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The Recorded Sayings  
of  
Chan Master Fenyang Wude  
(Fenyang Shanzhao)

(Japanese) *Funyō Zenshō*

Compiled by

Ciming, Great master Chuyuan  
of Mount Shishuang

Translated from the Original Chinese  
by  
Randolph S. Whitfield

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## Preface

Although *The Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Fenyang Wude* is not a long text, it seemed best to publish this first complete translation in two parts. The work is in three fascicles: encounter dialogues and talks in the first, some 300 commentaries on old cases in the second, and the third fascicle, which will be issued as a separate volume, contains the poetry of master Fenyang.

It is curious that this work, in view of its high reputation amongst early Song dynasty Chan texts and its obvious value related to the history and development of the *gong'an* genre, has never been translated into any modern language. Granted, Fenyang can seem quite impenetrable at times, even for a Chan master. And it is not as if the ever popular *gong'an* (kôan) or the poetry contains 'doctrinal quandaries' because such quandaries do not exist in Chan (there is no jurisprudence in Chan/Zen). Even less does Fenyang teach student monks how to think and act in accordance with Chan ideals because such ideals do also not exist. The difficulty is that the key thrust of the master's pointers seems to centre upon the exact opposite, namely, the attempt to free students from obtuse concepts; to open them up to a more neutral, unprejudiced approach to life's open-ended possibilities, through a practice based on actual experience rather than on the concocted labyrinthine concepts emanating from literati mentalities. In this regard what Ibn Khaldun said of the Sufis might apply equally to the Channists: 'Whatever supernatural knowledge or activity is achieved by the Sufis is accidental, and was not originally intended. ...Many (Sufis) shun (supernatural perception) when it accidentally happens to them, and pay no attention to it.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, through their devotion Sufis' intention is to come near to the master, or whatever name different traditions may give to *it*.<sup>2</sup>

Zen 1950's style, characterised as a 'sudden enlightenment', a 'mystical vision', attained 'miraculously', a 'divine revelation', all conceived as end-states, or, on the other hand, as *nothing but* a calm contemplative state of *mind* cultivated through a critical self-understanding – is happily a thing of the past. We need only go to the Mediterranean cultures of the late medieval/early renaissance period to get some idea of how things stood with our own Jewish, Islamic and Christian spiritual traditions, to feel ourselves on some kind of familiar ground with far-eastern Chan/Zen Buddhism. What is remarkable perhaps in the Chan/Zen tradition is that the laity was never and never has been burdened with repressive

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History*. trans. Franz Rosenthal. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul/Bollingen Foundation, 1958. Vol. 1, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ils tâchent, en général, d'éviter ces (marques de la faveur divine) et ils en détournent leur attention ; car ils recherchent Dieu pour lui-même, et sans aucun autre motif.' Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, traduits en Français et commentés par William Mac Guckin, Baron DE SLANE, membre de l'Institut, 1863. vol. 1, pp. 251-2.

religious laws or rituals. There is an absence of jurisprudence, of the imposition of debilitating models of performance based on the legal difference between venial sin and mortal sin (*peccatum veniale* and *peccatum mortale*) ever present in the West.<sup>3</sup> Fortitude in Chan comes not from external decrees but ideally from the cultivation of inherent impulses of restraint. The paradox is that this kind of restraint leads to freedom.

### *From the Introduction*

... The groundbreaking entrance into the Buddhist canon of the first coherent Chan lineage text in 1011 CE, the *Jingde Chuandeng Lu* (*Records of the Transmission of the Lamp*, hereafter CDL, first presented at court in 1004 CE)<sup>4</sup> rendered a Chan-without-words into a Chan with not a few words. The enigmatic expressions and often beautiful poetry that emerged in this innovative work became the very embodiment of Chan in China, Korea and Japan for the following thousand years, creating a unique poetic, religious and cultural pan-Asian amalgam, emerging from the midst of a Chinese religious landscape.<sup>5</sup>

