CHAPTER 1

TEXTUALITY:
the "dependent origination" of Huang Po

> If things could be expressed like this with ink and paper, what would be the purpose of Zen?
>
> Huang Po[1]

> It is clear from Huang Po's own words that he realized the necessity of books and teachings of various kinds for people less advanced.
>
> John Blofeld[2]

When the early Buddhists proclaimed that impermanence is the fundamental condition of all things, they were certainly onto something. Almost nothing remains today of the ninth-century Zen Buddhist world of Huang Po. Nothing, that is, but texts. In the absence of everything else, it is the presence of texts that transmits this distant world of Zen to us. Although they don't supply us with much from which to reconstruct the historical details of Huang Po's life,[3] John Blofeld is certainly right when he says that these texts present us with a vivid picture of the Zen master. Huang Po was a powerful Zen master, the abbot of one of the largest and most important monasteries in South-central China where Zen came to prominence. He is placed in the genealogical charts of Zen ancestry as the student of the famous Zen master, Pai-chang Huai-hai, and as the teacher of the great Lin-chi I-hsuan (Rinzai). Huang Po is described as large in physical stature and overpowering in his presence and voice. He is presented as having evoked in his followers both fear and the experience of ecstatic freedom.

[1] Blofeld, *Huang Po*, p. 22 [2] Blofeld, *Huang Po*, p. 102

[3] We sample our ignorance at the outset when we discover that neither Huang Po's birth nor his death can be accurately dated. Variant dates for his death are given in different texts as 849 and 857, but neither is verifiable in any sense. Several texts mention that he was born and raised in the Fukien area, but neither his family name nor given name, nor the name of his native village, are recorded. His official biography (*Sung Kao seng ch'uan*) tells us only that he entered monastic life at an early age in the monastery on Mount Huang Po in Fukien and was given the Buddhist name Hsi-yun.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

Huang Po's ways of teaching seem surprisingly diverse. On the one hand, he lectured on abstruse philosophical topics like the nature of "mind," while on the other hand, he intimidated disciples with his strange behavior and uproarious laughter. Some sections of text show his impressive knowledge of the vast and complicated literature of Buddhist philosophy, while others present him speaking in riddles and scoffing at philosophical seriousness. Although the tension between variant images of the master was perplexing, John Blofeld could proceed with his translation fully confident that, because Huang Po was speaking "from some deep inner experience,"[4] whatever contradictions seemed to appear on the surface were either reconcilable at some deep level or simply unimportant.

Later in his life, however, Blofeld expressed some doubts about the purity of the Huang Po texts. What worried him was that these texts didn't come directly from the hand, and therefore, the mind, of Huang Po. Instead, they came to be through a mediator, P'ei-hsiu, who wrote what he thought Huang Po thought. So the next time Blofeld chose a Zen text to translate, he picked one that seemed to be authored directly and without mediation, "whereas what remains to us of the teachings of Huang Po and others consists only of what their disciples chose to record."[5] Blofeld's concern here is quintessentially modern; it expresses the scientific concern for accuracy and the parallel romantic concern for authenticity and originality. If Huang Po's Zen is our interest, we want it direct from the source – no intermediaries. This is not what we get, however. In order to attain some clarity about what these texts are and, therefore, what we are doing when we are reading Zen, we will need to consider the origins and history of the Huang Po literature.

Had John Blofeld any idea what scientific historiography would soon discover about the Huang Po texts, he would never have entertained the idea of translating them. His worst fears have come true. Not only are these texts not directly from the mind of Huang Po, but they have passed through more mediations than anyone can count. Blofeld's own mediation ("My rendering is, to a small extent, interpretive"[6]) was just the latest of thousands that occurred before the text came to him.

[4] Blofeld, *Huang Po*, p. 8.

[5] Blofeld, *The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai*, p. 33. Blofeld obviously didn't consider this too serious a problem, however, since he could say in the same Preface that his Huang Po translation "was even then affording some people insight into the marvelous workings of an enlightened mind" (pp. 14–15).

[6] Blofeld, *The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai*, p. 17.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

One fruitful way to understand the status of these texts entails calling upon the seminal Buddhist concept of "dependent origination." As Buddhists in many eras have known, this idea is useful to explain *how* it is that things are impermanent, and how they come to be the particular things that they are. According to this traditional Buddhist theory, all things, including texts, are always changing because they depend, at the moment of their origin and at all times, on other things which are themselves changing. All things come to be exactly what they are at any given moment not because it is their own inherent nature to do so, but because other things influence them, shape them, and make them what they are. To understand what the Huang Po texts are – their very essence – we need to trace in some detail just some of the factors that have brought them to be what they are today. Blofeld's doubt about the purity of these texts turns out to be more appropriate than he could have imagined. If we work hard however, to understand the "lack of true self" that we discover in these texts through the Buddhist concept of "dependent origination," we will be able to get over our disappointment about the status of these texts and discover something extremely important about the processes of transmission.

Through what mediation do we receive the Zen teachings of Huang Po? One place to begin would be to imagine just some of the ways in which the words and thoughts spoken by Huang Po – the supposed origin of these texts – would themselves have "originated dependent" upon a whole network of prior factors. Although we can concede, with Blofeld, that "Huang Po spoke from some deep inner experience,"[7] we can also acknowledge the multiple ways in which that experience has been shaped by other factors: his teachers, the ideas and texts of Buddhism, his parents, his historical setting, and so on. Huang Po was not just an independent and isolated entity; he stood within a particular lineage, within the Buddhist tradition, within the resources available to him through the Chinese language and culture of his time.

