

Esoteric Zen

*Zen and the Tantric Teachings
in Premodern Japan*



Stephan Kigensan Licha

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Esoteric Zen

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By

Stephan Kigensan Licha



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*This book is dedicated to the memory of my former teacher,
the old Buddha Ryūun Taisan*

*Dante, perché Virgilio se ne vada, non pianger anco,
non pianger ancora; ché pianger ti conven per altra spada
Divina Comedia, Purgatorio, 30.55–57*



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Abbreviations

BGSR	<i>Butsugo shinron</i> 仏語心論. By Kokan Shiren 虎関師鍊. NDZK, vol. 10, 175–353.
CZS	<i>Chūsei zenseki sōkan</i> 中世禅籍叢刊. Edited by Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, Ishii Shūdō 石井修道, and Takahashi Shūei 高橋秀栄. 12 vols. Kyōto: Rinsen shoten 臨川書店, 2012–2020.
DDZS	<i>Dengyō daishi zenshū</i> 伝教大師全集. Edited by Tendaishū shūten kankō kai 天台宗宗典刊行会. 4 vols. Tōkyō: Tendaishū shūten kankō kai, 1912.
DNBZ	<i>Dainihon bukkyō zensho</i> 大日本仏教全書. Edited by Bussho kankōkai 仏書刊行会. 160 vols. Tōkyō: Bussho kankōkai, 1912–1922.
DNKGSKM	<i>Dainichikyō gishaku kenmon</i> 大日經義釈見聞. By Enni 円爾. CZS, vol. 12, 5–142.
DNKKM	<i>Dainichikyō kenmon</i> 大日經見聞. By Enni 円爾. NDZK, vol. 24, 65–280.
DRJS	<i>Dari jing shu</i> 大日經疏. By Yixing 一行. T 39: 579a–789c.
DRJYS	<i>Dari jing yishi</i> 大日經義釈. By Yixing 一行. ZTSZS, vol. 10.
GKSS	<i>Genkō shakusho</i> 元亨釈書. By Kokan Shiren 虎関師鍊. DNBZ, vol. 101, 133–512.
KRSYS	<i>Keiran shūyōshū</i> 溪嵐拾葉集. By Kōshū 光宗. T 76: 503a–888b.
NDZK	<i>Nihon daizōkyō</i> 日本大藏經. Edited by Nihon daizōkyō hensankai 日本大藏經編纂会. 48 vols. Tōkyō: Nihon daizōkyō hensankai, 1914–1922.
NRZS	<i>Nichiren zenshū</i> 日蓮全集. Edited by Nichirenshū fukyū kai 日蓮宗普及会. 2 vols. Tōkyō: Toshō hyōron sha 図書評論社, 1917.
NSBS	<i>Nichiren shōnin bunshū</i> 日蓮聖人文集. Edited by Suzuki Nobuyuki 鈴木暢幸. Tōkyō: Yūbōdō shoten 有朋堂書店, 1935.
SHS	<i>Saihokushū</i> 濟北集. By Kokan Shiren 虎関師鍊. In <i>Gozan bungaku zenshū</i> 五山文学全集. Edited by Uemura Kankō 上村觀光. Vol. 1, 40–365. Kyōto: Shibunkaku Shuppan 思文閣出版, 1992.
ShSZS	<i>Shingonshū zensho</i> 真言宗全書. Edited by Shingonshū zensho kankōkai 真言宗全書歡呼会. 42 vols. Kōya: Shingonshū zensho kankōkai, 1933–1940.
SSZS	<i>Sōtōshū zensho</i> 曹洞宗全書. Edited by Sōtōshū zensho kankōkai 曹洞宗全書刊行会. 33 vols. Tōkyō: Sōtōshū zensho kankō kai, 1970–1973.
T	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新脩大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 et al. 100 vols. Tōkyō: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切經刊行会, 1924–1933.
TSZS	<i>Tendaishū zensho</i> 天台宗全書. Edited by Tendai shūten hankōkai 天台宗典刊行会. 25 vols. Tōkyō: Daiichi shobō 第一書房, 1935–1937.

- X *Manzokuzōkyō* 卍続藏經. Edited by Maeda Eun 前田慧雲 and Nakano Tatsue 中野達慧. 88 vols. Tōkyō: Zōkyō shoin 藏經書院, 1905–1912.
- YK Yōkōji 永光寺 Archive. Microfilm reproductions held at Sōtōshū bunka chōsakai, Komazawa University. Call number Yōkōji – Ishikawa – 64, Kyōten, Kirigami. Individual kirigami cited by Sōtōshū bunka chōsakai index number.
- ZHS *Zenmon hōgoshū* 禪門法語集. Edited by Mori Daikyō 森大狂. 2 vols. Tōkyō: Kōyūkan 光融館, 1895–1896.
- ZTS *Zōtanshū* 雜談集. By Mujū Ichien 無住一円. Edited by Yamada Shōzen 山田昭全 and Miki Sumito 三木紀人. Tōkyō: Miyai shoten 三弥井書店, 1973.
- ZSS *Zenshū sōden shiryō no kenkyū* 禪宗相伝資料の研究. By Ishikawa Rikizan 石川力山. 2 vols. Tōkyō: Hōzōkan 法藏館, 2001.
- ZSSZS *Zoku sōtōshū zensho* 続曹洞宗全書. Edited by Sōtōshū zensho kankō kai. 10 vols. Tōkyō: Sōtōshū zensho kankō kai, 1974–1977.
- ZTSZS *Zoku Tendaishū zensho* 続天台宗全書. Edited by Tendai shūten hensanjo 天台宗典編纂所. 35 vols. Tokyo: Shunjūsha 春秋社, 1987–.

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Three Buddhas Sitting in a *Maṇḍala*

Concerning alchemy it is more difficult to discover the actual state of things, in that the historians who specialise in this field seem sometimes to be under the wrath of God themselves; for, like those who write of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy or on Spanish politics, they seem to become tinctured with the kind of lunacy they set out to describe.

HERBERT BUTTERFIELD



Three Buddhas are sitting in a *maṇḍala*. The first Buddha is seated on a lotus flower in the east, and it knows its own mind. The second Buddha is seated on the northern of the eight petals of the lotus at the center of the *maṇḍala*, and it knows both its own mind and that of the first Buddha. The third, most splendidly adorned, Buddha is seated in the middle of the same lotus as the second Buddha, and it knows its own mind as well as the minds of the previous two Buddhas. Which Buddha is preaching the Zen 禪 teachings?¹

The above brainteaser is one of the problems Japanese Buddhist scholiasts faced when they first encountered Song period Chan 禪 or Zen teachings.² The question of which Buddha propagated which teaching, although deeply rooted in East Asian Buddhist thought in general, occupied an especially dominant position in Japanese scholastic discourse. This was due to the centrality of the tantric teachings, which claimed to be the direct communication to sentient

- 1 This setup is adapted from KRSYS, T 76: 761b. The three Buddhas are Śākyamuni, Amoghasiddhi, and Mahāvairocana. In the Taizō 胎藏 *maṇḍala*, one of the two fundamental *maṇḍala* of Japanese tantric Buddhism, they are found as the central deity of the eastern Śākyamuni division (*shaka'in* 釈迦院), on the leftward petal of the central lotus flower, and in the middle of the central lotus flower. Here, Amoghasiddhi is considered the *dharmakāya* of Śākyamuni. On the mantrically and maṇḍalically mediated relationship between Śākyamuni and Amoghasiddhi, see the Shingon scholiast Raiyu's 頼瑜 (1226–1304) *Hishō mondō* 秘鈔問答, T 79: 312b.
- 2 In order to highlight the problems involved in simply identifying Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen as a single tradition, I will use “Chan” when referring to Chinese and “Zen” when referring to Japanese movements.

beings of the enjoyment the Buddha derives from its own perfection.³ All other Buddhist teachings had to position themselves in relation to this claim. Although the tantric dominance of Japanese Buddhist discourse had begun to weaken by the time Song-period Chan or Zen teachings arrived in the late 12th century, Chan or Zen pioneers still were under pressure to clarify the relation between the new continental Buddhism they championed and the established, tantrically inflected, Buddhist discourse. As the novel idiom that went with Chan or Zen, far from being immediately comprehensible, only gradually became accepted as a valid form of religious speech, Japanese Zen pioneers at least initially had no choice but to explicate Chan or Zen teachings in the dominant tantric dialect of scholastic Buddhism.

From this process of translation new and surprising questions emerged, such as which of the Buddhas housed in a tantric *maṇḍala* was responsible for preaching Zen. The answer to this seemingly inoffensive question had real-world consequences. In China, the patriarchal myth of Chan or Zen having been transmitted in an unbroken line from the historical Buddha to contemporary masters was in no small part responsible for its popularity among the governing elite. In Japan, on the other hand, this advantage could easily turn into a liability, for within the *maṇḍala* the historical Śākyamuni was, at least on one reading, but a sidekick of the sovereign Mahāvairocana Buddha.

In this monograph, I argue that, as the proponents and detractors of Chan or Zen wrangled over questions such as where Zen ought to be positioned in the *maṇḍala*, or whether it perhaps could meaningfully be said to reside outside the *maṇḍala*, they introduced into the tradition tantric ideological patterns and hermeneutical strategies that gave rise to a uniquely Japanese configuration of Zen. According to this configuration, Zen could accommodate, to name but one example, tantric embryology, not as graft but as part of its very fiber. Consequently, *kōan* 公案 could be interpreted as guides to the, maternal or maṇḍalic, womb. I refer to the configuration that makes such readings possible as “esoteric Zen,” and would like to follow its introduction with two immediate caveats.

First, esoteric Zen is an etic concept. I certainly hope to demonstrate that a careful reflection on the sources to be discussed below allows us to construct esoteric Zen as a coherent analytical category that is both faithful to, and illuminating of, these sources. Furthermore, I claim that esoteric Zen can be traced and delineated with a modicum of precision through and within a plurality

3 Another common denomination for Japanese tantric Buddhism is “esoteric” Buddhism (*mikkyō* 密教). On the vexing relationship between these two terms, see Orzech, Payne, and Sørensen, “Introduction,” pp. 3–18. As I will use “esoteric” in a broader sense, I will speak of “tantric” Buddhism when referring to Japanese *mikkyō* specifically.

of materials belonging to different genres and periods. However, esoteric Zen does not correspond to any single term or concept found in these sources.

Second, what follows is an attempt at writing intellectual history, or a history of ideas, in the wake of the discursive turn. I am not, in other words, primarily interested in what groups of medieval Japanese practitioners we consider to have been Zen Buddhists did or did not do. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which these practitioners and their interlocutors construed whatever it was they did as Zen. Even more specifically, I am interested in those ways of construing Zen that constitutively involved tantric discourses. Esoteric Zen, therefore, is not a term for a certain form of institution, for instance a monastery equipped with facilities for both formal seated meditation and tantric rites such as Enni's 円爾 (1202–1280) Tōfukuji 東福寺. Nor is esoteric Zen a form of practice akin to *kōan* introspection, such as for instance the repetition of *mantra* or *dhāraṇī* during seated meditation. Nor, finally, is esoteric Zen a certain text or genre of texts, such as oral transmission materials. Rather, it is an interpretive strategy or hermeneutical stance, one among various, that allows practitioners to think about certain institutions, practices, or texts as Zen institutions, Zen practices, or Zen texts in a specific way. This monograph is an attempt to elucidate how this esoteric Zen was constructed as a category, or rather, as a family of related categories.

1 Familial Purity

Esoteric Zen certainly never gained sole dominion over the premodern category of Zen. Yet as I hope to demonstrate, esoteric forms of Zen did play an important role in the intellectual history of Japanese Buddhism; first in central institutions such as the Zen pioneer Enni's Tōfukuji, sponsored by the most powerful aristocrat of his time, Kujō Michiie 九条道家 (1193–1252), and eventually also in Zen lineages such as those belonging to the Sōtō 曹洞 and Genjū 幻住 factions. Although its fortunes sharply declined with the emphasis on orthodoxy and orthopraxy that came to dominate Buddhist traditions during the Tokugawa 徳川 (1603–1867) period, some of its vestiges, such as the transmission in the Sōtō faction of secret initiatory documents known as *kirigami* 切紙, often containing tantric symbolism or esoteric lore, are still with us today.

Despite its importance in negotiating a place for Chan or Zen in the context of early medieval Japanese Buddhism and its wide diffusion during the later medieval period, in previous scholarship this strand of Zen, and especially its formative phase in the 13th and the early decades of the 14th centuries, has received scarce attention apart from as a brief episode of religious miscegenation. This neglect finds its justification in the thesis that during the Kamakura

鎌倉 (1185–1335) and early Muromachi 室町 (1336–1573) periods, Japanese Zen developed from false starts and impure beginnings into a major cultural and religious force through the faithful importation and skillful adaption of, as it were, “real” Chinese Chan. In the 1960s, the Zen historian Imaeda Aishin 今枝愛真 (1923–2010) coined the terms “concurrent practice Zen” (*kenshū zen* 兼修禪) and “pure Zen” (*junsui zen* 純粹禪) to describe this process. Early Japanese Zen pioneers such as Yōsai 榮西 (alt. Eisai, 1141–1215), the putative founder of the Rinzaï 臨濟 faction, or Enni, the founder of the Shōichi 聖一 lineage and one of the protagonists of the present monograph, practiced Chan or Zen teachings concurrently with tantric and Tendai 天台 *Lotus* teachings. In so far as they failed to establish an independent Zen tradition, Imaeda considered these figures as representing an intermediary period that was eventually overcome by the “pure” Chan or Zen instituted by the likes of the Chinese émigré monk Lanxi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (1213–1278), or the putative founder of the Sōtō faction, Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253).⁴ These latter masters are depicted as purists in two senses. First, they established Zen as institutionally independent from the classical factions of Japanese Buddhism; and second, they founded a “pure” tradition in basing themselves on the Chinese model of Chan practice codified in the monastic regulations known as the “Pure Standards” (C. *qinggui* 清規, J. *shingi*). In the Chan and Zen traditions’ collective historical imagination, Baizhang Huaihai’s 百丈懷海 (720–814) establishment of the *canones* that bear his name represents the movement’s emergence as a full-fledged member of elite monastic Buddhism. Lanxi or Dōgen are considered to have replicated this feat in Japan, thereby bringing about a decisive break with the corrupt Buddhist establishment.⁵ As Washio Junkei 鷲尾順敬 (1868–1941) observed as early as 1901:

The Buddhism of the late Heian [平安 (794–1185)] being rotten and corrupted, it ultimately came to the first stirrings of a new Buddhism (*shin bukkuyō* 新仏教). This new Buddhism appeared in two aspects of contemporary religious thought, that is to say the Pure Land teachings and the Zen school.⁶

4 See also Furuta, “Eisai no shisō.” More recently, Ibuki has argued the same. Ibuki, *Zen no rekishi*, pp. 190–191.

5 On the central role of scholars such as Imaeda in developing this discourse, see Wada, “Kamakura chūki,” pp. 95–97. In fact it was Enni who composed one of the first Japanese *shingi*. For a list of Japanese and Chinese monastic regulations, see Kagamishima, *Shūhen*, p. 209. See also Collcutt, *Five Mountains*, pp. 135, 145–149.

6 Washio, *Zenshū shiyō*, p. 12. On Washio and his influence on Zen historiography, see Klautau, “Against the Ghosts of Recent Past,” pp. 286–287.

This notion of a progression from an institutionally entangled and ideologically tainted to an independent and pure Zen school has deep historical roots. It continues a sectarian strategy Zen monks had used to discredit each other's legitimacy since medieval times. Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1268–1325), the Sōtō faction's fourth generation reformer, characterized the teachings of Yōsai as "impure" (*jun'ichi narazu* 純一ナラズ) and contrasted them negatively with those of Dōgen, who "widely disseminated the true *Dharma*" (*shōbō o guzū su* 正法ヲ弘通ス) and thereby became the "founding ancestor in Japan" (*Nihon no genso* 日本ノ元祖).⁷

"Purity" for Keizan meant to adhere to, or at least to claim convincingly to adhere to, the model of continental Chan. Japanese Zen monks were unique among the new movements arising during the Kamakura period in that they sought to derive their legitimacy from Song China. This marked Zen with an ambiguous foreignness, and sometimes exposed it to severe criticism. The charges brought often centered on the understanding that as a foreign religious tradition Zen lacked suitable relationships with the indigenous deities that protected the Buddhist lineages and institutions proper to Japan as land of the gods. In his *Nomamori no kagami* 野守鏡 the courtier and poet Minamoto no Arifusa 源有房 (1131–?), who was a stringent critic of the Zen and Pure Land movements, linked this lack of respect for the gods to Zen monks' disregard for mortuary taboos and other matters indispensable to the proper politico-religious governance of the country.⁸

In general, however, Zen's foreign origins were a mark of distinction, and its partisans lost no time in trying to convert them into spiritual authority. For instance, the great polemicist Kokan Shiren 虎関師鍊 (1278–1347) in his history of Japanese Buddhism, the *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書, included Yōsai in the category of "wisdom transmitters" (*denchi* 伝智). This category is comprised of those who carried the Buddha's gospel from China to Japan.⁹ Kokan's sectarian attempt to position Yōsai among this heroic company foreshadows the modern construct of "pure Zen," which likewise identifies "pure patriarchal Zen" with Song Chan.¹⁰

This notion of a development from impure to pure Zen often goes hand in hand with a second preconception, namely that after they had freed themselves from the Buddhist establishment's foul embrace, the various Zen factions soon

7 See Keizan's sectarian history, the *Denkōroku* 伝光録, T 82: 407c–408a.

8 See *Nomamori no kagami*, 89. In fact, Zen monks shared this disregard for funerary taboos with the members of other movements of recluse or *tonsei* 遁世 Buddhism. See Matsuo, *A History of Japanese Buddhism*, pp. 152–159; Stone, "Do Kami Ever Overlook Pollution?"

9 See GKSS, p. 2, 29.

10 On the problem of "pure Zen," see also Wada, "Kamakura chūki."

underwent spiritual decline. The exact reasons and circumstances scholars cite for this supposed decline differ by institution and faction. The Sōtō faction, for instance, is portrayed as losing the pure vision of Dōgen due to the many compromises made with the popular demand for worldly benefits and the magics that could deliver them.¹¹ The Rinzai factions associated with the powerful Five Mountains (*gozan* 五山) institution, on the other hand, supposedly fell victim to their own success. Having a controlling interest in the China trade, as well as acting as custodians of fashionable continental culture, the great monasteries of Kamakura and Kyōto supposedly soon lost their spiritual vigor and fell into lewd flamboyancy.¹² Zen allegedly would continue in such a state of degeneracy for centuries, until during the early Tokugawa period reform movements arose that restored its original glory.

One of these reform movements culminated in Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 (1686–1769) cementing the status of his own Ōtōkan 応灯関 lineage deriving from Daitokuji 大徳寺 and Myōshinji 妙心寺 as the sole orthodoxy of the Rinzai faction.¹³ Another reform movement, this time in the Sōtō faction, was led by Manzan Dōhaku 叡山道白 (1635–1715) and others. Responding to Tokugawa period religious policy, this movement sought to unify the Sōtō faction into a centrally organized school by returning it to its pure origins in Dōgen's Zen. The movement eventually succeeded in abolishing the medieval practice of changing one's *Dharma* lineage to that of the temple at which one presided as abbot (*garanbō* 伽藍法) instead of adhering to one's teacher's lineage (*ninbō* 人法).¹⁴ In the generation after Manzan, masters such as the superb philologist Menzan Zuihō 面山瑞方 (1683–1769) continued to entrench Dōgen, and especially his notoriously elusive *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏, as the Sōtō faction's standard of orthodoxy.

Even if scholars do not explicitly subscribe to the paradigm of the rise, fall, and revival of pure Zen, and among Western scholars very few still do, it has influenced the discussion of medieval Zen in more subtle ways. In so far as Zen is construed either with reference to its Chinese origins, or along teleological lines with reference to its Tokugawa period orthodoxy, medieval Zen tends to be framed in a way that isolates it from the broader medieval Buddhist world. The example of the treatment of the Zen movements' relationships with the Tendai faction, although admittedly not conclusive, may serve to illustrate this tendency. As is commonly observed, the majority of Japanese Zen pioneers

11 See for example Kōchi, "Keizan zenji."

12 See for instance Collcutt, *Five Mountains*, p. 100.

13 See Mohr, "Zen Buddhism," p. 4.

14 On the *Dharma* transmission reform movement, see Bodiford, "Dharma Transmission."

heralded from the Tendai faction, including Yōsai, Enni, and Dōgen. However, the Zen movements', usually antagonistic, interactions with Tendai traditions did not end with them. Rather, throughout the later medieval and well into the early modern period, Tendai tantric and *Lotus* traditions provided indispensable resources for the formulation of the esoteric lore of the Zen movements, especially in the Sōtō faction.¹⁵ As Ōkubo Ryōjun 大久保良順 has remarked, although outwardly at each other's throats, in intellectual terms Zen and medieval Tendai worked "hand in glove."¹⁶

Yet in many accounts of Japanese Zen, the Tendai tradition hardly appears, and if, then in the guise of a soon-to-be-overcome rival.¹⁷ Even when discussing esoteric Zen lore that has clear and direct precedents in the tantric and Tendai *Lotus* traditions, for instance the symbolism of the monastic robe (*kesa* 袈裟) in the Sōtō faction, scholars such as Bernard Faure search for its meaning far off on Chinese shores, rather than on the nearby slopes of the Tendai headquarters on Mt. Hiei 比叡.¹⁸ One of the few topics on which substantial continuities between the Tendai and the Zen faction have been recognized in previous scholarship is that of the Zen precepts.¹⁹ Yet even on this topic, the influence of Tendai on Zen is often limited to a brief and fleeting initial period, after which Tendai and Zen precept practices are understood to go their separate ways.

15 On the interaction between Tendai doctrinal studies and Sōtō *kōan* traditions, see Licha, "The Zen of Words"; for the influence of Tendai precept initiation on Sōtō transmission rituals, see Licha, "Dharma Transmission Rituals"; for Tendai criticism of the Zen school, and Zen counter strategies, see Licha, "Keiran shūyōshū"; also Licha, "Tendai isshū."

16 See Ōkubo Ryōjun, "Tendai kuden hōmon to Zenshū," p. 56.

17 See for instance the almost complete absence of Tendai in a recent history of early Japanese Zen, Heine's *From Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen*. "Tendai" does it not even make it into the index.

18 Faure reaches all the way back to China when tracing the origins of medieval Sōtō speculation on the *kesa*, referring to the "Vinaya master Yijing" 義淨 (635–713) as well as to the *Nienfo jing* 念仏鏡 attributed to the Pure Land patriarch Shandao 善導 (613–681), among other sources. Faure, "Quand l'habit Fait Le Moine," p. 232. As Mano Shinya has persuasively shown, a much more likely source for Sōtō speculations on the monastic robe is available, namely the medieval Japanese Tendai elaborations on the same subject. Mano specifically points to the *kaike* 戒家 or precept faction of the Tendai school, which developed an elaborate numerological interpretation of the monastic robe. Mano, "Yōsai," pp. 222–226.

19 See Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen*, pp. 168–185; Bodiford, "Bodhidharma's Precepts."

2 Recovering Common Ground

It was Kuroda Toshiō 黒田俊雄 (1926–1993) who did more than any other to dislodge the notion that the rise of the new Buddhist movements of the Kamakura period (*Kamakura shin bukkyō* 鎌倉新仏教), including the Zen movement, represented a radical break in the history of Japanese Buddhism.²⁰ Kuroda demonstrated that it was not the new but the established Buddhist schools that continued to dominate the religious scene well into the medieval period. The Kamakura New Buddhists, instead, occupied a marginal position, although the upper echelons of the new Zen networks eventually joined, rather than replaced, their establishment peers as elite monastic institutions charged with carrying out prayer services for the nation. The Kamakura New Buddhists coexisted with their establishment contemporaries in complex institutional, ideological, and personal networks that included not only the classical schools' mainstream factions, but also a variety of reform movements within each of the established schools. These, in turn, maintained multifaceted relationships with both the representatives of the Kamakura movements and their establishment *confratres*.²¹

Building on Kuroda's insight, Funaoka Makoto 船岡誠 emphasized the Zen movements' roots in the established traditions of Japanese Buddhism.²² Funaoka observed that, due to its perceived Chinese origins, Zen tends to be studied in a "family style" of inquiry that replicates the tradition's own genealogical obsessions and neglects its connections with other movements of Japanese Buddhism. In response, Funaoka pointed out that various forms of "meditation masters" (*zenji* 禅師) had existed in Japanese Buddhism since the Nara 奈良 (710–794) period. Furthermore, in the late Heian period, a struggle occurred within the established schools between the scholastic elite, drawn mostly from the ranks of the nobility and focused on doctrinal studies and tantric ritual, and monks of lower status, who emphasized monastic discipline and more readily accessible religious practices such as meditation or the

20 For an appreciation of Kuroda's groundbreaking scholarship, see the special volume of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23, 3–4 (1996) edited by James Dobbins.

21 For an overview and discussion of this aspect of Kuroda, see Sueki, *Kamakura bukkyō keiseiron*, pp. 27–103; especially pp. 45–51. One monk who in a sense straddled all the dividing lines was Ryōhen 良遍 (1194–1252) of the Hossō 法相 school. See Minowa, "Ryōhen."

22 Funaoka sets out this argument in great detail in his *Seiritsu*.

invocation of the grace of the Amida 阿弥陀 Buddha.²³ This struggle gradually led some factions to seek independence from the established schools and resulted in the formation of independent Pure Land, *vinaya*, *Lotus*, and Zen movements. When Song period Chan teachings arrived, they were received into this newly available Zen-shaped space, a process that helped determine the specific forms Zen would, or could, take in medieval Japan. Or to put it differently, in studying the formation of Zen as both a category and a movement in early medieval Japanese Buddhism, what was transmitted from China was no more important than how it was received in Japan.

Unfortunately, Funaoka closed his account with Kamakura figures such as Yōsai, thereby suggesting that as continental teachings and eventually teachers arrived and colonized the conceptual space of Zen, the established traditions' contributions to the development of the Zen movement came to an end.²⁴ Fortunately, on the other hand, scholars have continued to build on the combined insights of Kuroda and Funaoka. This effort has precipitated a double shift in the perception of the medieval Zen movement. First, it has become clear that the broad mainstream of medieval Zen actually was with exactly the long reviled "impure" Zen movements and their heirs, the aestheticism of the *gozan*, or the popular compromises of the post-Keizan Sōtō faction.²⁵ Second, the study of these movements has begun to break through the genealogical style of inquiry and instead to consider them part and parcel of medieval Japanese Buddhism. This turn to study the medieval mainstream of Zen against the background of Japanese Buddhism as a whole has guided scholarly curiosity back to the beginnings of the Japanese Zen movement, to those such as Yōsai and Enni who hitherto often had been dismissed as having failed in establishing "true" Zen traditions, or to movements such as Dainichibō Nōnin's 大日房能忍 (d.u., fl. 12th century) so-called Daruma 達磨 faction, the first indigenous and much maligned Japanese Zen movement.²⁶

In its attempt to offer an intellectual history of esoteric forms of Zen, the present study shall focus on Enni and his lineage. A common characteristic of

23 For a short introduction to Funaoka's main thesis, see Funaoka, "Heian jidai no zensō." For a brief overview in English, see Stone, "Do Kami ever Overlook Pollution?," p. 224; Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen*, pp. 7–12.

24 Funaoka, *Seiritsu*, pp. 146–218.

25 For a discussion of this trend, see Davin, "Datsu kamakura zen?" For work stemming from this change of perspective, see for instance Döll, *Im Osten des Meeres*. Also Vallor, *Not Seeing Snow*. For the Sōtō movement, see Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen*.

26 On the Daruma school, see Breugem, "From Prominence to Obscurity." Also Furuse, "Saikō"; the same, "Futatabi."

early Zen pioneers such as Yōsai and Enni was that they actively engaged in tantric ritual and scholasticism even while propagating their respective version of whatever it was they considered to be Zen. For this reason, older scholarship has settled on the moniker “concurrent practice” (*kenshū*), the appropriateness of which has recently been challenged. For instance, Katō Michiko 加藤みち子 has pointed out that for thinkers such as Enni, Zen and the tantric teachings did not stand beside one another as isolated and monolithic blocks. Rather, they interacted in ways that produced unique doctrinal patterns irreducible to either part. Katō calls the religious formation from which these patterns arose “Zen / Tantra” (*zenmitsu* 禅密),²⁷ and succinctly sums up a pressing *desideratum* in Zen scholarship by calling for them to be taken seriously as a form of Zen thought and practice specific and unique to medieval Japan.

3 Zen / Tantra

Yōsai was already an established Tendai tantric adept when he departed on his second voyage to China. During the four years of his sojourn he trained at the monastery of Xuan Huaichang 虚庵懷敞 (d.u., fl. 12th century), who was a master of the Huanglong 黄竜 (J. Ōryū) branch of the Linji 臨濟 faction. Although Yōsai today is revered as the founder of (Rinzai) Zen in Japan, the overwhelming majority of his literary output is devoted to either tantric scholasticism, or monastic discipline and the precepts, the latter being his lifelong preoccupation.²⁸ The only one of his texts that extensively addresses Chan or Zen teachings is the *Kōzen gokokuron* 興禅護国論 or *Treatise on Establishing Zen to Protect the Country*. In this apologetic work Yōsai defended himself against the charge of promoting a schismatic heresy by emphasizing the continuities, not least in terms of lineage, between himself and the founder of the Japanese Tendai tradition, Saichō 最澄 (767–822).²⁹ Yōsai’s defense relies on Chinese texts such as the *Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄 by Yongming Yanshou 永明延寿 (904–976) to argue that Chan or Zen and the scholastic teachings of Japanese Tendai are in perfect accord. Consequently, Yōsai discussed what he had learned in China in a way that fit the conceptual space labeled “Zen” as was available in, or definable according to, contemporary Japanese, and specifically Tendai, doctrinal discourse. Yōsai did on occasion quote *kōan* or instructions

27 Katō Michiko, “Enni zen”; Katō Michiko, “Daie.”

28 On Yōsai and the precepts, see Mano, “Yōsai.”

29 See *Kōzen gokokuron*, T 80: 5c, 9b–10a.

on seated meditation.³⁰ He did not, however, dwell on those elements that might be considered most distinctive of Chan or Zen, nor did he address their relationship to the tantric teachings.³¹ In fact, in his collection of edifying Buddhist tales, the *Zōtanshū* 雜談集, Enni's disciple Mujū 無住 (1227–1312) reported that although Yōsai did transmit the “gate of Zen” (*zenmon* 禪門) and the precepts (*kairitsu* 戒律) from China, he did not institute the communal practice of meditation. According to Mujū it was Dōgen and Lanxi who transmitted the practice of group meditation when the time was ripe.³²

The scarcity of information on Yōsai's understanding of Zen underlines the importance of Enni and the early generations of his Shōichi lineage for understanding Zen / Tantra.³³ In his youth, Enni studied Tendai tantric teachings with some of Yōsai's leading disciples, including Eichō 榮朝 (1165–1247) and Gyōyū 行勇 (1163–1241), from whom he also received the Zen transmitted within this lineage. After his first-hand encounter with contemporary Song Chan, an encounter his teachers lacked, he was in a unique position to negotiate the relation between Chan or Zen and the tantric teachings.

The *Zōtanshū* hints that Enni understood, and was aware that he understood, this relationship in ways that his predecessors and peers in the nascent Zen movement did not all, or entirely, approve of. The text explains that Enni put special emphasis on ritualistic or ceremonial practices (*ji no gyō* 事/行) such as the chanting of *dhāraṇī* incantations. This roused the ire of some other monks who had travelled to the continent, who admonished that Enni should adhere to Song customs and reduce the time spent on incantations in favor of

30 See for instance *Kōzen gokokuron*, T 80: 11c for *kōan* and 12a for meditation instructions, abbreviating Changlu Zongze's 長蘆宗蹟 (fl. 12th century) *Zuochan yi* 坐禪儀, T 48: 1047b–c.

31 One text traditionally attributed to Yōsai, the *Shinzen yūshingi* 真禪融心義, addresses the relation between Zen and the tantric teachings by arguing that Zen practice corresponds to the mystery practice of mind (*imitsu* 意密), and Zen's “separate transmission outside the teachings” (*kyōge betsuden* 教外別伝) corresponds to the practice of the “markless three mysteries” (*musō sanmitsu* 無相三密). I concur, however, with the findings of recent scholarship, which argues that the *Shinzen yūshingi* is in fact apocryphal. See Takayanagi, “Den Eisai.”

32 See ZTS, 257.

33 Strictly speaking, “Shōichi lineage” (*Shōichi ha* 聖一派) only refers to those of Enni's descendants active within the Zen context. Enni himself had received Yōsai's Yōjō 葉上 Tendai tantric lineage, which he also passed on to his disciples. Furthermore, the tantric lineage originated by Enni's student Chikotsu Daie 癡兀大慧 (1229–1312), for instance, is known as the Anyō 安養 line, after the temple at which he was active. For the sake of avoiding even more esoteric, in both meanings of the word, terminology than is already inevitable, I will use “Shōichi line” in an inclusive sense to refer to members of all lineages descending from Enni.

time spent sitting in meditation. Enni forcefully replied that to make seated meditation the sole standard of monastic practice in the manner of Chinese monks was a limited approach. In China, Enni pointed out, monks and lay people were eager to practice seated meditation, and consequently there were few ceremonies. Japanese monks, however, spent little time on meditation. If they did not hold ceremonies and chant incantations, how could they repay the debt of gratitude they owed the faithful for their alms? Therefore, such talk of simply following continental precedent and doing meditation in the manner of Song style Chan really should stop. Mujū's account closes with the claim that Enni's interlocutors had no reply to his stinging rebuke.³⁴

It is important to note that Enni did not concede that his Zen style was in any way deficient because of its departure from Chinese norms, nor did Mujū imply so when recounting the episode. On the contrary, Mujū praised Enni for his emphasis on *dhāraṇī*, eulogizing them as the most efficient means of cultivation during the last age of the *Dharma*.³⁵ This shamelessness in departing from continental standards should, I argue, be taken to imply that Zen practitioners such as Enni judged the validity and authenticity of their practice on a standard different from that invoked by fellow China travellers, or even sectarian critics such as Keizan.

