chuandeng lu</i> (1004) <sup>e</sup>	7/7	1/3 (+1)	11/32
<i>Mazu Yulu</i> (c. 1085)	7/7	3/3	32/32

<sup>a</sup>The approximate dates of the compilation of each text are given in parentheses.

<sup>b</sup>The subdivision of each section is based on the following criteria: (1) the biographical sketch is divided into seven parts, each of which consists of essential information about Mazu's life—years of birth and death, birth-place, study with Huairang, teaching at Gonggong Mountain, stay in Hongzhou, association with literati/officials, and training of disciples; (2) the number of sermons given as basis of comparison is three, based on the sermons contained in *Mazu yulu*; (3) the extant dialogues are divided into thirty-two sections, following the division introduced in *Sun-Face Buddha*, my translation of *Mazu yulu*. The correspondences between the contents of a particular text and the relevant section of *Mazu yulu* are expressed as fractions.

<sup>c</sup>The last (tenth) fascicle of *Baolin zhuan*, which included Mazu's biography, is lost and only a few brief fragments from Mazu's biography are still extant. My guess about the presence of additional biographical data and excerpts from the sermons is based on the inclusion of this kind of materials in the biographies that are preserved in the extant fascicles from this text. The contents of the last two missing fascicles of *Baolin zhuan* are discussed in Shiina Kōyū's two articles, "Hōrinden itsubun no kenkyū," *Komazawa daigaku bukkyōgakubu ronshū* 11 (1980): 234–257; and "Hōrinden makikyū makiju no itsubun," *Shūgaku kenkyū* 22 (1980): 191–198.

<sup>d</sup>T 48.402c XZJ 110.434b–d. In these two texts, Zongmi is not quoting directly from Mazu's sermons; rather, he is alluding to or paraphrasing short passages from each of the sermons. See also his discussion of the Hongzhou School in *Yuanjuejing dashuchao*, XZJ 14.279a–b.

<sup>e</sup>*Chuandeng lu* 6, pp. 104–106. The second sermon is presented as an independent text, rather than part of his biography, in *Chuandeng lu* 28, pp. 581–582.

As we examine the data presented in the table, it is obvious that none of the early sources from the Tang period contains a single dialogue. The fact that the encounter dialogues were nonexistent during the early ninth century is also corroborated by the contents of *Baolin zhuan*. Although the crucial tenth fascicle that included Mazu's biography is lost, on the basis of the materials presented in the extant fascicles it is apparent that this important text, which depicts the recently deceased Mazu as the inheritor of the orthodox Chan transmission, was composed before the onset of the encounter dialogue age.

After the dialogues made their appearance in *Zutang ji*, their numbers gradually increased in later transmission of the lamp texts. Mazu's biography in *Chuangdeng lu* contains only about 34 percent of the number of dialogues found in *Mazu yulu*. If we add the other eleven dialogues that appear in the biographies of Mazu's disciples, that brings the number of dialogues to twenty-two, or approximately 69 percent of the total found in *Mazu yulu*. It is apparent that the inclusion of dialogues as part of Mazu's record started with Mazu's biography in *Zutang ji*, and was significantly expanded in *Chuangdeng lu*. From then on, virtually all later Song collections of Chan materials, such as *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* (compiled in 1029) and *Gu zunsu yulu* (compiled in 1178), continued to include the dialogues as the largest part of Mazu's record.<sup>33</sup> We can therefore conclude that it was only from the second part of the tenth century onward that stories that contain Mazu's and his disciples' iconoclastic dialogues came to shape the understanding of their religious thought and teaching methods, and the history of the Hongzhou school.