The process of the integration of ancient Chinese poetic practices with literary Chan – the encounter dialogues and poems – was prefigured in the early years of the Northern Song dynasty by the present work, appearing in the same year as the CDL lineage text, 1004 CE, with a preface by the same scholar-official Yang Yi. Master Fenyang of *The Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Fenyang Wude* (hereafter FWYL)<sup>6</sup> had the distinction of an entry in the CDL as a still living master in 1011 CE when the CDL was entered into the Chinese Buddhist canon. The two works, CDL and FWYL, are in fact closely related.<sup>7</sup> Shishuang Chuyuan (986-1039 CE), Fenyang's heir and editor of the FWYL, composes a short preface in the first fascicle of the work to Fenyang's verses in praise of the CDL that clearly link the two works. Fenyang must have had access to the CDL then, even before its official entry into the Buddhist canon, judging also by his comments on Cases c.1-95 below, many of which have parallel passages in the CDL (recorded in footnotes). And in Cases c. I-XXX we are taken through the whole history of Chan, from its Indian background to the earliest

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<sup>3</sup> Barring of course the five heinous deeds/crimes *wuni zui* 五逆罪, Pāli, *pañcānantarya*, which deliver immediate retribution to the offender. The five are patricide, matricide, killing an arhat, injuring a Buddha, creating schism in the Saṅgha. But in this case there is no 'judgement' from without or from 'above'; actions automatically engender their consequences, and the results are not 'forever'.

<sup>4</sup> For a complete translation of the CDL (T. 2076) see *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp*, trans. R.S. Whitfield, 8 vols. Norderstedt: BoD, 2015-2020.

<sup>5</sup> Korean pronunciation of Chan is *Sōn*, in Japanese *Zen*.

<sup>6</sup> 汾陽無德禪師語錄, T. 47, no.1992. Fenyang Shanzhao (947-1024 CE), *Wude* is his posthumous appellation.

<sup>7</sup> Already noticed by Yanagida Seiza 柳田聖山, "Setchō juko no sekai 雪竇頌古の世界," *Zen bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 禅文化研究所紀要10 (1978): 11-87; 44 and discussed by Yang Zhengwen 楊曾文, 'Fenyang Shanzhao's Chan Dharma' 汾陽善昭及其禪法 in *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*, Taipei: The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, No. 15, (2002), p. 219-253; and Zhang Guoyi, 張國一, 'A Study on Fenyang Shanzhao, his Literary Output, Life and Thought.' 汾陽善昭之文獻 生平 思想研究, Centre for Buddhist Studies, College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University, 臺灣大學文學院佛學研究中心, Taipei: 第二十七期103年6月 [June, 2014], p. 53-114.

transmission in China, again, following, it would seem, the new redaction of the CDL by Yang Yi.

... Furthermore, Fenyang's *Record* includes the first detailed treatment of the famous *Five Ranks* teaching of Dongshan Liangjie (807-869 CE), by which the master paid great store all his life. After Fenyang Shanzhao had lost both his mother and his father at the age of fourteen, he left the home life to have his head shaved. Later he received the full precepts of a Buddhist monk and undertook a pilgrimage, wandering in all directions, seeking to take part in Chan communities. He travelled everywhere, all in all visiting seventy-one Chan masters, every one of whom had different aspects of the Dharma to transmit. Of all the streams of Chan in those times the master had a particular leaning towards the Caodong School's *Five Ranks* teachings and its blend of relative and absolute. Shimen Huiche (CDL 23.791) was a third generation Caodong master from Qianzhou (Hubei) and a Dharma-heir of Shimen Xian (CDL 20.559). In the course of his pilgrimage Fenyang had come to Shimen monastery in Hubei to enquire from Huiche of the details of the Five Ranks system. Fenyang presented Huiche with a *gatha* of understanding and having seen it, Huiche pronounced it good.<sup>8</sup> Later Fenyang added, 'The Five Ranks is the crowning elucidation, the Three Mysteries a direct pointing embracing all the elements in the Dharma-realm.'

However, the young Shanzhao did not become a Dharma-heir of the Caodong School but returned to Shoushan in Ruzhou (Henan) to take part in the community of Shengnian, fourth generation Dharma-heir of the Linji School. Fenyang Shanzhao then became the fifth in line to carry the Linji Chan Dharma forward. He settled further north in Fenzhou, Shanxi, occupying the Taizi monastery for nearly thirty years. There was a stone lion at the gate of the monastery and the Fen River (West River) runs north-south through this core area of ancient China, no doubt helping to account for the master's sobriquet. He groomed more than a dozen talented disciples there who propagated the teachings until they spread throughout the empire.

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<sup>8</sup> T47, n.1992, 605b25. In T49, n.2036, 662a08 (and in X1560 etc.) the verse is put in the mouth of the young Fenyang presenting his verse of understanding to Huiche. Here, in T 1992 the same verse is given to the mature Fenyang by his disciple/heir/editor, Shishuang Chuyuan.