Mujū can provide us with a first inkling as to this different kind of standard. In the *Shōzaishū* 聖財集, one of his more doctrinally oriented works, Mujū touched on a story about the Tendai prelate Kakua 覚阿 (1143–?). Kakua went to China in 1171, a full sixteen years before Yōsai's second voyage, and apprenticed under the Chan master Xiatang Huiyuan 瞎堂慧遠 (1103–1176). Among Japanese pilgrims to China, Kakua holds the unique distinction of being mentioned as a *Dharma* successor in Chan lineage chronicles.³⁶ According to Mujū, during his stay on the continent Kakua met a "certain Chan teacher," likely Huiyuan, to whom he mentioned that tantric teachings flourished in Japan. When his interlocutor inquired as to what these tantric teachings might be about, Kakua replied that according to the tantric teachings, "when first the mind [of awakening] is roused, it already has fulfilled complete awakening;

34 See ZTS, 276. William Bodiford interprets this passage somewhat differently. See Bodiford, "Zen and Esoteric Buddhism," p. 930. Bodiford argues that Enni was a pioneer of the combined use of incantations and seated meditation, thereby creating the impression that Enni criticized some unnamed Japanese monks for not devoting themselves to both with sufficient fervor. However, Bodiford's reading appears both ungrammatical in combining two separate sentences into one, and tendentious in separating Enni's reply from its immediate context.

35 See ZTS, 277.

36 See *Xu chuandeng lu* 続伝燈錄, T 51: 679a, 683b.

without moving life and death even a little, one arrives at *nirvāṇa*.” To, one presumes, Kakua’s delight, the Chan master agreed that the teaching of his own school was exactly like this.³⁷ In so far as he endorsed this story, it would appear that for Mujū, who stood in the lineage extending back to Yōsai via Enni, the definition or standard of Zen included commensurability with tantric teachings.

To establish a relation between Zen and tantric teachings that implied their mutual translatability was a uniquely Japanese problem that did not exist in Song China.³⁸ Consequently, what emerged from wrestling with it was a form of Zen unique to the Japanese Buddhist context. Again, it was Mujū who first clearly articulated this point. The Zen style of Tōfukuji, Enni’s monastery in Kyōto, Mujū explained, is greatly dependent on the *Zongjing lu*.³⁹ Mujū’s estimation of the *Zongjing lu* as a key text for Enni likely is correct. In early medieval Japan, the *Zongjing lu* was widely popular even beyond incipient Zen circles such as those of Yōsai or Nōnin. Furthermore, Enni prominently lectured on this voluminous text to the court.⁴⁰ As Takayanagi Satsuki 高柳さつき has pointed out, what made the *Zongjing lu* so attractive to Zen pioneers like Yōsai and Enni was that the text stresses the fundamental role of “one mind” (C. *yixin* 一心, J. *isshin*) as the ontological, psychological, and moral ground of

37 See *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 5, 439b.

38 In China, the relationship between Chan and tantric teachings had been discussed during the Tang 唐 (618–907) period. The circles within which the so-called Northern Chan teachings developed partially overlapped with the circles of those interested in the newly-arriving tantric teachings. For a preliminary sketch of possible lines of inquiry into these debates, see Sharf, “Buddhist Veda.” Lin Pei-ying has pointed out that an important context to the Chan / tantric debate were precept ceremonies and their relationship with meditative practices. See Lin, “Comparative Approach.” Precept ceremonies are also a prominent feature in the encounter between Chan and tantric Buddhism as recorded in manuscript materials from Dunhuang. As Henrik Sørensen has remarked, although tantric, or as he prefers, esoteric Buddhist ritual practices appear to have had a certain appeal for Chan practitioners, unlike in the Japanese case there is little doctrinal influence of tantric Buddhism on Chan. See Sørensen, “Meeting and Conflation.” On the other hand, as Dalton and van Schaik have discussed, such doctrinal confluences are apparent in so-called Tibetan Zen texts, some of which show Chan or Zen teachings being developed in the context of *mahāyoga*. See Dalton and van Schaik, “Chan and Tantra.” In remarks pertinent to our present concerns, van Schaik makes clear that these confluences should not be construed as syncretistic but rather as reflecting yet permeable orthodoxies. See van Schaik, *Tibetan Zen*, “Zen and Tantra” (eBook without page numbers). However, those early Chinese and Tibetan debates do not appear to have elicited much interest from medieval Japanese scholiasts negotiating the relation between tantric and Zen teachings. Mujū, however, mentions one of them briefly in his *Shōzaishū*. See CZS, vol. 5, 441b.

39 See *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 5, 439a.

40 See GKSS, 218.

the Buddhist tradition, a ground upon which Zen and the scholastic teachings could be unified.⁴¹

However, as Mujū adroitly noted, by the time Yongming composed his voluminous treatise the tantric teachings had been lost in China,⁴² and consequently cannot be found in the *Zongjing lu*. In these remarks, Mujū identified the central *Problembewusstsein* from which Zen / Tantra arose. The problem was not to reconcile Zen and the scholastic teachings in general. That task had already been accomplished admirably in works such as the *Zongjing lu*. Rather, it was to reconcile Zen with the tantric teachings in specific. On this point, the *Zongjing lu*, as the rest of the Chinese Chan tradition, was silent. In other words, whereas Chinese Chan had to navigate a binary division between itself and the scholastic teachings, Japanese Zen had to find its place in a tripartite Buddhist world, shared by itself, the scholastic, and the tantric teachings. To be certain, to an extent these two undertakings overlapped, not only with each other but with the wider, well-developed East Asian Buddhist discourse reflecting on the relationships between different forms of the Buddha's teaching.⁴³ However, in its specificity the project of Zen / Tantra led to results that almost literally are unthinkable in a different doctrinal context.

Enni's willingness to depart from Chinese norms with reference to Japanese circumstances, as well as Mujū's high level of self-reflexivity in identifying the confrontation with the native tantric teachings as a key point on which his own Zen tradition differed from its Chinese Chan ancestor, suggest that these masters were fully conscious of the fact that they were not simply transmitting and promoting a continental teaching but rather were engaged in constructing something new. Scholars such as Katō and Takayanagi have identified this something new as Zen / Tantra and traced it to specific doctrinal patterns according to which both tantric and Zen teachings could be derived from a common ground in a transcendent "one mind."⁴⁴ To offset my own understanding of the novelty of figures such as Enni and his heirs from such an approach, I will speak of "esoteric Zen" instead.

41 See for instance Takayanagi, "Darumashū."

42 This is Mujū's Japanese perspective speaking. It would be more correct to say that in China the tantric teachings, rather than being lost, had been disseminated differently. See Sørensen, "On Esoteric Buddhism."

43 The most comprehensive scholarly overview in English of these discourses can be found in Mun, *Doctrinal Classification*. The perhaps most comprehensive overview to be found in any Western language is Petzold, *Classification*. Petzold's work is based on traditional Tendai doctrinal studies.

44 Takayanagi, "Kamakura Rinzai zen," pp. 27–49.

4 Constructing Esoteric Zen

Whereas scholars such as Katō focus their investigation of Zen / Tantra on the doctrinal level, I would like to suggest that the doctrinal maneuverings they explore depend on something subtler, namely the hermeneutical intuition that Zen and tantric teachings indeed can be explicated in terms of each other. In this sense, Enni's unique achievement was not the formulation of this or that doctrinal position, but rather to render the Song-style Chan or Zen he brought from the continent available to Japanese doctrinal speculation in the first place. He did so by reading Zen into the tantric discursive cosmos by defining it as the direct, non-linguistic indication of the Buddha's inner self-knowledge. It was this, as it were, pre-doctrinal or axiomatic move that opened up the conceptual space within which the hermeneutical operation and interpretative strategy of making Zen make sense by reading it through tantric discourse, or what I call "esoteric Zen," becomes possible. I would like to close the current section of these introductory remarks by sketching the kind of esoteric hermeneutics Enni's pioneering efforts enabled, drawing on an example from Enni's disciple Chikotsu Daie 癡兀大慧 (1229–1312).

Chikotsu composed a commentary on the famous *Ten Ox Pictures* (C. *Shiniu tu* 十牛圖, J. *Jūgyūzu*), the *Jūgyūketsu* 十牛決 or *Determination of the Ten Oxen*. As part of his explication of the eighth vignette, "Man and Ox both Forgotten," Chikotsu comments on the famous Chan or Zen slogan, "directly pointing at the human heart, seeing nature, becoming Buddha" (*jikishi ninshin kenshō jōbutsu* 直指人心見性成佛). Chikotsu held that the "human heart" directly indicated is, "the heart-lump of red flesh (*shakuniku shindan* 赤肉心団)."⁴⁵ The interested Zen practitioner likely would casually assume this to be a reference to the Chinese Chan master Linji Yixuan's 臨濟義幻 (?–866) famous saying on the "true man of no rank" (C. *wuwei zhenren* 無位真人): "Upon your lump of red flesh (C. *chirou tuan* 赤肉団) is one true person without rank who is always going in and out of the face of you all. If you have not realized this yet, look! Look!"⁴⁶ In pointing to the red lump of flesh, Chikotsu's exposition appears faultlessly orthodox.

Except that when speaking of the heart-lump of red flesh, Chikotsu was being entirely literal. The heart or mind (*shin* 心) indicated by Zen, according to Chikotsu, is precisely the physical, lumpy, meaty organ in the chest. The process by which Chikotsu arrived at this conclusion is a torturous one that

45 See *Jūgyūketsu*, 340.

46 See *Zhenzhou Linji Huizhao chanshi yulu* 鎮州臨濟慧照禪師語錄, T 47: 496c.

will occupy us at length in Chapter 4. In brief, Chikotsu inherited from his teacher Enni the axiomatic idea that Zen referred to the inner self-verification of Mahāvairocana. In the tantric teachings, this inner verification is manifested in Sanskrit seed syllables, especially the syllable *a*. Zen, on the other hand, is based on the principle of “not establishing words and letters” (*furyū monji* 不立文字). Consequently, according to Enni, Zen refers to the mind of Mahāvairocana *before* any syllables have arisen. Furthermore, since Godai’in Annen 五大院安然 (841–889?), the consummate scholiast who completed the Tendai tantric system, it has been taken for granted that the tantric mind of awakening (*bodaishin* 菩提心) was identical with the heart organ in the chest, the eight fleshy lobes of which turned into the eight petals of a lotus during the process of tantric cultivation.⁴⁷ It is on this heart-lotus that the syllable *a* appears. Based on these premises, the problem for Chikotsu presented itself as follows: If Zen does indicate the mind of Mahāvairocana before any syllables arise, and if the mind of Mahāvairocana has a basis in the physical body, which part of the body does Zen indicate when indicating mind? Chikotsu concluded that Zen indicates the heart organ as a simple piece of meat, as yet unblossomed into the fleshy lotus and syllable that are the tantric mind. For ease of reference, I summarize the esoteric interpretations of the famous Zen slogans on which Chikotsu’s reading is based in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Enni and Chikotsu’s esoteric Zen parameters

Chan or Zen slogan	Esoteric Zen interpretation
Separate Transmission Outside the Teachings (<i>kyōge betsuden</i> 教外別伝)	The Inner Self-Verification of Mahāvairocana Outside Scholastic and Tantric teachings
Not Establishing Words and Letters (<i>furyū monji</i> 不立文字)	Before the Syllable <i>A</i> is Manifested
Directly Pointing at the Human Heart / Mind (<i>jikishi ninshin</i> 直指人心)	The Physical Heart in the Chest
Seeing nature, fulfilling Buddhahood (<i>kenshō jōbutsu</i> 見性成佛)	

47 See Annen’s *Taizō kongō bodaishingi ryakumondōshō* 胎藏金剛菩提心義略問答鈔, T 75: 454c.

It is important to note exactly what Chikotsu did and did not do in constructing an esoteric Zen interpretation of a classical Chinese Chan work. Significantly, Chikotsu did not introduce any overtly tantric symbols, doctrines, or terminologies. For this reason, unless one is aware of its wider background, Chikotsu's reading might be taken as being entirely, even exemplarily, orthodox according to even continental Chan standards. In other words, Chikotsu did not establish a syncretistic or hybrid Zen by combining it with tantric elements.

Instead, Chikotsu simply changed the rules according to which the often enigmatic, frustratingly elusive, or just plain incomprehensible statements of Chan or Zen were to be made to make sense. It is in this sense of operating on the level of the rules guiding interpretation, rather than on the level of doctrinal interpretations themselves, that I consider esoteric Zen not a fixed set of relationships between tantric and Zen elements, but rather a hermeneutical attitude or interpretative strategy that logically precedes the doctrinal structures of Zen / Tantra.

If esoteric Zen does not depend on any specific borrowings from tantric traditions, how then are we to demarcate it from other forms of Zen? I will return to this problem in the conclusions. For now, let me but briefly outline a possible solution in a few rough strokes. Given its procedural nature, the sphere of esoteric Zen cannot be defined normatively. Rather, it will have to be established on a case-by-case basis through a genealogical inquiry. I close by giving one, I hope fairly uncontroversial, example of this process.

The theory that the *dharmakāya*, or the most abstract body of the Buddha, actively preaches the *Dharma* is a supposed hallmark of the tantric teachings. Enni's second-generation successor, Kokan, sought to establish a non-tantric version of it on the authority of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, a text long associated with the Zen tradition. This text recommended itself because already Kūkai 空海 (774–835), the founder of one of the major factions of the Japanese tantric tradition, had used the *Laṅkāvatāra* as textual evidence for his own, tantric understanding of the *dharmakāya* teaching as the Mahāvairocana Buddha. Kokan's strategy was to go back beyond Kūkai to the *sūtra* itself to show that Kūkai's interpretation is a derivative one at odds with the text. According to Kokan, it was the physical body of the Śākyamuni Buddha himself that was nothing other than the *dharmakāya* preaching. When the first Chan or Zen ancestor Mahākāśyapa inherited Śākyamuni's teaching it was but the transmission, from physical body to physical body, of the *dharmakāya*'s self-realization. This transmission is the foundation of the Zen lineage, the member bodies of which preserve the Buddha's incarnate awakening to the present day. Thus although in his exposition of this theory, notably in his commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra*

sūtra, the *Butsugo shinron* 仏語心論 or *Treatise on the Heart of the Buddha's Words*, Kokan does not rely on tantric terminology, doctrine, or symbolism, he is reading Zen transmission through a complex of problems generated from the tantric understanding of the *dharmakāya* teaching.

The genealogy of the pattern on which Kokan bases his esoteric reading of Zen transmission can be traced to a problem that greatly vexed Chikotsu, namely the relationship between the preacher of the tantric and the preacher of the Zen teachings, a problem with the maṇḍalic formulation of which I have opened this discussion. Chikotsu addresses this problem through his reading of the Chinese *Chuanxin fayao* 伝心法要, a collection of the teachings of Huangbo Xiyun 黄檗希運 (?–805). In this text, Huangbo, too, asserts the notion that the *dharmakāya* is preaching, but only in so far as it permeates all phenomena, a much weaker version of the theory as espoused in Japanese tantric traditions.⁴⁸ Chikotsu reads this Chinese Chan text not only against the grain, but also through the *maṇḍala*, re-defining the *dharmakāya* as Mahāvairocana, the maṇḍalic sovereign, whom Zen practitioners but glimpse in the abstract through the historical Śākyamuni Buddha. Thus whereas the Chinese Chan text refers to an impersonal *dharmakāya* as broadly conceived within East Asian Buddhism in general, Chikotsu reads it instead in the context of the specifically Japanese tantric understanding of the *dharmakāya* actively, personally teaching. In other words, he shifts the hermeneutical framework within which the *Chuanxin fayao* ought to be read. Kokan inherited the problem of the preacher of Zen, but again changed the rules of the game, offering Zen answers to tantric problems. Yet in so far as he still had to address such tantric concerns, he remained within the purview of esoteric Zen. What Kokan attempted was to guide Śākyamuni out of the *maṇḍala*, an attempt that, as with any good labyrinth, but ensnared him more subtly.

5 Structure and Overview of Chapters

The present study is structured into two parts, which in terms of historical period covered, problems investigated, and sources utilized represent two distinct phases or aspects of the form of esoteric Zen that developed in the environs of Enni's Shōichi lineage.⁴⁹ The first part, comprised of Chapters 1 to 4,

48 See *Chuanxin fayao*, T 48: 382a.

49 I explicitly affirm the possibility of other forms of esoteric Zen having existed during the medieval period, and perhaps even still existing today. However, this study focuses on Enni and his lineage due to the relative wealth of materials available.

takes up the formation of esoteric Zen from the 13th to the 14th centuries. The second part, comprised of Chapter 5 to 7, focuses on esoteric, and especially embryological, readings of *kōan* as developed in the later medieval and early modern Sōtō and Genjū lineages. In connecting these embryological readings of *kōan* with earlier embryological teachings developed in the Shōichi lineage and its environs, this second part is intended to demonstrate that esoteric Zen as a hermeneutical strategy endured into the early modern period.

5.1 *Part 1*

The first part of this monograph is devoted to a necessarily technical and somewhat tedious investigation of the relation between the tantric teachings and Zen as formulated by three main protagonists, namely Enni, Chikotsu, and Kokan. Each of these thinkers represents one of the possibilities inherent in esoteric Zen. Enni discovered the Chan teachings he had encountered on the continent as the immediate self-verification of the maṇḍalic sovereign, Mahāvairocana, beyond even the tantric teachings themselves. Zen for Enni indicated the, if the neologism be forgiven, trans-tantric pinnacle of a tantric cosmos. Chikotsu, on the other hand, inverted his teacher's judgment while adhering to his main premise. Zen was inferior to the tantric teachings exactly because it dispensed with tantric forms of mediation. Kokan, finally, represents a threshold in the history of esoteric Zen. Up until his generation, in the Shōichi lineage tantric and Zen teachings had been transmitted together. From Kokan's time onwards, they began to go their separate ways, and Kokan devoted his vast erudition and considerable polemical spleen to demonstrating the Zen teachings' superiority over the tantric teachings. In this sense, he represents the beginning of a new phase of esoteric Zen in that its hermeneutical patterns began to be used in a Buddhist world in which the tantric teachings no longer held sway. Rather, they represented merely one option among a variety of different sources of meaning and ways of making Zen make sense.

In terms of sources, this part makes extensive use of manuscript materials recently discovered at the Ōsu 大須 archive housed at Shinpukuji 真福寺 in Nagoya, and published between 2012 and 2020 in the series *Chūsei zenseki sōkan* 中世禪籍創刊. From among the wealth of materials discovered, of particular importance to our concerns are the tantric commentaries associated with the Shōichi lineage, which will be introduced in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. These materials serve to fill a gap in the textual record of, especially, Enni. While previously known materials associated with the master dealt either with Zen or with the tantric teachings, with hardly any overlap between them, the newly discovered materials show how Enni conceived of the two traditions' relationship.

A word perhaps needs to be said on the question of authorship. Most of the texts usually attributed to Enni were compiled or edited by others. Enni's *Recorded Sayings*, for instance, were composed by Kokan Shiren based on the reminiscences of Enni's students. Similar questions of authorship also arise concerning Enni's recently discovered tantric commentaries. Rather than texts written by Enni himself, they are lecture notes taken by one or the other of his students, generally Chikotsu Daie. This, as it were, distributed form of authorship raises the question up to which extent any specific text can be relied upon to actually represent Enni's thought. Absent the discovery of some materials attributable to Enni himself with a higher degree of certainty than currently available, this question is unanswerable. However, as I shall also argue in the body of this study, if we compare the various texts attributed to Enni we can discern common doctrinal patterns and concerns. For instance, Enni's interpretations of the *Vairocanābhishambodhi* as preserved in the commentaries recorded by Chikotsu are consistent with the notes on the same teachings preserved by Mujū. If we further compare these commentaries with the ones attributed to Chikotsu, we find a clearly different emphasis and doctrinal orientation. In short, while we cannot be sure about the attribution of any specific text to Enni considered as an individual thinker, the corpus of texts so attributed does exhibit a significant degree of consistency. It is in this sense that for present purposes, and certainly with a degree of trepidation, I accept attribution of the texts in question to Enni.

To now turn to the outline of part 1, Chapter 1 investigates the background against which esoteric Zen arose by sketching the conceptual space into which the continental teachings were received. After outlining the discussion of Zen teachings in the Tendai school until the early Kamakura period, the chapter turns to a famous dispute between Enni and the Tendai scholiast Jōmyō 静明 (d.u., fl. 13th century). In previous scholarship, Jōmyō often was depicted as Enni's follower, and hence as the conduit for a one-way influence from Zen on Tendai. In contrast, I demonstrate that Enni's Zen and Jōmyō's Tendai teachings addressed a common problem in a common doctrinal idiom, namely how to reconcile what is "outside the teachings," the mind of the Buddha, with the Buddhist teachings in their concrete forms. This problem had arisen in parts from Tendai attempts to integrate the tantric with the teachings of the *Lotus sūtra* by deriving both from a common but transcendent origin. This origin provided Enni with a model on which to establish his Zen "outside the teachings." Ironically, in order to do so, Enni drew on metaphors re-coined in the Tendai tradition. Jōmyō, on the other hand, offered a detailed criticism of the Zen teachings' failure to integrate the linguistic form of the teachings with

their ontological ground, while still suggesting that certain Zen masters might overcome this difficulty.

Chapter 2 focuses on Enni's perhaps most famous teaching, namely his formulation of three different mechanisms or methods used to shoehorn practitioners into awakening. These three are, first, the rational discourse of scholasticism; second, the *kōan* of Zen; and third, an ambiguous device known as "turning upward" (*kōjō* 向上) or "direct indication" (*jikishi* 直指). Enni constructed his Three Mechanisms, as I shall refer to them, from Chinese Chan sources, especially the formidable *opus* of the great master Yuanwu Keqin 円悟克勤 (1063–1135), whom Enni shamelessly plagiarized. By drawing on Jōmyō's discussion of the metaphysics of language, I show that Enni adapted Chan teachings in a manner that enabled him to counter Tendai criticism of the Zen movement as viciously quietist. Enni's defense centered on the concept of "turning upward," or the "direct indication" of mind, the third of his Three Mechanisms. As even Jōmyō was forced to concede, through this mechanism Enni had in hand a means to directly communicate the mind of the Buddha akin to the ones used in the Tendai school.

Chapter 3 will show that it was through this mechanism of "turning upward" that Enni could read the Zen teachings into the tantric world of medieval Japanese Buddhism. The chapter first discusses Enni's taxonomy of Buddhist teachings, through which Zen came to be inscribed by the constitutive tantric distinction between exoteric and tantric teachings. Enni then exploited an ambiguity in his Chinese source so as to decouple "turning upward" or "direct indication," the third of his communicative mechanisms, from the use of *kōan*, which he considered secondary devices. Rather than relying on any symbolic intermediary, "turning upward" simply pointed, as with a finger, at the mind, and hence was "outside the teachings," the latter here understood as linguistic, or at least semiotic, structures. Yet insofar as Zen still communicated mind, if by gesture rather than by word or sign, it established communicative devices directly in the Buddha mind. Having equipped Zen with a tantric distinction and disassociated it from its most characteristic feature, the use of *kōan*, Enni finally was in a position to declare that the mind directly indicated by Zen was but the mind of the central tantric deity Mahāvairocana.

Chapter 4, which brings the first part of this study to a close, takes up Chikotsu's and Kokan's understanding of the physical basis and the preacher of the Zen teachings. These problems have already been sketched above. This discussion concludes by showing that through Enni's and especially Chikotsu's esoteric readings, an understanding of Zen emerged that put extraordinary importance on physicality and embodiment. Kokan de-tantrified this

understanding of Zen and stressed the superiority of the Zen preacher's historical, physical body over the mind-woven bodies of tantric deities.

5.2 Part 2

Part 2 will trace the physicality of esoteric Zen into the *kōan* lore of the late medieval and early modern Genjū and Sōtō factions by exploring a spectacular interpretation of the old yarns as referring to the gestation of Buddhas in the womb. In terms of sources, this part of the essay will draw on two genres of initiatory texts transmitted within Zen lineages. The first are secret *kōan* manuals known variously as *monsan* 門參, *missanroku* 密參錄, or similar. These materials contain selections and fixed hierarchies of *kōan* materials into which advanced students were initiated during secret sessions of oral instruction. The second set of sources to be used are so-called *kirigami*. These, too, were secretly transmitted initiatory documents, but unlike the more extensive *kōan* manuals they often consisted of a single slip of paper, and extensively used charts or other graphic elements to convey their message. Unlike the *kōan* manuals, which were common to all factions of the medieval Zen movement, *kirigami* appear to have been limited to the Sōtō faction. In terms of content, however, much that can be found in Sōtō *kirigami* can also be seen in the *kōan* manuals of other factions, especially the Genjū lineage, which had close personal ties with Sōtō factions.

Chapter 5 introduces some important background for understanding how embryological readings of *kōan* could emerge in the first place. It shows how after Enni numerous interpretations of his Three Mechanisms arose, some of which redefined them as categories of *kōan*. At the same time, thinkers such as Mujū began to discover the language of *Yijing* 易經 cosmology as an alternative idiom in which to express tantric concepts, or perhaps more accurately, as a meta-language into which both Zen and tantric discourses could be transposed. The Sōtō school adopted both developments into their *kōan* lore by combining them with the Five Positions (*goi* 五位), a metaphysical scheme with strong *Yijing* connections. Sōtō masters developed a system of *kōan* lore in which *kōan* were seen to manifest from the mind's inner self-differentiation, a process that was understood to mirror the cosmological cycle of manifestation from and re-absorption into the Great Ultimate (*taikyoku* 太極) of Neo-Confucian cosmology. *Kōan* practice thus was conceived of as a return to and rebirth from the cosmic origin. This motif was ripe for embryological embellishment.

Chapter 6 returns its focus to the Shōichi lineage. Within the tantric circles in which Enni moved, embryological teachings were widespread and thoroughly mainstream. After exploring their background in the lineages and sponsorship

networks surrounding Enni, I examine the tantric embryology transmitted by Enni and Chikotsu. According to this doctrinal and ritual system, tantric initiation re-enacts the process of gestation. However, neither master explicitly articulated Zen teachings in embryological terms. Chikotsu even outright denied such a possibility. After exploring the possible doctrinal reasons behind this lacuna or refusal, the chapter will suggest a surprising origin for embryological readings of Zen *kōan*, namely Enni's competitor for the favors of their patron Michiie, the tantric scholiast Dōhan 道範 (1178–1252).

Chapter 7 finally will conclude this study of esoteric Zen by investigating embryological discourses in the Sōtō and Genjū lineages, and especially the embryological interpretations of *kōan* that arose from the confluence of the developments sketched in the previous two chapters. I suggest that embryological teachings developed in the Genjū and Sōtō factions from entwinement with other medieval religious movements such as Ise Shintō 伊勢神道. Importantly, on the development of the latter Chikotsu had a decisive influence. Having absorbed tantric and embryological notions from a common symbolic repertoire on which all medieval Buddhist practitioners could draw regardless of sectarian or lineage association, Genjū and Sōtō masters used them as a framework within which to elucidate *kōan*. According to the rules governing this framework, not only could representative *kōan* be identified directly with tantric concepts such as the syllable *a* as a literal, impregnating seed, Zen practice *in toto* could be understood as a dwelling in the womb, and *kōan* could be read as guides referring to precise aspects of reproductive physiology.

Outside the Teachings

Enni, Jōmyō, and the Common Conceptual Space of Zen and Tendai in Early Medieval Japan

1 Introduction

In his history of Japanese Buddhism, the *Genkō shakusho*, Kokan Shiren recounts the following meeting between Enni, who had studied Chan on the continent, and Jōmyō, a pivotal figure in the formation of medieval Tendai scholasticism and oral transmission teachings (*kuden hōmon* 口伝法門):

Jōmyō of Mt. Hiei heard that Enni excelled in Tendai teachings and consulted him on the four kinds of *samādhi* while at the same time inquiring about the purport of the separate transmission [of Zen]. Enni's expositions were of a clarity Jōmyō had never heard before and he was startled listening to them. Enni said, "You are not yet proficient in the teachings and contemplations [of Tendai]; how then could the true tenets of my single transmission of Buddhas and ancestors be within reach of [your] doctrinal learning?" Jōmyō was struck listening [to these words], and from then on incessantly visited [Enni]. At one time, [Jōmyō and Enni] discussed the relative and absolute (*sōzetsu nitai* 相絶二待). Enni indicated them using the [Zen] school's lock and key (*kanrei* 関捩),¹ and Jōmyō's doubt suddenly vanished. He rose and with tears flowing paid obeisance, saying, "If I had not come to see the priest [Enni], how would I have espied the mysterious pivot of Buddhas and ancestors? From now on, life after life, I vow I shall not waste the opportunity rare as hitting a mustard seed with a needle!"²

Previous scholarship has pointed to this encounter as an example of the influence exerted by the Chan or Zen teachings on the medieval Tendai school, and especially on the latter's oral transmission and original awakening (*hongaku*

1 This term indicates both the central point to be understood as well as the most direct means of arriving at it. In the Zen context, this often indicates employing the "shout and staff" rather than discursive means to guide students.

2 GKSS, 218b–219a.

本覺) teachings.³ This interpretation can be traced back to the great *Lotus* fundamentalist Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282). Nichiren blamed the continental teachings for what he considered a repugnant eagerness with which his *confreres* abandoned the letter of the *Lotus sūtra* in preference for quietist contemplation of mind.⁴

That Enni exerted such influence over the religious scene of contemporary Kyōto is certainly a notion Kokan was eager to promote. Kokan was perhaps the most gifted and truculent polemicist the Japanese Zen schools ever produced. Despite its historiographical affectations, the *Genkō shakusho* is a sectarian document composed to promote Kokan's own Shōichi lineage deriving from Enni.⁵ However, it is unlikely that Kokan shaped Enni and Jōmyō's meeting entirely out of the airy nothing of a propagandist's imagination. There is little doubt that the two men knew, or at least knew of, each other. Jōmyō repeatedly mentions Enni by name in his writings, and both masters belonged to the network of patronage surrounding the powerful aristocrat Kujō Michiie. Michiie was the sponsor of Enni's monastery Tōfukuji as well as the father of Jigen 慈源 (1213–1255), the head abbot of the Tendai headquarters on Mt. Hiei on whose behalf Jōmyō visited Enni.⁶

Besides their entangled biographies, Enni and Jōmyō also display a common doctrinal sensitivity or *Problembewusstsein*. Enni's hagiography, the *Shōichi kokushi nenpu* 聖一國師年譜, reports that at age fifteen Enni attended a lecture on the Chinese Tiantai 天台 patriarch Zhiyi's 智顗 (538–597) *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀, a voluminous and comprehensive work on the spiritual cultivation techniques used in the Tiantai tradition. The lecturer in charge faltered at explicating the meaning of the passage, "Therefore, outside the four noble

3 See for instance Stone, "Not Mere Written Words," pp. 172–175; Groner, "Medieval Japanese Reading," pp. 53–54. In Japanese, see Tamura, "Kaisetsu," pp. 437–438. For a dated yet still useful overview over the presumed relationships between the Tendai original awakening and oral initiation teachings and the other movements of medieval Buddhism, see Tamura, "Nihon tendai," pp. 661–672. Tamura, who established the standard periodization of original awakening thought, argues that Tendai original awakening thought represents the matrix of Kamakura New Buddhism, an idea originally formulated by Shimaji Daitō 島地大等 (1875–1927). For a discussion of the Shimaji / Tamura "matrix" theory as well as some of its critics, see Stone, "Medieval Tendai."

4 Furuse Tamami has assembled relevant quotations from Nichiren's works. See Furuse, "Dainichibō Nōnin." Following Nichiren's suggestion, some modern scholars have attempted to identify specific medieval Tendai doctrines as having arisen from Zen's supposed influence. See Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, pp. 174–175. For a criticism of this notion, see Sasaki, "Jōmyō." Also Kubota, "Ben'en."

5 See Imaizumi, "Kokan Shiren," pp. 74–79.

6 See Aramaki, "Jōmyō hōin," pp. 74–79.

truths, the essence of *dharma* (*hosshō* 法性) is established.” The young Enni effortlessly supplied the correct interpretation.⁷

Jōmyō, on the other hand, was a respected Tendai meditation master in his own right. In this capacity, he is said to have attended a 1268 debate on the *Mohe zhiguan* conducted in front of retired emperor Gosaga 後嵯峨 (1220–1272). During this debate, the question of whether there is a superior gateway to the Buddhist truth apart from the contemplation of the Three Truths of the Tendai school (*sandaikan no hoka ni chōka no hōmon* 三諦觀ノ外ニ超過ノ法門) or not was raised.⁸ Although these anecdotes provide little detail, they suggest that to both the future Zen master and the Tendai scholiast meditation texts such as the *Mohe zhiguan* suggested the intriguing if unsettling possibility that there was something outside the strictures of the formal teachings *qua* sum-total of all that can be communicated.

In the present chapter, I use Enni and Jōmyō’s dispute to explore this common space “outside of the teachings.” What unfolded therein, I suggest, was not a monologue Chan or Zen proponents directed at their less insightful Tendai competitors. Rather, it was a lively conversation, and often a quarrel, conducted in a variety of Japanese Buddhist doctrinal dialects sprinkled with a smattering of Buddhist Chinese. For the greater part of his life, Enni was preoccupied with just such a dialogue. Enni spent only six years in China, but after his return nearly forty years teaching and interacting with Japanese Buddhist monks who were trained, for the most part, in traditional scholasticism and tantric Buddhism, traditions Enni himself never renounced. These considerations suggest that both in communicating what he had learned on the continent, and, more importantly, in conceptualizing it for himself, Enni continued to rely on the doctrinal languages of Japanese Buddhism. Enni’s Zen was not a simple continuation of Chinese Chan. Rather, the need to articulate and frame Zen in a Buddhist idiom profoundly different in its semantics from the one used in China transformed what Enni had learned on the continent.

In the first section of the present chapter, which examines the implied meanings and associations playing through Enni and Jōmyō’s encounter, we will explore the pre-understanding of Zen in Japanese Tendai. Tendai scholasticism considered Zen to be one of the four kinds of *samādhi* (C. *sizhong sanmei* 四種三昧, J. *shishu zanmai*) meditation practiced in the Tendai tradition, namely the constant sitting *samādhi* (C. *changzuo sanmei* 常坐三昧,

7 *Shōichi kokushi nenpu*, DNBZ, vol. 95, 130ab.

8 See Takahashi, “Kamakura jidai,” p. 192.

J. *jōza zanmai*).⁹ Furthermore, Zen was closely associated with an apophatic approach to Buddhist practice. Zen, in other words, was very much seen as a part of the Tendai teachings. Now, if Zen, as per its own claim to be a transmission outside the teachings, were to be removed from its place within the Tendai framework, would its emphasis on emptiness not plunge it into a malicious quietism that denies Buddhist ethics and ascetics? This is the criticism his opponents directed at Yōsai, the putative founder of the Japanese Rinzai Zen faction. Yōsai relied on Tiantai or Tendai doctrinal categories to refute this criticism. Yōsai's strategy in turn helped determine the kinds of questions Jōmyō would, and meaningfully could, ask of Enni. These questions again revolved around the problems of what it means to be outside the teachings and whether this involved a denial of the teachings.