### Literary Transmutations

The analysis of *Mazu yulu* presented in the preceding pages offers a simple resolution to the problem posed by the contrasting images of Mazu evidenced in his sermons and dialogues. The existence of the two sharply divergent images can be explained by the simple fact that each of the two types of literary subgenres in which they are presented originated at different times and in response to different sets of religious and social predicaments. The two distinct types of literary narratives reflected the changing images of Mazu, his Hongzhou school, and the rest of classical Chan. Those images were continually refashioned in light of the distinct conceptions of Chan orthodoxy prevalent during the periods of their creation and among the groups that produced them. The sermons' conservative image of Mazu as a somewhat traditional Buddhist teacher, which is confirmed by the available biographical materials, reflects the historical reality of his actual position as an abbot of a large official monastery in the southern part of the Tang empire. The iconoclastic image that we find in his dialogues, on the other hand, reflects later semi-mythologized portrayals of Mazu as a radical leader of a growing novel movement that challenged the

hallowed traditions of medieval Chinese Buddhism and charted a path for the establishment of new Chan orthodoxy.

One of the notable differences between the sermons and the dialogues, which is directly related to their diverse origins, is the level of variation among different editions and versions of the same stories and sermons. Whereas there were no significant changes in the different versions of Mazu's sermons and the sermons of other Chan monks from the Tang period, the situation with the dialogues was quite the opposite. Careful comparison of different editions of Chan records reveals that often there are great changes and significant differences between variant versions of the same encounter dialogue.<sup>34</sup> In some instances, identical or similar stories are attributed to completely different monks. It is apparent that because many of the dialogues were originally created and transmitted as oral narratives, at the early stage of their historical development their contents had considerable fluidity and flexibility, which accounts for the proliferation of different versions of the same stories.

To illustrate the changes introduced in different versions of an encounter dialogue, let us examine the story of the initial meeting between Mazu and his disciple Wuye (761–823). Below there are translations of two extant versions of this story presented next to each other, divided into sections for an easy comparison. Parts of the story that are identical in both versions (or differ only in unimportant details) are italicized. The version on the right is from *Mazu yulu*<sup>35</sup>; the version on the left from Wuye's biography in *Song gaoseng zhuan*.<sup>36</sup> When comparing the two versions, it is useful to bear in mind that even though the exact origin of either is impossible to establish, the *Song gaoseng zhuan* version is earlier, and it appears in a nonsectarian text that is a more reliable source of historical information.

[A1] Later, [when Wuye] heard that *Daji* (i.e., Mazu) of Hongzhou was the leader of the Chan School, he went there to see him and pay his respects. Wuye's *body* was six feet tall and it stood magnificently like a mountain. His gaze had a determined expression, and the sound of *his voice was like a bell*. As soon as he saw him, *Daji* smiled and said, "*Such an imposing Buddha hall, but no Buddha in it.*"

[B1] *Wuye respectfully kneeled down, and said, "As to the texts which contain the teachings of the three vehicles, I have been able to roughly understand their*

[A2] When Chan teacher *Wuye* of Fenzhou went to see the *Patriarch* (i.e., Mazu), the Patriarch noticed that his *appearance* was extraordinary and that *his voice was like* [the sound of] *a bell*. He said, "*Such an imposing Buddha hall, but no Buddha in it.*"

[B2] *Wuye respectfully kneeled down, and said, "I have studied the texts that contain the teachings of the three vehicles and have been able to roughly un-*



meaning. I have also heard about the teaching of the Chan school that mind is Buddha, and this is something that I have not yet been able to understand.”

[C1] *Daji* said, “This very mind that does not understand is it; there is nothing else. When there is no realization, it is ignorance; with realization it is awakening. Ignorance is sentient being; awakening is the Buddha’s Way. Without leaving sentient beings, how could there be any Buddha? It is like making a fist with one’s hand—the fist is the hand!”

[E1] On hearing this, *Wuye* experienced awakening. He wept sorrowfully, and told *Daji*, “Before I used to think that the Buddha’s Way is broad and distant, and that it can be realized only after many eons of effort and suffering. Today for the first time I realized that the true reality of the *dharmakāya* is originally completely present in oneself. All the myriad dharmas are created by the mind and are names only, devoid of any reality.”

[F1] *Daji* said, “That is so. The nature of all dharmas is neither born nor perishable. All dharmas are fundamentally empty and quiescent. The sutras say that ‘all dharmas are from the very beginning of the character of extinction [nirvāṇa].’ They also say that they are ‘the house of ultimate

derstand their meaning. I have also often heard about the teaching of the Chan school that mind is Buddha, and this is something I have not yet been able to understand.”