In the extensive footnotes to Iriya Yoshitaka's modern Japanese translation of Huang Po,[8] we get a sense of just how widespread the "intertextuality" of Huang Po's text and mind was. His language is rarely just *his* language. So familiar with the corpus of Chinese Buddhist texts is Iriya that no paragraph goes by without his noticing familiar language, language taken, either consciously or unconsciously, from other texts and other speakers and added to Huang Po's. Sometimes the Huang Po texts simply quote sutras and other texts to substantiate a point. At other

[7] Blofeld, *Huang Po*, p. 8. [8] Iriya, *Denshin Hoyo*.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

times, however, they just borrow language and ideas without citation and acknowledgment. Were Huang Po a modern author, we would be concerned about plagiarism charges. Medieval Chinese Buddhists, however, were not modern individualists; they assumed that borrowing certified ideas and phrases, and being influenced by them, was exactly what one ought to do. The use of prior texts is so prevalent in the Huang Po literature that it seems to be composed essentially of other writing, now grafted together and rewoven into a new form and directed at new purposes. For the modern historical philologist, these texts are a nightmare – or a dream come true – hinting at a never-ending task of tracing antecedent sources. And if dependent origination is, as the early Buddhists claimed, a truth about all things, then this task will indeed be endless, even for the computers that are now being trained for the job.

All of this is just to say that, wherever we begin our process of tracing the origins and history of the Huang Po texts, it will not be a true origin; there will always be more "dependencies," more background, to uncover. If even the enlightened mind of Huang Po, where it all may have seemed to begin, is itself a product of innumerable coalescing factors, then our starting there in the lecture hall of Huang Po monastery is just an arbitrary point of selection. Nevertheless, this is where we begin.

So, once again, through whose mediation do we receive *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po*? Blofeld knew that the answer to this was through P'ei-hsiu, the lay Buddhist devotee of Huang Po, who explains in his Preface to the literature how it came to be that he is the real author. Knowing who P'ei-hsiu was will help us understand what he wrote and why.[9] In 842, P'ei-hsiu, the newly appointed Governor of the Hung-chou area,[10] met Huang Po, who at that time had a strong local reputation as one of the leading

[9] P'ei-hsiu (797–860) was born into a well-known and politically important family in Hunan. He, like his brothers, passed the Imperial civil service exam at the highest level (*chin-shih*) and served in a series of official posts until being elevated to the position of Prime Minister of China in 853. He had the finest education available, and was in consultation throughout his life with China's most famous philosophers. Although a master of the Confucian classics for political purposes, P'ei seems to have turned more and more toward Buddhist thought as he grew older. In the middle of his career he became a student of the Hua-yen and Zen scholar/master Tsung-mi. He was also associated with the Hua-yen scholar Cheng-kuan and, later in his life, with Wei-shan Ling-yu, a well-known Zen master in Hunan and contemporary of Huang Po. His biographies tell of his immersion in the world of Buddhist texts, sometimes enclosing and isolating himself for extended periods of study. His calligraphy is regarded as among the finest of his era. P'ei-hsiu's official biographies are found in *Chiu T'ang-shu* (177) and *Hsin T'ang-shu* (182). See Broughton, *Kuei-Feng Tsung-mi*, and Gregory, *Tsung-mi*, for details about his association with Tsung-mi.

[10] This was the area in South-central China settled two generations earlier by the famous Zen master Ma-tsu, and, by the mid ninth century, was spotted with numerous newly opened temples and monasteries of the new, avant-garde Zen tradition.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

figures in the newly emerging – avant-garde – form of Buddhism, Zen. Very shortly thereafter, P'ei-hsiu became a lay disciple of Huang Po, and, as a wealthy and powerful figure, ordered a monastery built for Huang Po off in the rural mountains, several days' walk west of the capital of Hung-chou.[11] It was named Mount Huang Po after the mountain temple in Fukien where the Zen master first entered the Buddhist order, and it is after this mountain that our protagonist came to be named Huang Po.[12] In 845 a massive government suppression of Buddhism was ordered by Emperor Wu-tsung, deposing and sending into exile the thousands of monks resident in numerous monasteries like Huang Po. None of the accounts of Huang Po's life discuss his whereabouts during this period. A biographical note on one of his students, however, mentions that, at the end of the suppression, P'ei-hsiu invited Huang Po to come out of the mountains and to serve as his teacher where he was then posted, in the district of Wan-ling.[13] In his Preface to the Huang Po texts, P'ei describes how "day and night" he received the teachings from Huang Po with eagerness and exactitude: "After leaving him [Huang Po], I recorded what I had learnt and, though able to set down only about a fifth of it, I esteem it as a direct transmission of the Doctrine."[14] Then, sometime either shortly before or after Huang Po's death,[15] P'ei was called to the capital to become Prime Minister. After a few years of service in that prestigious office, he retired, turning his attention entirely to Buddhist practice.