The second section addresses this problem through a text commonly attributed to Enni, the *Jisshū yōdōki* 十宗要道記. In specific, it will trace a set of images used to illustrate the relationship between the teachings and Zen, namely that of a mirror and of water, through a series of Tendai oral transmission and original awakening texts. This investigation demonstrates that Enni, or at least Zen practitioners of his lineage, consciously adapted hermeneutical strategies developed within the incipient Tendai original awakening teachings and used them to account for what transcends the Buddhist teachings as commonly understood.

The third section will take up this problem from the reverse and discuss how the difficulties Zen thinkers hoped to overcome by appropriating Tendai metaphors played out in the Tendai tradition itself. Early original awakening thinkers were pushing traditional doctrinal categories to a breaking point by suggesting a fundamental level of mind and insight outside formal Tendai doctrine. Hence, they had to address the question how this "mind-contemplation" (*kanjin* 觀心) relates to their textual heritage. In fact, the charge of abandoning thought, of falling into mindless emptiness, was directed not only against the Zen school, but also against Jōmyō and his meditation teachings. As the common criticism directed against both Zen and certain Tendai teachings implies, they uncomfortably inhabited the same space "outside the teachings" and had to deal with the problems such shared occupancy caused.

9 The other three *samādhi* are constant walking (C. *changxing* 常行, J. *jōgyō*), half walking and half sitting (C. *banxing banzuo* 半行半坐, J. *hangyō hanza*), and neither walking nor sitting (C. *feixing feizuo* 非行非坐, J. *higyō hiza*) *samādhi*.

2 Finding a Place for Zen: The Doctrinal History of Zen in the Tendai School

According to Kokan's account, Jōmyō questioned Enni on two points: First, he inquired after the four kinds of *samādhi* taught in the Tendai school and their relationship with the "purport of the separate transmission" of Zen. Second, Jōmyō questioned Enni on the "relative" and "absolute." Jōmyō's queries reference both the interpretation of Zen as the negative or apophatic approach to the Tendai perfect teachings and Yōsai's defense of Zen's orthodoxy in the face of its, at least polemical, disdain for formal doctrine. In short, far from asking out of disinterested curiosity, or even naïvely, Jōmyō sought to set up Enni by challenging him on what, if anything, Zen could be apart from Tendai teachings.

Let us begin with Jōmyō's first question concerning the four *samādhi* and the separate transmission. When Chan teachings arrived in Japan from the late Heian period onwards, they were received not into a *tabula rasa* but rather into a convoluted landscape of doctrinal taxonomies, as the following remarks from the Tendai scholiast Shōshin's 証真 (1131–1220) *Tendai shingon nishū dōishō* 天台真言二宗同異章 demonstrate:

If we discuss the [single] reality and principle [on which they are both based], the perfect [teachings] of Tendai and Shingon¹⁰ are not separate. For this reason it says in the *Kyōjijō*[ron] (教時諍[論]) [by Annen], "The positive approach of the perfect teaching comprises the Shingon school, the negative approach comprises the Daruma school" and so on. I [Shōshin] say, "'Daruma school' means the *samādhi* of the single practice of constant sitting from among the four kinds of *samādhi* of the Tendai [school]."¹¹

This brief passage refers to the Zen movements as the "Daruma school."¹² This terminological choice should not be given too much weight, as already

10 "Shingon" here refers not to the school of Buddhism today known under this name, but to the "*mantrayāna*" as general term for the tantric teachings.

11 T 74: 420b.

12 "Daruma school" is also the name given to the indigenous movement of Dainichibō Nōnin by both contemporary heresiologists such as Dōgen's student Senne 詮慧 (fl. 13th century) and modern scholars. It was not an autonym used by the movement itself. Furthermore, in at least some medieval sources it is a, perhaps derogatory, term for the Zen school in general. See Furuse, "Saikō." For an example of a text that uses the term in such a general and derogatory sense, see Licha, "Tendai isshū."

Enchin 円珍 (814–891) had referred to a *Lineage Chart of the Daruma School* (*Darumashū keien* 達磨宗系円) in the catalogue of the texts he collected in China.¹³ Instead of suggesting the emergence of a new or independent Zen movement, “Daruma school” here indicates the Zen teachings transmitted within the framework of Tendai scholasticism. In order to define these more precisely, Shōshin’s text first refers to the Heian period scholiast Annen, who completed the great edifice of Tendai doctrine. In one of two drafts of a work on the periodization of the Buddha’s teachings, the *Kyōjijōron*, Annen identified the Zen school, by which term he understood the lineage of the Northern Chan teachings transmitted to Saichō from the Chinese émigré monk Daoxuan 道璡 (702–760), with the apophatic aspect (*kūmon* 空門) of the Tendai perfect teachings. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, represent Tendai’s kataphatic (*umon* 有門) aspect.¹⁴ In the second draft of his treatise, the *Kyōjijō* 教時諍, Annen ranked teachings according to their universality and singularity. On this measure, Zen resides above Tendai but below the tantric teachings. Zen, Annen argued, represents the mind of the Buddha communicated in full beyond text and doctrine. It thus exceeds Tendai, which relies on the text of the *Lotus*, yet cannot equal tantric Buddhism, in which “Mahāvairocana, constantly abiding and unchanging, at all times and in all places teaches the one perfect principle.”¹⁵ Annen built these accounts on the work of Enchin, who in his synopsis of Buddhist teachings characterized Zen as unconcerned with formal doctrine (*kyōsō shi* 教相旨) due to its emphasis on emptiness and the principle of mind itself being Buddha (*ze shin ze butsu* 是心是仏).¹⁶

The second frame invoked by Shōshin harks back to Saichō and the foundation of Japanese Tendai. While travelling in China, Saichō received the lineage of the Oxhead (C. *Niutuo* 牛頭, J. *Gozu*) faction of Chan.¹⁷ In his account of these lineages recorded in the *Naishō buppō sōshō kechimyakufu* 内證仏法相承血脈譜, Saichō characterized the Chan teachings in terms of “single practice *samādhi*” (*ichigyō zanmai* 一行三昧).¹⁸ This concept, which was of importance in both continental Chan and Tiantai circles, can refer to taking the unitary mark of the *dharmadhātu* (*hōkai* [alt. *hokkai*] *issō* 法界一相) as the sole object

13 *Nihon biku Enchin nyūto guhō mokuroku* 日本比丘円珍入唐求法目錄, T 55: 1100c.

14 T 75: 363c, 369a.

15 T 75: 362ab.

16 *Shoke kyōsō dōi ryakushū* 諸家教相同異略集, T 74: 312c. Compare the text found in Ikeda, *Chishō daishi kenkyū*, pp. 332–33.

17 DDZS, vol. 2, 528–29.

18 According to one theory, the *Naishō buppō sōshō kechimyakufu* is a composite work, the lineage charts and colophon being by Saichō, and the text by his close student Kōjō 光定 (779–858). For our purposes, the details of authorship are irrelevant. See Minowa, “Kōjō.”

of one's practice, and / or to engaging in a single mode of practice.¹⁹ As for the first connotation, in the *Kechimyaku fu* Saichō based himself on the important Chinese apocryphal *Dasheng qixin lun*'s 大乘起信論 definition of single practice *samādhi* and declared it to be the non-differentiation of "the *dharmakāya* of all Buddhas and the nature of sentient beings."²⁰ As for the second connotation, single practice *samādhi* was understood as the practice of "constant sitting," one of the four types of *samādhi* prescribed in the *Mohe zhiguan*.²¹

In the short passage quoted above, Shōshin masterfully summarized three and a half centuries of Tendai taxonomical speculation on Chan or Zen as internal to the Tendai teachings themselves. This speculation associated Zen with, first, an emphasis on contemplation of mind over bookish learning; second, an emptiness-based, apophatic approach to spiritual cultivation; and finally, a penchant for seated meditation, especially the practice of "constant sitting" from among the four *samādhi*. In the light of this background, we can now understand the query Jōmyō addressed to Enni more precisely. The problem raised by Jōmyō was that of the relationship between, on the one hand, the Tendai teachings, which include the single practice *samādhi* of the so-called "Darumashū," and, on the other, the "separate transmission outside the teachings" Enni brought from China. Was Enni's Zen the same or different from the Zen transmitted as the Tendai single practice *samādhi*? If the same, what use transmitting Zen? If different, how, being divorced from the integral framework of Tendai doctrine and ascetic methodology, can it avoid being a merely negative quietism?

This problem is reflected and developed in Jōmyō's second query regarding the "relative" and "absolute." These two terms, and even more importantly the abstract conceptual structure underpinning them, which can manifest itself in various concrete doctrinal schemes, will continue to haunt us throughout this inquiry. It hence is worth exploring them in some detail here at the outset. "Relative" and "absolute" are closely related to the taxonomy and hermeneutics of the *Lotus sūtra* and its relationship to other Buddhist scriptures. Jizang 吉藏 (549–623), the great East Asian theoretician of emptiness, argued in his *Fahua xuanlun* 法華玄論, a commentary on the *Lotus sūtra*, that the first character of the scripture's full Chinese title, *miao* 妙, which carries a range of connotations including "mysterious," "subtle," "fitting," and "exquisite," can be interpreted in

19 Faure, "One-Practice Samadhi," pp. 99–128. See also *Wenshushili suoshuo bore boluomi jing* 文殊師利所說般若波羅蜜經, T 8: 731a–c, the root text of the practice as taught in the Tiantai school.

20 DDZS, vol. 2, 525. The *Qixin lun* reads, "the body of sentient beings" (*shujō shin* 衆生身). T 32: 582b.

21 T 46: 11a.

two ways. The first, “relative” interpretation is established in comparison to the “rough,” “coarse,” or “crude” (*cu 麤*) quality of other scriptures. In this sense, the *Lotus* is “mysterious” in contrast to the distasteful superficiality of the teachings that came before it, yet still can be measured with the same rod. The second, “absolute” meaning denies such a qualitative continuity between the *Lotus* and other teachings. As Jizang, riffing off the 25th chapter of the *Daode jing* 道德經, explains:

The absolute mysterious (*juedai miao* 絕待妙) is neither “mysterious” nor “coarse”; [I] do not know how to designate it; thus, by necessity, [I] name it “mysterious.”²²

The absolute sense, in other words, lifts the *Lotus* out of any common frame of reference shared with other scriptures. Being absolutely other and thus beyond comparison, there is no possible designation for it. It is called “mysterious” but for the impossibility of calling it anything else.

Jizang’s understanding of the “absolute” emphasizes the conventional nature of language. The Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi, on the other hand, developed the concept into a dynamic interplay of apophatic and kataphatic aspects. The term I render “absolute” literally translates as “extinguishing [mutual] dependencies.” Whereas “relative” modes of expression speak of things in dependence on comparative and relational terms, in the “absolute” mode a phenomenon is considered “in and for itself,” without depending on any outside point of reference. This means that the phenomenon is rendered inexpressible, for all discourse depends on comparison and relation. However, all linguistic signs are also phenomena in and for themselves. Therefore, as phenomena in and for themselves, they are inexpressible. As themselves inexpressible, they show the absolute inexpressibility of all phenomena. Language, in other words, cannot express the absolute aspect of phenomena, but it can show it in its own absolute inexpressibility as a phenomenon in and for itself.

This point is perhaps easier grasped when applied. For Jizang, absoluteness implies that the *Lotus* teachings are outside any common frame of reference. Being incomparable, and consequently unnamable, they are provisionally designated “mysterious” by analogy alone. Zhiyi, on the other hand, argued that while on the relative level the coarse teachings have to be abolished in order to reveal the mysterious *Lotus* (*pocu xianmiao* 破麤顯妙), in the absolute sense the mysterious *Lotus* is revealed *through* the coarse discourse of the lesser teachings being opened up or made transparent (*kacu xianmiao* 開麤顯妙).

22 T 34: 371c.

In short, Jizang insisted that the absolute *Lotus* is not expressible in terms of the cruder teachings. Zhiyi, instead, claimed that it still can be shown through them.²³

In his great meditation treatise, the *Mohe zhiguan*, Zhiyi applied this hermeneutics of the relative and the absolute also to the practice of meditation, specifically the Tiantai and Tendai system of calming and contemplation (*zhiguan* 止觀). Relative calming and contemplation describe the practice of meditation in relational terms. On this level, three meanings of, say, calming can be distinguished. Calming as “stilling” wrong views, calming as “stopping” or fixing the mind on the truth, and calming as opposed to non-calming.²⁴ The absolute interpretation of calming and contemplation denies all the terms used to define it relatively by (mis-)applying Nāgārjuna’s (fl. 2nd century) famous tetralemma: Calming cannot be stilling something outside itself, for that would represent the flaw of arising from something else; calming cannot be stopping in the truth, for then it would arise by itself in so far as calming itself is but abiding in truth; calming cannot arise from a combination of different causes, for this would be the flaw of combinatory causation; finally, calming cannot arise without cause. In short, calming cannot be cashed in as a coherent concept, and neither can contemplation. Both transcend all possible conceptualizations.²⁵ Yet, just like the absolute mysteriousness of the *Lotus*, although absolute calming and contemplation are beyond expression and conceptualization, they can be revealed through expressions and conceptualizations:

The words [used to describe calming and contemplation] are unobtainable; therefore this is called “absolute calming and contemplation.”²⁶

The absolute meaning of calming and contemplation, to be unobtainable, though beyond words, can be revealed through words when they are opened up to their own unobtainability. This opening up itself is nothing but the actualization of calming and contemplation.²⁷

This detour through the hermeneutics of the *Lotus* has almost brought us to the point at which we can understand Jōmyō’s challenge to Enni. Only one more piece needs to be put into play. In 1194, Tendai monks from Mt. Hiei petitioned

23 See Zhiyi’s *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義, T 33: 697bc. See also Zhili’s 知礼 (960–1028) commentary, *Siming zunzhe jiaoxing lu* 四明尊者教行錄, T 46: 883a.

24 T 46: 21b; Swanson, *Clear Serenity*, p. 262.

25 T 46: 22a; Swanson, *Clear Serenity*, pp. 266–267.

26 T 46: 22b; Swanson, *Clear Serenity*, pp. 266–267.

27 Zhiyi’s treatment of the absolute seems closely related to paradoxes of self-reference. On these, see Priest, “Paradoxes.”

the court to prohibit what they considered the schismatic heresy propagated by Yōsai and Nōnin.²⁸ In his defense, Yōsai authored his only extended work on Zen, the *Kōzen gokokuron*. In the second part of the third fascicle, Yōsai addressed the accusation that Zen's claim to "not establish words and letters" results in one-sided attachment to quietist emptiness (*akushu kū* 惡取空) and therefore violates the Tendai teachings. Yōsai vigorously denied this accusation and insisted that Zen "practices the perfect and sudden depending on the perfect station [that incorporates all stations]" (*e en'i shū endon* 依円位修円頓). Yōsai bolstered his claim by quoting two passages from Yongming Yanshou's *Zongjing lu*. This Chan text, which advocates for the basic unity of Chan and the doctrinal teachings, including Tiantai, on the basis of "one mind," was popular in the late Heian and early Kamakura periods. Yōsai's first quotation asserts that Chan or Zen teachings are not harmfully attached to either phenomena or principle, as both are fully established in the one mind, which is the substance of Chan or Zen.²⁹ The second quotation in turn is based loosely on the *Mohe zhiguan* and introduces the relative and absolute calming and contemplation of the Tiantai school. The Chan or Zen teachings, the quote concludes, correspond to the absolute Tendai meditation teachings that do not one-sidedly cling to either emptiness or phenomena.³⁰

The heresiological implications and strategic aim of these quotations become clear from the very next passage of the *Kōzen gokokuron*, in which Yōsai sharply distanced himself from the followers of what he called the "Daruma school." Their perverted beliefs concerning the primacy of emptiness, Yōsai claimed, led them to conclude that, as from the beginning there is no delusion to overcome, there is no necessity to engage in Buddhist practice. One better just take a nap.³¹ Yōsai thus used the Tiantai doctrinal categories of a relative and an absolute approach to understanding meditation as filtered through an authoritative Chinese Chan source in order to defend his own brand of Zen against accusations of being one-sidedly attached to quiescence and thereby in violation of Tendai orthodoxy.

As has become clear, Jōmyō was far from naïve when he first queried Enni on the relationship between the Tendai four *samādhi* and Zen's transmission separate from the teachings, and then continued to press the Zen master on the relative and absolute. Jōmyō attempted to goad Enni into taking a stance

28 See *Hyakurenshō* 百鍊抄, 125.

29 *Kōzen gokokuron*, T 80: 7bc, cf. *Zongjing lu*, T 48: 496b. Phenomena and principle here most likely refer to concrete, formal practice, and abstract, mental understanding of the Buddhist truth.

30 *Kōzen gokokuron*, T 80: 7c, cf. *Zongjing lu*, T 48: 866bc.

31 *Kōzen gokokuron*, T 80: 7c.

on the controversy *du jour*, namely how Zen, once removed from the scaffolding of Tendai doctrine, could avoid the pitfalls of nihilist emptiness. As we shall see in the next section, Enni countered by drawing on the cutting edge of contemporary Tendai thought.

3 Betwixt the Ox's Horns: Enni Between Tendai and Zen

As mentioned above, Saichō had received the Northern Chan lineage of the Chinese émigré monk Daoxuan. Saichō also gathered Chan teachings while traveling on the continent. Between Daoxuan's arrival from and Saichō's departure to China, the Chan traditions' mainstream had shifted from the so-called Northern to the Southern school of Huineng 慧能 (638–713), the supposed sixth patriarch.³² In the catalogues of the texts he brought from China, Saichō lists about ten Chan works, among them what were likely the first materials associated with the new Southern Chan mainstream to be transmitted to Japan.³³ In addition to new texts, Saichō also brought with him a new Chan lineage, the Oxhead lineage he received in the seventh month of 804 from the otherwise unknown Xiuran 偁然 (d.u.).³⁴ Members of the Oxhead faction had an outsized influence on the doctrinal development of Chan through their contributions to the composition of the *Platform sūtra*, early Chan's definite vision statement.³⁵ In their relative under-determination, Saichō's Chan or Zen lineages, especially the mysterious Oxhead lineage, provided a space into which later Tendai thinkers could project their ideological needs. They thus created a reservoir of ideas and images on which Zen pioneers such as Enni could draw in turn, thereby creating complex feedback loops from which a Japanese understanding of Zen's position "outside the teachings" could emerge.

The *Jisshū yōdōki* is an idiosyncratic text attributed to Enni that is attested in a single mid-15th century manuscript copied by a certain Shunkei 春溪.³⁶ Nothing certain is known of the copyist, but Tōyō Eichō 東陽英朝 (1428–1504), the founder of one of the sub-lineages of the Rinzaï Myōshinji faction, wrote an inscription for a portrait (*zōsan* 像贊) on behalf of a member of Yōsai's lineage called Shunkei.³⁷ Furthermore, the 82nd abbot of Shōfukuji 聖福寺, Yōsai's first

32 On the construction of Huineng as the transmitter of the "orthodox" Southern stream of Chan, see Jorgensen, "Figure."

33 *Esshuroku* 越州錄, T 55: 1059ab.

34 *Naishō buppō sōshō kechimyakufu*, DZS, vol. 2, 528–529.

35 See McRae, *Seeing through Zen*, pp. 56–65.

36 The text is published in Murakami, "Jisshū yōdōki."

37 See *Shōrin mukōteki* 少林無孔笛, T 81: 407c.

monastery on Kyūshū, likewise was called Shunkei (fl. 15th century). These two data points bear out the date the *Jisshū yōdōki* gives of its transcription, 1462. Shunkei explained in his postscript that he had heard that the text was by Enni, but had not been able to obtain the original, preparing his own copy from another copy, instead.³⁸ Scholars such as Sueki Fumihiko 末本文美士 and Carl Bielefeldt have accepted Shunkei's attribution of the text to Enni.³⁹

Several circumstantial factors corroborate the attribution to Enni, or at least to the circle of his followers. As discussed in detail below, one of the features of the *Jisshū yōdōki* is the combined use of mirror and water metaphors in order to discuss the mind beyond all differentiation. This combination of images is also used in recently discovered fragmentary notes on Enni's teachings taken by his disciple Mujū.⁴⁰ Although the combined use of the images of mirror and wetness is not unique to Enni and Mujū but can also be found in early Tendai oral transmission literature, it is sufficiently unusual to add to the indirect evidence supporting the text's association with Enni or the circle of his students.

An additional scrap of evidence strengthening, if not finally settling, Enni's claim to authorship can be deduced from a peculiar turn of phrase used in the *Jisshū yōdōki*'s section on Zen. This wordplay occurs in the context of denying the validity of knowledge that is aware of itself as the knowing of an object. Repeating the character for "to know," *chi* 知, five times, the text explains that the "knowing knowledge of intentional mind being knowledge, knowledge that knows [itself to be knowledge] is false knowledge" (*shin no sai no shiru chi ha chi ni shite chi suru chi ha mochi nari* 心ノ作意ノ知ル知ハ知ニシテ知スル知ハ妄知ナリ).⁴¹ A similar formulation occurs in the *Chanzong Yongjia ji* 禅宗永嘉集, an early Tang period text attributed to Yongjia Xuanjue 永嘉玄覺 (665–713). Xuanjue is variously described as a Chan or a Tiantai monk, and in the *Yongjia ji* uses terminology and doctrine drawn from both movements. In the fourth part of the text, which deals with insight or *vipaśyanā*, Xuanjue explains that knowledge of knowing some object is an impossibility. He says:

If one knows knowing with knowing, knowing of knowing is removed from [outward perceptual] objects (*ruo yi zhi zhi zhi zhi zhi ze li wu* 若以知知知知知則離物). Removed from [outward perceptual] objects, it is yet like there is knowledge. [Yet] when one arouses knowing and knows

38 *Jisshū yōdōki*, 23.

39 See for instance Sueki, *Kamakura bukyō keiseiron*, pp. 80–84. Also the same, "Kenmitsu taisei," pp. 10–11. Carl Bielefeldt's is the only detailed discussion of the text in English. See Bielefeldt, "Filling the Zen-Shū," for the text's authorship, p. 234.

40 See *Itsudai mujū kikigaki* 逸題無住聞書, CZS, vol. 5, 470; vol. 12, 614b.

41 *Jisshū yōdōki*, p. 20.

knowing, once the latter knowing is produced, the former knowing is already gone [and therefore the latter knowing cannot arise].⁴²

Here again occurs the fivefold repetition of the character *zhi* 知, or *chi* in Japanese reading, to make a point about the deleterious consequences of mistakenly knowing knowing. Both Enni's and Xuanjue's text prescribe the same remedy, namely, to rely on naturally numinous knowing (C. *linggzhī* 靈智, J. *ryōchī*). It might be a coincidence that the exact same repetition of the character *zhi* or *chi* appears in similar contexts in both Enni's and Xuanjue's text. However, we also know from Mujū's notes on Enni's teaching that the latter was familiar with the *Yongjia ji*.⁴³ In short, while Mujū's recently recovered testimony does not resolve the question of Enni's authorship of the *Jisshū yōdōki*, it does lend Enni's claim some additional support. At the very least, it shows that some of the images and doctrinal motifs appearing in this text also circulated among Enni's students.

The *Jisshū yōdōki* introduces the so-called "ten schools" (*jisshū* 十宗) of Japanese Buddhism, that is to say, the Ritsu 律, Kusha 俱舍, Jōjitsu 成実, Hossō 法相, Sanron 三論, Kegon 華嚴, Tendai, Shingon 真言, Pure Land (*jōdo* 淨土), and Zen schools, the latter of which it terms the Buddha mind school (*busshin shū* 仏心宗).⁴⁴ These ten schools are divided into the three gates of discipline (Ritsu), teachings (from Kusha to Pure Land), and meditation (Buddha mind), and furthermore into the two categories of "within the teaching" (*kyōnai* 教内, discipline and teaching gate) and "outside the teachings" (meditation gate). The discussion of each school opens with setting out the stages and duration of the path of practice taught in it before turning to its metaphysical underpinnings, especially its discussion of consciousness. At the end of the entry on the Pure Land school, which concludes the discussion of the traditions "within the teaching," the text states that the various schools are ranked according to the depth and subtlety of the mind they reveal, beginning with the Small Vehicle, that is to say the Kusha and Jōjitsu scholastic traditions, which

42 *Chanazong Yongjia ji*, T 48: 389c.

43 See *Itsudai mujū kiki gaki*, CZS, vol. 5, 497.

44 On the implications of the emergent ten schools model for the scholarly understanding of medieval Buddhism, see Sueki, "Kenmitsu taisei." Sueki argues that the taxonomy of Buddhist schools proposed in the *Jisshū yōdōki* and other texts shows that the *kenmitsu taisei* theory as developed by Kuroda is insufficient to account for medieval Buddhism's doctrinal diversity. Furthermore, Matsunami has drawn attention to the fact that Enni quotes Annen in elaborating the ten schools. See Matsunami, *Zenshū shisōshi kenkyū*, pp. 184–187. This supports the argument to be made below that Enni drew on Tendai doctrinal categories in formulating the conception of Zen as forwarded in this text.

illuminate only six consciousnesses, and culminating in the tantric teachings, which illuminate ten.⁴⁵

The text then proceeds to discuss the meditation gate outside the teachings, the Buddha mind or Zen school. To summarize this section, by far the longest of the whole text, the Buddha mind school is defined according to the famous Chan and Zen slogan that it is “directly pointing at the human mind, seeing nature, realizing Buddhahood without establishing words or letters” (*jikishi ninshin kenshō jōbutsu furyū monji* 直指人心見性成佛不立文字). Zen proposes neither practices nor stages. It does not concern itself with doctrinal sophistries of six or ten minds. Instead, it directly actualizes the mind as Buddha (*ze shin ze butsu*). If one awakens to the intention of Zen (*zen'i* 禪意), one sees that it is the essence on which both exoteric and tantric teachings depend (*kenmitsu shoe tai* 顯密所依體), yet is without method (*mon* 門) or teaching (*hō* 法) of its own.⁴⁶

Although the *Jisshū yōdōki* does not address the problem outright, its hermeneutic strategy suggests that one of the text's main aims was to produce a taxonomy of Buddhist traditions according to which Zen occupied a position outside of and superior to the “teachings,” which here are understood to include both exoteric and tantric teachings. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, this inclusion of tantric thought and practice in the category of “teachings” is an important taxonomical feature also found in Enni's tantric commentaries, and one that marks his taxonomy of Buddhist teachings off from Chinese Chan precedent. In texts such as the *Zongjing lu*, the “teachings” against which Zen is defined primarily referred to the Huayan and Tiantai perfect, not the tantric, teachings.

Zen as the “Buddha mind school” points to a mind of such subtlety that it is transcendent of yet foundational to the teachings in both their tantric and exoteric forms. This Buddha mind is simple luminosity, the “single word ‘know’ that is the gate to all mysteries” (*chi no ichiji shumyō no mon* 知之一字衆妙之門).⁴⁷ The text offers the following characterization of this mind:

True knowing (*shinchi* 真知) naturally knows the perceptual realm without the mind pondering, effortlessly illuminates objects without the mind discriminating. Horizontally exhausting the three times it is numinously numinous (*ryōryō* 靈靈) single knowing, vertically covering the

45 *Jisshū yōdōki*, 15.

46 *Jisshū yōdōki*, 15–18, cf. Bielefeldt, “Filling the Zen-Shū,” pp. 231–234.

47 *Jisshū yōdōki*, 18. This is a saying by Heze Shenhui 荷沢神会 (668–760), the so-called founder of the Southern school and the Heze lineage of continental Chan.

ten directions it is distinctly distinct (*ryōryō* 了了) single mind. Therefore, who, having attained the nature of wetness, despises the muddy and loves the pure; who, having attained the bronze, debases the obscure and values the clear? True knowing is neither wisdom nor foolishness, just as the nature of wetness is neither muddy nor pure, the nature of bronze is neither the mirror nor the obscurity and clarity of the images that appear in it.⁴⁸

The true nature of mind is pervasive knowing beyond cogitation and discrimination. This naturally luminous and numinous mind is illustrated with two similes. The first simile is that of the wetness of water, which remains constant no matter whether the water is muddy or pure. The second simile is that of the bronze from which a mirror is fashioned, which is unchanged by the obscurity or clarity of the images appearing in it. Zen thus points to that essential quality of mind that enables it to know yet is beyond each discrete act of knowing something. This bare potential of the mind to know is the necessary condition on which distinct bodies of knowledge such as the teachings can be built. However, as the teachings are, per definition, teachings on and of something, they in principle cannot ever grasp this simple “mindness,” as it were.

The history and intellectual context of the two specific similes of mirror and water reveal a complex entwinement of Zen and Tendai discourse in the early medieval period. To begin with the mirror, it is of course a pan-Buddhist, and perhaps even a universal, metaphor for the mind. In the Chan and Zen traditions specifically, the mirror as symbol of the mind is of course part of the well-known myth of the sixth patriarch Huineng’s succession to the *Dharma*. Yet the *Jisshū yōdōki* does not reference this famous Chan precedent, but rather draws on the extensive mirror lore of the Tiantai and Tendai traditions, and especially on the versions developed within the nascent oral transmission and original awakening teachings. In his *Mohe zhiguan*, the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi uses the mirror to illustrate the principle of the Tiantai Three Truths of emptiness, provisional existence, and the middle being established in a single instance of thought:

It should be understood that one thought itself is empty, itself is provisional, itself is the middle. [...] For example, it is like a bright mirror. The brightness exemplifies “itself being empty.” The image exemplifies “itself being provisional.” The mirror exemplifies “itself being the middle.”⁴⁹

48 *Jisshū yōdōki*, 20.

49 *Mohe zhiguan*, T 46: 8c–9a.

In his famous controversy with the Hossō scholiast Tokuitsu 徳一 (d.u.), Saichō in turn referenced this simile of the mirror to fault his opponent's lacking understanding of the Tiantai or Tendai perfect teachings. Tokuitsu argued that there was no need for an independent Tendai tradition, as already the Hossō school demonstrates the equality of all phenomena by returning them to their undifferentiated fundamental nature (*shōsō kishō mon* 摂相帰性門). Saichō argued that this is a misunderstanding of the perfect teachings. The latter, he claimed, reveal that all phenomena, just as they are, instantiate the Three Truths without first having to be reduced to some ontologically primary principle. In order to comprehend the deep significance of the perfect teachings, Saichō insisted, one must grasp the intricacies of Zhiyi's simile of the mirror. This is only possible if one receives personal tutelage under a master, for "the meaning of the perfect integration (*ennyū* 円融) of image and mirror is not understood without oral explanation (*kuketsu* 口決). Truly, there is a reason for the succession of masters!"⁵⁰

During the late classical and medieval periods, various accounts of Saichō's legendary oral transmissions emerged. By gradually increasing the number, shapes, colorings, and combinations of mirrors, these transmissions often reached byzantine levels of complexity. Tendai practitioners also took to enacting oral transmissions as part of initiatory rituals. The earliest textual source for the ritual enactment of mirror lore is found in the *Koshin chūki* 己心中記, attributed to the Tendai scholiast Kakuchō 覚超 (960–1034).⁵¹ Kakuchō described an initiatory procedure that involved hanging two mirrors facing each other in the purified and adorned ritual arena. In between the two mirrors are placed the neophyte to be initiated as well as a Buddha image. In this manner, sentient being and Buddha appear together in each of the mirrors, while at the same time this image of their equality is expanded into infinity between the two mirrors.⁵²

One of the earliest references to the simile of the mirror as it appears in the *Jisshū yōdōki* can be found in the *Tendai hokkeshū gozu hōmon yōsan* 天台法華宗牛頭法門要纂 or *Essential Compilation of the Oxhead Dharma Gate of the Tendai Lotus School*, a late 12th or early 13th century text attributed spuriously

50 *Shugo kokkaishō* 守護国界章, T 74: 159c.

51 Kakuchō's authorship of this text has been questioned on account of its oral transmission character, whereas Kakuchō is considered as representing the last flowering of the textualist orientation of Tendai scholasticism not only in modern scholarship but also in traditional accounts. On this question, see Hanano, "Nihon chūko Tendai bunken," pp. 745–749.

52 See *Koshin chūki*, TSZS, vol. 9, 106c–108a, on the enactment especially 108a.

to none other than Saichō himself.⁵³ This text is comprised of ten sections, each of which likely circulated separately before they were gathered into a single text. The very first section addresses the simile of the mirror. It posits three possible interpretations of the relation between a mirror and the images appearing within it, each representing a more profound level of spiritual truth. According to the first interpretation, which roughly corresponds to Tokuitsu's position, the mirror and its images are erroneously (*meichū* 迷中) interpreted as separate (*kyakuryaku* 隔歷), representing the mind of abiding *dharma* nature (*hosshō shin* 法性心), and the myriad, transient distinctions of the transmigratory realms appearing within it, respectively. The second, awakened (*gochū* 悟中) interpretation, which roughly corresponds to the position outlined in the *Mohe zhiguan*, understands image and mirror as perfectly integrated with each other. The unchanging and abiding nature of the mirror constantly follows the images appearing within it, and the infinitely variable, floating images are equally apparent in the mirror's brightness. Finally, the third interpretation transcends (*chō* 超) all questions of error or correctness, of mirror or image, of clarity or obscurity, which are merely human conceits. What is real is but the bronze from which the mirror is crafted, and this bronze,

from the beginning cannot be said to be bright or obscure. It is only called bright or obscure according to conceptualizing thought (*sōnen* 想念). The nature of the bronze is not artificially created, it is removed from [being divided into the] front and back [of the mirror], it is not in the thought of oneself or others, and it also transcends degrees of brightness or darkness.⁵⁴

53 The only Chinese source in which a similar image is used that I could find is the *Dafangguang fo huayan jing suishu yanyi chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔 by Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839), who uses the simile of the bronze to represent **svasamvittisamvittibhāga* (C. *zhengzizheng fen* 證自證分), one of the four aspects of cognition, namely the aspect through which mind knows that it knows. See T 36: 252b. However, this passage does not appear to have been cited in Tendai materials. The closest I could find is the *Kaikan juhō* 戒灌授法, a text associated with the precept faction. This text contains a quote from the *Zongjing lu* that in turn is a quotation of a different passage from Chengguang's commentary dealing with mirrors. See *Kaikan juhō*, ZTzS, vol. 5, 10b and *Zongjing lu*, T 48: 583c, citing *Yanyi chao*, T 36: 97a. However, although the *Zongjing lu* also cites the passage on bronze at 758b, I have not seen this passage used in any Japanese Tendai materials.

54 See *Tendai hokkeshū gozu hōmon yōsan*, pp. 25–28 for the Japanese reading, pp. 326–327 for the Chinese.

The true understanding of the mirror thus points beyond even the seemingly fundamental distinction between awakening and delusion. This is essentially the same interpretation of the mirror as used in the *Jisshū yōdōki* to illustrate the “Buddha mind” of Zen.