[C2] *The Patriarch* said, “This very mind that does not understand is it. There is no other thing.”

[D2] *Wuye* further asked, “What is the mind-seal that the Patriarch [Bodhidharma] secretly transmitted from the West?” *The Patriarch* said, “The Reverend looks rather disturbed right now. Go and come some other time.”

[E2] As *Wuye* was just about to step out, the Patriarch called him, “Venerable!” *Wuye* turned his head and the Patriarch asked him, “What is it?” [On hearing this] *Wuye* experienced awakening.

[F2] He bowed to the *Patriarch*, who said, “This stupid fellow! What is this bowing all about?”

emptiness and quiescence,' and that 'emptiness is the seat of all dharmas.' This is to say that all the buddhas, *tathāgatas*, dwell in this abode of nondwelling. If one has this understanding, then one dwells in the house of emptiness and quiescence, and sits on the seat of emptiness. Whether lifting the foot or putting it down, one never leaves the site of enlightenment. If upon receiving instructions one has realization, then there is no gradualness; without moving the foot, one ascends to the mountain of nirvāṇa."

The basic "plot" of the story is typical of this sort of Chan writings. The young Wuye goes to visit Mazu's monastery with an intent to receive religious instructions from the famous Chan teacher, perhaps in the hope of becoming enlightened by him. Until the beginning of section C both versions of the story are very similar. From that point on, however, they present two contrasting images of the Chan search and experience of spiritual awakening. The earlier version, from Wuye's biography in *Song gaoseng zhuan*, presents a fairly conservative description of Mazu's teachings, which accords with the earliest sources. This version of the story lacks the dramatic pathos we expect to find in classical Chan stories. It simply presents Mazu as a skilled teacher who instructs his new student by offering him rather commonplace doctrinal explanations, complete with scriptural quotations, very much in the style of a traditional Buddhist teacher. This version of the story depicts Wuye as having become awakened (*kaiwu*) upon hearing Mazu's short discourse on the essential identity of the Buddha and sentient beings, without clarifying the epistemological status of Wuye's realization. Nonetheless, Wuye is portrayed as equally prone to verbosity, and in section E1 we are provided with information about the intellectual content of Wuye's spiritual realization, which consists of a realization of the immanence of the true reality of *dharmakāya* (the true body of the Buddha) within oneself. All of these are standard Chinese Buddhist ideas, and they hardly represent notions that were unique to the Chan school. In its form and contents, this transcript of the dialogue between Mazu and Wuye is similar to conventional dialogues found in other Hongzhou school texts from the Tang period, such as the records of Huangbo and Baizhang; its format is also akin to some of the dialogues featured in other early Chan texts, such as the *Platform Sutra* and the records of Shenhui.

In contrast, the later version of the story from *Mazu yulu* portrays Wuye

as being enlightened by Mazu in a direct and immediate way without resort to traditional forms of religious instruction. Here there is no trace of doctrinal explanations, very much in keeping with latter-day expectation that a Chan teacher would eschew the kind of profuse verbosity that was characteristic of the doctrinal schools. Instead, Chan teachers such as Mazu were supposed to discard conventional Buddhist teachings in favor of more direct methods of communication that, we are told, went directly to the heart of the matter. The unusual form of religious “training” presented in this story accords with popular notions about the distinctive teaching methods of classical Chan, which supposedly included beating, shouting, asking enigmatic questions, remaining silent in response to a question, and the like. The calling of student’s name as a means to induce religious insight featured in this version of the story was another of the unconventional teaching methods, which according to D. T. Suzuki, Yanagida, and other scholars, were developed by the Hongzhou school as an expression of its novel style of uniquely Chinese form of profound spirituality.