One practice that he initiated right away was the textual practice of reconstructing the teachings of Huang Po. From voluminous notes that

[11] Recently, Japanese Buddhist scholars, searching this area for traces of the early Zen tradition, located the monastery site of Mount Huang Po. Shortly after this "rediscovery," I made my way to this rural area in search of Huang Po. According to locals, the monastery had functioned, although at significantly reduced levels, all the way into the mid twentieth century. It was used by Maoist revolutionaries as a base camp during and following the "long march." The monastery itself was destroyed during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, so that nothing remains of the original edifice but the monastery well. The building materials from the monastery were used to build new structures, including the commune store that now sits on the ancient temple site. Having undergone a "revolutionary" name change sometime in the fifties, local residents have now renamed the community the "Huang Po commune." They now seek "foreign investment money" to rebuild the edifice into a functioning Buddhist monastery and, not insignificantly, into a tourist attraction for wealthy Japanese travelers on pilgrimage to the ancient "holy land" of Zen. Impermanence indeed!

[12] This Fukien temple, rather than the Kiangsi temple featured in our story, is the place of origin for the Obaku or Huang Po sect of Zen Buddhism in Japan, which traces its lineage to the Fukien area in the Ming Dynasty.

[13] *Sung kao-seng ch'uan*, T. 50, p. 817c.

[14] T. 48, p. 379c; Blofeld, *Huang Po*, p. 28.

[15] An event which is not precisely datable. The revival of interest in the ancient site of Mount Huang Po has made it possible to locate a grave marker for Huang Po Hsi-yun in the hills near the old monastery site, along with grave markers for hundreds of other important monks and subsequent abbots of the monastery over the last millennium.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

he claimed to have written following two intensive sessions with Huang Po, he did his best to reproduce the "essential teachings on the transmission of mind."[16] Now, let's consider some possible effects of the fact that the Huang Po texts "originated dependent" upon the mind and notes of P'ei-hsiu.[17] First, without P'ei as medium, there may never have been a text of Huang Po's teaching. Or, even if there was, P'ei is clearly a condition without which *this* text would have never existed. Second, let us consider that one form that P'ei's mediation may have taken was the systematization and rationalization of what may have been less systematic and rational in the spoken original. Why should we postulate this? Several reasons. Written versions of oral discourse are frequently and naturally brought into sharper focus when they appear as text. We don't notice our rambling when we speak; but when we see a written transcription we are often appalled at our own rhetorical incoherence. P'ei was offering Huang Po to the world; most importantly, to his world of highly educated Chinese scholars. No doubt Huang Po's best and most sophisticated foot was placed forward. Another reason might be that P'ei himself was trained to be a systematic Buddhist philosopher by his earlier and equally famous teacher, Tsung-mi. By the time P'ei would have met Huang Po, he was already himself a Buddhist philosopher in his own right. What he learned from Huang Po would have been added to the system already organized in his mind. Given their prior training, P'ei-hsiu's ears would have heard Huang Po "systematically." This would be true even though one of the most important things P'ei-hsiu would have learned from Huang Po would have been how to dislodge and disrupt mental systems, how to free the mind from rational structure by seeing its inadequacy and emptiness. We can see P'ei-hsiu's eagerness to teach in his Preface. There, before we even get to Huang Po, P'ei can be found offering his own teachings on the nature of mind. He had something he needed to teach, regardless of where he had gotten it.

A third effect of P'ei Hsiu's transmission surfaces when we consider the character of the language through which Huang Po comes to the reader of Zen. Whose is it? P'ei-hsiu was a highly educated, highly polished member of the wealthy *literati* class. Huang Po was a rising star in

[16] One of the titles later given to the text.

[17] A lot has been thought and written recently about what occurs to spoken discourse when it makes its way into textual form, and about the differences between speech and writing. In *Chan Insights and Oversights*, Bernard Faure reflects on the bearing this recent literature might have on the medieval Zen tradition. The sources he draws upon in doing so – Derrida, LaCapra, Ong, and Ricoeur – are the best places to look for ways to understand the orality/textuality relation.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

a newly emerging rural Buddhist movement that mocked cultural polish and that purposefully employed the most shocking slang of the day. In whose rhetoric is Huang Po's "transmission of mind" made? "Both" would be a good guess. P'ei-hsiu would not have become Huang Po's disciple unless he was attracted to the form and content of his teachings. He must have liked the way Huang Po spoke, however shocking it may have been to his urbane disposition. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine the Prime Minister writing that way himself, particularly when he knew that his highly educated friends might end up reading it. Indeed, an analysis of the form of writing does show both tendencies. Much of the text is written in a polished, literate style. But even these sections occasionally burst into colloquialisms. Other sections (to which we will return later) show no *literati* polish, featuring their slang in both form and content.[18]

Fourth, and finally, let us consider how the fate of the text – what ended up happening to it – would have "originated dependent" upon the enormous prestige of P'ei-hsiu. P'ei was no ordinary lay disciple. In fact, a better advocate of Huang Po's Zen could not have been found. It was P'ei-hsiu's fame and legitimacy, when placed in the service of Huang Po, that would have brought the Zen master to national attention. P'ei's advocacy would have deeply affected who would have sought this text and in what numbers. In the long run, of course, Huang Po's fame would outrun P'ei-hsiu's. Blofeld had no interest in transmitting P'ei-hsiu to the west; he wanted the great Huang Po. The question still remains, however: who did he get?