Together with the parable of the mirror, the *Gozu hōmon yōsan* also employs the simile of the wetness of water to illustrate the true nature of mind transcendent of all discriminations and distinctions:

The mind of sentient beings again is like this. [...] Although all *dharma* constantly rise and cease, the one mind is abiding constantly. Contemplation shifts from pure to muddy, but wetness is known as constant. The awoken [mind] substance of self nature (*jishō kakuō* 自性覺王)⁵⁵ is removed from the four terms of perceiver and perceived (*nōsho shiku* 能所四句)⁵⁶ and knows the true mark of one mind (*isshin jissō* 一心実相). The two [kinds of] explanations⁵⁷ of the World Honored One do not proffer even a single word; they are removed from the position of discourse, being inexpressible (*fukasetsu* 不可説) they are perfected (*en* 円). Transcending the two views of emptiness and existence (*kūu* 空有), it is singly the true view (*shinken* 真見) of the true mark (*shinsō* 真相) illuminating the reality mark (*jissō* 実相). [...] This is the inherent reality mark (*tōtai jissō* 当体実相). For this reason, the simile of the mirror based on the level of the perfect-transcendent of bronze (*enchō dō i* 円超銅位) is established.⁵⁸

As this passage shows, the *Gozu hōmon yōsan* and the *Jisshū yōdōki* share a basic doctrinal orientation and a common imagery to communicate it. The true substance of sentient beings’ mind by itself is constantly abiding, while the flow of phenomena is but accidental. The former is like bronze or wetness, the latter like the incessant procession of images or the change from muddiness to limpidity. As this true nature of mind is beyond all phenomenal marks, it is “inexpressible.” In this manner, Enni drew on an image pioneered in an

55 “Ō” 王 “king, sovereign” here refers to the substance of mind, *shinnō* 心王 (*S. citta*) as opposed to mental concomitants, *shinsho* 心所 (*S. caitasika*). *Kakuō* refers to the inherently awoken fundamental mind substance, as opposed to the deluded substance of consciousness, *iō* 意王.

56 The four terms of perception are sameness, difference, both sameness and difference, and neither sameness nor difference.

57 The two explanations are the provisional and true explanations, or the explanations according to causal and resultant state.

58 *Gozu hōmon yōsan*, 28–29; 326–327.

early Tendai original awakening text to define the Zen movement's position "outside the teachings."

In the *Tendai hokke shū gozu hōmon yōsan* this imagery illustrating the "Oxhead *Dharma* Gate" is said to be part of the secret teachings (*hihō* 秘法) imparted to Saichō by his Tiantai mentor.⁵⁹ This is not the only oral transmission text that presents the newly formed Tendai original awakening teachings as representing the Oxhead lineage. Another is the *Gobu kechimyaku* 五部血脈 or *Five Part Bloodline*. This text shares some material in common with the *Gozu hōmon yōsan* and belongs to the same early layer of original awakening materials composed in the second half of the 12th century. The *Gobu kechimyaku*'s subtitle states that, "[t]his is called the 'reverently received Oxhead *Dharma* gate' (*chōdai gozu hōmon* 頂戴牛頭法門) placed in the treasure repository (*hōzō* 宝蔵) of Mt. [Hi]ei. It is the essential *Dharma* transmitted only to a single person."⁶⁰ In the *Kechimyaku fu*, Saichō describes the circumstances of his reception of the Oxhead lineage in virtually identical terms:

The monk from Chanlinsi 禅林寺 on Tiantai [mountain], Xiuran, transmitted the bloodline of the *Dharma* entrustment of the two countries of India and China together with the *Dharma* gate of Oxhead Mountain, [which is] the *Dharma* entrustment of Bodhidharma, among other things. Receiving (*chōdai* 頂戴) and bringing [them to Japan], I placed them in the repository (*zō* 蔵) of Mt. Hiei.⁶¹

It would appear that during the late 12th century some Tendai circles experimented with legitimizing their doctrinal speculations by casting them as Saichō's Oxhead transmission.⁶² Enni's, or at least the *Jisshū yōdōki*'s author's, use of the similes of bronze and wetness to exemplify the non-dual nature of mind suggests that he was familiar with these circles and their attempted appropriation of the Chan or Zen brand. Not only that, but he also sought to counter-appropriate the connection to Saichō and his Tendai / Oxhead heritage in turn. This is an excellent example of just how involved Tendai and Zen were in the early medieval period: The *Jisshū yōdōki* illustrates the mind of Zen with a simile derived from the incipient Tendai original awakening teachings,

59 *Tendai hokke shū gozu hōmon yōsan*, 25.

60 *Gobu kechimyaku*, DDZS, vol. 4, 581.

61 *Naishō buppō sōshō kechimyakufu* 内証仏法相承血脈譜, DDZS, vol. 2, 529.

62 Ōkubo Ryōjun has suggested that this might be based on an elaborate pun concerning two principles being complementary like the horns of an ox. See Ōkubo Ryōjun, "Tendai hokkeshū."

that in turn spuriously cast themselves in the guise of a to them obscure Chinese Chan movement.

In the *Jisshū yōdōki* the imagery of mirror and water is used to clarify the relationship between the “Buddha mind” of Zen, or the meditation gate, on the one hand, and the teachings and practices of the traditions belonging to the “teaching gate,” on the other. No such taxonomical interests are apparent in the *Gozu hōmon yōsan*, but other roughly contemporary materials did employ the two similes to such an end. The *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* 顕密一如本仏 or *Unitary Fundamental Buddha of the Exoteric and Tantric* is an apocryphal text spuriously attributed to Enchin. The text cannot be dated precisely, but as it is quoted in Raiyu’s *Shoshū kyōri dōishaku* 諸宗教理同異釈, completed in 1276, it most likely dates to the late Heian or early Kamakura periods.⁶³ This dating is supported by the fact that in trying to align the *Lotus* and tantric teachings it shares a common doctrinal interest with other early original awakening materials dating to the same period, notably the *Honri daikōshū* 本理大綱集 attributed to Saichō, and the *Endaragishū* 円多羅義集 attributed to Enchin.

As its title suggests, the *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* seeks to integrate the *Lotus* and tantric teachings by demonstrating the identity of the Buddhas who promulgate them, namely Śākyamuni and Mahāvairocana. The *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* discusses the two Buddhas’ respective threefold bodies, first according to their designation by doctrinal characteristics (*nosen kyōsō* 能詮教相), and then according to the essence of the three bodies thus designated (*shosen sanshin tai* 所詮三身体). Having established the two Buddha’s identity, the text offers the following observation:

Clearly understand! The similes of the water and the wave, the water and the mirror of the exoteric and tantric cause one to renounce [minor] benefits and to return to the source [of all benefits instead]. Scholars dwelling in the fundamental intention (*hon’e* 本懷) of the two Buddhas, not arising, not ceasing, neither hidden [i.e. tantric] nor revealed [i.e. exoteric], they sojourn leisurely in the true of bronze and wetness.⁶⁴

The relationship between *Lotus* and tantric teachings is one of the fundamental concerns of Tendai dogmatics. The *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* seeks to overcome the two teachings’ contradictions by positing a more fundamental, undifferentiated level of Buddhahood into which their differences can be dissolved. To be Mahāvairocana or to be Śākyamuni is but accidental to

63 T 79: 60c.

64 DNBZ, vol. 24, 158b.

fundamentally being Buddha. This understanding the *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* illustrates with the now familiar images of bronze and wetness.

The intricacies of water and bronze do not end here, however. For if one chooses to establish the unity of the *Lotus* and tantric Buddhas, as well as their respective dispensations, by appealing to a sphere of transcendent non-differentiation, the question arises how this transcendent level relates to the concrete details of the teachings to be unified. In the context of its discussion of the Buddha of the *Lotus*, the *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* suggests the following solution:

First, according to the exoteric teachings, there is the difference between the two gates of the derivative and the fundamental [of the *Lotus sūtra*] (*honjaku nimon* 本迹二門). According to the intention of the derivative gate, when one for the sake of the real (*jitsu* 実) discards the provisional (*gon* 権), the limited three bodies [of the Buddha] follow the capabilities and conditions [of sentient beings] and the four teachings are not the same. When opening the provisional to reveal the true [as is done in the fundamental gate], the expansive three bodies transcend the eight teachings and are a single, great, perfect Buddha (*ichidai enbutsu* 一大円仏).⁶⁵

The text here invokes a fundamental paradigm of *Lotus* hermeneutics, namely the scripture's division into two parts. The first, derivative part comprises the text's first fourteen chapters, in which the Buddha pretends to be an ordinary human who a number of years ago achieved awakening while sitting under a tree. In the second, fundamental part, the Buddha reveals that actually he had achieved awakening countless eons past, and merely put on a show of sitting under a tree. According to the *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu*, this fundamental Buddha is the "single, great, perfect Buddha," who transcends the eight teachings comprising the formal Tiantai and Tendai system of doctrinal classification. The fundamental Buddha, to borrow a Zen idiom, is "outside the teachings."

The notion that the perfect *Lotus* in some way transcends the tradition's formal system of doctrinal classification is already present in the Chinese tradition and arose from the problem of whether the perfect teachings expounded in the *Lotus* are identical to the perfect teachings expounded in other *sūtra*, such as the *Avatamsaka*. One solution, commonly associated with the Tiantai patriarch Zhanran 湛然 (711–782), was to argue that in so far as it was the essence of the perfect teaching to reveal the integration (C. *yuanrong* 円融,

65 DNBZ, vol. 24, 156b.

J. *ennyū*) and non – obstruction (C. *wuai* 無礙, J. *muge*) of all *dharma*, *Lotus* and other perfect teachings were indeed the same and equally stood in contrast to lesser, provisional teachings (C. *quanjiao* 權教, J. *gonkyō*). In so far, however, as the *Lotus* alone was capable of opening up or rendering transparent the provisional teachings in order to reveal the true, single Buddha vehicle (C. *yisheng* 一乘, J. *ichijō*), its perfect teaching transcended the others and stood outside the formal doctrinal taxonomy of the eight teachings. Needless to say, this concept of a perfect teaching transcending the framework of eight formal teachings (C. *chaoba* 超八, J. *chōhachi*) is structurally similar to the relative / absolute distinction introduced above.⁶⁶

While the Chinese Tiantai tradition for the greater part considered relative / absolute or inclusive / exclusive to be complementary aspects of the same *Lotus*, Japanese Tendai, and especially the oral transmission and original awakening teachings, developed a tendency to emphasize the absolute / exclusive over the relative *Lotus* and to associate the former with the contemplation of mind. One example for this development is the *Endaragishū*, a text that spuriously is attributed to Enchin. As Shōshin quoted the *Endaragishū* in a work completed in 1207, it can be dated to the 12th century, and thus counts among the oldest layer of Tendai original awakening materials.⁶⁷ The *Endaragishū* explains that the “one great perfect teaching of the *Lotus*” (*hokke ichidai engyō* 法華一大円教) is not contained within the eight teachings but rather stands outside them as a kind of ninth teaching. This does not violate the principle of eight teachings, as the *Lotus* perfect teaching is the “intention” of the three contemplations in one mind (*isshin sangan no i* 一心三觀之意) and consequently does not have the features of a teaching in the sense of formal doctrine (*shōkyōsō ni arazu* 非正教相).⁶⁸

The presence of the two similes of bronze and wetness in the *Jisshū yōdōki* opens a window on a convoluted discourse transcending the boundaries between Tendai and Zen lineages. Drawing on Chinese Tiantai precedents, in medieval Tendai the image of the mirror developed into a complex, three-layered simile while becoming linked with the metaphor of wetness, a link to the best of my knowledge not attested in any Chinese sources. In some early Tendai original awakening texts, this double image was presented as part of the Oxhead teachings Saichō had received in China. At the same time, texts like the *Kenmitsu ichinyō honbutsu* used these images to integrate tantric and *Lotus* teachings by establishing a space “outside the teachings” from which the

66 See Fukuda, *Tendaigaku gairon*, pp. 134–135.

67 Tamura, “Kaisetsu,” pp. 523–524.

68 *Endaragishū*, DNBZ, vol. 28, 1146a.

two systems equally could be derived. At roughly the same time, the *Jisshū yōdōki* made a similar move by appropriating the two similes to illustrate the mind of Zen and position it as transcendent of, yet foundational to, the exoteric and tantric teachings. In so doing, the *Jisshū yōdōki* replaced the “one, great, perfect” Buddha or teaching that unites *Lotus* and tantric teachings with the Buddha mind of Zen. Yet the discursive space in which this Buddha mind had to be articulated had already been given an outline, had been pre-structured, as it were, by Tendai doctrinal speculations.

When at the dawn of the medieval period Tendai thinkers were engaged in explorations beyond the strictures of scholastic textualism, and the Chan teachings arrived from China with their own claims to a “separate transmission outside the teachings,” battle was joined over who had the more legitimate claim to the wide-open spaces beyond holy doctrine. This contentious space outside the teachings belonged to neither camp exclusively, but rather was shaped by their conflict. Traces of the terms of battle can be gleaned from the *Tonchō himitsu kōyō* 頓超秘密綱要, an oral transmission text spuriously attributed to Zhiyi. The oldest copy of the text is dated to 1312, and its second fascicle quotes the *Gozu hōmon yōsan*’s discussion of the three interpretations of the mirror almost *verbatim*.⁶⁹ This would suggest that the two texts are roughly contemporary, with the *Kōyō* being somewhat younger.

The *Tonchō himitsu kōyō* was of considerable importance to the medieval Tendai precept initiation movement and offers an original awakening style interpretation of Buddhist (non-)practice. As the text explains:

What is understood in the mind: there not being transgressions in the mind-ground (*shinchi* 心地) is the precepts; there not being disturbances in the mind-ground is concentration; there not being defilements in the mind-ground is wisdom; these are the three studies based upon the reality mark (*jissō* 実相) of the mind-ground.⁷⁰

True Buddhist practice, in other words, is not to engage in any kind of artificial behavior aimed at gradually rectifying body, speech, and mind, but rather the simple, sudden insight into the true characteristics, or “reality mark,” of the mind itself. In response to this interpretation, the text’s fictional interlocutor registers the following doubt:

69 ZTSZS, vol. 10, 326a–328a.

70 ZTSZS, vol. 10, 322b.

Now, this reality mark, it takes no-thought (*munen* 無念) for its essence (*tai* 体). If this is the case, how can it be different from the [wrong] contemplation of the Three Truths as a single truth (*sandai no ittai no kan* 三諦ノ一諦ノ観)? This is not the unproduced, perfect and sudden contemplation (*musa endon no kan* 無作円頓ノ観)!

In other words, the interlocutor claims that the position advocated by the *Tonchō himitsu kōyō* falls short of the highest Tendai ideals. It characterizes the mind-ground in purely negative terms as free from thought. In so doing, it promotes reducing the three Tendai truths of provisional existence, emptiness, and the middle to a single, ontologically primary, undifferentiated truth and thus retrogresses from the key insight that the Three Truths interpenetrate and are established simultaneously in each *dharma*.

The *Tonchō himitsu kōyō* defends itself as follows:

Within the teachings, contemplation is indicated calling it “no-thought.” Now, the fundamental meaning is to take up essence and call it the reality mark. Being within the teachings is as if [practicing by] obeying the purity and muddiness of water: by counteracting the muddiness, one purifies it. Gradually emptying out the muddied mind of ignorance, *dharma* nature is made into a pure mind. [...] As it is this no-thought pointed out [in the teachings], it is not the essence of the reality mark and [instead] is called the reality mark of purification. Next, as for taking up essence, for example it is like water. Purity and muddiness are its appearances, but not the totality of its essence. Wetness is the essence of water. When [water is] muddy, wetness is not muddied, thus when pure, how could wetness be purified?⁷¹

It is but limited understanding of contemplation dependent on the “eight teachings” that characterizes the true mark of reality as “no-mind.” True contemplation grasps the “perfect essence transcending the eight” (*chōhachi entai* 超八円体)⁷² teachings and makes it the reality mark. This difference again is illustrated by the simile of water. While contemplation according to the teachings seeks to purify mind by counteracting defilement, true contemplation bypasses accidental defilement and purity to go straight to the essence, just as the wetness of water is realized distinct from its clearness or muddiness.

71 ZTSZS, vol. 10, 323a.

72 ZTSZS, vol. 10, 318b.

To accuse one's opponent of falling into no-mind was a strategy also employed in the *Jisshū yōdōki*:

Those who have not studied this knowing [of the Buddha mind school] run towards the obsessed heart of no-mind and speechlessness (*rigon* 離言) of the three contemplations in a single mind (*isshein sangon* 一心三觀) [of Tendai]. The living wisdom of the separate transmission outside the teachings that floats in the mirror of the reality mark of mind soars in the avenue of the unfathomable (*fushigi* 不思議), plays alone in the sky beyond image, and directly indicating the human mind climbs the crown of Vairocana. Truly! The reality mark of mirror and image, of purity and muddiness, is what is discussed in the arising and ceasing within suchness. The reality mark of the numinous knowing of bronze and wetness is the fundamental intention of the Buddhas and patriarchs!⁷³

The *Jisshū yōdōki* here uses the same arguments and similes as found in the *Tonchō himitsu kōyō*. Those whose vision is limited by the teachings are incapable of arriving at the true mark of reality, the transcendence of which they mistake for mere negativity and quiescence. This true mark, in turn, is symbolized by the double image of mirror and wetness. In the *Jisshū yōdōki*, however, the targets of this criticism are the practitioners of Tendai contemplations.

This sprawling exploration of the metaphors of bronze and wetness as encountered in a polemical taxonomy of Buddhist teachings attributed to Enni has led us deep into the earliest layers of Tendai original awakening and oral transmission teachings. In both contexts, bronze and wetness were used as images to delineate the space of a fundamental yet transcendent reality outside the formal structures of the teachings. Furthermore, this was a contested space, with each actor accusing their perceived opponents of getting stuck in the scholastic thicket of views and therefore unable to perceive what is beyond as anything but the malicious quietude of no-thought. In the Tendai materials examined in the present section, this critique was not aimed at Zen. As shall be discussed in the next section, Jōmyō, on the other hand, was quick to do just that.

4 Entangled in Thought: Jōmyō on Meditation, Enni, and Tendai

Jōmyō was far from the naïve student Kokan would have us imagine. Widely learned in traditional Tendai scholasticism and the budding oral transmission

73 *Jisshū yōdōki*, 21.

lineages of his time, Jōmyō had mastered the intricacies not only of his own Eshin 恵心 but also of the rivaling Danna 檀那 faction.⁷⁴ Furthermore, he was a seasoned meditator in his own right, as is clear from the *Awataguchi kuketsu* 粟田口口決, a collection of Jōmyō's oral transmissions. The section "On Calming and Contemplation" (*shikan no koto* 止観ノ事) offers some hints as to what kind of hands-on instruction his students would have received. Taking a swipe at Zen meditation, which he associated with a one-sided focus on concentration, Jōmyō first explained the relationship between calming and contemplation:

To one-sidedly turn towards *dharma* and dwell indicating the imperturbability of all *dharma*, that is "calming." Here, there is not a single thought. [...] When one falls into thought, one uses contemplation. This is illuminating that this thought itself is the *dharmadhātu*.⁷⁵

The meditative process, Jōmyō pointed out, consists of two modalities. Calming goes directly to the nature of non-discrimination, the unmoving realm of equality. However, as even meditation masters are fallible, it is still necessary to counteract discriminatory thought processes as they arise. This is done through the systematic contemplation of arisen thought:

Inquiring with the four natures (*shishō* 四性), when one attains unproduced thought (*fushō no nen* 不生ノ念), this thought is what in the Zen school is called no-thought, the essence removed from thought (*rinēn no tai* 離念ノ体).⁷⁶

This short passage makes two important points. First, it clarifies the process of contemplation. Once thought has arisen, one is to contemplate it according to the causal tetralemma, inquiring whether the thought arose, 1. from itself, 2. from another, 3. from both, or 4. from neither. Having rejected all four possibilities, just as Zhiyi did in establishing "absolute" calming and contemplation, one attains unproduced thought. From this brief outline, Jōmyō's basic approach to meditation is reasonably clear. The primary practice is concentration, which means to dwell in non-differentiation beyond thinking. When thinking arises, one employs the meditative modality of contemplation to return arisen thought to its unproduced origin.

The second point to note is that Jōmyō employed a subtle yet suggestive distinction between "unproduced thought" and "no-thought." Jōmyō claimed that

74 Takahashi, "Kamakura jidai," pp. 190–195.

75 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 162b–163a.

76 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 163a.

the Zen schools mistakenly consider unproduced thought to be no-thought. As the discussion of the *Jisshū yōdōki* and *Tonchō himitsu kōyō* in the previous section has shown, to accuse one's opponents of falling into quietist no-thought was a popular strategy in seeking to discredit their vision of what is outside of scripture. Those caught in wrong view can apprehend unfathomable essence only as silence.

This association of no-thought with Zen is not merely an ideological claim forwarded by Jōmyō. Rather, Zen teachers such as Enni did indeed exalt the virtues of being thoughtless. When queried on the principle of “delusion itself being wisdom, life-and-death itself *nirvāṇa*” (*bonnō soku bodai shōshi soku nehan* 煩惱即菩提生死即涅槃), Enni, in his vernacular lecture known as the *Zazenron* 坐禪論, replied as follows:

If it is not known that single mind from the beginning is no-mind, mind is aroused, mind is queried, and without noticing it changes into the misapprehension of coming and going. This is the seed of life and death. If one understands that single mind fundamentally is unproduced and unceasing, there is no discrimination between self and other, [...] everything is no-thought and no-mind. This is called “life-and-death itself is *nirvāṇa*” [...] Single mind arises, there is life-and-death.⁷⁷

In his *Recorded Sayings*, Enni also offered some more practical guidelines on the role no-mind plays in Zen training. While for a beginner there is some use in focusing on a critical phrase or “head word” (*watō* 話頭) from a *kōan*, these are merely means used by the ancestral teachers to stop the infant practitioner's discriminating mind from wailing. In order to truly understand the mark of reality, one had to let go of even the inspection of the *kōan*, as only “no-mind is the way” (*ze mushin ze dō* 是無心是道).⁷⁸

77 *Zazenron* 坐禪論, ZHS, vol. 2, 10–12, no continuous pagination. Bielefeldt, “Sudden Awakening.” As is the case with so many of Enni's writings, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the text's authorship, especially as a nearly identical text, composed in *kanbun*, is attributed to Lanxi Daolong. However, as Enni and Lanxi frequently corresponded, it is not implausible that Enni, who, as we shall see in the next chapter, had a penchant for plagiarism, might have emulated Lanxi's writings. Furthermore, the passage here quoted from the vernacular text attributed to Enni significantly differs from the corresponding passage in the text attributed to Lanxi. Interestingly, while ostensibly a treatise on seated meditation, unlike the version attributed to Lanxi, which deals with the concrete details of the practice, Enni's text does not touch on *zazen* at all. For a comparative edition of the two texts, see Lee Shiuchen, “Rankei Dōryū.” On Enni and Lanxi, see Wada, “Kamakura chūki.”

78 *Shōichi kokushi goroku* 聖一國師語錄, T 80: 19c–20a.

As Jōmyō's fictional interlocutor in the *Awataguchi kuketsu* astutely points out, despite the delicate terminological maneuverings, the approach to meditation Jōmyō advocated appears suspiciously similar to the one promulgated by Enni. Both seek to eradicate discursive thought, Jōmyō by use of the causal tetralemma, Enni through concentration on a *watō*. Are not both, therefore, instances of one-sidedly contemplating emptiness (*kū o kan su* 空ヲ觀ス)?⁷⁹ If this is the case, what then is the difference between Jōmyō's calming and contemplation and Zen's malicious no-mind nihilism?

In his *Risshōkanshō* 立正觀抄, Nichiren pointedly criticized those *Lotus* scholiasts who under the influence of Zen discard the *Lotus* and establish "thoughtless calming and contemplation" (*munen no shikan* 無念ノ止觀) in its stead.⁸⁰ As if replying to Nichiren, Jōmyō explains himself as follows:

[...] The reason for using the contemplation of discerning the four natures of the signified (*shozen shishō suiken no kan yūji* 所詮四性推檢ノ觀用事) is to attain the essence of words (*montai* 文体).

Question: "What are words?"

Indicating [the answer, Jōmyō] says, "The *dharma* of various things such as straw mats and screens. [...]"⁸¹

Due to the sparseness of his remarks, Jōmyō's meaning is difficult to grasp. Fortunately, in another passage entitled "On the Unobtainability of the Four Natures" (*shishō hatoku no koto* 四性叵得ノ事), he elaborates in more detail:

Question: "If one sees that 'A screen is a screen!' is that the level of calming or the level of thought?"

Indicating [the answer, Jōmyō] says, "Dwelling in turning to and pointing towards the various *dharma* without discrimination, their essence is seen as it is. A screen is seen as a screen. The discriminating consciousness that one falls into ruminating on this [essence] and giving rise to thoughts of discrimination is the sixth consciousness."⁸²

In other words, in the state of calm things are apprehended as they really are, without being entangled in idle fancies. Should one fall into cogitation, the contemplation of the causal tetralemma allows one to work through the

79 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 163a.

80 *Risshōkanshō*, NSBS, 349.

81 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 163a.

82 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 170a.

conjugations of discriminatory consciousness and to return to the essence of the percept, seeing the screen behind the “screen,” the signified beyond the signifier. It is on this point that Tendai calming and contemplation differs from the Zen approach culminating, according to its Tendai critics, in no-mind. In the Zen school, Jōmyō insisted, “there is no instruction in names on the basis of essence. In the Tendai school, words are understood on the basis of essence.”⁸³ The Zen practitioner, in other words, having eradicated thought, might perceive the screen, yet remains mute and stuck in no-mind. For the Tendai contemplative, on the other hand, discriminatory consciousness and language are not merely imaginary figments to be abandoned. Rather, they are the appearance and functioning (*sōyū* 相用) of that essence (*tai* 体) which is discerned in contemplation. The Tendai meditator, in other words, seeing the screen, can speak of a “screen.”

In order to establish contemplation at the heart of no-thought, Jōmyō used exactly the two concepts of relative and absolute calming and contemplation that played such an important role in Yōsai’s defense against accusations of nihilistic quietism. The fictive inquisitor in the *Awataguchi kuketsu* voices reservations regarding Jōmyō’s use of the causal tetralemma as contemplative method, linking it to the negative contemplation of emptiness advocated in the Zen school. One aspect of this doubt is that it is difficult to see how such a negative approach could allow for the simultaneous establishment of the full set of three contemplations, namely of provisional existence and of the middle besides emptiness, in a single mind, as demanded by Tendai orthodoxy. Jōmyō replied as follows:

Relative and absolute are established upon the perceptual realm of single mind. It is erroneous to think that relative contemplation is a matter apart. When one falls into thought, one necessarily uses relative contemplation. Thus using relative contemplation intending to discern the features of the three contemplations, when eventually thought is extinguished, the three contemplations are simultaneously [established] by themselves.⁸⁴

Because the relative and absolute are not separate from each other but rather established in a, or the, single mind, the relativistic, gradual meditative operation of causally dissecting the rise of phenomenal thought leads to the simultaneous establishment of the Three Truths as actualized in absolute

83 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 170b.

84 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 163b.

contemplation. Here the contrast between Tendai and Zen appears in all its starkness. The merely relativistic Zen inquiry into the origin of thought, guided by mulling over a *kōan*, ends with letting go of the critical phrase and abandons itself to the quiescence of no-mind. Tendai meditation practice, however, being simultaneously relative to practitioners' needs and absolute in its nature, encompasses no-mind, or rather unproduced mind, yet reaches beyond it towards those already entangled in thought.

This tension between apophatic emptiness and kataphatic nature finally affords Jōmyō the opportunity to directly cross swords with Enni's doctrinal vision. The reason Tendai can speak where Zen must fall silent is that whereas the Zen tradition privileges no-mind or emptiness, Tendai instead establishes all Three Truths instantaneously. In the *Awataguchi kuketsu*, Jōmyō's fictitious yet reliable prompter raises this problem as follows:

In the interpretation (*gi* 義) of Shōichibō 聖一房 [i.e. Enni], the meaning of Tendai is that in the nature of suchness (*shinnyo shō* 真如性) there is no self-nature (*jishō* 自性), not having self-nature is taken to be the essence. The aspect of the differentiations of self-nature [into plural phenomena] is functioning. In the fundamentally unproduced, there is mere, single no-nature (*yuiichi mushō* 唯一無性). Here the natures of the myriad *dharma* cannot exist. What is called *dharma* arising is function. How about this interpretation?⁸⁵

In other words, according to Jōmyō's interlocutor, Enni forwarded the following argument based on the venerable doctrinal distinction between an entity's (or indeed a non-entity's) essence (*tai* 体) and its functioning (*yū* 用): Suchness or the nature of reality is in itself without essential characteristics, it has no nature of its own. Whatever can be distinguished as having a specific, characteristic nature of its own arises in an accidental manner from reality's functioning but does not pertain to reality's essence. Hence, all concrete phenomena are but the functioning of reality, but reality in and for itself is devoid of and beyond all possible phenomena. Does this position, Jōmyō's interlocutor wonders, agree with Tendai orthodoxy?

Jōmyō answered this query in a rather surprising manner by relating Enni's stance to the doctrinal positions advocated by the two main branches of Tendai oral transmission teachings, the Eshin and the Danna factions. Or rather, to be more accurate, Jōmyō relates Enni's views to what as a member of the Eshin lineage he considered an advantageous depiction of the doctrinal

85 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 171b.

positions advocated by the Eshin and Danna factions. Jōmyō opens by mentioning a debate allegedly conducted in 1020 between Hengu 遍救 (962–1030), retrospectively associated with the Danna faction, and Kakuchō, retrospectively associated with the Eshin faction. During this debate, Jōmyō claimed, Hengu argued that the Three Truths of emptiness, provisional existence, and the middle are actually a single essence (*ittai* 一体), whereas Kakuchō argued that they constitute nine truths.⁸⁶ Jōmyō then identifies Hengu's advocacy of a single essence with the Danna faction and likens it to a drunkard seeing both a moving and an unmoving sun. The moving sun is obviously caused by his inebriation, the unmoving sun alone being real.⁸⁷ The two suns, one of which is real and unmoving, the other illusory and changing, represent the mistaken view that a permanent essence, or non-essence, can be established separate from changing functioning. This view obviously resembles the position Jōmyō's sock puppet ascribes to Enni.

As opposed to the Danna faction's limited view, the Eshin faction holds that the essence of all *dharma* is unproduced, and therefore the myriad phenomena are naturally established as constantly abiding in their original being (*hōtai fushō gi ni manbō ennen toshite honnu jōjū to dan suru nari* 法体不生義二万法宛然トシテ本有常住ト談スル也). Jōmyō concludes that in his belief that essence is devoid of self-nature and hence a mere, single no-nature, Enni makes the same mistake as the Danna faction.⁸⁸

Jōmyō was no zealous partisan, however. He did allow for the possibility that Zen had the potential to overcome its limitations and rise to the heights of Jōmyō's own Eshin faction. Continuing on from the above discussion concerning unproduced essence, Jōmyō offered the following olive branch:

86 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 172a. Kakuchō and Hengu are said to have argued different positions on five points of doctrine, including the question of how the Three Truths relate to the essence of the *Lotus*. See Hazama, *Nihon bukkyō*, p. 19. The *Kankō ruijū* 漢光類聚 mentions the dispute between the two scholars. Under a separate heading within the same section, this source also explains that the nine truths are arrived at by combining the Three Truths with each other. T 74: 406c. The *Hokke bentai* 法華弁体, a text attributed to the Tendai scholiast Genshin 源信 (941–1017), likewise mentions a dispute between two unnamed scholars on a related point and attempts to reconcile the two interpretations. DNBZ, vol. 32, 177–183, on nine truths, esp. 179a.

87 This simile is based on Zhiyi. See *Sijiao yi* 四教義, T 46: 728c; *Weimo jing xuanshou* 維摩經玄疏, T 38: 535b. The simile also appears, though in a different form and context, in the *Fahua xuanyi*, T 33: 705b.

88 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 172a. This simile would imply that in the Eshin faction, *both* the moving and unmoving sun are understood as real, and thus drunken and sober vision as equally true.

In the Zen school, they have the matter of the last word (*matsugo ikku* 末後一句). It is the same as the intention of the long life (*juryō* 寿量) of the fundamental gate of Tendai. Those who say that, where a single *dharma* is unproduced, there is nothing, are beginners among Zen masters. Zen masters who transmit the last word attain the meaning of the constant existence of the myriad *dharma* in the unproduced essence.⁸⁹

The “last word” is the final expression of Zen insight. According to Jōmyō, when Zen practitioners pierce this barrier, they dwell in the same unproduced fecundity as is revealed in the fundamental gate of the *Lotus sūtra*, especially the 16th chapter on the “Life Span of the *Tathāgata*” (*Nyorai juryō bon* 如来寿量品). As the next chapter shall show, although Jōmyō does fault Enni’s metaphysics, he did consider him one capable of uttering a “final word.”

5 Conclusions

This chapter opened with a well-known episode in the history of Japanese Buddhism, namely the meeting between Jōmyō and Enni. In previous scholarship, this encounter was held up as an example of the influence the newly arriving Chan or Zen teachings had on the Japanese Buddhist establishment, especially the Tendai tradition. The present discussion has attempted to offer a broader perspective by shifting the focus from questions of mono-directional influence to the wider doctrinal discourse that constituted the medium through which any such influence would have had to assert itself.

As we have seen, both Enni and Jōmyō had to contend with a similar problem, namely what is outside the teachings, and how this outside relates to the teachings’ concrete contents. Interest in this “outside the teachings” was not simply a Chan or Zen import from the continent. Early original awakening materials such as the *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* and the *Gozu hōmon yōsan* had already begun to explore this no-doctrine’s land, respectively in an effort to reconcile the *Lotus* and tantric teachings, and to postulate a fundamentally awoken mind. In the course of these explorations, they began to develop a set of images, of the bronze from which a mirror is cast, of the wetness that remains constant in both muddy and pure water, to illuminate the relationship between the fundamental mark of reality, on the one hand, and concrete teachings or phenomenal mind, on the other. Furthermore, the *Gozu hōmon*

89 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 172b.

yōsan and related texts appealed to Saichō's mysterious Oxhead transmission to bestow on their innovative doctrinal stances a veneer of respectability.

These very similes appear again in the *Jisshū yōdōki*'s taxonomy of Zen and the teachings. This text uses the images of bronze and water to define Zen as the "Buddha mind school," the foundational mind and substance of the "teachings." The latter category here includes both tantric and exoteric or *Lotus* teachings. In this scheme, the status of Zen is structurally similar to that of the *Lotus* "transcending the eight" teachings discussed in some original awakening materials. Enni, in other words, borrowed the outline, if not necessarily the content, of a Tendai doctrinal scheme in order to promote Zen as the foundation of all Buddhism.⁹⁰

The Tendai scheme adopted by Enni, however, brought its own dangers. As the *Jisshū yōdōki*'s attack on Tendai contemplation as falling into thoughtlessness demonstrates, the claim to stand in some way outside the teachings invited the criticism of denying the teachings in their linguistic and conceptual nature as legitimate expressions of and gateways to the Buddha's mind. A similar problem presented itself to Jōmyō, whose own emphasis on mind contemplation and use of the causal tetralemma earned him censure for being dangerously close to Zen-like mindlessness.