Even without taking into account its late origin, the contents of the second version of the story give rise to doubts about its authenticity. It is strange, for example, that Wuye, who in section B describes himself an outsider to the Chan school, asks for religious instruction by employing the question about Bodhidharma’s mythic transmission of the mind-seal of enlightenment to China. This formulaic question is an alternative and probably earlier version of the famous question about the “meaning of [Bodhidharma’s] coming from the West,” which appears as a set expression in numerous Song Chan texts. That is a typical example of the Chan “insider talk” that was popularized by Northern Song texts and took its full force with the offset of the age of *gongans*, not a question of somebody like Wuye who comes to meet a Chan teacher for the first time. It is also strange that Wuye, who prior to his coming to Mazu’s monastery had undertaken extensive study of the Buddhist canon, would be unfamiliar with the doctrine about the identity of mind and Buddha. Though the authors of this and other similar stories tried to appropriate this doctrine as being unique to the Chan school, the theory of the intrinsic identity of the mind of the Buddha was by the mid-Tang period very much an integral part of the mainstream doctrinal outlook of Chinese Buddhism. It is highly improbable a monk as well versed in Buddhist doctrine as Wuye would have been unfamiliar with it, or that he would have been startled by its theoretical and practical ramifications.

It is apparent that the later version of the story presented in *Mazu yulu* is not a record of an encounter between two eighth-century monks. Rather, it should be read as a record that reflects the transformation of the images of classical Chan that was taking place during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The central feature of that process was the refashioning of Mazu and his disciples into radical iconoclasts, a process that reflected the changing beliefs of

the Chan school and the sectarian needs of certain Chan factions. To a large extent, these changes were enacted as part of unstructured growth and transmission of popular lore that centered on the spiritual exploits of the great Tang Chan teachers. But at least to some degree, they also reflected the attempts of later Chan groups to transform existing or invent new religious narratives that would lend support to their claims about the spiritual legitimacy of their lineage. Often the image of a noted Chan teacher from the Tang period was recreated in a manner that conformed to a new pattern of “exemplary” Chan religiosity that reflected the religious concerns and ideological requirements of these later Chan factions. An easy way to achieve that transformation was to rewrite earlier dialogues in which that particular Chan teacher was a participant, or to create entirely new fictional dialogues in which he acted and spoke in ways that accorded with the religious ideas and sectarian predilections of much later Chan factions. In the case of Mazu, we are of course talking of the Linji school, which after its slow start by the early Song was successfully positioning itself as the orthodox Chan tradition that traced its spiritual ancestry back to Mazu.

### Canons, Texts, and Interpretations

As we saw, the three main styles of narrative discourse found in Mazu’s record of sayings (his biographical sketches, sermons, and encounter dialogues) were products of different sets of historical circumstances, had different literary histories, and revealed different dimensions of the Chan school’s constantly evolving conceptions of religious doctrine, practice, and experience. The analysis presented above demonstrates that although it can be substantiated that Mazu’s sermons and his biography were recorded during the mid-Tang period, there is no evidence that any of his encounter dialogues were extant before the mid-tenth century or that any of them had any direct connection with Mazu. This finding about the varied provenance of the constituent parts of *Mazu yulu* is also applicable to other records of prominent Chan teachers from the middle and late Tang periods.

In light of popular belief about the central role of the encounter dialogue model in the religious discourse and practice of classical Chan, it is important to note that the lack of any evidence about Tang-period origins of any of the dialogues that appear in *Mazu yulu* is in no way unique to this text. Despite the fact that later Chan collections include many stories that contain iconoclastic dialogues in which Mazu and his disciples are the main protagonists, not one of them appears in a text from the Tang period (i.e., before the tenth century). Indeed, I have not been able to find a single piece of contemporary evidence to indicate that during the Tang period there was any awareness of such a thing as encounter dialogue, let alone that it was Chan’s main medium

of religious instruction, as is often assumed. None of the extant records from the Tang convey any sense of recognition of the encounter dialogue model. That is true of the numerous stele inscriptions and other epigraphic evidence, the transcripts of the teachings of Mazu's spiritual descendants (such as the records of Baizhang and Huangbo mentioned above), Zongmi's writings on Chan, and the poems and miscellaneous writings of Tang literati and historical chronicles such as *Baolin zhuan*. It is also true of texts actually written by Chan monks, such as the treatise by Dazhu Huihai (fl. 8th c.) on Chan doctrine, *Dunwu rudao yaomen lun*, and the tract on monastic life by Guishan Lingyuo (771–853), *Guishan jingce*.