It is only because Blofeld thought that the story of the text's origins ended here that he was, initially at least, satisfied. The truth is, however, that this is just one of many beginnings. What happened to the text after P'ei-hsiu wrote it? "I gave the manuscript to the monks T'ai Chou and

[18] To get a glimpse of how significant these last two factors might have been, compare the images of Huang Po that we receive from two distinct sources, P'ei-hsiu and Lin-chi. Huang Po would have taken the young monk, Lin-chi I-hsuan, into his "Great Peace Temple" (*Ta-an ssu*) in the capital city of Hung-chou province several years before meeting P'ei-hsiu, but the *Lin-chi lu*, or *Record of Rinzai*, is a text that comes to us from a later period than P'ei-hsiu's. P'ei-hsiu, the wealthy, influential scholar–official, projects a Huang Po well-versed in Buddhist doctrine and texts, articulate and convincing in his sermons before throngs of respectful listeners. Lin-chi, famed for his unconventional style of Zen, projects Huang Po as overpowering in his ridicule of unenlightened speech and action, and unconcerned with the intricacies of traditional doctrine. Perhaps these accounts differ because Zen monks (like Lin-chi) differ from scholar–officials (like P'ei-hsiu) or because Sung dynasty images of greatness differ from those of the T'ang. Or perhaps they can be reconciled, as Yanagida suggests (in Iriya, *Denshin Hoyo*), in one complex individual. The point here, however, is that perspective shapes who and what is seen, and that this is a vital dimension of the fate of these texts.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

Fa Chien, requesting them to return to the Kuang T'ang Monastery on the old mountain and to ask the elder monks there how far it agrees with what they themselves used frequently to hear in the past."[19] How far might it have agreed? No sane monk would have risked saying that it was just plain wrong, no matter what he thought. After all, this was the manuscript of the former Prime Minister! In such circles, caution is wisdom. Furthermore, P'ei-hsiu's continued attention to their master would have been considered a great opportunity. On the other hand, P'ei-hsiu did ask to be corrected, at least implicitly. He didn't want to misrepresent his revered teacher; therefore, he called for editorial assistance from those who had heard Huang Po many more times than he had. No one now knows what corrections or deletions were made.

There is strong evidence, however, that substantial additions were made. This can be seen from a "form-critical" analysis of the text. Some passages are written in a different style and presuppose an entirely different point of view. That point of view is clearly monastic, coming from the monks at Mount Huang Po to whom the manuscript was given. What did they add? Yanagida Seizan thinks that many of the elder monks would have had in their possession "private notes" compiled over many years of encounter with the abbot Huang Po, and that the arrival of P'ei-hsiu's manuscript would have enticed them to bring these forth so that they could be used to check P'ei's version of the teachings.[20] This makes sense. It also fits nicely with our understanding of the overall genre of Zen literature within which the Huang Po texts have been placed.[21]

The "recorded sayings" genre of Zen literature is at the very center of the emergence of this sect of Buddhism. The sheer fact that such literature was ever written tells us a lot about Zen. As we will see in the next chapter, Zen masters were frequently, almost stereotypically, critical of texts and textual practices. They didn't want their students focusing on sutra study, and they didn't want them writing down or even memorizing Zen phrases.[22] For example, the *Lin-chi lu* harshly criticizes students who "revere the words of some decrepit old man as being the profound truth writing them down in a big notebook, which they then wrap up in

[19] T. 48, p. 379c; Blofeld, *Huang Po*, p. 28. [20] Yanagida in Iriya, *Denshin Hoyo*, p. 172.

[21] See Yanagida, "The Recorded Sayings Texts."

[22] P'ei-hsiu was certainly aware of the ambiguity of his writing practice. One story in the texts shows Huang Po mocking P'ei for trying to express "Zen" in poetry. Also, P'ei says in his Preface, as any pious Zen Buddhist would do before publishing: "At first I was diffident about publishing what I had written. But now fearing that these vital and penetrating teachings will be lost to future generations, I have done so" (T. 48, p. 379c; Blofeld, *Huang Po*, p. 28).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

numerous covers and not let anyone else see."[23] Without seeming to notice the irony, the Ma-tsu "recorded saying" text says that the "sayings of Ma-tsu written down by people who cherished facts" do not really capture the spirit of the real Ma-tsu.[24] This, in any case, was the widespread attitude toward texts. In view of this harsh criticism, we can understand why this tended to be done secretly. But why was it done at all? Yanagida explains the process like this:

> The greater the number of disciples that surrounded a great teacher became, the smaller each student's opportunities for individual instruction. Hence moments of direct contact with the teacher became prized experiences for the disciples involved, some of whom soon began making secret notes of the events. Eventually certain monks prone to such activity started making anthologies of the teacher's words and actions based on what they heard from other students in addition to their own experience. This was a perfectly natural development.[25]

Why should we think that this was a "perfectly natural development?" Primarily because, in spite of Zen rhetoric on the matter, and in spite of our own modern romantic and utilitarian views of language, the link between what the Zen master said and his enlightened mind was assumed to be very close.[26] When Huang Po spoke, everyone in the monastery listened. Nor was listening enough. Huang Po's utterances literally evoked memorization, mental repetition, and reflection. These were enlightened words, words which bear repeating over and over in one's own mind. In order to do that, and to get it right, what better way than to write them down, secretly perhaps, so that the mind is relieved of the burden of continual memorization, and so that accuracy and authenticity are guaranteed? Freed from the work of just keeping the saying straight in one's mind, one could focus on the saying itself in contemplation and meditation.

Very likely such secret collections of sayings existed on Mount Huang Po and very likely they emerged, perhaps with a smirk of embarrassment and pride, when P'ei-hsiu's manuscript arrived for verification.[27] When someone's saying collection contained something important which was missing from P'ei-hsiu's version, an addition might have been made. The manuscript must have grown; how much, no one knows.