Enni and Jōmyō thus addressed the same set of problems in a shared doctrinal idiom. This claim does not minimize, much less deny, the impact Chan or Zen had on early medieval Buddhism, nor does it undermine the possibility that Chan or Zen exerted a significant influence on the formation of Tendai original awakening teachings. It does, however, contextualize these claims by drawing attention to the constraints their new doctrinal environment imposed upon the arriving continental Chan teachings as they came to be articulated in Japan, as well as the fresh opportunities and lines of development this process afforded. In short, the transmission of Chan to Japan and its transformation into Zen was a creative rearticulation, and in the next chapter we will discuss in detail one example of how Chinese Chan teachings were altered by being reformulated in a Japanese Buddhist idiom.

90 Katō Michiko has discussed Enni's taxonomical use of the "Buddha mind school" as the foundation of Buddhist teachings. See Katō Michiko, "Enni zen," pp. 49–64. Based on Enni's conception of a common basis of all Buddhism, Katō, correctly, I think, criticizes the characterization of Enni's Zen as "combinatory practice" Zen.

The Vicissitudes of Turning Upward

Enni's Three Mechanisms and Their Contexts

1 Introduction

In his master's hagiography, the *Tōfuku kaisan Shōichi kokushi nenpu* 東福開山聖一國師年譜, Enni's student Tetsugyū Enshin 鉄牛円心 (1254–1326) offered an alternative account of the meeting between the Tendai scholiast Jōmyō and Enni that provided the starting point for our explorations in the previous chapter. According to Tetsugyū, when Jōmyō inquired about the four kinds of *samādhi* and the “essentials of the practice of the contemplation of mind” (*kanjin shugyō no yō* 観心修行之要), Enni “took up the iron mallet of turning upward (*kōjō* 向上) and smashed the den of relative and absolute.”¹

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the conceptual distinction between the relative (*sōtai* 相待) and the absolute (*zettai* 絶待) is central to both Enni's and Jōmyō's attempts to untangle the relationship between the inside and the outside of the teachings while evading accusations of quietist nihilism. Relatively speaking, inside and outside the teachings are opposites, and what is outside the teachings cannot be communicated, for if it could, then it would be a teaching. Absolutely speaking, what is outside the teachings can be communicated not by, but through the teachings, just as the rules of chess, say, govern, and hence can be learned from observing, an actual game of chess even though they never appear within it. Consequently, from the absolute point of view the opposition between inside and outside the teachings is not so much abolished as superseded.

In Tetsugyū's account of the exchange between Jōmyō and Enni, this fundamental binary is related to a concept central to the investigation to be undertaken in the present chapter, namely *kōjō* or “turning upward.” As we have seen, when Jōmyō asked about the four kinds of *samādhi* and their relation to Zen, what he really did was attempt to set Enni up by asking, “Apart from the teachings of Tendai, what could Zen be but vicious quietism?” Once Jōmyō's question is understood in this way, it becomes clear that *kōjō* is a concept or mechanism to manage the relationship between what is inside and what is outside the teachings, just as absolute and relative are. Enni's student Senkei

1 *Shōichi kokushi nenpu*, DNBZ, vol. 95, 142b.

Shoken 潛溪処謙 (?–1330), whose words are preserved in the encyclopedic collection of medieval Tendai oral transmission materials, the *Keiran shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集, confirms this suspicion when he claims that Enni considered the “absolute contemplation” (*zettai kan* 絶待観) of the Tendai tradition to be the “intention of the application of turning upward (*kōjō*) of my [Zen] school.” According to Senkei’s testimony, Enni would have held that Zen and Tendai ultimately do not contradict each other.² Below we shall see that Enni’s actual position, as far as we can reconstruct it, is much more ambiguous. For now, it is sufficient to realize that *kōjō* is a key term for understanding how Enni considered his Zen teachings to relate to the established forms of Buddhism, including Tendai and tantric teachings.

Kōjō is part of Enni’s perhaps most famous set of instructions, which is variously known as the “three principle indications” (*san shūshi* 三宗旨), the “three preliminary means” (*sanshu hōben* 三種方便), or the “three mechanisms” (*sanki* 三機). In previous scholarship, these Three Mechanisms, as I shall refer to them, generally have been considered forerunners of the system of *kōan* classification usually ascribed to Hakuin Ekaku, the reformer of the Ōtōkan lineage of the Rinzai faction.³ Some scholars such as William Bodiford have even speculated that Enni’s scheme might indicate that similar systems of *gon-gan* or *kōan* classification already had been used in China.⁴

Didier Davin has already pointed out that the assumed connection between Hakuin and Enni derives more from a retrospective desire for a legitimizing precedent than from historical fact.⁵ Enni’s Three Mechanisms are not a system of classifying *kōan*, but crucially include the teachings and practices of the doctrinal schools (*kyōke* 教家).⁶ Far from a narrowly sectarian discourse, and even farther from a straightforward Chinese import, the Three Mechanisms were part of a shared, trans-sectarian conversation that functioned as a discursive interface between Zen practitioners and scholiasts of other schools. The Three Mechanisms provided these groups with a vocabulary and doctrinal structure through which they could contend with each other over how the newly arrived Chan or Zen teachings were to be fitted into the transforming

2 KRSYS, T 76: 542a.

3 For a brief discussion of Hakuin’s scheme, see Mohr, “Emerging from Nonduality,” p. 265.

4 Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen*, p. 146.

5 Davin, “Datsu kamakura zen?” Davin kindly refers to some of my own work. See Licha, “Keiran shūyōshū.”

6 However, the re-interpretation of Enni’s scheme has precedents already in the work of Kokan Shiren. In the oral elucidations on his commentary on the *Laikāvatāra sūtra*, the *Butsugo shinron* 仏語心論, Kokan defined *richi* as the *watō* passed down by former generations of teachers. See BGSR, 234b.

medieval Buddhist landscape. This function of the Three Mechanisms as discursive mediators, especially between Enni and his Tendai frenemy, if the colloquialism were allowed, Jōmyō, will be the focus of the present chapter. I will first discuss how Enni's concern with teaching mechanisms dovetailed with a broader interest of medieval (Tendai) Buddhism, namely a soteriological universalism that sought to extend the highest teachings to those with the lowest capabilities. We will then turn to an in-depth reading of Enni and his Chinese sources, which will show that Enni's Three Mechanisms, and especially *kōjō*, remained ambiguous. This ambiguity proved to be both a target for Jōmyō to attack and a starting point for a possible defense against the scholiast's onslaught. This ambiguity, which will remain unresolved, shall guide us into the discussion of the next chapter, in which we will connect Enni's Three Mechanisms to his tantric teachings.

2 Buddhist Communication Theory

Before we can turn to Enni's sources for and use of his Three Mechanisms, it is necessary to briefly familiarize ourselves with their basic outline and doctrinal background. The Three Mechanisms are three kinds of "triggers" (*ki* 機) that can be employed to communicate Buddhist truth.⁷ As befits their trans-sectarian nature, some of the most streamlined and coherent expositions of Enni's Three Mechanisms are found in scholastic materials. In his *Shoshū mondōshō* 諸宗問答抄, Nichiren discusses the Three Mechanisms under the heading of the three *Dharma* gates of the Zen school:⁸

In general, in capabilities (*ki* 機) there are superior, middling, and inferior roots. Consequently, *Dharma* gates as well are explained according to the three roots. Furthermore, the Zen schools indicate *richi* 理到, *kiikan* 機関, and *kōjō* as the *Dharma* gates that correspond to the three roots. [...] What is called *richi* is to make those of inferior roots listen to principles (*dōri* 道理) [i.e. rational, doctrinal teachings], and this is a term for not knowing the *Dharma* gate of Zen. *Kiikan* is to answer something like, "The oak tree in the garden," when those of middling roots ask, "What is the original face?" This is the manner of indicating Zen. *Kōjō* is for those of

7 For this understanding of *ki* as a trigger or communicative mechanism, see for example Heine, *Chan Rhetoric*, pp. 205–206.

8 Furuse Tamami has highlighted the importance of Nichiren sources in order to understand early medieval Zen Buddhism. See for instance Furuse, "Dainichibō Nōnin."

superior roots. This mechanism (*ki* 機) is not transmitted from the ancestral teachers, nor is it transmitted from the Buddhas. It is the mechanism of awakening to the *Dharma* gate of Zen by oneself.⁹

The Three Mechanisms according to Nichiren are *richi*, *kikan*, and *kōjō*. *Richi* are doctrinal “principles” grasped discursively. *Kikan* or “devices” are the *Dharma* gate of *gongan* or *kōan*, the puzzling, vivid, sometimes violent “crazy talk,” as Nichiren put it, celebrated in Chan and Zen literature.¹⁰ Finally, *kōjō* or “turning upward” is the most puzzling of the Three Mechanisms. It refers to the direct, unaided encounter of practitioners with their mind without having to rely on the guidance or preliminary indications proffered by Buddhas or ancestors. In short, *richi* and *kikan* are different kinds of linguistic or symbolic devices used to communicate the Buddhist truth, whereas *kōjō* is a direct, immediate or symbolically unmediated, confrontation with it. On this interpretation, *richi* and *kikan* together are opposed to *kōjō*, resulting in a twofold scheme of inside / outside language.

In addition to this binary division, Nichiren also used a tripartite understanding of the Three Mechanisms as related to the three levels of spiritual capacities. The binary ordering of the Three Mechanisms emphasizes the qualitative difference between *richi* / *kikan* as language, on the one hand, and *kōjō* as immediate encounter, on the other. The tripartite scheme, in contrast, emphasizes their common nature of being ordered towards communicating to sentient beings. As we shall discuss below, Jōmyō emphasized that Enni, unlike lesser Zen teachers, understood *kōjō* specifically as concerned with the communication of Buddhist truth rather than as a silent encounter. To restate Jōmyō’s point more clearly, if, according to mainstream Zen teachings, *kōjō* is but direct, unaided, individual confrontation with mind, then, just like the taste of water, it is beyond being communicated to others. Hence, it cannot be a teaching, that is to say a communication intended to convey the nature of such an encounter to those who have not yet made it. Enni, it would appear Jōmyō implied, figured out a way in which such a direct encounter *could* be communicated via a “direct indication,” a pointing, as it were, that is not part of any teaching yet still an act of communication. This problem of how *kōjō* can be a communication without becoming but one teaching among others shall concern us again towards the end of the present chapter. In the following chapter, we shall see that this puzzle is essential to Enni’s understanding of the relation between Zen and the tantric teachings. To but teasingly state my

9 *Shoshū mondōshō*, NRZS, vol. 1, 674–675.

10 *Shoshū mondōshō*, 676.

conclusions, Enni held that Zen could point at what the exoteric and tantric teachings could not signify.

Even in Nichiren's systematic account of Enni's Three Mechanisms we can thus discern a tension between two different readings or orderings of their constituent elements. On the one hand, there is a qualitative difference between *kōjō* as the direct encounter with the Buddhist truth and *richi* / *kikan* as second-hand means of communicating it. On the other hand, all three mechanisms, including *kōjō*, are, as "triggers," necessarily ordered towards sentient beings' communicative capabilities. This problem of truth and its communicability, as well as Enni's attempt to solve it by establishing communication even in direct encounter, resonates with a wider soteriological problem in medieval Tendai discourse, namely, how to relate the highest teachings to the lowest capacities. According to standard Buddhist communication theory, for an instance of speech to qualify as a "teaching" it needs to be addressed to an audience and adapted to the audience's communicative mechanisms so as to activate the audience's "triggers." In general, this implies that the loftiest teachings are reserved for those endowed with the most finely attuned receptive devices. Thus, as we shall see below, in Chinese Chan the ancestral transmission was considered the culmination of the Buddha's teachings because it directly communicated the Buddha's mind to those few gifted with spiritual hair-triggers. Medieval Tendai thinkers, on the other hand, began to invert this relationship as soteriological values shifted towards inclusiveness. Consequently, they sought to establish an approach to Buddhist practice that offered highest liberation to the lowest bidder. This tendency is obvious from the *Kankō ruiju* 漢光類聚, a root text of the Eshin lineage.¹¹ On the question of roots and capabilities, the *Kankō ruiju* notes:

Doubt [to be resolved]: [Sentient beings'] faculties (*ki* 機) and [the Buddha's] teachings (*hō* 法) necessarily are ordered toward each other.

Why is the highest teaching made to extend to the lowest roots?

Answer: From the beginning, the essence of the practice pursued by the deluded and the wise, the evil and the good, [equally] returns to and enters into the great ocean of calming and contemplation; what would not be proper roots for calming and contemplation? The fundamentals of the highest teaching transform those of lowest roots.¹²

11 For a basic discussion of the *Kankō ruijō*, see Groner, "Medieval Japanese Reading."

12 *Kankō ruijō*, T 74: 377b.

Just as the world's many rivers finally enter the great ocean, all Buddhist teachings return to Tendai calming and contemplation as their ultimate source. Hence, calming and contemplation are superior to, or inclusive of, all other modes of Buddhist cultivation in that they are capable of corresponding to all roots from the highest to the lowest. As shall be discussed below, the question of whether Zen, too, can gather the lowliest into the pinnacle of truth was a focal point of Jōmyō's criticism of the new teachings.

The *Keiran shūyōshū* contains a fascinating account suggesting that Enni was receptive to this tendency to broaden the soteriological base, so to speak, and on this point indeed did differ from his Chinese peers and their students.

The instruction of Shō[ichi] of Tō[fukuji, i.e. Enni] says that the *Dharma* of the teachings [i.e. the doctrinal schools] is for those of superior roots. The gate of Zen is for those of inferior roots. For example, a drunkard will not understand anything [that is said to him], but can be roused by the unexpected stick or shout. To rouse him with words, that is the *Dharma* of the teachings. To beat him awake with a single rod, that is the Zen gate. Somebody only a little inebriated can be woken with words. The drunkard is woken by stick and shout. In other words, the teachings are for those of superior capacities, the mechanisms of Zen for those of inferior capacities. This is what the old [master of] Tō[fukuji] said. Furthermore, [he said that,] the principle of the lineage of Dōryū [i.e. Lanxi] in Kantō is not like this. [According to them,] the *Zen Dharma* is for those of superior roots as well as excellent faculties and wit. And so on.¹³

Just as a prudent thrashing can rouse the drunkard from his stupor even when all well-meaning exhortations have proven useless, so Zen practice can shock into awakening even the most ignorant and dull-witted who are entirely beyond the reach of scholastic niceties. On this point, Enni sees himself in disagreement with the Chinese émigré master Lanxi.

Although they do not outright contradict each other, and indeed might be reconciled through the kind of nifty doctrinal footwork at which medieval scholiasts excelled, the passage just quoted differs from Nichiren's account of the Three Mechanisms in that it equates Zen with the guidance of those of lower capabilities. Layers of ambiguity indeed appear endemic to Enni's exposition of the Three Mechanisms, especially in his *Recorded Sayings*. Such uncertainties might in part be due to the *Recorded Sayings* genre's demand

13 KRSYS, T 78: 542c–543a.

for enigmatic imagery and perplexing pronouncements. Be this as it may, the obscurities of Enni's account gave rise to different interpretations of the Three Mechanisms in the generations of his lineage to follow him. Perhaps the most important of these differences arose from the tensional inner structure of the Three Mechanisms we have already remarked upon with regard to Nichiren's exposition. This inner tension is rooted in the relation between *kōjō* and the other two elements. The first interpretation, advocated for by Tetsugyū and Kokan, sees the Three Mechanisms as corresponding to a hierarchy of capabilities. According to this view, *kōjō* as immediate self-realization rests at the top, and is followed by *kan* or Zen-like encounter dialogue, and finally by *richi* or rational teachings. This line of thought might have led to the interpretation of the Three Mechanisms as classes or levels of *kōan*, as Kokan, for instance, re-defined *richi* as the *watō* of former generations of teachers.¹⁴

The second interpretation is developed in Enni's tantric commentaries and preserved for instance by his disciple Mujū. According to this interpretation, the provisional means used within the Zen school are only two, namely *richi*, or common doctrinal teachings, and *kan*, or *kōan* style encounter dialogue. Both of these can be employed by Zen masters to give a "direct indication" if they are used not according to sentient beings' delusions but according to the "fundamental portion" (*honbun* 本分) of awakening.¹⁵ This interpretation suggests that according to Enni the essence of Zen was not the exclusivist use of *kōan*, which would clearly mark Chan or Zen off from other Buddhist traditions, but rather direct insight into the Buddha mind. This insight could be brought about both by doctrinal talk and *kōan*, provided they are used in an appropriate manner. On this reading, the difference between Zen and the teachings is not the kind of language used, doctrinal exposition or *kōan* "crazy talk," but rather the way in which it is used. The above quote from the *Keiran shūyōshū* might reflect this latter interpretation, taking the thrashing Enni prescribes to the drunkard as a "direct indication" accessible even to the unlearned. We will consider these problems further in the following chapter in relation to the inner self-verification of the tantric sovereign. For now, we need to explore Enni's *Recorded Sayings* and their relationship to his Chinese sources more fully, for it is from this relationship that the structural tensions or ambiguities we have noted arose.

14 See BGSR, 234b.

15 See Mujū's *Shōzaishū* 聖財集, czs, vol. 4, 437ab.

3 Enni's Chinese Sources

Enni's elaboration of his Three Mechanisms is strongly influenced by Yuanwu, whose writings the Japanese master bowdlerized in his *Recorded Sayings*. In previous scholarship discussion of Enni's Chinese sources instead has focused on the *Zongjing lu*.¹⁶ Enni's devotion to this text has often been inferred from a postulated resemblance in thought and terminology between the *Zongjing lu* and especially the *Jisshū yōdōki*, as well as from reports found in Enni's hagiographies that the master had lectured the court on this text.¹⁷ Mujū's *Shōzaishū* strongly backs the importance of the *Zongjing lu* for Enni's lineage by stating that, "The Dharma gate of Tōfukuji is mostly based on the *Sūgyō* [roku, i.e. the *Zongjing lu*] (Tōfukuji no hōmon, daitai sūgyō no gisei nari 東福寺/法門、大体宗鏡/義勢也).¹⁸ Furthermore, the *Zongjing lu* is an important source in both Yōsai's *Kōzen gokokuron* as well as in the discussions of Zen found in Tendai materials. However, there are few direct quotations from the *Zongjing lu* found in either Enni's tantric commentaries or his *Recorded Sayings*. Therefore, it remains an open question whether the text was as important to the master as tradition and scholarship would have us think.

The second Chinese Chan source often associated with Enni is the *Xinbian fofa daming lu* 新編仏法大明錄, an introduction to Dahui Zonggao's 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163) Chan teachings compiled by the layman Guitang 圭堂 (d.u.). Dahui was a student of Yuanwu, and the innovator of the *kanhua* 看話 approach to Chan or Zen practice. According to the *Shōichi kokushi nenpu*, Enni received the *Daming lu* together with a robe from his Chinese mentor and brought it back to Japan.¹⁹ That the *Daming lu* was widely recognized as a representative source on Chan or Zen teachings can be seen from the fact that it was quoted to this effect by scholiasts of other schools, notably by Ryōhen of the Hossō and Gōhō (alt. Kōhō) 杲宝 (1306–1362) of the Shingon schools.²⁰ Kokan, on the other hand, expended considerable spleen on the notion that Enni should have been taken in by what Kokan argued was the superficial babble

16 See for instance Takayanagi, "Darumashū." For the supposed influence of this text on Enni's thought, Matsunami, *Zenshū shisōshi kenkyū*, pp. 140–146. The *Zongjing lu* had already attracted the attention of scholiasts during the Insei 院政 (1086–1185) period, and thus likely contributed to the rise of interest in Chan or Zen during the early medieval period. See for instance Kikuchi, "Shōichi ha," p. 283.

17 See for example *Tōfuku kaisan Shōichi kokushi nenpu*, DNBZ, vol. 95, 137.

18 CZS, vol. 5, 439a.

19 *Shōichi kokushi nenpu*, vol. 95, 134. This Song period copy is now designated a Japanese National Treasure.

20 See Ryōhen's *Shinjin yōketsu* 真心要決, T 71: 99c, and Gōhō's *Kaishinshō* 開心集, T 77: 736b and 743c.

of a questionable intellect such as Guitang.²¹ Perhaps because of Kokan's intervention, the role of the *Daming lu* in Enni's teachings has not attracted the same amount of scholarly attention as that of the *Zongjing lu*. Recently, a short text entitled *Myōshin(shō)* 明心(抄) has emerged that suggests that the importance of the *Daming lu* has been underestimated. This brief, mostly vernacular source contains what might be Enni's comments on the first section of the *Daming lu*, also entitled *Mingxin* 明心, or *myōshin* in Japanese reading, "luminous mind." Although the authenticity of the *Myōshin (shō)* still is uncertain, circumstantial evidence strongly suggests a connection to Enni or at least his lineage.²² At present, however, studies on Enni's use, or lack of use, of the *Daming lu* remain a *desideratum*.

The uncertainties surrounding Enni's use of the two Chinese Chan sources most consistently associated with his name, the *Zongjing lu* and the *Daming lu*, highlight the importance of Yuanwu and his literary oeuvre for understanding Enni's thought. Yuanwu was without doubt one of the most significant Chan masters of the Song dynasty, whose *opus magnum*, the *Biyan lu* 碧巖錄 or *Blue Cliff Record*, resides at the pinnacle of the literary sophisticated Chan style of the period. In Japan, this text formed a major part of medieval *kōan* curricula, and a familiarity with its convoluted phraseology was, and is, considered *de rigueur*.²³ Yuanwu was a notoriously abstruse teacher, and there are admiring reports that one of his disciples lost his mind and died insane after trying to make sense of the master's instructions.²⁴

The impact Yuanwu had on the development of Japanese Zen in general has long been recognized. Already Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 (1922–2006), focusing on Kokan's contemporary Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275–1351), suggested that Yuanwu was a pivotal source for the reception of the concepts of *kikan* and *richi* in early medieval Japanese Zen.²⁵ Elaborating on Yanagida's insights, more recently Wada Ukiko has shown that Yuanwu's teachings as recorded in the *Yuanwu xinyao* 円悟心要 or *Yuanwu's Mind Essentials*, a collection of Yuanwu's letters to his monastic and lay disciples, contributed to the development of

21 See GKSS, 152–162; SHS, 314–338.

22 See Furuse, "Hokke mondō shōgi shō," pp. 675–680.

23 Andō, *Kōan Zen*, p. 227. The *Biyan lu* was the primary source for the *kōan* curriculum of the Myōshinji faction, and was also of importance in the Daitokuji faction, although to a lesser degree due to the latter's more diverse curriculum. The text was used in Sōtō lineages, yet did not have the same importance as for instance the *Wumen guan* 無門関. This might be due to the close association between some Sōtō lineages and the Hattō 法灯 faction of Shinchi Kakushin 心地覺心 (1207–1298), Wumen's Japanese disciple who first brought his master's text to Japan.

24 See "Engo shinyō" kenkyūkai, "Engo shinyō yakuchū," p. 24.

25 Yanagida, *Zen bunken*, p. 401.

tripartite schemes of teaching mechanisms in early medieval Zen lineages, including in the Shōichi and the so-called Daruma lineages.²⁶ It is to the likely origin of these threefold schemes in the thought of Enni we now turn.

4 Monkeys Grasping at Shadows: Yuanwu and Enni on Zen Mechanics

Enni, this section will show, derived from Yuanwu three elements that he re-combined to establish his Three Mechanisms. These three elements were, first, the distinction between *richi* and *kikan*; second, the concept of *kōjō*; and finally, the notion that Chan or Zen teaching mechanisms could be divided into three levels according to their increasing inner differentiation and decreasing directness necessitated by having to respond to sentient beings' spiritual capacities. The ambiguities inherent in Enni's teachings, which facilitated the rise of divergent, even contradictory, interpretations of the master's legacy among later generations, stem from a lack of clarity on how exactly these three elements are related to each other.

Let us begin our investigation from the first ingredient Enni borrowed from Yuanwu, namely the distinction between *kikan* and *richi*. It would seem that Yuanwu considered *richi* and *kikan* to be a binary with only an indirect connection to *kōjō*, the third of Enni's Three Mechanisms. Yanagida has suggested the following passage as the *locus classicus* from which the former two concepts are derived. Although somewhat long, its central importance justifies reproducing it almost verbatim. Yuanwu wrote:

Ever since there have been patriarchs, they have only striven to singly transmit direct indication. They are not happy to fool people, carrying water and racking mud, beating the dew cloth and cleaning the den. Essentially, for three hundred odd assemblies, old Śākya[muni Buddha] set up teachings according to capacities (*duiji shejiao* 對機設教), took a stand and established standards, and [consequently single transmission] was mostly hidden. Therefore, in the end he imparted the essentials of the straight cut to those of highest capacities. In the 28 generations [of Indian ancestral teachers] from Mahākāśyapa onwards, they have rarely used devices (*jiguan* 機関) [i.e. *gongan* and the like] and often revealed doctrinal principles (*lizhi* 理致). [Yet w]hen it comes to imparting and receiving [the true *Dharma*], how could they not face it directly and grasp

26 Wada, "Zenshū."

it [right there] (*zhimian tichi* 直面提持)? This is like cutting down the flag-pole, dropping a needle into the water of a begging bowl, manifesting the shape of a round light, taking up a red flag, or taking up a bright mirror.²⁷ It is like Bodhidharma pacifying the realm by expounding the *Dharma* transmission verse like an iron nail and destroying the tenets erected by the six schools and the heretics. It is like the reversals of “I,” “Heaven,” “You,” “Dog.”²⁸ All these [show] the swiftness of superior mechanisms (*ji* 機) [that grasp the matter at hand directly], not [slow and progressive] consideration and speculation on what can be measured. When it comes to arriving in Liang and wandering in Wei, again these obviously are called “the mind seal of the single transmission of separate transmission”²⁹ outside the teachings.” What is indicated by the sixth generation’s transmission of the robe is clear and definite. Reaching the great mirror of Caoxi, penetrating explanation (*shuotong* 說通) [of Zen to others] and penetrating the basis (*zongtong* 宗通) [i.e. awakening to the truth of Zen for oneself] are indicated in detail. [...] Finally, one sees the practice of staff and shout, of clearing away words with words, of abolishing mechanisms with mechanisms, of treating poison with poison, of destroying [the] function [of deluded mind] with [the] function [of deluded mind]. For this reason, for these last 700 years [since Bodhidharma], the different branches and lineages [of the Zen school] each have their in-house style. [...] However, what they all definitely return to is nothing more but directly indicating the human mind (*zhizhi renxin* 直指人心). [...] Those who are vessels of the roots of turning upward must be endowed with lofty knowledge and far sight, and have the firm intention of perpetuating [the heritage] of the Buddhas and patriarchs. Then they can enter deeply into the innermost.³⁰

This passage is an extended *laudatio* on the ancestral myth and spiritual fecundity of the Chan or Zen lineage. Chan or Zen, according to Yuanwu, is nothing

27 These are all examples of Indian ancestors using Chan or Zen methods rather than doctrinal instruction to pass on the *Dharma*.

28 This is a reference to a story about Āryadeva (fl. 3rd century), the Madhyamaka patriarch and disciple of Nāgārjuna (fl. 2nd–3rd centuries), engaging in debate with a heretic Brahmin. The debate centered on the function of pronouns and their shifting referents.

29 The text reads *betsugyō* 別行 but this appears to be a copy error. I read 別伝.

30 *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* 円悟仏果禅师语录, T 47: 766c–767b. Part of the text can also be found in Tōrei Enji’s 東嶺圓慈 (1721–1792) *Shūmon mujintōron* 宗門無尽灯論, T 81: 591bc. Where possible, I have followed the text of the *Yulu*, but the superior punctuation of the *Shūmon mujintōron*.

but to indicate the human mind simply and directly. The transmission of this mind seal began with the Buddha himself. Throughout most of his life, the Buddha observed the standard pedagogical model of establishing teachings by adapting his preaching to the capacities of his audience. Only towards the end of his life he transmitted the essence of the *Dharma* to Mahākāśyapa by holding up a single flower, and the patriarch received it with a smile. It has been handed down in like manner ever since.³¹

It is from this fissure in the Buddha's own career that Yuanwu derived the difference between *lizhi* or *richi*, on the one hand, and *jiguan* or *kikan*, on the other. For clarity's sake, I will continue to use the Japanese reading of these terms. *Richi* are the formal Buddhist teachings found in the scriptures and commented upon by scholastics in doctrinal treatises. As the Buddha's skillful communication, they are relative to the varying receptive capabilities of their audience. *Kikan*, on the other hand, take the Buddha's own mind as their standard, and consequently are open only to those possessed of a similarly superior mind. Yuanwu used a number of famous transmission episodes between Indian patriarchs as found in Chinese Chan sources to illustrate *kikan*, for instance Mahākāśyapa telling the second ancestor Ānanda to "cut down the flagpole" in response to the latter's question whether the Buddha had passed on anything apart from his golden robe.³² *Kikan*, in short, refers to encounter dialogue as mode of transmission, and by extension to the use of *gongan* or *kōan*, at which Yuanwu himself excelled. As this method of communicating the Buddhist truth takes as its measure the highest spiritual faculties possessed by the Buddhas and ancestors themselves, it cuts straight to the heart of the matter, dealing with it once and for all in one fell swoop. Although Indian patriarchs reserved this direct mode of transmission for the rare occasion of passing on the *Dharma* among themselves, once the Chan lineage reached China, direct transmission proliferated far and wide. The racist undertones here are unmistakable.

We now proceed to the second element Enni borrowed from Yuanwu, namely *kōjō*. *Richi* and *kikan* can be understood quite clearly from the above passage. In contrast, the third member of Enni's mechanisms, *kōjō*, is not explicitly elaborated upon apart from a brief reference in the final sentence to the "roots of turning upward" (*xiangshang genqi* 向上根器). "Turning upward" here is used in the adjectival sense of "superior," a usage common in Chinese sources, which appear to only rarely use the term as a noun on its own.

31 According to the internal chronology of the Buddha's teachings used in the Chan and Zen schools, the Buddha transmitted Zen between preaching the *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa sūtra*.

32 See for instance *Wumen guan*, T 48: 295c.

Grammatical considerations aside, we can infer that in so far as the “roots of turning upward” are those possessed by patriarchs, such roots, or rather those possessed of them, are receptive to “directly facing and grasping” “the direct indication of the human mind.” Unlike inferior practitioners, such superior individuals do not have to rely on secondary or provisional means. Such an understanding of “turning upward” as a direct encounter with mind not mediated by anyone’s intercession is also apparent elsewhere in Yuanwu’s *Recorded Sayings*:

The single road turning upward the thousand sages do not transmit; students toil with forms like monkeys grasp at shadows. Arriving therein, not constrained by formalized standards, not stepping into the tracks of those gone before, not obscuring [what] hits the spot (*bumei dangji* 不昧当機).³³

As we shall see below and especially in the following chapter, the notion that “turning upward” is something that the Buddhas and patriarchs do not and cannot transmit, that all their teachings and skillful means amount to monkey play and shadow boxing, is the pillar around which Enni built his strategy of integrating Zen as the Buddha’s own self-verification of mind with the tantric teachings. Furthermore, the exact phrasing of the above passage and especially the first sentence became glosses or keywords for *kōjō* used widely throughout medieval Japanese *kōan* literature, not only in the Shōichi lineage but, as we shall see in Chapter 5, also in the Sōtō faction.

Finally, we turn to the integration of the above elements into tripartite structures or hierarchies of Zen teaching mechanisms. It is unclear whether Yuanwu himself considered *kōjō* to be part of a unitary and consistent structure also including *kikan* and *richi*. Although Yuanwu did employ terms such as “the mechanism of turning upward” (*xiangshang ji* 向上機) or even “the device of turning upward” (*xiangshang jiguan* 向上機關),³⁴ I have been unable to identify in his extensive *oeuvre* a passage in which he would use the three terms *richi*, *kikan*, and *kōjō* together to denote three different teaching mechanisms. Rather, Yuanwu seems to have considered of primary importance the distinction between *kikan* and *richi*, as this differentiation defined the line separating

33 *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu*, T 47: 728c. “Not obscuring [what] hits the spot,” or, more literally, “not obscuring the triggering mechanisms,” is a key expression that is already found in the works of Yuanwu’s teacher Fayen 法演 (?–1104). See *Fayen chanshi yulu* 法演禪師語錄, T 47: 659a.

34 See for example the record of a “small assembly” discussing these topics in the *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu*, T 47: 762a–b.

the Chan or Zen approach from doctrinal teachings, and thus bestowed on the former its distinctive identity. Judging from the passages from his *Recorded Sayings* quoted above, it would seem Yuanwu considered “turning upward,” or rather “facing it directly and grasping it” right there and then, to be the result of the skillful application of *kikan* practiced by the patriarchs amongst themselves, rather than an additional or alternative third means of communication.

In contrast, Enni’s *Recorded Sayings* contain the following passage, which, although not entirely straightforward either, does seem to suggest that *kōjō* should be understood as a third term included alongside *richi* and *kikan* in a single, progressive structure:

The Buddhas extend their hands not only to others [but also to each other]. It is only that this self-benefitting (*jiko onriki* 自己恩力) [of a Buddha meeting a Buddha] is thrusting square pegs at round holes, or washing earth in mud [i.e. it is useless for Buddhas to teach Buddhas]. The patriarchs transmitting to each other, it is like an empty valley answering the voice, creating north by calling [the opposite direction] south, three down and four across [?], sitting once while running around seven times [i.e. a waste of effort]. One has not avoided difficulties. If again one attains full confidence turning to the evasive obscurity of deepest darkness (*yōmyō kōsō* 杳冥恍惚)³⁵ before the single *ki* (*ikki* 一氣) is signified, it’s like the second heading [of the Three Mechanisms, i.e. *kikan*]. How much more so shall one fall into the third mechanism [of *richi*] if one attains it after primordial chaos has been divided out?³⁶ Looking for oneself, one has to directly surpass the *richi* and *kikan* of the Buddhas and ancestors. What is called surpassing the Buddha’s *richi* is to succeed in passing the forest of thorns; to overcome the patriarch’s *kikan* is to penetrate the iron wall and silver mountain. Then for the first time one shall know that there is the fundamental portion of turning upward (*kōjō honbun* 向上本分).³⁷

Enni here related three “headings” or “mechanisms” of Zen to the terms *kōjō*, or what Buddhas and patriarchs attempt to bestow or transmit in vain; *kikan*, or the single, undivided iron wall of the ancestral teachers’ sayings; and *richi*, the thorny thicket of views one enters when studying the manifold doctrines

35 This is a reference to the 21st chapter of the *Daodejing*, see Kanaya, *Rōshi*, p. 79.

36 These two sentences are based on a lecture by Yuanwu. See *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu*, T 47: 719a. Yuanwu however does not mention the “third mechanism.”