It was only from the middle part of the tenth century onward that stories containing Mazu's iconoclastic dialogues with his disciples came to shape the (mis)understanding of his religious thought and teaching methods. At present, the situation is further exacerbated by the uncritical acceptance of the somewhat biased interpretation of sectarian Japanese scholarship, not to mention popular vulgarizations of the tradition's teachings and history. That does not preclude the possibility that some of the dialogues might echo an orally transmitted lore that was at least partially based on events that took place during the lives of Mazu and other Chan monks, even if they were taken out of context and recast in the light of sentiments and concerns that were not present during the late Tang period. But such tenuous connections are impossible to unravel, and even if there was anything of that sort, it is still clear that the encounter dialogue model of religious communication and practice, as presented in Song texts and interpreted by modern commentators, was not in vogue during the Tang period. In the same vein, it is apparent that encounter dialogue stories should in no way be used as historical sources for the study of the Hongzhou school's history, teachings, and practices.

The establishment of religious canons, such the Chan canon of which *Mazu yulu* became a part, is usually an act of defining the basic identity of a religious tradition and establishing the parameters of its orthodoxy. The writing of texts that turn out to be parts of an emerging canon typically involves a somewhat arbitrary demarcation of the historical origins and essential teachings of a specific tradition. That obscures the complex historical processes that led to the creation of the contents of the canon. That a major portion of the Chan canon is in a sense forgery—which in the present case applies to the numerous apocryphal stories that feature encounter dialogues of noted Chan teachers from the middle and late Tang periods—should perhaps not come as a surprise to students of Buddhism (or more generally to students of religious literature).

The history of Buddhism in both India and China was a history of production of new texts whose complex origins were obscured by attributing them to the Buddha or to other noted leaders and thinkers of various Buddhist traditions. Such were the origins of the Indian Mahāyāna scriptures that were

translated into Chinese, as well as the numerous apocryphal scriptures and treatises composed in China. The proliferation of new texts that openly aspired to canonical status, or unwittingly and gradually become accepted as such, was made possible by the fact that the Chinese Buddhist canon was an open one. As it set to create its own body of religious literature—some of which was eventually canonized as prized repository of quasi-historical lore and authoritative religious teachings—the Chan school simply inherited and adapted tendencies that were an inherent part of the broader Buddhist tradition from which it evolved.

The reading and interpretation of canonical texts such as *Mazu yulu* is greatly enhanced when it is grounded in an understanding of their genesis, literary structure, and the ideological and institutional contexts that shaped their creation. All of these, in turn, can be situated in relation to the characteristics of the genre to which a specific text belongs. The creation of distinctive Chan genres was a gradual process of codification of discursive properties characteristic of the Chan school that took place over an extended period of time.<sup>37</sup> Each new genre, including the records of sayings of noted Chan teachers that were briefly examined in the proceeding pages, grew out of what existed before it. The codification of a genre such as the Chan records of sayings was the result of a prolonged process that involved the transformation—through “combination, displacement, or inversion”—of one or more earlier genres.<sup>38</sup> By combining elements from earlier texts and introducing new models of narrative structure, the Chan school developed original types of literature that reflected its continuously evolving religious and institutional concerns.

Comprehending the process that led to the creation of a specific Chan genre and its subsequent institutionalization is of great help in understanding, to use Tzvetan Todorov’s terminology, the “models of writing” utilized by the ancient authors of Chan works, as well as the “horizons of expectation” of their medieval readers.<sup>39</sup> Like firmly rooted social institutions, established genres transmit certain sets of religious and social attitudes by which they are shaped, and on which in turn they act and affect.<sup>40</sup> Since genres, like other institutions, are reflections of the dominant ideology and reveal the major constitutive traits and values of the social groupings or religious traditions that created them, understanding the formation and function of Chan genres sheds light on the forces that shaped the historical development of the tradition(s) that produced them.<sup>41</sup>

As far as the historical emergence of the encounter dialogue model is concerned, unfortunately at this point we do not know how and why these stories were created.<sup>42</sup> We also do not understand the impulses and circumstances that led to the canonization of those texts that created and popularized the iconoclastic image of classical Chan, as conveyed by the encounter dia-

logues of Mazu and other great Chan teachers from the Tang period. Although it is possible to speculate about the ways various aspects of changing religious, social, and political milieus influenced this development, in order to be able to respond to these questions in a meaningful and productive way we must undertake a systematic study of the history and literature of Chan Buddhism during the period that covers the late ninth and the tenth centuries, that is, the final decades of the Tang dynasty, the Five Dynasties period, and the early Song. Unfortunately, that period has received little attention from Chan scholarship.