[23] See Yanagida, "The Recorded Sayings Texts," p. 188.
[24] Pas, *The Recorded Sayings of Ma-tsu*, p. 39.
[25] Yanagida, "The Recorded Sayings Texts," p. 187.
[26] This is one of my topics in chapters 4 and 5.
[27] One early text, the *Chodang Chip*, refers to "notes" about Huang Po which were in circulation at the time of its writing in the mid to late tenth century. See Iriya, *Denshin Hoyo*, p. 172.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

Which sayings would have been jotted down over the years, waiting there in reserve to be included in the "recorded sayings" texts? Certainly not everything Huang Po said would have been recorded. Some things must have seemed too pedestrian, too ordinary to qualify – things already known or not worth remembering. Sayings which met with awe and enthusiasm would have stuck in the mind most forcefully – whatever really seemed to strike home.[28] Most worth recording might have been sayings that stood at the very edge of understanding, those that, with just a little reflection, might open great reserves of insight. Those that pushed too far beyond the graspable might have been too hard to remember, unless, of course, they were so strange, so Zen-like, as to capture the imagination. Sayings noted for their extravagance, for their irregular and unusual qualities, are commonly found in these collections. Some sayings were just so far out of context and out of the ordinary that they became focal points of meditation. A few of these made it all the way into later *koan* collections, puzzles for subsequent generations of minds.

Consider the following enigmatic event on Mount Huang Po: "One day the master entered the hall. When the monks were all assembled, he lifted his staff as if to hit and drive them away. As they were leaving he called to them and when they turned, he said: 'The crescent is like a bent bow, very little rain but only strong winds.'"[29] Perhaps, like us, no one had the slightest idea what Huang Po was talking about. Or perhaps there were clues, present only in that immediate context or decipherable only to an exclusive few. Either way, this was a memorable event, one well worth writing down to see what it might yield upon more thorough meditation.

Here we see two kinds of editorial gatekeeping. Not only did sayings have to make it past the editors who formed and reformed the collections. First, they had to survive the mechanisms of censorship inherent in human interpretation – someone had to notice, remember, write, and preserve the saying in the first place. Transmission, both oral and written, presupposes more forgetting than it does remembering. But we can imagine the excitement generated by the arrival of P'ei-hsiu's manuscript version of their master's teaching on Mount Huang Po. If the secret wasn't out already, this would have been the occasion for confession –

[28] Consider Ma-tsu's now famous saying: "Do not remember my words!" (Pas, *The Recorded Sayings of Ma-tsu*, p. 39) It is hard to imagine a more memorable saying, nor one more difficult to put into practice. In attempting to carry it out, you would be violating it.

[29] *Ku-tsun yu-lu*, Lu K'uan Yu, *Ch'an and Zen Teachings*, p. 125.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

"okay, I did jot down a few notes now and then!" Who wouldn't have been thankful for their "inauthentic" lapses? Who wouldn't have wished at that point that *they* had taken notes?[30]

The origin of these teachings and the image of Huang Po preserved in them is thus "dependent" upon numerous minds, some no doubt more influential than others. Someone, perhaps a committee, had to serve as editor, the organizer of the text as a whole. Since the Huang Po texts, like many others in this genre, are not in full narrative order from beginning to end,[31] someone had to decide where to place each of the entries. Which aphorisms, sermons, or stories would be featured up front, which later, and which just eliminated altogether? The character of the Huang Po text depends on these decisions. Or, perhaps no single orthodox version of the teachings of Huang Po was formed at all. Since getting a copy of the text probably meant copying your own, it may be that different monks selected different parts of the manuscript to copy, leaving others out or rearranging the order.

Although printing – the process of stabilizing the impermanence of texts through the widespread dissemination of an official version – had been invented in China sometime before this,[32] China was still by and large a "manuscript culture."[33] What this meant in the monastic context of ninth-century China was that texts were hand-copied by individuals for specific purposes, and thus occasionally modified to fit those purposes. Texts were not regarded as fixed and unalterable entities. They could be added to, subtracted from, corrected, and improved. Texts could also take others into themselves. Whereas the Huang Po texts draw upon isolated fragments of many other texts, later texts, even more voracious, often took the entire Huang Po corpus into themselves – and then added some more! Relations between texts, as between spoken discourses, were fluid, always open to some new twist or turn. Although this fluidity was especially prevalent before the widespread use of printing, it continued long after printing came to be common. Printing just made the wholesale incorporation of one text by a later predator all that much easier.

[30] We sense a modern, romantic version of this same tension in the account of Thomas Hoover, who writes: "Huang-po is known to us today primarily through the accident of having a follower obsessed by the written word" (*The Zen Experience*, p. 123). In other words, "we can be thankful, but he shouldn't have done it!"

[31] As Tsung-mi has his questioner say: "There is no order to it. I see no beginning and no end" (Broughton, *Kuei-feng Tsung-mi*, p. 104).

[32] For a brief history of print in China, see Liu Guojun, *The Story of Chinese Books*.

[33] Following Gerald Bruns, I distinguish here between "the closed text of a print culture and the open text of a manuscript culture" (*Inventions: Writing, Textuality, and Understanding in Literary History*, p. 44).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

Prior to printing, however, Zen texts circulated in handwritten form and, therefore, as manuscripts, remained open to further acts of writing. In this Zen culture, readers were enjoined to their texts in ways that encouraged emendation and extension of the text. Since the text was for their own spiritual use, they felt free to amplify, highlight, and fill in the gaps. Rewriting is thus a method of keeping a text up-to-date, of bringing out whatever in the text really does speak to the present situation.