37 *Shōichi kokushi goroku*, T 80: 20b.

preached by the Buddha. It is important to note that this passage implies a hierarchy, or at least a descendent order, among the three headings or mechanisms. They devolve from the unfathomable inner mind of the Buddhas beyond even the notion of transmission, via the single principle of patriarchal transmission, to the doctrinal plurality generated from following the manifold and varying capacities of sentient beings. Furthermore, Enni in part drew on cosmogonic language such as the “single *ki*” to illustrate this process of diversification. As we shall see in Chapter 5, especially in the *kōan* lore of Sōtō lineages such cosmogonic language would come to play a central role.

While Yuanwu might not have provided Enni with a straightforward precedent of three hierarchically ordered mechanisms, the Chinese master's *Recorded Sayings* certainly contain passages that suggest a threefold classification of Zen teaching approaches, even if these are not explicitly identified as *richi*, *kikan*, and *kōjō*. Enni included some of these passages almost *verbatim* in his own lectures. One particularly clear instance of Enni's creative plagiarism is the following passage, which introduces the “three different kinds of mechanisms” (*sanshu ki* 三種機) or indications used in Chan or Zen teachings, although without naming them:

From the Buddhas and ancestors onwards, in general there are three kinds of mechanisms to apply to people. As for the first mechanism, further [*sic!*] there are no provisional means, no meaning and principles; it is difficult to explain in words. If you understand it right now, then concerning “the oak tree in the garden,” “three pounds of flax,” and “with a single gulp drink the Xi river,” again there is no difference. As for the second mechanism, a question arises, and is followed by a pithy reply [revealing the truth]. In other words, it is like Linji querying Huangpo [Xiyun 黃檗 希運 (?–850)] and eating sixty blows. As for the third mechanism, entering mud and entering water [to save those who fell into them], appending footnotes, blinding people's eyes and destroying the lineage of the Indian [i.e. the Zen lineage deriving from the Buddha. ...] The old monk does not begrudge the school's manner; this is called indicating the three kinds of mechanisms.³⁸

This whole passage is lifted almost word for word from Yuanwu, if in an abbreviated form.³⁹ In Yuanwu's more extensive version, the structure and nature

38 *Shōichi kokushi goroku*, T 80: 20b.

39 See *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu*, T 47: 774a. This passage is not contained in the *Mind Essentials*, which suggests that Enni also consulted Yuanwu's *Recorded Sayings*, a hitherto

of the three approaches to imparting the truth of Chan or Zen is clearer than in Enni's condensed discussion. Essentially, the mechanisms differ in how much consideration is given to a student's needs, and how much instruction is provided accordingly. Yuanwu illustrates this with the story of Yudi 于頔 (719–818)⁴⁰ asking his master Ziyu Daotong 紫玉道通 (731–813), a student of Mazu 馬祖 (709–788), “What is it, this black wind blowing ships about and stranding them in the land of demons?” This is a reference to the *Lotus sūtra*, according to which the bodhisattva Kuanyin 觀音 (J. Kannon) will save those whose ships have been blown into the land of *rakṣā* demons if but its name is invoked.⁴¹ Ziyu answered, “Yudi, you thrall, how come you ask such a thing?” When Yudi got angry, Ziyu said, “Now that the black wind blows, how could Kuanyin not appear?”⁴² The lesson, one presumes, is that the “black winds” blowing in the human heart provide the opportunity for awakening.

Yuanwu used this story to explain the three approaches as follows. In the first mechanism, one suddenly and unexpectedly throws students back onto their own minds. Before they even have the chance to speak up, one hits them with a saying like, “the oak tree in the garden” or “three pounds of flax.”⁴³ There is no other means to help them, nothing more to be said. This is the most difficult to trigger of the three mechanisms, for if the student is even slightly distracted, or in the least gives rise to conceptual thinking, she or he will miss the point.⁴⁴ The second mechanism involves an Aikidō style maneuver. Just as the student opens her or his mouth to ask a question, one addresses them with a pithy saying, causing a moment of confused hesitation one exploits to overturn their confusion. Yuanwu does not provide a specific example for this

overlooked source for understanding Enni's thought. Yuanwu's *Recorded Sayings* are contained alongside the *Mind Essentials* in the *Fumon'in kyōron shōsho goroku jusho dō mokuroku* 普門院經論章疏語錄儒書等目錄. Although this is not entirely clear from the *Fumon'in mokuroku*, which has been compiled about a hundred years after Enni's death, it is likely that both texts were among the works Enni brought from the continent. Unfortunately, an earlier catalogue of these works Enni compiled himself is lost. See Haga, *Chūsei zenrin*, p. 316.

40 The *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* gives 于頔.

41 See T 9: 56c.

42 This is the exchange according to Yuanwu's *Recorded Sayings*. The *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 contains a different ending, with Ziyu saying, “Subdue right here this falling into the land of demons!” See T 51: 248c.

43 Interestingly, Ōgawa Takashi 大川隆 has recently suggested a similar interpretation of the “oak tree in the garden” case. According to Ōgawa, Zhaozhou's reply was to direct the student to the immediacy of the perceiving mind. See the introduction to his *Goroku no shisō*.

44 Yuanwu cites Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (864–949) to this effect. See *Yunmen Kuangzhen chanshi guanglu* 雲門匡真禪師廣錄, T 47: 553c.

mechanism, but Enni likens it to the famous story of Linji asking his teacher about the meaning of Buddhism and receiving a savage beating in return. Finally, in using the third mechanism one “enters mud and water” by allowing oneself to be dragged into verbal exchanges, just as Ziyu did with Yudi. In sum, the three kinds of Zen mechanisms address students with decreasing directness and increasing verbosity. The first mechanism directly turns students to their own minds. The second mechanism uses a student’s most profound and simple doubt to teach them with an incisive word. Finally, the third kind of mechanism teaches through the back and forth of question and response. It is easy to recognize the similarities between Yuanwu’s three timings and the graded mechanisms of *richi*, *kikan*, and *kōjō*. However, neither Enni nor Yuanwu explicitly referred to the three timings used in Zen teaching by these three terms.

In Yuanwu’s understanding, each of these three timings or teaching methods involves interaction between teacher and disciple. In the passage quoted above, Enni shared this dialogical orientation. However, elsewhere in his *Recorded Sayings* Enni also developed a more idiosyncratic interpretation:

The followers of the patriarchal teachers point directly at the mind. Discursive explanations and provisional means are for the especially obstinate. Not falling into seeing and hearing, not following voice or visible form, free among the hundred grasses, sitting and reclining [freely] among the heap of ten thousand shapes. When exhaling not inclining towards perceptual conditions, when inhaling not bound by [interior] physical and mental phenomena (*in* 陰) and the fields of perception (*kai* 界). Exhaustively the great earth is the gate of liberation; generally land and sea are the true *Dharma*. The competent adept knows return in picking up and putting down, beginners and slow learners, how could they rest [safely] like a ship in the harbor? If it is not attained [through this mechanism, Zen practitioners] turn to the gate of the second principle, and establish a one-lane road, proliferate words in where there are no words, display perceptual characteristics in what is without perceptual characteristics (*musō* 無相). What is this proliferation of words in where there are no words? A millstone runs through space! What is manifesting perceptual characteristics in what is without them? Xihe plays the lion[?]. During your everyday life, when according to conditions you respond to the field of discriminations, do not use [the means of] eliminating [associative] thought (*sō* 想), do not [seek to] create a subtle alignment. Abandon reasoning and abandon the flavor of words, night and day, forget sleeping and eating, and simply look at this word [of the

watō]! If again you cannot attain it, then the third heading is explained. Explaining mind and explaining nature, explaining the mysterious and explaining the subtle. One speck of dust contains the *dharmadhātu*, one thought reaches the ten directions. For this reason an ancient one said, “In the limitless realm, not a hair separates self and other. The ten worlds, past and present, are not in the least remote from this very thought [right now].”⁴⁵

Although Enni still used a threefold framework, the nature and content of the mechanisms differ from the ones discussed above. In the previous scheme, which Enni copied from Yuanwu, the different mechanisms arose from the timing according to which the teacher chose to “hit” the student with a *kōan* or similarly incomprehensible utterance or action. In other words, the scheme is based on the relational encounter between teacher and student. This aspect is absent in the passage just quoted, which instead defines three mechanisms according to content or according to the method used to trigger awakening. The passage then arranges these three mechanisms in a hierarchical manner from the most simple and direct to the most involved and indirect.

The first mechanism takes as its content mind itself. It does not use any teaching or learning at all, but rather enjoins that the practitioner simply and naturally dwell in the freedom of mind. Elsewhere, Enni calls this “self-propelled [awakening] without a teacher before the empty eon” (*kūkō izen mushi jihotsu* 空劫以前無師自發).⁴⁶ The use of *kōan*, encounter dialogue, or similar stereotypical Chan or Zen methods is restricted to the second mechanism. This mechanism specifically refers to the *watō* method of intensely focusing on a single part of a *kōan* as popularized by Yuanwu’s student Dahui, rather than at the spontaneous interaction between master and disciple. This is a significant point that clearly shows how Enni creatively adapted, rather than simply copied, Yuanwu; the Chinese master would not have been familiar with this specific technique of *kōan* usage. Elsewhere in his *Recorded Sayings* Enni emphasized the convenience and efficacy of using a *watō* in order to cut off deluded thought even while emphasizing the preliminary nature of such an approach. Enni thus likened *watō* to a brick used to knock at the door of awakening, or to a bauble used to distract a crying child.⁴⁷ Finally, the third mechanism or “third heading” does not involve any characteristically Chan or Zen elements at all. Rather, it seems to refer to doctrinal teachings, especially

45 *Shōichi kokushi goroku*, T 80: 19b.

46 T 80: 21a.

47 T 80: 19c.

the Huayan or Kegon style “mote of dust containing the universe” type of expositions. Fittingly, the final quotation from an “ancient one” is a reference to the popular and influential lay Huayan teacher Li Tongxuan 李通玄 (635–730 or 646–740) and his *Xin huayanjing lun* 新華嚴經論 or *New Treatise on the Huayan jing*. Overall, this threefold structure of natural dwelling in liberated mind, practice of observing a turning word while going about one’s usual business, and the formal study of doctrine is quite close to the full-fledged Three Mechanisms of Zen practice described by Nichiren, even if it does not explicitly relate them to spiritual capacities.

Again, it is entirely possible, even likely, that Enni gleaned the inspiration for this revised set of three teaching methods from none other than Yuanwu and his labyrinthine *oeuvre*. Yuanwu’s *Recorded Sayings* contain the following passage:

Continuing, the master [Yuanwu] said, “Great assembly! The moon births one; the swift eagle and the splendid hawk cannot cross it. The moon births two; Deshan and Linji have slipped the hook. The moon births three; Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī associate closely.”⁴⁸

Enni’s *Recorded Sayings* make use of the very same image of the moon gradually birthing an integrated plurality from a primordial singularity:

Ascending the Hall [to preach, Enni said], “The moon births one; *kan* 乾 and *kon* 坤 [the pure *yang* and pure *yin* trigrams of the *Yijing*, heaven and earth, all things, the universe] are open and clear. There is nothing outside the great expanse. The moon births two; the lion is roused, the elephant king turns. The moon births three; in the eye of the minute mite, the great roc bird transforms its body. Therefore it is said, “The single road turning upwards the thousand sages do not transmit; students toil with forms like a monkey grasping shadows.” He took up the staff and, striking the table once, said, “Adding spirit when having spirit, but not having style again is a style.”⁴⁹

Enni not only pilfered the guiding image of his discourse from Yuanwu. With the single exception of the third sentence, “in the eye of the minute mite [...],” which is based on the *Recorded Sayings* of Yuanwu’s student Dahui, the entirety

48 *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu*, T 47: 747c.

49 *Shōichi kokushi goroku*, T 80: 19b. I have adapted the last phrase from Hori, *Zen Sand*, p. 486.

of this sermon is composed of phrases lifted from Yuanwu.⁵⁰ Yet there is a crucial difference between Enni's and Yuanwu's sermon. Enni uses the phrase, "the single road upwards the thousand sages do not transmit; practitioners toil with forms like a monkey grasping shadows," as a kind of capping word or summary of his discourse. This phrase, which we will encounter repeatedly throughout the remainder of our discussion, is closely associated with the master's concept of *kōjō* as the highest Zen teaching mechanism. In other words, through use of this capping word Enni established a link between *kōjō* and a threefold scheme of Chan or Zen teaching strategies that did not exist in his Chinese source text. Although, or perhaps because of, being prone to plagiarism, Enni was not devoid of derivative yet highly developed skills at playing Chan or Zen word games, the tradition's favored hermeneutical technique.

At the risk of repetition, let me in conclusion of this long and winding inquiry into Yuanwu's and Enni's understanding of Zen teaching mechanisms reiterate the main points. Although Enni himself does not set them out as systematically as did his successors, from the above considerations the rough outlines of the Three Mechanisms as apparent in, or recoverable from, his *Recorded Sayings* are tolerably clear. Yuanwu's *Recorded Sayings* are one of the main sources of Enni's own Zen sermons, to the point that the latter often consist entirely of quotations plucked and simplified from the former. From this Chinese source, Enni constructed his Three Mechanism by fusing the three elements discussed above, namely, first, the distinction between *richi* and *kikan*; second, the notion of *kōjō* or turning upward; and, finally, at least two different threefold schemes of teaching devices, one based on timing and the other on level of diversification. In Yuanwu's own work, these three elements are quite distinct, and there is no indication that the admittedly reliably obscure Chinese master considered them part of a single scheme or pedagogical approach. In a sense, Enni's construction of the Three Mechanisms might be seen as an attempt at conceptual simplification, just as on the textual level Enni's borrowings often excise the most incomprehensible passages of Yuanwu's prose.

In terms of content, *richi*, at least in the case of Yuanwu and Enni, was not a category of *kōan*, as has been presupposed in most modern scholarship on medieval *kōan* systems, but rather a term for the doctrinal teachings. *Kikan*, on the other hand, indicated the totality of Zen "devices." *Kōjō*, finally, is

50 For "*kan* and *kon* are open and clear, the great expanse has no outside" see Yuanwu *Foguo chanshi yulu*, T 47: 799a. For "the lion is roused, the elephant king turns," 798c. For "adding spirit when having spirit, but not having style again is style," 793a. For the third sentence, "in the eye of the minute mite, the great roc bird changes its body," see Dahui *Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄, T 47: 817a, "the moon births three, in the eyes of the mite the great sea turtle changes."

ambiguous in that it appears to be both a resultant state of direct insight and a kind of mechanism or “means” to directly enter this state. In this sense, *kōjō* is what neither Buddha nor patriarch can transmit, just as one cannot explain to another the taste of salt. As Yuanwu himself put it:

For this reason it is said, the single road of turning upwards the thousand saints do not transmit; students toil with shapes like monkeys grasp at shadows. It is just that before one has arrived at and penetrated something [for oneself], how to bring it up, how to explain its principles and subtleties? Can one [understand even] drinking a single gulp, drawing a single line, opening the mouth and babbling [without having done it oneself]? Can one obtain thirty-six from six times six, or eighty-one from nine times nine [without understanding multiplication for oneself]? If this cannot be even for simple principles like these, how much more so for the subtleties the thousand sages do not transmit? Coming to this single field, only a Buddha and a Buddha can know it [amongst themselves].⁵¹

Kōjō, in short, is to “directly face” the Buddhist truth in its immediacy, whereas *richi* and *kanan* are, each in its respective way, (mere) indications of this truth. As long as students cling to either scholastic doctrine or even Zen word play, they are but monkeys grasping at shadows.

Finally, Enni also, if even more indirectly, derived from Yuanwu the notion that the three elements of *richi*, *kanan*, and *kōjō* can be integrated into a tripartite hierarchy of Chan or Zen teaching devices. This hierarchy is predicated on how much allowance each device makes for accommodating students’ needs, and how diversified it is in consequence. *Kōjō* is the direct encounter with mind the “Buddhas and patriarchs do not transmit.” Single and immediate, it rests on top of the hierarchy. Next, *kanan* addresses the capabilities of patriarchs, taking mind itself as its standard. While still relatively immediate, it already has transmission as its intention, and therefore resides below *kōjō*. Finally, *richi* as “teaching” is essentially characterized by being ordered towards sentient beings’ diverse capacities. Furthest removed from singular mind, it occupies the base of the hierarchy. However, Enni stopped short of outright assigning *richi*, *kanan*, and *kōjō* to specific roots in the mechanical way we saw Nichiren do.

⁵¹ See *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu*, T 47: 763c.

5 Separate Transmission as Separate Teaching: Jōmyō's Criticism of Zen

The *Keiran shūyōshū*, on which we have already touched on occasion, is a 14th century Tendai encyclopedia of oral transmission lore, a highly manipulative genre with a deserved reputation for unreliability. Yet when it comes to Enni and the lineages connected to him, the *Keiran shūyōshū* transmits a surprising amount of accurate information.⁵² In the following, I will draw on some of the materials the text preserves concerning Enni and his Tendai interlocutor, Jōmyō, in order to tease out how the Three Mechanisms functioned as part of a trans-sectarian doctrinal and polemical discourse.

According to Kōshū 光宗 (1276–1350), the *Keiran shūyōshū*'s compiler, the following entry on “Zen and the Teachings” (*zen to kyō no koto* 禪與教事), which I have already alluded to in the introductory remarks to the present chapter, is a private or secret instruction (*mitsudan* 密談) of Enni (here referred to as “Shōkō” 聖公) recorded by his disciple Senkei Shoken. It concerns

52 As Matsunami points out, the sections related to Zen and especially Enni in fascicles 9 and 10 belong to the oldest layers of the KRSYS and were recorded in the early 14th century, likely by 1313, the date given for the completion of the 10th fascicle. This is thirty years after Enni's death and within the lifetimes of some of his disciples. This would make these passages some of the earliest materials relating to Enni and his teachings. See Matsunami, *Zenshū shisōshi kenkyū*, p. 179. Furthermore, the views on Zen the KRSYS ascribes to Jōmyō are consistent with what we have encountered in the previous chapter's discussion of Jōmyō's meditation teachings, as will be discussed further below. The KRSYS also was familiar with the transmissions of Yōsai's Yōjō lineage, a number of which are collected in the 76th fascicle. As Enni succeeded to this lineage, it comes as no surprise that they treat similar topics. For instance, in the *Dainichikyō kenmon* 大日經見聞, Enni refers to an oral determination (*kuketsu*) on the key phrase “becoming Buddha is the outward trace, the true intention of *bodhi* is no awakening and no becoming” (*jōbutsu to ha kore gejaku, bodai jitsugi ha mukaku mujō nari* 成仏者此外迹、菩提実義、無覺無成也). *Dainichikyō kenmon*, NDZK, vol. 24, 66a. Punctuation mine, the text reads, 成仏者此外迹菩提。The KRSYS contains a passage on this phrase's interpretation which is described as the outline of the “oral decisions of the Yōjō lineage” (*yōjō ryū no kuketsu* 葉上流口決). See KRSYS, T 76: 760b. The same fascicle also defines the Zen slogan “not establishing words and letters” (*furyū monji*) as relating to mantra and *siddham* syllables. This is consistent with Enni's remarks to the same effect in his *Hikyōketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 479. The *Taimitsu keigushō* 胎密契愚鈔 contains a record of oral transmissions associated with Enni as an appendix. Materials these transmission have in common with the Yōjō section of the KRSYS include those on the four types of Mahāvairocana (see *Taimitsu keigushō*, reprinted in Mizukami, *Taimitsu shisō*, pp. 595–671, here: p. 657; KRSYS, T 76: 762a), as well as on the single *dharmakāya* and its *mantra*. See *Taimitsu keigushō*, 658 and KRSYS, T 76: 762b. Finally, some materials quoted by Enni's disciple Mujū can be found in the KRSYS, for instance the three types of *dhāraṇī* Mujū cites in the context of a comparison of Zen and esoteric teachings. See *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 5, 440 and KRSYS, T 76: 785a).

the relationship Enni envisioned between the absolute approach to spiritual cultivation promoted in Tendai, on the one hand, and his own Zen mechanism of *kōjō*, on the other:

One thought not arisen (*ichinen fushō* 一念不生), is called turning upward (*kōjō*). After one thought has arisen, it is called turning downward (*kōge* 向下). When lord and vassal are not yet divided (*kunshin mibun* 君臣未分), that is turning upward. It is before the three sovereigns and five emperors (*sankō gotei* 三皇五帝). Therefore, to say that the unfathomable realm of calming and contemplation (*shikan fushigi kyō* 止觀不思議境) [as taught in the Tendai traditions] is the single *Dharma* intimately relied upon by those of superior roots [i.e. Zen] is entirely in accord with the fundamental indication of Sōkei 曹溪 [the 6th Chan patriarch]. This being the case, the absolute contemplation of the unfathomable realm of calming and contemplation (*shikan fushigi kyō zettai kan* 止觀不思議境絕待觀) that is practiced by transcending both the perceptual realm and knowledge thereof, perceiving and perceived, mind and condition, deluded and sagely, is the intention of the diligence (*kufū* 工夫) of turning upward of my [Zen] school. [...] It is just that in the style of my school only the single mechanism (*ikki* 一機) of cutting off in a single turn [known as] turning upward is considered the measure of the fundamental indication. In calming and contemplation, although the unfathomable contemplation of cutting off dependencies is established, it is said⁵³ that middling roots clarify the second and seventh [of the ten vehicles of contemplation]. Or they say that inferior roots should follow ten and complete the ten realms [of contemplation]. For this reason, the explanations of the teachings often discuss principles relating to inferior roots.⁵⁴

This dense passage discusses the relationship between Tendai and Zen approaches to meditation. As we can see, within the Zen teachings Enni differentiated between “turning upward,” which is the primordial state before deluded thought has arisen, and “turning downward,” which is the common, deluded state of beings lost in thought. The first of these, Enni claimed, is identical to the absolute calming and contemplation of the Tendai school. In both Zen and Tendai, Enni argued, those of superior capacities simply contemplate the unfathomable realm. However, while Zen stops at this “single mechanism,” Tendai seeks to offer those of lesser capabilities methods suited to their needs.

53 I read 所謂 for 所止.

54 KRSYS, T 76: 542a–b.

In short, Enni insisted that the two traditions are identical in substance yet differ in the accommodations they make for those of lower spiritual gifts. As a diverse teaching, Tendai resides below the unity of intent characteristic of Zen, even if both traditions ultimately are founded on the same “fundamental ground.”

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Jōmyō, although faulting Zen for one-sidedly emphasizing “no-mind” and falling into the quietist trap, did suggest that at least some Zen teachers such as Enni were capable of overcoming this deficiency and speaking a “final word” akin to Tendai contemplation teachings. This did not imply, however, that Jōmyō simply approved of Enni’s claim that the highest portion of Tendai and Zen were identical:

Tōshō 東聖 [i.e. Enni] says, “The mechanisms that enter using comprehension (*geryō* 解了) are the mechanisms of inside the teachings.⁵⁵ The mechanisms that do not depend on comprehension and from the first align with the fundamental portion are the alignment and mechanisms of the gate of the school [i.e. the Zen school]. Again, within the gate of the school there are the two principles (*gi* 義) of the school’s intention and the school’s manner. In the school’s intention [there is] the single road turning upward even the thousand sages do not transmit (*kōjō no ichirō senjō mo fuden* 向上ノ一路千聖モ不伝), the indication of the ancestral teacher not yet having come from the West. There can be no tenet of comparing the various teachings here. As for the school’s manner, it is talk of “surpassing the various teachings” and of “the Buddhas and ancestors not transmitting.” These all are the *Dharma* gate of turning downwards. The intention of the school, which is what is signified, is turning upwards. The manner of the school[, which is what signifies,] is turning downwards.” And so on.

The gist of Jō[myō] *hōin*’s 法印 [reply to Enni] says, “If one asks what this turning upward and so forth, this surpassing the various teachings, are, [then the answer is that] they are the *Dharma* gate of the separate teaching.⁵⁶ It is to be considered that herein there is only one-sided principle not entailing the texts of the various teachings.”⁵⁷

This passage opens with differentiating between the “teachings,” which rely on intellectual comprehension, and Zen, which directly aligns with fundamental

55 The text gives 案内, for which I read 教内.

56 I read ナン for ナシ.

57 KRSYS, T 76: 542b.

reality. Within the latter, a further distinction is made between the “school’s intention,” that is the realm before deluded thought arises, and the “school’s manner,” the various expressions with which Zen teachers indicate and orient the practitioner towards this realm. These two, signified reality and signifying indication, are known as “turning upward” and “turning downward.”⁵⁸

It is this point, which suggests a chasm or separation between the substance of Zen and the means by which it is communicated, that provoked Jōmyō’s rebuke. By dividing signified from signifier, and therefore claiming to refer to something outside the concrete and specific words of the teachings, Jōmyō pointed out, Zen amounts to no more than a separate teaching (*bekkyō* 別教). Therefore, it is inferior to the Tendai perfect teachings. The latter, Jōmyō asserted, can integrate signifier and signified, and therefore overcome the separation constitutive of Zen as “outside the teachings.”

According to the Tiantai and Tendai system of classifying Buddhist teachings, the separate teaching is one of the four teachings categorized according to doctrinal content (*kehō* 化法). Together with the perfect teachings, it comprises the supra-mundane (*kaige* 界外) class, as opposed to the mundane three baskets (*sanzō* 三藏) and common teachings (*tsūkyō* 通教). While the mundane teachings are focused on emptiness, the supra-mundane teachings focus on the middle way (*chūdō* 中道). However, separate and perfect teachings conceive of this middle way differently. While the perfect teachings see each specific phenomenon as a complete instantiation of the middle way, the separate teachings establish the truth of the middle beyond phenomena. Guanding 灌頂 (561–632, also known as Zhangan 章安), the scribe and editor of many of the Chinese Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi’s works, explains the middle way of the separate teaching with the image of clouds and moon:

Leaving the two extremes [of one-sided being and one-sided emptiness] far behind, it is like the moon apart from the clouds.⁵⁹

58 If we were to relate this binary of “turning upward” and “turning downward” to the Three Mechanisms, it would appear that *richi* and *kan*, as preliminary signifiers, are to be included in the latter. This would strengthen Mujū’s interpretation, according to which *kōjō* as direct indication is opposed to both *richi* and *kan* as means.

59 *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義, T 33: 682c. To use the correct doctrinal terminology, the separate teaching establishes the “middle” (*chū* 中) over and above the “provisional” (*ke* 仮) and “emptiness” (*kū* 空) truths, whereas the Perfect Teaching sees these three as perfectly integrated (*ennyū* 円融). See Fukuda, *Tendaigaku gairon*, pp. 95–207; Ōkubo Ryōshun, “Tendaishū,” pp. 59–64; Swanson, *Foundations of T’ien-T’ai*, pp. 1–18.

In essence, Jōmyō charged that by differentiating between the school's intention and its manner, "turning upward" towards reality and "turning downward" towards sentient beings, Zen separates the moon from the finger and therefore is a representative of the separate teachings class.

In the *Awataguchi kuketsu*, Jōmyō elaborated on the dire consequences the metaphysical choice of separating signifier from signified invites for Zen's meditative practice and soteriological efficacy. Jōmyō first asserted that while those of superior faculties might be able to directly approach the Buddhist truth, beings of a lower order depend on provisional means and mediating devices:

Those of sharp faculties directly (*jiki* 直) dwell in the essence of *dharma* (*hōtai* 法体). Those of dull faculties, by gradually distinguishing the three contemplations [of emptiness, provisional existence, and the middle], return to the fundamental principle of one thought [that is fully endowed with] the three thousand [worlds].⁶⁰

In other words, Jōmyō argued that due to its lack of contemplative techniques, which would allow practitioners to gradually work through the layers of delusion, the direct approach of Zen, the "single mechanism of turning upward" as Enni called it, is suitable only for those of superior faculties who are able to directly dwell in no-thought. In the Tendai teachings, on the other hand, there can be contemplation even in this state of no-thought (*munen no i* 無念ノ位). By not restricting contemplation to discursive thought (*nensō kan* 念想観) Tendai teachings of calming and contemplation extend even to those of middling or inferior qualities, who otherwise would be unable to directly traverse emptiness and instead have to rely on concrete teachings.⁶¹ In short, Tendai calming and contemplation does not divide the signifiers of awakening from what they signify, the finger from the moon. It therefore surpasses Zen, which merely seeks to abolish signification through calming.

Although the details of Jōmyō's critique of Zen as a separate teaching are quite innovative and reflect Japanese Buddhist concerns, its outline can already be found in Chinese Tiantai polemics, which likewise disparaged Chan's excessive focus on abolishing language through concentration.⁶² The 9th fascicle of the *Keiran shūyōshū*, however, preserves a discussion of Zen,

60 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 164a.

61 ZTSZS, vol. 6, 164b. Jōmyō developed this reading with reference to different chapters of the *Mohe zhiguan* and the contemplative teachings set out in them as being addressed to those of different faculties.

62 See Ziporyn, "Anti-Chan Polemics."

likewise attributed to Jōmyō, that suggests a somewhat more complicated picture. Significantly, this more nuanced discussion is based on Enni's Three Mechanisms. The passage in question first takes up the Tendai criticism of the Zen practice of *kōan*. *Kōan*, Jōmyō explained, are applied as a tool to wipe the mind clean of thought. In this regard, they resemble the use of the causal tetralemma as contemplative method described in the *Awataguchi kuketsu*. In so far as the Zen approach of wiping the mind clear of thought is one-sidedly biased towards calming and emptiness, Jōmyō continued, it is inferior to Tendai. Citing the *Greater Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* as a proof text, Jōmyō repeated his assertion that Zen is a separate teaching that establishes *dharma* nature in emptiness and consequently outside the teachings.⁶³ Jōmyō associated this understanding specifically with an obscure Zen practitioner called Dōshō 道証 (d.u.), who is described as a contemporary of Enni and a disciple of the Chinese émigré master Lanxi.⁶⁴

Although he insisted that Enni shared Dōshō's opinion that Zen was superior to the practices of Tendai and tantric Buddhism, Jōmyō also raised a crucial point of disagreement between the two Zen enthusiasts:

The use of *kōan* in the gate of the school [i.e. in Zen] is, with regards to mechanisms [for conveying truth], the second kind of mechanism from among the three kinds of mechanisms [used in the Zen school, i.e. *kikan*. ...] The third is the common mechanism of doctrinal study [i.e. *richi*]. This is the portion of studying the three studies of discipline, concentration, and wisdom, and proceeding from teaching via practice to verification. As for the first kind of mechanism, i.e. *kōjō*, the Chan record of Yuan[wu] says, "Turning upward of the school's manner, not even the thousand sages can explain." The mechanism of turning upward does not in the least use *kōan* [and instead] makes [one] arrive directly [in the truth without relying on intermediaries such as the words of a *kōan* or focusing on a *watō*]. It is said that this principle not even the thousand sages can explain (*senshō fukasetsu* 千聖不可説). The true mechanism of calming and contemplation is established abolishing the emptiness of turning upward of the school's manner. It is not clinging to it. Also, in the gate of the school [i.e. Zen] it is commonly said that in turning upward there are no mechanisms. Dōshō and others are [advocates of]

63 KRSYS, T 76: 531a.

64 See KRSYS, T 76: 532a. This Dōshō also appears to have been involved in the publication of Mujū's *Shasekishū*, according to which he had practiced *ajikan* meditation for many years before apprenticing under Lanxi.

emptiness. This is the realm of only a Buddha and a Buddha.⁶⁵ It is from turning downwards that mechanisms are discussed. However, Shōichibō of Tōfukuji [i.e. Enni] has mechanisms in turning upward. [...] The explanations of common Zen masters and the like that do not establish mechanisms [in turning upward] truly cannot reach Tendai [contemplation teachings]. Those [Zen teachings] that discuss mechanisms in turning upward have a part in common with tantric teachings and Tendai.⁶⁶

This fascinating passage is littered with key phrases we are already familiar with from our discussion of Yuanwu and Enni. In the Zen school, Jōmyō claimed, what is outside of the teachings or *kōjō* is associated with the phrase “the thousand sages cannot explain” or “do not transmit” (*fuden* 不伝), which he correctly associates with Yuanwu. Dōshō took this slogan literally and insisted that Buddhist truth indeed cannot be communicated, explained, or transmitted to sentient beings, that it was the preserve of “only a Buddha and a Buddha.” From the sentient being’s perspective, there is no intermediary, no path from delusion to awakening. It is only after one has taken a “sudden leap” from sentient-being-hood into Buddhahood that concerns with communicating truth arise. This is in line with what we have discovered about *kōjō* as a direct, immediate entry into the mind of the Buddha itself. According to Jōmyō, Enni was superior to his fellow Zen devotees such as Dōshō in that he recognized the existence of a “mechanism” even on the level of *kōjō*. By this mechanism, the truth of the direct encounter with mind can be rendered communicable. In acknowledging this possibility, Enni rose above the obsession with one-sided emptiness so characteristic of Zen practitioners and came close to the Tendai and tantric teachings.

6 The Limits of Turning Upward

In Enni’s thought, *kōjō* has some very peculiar features, so that it is not clear whether it should be understood as a communicative mechanism, as a resultant state, or both. As discussed above, there is in Enni a sense that the “fundamental ground of turning upward” is where the practitioner ends up having passed through *kikan* and / or *richi*. In this sense, it might be understood to be a goal rather than a means towards a goal. Elsewhere, however, Enni suggested

65 This phrase “merely a Buddha and a Buddha” is also used in the *Awataguchi kuketsu* to criticize Zen. See ZTSZS, vol. 6, 162b.

66 KRSYS, T 76: 531b.

that far from simply a final destination, *kōjō* is also a way to communicate something about the nature of this destination:

Before the empty eon, before the Buddha Bhīṣmasvara (*ion naban* 威音那畔) [had appeared in the world], there was awakening by oneself without a teacher. There were none of the provisional means (*hōben* 方便). This is what Bodhidharma calls secretly matching intimate verification (*misshō* 密証). After the empty eon, there is awakening and confusion, question and answers, master and disciple. All these are provisional means of extending a [guiding] hand. Buddhas and ancestors arise, there is *richi*, there is *kikan*, there is *kōjō*, there is *kōge*.⁶⁷

In this passage, Enni pairs *kōjō* with *kōge* and places it on the same level as *richi* and *kikan*, that is to say on the level of a *hōben* or provisional means used “after the empty eon” has passed.