The present analysis highlights some of the serious problems that arise from the prevalent tendency to use the encounter dialogues as sources of information about Mazu, his Hongzhou school, and the rest of the classical Chan tradition. Most of the prevalent misunderstandings of the doctrines, practices, and institutions of the Hongzhou school stem from the fact that studies of Tang Chan place undue emphasis on the apocryphal dialogues found in later strata of Chan literature, and gloss over or ignore those earlier sources that do not accord with entrenched views about classical Chan. That does not mean that the dialogues are of no value for our understating of Chan's historical evolution. They are of immense importance for understating the religious and social milieus that produced them, and the later traditions that transmitted and employed them. But none of that has anything to do with the Hongzhou school and Tang Chan, but pertains to the religious history of the Song and the subsequent periods.

One of the key issues here is the need to establish sound criteria for distinguishing elements of Chan narratives that are pertinent to the study of Tang Chan from those that are more useful for understanding the social and religious milieus of Song Chan. This is not a case where we must adopt a historiographic approach that privileges earlier texts and narratives over later ones. Religious meaning is produced not only with the emergence of great religious leaders, new traditions, and texts produced by them. New meaning is constantly produced in light of changing religious sentiments and diverse local conditions, often disguised as a restatement or clarification of meaning initially articulated by individuals who are perceived as tradition's founding figures. A text such as *Mazu yulu* should therefore be read in relation to at least two points of reference: the historical contexts of the life and teachings of the religious leader who dominated the Chan tradition during the mid-Tang period, and the subsequent transformations of his image in light of the prevailing religious attitudes and ideological agendas of later Chan milieus and traditions. Both are valid areas of historical research, but we must not confuse the two. Such multivalence makes the study of this and other comparable texts a much more complex undertaking. But even as that calls for a prudent consideration of the convoluted questions of origin, genre, and interpretation that were briefly touched upon in the preceding pages, it also makes these documents

valuable sources that shed light on a broader array of issues that shaped the ongoing evolution of a key tradition in Chinese religious history, as reflected in the lives (both actual and fictional) of its great patriarchs.

## NOTES

1. An example of this tendency is Judith Berling's "Bringing the Buddha down to Earth: Notes on the Emergence of *Yü-lu* as a Buddhist Genre," *History of Religions* 27 no. 1 (1987): 56–88, a rare study of one of the Chan genres. In what is supposed to be a discussion of the evolution of the "records of sayings" (*yulu*) genre, Berling does not distinguish between different Chan genres. For example, *Jingde chuandeng lu*, which belongs to the genre of "lamp histories," and *Biyān lu*, a Northern Song *gongan* collection, are both assigned to the *yulu* genre, whereas the *yulu* genre itself is basically reduced to one of its elements, the popular encounter dialogue stories. Berling's somewhat indiscriminate mixing of different genres and lack of appreciation of their complex origins is by no means unique; as a matter of fact, it is typical of both traditional and modern Chan/Zen scholarship.

2. The record forms a part of *Sijia yulu* (Record of the sayings of four masters), which can be found in XZJ 119.405c–409a (discussed in the next section). An English translation by Cheng-chien can be found in my *Sun-Face Buddha: The Teachings of Mazu and the Hongzhou School of Chan* Cheng-chien (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1993), pp. 59–94. For a good Japanese translation, which also includes the original Chinese text, see Iriya Yoshitaka, trans., *Baso no goroku* (Kyoto: Zen bunka kenkyūjo, 1984), pp. 1–119.

3. Yanagida Seizan, "Goroku no rekishi: Zen bunken no seiritsu shiteki kenkyū," *Tōhō gakuho* 57 (1985): 474.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 476.