One cultural practice in medieval Zen which accentuated the pace at which textual, linguistic, and ideological change took place was the institution of travel. When Zen monks traveled from one monastic complex to another they would invariably encounter new ideas, new phrases, and new texts. Many Hung-chou Zen texts allude to the practice of sending "messengers" to another monastery to observe their discourse and practice, and to engage in dialogical exchange about the "great matter" of Zen. These were certainly note-taking occasions. Upon return, monks were expected to report back on what they had observed. Monasteries were so readily interlinked that communication was constant. When Huang Po's biography says that his sayings were in "circulation throughout the world," the world they imagine is this circuit of interdependent monasteries.[34] As they circulated, many of Huang Po's sayings made their way into the minds and texts of other Zen masters. As new ideas and expressions arrived at Huang Po monastery, some of them would eventually find their way into the Huang Po literature.

Naturally it is difficult for us to conceive of this editorial license in anything but negative light. To us it constitutes defacement of an original – the real Huang Po – and distortion of a historic form. In a "manuscript" mode of textuality, however, rewriting is a positive necessity, without which the transmission of mind and text would not be possible. The impermanence of text and tradition are best understood as the actualization of previously unseen possibilities. From the perspective of modern historicism, however, this impermanence is a significant problem. If, following this modern practice, we regard a text as representing its own unique culture and historical epoch, then any later alteration obstructs that representation. Medieval Zen practitioners were clearly not historicists. They took their texts to represent not another era, but the "great matter" of Zen as a possibility for actualization in their own era. So if the text's language or ideas needed updating to fulfill that task, editors were always available for the task of rewriting.

[34] T. 50, p. 842bc.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

Later editors of Huang Po, for example, felt free, indeed compelled, to alter some of the vernacular language, especially slang expressions. Because language changes – slang expressions perhaps most quickly – old formulations lose their power, not to mention their sense. For Huang Po to be effective in a later era, some accommodation in its language was required. Paradoxically, therefore, amending a manuscript by editing its language served textual preservation, rather than being a sign of its demise. The text is preserved in its alteration precisely because its form must be brought to address the present if it is to continue to have anything like the power it had in the time of its origin.

What Tsung-mi, P'ei-hsiu's earlier teacher, says in critique of Huang Po's Zen is right to the point here: "Essentially speaking, these [Zen sayings] are merely things in accordance with the present time. They are in response to the abilities of present-day people."[35] What Tsung-mi didn't fully realize was that this was true of all successful texts – even his own – and that the few "classic" texts which manage to speak meaningfully to other eras or places, in addition to their own, become "classics" out of sheer contingency – a network of "dependent origins" so complex as to be neither predictable in advance nor fully traceable in retrospect.

The alterations required to fit a new group of readers in a new time and place occur invisibly and with relative ease when the transformation required is translation from one language to another. When John Blofeld wrote in English what the Huang Po texts meant to him when he read them in Chinese, a fundamental alteration of the texts' form occurred in an entirely natural way. Since romanticism was the preferred language of spiritual quest in the modern, English-speaking world, as well as Blofeld's own orientation in the world, Blofeld could just put Huang Po into the idioms of romanticism and be assured that the text would be able to communicate in its new location. This transformation of the Huang Po texts is more radical, to be sure, but not unlike the series of transformations that had already occurred in China in the movement of the text from one context or time to another. A successful text must be just as impermanent over time and place as its readers. To regret this impermanence and the "dependent origination" of Huang Po over time is to miss the Buddhist point.[36] Indeed,

[35] Broughton, *Kuei-feng Tsung-mi*, p. 105. Yanagida calls this focus in Zen literature of the Hung-chou area a "transition from substance to function" or from essence to act (*Mu no Tankyu*, p. 177).

[36] A few medieval Chinese, lamenting the impermanence of great texts, tried to overcome or at least to forestall the flux by carving them in stone. It is ironic, however, that the Chinese practices of copying texts for repeated transmission proved to be much more enduring. Ancient stone texts have wasted away while the texts themselves continue to circulate in ever-new forms.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

the entire Buddhist tradition councils explicitly against this regret. Since all grounds are fluid and all priorities already dependent, grasping for secure foundations and stable originals can only be misguided – and painful. Better to see the continued transformation of the texts as a sign of health, each new version "originating dependent" upon, and impermanent in accordance with, the complexities of a new situation.

In view of these highly "dependent origins" of the Huang Po texts, let us reflect on their history in rough outline. Because the history of this literature is far too complex ever to write, we focus on occasional and, from our vantage point, interesting stops along the path just to bring them to mind as dimensions of the transmission process.

P'ei-hsiu's Preface to his text, written sometime after having sent the manuscript to Mount Huang Po, is dated October 8, 857, and written in the capital city of Ch'ang-an.

The *Wan-ling lu*, the second of the two texts translated by Blofeld and attributed to P'ei-hsiu, is, because of its language and the nature of its stories, more likely the product of monks on Mount Huang Po.[37] It circulates separate from the P'ei-hsiu text until at least the early eleventh century, after which the two are joined together as a set.