Kōjō thus appears to be a contradictory limit concept that equally applies to a state and a means of conveying this state.⁶⁸ It might have been just this indeterminate nature of *kōjō* that inspired Jōmyō to declare that Enni established mechanisms in *kōjō*. On the most basic level, as opposed to his Chinese source Yuanwu, Enni did paradoxically connect *kōjō*, “what the Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit,” with the concept of teaching mechanisms simply by including it in his three fundamental indications alongside *richi* and *kikan*. However, there are hints in both Tendai transmissions on Enni’s Zen teachings and in Enni’s *Recorded Sayings* themselves that Enni might have had in mind a more substantial conception of *kōjō* as communicative mechanism.

In the above quoted passage from the *Keiran shūyōshū* in which he discussed the “two principles” used in the Zen school, namely the school’s intention and the school’s manner, Enni established two conceptual chains: first, school’s intention / turning upward / signified; and second, school’s manner / turning downward / signifier. What is striking is that in the passage under consideration the phrase “the thousand sages (or the Buddhas and ancestors) do not transmit” appears twice, once as *kōjō* and once as *kōge*. To use modern stylistic conventions, Enni appears to hold that the linguistic expression, “not transmit,” is the *kōge* or signifying counterpart of the *kōjō* or signified that is not transmitted (or not transmitting). If this were the case, the relationship

67 T 80: 20c.

68 I am adapting the notion of a limit concept, a contradiction that marks a limit of thought or language, from Graham Priest. See Priest, *Beyond the Limits*. However, note María Frápolli’s reservations regarding Priest’s dialetheism. See Frápolli, “Review,” pp. 437–439.

between this specific pair of signifier and signified is not merely conventional or symbolic but involves a certain structural isomorphism or conceptual iconicity: “The thousand sages do not transmit,” at least when spoken by a sage, shows what it says, namely that, the thousand sages do not transmit.

Such an interpretation of Enni might be considered overly fanciful. Yet there is some circumstantial evidence that it is not entirely off the mark. As discussed in the previous chapter, Jōmyō argued that while Zen practitioners in their single-minded perusal of catatonic no-mind might see the screen beyond the concept or sign “screen,” Tendai master contemplatives understood that language, too, is rooted in unproduced essence, and thus can understand that a screen is indeed a “screen.” Furthermore, Jōmyō held out on the possibility that some Zen adepts might be able to have the “last word” that escaped the nihilist trap of silent emptiness, or as he put it rather more verbosely, “Zen masters who transmit the last words attain the meaning of the constant existence of the myriad *dharmas* in the unproduced essence.”⁶⁹ The *Tōkai kudenshō* 等海口伝抄 from 1349 is a collection of oral transmission materials of Jōmyō’s Eshin faction. It contains the following comments on Zen, attributed to Shinga 心賀 (d.u.), Jōmyō’s successor:⁷⁰

Question: In the Zen school, there is the first word and the last word. What about those?

The gist of Shinga[’s answer] says, “As for the first word, it is the phrase cutting off all outflows, it is the phrase devoid of reason (*dōri*). This is called the dead phrase. This is the *kōan*. As for the last word, it is called the living phrase. ‘Mountains are mountains, water is water,’ there are these living phrases. Because the Tendai school from the beginning takes the six perceptual realms and the six sensations [based on them] to be original awakening, it is superior [to Zen] as it has this ‘mountains are mountains, water is water.’ The Zen school, when it is just about alive, has a part that is equal to Tendai.”⁷¹

The connection between Jōmyō’s remarks on seeing a screen as a “screen” and Shinga’s remarks on the “last word” is obvious. A “final word” overcomes inclinations towards annihilationist emptiness and instead reveals the true nature

69 *Awataguchi kuketsu*, ZTSZS, vol. 6, 172b.

70 After Jōmyō’s death, a dispute arose between Shinga and Jōhan, Jōmyō’s son, as to who should be recognized the legitimate successor of Jōmyō’s Sugui lineage. See Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, pp. 138–148.

71 *Tōkai kudenshō*, TSZS, vol. 9, 569a.

of phenomena in, or rather through, language. However, Shinga, unlike Jōmyō, goes a step further by telling us what such a final word actually consists of, namely, “mountains are mountains, water is water,” a living phrase far superior to the “crazy talk,” as Nichiren would have it, of Zen *kōan*.

Enni's *Recorded Sayings* contain the following verse:

Subtle, what Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit;
Greatly exceeding *richi* and passing beyond *kikan*.
Passing beyond *kikan*, old habits are cast aside;
Water is water, and mountains are mountains.⁷²

In this verse, Enni connected the very phrase Shinga considered to be final, “water is water, and mountains are mountains,” to the key definition of *kōjō*, “what Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit.” Both greatly exceed the elaborations of *richi* and even the *kikan* of the ancestral teachers. Yet even more importantly, both phrases share what above I have described as a kind of structural isomorphism or conceptual iconicity to what they signify: “Mountains are mountains” does not tell us anything about mountains, it simply shows the brute fact that, mountains are mountains, or perhaps that, mountains indeed are “mountains.”

From these considerations it appears that Enni was one of the Zen masters equal to Tendai adepts such as Jōmyō in that they were capable of having the last word. Enni could do so by coming up with a type of sentence that shows what it means, just as the “absolute” teaching of Tendai calming and contemplation understood that a screen is a “screen.”⁷³ What unites these types of sayings is that they are not meaningful in the sense of communicating any new information. This is in line with an observation Enni made in one of his tantric commentaries:

[Zen] makes single transmission and direct indication its principle (*shū* 宗). Therefore, the thousand phrases and ten thousand words [...] they all lose their flavor, lose their reason. Therefore, it is outside the intention of verbal expression.⁷⁴

To put it differently, Zen is not without words, but its words have been drained of all rhyme and reason.

⁷² T 80: 21b.

⁷³ See Chapter 1.

⁷⁴ DNKGSKM, 486.

It might be this possibility of speaking in emptiness that provides a more substantial interpretation of Jōmyō's claim that Enni's Zen was Tendai and tantric Buddhism's equal in establishing mechanisms in *kōjō*, or a way to transmit what cannot be communicated in words. Yet true to his literally maddening role model Yuanwu, Enni in his *Recorded Sayings* did not provide us with sufficient information to arrive at anything more definite than such a tentative conclusion. Fortunately, Enni's tantric works promise more doctrine and less "crazy talk," and so it is to them we turn in the following chapter to deal with the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings head on.

7 Conclusions

As the previous chapter has made clear, Enni's propagation of Zen occurred in a discursive space at least in part demarcated and determined by, as well as shared with, medieval Tendai teachings, notably the emergent original awakening and oral transmission teachings of figures such as Jōmyō and his lineage. In the present chapter, I have explored the ways in which Enni's perhaps most well-known legacy, the Three Mechanisms, emerged from out of this space by reading Chinese Chan teachings through an interpretative lens informed by Japanese doctrinal concerns. Such concerns included extending Zen's soteriological reach, as well as aligning it with the absolute contemplation teachings of Tendai.

Enni constructed his Three Mechanisms from skillful plagiarism of Yuanwu. The primary distinction Enni found in his Chinese source was between *richi*, or doctrinal teachings accommodating sentient beings' spiritual capacities, and *kikan*, or encounter dialogue as transmission among patriarchs taking as its standard awoken mind itself. Yuanwu does not appear to have considered *richi* and *kikan* part of a threefold structure topped by *kōjō* as a separate communicative mechanism. Rather, *kōjō* appears in an adjectival function in expressions such as "the mechanism of turning upward," "the device of turning upward," or, most paradigmatically, "the single road of turning upward." In such expressions it indicates the direct and immediate entry into the Buddha mind these devices are supposed to bring about. However, Yuanwu did suggest a threefold method of teaching Chan or Zen based on the sharpness of a student's faculties. This threefold mechanism primarily showed itself in the timing with which a "device" such as a shout, a blow, or a pithy saying was applied. Yuanwu also implied the existence of a second threefold scheme, or perhaps a different aspect of the same scheme, that proceeded from unity to plurality, and which the great Chinese *literatus* illustrated with the image of the moon.

Enni combined these elements into a semi-coherent, threefold system comprised of *richi*, still understood as doctrinal teachings, *kikan*, or patriarchal encounter, and *kōjō*, the ambivalent limit concept that appears to be both a communicative mechanism and a resultant state of awakening. These three can be ordered hierarchically according to their internal diversification and the extent to which they accommodate the faculties of sentient beings. According to these criteria, *kōjō*, the immediate and direct indication of mind, resides at the top, followed by the single intent of *kikan*, and finally by the many accommodations offered by doctrinal teachings. From the point of view of faculties, *kōjō* solely addresses what is of concern to “only a Buddha and a Buddha,” and hence is not compromised in the least by having to address sentient beings’ faculties. *Kikan* addresses the single faculty of patriarchs. Finally, *richi* is by its very definition as teaching always adjusted to the diverse faculties of the beings addressed. Enni occasionally used cosmogonic or cosmological language or imagery to express this principle of progressive diversification.

In his appropriation of Chinese Chan, Enni thus tipped his hat to one of the fundamental concerns of medieval Japanese Buddhism, namely Buddhist communication theory based on the problem of spiritual roots and capacities. In so far as Enni’s Three Mechanisms included doctrinal teachings, and in so far as they addressed this trans-sectarian problem of communicating Buddhist truth, they were not a discourse internal to the budding Zen school. Rather, scholiasts such as Nichiren used the Three Mechanisms almost as doctrinal shorthand for Zen teachings and made them the primary target of their critique. It was Enni’s old sparring partner Jōmyō who articulated the perhaps most sophisticated riposte to Zen teachings from within the context of the emergent Tendai oral transmission teachings. In so far as *kikan*, the second indication or use of *kōan*, merely aimed at abolishing discursive thought, Jōmyō argued, Zen divided provisional means from awakening, or signifiers from what they signified. In this regard, Zen is but a separate teaching unable to ascend to the lofty heights of Tendai’s own perfect *Lotus* and tantric teachings.

Jōmyō did, however, make a remarkable exception for Enni, who, according to the Tendai scholiast, established communicative mechanisms on the level of *kōjō*. Unfortunately, Jōmyō himself is silent on what kind of mechanisms these were. I have drawn on later Tendai transmission materials and Enni’s *Recorded Sayings* to suggest that these communicative devices were related to a doctrinal constellation we have already encountered in the previous chapter. Jōmyō asserted that Zen practitioners, as calming specialists, at best could engender a state of no-mind in which they could see an object, say a screen, as it is beyond conceptual proliferations or outflows. Tendai contemplatives, in contrast, understood that language itself is just a phenomenon as

any other. Consequently, they also understood the relationship between the screen they perceived in calm no-mind and the “screen” they contemplated. In a similar manner, Enni linked statements such as “mountains are mountains” to *kōjō*, the third indication that communicated through “direct indication” (*jikishi*). I have suggested that Enni might have considered such statements to disrupt the ordinary linguistic order of signification by showing their own meaning(lessness).

The *Keiran shūyōshū* has Jōmyō on record as asserting that in so far as a Zen master could speak a final word, their teaching was on par with that of Jōmyō’s own Tendai and, importantly, tantric traditions. Indeed, apart from an adept of the intricacies of Zen, Enni also was reckoned a master practitioner of tantric Buddhism. East Asian tantric Buddhism is a tradition endowed with one of the most sophisticated systems of ritual semiotics ever developed. In the next chapter, I will suggest that there is a very clear motivation behind Enni sidelining the perhaps most distinctive feature of Zen training, the rhetorical, ritual, and meditative use of *kōan* and relegating them to the secondary level of *kikan*, instead. He did so, I argue, because he used the paradoxical features of his final word of turning upward to position Zen directly in the inner self-verification of the *maṇḍalic* sovereign Mahāvairocana beyond the mediation of patriarchal sayings and tantric rites alike. Enni’s project, in this sense, was to impose a limit on the proliferation of Buddhist semiosis.

The Zen of Mahāvairocana

Enni on Zen and the Tantric Teachings

1 Introduction

Until a few years ago, a cursory examination of Enni's available works might have left even a sympathetic reader with the distinct impression of somebody whose compartmentalization of their intellectual life bordered on the obsessive. Enni's works on Chan or Zen, especially his *Recorded Sayings*, preserve the voice of a most orthodox ancestral teacher, although it should be acknowledged that Kokan Shiren, Enni's posthumous editor, might have had a rather heavy hand in this. In contrast, Enni's lecture on one of the central scriptures of East Asian tantric Buddhism, the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhitāntra* or *-sūtra*, which until recently has been the main source for Enni's tantric thought, does not touch on Zen at all. The only hint of how Enni considered the relationship between the two teachings that dominated his life was a cryptic remark in another tantric commentary on the *Yuqi jing* 瑜祇經 (J. *Yugikyō*). This (likely) Chinese apocryphal tantric *sūtra* was, not least because of its sexual imagery, of great importance in medieval Japanese tantric Buddhism.¹ In his lecture on the *Yuqi jing*, Enni made a comment to the effect that if one were to establish communicative devices directly in the "moon disc without perceptual characteristics" (*musō gachirin* 無相月輪) before even a single letter (or syllable) had arisen, then this would be "not establishing words and letters, directly pointing at the human heart" (*furyū monji jikishi ninshin* 不立文字直指人心), the famous Zen slogan.² However, lacking any context, the full implications of this remark remained obscure.

The recent discovery of three texts detailing Enni's understanding of, mainly, tantric Buddhism but also containing substantive discussions of its relationship with Zen has entirely changed the situation. These commentaries provide the context to fully appreciate the complexity of Enni's thought on the knotty problem of Zen and the tantric teachings. The first is the *Dainichikyō gishaku kenmon* 大日義釈見聞, Enni's sub-commentary on Yixing's 一行 (683–727)

1 For the most comprehensive discussion of this scripture and its related practices in English, see Dolce, "Tantric Scripture"; Dolce, "Abhiṣeka."

2 See *Hikyōketsu* 秘經決, CZS, vol. 4, 479.

seminal commentary on the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*. The second discovery is an alternative version of Enni's lecture on the *Yuqi jing*. Finally, the notes of Enni's disciple Mujū on the oral instructions he had received from Enni have come to light. These substantially corroborate the image of Enni and his teachings Mujū had conveyed in other, previously known sources.

As I have argued in the previous two chapters, one major doctrinal concern for Enni as well as his peers in the established schools was the question of how what is outside the teachings could be accounted for without falling into nihilist quietism. In negotiating this problem, the differentiation between "absolute" and "relative" conceptions of the relation between the teachings and their outside were of fundamental importance. Enni was drawing, at least in part, on the Tendai understanding of "absolute contemplation" (*zettai kan*) when establishing his three communicative mechanisms. The uppermost of these mechanisms, *kōjō* or "turning upward," referred to the direct indication of mind. The Tendai scholiast Jōmyō and his lineage considered Enni to surpass his fellow Zen enthusiasts in so far as he had established this direct pointing at mind as a communicative mechanism (*ki*). In this respect, Jōmyō asserted, Enni's Zen equaled the Tendai *Lotus* and tantric teachings. However, although I have already suggested towards the end of the previous chapter that Enni's mechanism might be grounded in a semiotics of sentences that show what they say, our understanding of Enni's *kōjō* as communicative device remains sketchy.

The present chapter will fill in the gaps by investigating how Enni read Zen in(to) a tantric cosmos. He could do so because the tantric cosmos of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* is organized around a similar structural and structuring tension as motivated the emergence of new Buddhist ways of thought in the early medieval period and indeed might have contributed to it. This tension revolved around the question of how the Buddha mind, which is beyond all perceptual marks (*musō*), relates to the perceptual marks (*usō* 有相) that were a necessary condition of all teachings, and of tantric ritual practice in particular. In Japan this doctrinal problem had been known and debated ever since Kūkai. Kūkai had decided to present tantric ritual technology such as *mudrā* or *mantra* as the means by which the *dharmakāya*, which generally is held to be beyond perceptual characteristics, reveals itself through or in perceptual characteristics. In this sense, the tantric teachings established communicative devices within the transcendent realm of the Buddha mind itself. According to Jōmyō this is exactly what Enni's Zen did, as well.

Which raises the question of how, if both of them established communicative mechanisms within the Buddha mind, Zen differed from the tantric teachings. Neither Enni nor any member of his lineage ever suggested that the two

teachings could be dissolved into each other without remainder. The answer to this question lies in how, exactly, the two teachings set up the triggers of their respective communicative mechanisms and the degree of directness with which they hit the mark. Before turning to these technical problems and their contexts, some more general remarks on the taxonomic models underlying Enni's project to integrate Zen into medieval Japanese Buddhism are called for.

2 Accommodating the Patriarchs

The *Gishaku kenmon* and the *Dainichikyō kenmon* are the two of Enni's remaining commentaries that are focused on the textual and exegetical lineage of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*. The two texts share a doctrinal orientation, and have been composed, or taken down from oral exposition, only two years apart, in 1270 and 1272, respectively. However, a comparison between them reveals an important terminological and doxographic difference.³ In the *Dainichikyō kenmon*, which does not touch on Zen at all, Enni referred to the taxonomical categories into which the various Buddhist traditions can be divided by the phrase, “*shōdai gonjitsu kenmitsu no shoshū*” 小大権実顕密之諸宗, or the schools of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, provisional and true Mahāyāna, and, finally, exoteric and tantric teachings.⁴ In the *Dainichikyō gishaku kenmon*, on the other hand, Enni introduced the taxonomical confection “*shōdai gonjitsu kenmitsu kyōzen*” 小大権実顕密教禪, which adds the categories of “teachings” and “Zen” to the more common tripartite scheme.⁵

A constitutive and systematic distinction between “Chan” or “Zen,” on the one hand, and doctrinal “teachings,” on the other, can already be found in Chinese sources. One of the prefaces of Zongmi's 宗密 (780–841) *Chanyuan zhuquan ji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序, for instance, states that, “The two schools of Zen and the teachings equally issue from the Buddha. Zen is the Buddha's mind. Teachings are the Buddha's mouth. How could mouth and mind contradict

3 Especially the DNKKM is a work of two voices, one ascribed to the “master” (*shi* 師), and one to the person taking dictation (*watakushi* 私). There has been some dispute as to whether these two should be interpreted as referring to Enni and Chikotsu Daie or rather to Eichō 榮朝 and Enni. Scholarly consensus has settled on the former possibility. As Kubota Tetsumasa has pointed out, the DNKKM dates to about 30 years after Eichō's death. See Kubota, “Hokkekyō.” Hiroumi Kōzen has studied the differences between the two voices from a doctrinal point of view and arrives at the same conclusion. See Hiroumi, “Chikotsu Daie.”

4 DNKKM, 275b.

5 DNKSKM, 485b.

each other?”⁶ The *Zongjing lu* echoes this programmatic statement.⁷ It is important to note, however, that this distinction between Chan or Zen and the teachings is internal to Chan or Zen discourse. It presupposes a self-conscious Chan or Zen tradition legitimizing itself as different from the teachings. This implies that these teachings have a constituting function towards the nature of the Chan or Zen that establishes by differentiating itself from the teachings in so far as the boundary that divides them also defines them both.

Matsunami Naohiro 松波直弘 has pointed out that Enni’s understanding of the “teachings” accordingly differs significantly from what can be found in Chinese texts. In the latter, “teachings” refers primarily to the perfect teachings of the Huayan and Tiantai traditions.⁸ The *Chanyuan zhuquan ji duxu*, for example, cites the Tiantai patriarchs Zhiyi and his teacher Nanyue Huisi 南嶽慧思 (515–577) as representatives of the “teachings” that it claims to ultimately be in accord with Chan.⁹ In the *Gishaku kenmon*, on the other hand, Enni defined the category of the “teachings” as the exoteric (*kengyō* 顯教) and tantric (*mikkyō*) or “mantric” teachings (*shingonkyō* 真言教). To construe the “teachings” as a bifurcated category produced from the distinction of exoteric and tantric was an integral part of Enni’s understanding of the divisions of Buddhism. A similar taxonomy of the “teachings” can be found in the *Jisshū yōdōki* discussed in the first chapter, which likewise includes both exoteric and tantric traditions under the heading of the “teaching gate” (*kyōmon* 教門), which together with the “discipline gate” (*kaimon* 戒門) comprises the dispensation “within the teachings” (*kyōnai*).¹⁰ Also Enni’s disciple Mujū in his *Shōzaishū* defined the “teachings” as encompassing both the exoteric and the tantric.¹¹

The doxographic distinction between the exoteric and the tantric, a mostly Japanese Buddhist construct, again functions within tantric discourse in order to bestow on the tantric teachings an identity recognizable against a broader Buddhist mainstream. It therefore constitutes a, if not the, mark of a

6 T 48: 397b.

7 See T 48: 418b. The *Zongjing lu* speaks of “scripture” (*jīng* 經) and Zen not contradicting each other.

8 Matsunami, *Zenshū shisōshi kenkyū*, pp. 144–146.

9 See T 48: 397c.

10 See Bielefeldt, “Filling the Zen-Shū,” p. 230.

11 See *Shōzaishū*, CZS vol. 4, 393b. Both the *Yōdōki* and the *Shōzaishū* also include the Pure Land under the category of “teachings.” As the Pure Land plays no role in Enni’s tantric commentaries, nor indeed in the rest of his oeuvre, I have abbreviated them for clarity’s sake.

TABLE 2 Internal structure of Enni’s Zen and Chinese Chan (*Zongjing lu*)

Enni’s Zen			Chan (<i>Zongjing lu</i>)		
Zen	Teachings		Chan	Teachings	
	Exoteric	Tantric		Huayan	Tiantai
	Tantra				

self-conscious tantric hermeneutics.¹² In so far as Enni positioned Zen against a category of “teachings” internally structured along the lines of this tantric / exoteric distinction, his positioning of Zen presupposed the tantric hermeneutics that still dominated the doctrinal discourse of his time. Or, to put it differently, he inscribed Zen with a tantric distinction. Table 2 visualizes the conceptual difference between Enni’s Zen and its continental Chan predecessor as represented by the *Zongjing lu*.

By extending the *shōdai gonjitsu kenmitsu* taxonomy to include the Chan or Zen distinction between itself and the teachings, Enni sketched a circular program in which Zen was joined to a tantric hermeneutics that itself had been modified by its very transposition into the Zen category.¹³ In order to follow through on such a program, Enni had to fit Zen into a discursive universe in which the differentiation between the exoteric and the tantric was constitutive,

12 This problem has been especially acute within the Japanese Tendai tradition, which sought to accommodate within itself both the tantric and the *Lotus* teachings. The point of contention was that according to Kūkai, who first introduced a systematic distinction between tantric and exoteric teachings into Japanese Buddhist doctrinal discourse, the *Lotus* belonged to the latter category. In Chinese Tiantai, as in pan-Asian mainstream Buddhism more generally, *xianmi* 顯密 indicated the obvious and hidden meanings of a Buddhist scripture. In this sense, Zhiyi even occasionally speaks of the “esoteric teaching” (*mijiao* 密教) of the *Lotus sūtra*. See for instance *Fahua wenju*, T 34: 48a, where Zhiyi differentiated between the Buddha’s exoteric explanation (*xianshuo* 顯說) and his esoteric teaching (*mijiao*) in the context of the *Lotus*. Japanese Tendai built on this terminology to offer their own account of the relationship between the perfect (*engyō* 円教) and one vehicle (*ichijō* 一乘) teachings of the *Lotus* and the tantric teachings. According to the compromise eventually established, the *Lotus* itself would be considered a kind of *mikkyō*. See Dolce, “Taxonomy.”

13 On the continuing importance of closely attending to the subject of doxography in medieval Buddhism, see, for instance, Ōtsuka, “Chūsei ‘zenritsu’ bukkyō”; Sueki, “Kenmitsu taisai.”

even if not exclusively so, and to articulate Zen in a language comprehensible within such a universe.

Enni used the device of *kōjō*, or “turning upward” to “what the thousand sages do not transmit” in order to plug Zen into the inner, unconditioned non-awakening of the primordial Mahāvairocana, the main deity of the Japanese tantric tradition. Zen, Enni argued, could achieve something denied both Tendai perfect and tantric teachings, precisely because these latter two were conditioned teachings and teachings on conditionality. Zen could directly point at, and thereby establish communicative devices for, the Buddha mind in its unmarked nakedness. As Enni conceived of them, both Tendai and the tantric teachings in some way depended on semiosis, the contingent establishment of signs and perceptual marks. Zen, as what is outside the teachings, instead can directly point at the unsignified mind-ground of the Buddha bare of perceptual characteristics or marks. In relation to the tantric teachings in specific, Zen, according to Enni, surpasses the two *maṇḍala* and instead makes its place with the absolute, all-pervasive Buddha endowed with the “body of single wisdom” (*ichichi shin* 一智身). It is from here that all the deities resplendent in their insignia and *mantra* invoked in deity *yoga* arise.

In order to arrive at this solution, Enni exploited a hermeneutical problem that had plagued the tantric tradition since its enculturation in Japan, if not since its Indian origin, namely, the tension between its doctrinal affirmation of a Buddha mind conceived of as free of perceptual marks (*musō*), on the one hand, and its sensual ritual technologies, on the other. We now turn to this problem in the context of the exegetical lineage of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*.

3 The *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* on Perceptual Characteristics

Having been translated into Chinese in 724 by the Indian émigré master Śubhakarasiṃha (637–735), the *Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi vikurvita adhiṣṭhāna vaipulya sūtra* (or *-tantra*), to give it its impressive full title, belongs to the oldest layer of Buddhist tantric materials. According to Steven Hodge, it might actually be the earliest fully fledged tantric text, in the sense that the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* synthesizes many of the ritual and doctrinal features that would become characteristic of later tantric traditions, including pre-Buddhist elements such as the *homa* fire rite, but also fundamental tantric technologies such as the processes of deity *yoga* based on *mudrā*, *mantra*, and *maṇḍala*. The text systematizes these elements in the context of what Davidson calls “institutionalized esotericism,” in which they contributed to an imperial metaphor that facilitated the spread of tantric Buddhism as an

aristocratic warrior-ideology-cum-sacral-technology.¹⁴ At the same time, the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* maintains close links with Mahāyāna scriptures such as the *Avataṃsaka* or the *Lotus sūtra*.¹⁵

On the doctrinal level, the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* addresses a concern shared by virtually the entire Buddhist tradition, namely, to know the nature of mind as it truly is (C. *rushi zhi zixin* 如實知自心, J. *nyojitsu chi jishin*).¹⁶ As the main deity of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, Mahāvairocana, puts it to its primary interlocutor, Vajrasattva, here called the “Lord of Mysteries”:

Lord of Mysteries, what is *bodhi* [awakening]? It means to know one's mind as it really is. Lord of Mysteries, this is *anuttarā samyaksambodhi* [unsurpassed, perfect, and full awakening], and there is not the slightest part of it that can be apprehended. Why? [Because] *bodhi* has the characteristic of empty space, and there is no one to comprehend it, nor is there any understanding of it. Why? Because *bodhi* has no [perceptual] characteristics. Lord of Mysteries, all *dharma* are without perceptual marks. That is to say, they have the characteristic of empty space (*zhufa wuxiang*. *wei xukongxiang* 諸法無相。謂虛空相).¹⁷

Due to its conditioned nature, mind ultimately is empty and therefore without phenomenal marks or perceptual characteristics.¹⁸ This emphasis on the empty nature of mind is well in keeping with the doctrinal background from which the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* arose, according to which the nature of mind was considered to be non-dual, luminous awareness.¹⁹ In this sense, to know mind is not to know something, or some thing, but rather to know knowing before its adventitious division into cognitive structures such as subject and object or perceptual categories such as form or sound.

14 Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 114–116, pp. 119–153.

15 Hodge, *Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra*, p. 14, p. 29.

16 *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, T 18: 1c. Reflecting the Yogācāra / *tathāgatagarbha* connection, the exact same phrase can be found in Bodhiruci's (fl. 6th century) translations of the *Laṅkāvatāra* (T 16: 547c) and *Dharmasaṃgīti sūtra* (T 17: 619b). Bodhiruci also translated the *Samdhinirmocana sūtra*, a root text of East Asian Yogācāra thought.

17 Adapted from Giebel, *Vairocanabhisambodhi Sutra*, p. 5. See also T 18: 1c.

18 The Sanskrit text of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* is lost, but according to Yamamoto Shōichirō, judging from surviving citations in other sources and the Tibetan translations of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, *xian* 相 or “perceptual characteristics” most likely translates *nimitta*, *wuxian* translates *nirnimitta* or *animitta*, and *youxiang* 有相 translates *sanimitta*. See Yamamoto Shōichirō, “Dainichikyō,” pp. 131–132.

19 Hodge, *Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra*, pp. 29–33.

At the same time, the above quotation also exemplifies the danger of metaphors, a threat that came to exert a structuring pressure on the unfolding exegetical tradition of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*. *Dharma* are characterized both in the abstract as “without characteristics” (*wuxiang*), and metaphorically as having the characteristic of “empty space (*xukong xiang*).” This metaphor rests on space itself being imperceptible, and hence without perceptual characteristics. Yet being nowhere and no-thing in specific, space also is all encompassing. In this sense, space includes within itself all characteristics. Including each and every specific characteristic, space is, in a sense, endowed with all of them. The question, in a nutshell, is whether the absence of every perceptual characteristic is not itself again a perceptual characteristic, if a very special one.²⁰ We will return to this riddle in a moment, but first we need to say a few more words on the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* itself.

The first chapter of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, from which the above passage is drawn, offers a discussion of mind, and of the practices to be employed in knowing it, which does not significantly differ from what can be found in other, mainstream or non-tantric Mahāyāna scriptures and systems of thought. The scholiast Buddhaguhya (fl. 8th century), for instance, interprets the tantric exhortation to “know thyself” along classical Yogācāra lines, according to which the contemplative first refutes the existence of the perceptual image of the object, which leads to the refutation of the perceiving subject, culminating in an insight into the non-duality of mind.²¹ The first chapter thus clearly places the emphasis on direct insight into the mind being empty and beyond perceptual characteristics. The remaining twenty-eight chapters of the *Vairocanāsambodhi*, on the other hand, dwell on the ritual processes of deity *yoga* and its attendant practices, including such supplementary or foundational matters as initiations and precepts. Through these ritual technologies, the tantric adept was to be empowered to generate, and eventually identify with, the bodily presence of a deity. Needless to say, unlike the space-like mind, the practices of deity *yoga* inherently depend on a multitude of tactile, olfactory, auditory, visual, and other perceptual characteristics.

According to the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* itself, the multitudinous practices of *yoga* with their deities and paraphernalia were nothing but provisional,

20 Ironically, Yixing in the *Darī jīng yishi* does warn against pushing the metaphor of space too far, exactly in order to guard against this paradox. See DRJYS, 24b.

21 See Hodge, *Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra*, p. 55. Yixing in the DRJYS is less direct in identifying the theoretical discussion of mind offered in the first chapter of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* with specific meditative techniques, although it, too, makes clear that statements such as the mind being formless or like space are not merely theoretical but are intended to offer guidance in actual (contemplative) practice. See DRJYS, 22a.

expedient means intended to guide the deluded towards the primordial mind beyond all characteristics, as the following verse from the second chapter of the text makes clear:

The Buddha's *Dharma* is free from all characteristics, and *dharma* abide in the station of *dharma*;
 What you have explained is incomparable, without characteristics, and unconditioned.
 Yet why, O Great Energetic One, do you teach this which has characteristics, As well as *mantra* practices? This does not conform with the way of *dharma*-thusness (*hōnen* 法然)!"

Then the Bhagavān, the Buddha Vairocana,
 Addressed Vajrapāṇi: "Listen carefully to the characteristics of the *Dharma*!
 The *Dharma* is free from differentiation and all false conceptions. [...] The supreme and perfect awakening that I attained is ultimately like empty space,
 But unknown to ordinary foolish beings, who are wrongly attached to the objective realm. [...]
 And it is in order to liberate them that these [practices with characteristics] are taught in conformity with them as an expedient [means].
 But in reality there is no time or direction, nothing done, and no doer;
 All *dharma* simply abide in the reality mark (*jissō*).²²

The *Vairocanāśambodhi* affirms the basic Mahāyānist understanding of the Buddha using a plethora of skillful means in order to guide sentient beings to awakening. The skillful means taught in the *Vairocanāśambodhi* might have consisted in the new technology of deity *yoga* and its associated gadgets such as *maṇḍala*, but in doctrinal terms the text remained well within the Mahāyānist mainstream by affirming the empty nature of mind beyond all perceptual characteristics.

4 *Dharmakāya* Resplendent: The *Vairocanāśambodhi* Exegetical Tradition in Japan

In the sinic exegetical tradition of the *Vairocanābhīśambodhi*, the tension between the mind's transcendence of perceptual characteristics, on the one

22 Adapted from Giebel, *Vairocanābhīśambodhi Sutra*, pp. 20–21.

hand, and the practitioner's dependence on them in the performance of the ritual techniques of deity *yoga*, on the other, as well as the text's clear preference for the former, became a central problem and gave rise to a multitude of interpretations.²³ Yixing, without a doubt the most important interpreter of the text in the East Asian tantric tradition, in his commentary on the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* at least paid lip service to the text's apophatic tendencies. At the same time, Yixing exhibited a tendency to game what "absence of perceptual characteristics" actually meant by reading it through his East Asian Buddhist, and particularly his Tiantai, doctrinal heritage. Yixing emphasized the notion of equality (*C. pingdeng* 平等, *J. byōdō*), thereby arriving at a definition of the "absence of perceptual characteristics" as "absence of *distinguishing* perceptual characteristics." The following passage from his commentary demonstrates this shift:

If one contemplates the mind of awakening (*puti xin* 菩提心), it is entirely without perceptual characteristics (*yixiang wuxiang* 一向無相). This mind itself is Buddha. Buddha itself is this body [i.e. oneself]. Oneself becoming Buddha, as one becomes Buddha, a single characteristic without differentiating conceptions (*yixiang wu yixiang* 一相無異想). Therefore it is called "without perceptual characteristics."²⁴

Yixing's reasoning in this terse passage draws on the quasi-paradox of space we have touched upon above. Space, the quasi-paradox runs, being without characteristics of its own, is all pervasive and therefore endowed with all characteristics. Yet being endowed with all characteristics, there is not a

23 See for instance, Yamamoto Shōichirō, "Dainichikyō." As Yamamoto points out, this tension is already present in the contemplative practices of the Yogācāra tradition, for instance in the *Samdhinirmocana sūtra*'s distinction between *saṃkalpa pratibimba* or images accompanied by predication supporting *vipaśyanā* and *nirvikalpa pratibimba* or images devoid of predication supporting *śamatha*. See Yamamoto, "Dainichikyō," pp. 134–136; *Samdhinirmocana sūtra* (*C. Jie shenmi jing* 解深密經), T 16: 697c. This latter correlation is the distant basis for Jōmyō's criticism of Zen as a concentration practice abolishing thought. As for the deity *yoga* taught in the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* itself, Yamamoto discusses Buddhaguhya's understanding of the practice as a circular process of manifestation from and re-absorption into the *yogin's* body / mind. The same process of manifestation and re-absorption into the *yogin's* body is also apparent in the so-called *Buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch* published by Dieter Schlingloff, a meditation manual discovered in Turfan. See Schlingloff, *Buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch*. See also Yamabe, "Significance." Furthermore, Germano has traced the development of the tension between the signless, the visual, and the tactile in the development of the Tibetan Great Perfection traditions. See Germano, "Architecture and Absence."