5. The extant editions of Linji's record go back to an even later version of the text, produced at Gushan, Fujian, in 1120. See Akizuki Ryomin, trans., *Rinzairoku* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1972), p. 251.

6. For Pei Xiu's association with Huangbo, see Yoshikawa Tadao, "Hai Kyū den: Tōdai no ichi shidaifu to bukkyō," *Tōhō gakuho* 64 (1992): 140–50. For the compilation of Huangbo's records, see Yanagida's comments in Iriya Yoshitaka, trans., *Denshin hōyō*, *Enryōroku* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969), pp. 172–76.

7. Iriya, trans., *Denshin hōyō*, *Enryōroku*, pp. 172–76.

8. The compilation of Baizhang's record is mentioned in his stele inscription, which was written by Zhen Xu shortly after his death. A text entitled *Baizhangshan heshang yaojue* (The essential teachings of the reverent from Baizhang Mountain), presumably an early version of this text, is listed in Enchin's (814–891) catalogues of texts he brought to Japan from China in the 840s. See T 55.1.095a, T 55.1.101a, T 55.1.106c, and Yanagida, "The 'Recorded Sayings' Texts of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," translated by John McRae, in Whalen Lai and Lewis Lancaster, eds., *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), pp. 191–92.

9. The very term "record of sayings" is not attested before the beginning of the Song Dynasty. It first appears in the biographies of Huangbo and Zhaozhou (778–889) in *Song gaoseng zhuan*, T 50.842c23 and T 50.775c17–8, respectively. For a dis-



cussion of the antecedents to this term, see Yanagida, “Goroku no rekishi,” pp. 229–246.

10. For a definition of “encounter dialogue,” a term coined by Yanagida, see John McRae, “The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism,” in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, eds., *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 47–48.

11. T. Griffith Foulk, “Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch’an Buddhism,” in Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, eds., *Religion and Society in T’ang and Sung China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1992), pp. 149–150.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

13. T 47.504b–506c.

14. T 47.575a–576a. See also Yanagida, “Goroku no rekishi,” p. 576. New revised editions of both *Linji lu* and *Yunmen lu* were published together in 1267; see Akizuki, trans., *Rinzai roku*, p. 252. For the compilation of *Yunmen lu*, see Nagai Masashi, “Unmon no goroku no seiritsu ni kansuru ichi kōsatsu,” *Shōgaku kenkyū* 13 (1971): pp. 111–116.

15. For the format of official biography, see Denis Twitchett, “Problems of Chinese Biography,” in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 28.

16. *Mazu yulu*, XZJ 119.406a; translation adapted (with minor modifications) from Cheng-chien in Poceski, *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 62.

17. See Kenneth Ch’en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 240–241. The image of the erudite but spiritually unaccomplished lecture master is a standard trope in Chan literature, where the subject is unflatteringly contrasted with the enlightened Chan teacher. One such example that comes from Mazu’s records is the story about the abbot of Daan monastery in Hongzhou and a ghost, recounted in *Zutang ji* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996), vol. 14, pp. 304–305. A more flattering picture of this type of monk can be found in the numerous biographies assigned to the category of exegetes (*yijie*) that are included in the collections of biographies of eminent monks, such as *Gaoseng zhuan*.

18. Ch’en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*, pp. 243–244.

19. Yanagida has argued that Chan sermons were markedly different from the conventional sermons that were in vogue at the time. See Yanagida, “Goroku no rekishi,” pp. 513–514. His contention is based more on his heartfelt convictions about the uniqueness of Chan teaching methods—indeed, the uniqueness of the whole Chan experience—than on any sound textual evidence. There is insufficient data to ascertain the exact format and ritual setting in which Chan sermons were delivered during the mid-Tang period. The earliest description of the format of a Chan sermon is a brief passage from *Chanmen guishi* (composed toward the end of the tenth century), which is appended to Baizhang’s biography in *Chuangdeng lu* 6 (Taipei: Xinwen feng, 1988), p. 117; English translation by Cheng-chien in Poceski *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 34. Though conclusive evidence is lacking, it seems probable that the ritual context in which Chan monks presented their sermons was not much different from the one used in most Tang monasteries. Descriptions of ritual settings for Buddhist sermons can be found in monastic texts such as Yuanzhao’s *Sifenlü xingshichao zichiji*, T 40.404b, quoted in Ch’en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*, p. 247. See also

Edwin O. Reischauer, trans., *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (New York: Ronald, 1955), pp. 154–55, for a translation of a passage from Ennin's diary that describes a public lecture which Ennin heard in 839.

20. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 148.

21. *Mazu yulu*, XZJ 119.408a; Cheng Chien, in Poceski, *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 16. There is a different version of this story in *Gu zunsu yulu*, XZJ 118.80d, also translated in *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 92 n. 58.

22. See Yanagida in three articles, “Basozen no sho mondai,” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 17 no.1 (1968): 37–38; “Chūgoku zenshū shi,” in Suzuki Daisetsu and Nishitani Keiji, ed., *Zen no rekishi: Chūgoku*, pp. 53–56; and “Zenshū goroku no keisei,” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 18 no.1 (1969): 40. For a further discussion of the encounter dialogue model that is influenced by Yanagida's views, see John McRae, “Encounter Dialogue and the Transformation of the Spiritual Path in Chinese Ch'an,” in Robert E. Buswell and Robert M. Gimello, eds., *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), pp. 339–369.

23. There are three extant editions of Mazu's stele inscription, preserved in the following collections: *Quan Tangwen* 501.5106a–5107a, *Tang wenzui* 64.1058–1059, and *Quanzai zhi wenji* 28.167a–168a. The three editions are quite similar, and the minor differences between them appear to be mostly due to copyists' errors.

24. For brief information about the discovery of this inscription and its contents, see Chen Baiquan, “Mazu chanshi shihan tiji yu Zhang Zongyan tianshi kuanji,” *Wenshi* 14 (1982): 258.

25. *Song gaoseng zhuan* 10, T 50.766c. See also Nishiguchi Yoshio, “Baso no denki,” *Zengaku kenkyū* 63 (1984): 117.

26. Quan also wrote a stele inscription for Zhangjing Huaihui (756–815), one Mazu's main disciples who taught in Changan, the Tang capital. For this inscription, titled *Tang Zhangjingsi Baiyan dashi beiming bingxu*, see *Quan Tangwen* 501.2260b–c and *Wenyuan yinghua* 866.4568a–b.

27. *Zutang ji* 15.338 and *Zutang ji* 18.410, respectively.

28. For Mazu's quotation, see *Zongjing lu* 14, T 48.492a; for Huangbo's passage, see T 48.381a (Iriya, *Denshin hōyō*, *Enryō*, p. 30); and for Wuyue's, see *Zongjing lu* 98, T 48.942c. These correspondences are pointed out in Yanagida, “Goroku no rekishi,” p. 494.

29. See *Mazu yulu*, XZJ 119.406c, and *Baizhang guanglu*, XZJ 118.85.

30. For more details, see my “The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism during the Mid-Tang Period” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 2000), pp. 98–101.

31. *Zutang ji* 14.304–309.

32. T 48.418b, 492a, 550c, and 940b.

33. For a convenient summary of the inclusion of Mazu's dialogues in these texts, see the table in Okimoto Katsumi, “Zen shisō keiseishi no kenkyū,” in *Kenkyū Hōkoku* (Kyoto: Hanazono Daigaku gokusai zengaku kenkyūjō, 1998), pp. 351–353.

34. Yanagida, “Goroku no rekishi,” p. 545.

35. XZJ 119.407d; translated by Cheng-chien in Poceski, *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 74.

36. *Song gaoseng zhuan* 11, T 50.772b–c; translated by Cheng-chien in Poceski, *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 90 n. 52. Two additional version of the same dialogue can be found in *Zutang ji* 14.308 and *Zongjing lu* 98, T 48.942c–43a.

37. See Tzvetan Todorov, “The Origin of Genres,” *New Literary History* 8 no.1 (1976): 162.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

40. Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 4.

41. See Todorov, “The Origin of Genres,” p. 162.

42. For discussion of different types of Chan discourses that might be construed as antecedents to the encounter dialogues, see McRae, “The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue.”