The early Huang Po texts had no title although they may have been known orally as the Huang Po Discourse Collection (Huang-po yu-pen). Later on, when titles are appended, they differ, but the most significant and enduring of these titles is *Zen Master Huang Po Hsi Yun's Essential Teachings on the Transmission of Mind* (*Huang-po Hsi-yun Ch'an-shih Ch'uan-hsin fa yao*).

The earliest extant version of Huang Po's recorded sayings comes from the *Ancestral Hall Anthology* (*Tsu-t'ang chi*), written in 952 and only recently rediscovered in Korea. Along with biographical materials on numerous other Zen masters, this anthology gathers an extensive and purportedly chronological set of stories about the career of Huang Po.

A half-century later, the *Ching-te Records of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*) collects a slightly more extensive and somewhat different set of texts about Huang Po, and includes, in a subsequently added appendix, an early version of his recorded sermons that would later come to be known in different forms as the *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind*. We don't have the original of this text, only a 1283 edition.

[37] This is the view of Yanagida in Iriya, *Denshin Hoyo*.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

The canonization and sanctification of Huang Po was established during the Sung dynasty when officially sanctioned versions of the Buddhist classics were published with the Emperor's "imprimatur," and printed in numerous high-profile editions of the canon. The Huang Po texts came to have a status virtually equivalent to that of the sutras.

Printing, which was used for sutras and other classic texts in the T'ang dynasty, came to be used for other Buddhist texts in the Sung. This slowed the impermanence of texts like the Huang Po, which were no longer handwritten manuscripts. Variant texts now had standards against which they could be judged. Printing also meant easier access to texts, wider dissemination, and ease of reading.

The *Record of Lin-chi* becomes a widely circulated text because of the status of the Lin-chi school of Zen. Many stories in this text add to the Huang Po legends as they describe exchanges between the master, Huang Po, and his wild disciple, Lin-chi. This radical image of Huang Po becomes much more popular in the Sung and post-Sung eras than the rational and ideological Huang Po of the *Transmission of Mind.*

The *Transmission of Mind* was first published in Japan in 1283, the first Zen discourse record to appear there. When it arrived in Japan is not clear, but the Zen scholar Ui Hakuju suspects that it came to Japan in the hands of Eisai, the founder of Rinzai Zen. In any case, the *Fu-chou Tripitaka* arrived in Japan at about that time and Huang Po was in it. The Huang Po texts were favorites of the samurai swordsmen who brought Zen to prominence in the Kamakura era.

By the late Sung, *koan* practice appears to have been well established in Zen monasteries. As the classic *koan* collections took shape, Huang Po's name and stories of his acts held a prominent place, no doubt due to his status as the teacher of Lin-chi. This interest in *koans*, however, affected which texts of Huang Po would continue in popularity. From this point on, the sermons on "mind" recede to the background, while the anecdotes and stories take prominence – "strangeness" rather than doctrinal insight becomes the criterion of selection.

Numerous other editions of the Buddhist classics are published and continue the dissemination of Huang Po texts. Of these many texts, each bringing us a slightly different Huang Po, the most important may be *The Four House Discourse Record* (*Ssu-chia yu-lu*), first compiled in the early Sung as a product of another Zen lineage in the Hung-chou area. Its importance is the certified link it makes between four

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

masters in the Hung-chou lineage: Ma-tsu, Pai-chang, Huang-po, and Lin-chi. By the time of its printing, these four masters had come to represent the "golden age" of Zen, a time when Zen masters were "really" enlightened. This image of the golden age of Zen served as a counter-image to the present, against which the corruption of current times could be measured and to which contemporaries could look for pure ideals and practices.

By the mid fourteenth century, Neo-Confucianism had begun to displace Buddhism as the avant- garde tradition of the educated elite. This occurred, however, only after their deep appropriation of Buddhist thought and practice as contained in texts like the Huang Po literature. The particular status of the Huang Po texts during the long reign of Neo-Confucianism is that they tended not to be objects of criticism due to their logical and ideological form. More vulnerable to critique were the radical texts of Zen which had given up altogether on logical proposition. As Yanagida points out, these texts may have been exempt from critique because they had been composed by the *literati* figure, P'ei-hsiu. Criticized or not, however, they ceased being read and fell into centuries of relative disuse.[38]

At just the time when D. T. Suzuki began to write about Huang Po and other Zen masters in English, the Huang Po texts and other Zen texts were banned in China as counter-revolutionary even though almost no one knew what they said since they hadn't been read in centuries. By the time I purchased *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po* in Blofeld's version, Buddhist texts were being burned in China during the Cultural Revolution.

In light of this complex story about the origins and history of the Huang Po texts, what can we now say about the question of authorship? Who should be regarded as the writer of these texts and whose mind do they represent? Before our attempt to answer this, we would do well to recognize, reflexively, the status of this question. The question of authorship is a peculiarly modern question. Medieval Zen monks would have been puzzled that we would insist that the project of reading Zen begin here. The heritage of romanticism entices us to seek out Huang

[38] Other kinds of change affected textuality from the Sung dynasty onward. Books became popular items for private collections, and public libraries began to be built. A new form of text called "leaf binding" or "sutra binding" began to replace scrolls (although both were called "scrolls," which simply meant "text"). This change is significant because it allows the reader to leap into the text at any point without having first to unroll the lengthy paper or silk. Also, texts began to be stored in boxes called "book clothes" which served to preserve them for longer periods of time.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

Po's texts only to the extent that we can legitimately consider them an accurate disclosure of the enlightened mind of the individual Huang Po. For us it almost goes without saying that a text of this kind is successful if it genuinely reveals to us the creative personality behind it. Therefore we seek to look through the text to the authorial voice expressed in it. This orientation to texts became so "natural" to us in the twentieth century that only very recently has it been noticed in literary studies that there might be other options.

Fully ensconced within this romantic tradition of textuality, John Blofeld would insist that neither P'ei-hsiu's mediation nor his own have obstructed the pure expressivity of the Zen master himself. What we get is still the real Huang Po behind the text.[39] In order to sustain this conception of the text, Blofeld accepts at face value P'ei-hsiu's humble deference to the authority of Huang Po: P'ei-hsiu claims to be a neutral medium through which the enlightened mind of Huang Po has been transmitted.[40] Only romantic piety will encourage our efforts to believe this, however. We now understand too much about history, writing, and interpretation not to see the significance of P'ei-hsiu's role in the authorship of the texts. P'ei-hsiu was not just recording; he was composing a text in a newly emerging genre. He was writing what Huang Po never wrote and, if the stories are true, never wanted written.[41]

Beyond these originating circumstances we have seen that numerous other authors have entered the scene of creation. First, the monks on Mount Huang Po who were asked to verify and to edit the text joined Huang Po and P'ei-hsiu in the act of origination. Ironically, the text's initial audience was in fact its author. Second, we know that this process continued for centuries. The text was amplified, extended, and revised to produce what would have been taken to be a better text in subsequent eras. The authorial process seems to have broadened as time went on.

[39] This emphasis surfaces most directly in Blofeld's translation of Hui Hai, where he writes that the text "brings us closer to him, because he seems to be addressing us straight from his heart as though we were actually face to face with him" (*The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai*, p. 33). The text succeeds if it manages to get the reader back into the "heart" of its author.

[40] We can easily resist P'ei-hsiu's claims here by pointing out the fact that one of his official government positions was in the "censorship bureau" (*Chiu T'ang Shu*, clxxvii, p. 7b)!

[41] It is clear enough that Huang Po Hsi-yun's area of greatness was Zen oratory. Texts tell us that the quality of his spoken discourse was extraordinary, and that it carried a presence and intensity that compelled attentive listening. Like other Zen masters of his time, he was perhaps first and foremost a skilled speaker, both on the lecture dais and in personal encounter. Buddhist priests of this time either gained fame, or failed to do so, primarily based upon their mastery in these domains. The master spoke from the position in the Dharma Hall traditionally given to the image of the Buddha and, therefore, spoke as an instantiation of enlightenment. See Collcutt, *Five Mountains*, p. 195, for a description of this monastic context.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

From Huang Po the teachings were transmitted to P'ei-hsiu; from P'ei they were written and transmitted to Huang Po's monastic community; from there the text was transmitted on from generation to generation, "circulating" outward into the larger world of Zen monasteries where other editors and writers made their contributions.

Our question about authorship is best answered, therefore, by saying that the Huang Po texts available for our reading should be attributed, not to any one creative individual or mind, but rather to the Zen tradition in China as it took shape over many centuries. Communal composition, the collection into a composite form of the community's most influential sayings, stories, and wisdom, problematizes our romantic expectations about individual authorship by inserting in its place an anonymous, selfless collectivity. In the gradual alteration of the manuscript we find the unfolding and transformation of the community's highest ideals. The texts *do* hold out an image of the person Huang Po as a paradigm for practice and emulation. But this image is best conceived as the monastic community's most significant projection, the projection of what Huang Po was, and, therefore, what each of them aspired to become. Moreover, this image of Huang Po changes over time.[42]

The Buddhist image of "no self" at the authorial helm of these texts can be made clear if we recall the origins of the name "Huang Po." The words "Huang Po" were selected by the Zen master to name his new mountain monastery. Therefore, they name, first of all, a place and an institution, an alpine monastic community. It is by virtue of the fact that he was the long-time abbot of this mountain monastery that the monk, Hsi-yun, comes to be named "Hsi-yun of Huang Po monastery." Following his death a succession of abbots were also named "Huang Po"; they too propagated the "Zen Teachings of Huang Po." Although the original master, Huang Po Hsi-yun, does come to be paradigmatic, the actual sources of this impressive paradigm can be more truly located in the innumerable Zen authors who wrote under the overall sign of the monastery. In China, "Huang Po" never did refer just to an individual person and, given what we have discovered to be true of the Huang Po texts, we would be well advised to follow that practice now.

It would be difficult to find a concept more suited to understanding this manner of textuality than the early Buddhist concept "dependent

[42] Bernard Faure makes a similar point about the fruitlessness of historicist efforts "to reconstitute an original text," suggesting that we read the texts in light of their constitution through ongoing "supplementarity" (*The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, p. 55).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009

origination." Dependent origination makes clear to Buddhists how things lack independent and autonomous status. All things come into being and change over time through their interactions with other things which also share this same "selfless" status. Our discovery is that, not only does the person Huang Po come to us in complex interdependence, but so does his text. The extent to which this continues to disappoint us is the extent to which reading Zen is just what we need.

"Reading," however, is no more exempt from this "dependent" status than are texts. The character of your reading "originates dependent" upon a whole host of factors that you may never have noticed.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Stockholm University Library, on 04 Nov 2017 at 13:09:41, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511983209.002
Cambridge Books Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009