24 T 39: 785c.

single characteristic by which it can be differentiated. Hence, it is without distinguishing perceptual characteristics. In like manner, Buddha and sentient beings both are ultimately without characteristics. Being without characteristics, they are equal. Being equal, they bear the single seal of space, the mark of non-differentiation. Thus although the exegetical tradition of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* begun by Yixing honored the text's emphasis on transcendent mind without characteristics, this does not necessarily entail a rejection or abolition of perceptual characteristics as such; rather, it emphasizes their being immersed in equality. As Yixing put it elsewhere, in "according with being without characteristics, all characteristics are established" (*ji wixiang er ju yiqiexiang* 即無相而具一切相).²⁵

In Japan, the tension between absence of and endowment with perceptual marks became an especially pressing problem. Kūkai established his theory of the *dharmakāya* preaching on it being endowed with the three mysteries of body, speech, and mind, and thus in some sense involved with distinguishing marks or perceptual characteristics. As he put it in the *Jūjūshinron* 十住心論, channeling Yixing's torturous reasoning, "The characteristic removed from all characteristics, there is no [one single] characteristic [that is] not established. This is the *dharmakāya* constantly manifesting the bodies of form [...]."²⁶ Consequently, in the tantric lineages deriving from Kūkai, being possessed of perceptual marks is often valued higher than empty transcendence. This valuation was increasingly emphasized during the sectarian polemics of the medieval period. For example, Raiyu, a disciple of the founder of the Shingi 新義 branch of Kūkai's faction, Kakuban 覚鑁 (1095–1143), declared in his *Kenmitsu mondōshō* 顯密問答鈔 that, "in the tantric [teachings], having characteristics is considered ultimate."²⁷

The emphasis on the *dharmakāya* being endowed with the three mysteries, and thus in some sense with perceptual characteristics, presented a problem for the Tendai tradition. Saichō, the founder of Japanese Tendai, considered his tradition a comprehensive Buddhism, which included not only the Tendai perfect but also the tantric teachings. Saichō himself never systematically articulated this universalist vision, but in general observed the perfect teaching's proclivity to consider the absence of perceptual characteristics as surpassing the establishment of phenomenal marks.²⁸ After his death, and in the face of

25 T 39: 770a.

26 T 77: 329a.

27 *Kenmitsu mondōshō*, CZS, vol. 7, 502a.

28 On the difference between Saichō and his successors in their respective understanding of the evaluation of perceptual characteristics, especially in the light of integrating the tantric teachings into the Tendai system, see Fukuda, *Tendaigaku gairon*, pp. 384–390.

stiff competition from Kūkai's faction, the integration of the Tendai perfect teachings based on the *Lotus* and the tantric teachings into a coherent system (*enmitsu itchi* 円密一致) was one of the chief concerns of classical Tendai, an endeavor that arguably reached its zenith in the *oeuvre* of Godai'in Annen.

The Chinese Tiantai perfect teachings, in line with most continental mainstream Buddhism, did not recognize the *dharmakāya* as being endowed with the three mysteries, but rather endorsed a weaker theory of its preaching based on its perfect pervasiveness. In order to circumnavigate this difficulty, Annen relied on a hermeneutic strategy that read the notion of being without perceptual characteristics through the Tiantai system of the mutual entailment of the Three Truths.²⁹ In specific, he argued that while the practices of the *Lotus* perfect teachings, which emphasized the mind's ultimate transcendence of all perceptual marks, and of the tantric teachings, which emphasized aligning with the *dharmakāya*'s self-communication by engaging the three mysteries of body, speech, and mind, were based on the same principle, they different in their concrete performance.³⁰ Drawing on his teacher Enchin's *Soshitchikyōsho* 蘇悉地經疏, Annen defined the one vehicle teachings of the *Lotus sūtra* as representing the "esoteric teaching in theory" (*ri himikkyō* 理秘密教). As such, they taught the perfect integration of perceptual marks and their absence on the abstract level but lacked the concrete instantiation of this principle in the form of tantric ritual practice. The *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, on the other hand, represented the "esoteric teaching in both theory and practice" (*rijigu mikkyō* 理事俱密教) because it taught the concrete marks and characteristics of tantric practice as in accordance with unmarked mind.³¹ Annen subtly but decisively elevated the tantric teachings over the more austere *Lotus* perfect teachings. At the same time, he read the *Lotus* as a kind of tantric scripture and thereby could integrate the two traditions' soteriological visions. This Annenian truce would last into the early medieval period.

As ingenious as Annen's strategy was, it proved inherently instable. The simple reason for its ultimate failure is that the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* itself could be interpreted as undermining Annen's best efforts by arguably valuing the formless mind over practices based on perceptual characteristics. Exploiting this instability, oral transmission and original awakening teachings began to reconsider the relationship between the perfect and the tantric teachings, one example of which is the *Kenmitsu ichinyo honbutsu* we encountered in the first

29 See Ōkubo Ryōshun, *Taimitsu kyōgaku*, p. 85.

30 See Annen's *Bodaishingishō* 菩提心義抄, T 75: 492a.

31 See *Bodaishingishō* 菩提心義抄, T 75: 471c. For an in-depth discussion of the problem, see Ōkubo Ryōshun, *Taimitsu kyōgaku*, pp. 71–97.

chapter. This text still honored the Annenian truce by emphasizing the unity of the preachers of the *Lotus* and tantric teachings, even if unlike Annen it sought to establish this union not upon maṇḍalic grounds but rather in a realm beyond both exoteric and tantric teachings.³²

Yet from our point of view, the most interesting Tendai thinkers were those who began to advocate for the superiority of the *Lotus* perfect over the tantric teachings while invoking the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*'s own testimony as proof. One of these thinkers was Ryōjo hōshinnō 良助法親王 (1268–1318), the son of Kameyama tennō 龜山天皇 (1249–1305). In his *Hokke kirin yūfūdan* 法華輝臨遊風談, a sub-commentary on the *Hokkekyō gisho* 法華經義疏, the influential commentary on the *Lotus sūtra* attributed to Shōtoku taishi 聖德太子 (564–622), Ryōjo argued that the tantric practice of the three mysteries was nothing but a provisional accommodation the Buddha made to save deluded beings. As such, it could not match the *Lotus sūtra*, which dispensed with provisional means (*sha hōben* 捨方便) and instead directly (*shōjiki* 正直) communicated the intention of the Buddha. This, Ryōjo triumphantly declared, is nothing but the teaching of the Vairocana Buddha itself, for did it not in the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* declare the superiority of what is without perceptual characteristics?³³

Similar ideas also circulated in Jōmyō's Eshin lineage. Jōmyō's disciple Shinga, for instance, is reported to have considered both the Tendai and the *mantra* (*shingon* 真言) teachings to ultimately be based on the absence of perceptual characteristics, even if they still provided phenomenal practices for those of inferior capacities.³⁴ This newly reaffirmed respect for a transcendence of the phenomenal is also reflected in the way in which the Eshin lineage conceptualized its mind contemplation teachings. The *Kankō ruiju*, for instance, defines the derivative teachings (*shakumon* 迹門) of the *Lotus sūtra* as the mutual entailment of delusion and awakening (*bonnō soku bodai* 煩惱即菩提), the fundamental teachings (*honmon* 本門) as the self-identity of delusion and awakening (*bonnō soku bonnō bodai soku bodai* 煩惱即煩惱菩提即菩提), and the mind contemplation teachings (*kanmon* 觀門) as neither delusion

32 For an overview of Tendai oral transmission teachings and their take on tantric Buddhism, see the classic account of Ōkubo Ryōjun, "Tendai kuden hōmon to mikkyō." See also Dolce, "Taxonomy," pp. 130–171. The attempt to derive *Lotus* and tantric teachings both from a transcendent ground actually has a precedent in Annen, who argued that both *Lotus* and mantra teachings represent the "perfect [teachings] that transcend the eight [formal categories of teachings]." See *Bodaishingishō*, T 75: 456b.

33 See *Hokke kirin yūfūdan* 法華輝臨遊風談, DNBZ, vol. 14, 392a.

34 See *Tōkai kudenshō*, TSZS, vol. 9, 428ab.

nor awakening (*hi bonnō hi bodai* 非煩惱非菩提).³⁵ As we will see below, this affirmation of the apophatic is not dissimilar to Enni's exegesis of Zen in the context of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*.

In a sense, Ryōjo, Shinga and the Eshin lineage, as well as Enni, were part of a wider, trans-sectarian medieval discourse involving the Tendai *Lotus*, the tantric, and the Zen teachings. Neither party could assert complete authority over this conversation, even if at the outset the tantric teachings still dominated the field. As time passed, the tantric teachings gradually lost their hegemonic position and new resources for the creation of religious meaning became available, among them Ryōjo's superior *Lotus* and the Zen of Enni and his heirs. Yet laboring in the 13th century and, at least metaphorically, in the shadow of the Tendai headquarters of Mt. Hiei, Enni still felt the need to articulate Zen's place within a fundamentally tantric world.

5 Beyond the *Bodhimaṇḍala*: Basic Features of Enni's Tantric Lineage

This section will give a brief outline of the most salient features of Enni's tantric teachings in so far as they inform his treatment of Zen. I will focus on Enni's doctrine concerning the main deity Mahāvairocana, the nature of its

35 T 74: 382c. Also, Enni occasionally touches upon the *Lotus* teachings and their relationship to mind contemplation. In the DNKGSKM, Enni claims that the derivative teachings of the *Lotus* are one-sidedly attached to arid voidness (*shajō no musō* 遮情/無相), while the fundamental teachings of the *Lotus* are attached to inherent existence (*jitsuu* 実有). In this they resemble the exoteric teachings and the teachings of the Tōji tantric lineages. See DNKGSKM, 525b. In the DNKKM, Enni also touches upon the contemplation gate (*kanmon*). He argues *contra* Saichō that the mind contemplation teachings are, like the *Lotus* teachings in general, part of the tantric teachings in principle only, and therefore not entirely identical with the tantric teachings themselves. DNKKM, 105b. Enni makes the same point concerning the fundamental teachings of the *Lotus*, arguing that they lack the provisional means of three mysteries practice, and presumably are therefore inferior to the tantric teachings. DNKKM, 115b. For Enni's views on *kanjin* in the DNKKM, see Kubota, "Ben'en." As Kubota argues, *kanjin* in this text is not yet a separate category, as in the Tendai original awakening teachings, but rather there is a *kanjin* of the tantric teachings, a *kanjin* of the perfect teachings, and so on. Furthermore, the Tendai scholiast Shōshin, most famous perhaps for his attack on the original awakening teachings, also discusses the notion that the tantric teachings, especially those of the Tōji faction, are one-sidedly attached to "real characteristics." See his *Tendai shingon nishū dōi sho*, T 74: 421b. This suggests that early original awakening teachings in the Tendai tradition were in some way related to an interpretation of tantric teachings that upheld the ultimate existence of characteristics.

awakening, and the means by which sentient beings can partake of it, drawing in the main on the *Dainichikyō kenmon*.

As Mizukami Fumiyoshi has pointed out, the tantric teachings Enni inherited in Yōsai's line stress the existence of a single, transcendent Buddha beyond the two central deities of the *Womb* and *Diamond maṇḍala*.³⁶ This emphasis on the transcendent Buddha's singularity reflects a tendency common in Tendai tantric lineages, namely to attempt to unify the two maṇḍalic realms.³⁷ It also reflects the wider search for a common ground of Buddhism beyond each and every specific teaching or practice. This vision of a transcendent ground producing, containing, and being replicated within phenomena is apparent in the very opening passages of the *Dainichikyō kenmon*. The text here differentiates between two forms of Dainichi 大日 or Mahāvairocana. The first is a transcendent Mahāvairocana that is the "undivided, unitary essence deity" (*mibun ittai son* 未分一体尊) underlying both of the two main maṇḍala, the *Diamond* and *Womb* realms.³⁸ The second is the phenomenal Mahāvairocana who occupies the central lotus dais of the *Womb maṇḍala*. This secondary *Womb* Mahāvairocana derives, together with the corresponding and complementary main deity of the *Diamond* realm, from the fundamental Mahāvairocana through a process of differentiation.

Having defined the central deity of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, the Buddha Mahāvairocana as both transcendent ground and phenomenal trace, the *Dainichikyō kenmon* turns to the concept of awakening or becoming a Buddha (*jōbutsu* 成仏). "As for 'becoming Buddha,'" the text explains, "this is but awakening [on the level of] outer traces (*gejaku bodai* 外迹菩提). In truth (*jitsugi* 実義), there is no awakening and no attainment [of Buddhahood] (*mukaku mujō* 無覚無成)."³⁹ In this terse remark, the ontological tension between a mind-ground devoid of characteristics and its involvement with the phenomenal constitution of sentient beings is transposed into the Buddhist theory of

36 Mizukami, *Nihon tendai*, pp. 61–62. Of course, in Japanese tantric teachings the two main deities of the *Womb* and *Diamond* realm were generally seen as representing two aspects of a single reality. Thus the emphasis put on singularity in Yōsai's lineage represents a shift in accent rather than a break in substance.

37 Mizukami, p. 89. Mizukami argues that this tendency towards unification is due to the fact that while lineages deriving from Kūkai transmitted the two maṇḍala as non-dual, Tendai tantric lineages originally transmitted them separately, thereby problematizing how they are to be united. This eventually gave rise to a threefold conception of the tantric teachings, according to which the *Suxidi jieluo jing* 蘇悉地羯羅經 (J. *Soshitsuji kyarakyō*), a text that itself belongs to the *Womb* lineage, represented the non-duality of the two maṇḍala. See also Ōkubo Ryōshun, *Saichō no shisō*, p. 18.

38 DNKKM, 66a.

39 DNKKM, 66a.

practice. As mind is without characteristics, it cannot be grasped or known. Consequently, the tantric imperative to “Know thyself!” involves a paradox, as to know the true nature of mind is to know that it cannot be known. From this point of view, Buddhahood, to truly know mind, is not something that could be governed by the relation of attainment. Yet when turning towards ignorant beings, who are ignorant precisely because they think that Buddhahood is something to be attained and mind something to be known, the Buddhas use provisional means to guide beings, including promises of Buddhahood and practices with which to attain it. These soteriological white lies are but the endlessly deferring, outward traces of the ungraspable reality. In the context of Enni’s tantric teachings in specific, all the practices of deity *yoga*, the trappings of *mantra*, *mudrā*, and *maṇḍala*, all are considered such provisional traces.

Now that we have understood the twofold nature of the central deity Mahāvairocana as both ground and figure, and the equally twofold nature of awakening as unobtainable, non-dual self-awakening and utter deception, we can turn to the practices that are to be employed in their non-attainment. According to Enni, the essential practice of his lineage is the *mantra* gate of the syllable *a* through which one attains Mahāvairocana’s inner verification (*naishō* 内証). In brief, the syllable *a* represents arousing the mind of awakening as basis, subject, and goal of tantric practice, while adding four diacritic marks to produce the syllables *ā*, *aṃ*, *aḥ*, and *āḥ* (or *āmḥ*) represents gradual practice, the attainment of wisdom, gaining liberation / extinction, and manifesting skillful means, respectively.⁴⁰ Through the contemplative performance of the permutations of the syllable *a* the practitioner re-enacts the career of the ideal tantric adept and ultimately of the Mahāvairocana Buddha itself.

This tripartite structure consisting of the provisional outer traces of awakening, its ungraspable inner nature, and the syllable *a* as the mediator between them, can be traced back to the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* itself, or rather to Yixing’s exegesis of this text. The second chapter of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* contains the following verse, in which Vairocana explains the nature of his attainment to Vajrasattva:

Formerly when I was seated at the site of awakening
I vanquished the four demons,
And with the voice of a great striving hero I removed the fears of beings.
[...]

⁴⁰ DNKKM, 66a. There is also a second practice to generate the deity’s body by permuting the syllables *a va ra ha kha* in like manner, resulting in five sets of five syllables. I have abbreviated this practice for clarity’s sake.

I awoke to original non-birth, transcended the path of speech,
 Obtained liberation from all faults, dissociated myself from causes and
 conditions,
 And knew emptiness, which is like empty space, and knowledge concordant
 with the real character [of things] was born.⁴¹

According to Yixing, the first part of this verse relates to “the outward traces of attaining Buddhahood” (C. *chengfo waiji* 成仏外迹, J. *jōbutsu gejaku*), or the activity the Buddha displays in the world for the sake of sentient beings. Yixing continued:

[... N]ext, there are two verses clarifying the true meaning of awakening (C. *puti shiyi* 菩提実義, J. *bodai jitsugi*). As for “I awoke to original non-birth,” it means to fully comprehend that one’s own heart from the very beginning onwards was originally unproduced. This is “attaining Buddhahood,” however in truth there is no awakening and no attainment (C. *wujue wucheng* 無覺無成, J. *mukaku mujō*). [...] As for “transcended the path of speech,” from here onwards the gate of the syllable *a* is variously interpreted. To awaken to the fundamentally unproduced (C. *ben bushing* 本不生, J. *hon fushō*) is Buddha. The *Dharma* of the Buddha’s inner verification cannot be reached by discriminatory thought.”⁴²

In Japan, this tripartite structure of tantric practice continued to be explicated by such luminaries as Kūkai in his *Dainichikyō kaidai* 大日經開題 and Enchin in his *Daibiroshanakyō shiki* 大毘盧遮那經指歸.⁴³

This tripartite structure, which crucially includes the syllable *a* as mediating device between the Buddha’s unfathomable inner self-verification and sentient beings, sets the tantric apart from the exoteric teachings as the latter do not provide any mechanisms through which the inner verification of the Buddha can be communicated. As Enni explained in the *Dainichikyō kenmon*:

Clearly understand! The Hossō school abolishing signification (*haisen* 廢詮), the Kegon school’s resultant [state of Buddhahood that cannot be communicated], the heavenly truth of the *Lotus*, these all point to the perceptual realm of inner verification. [...] However, these exoteric

41 Giebel, *Vairocanabhisambodhi Sutra*, pp. 39–40. Also *Darījing*, T 18: 9b.

42 DRJYS, 172b, also DRJS, T 39: 646b.

43 See for instance T 58: 1c and T 58: 15c, respectively.

teachings consider the perceptual realm and wisdom of inner verification to be unconnected to devices (*shōki no tokoro ni nasazaru nari* 不為撰機之所).⁴⁴

The exoteric teachings, here exemplified by the Hossō, Kegon, and Tendai *Lotus*, consider the inner realization of the Buddha to be an arid void barren of signification.⁴⁵ As awakening is a silence beyond semiosis, sentient beings, in order to attain awakening, have to abandon the fabrications of their minds and still the chatter of their thoughts. This characterization is strongly reminiscent of Jōmyō's critique of Zen as treating thought as a mere sickness to be healed instead of considering the creative power of language as his own Eshin lineage does. Note that the very term Enni used to describe the provision of communicative mechanisms, *shōki* 撰機, is the same one used by Jōmyō in his discussion of Zen and its relationship to the Tendai and tantric teachings. This underlines the trans- or pre-sectarian nature of medieval doctrinal polemics. In these debates, targets were highly movable and accusations of malicious nihilism highly opportunistic.

To return to the present manifestation of this dispute, according to Enni the tantric surpass the exoteric teachings in so far as they consider true awakening to be semiotically productive and therefore establish devices (*shōki*) to communicate it. As Enni explained a little later in the *Dainichikyō kenmon*:

The true meaning of awakening (*bodai jitsugi*) is "however in truth there is no awakening and no attainment" [as the *Dari jing yishi* says in the verse quoted above]. From this true ground without characteristics of no awakening and no attainment (*mukaku mujō musō jitchi* 無覺無成無相実地) appears the syllable *a* with five [diacritic] marks [which belong to

44 DNKKM, 68a.

45 To add a further layer of complexity, within the Hossō school the position that signification is abolished in meditative or contemplative pursuits is associated especially with the reformist Ryōhen, who had a strong interest in Zen and might have attended Enni's lectures on the *Zongjing lu*. In his *Shinjin yōketsu* 真心要決 Ryōhen mentions sending the work to Enni. See T 71: 108b. Minowa Kenryō 蓼輪顕量 doubts the authenticity of this part of the work based on stylistic criteria and on the fact that only the first part exists in Ryōhen's own hand. See Minowa, "Ryōhen." Enni's hagiography, the *Shōichi kokushi nenpu* composed by his disciple Tetsugyū, however, does mention Ryōhen's work in three fascicles, which would suggest the authenticity of the latter two fascicles Minowa questions. Be this as it may, Ryōhen emphasized the importance of the "three non-natures" (*san mushō* 三無性) taught in East Asian Yogācāra. On Ryōhen's doctrinal position, and especially his understanding of abolishing signification, see Shimada, "Ryōhen no yuishiki"; Shimada, "Ryōhen ni okeru bodaishin."

the realm of] having awakening and having attainment. First there arises the unmarked syllable *a*. This is called one's own mind arousing *bodhi*. Finally arises the syllable *a* fully endowed with five [diacritics].⁴⁶

The exoteric teachings are a one-way street that enters into the inner, pure self-nature of mind by separating from outward defilements.⁴⁷ The tantric teachings, on the other hand, are a dynamic interplay between inner purity and its splendid outward vestments. Having attained the “pure mind-ground of self-nature without characteristics” (*musō jishō shōjō shinchi* 無相自性清淨心地), Vairocana manifests the “mind of awakening of the syllable *a*” (*aji bodaishin* 阿字菩提心), which is the “outer trace of attaining Buddhahood” (*jōbutsu gejaku*) and the “way of provisional means” (*hōben dō* 方便道). Thus whereas the exoteric teachings perceive the inner mind-ground of the Buddha ultimately as an essence without perceptual characteristics (*goku musō tai* 極無相体), the esoteric teachings understand that it is endowed with and adorned by infinite virtues.⁴⁸ These manifest first as the syllable *a*, and eventually as the *maṇḍala* lavishly endowed with perceptual characteristics (*usō mandara* 有相曼荼羅), so that even those of little wisdom and dull faculties might gain a connection with the “markless *dharma*” (*musō hō* 無相法) of the mind through reliance on the provisional means provided by the tantric teachings.⁴⁹

The structure of the tantric teachings Enni expounded is circular. The Buddha establishes the phenomenal tantric teachings from his own mind ground beyond perceptual characteristics. Sentient beings, in turn, rely on the perceptual characteristics with which the ritual technology of deity *yoga* is endowed in order to enter into the unmarked ground of, ultimately, their own mind. This feedback loop of awakening differentiates the tantric from the exoteric teachings, for only the former establish communicative mechanisms in the markless mind itself.

Even down to the terminology employed, the question of communicative mechanisms established in mind itself is the very issue on which Jōmyō argued that Enni differed from his fellow Zen enthusiasts and approached the lofty heights of Tendai and tantric doctrines.⁵⁰ As we shall now see, which teaching establishes which kind of communicative mechanisms was indeed a wedge

46 DNKKM, 69b–70a.

47 DNKKM, 73b.

48 DNKKM, 74a.

49 DNKKM, 110b.

50 In the KRSYS, Jōmyō uses the very term *shōki* to characterize the point on which Enni surpasses his fellow Zen enthusiasts and shares in Tendai and tantric teachings. See T 76: 537b.

issue Enni used to establish Zen in the mind of Mahāvairocana. In this sense as well, Enni's Zen was inscribed by tantric Buddhism in the sense of being founded upon a tantric distinction.

6 Disestablishing the Syllable *A*: Zen Beyond the Mantric Mind

The powerful communicative apparatus of the tantric teachings is established upon the syllable *a* that mediates between the “pure mind-ground” without characteristics and its outer appearance. Enni argued that what enables the tantric syllable *a* in specific to fulfill this function is its liminal nature, as the following exchanges recorded in the *Dainichikyō kenmon* show:

Question: The text says, “Contemplating letters, contemplating insignia (*kan'in* 観印), contemplating deities (*kanson* 観尊), to contemplate these is ‘with characteristics’ (*usō*).⁵¹ To merely contemplate nothing but *bodhi*, that is ‘without characteristics’ (*musō*).” The subtlest *Dharma* without characteristics, is that *bodhi*?

Answer: Indeed.

Question: The mechanisms (*ki*) of merely contemplating nothing but *bodhi* surpass syllables, insignia, and appearances [of the deities in deity *yoga*]?

Answer: Indeed.

Question: Abolishing syllables, insignia, and appearances, what else is there to contemplate?

Answer: Contemplate the syllable *a*.

Question: [Does contemplating the syllable *a*] directly surpass the provisional means of the three mysteries?

Answer: Surpassing the three mysteries with characteristics, it directly contemplates the three mysteries without characteristics (*musō sanmitsu* 無相三密).⁵²

51 The root text is Yixing's commentary, see T 39: 785b. As Ōkubo Ryōshun has pointed out, although *in* 印 generally translates *mudrā*, in the context of deity *yoga* the term *kan'in* refers to visualizing the deity's insignia, which represents its *samayā* in the *maṇḍala* of the same name.

52 DNKKM, 110b. For a general overview of the concept of the “three mysteries without characteristics” and their doctrinal background, see Kitagawa, “Tōmitsu,” pp. 39–40. In some medieval tantric lineages, often from the *tōmitsu* 東密 faction, the three mysteries without characteristics became an important conceptual tool for positioning the tantric teachings in relation to Zen. This use is apparent in the *Shinzen yūshingi*, a text sometimes

The syllable *a* is a very special kind of sign indeed, one that fundamentally differs from the other maṇḍalic signs used in deity *yoga*. *A* is both the first syllable of the Indic alphabet, and a negative prefix. In tantric semiognosis, it simultaneously stands for the ungraspable (*fukatoku* 不可得) character of reality, and for the fundamentally unproduced nature of all phenomena as conditioned and contingent phenomena (*hon fushō*). These represent, to return to a terminological distinction we are already familiar with, the absolute (*zettai*) and relative (*sōtai*) aspects of the syllable *a*. Given this double role, the syllable *a* is liminal and paradoxical. In so far as it is a letter with characteristics, a definite shape and sound (*jisō* 字相), it is a contingent phenomenon, that is to say produced from conditions. Yet like all contingent phenomena, it is, as per the standard dialectic on emptiness, ultimately unproduced. Being itself unproduced, the syllable *a* does not provide conditions for perception, and therefore shows its own ungraspability, which is what it signifies on the discursive level (*jigi* 字義). To be ungraspable as a conditioned phenomenon, which is to say to be devoid of perceptual characteristics, is precisely what *a* means as the negation of any possible ascription. *A* thus shows what it means, namely being conditioned, therefore unproduced, and hence ungraspable. In this manner, *a* can act as a mediator, a bridge between the inner verification of the Buddhas' minds beyond all semiosis and deluded beings' dependence on signs and characteristics.

Despite its intriguing properties, in so far as the syllable *a* still is a syllable, a phenomenal sign, it is liminal to the mind-ground itself, or rather a provisional means towards it. Enni was very clearly aware of this problem, as the following remarks recounted by Enni's disciple Mujū show:

attributed to Yōsai due to its emphasis on the unity of Zen and the tantric teachings, but almost certainly a later forgery emanating from the environs of the Kongō sanmai'in 金剛三昧院 on Mt. Kōya. See Tado, *Chūsei tōmitsu*, pp. 202–226. In this text, the *musō sanmitsu* came to be identified with the notion of transmitting mind by mind (*ishin denshin* 以心伝心). See Tado, *Chūsei tōmitsu*, p. 196; also *Bodaishinron kenmon* 菩提心論見聞, T 70: 108a, “the three mysteries without characteristics, this is transmitting mind with mind” (*musō sanmitsu sunahachi ishin denshin* 無相三密即以心伝心). This identification contributed to the interpretation of the *ishin kanjō* 以心灌頂 or initiation by mind, in which most of the ritual process is shifted into the mind of master and disciple. As the 14th century *Yuga dentōshō* 瑜伽伝灯鈔 by Hōren 宝蓮 (d.u.) explains, “in order to transmit the *mudrā* of non-duality, produce it in the mind.” *CZS*, vol. 7, 597b. For a discussion of this text and its understanding of initiation in relation to Zen, see Rappo, “Ishin denshin.” For a different tantric initiation that uses the concept of the three mysteries without characteristics and its Zen influences, see Tomabechi, “Saigo kanjō jōgyō shinyō hō.”

[The syllable] *a* is the singular wisdom body (*ichichi shin*) [of the transcendent Buddha]. Although this *a* is without perceptual characteristics, as conditions are unproduced, it is yet connected to having perceptual characteristics. Unchanging absence of characteristics does not condition. It is [two characters missing] the syllable *a* not yet arisen. In this principle [of the unchanging absence of perceptual characteristics] the *mantra* teachings are not established. These [*mantra*] teachings are established from the syllable *a*.⁵³

A, in other words, in so far as it is still a sign, remains bound to conditioned characteristics and their perception, and therefore can reveal the mind without perceptual characteristics only through characteristics. As Enni explained in the *Dainichikyō gishaku kenmon*, even those most superior tantric practitioners who can enter the inner realization of Mahāvairocana directly (*tonnyū jikishō sha* 頓入直証者) without first having to traverse the labyrinth of the *maṇḍala* “directly enter into the *Dharma* without perceptual characteristics (*musō no hō* 無相/法) by hearing the provisional means endowed with perceptual characteristics (*usō no hōben* 有相/方便).”⁵⁴ The superior *tāntrika* might glimpse mind *through* the syllable *a*, but *a* is not mind itself. The syllable *a* is a truly exceptional sign, yet a sign it still is: it stands for something it is not, and hence remains but a placeholder for awakening.

Here we again encounter the tension at the heart of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, namely the problem of how markless mind can be communicated through phenomena. As the text itself stresses, the mind “is removed from all [mantric] letters (*yuanli yu zhuzi* 遠離於諸字).”⁵⁵ The *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* resists the skillful exegetical subterfuges of Kūkai, Annen, and others who sought to dissolve this tension into an, if qualified, affirmation of phenomena. The text itself undermines any such attempt by insisting that there is something apart from mantric mediation, something, as Enni put it in the above quote, in which “the syllable *a* has not yet arisen.” Elsewhere, Enni described such an unconditional transcendence of perceptual characteristics as the “absence of perceptual characteristics [of the] the fundamental ground” (*honji musō* 本地無相) as opposed to the “conditioned absence of perceptual characteristics” (*engi musō* 縁起無相).⁵⁶ To his disciple Mujū, Enni described this mind-ground and the means to access it as follows:

53 See *Itsudai Mujū kikigaki*, CZS, vol. 4, 467–468.

54 DNKGSKM, 489b.

55 T 18: 44b.

56 See *Taimitsu keigu sho* 胎密契愚鈔, 661.

In the *mantra* teachings, I have yet to see a sentence [that would talk about] a provisional means apart from the syllable *a*, taking true awakening as its gate and establishing communicative devices directly in [the Buddha's inner self-verification] where words and letters are not established (*furyū monji*). The gate of the [Zen] school is not like this. It indicates directly (*jikishi* 直示). [...] The doctrinal school now (*konshū* 今宗) [under consideration, i.e. the tantric teachings,] have the provisional means of the syllable *a* (*aji hōben* 阿字方便). As for there not being a corrective provisional means (*taiji hōben* 対治方便) before the syllable *a* [is established], the Zen gate does not establish the syllable *a* (*furyū aji* 不立阿字). The provisional means of direct indication makes awakening without perceptual marks (*musō bodai* 無相菩提) the provisional means.⁵⁷

In this important passage, Enni asserts that the Zen gate can achieve what the tantric teachings by their very nature cannot: Zen can go beyond provisional means and by “not establishing the letter *a*” (*furyū aji*) enter into where “words and letters are not established” (*furyū monji*). Zen, in other words, “directly indicates” the innermost self-verification of the Mahāvairocana Buddha “removed from all [mantric] letters,” as the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* put it. Furthermore, Zen’s “direct indication,” instead of relying on outside provisional means, makes markless awakening into its own mediator, thereby taking the goal as the way. Enni thus exploited the tension inherent in the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* so as to position Zen as a “direct indication” of the fundamental Mahāvairocana beyond the paradoxical liminality of the syllable *a*.

I would like to stress how exegetically scrupulous yet daring Enni was in opening the Zen gate to the mind of a tantric Buddha. His entire strategy was based on carefully extending and exploiting the tension between mind without perceptual characteristics and its phenomenal mediations inherent in the tantric exegetical tradition of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* itself. Where the *Vairocanābhisambodhi* speaks of the mind “removed from all letters,” (*yuanli yu zhuzi*), Enni read this as referring to the mind which “does not establish the syllable *a*” (*furyū aji*), and finally as the equivalent of the famous Zen slogan, “not establishing words and letters” (*furyū monji*). The dictum of “not establishing words and letters” therefore refers not to everyday speech, or even to the pronouncements of Buddhist scholasticism, in general, but to tantric syllables and *mantra* in specific.⁵⁸ Enni, in other words, construed a central tenet

57 *Itsudai Mujū kiki-gaki*, 480.

58 A similar point is made in a section of the KRSYS that purports to transmit the teachings of Yōsai's Yōjō lineage. See T 76: 761c, and also the next chapter on Chikotsu Daie's theory

of Chan or Zen in a manner meaningful only to one who both is familiar with, and accepts as valid, basic axioms of tantric discourse.

7 Pointing at the Buddha: Tantra and Zen in the *Dainichikyō gishaku kenmon*

It is no coincidence that Enni unfolds most of his thinking on the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings in the context of commenting on Yixing's *Commentary on the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*. Yixing had significant ties to the tantric, Tiantai, and Northern Chan movements of his time and like few other figures represents the vibrancy and intellectual fertility of Tang 唐 (618–907) period Buddhism.⁵⁹ On the doctrinal level, Yixing's handling of the fundamental tension between awakened mind and phenomenal entrapment inherent in the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* provided Enni with the exegetical framework to position Zen vis-à-vis the tantric teachings. Yixing's basic doctrinal stance honored the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*'s commitment to a mind without perceptual characteristics. In so doing, he circumscribed a space beyond mantric mediation Enni could claim as the ancestral ground of Zen.

Yixing emphasized that “[t]he *Dharma* of the Buddha's inner verification cannot be reached by discriminatory thought.” Immediately following this assertion, Yixing continued to state that this mind of the Buddha, “cannot be transmitted to people” (*buke chuanshou yu ren* 不可伝授与人).⁶⁰ To Enni, who was busy justifying the ways of Zen to tantric man, how could this have failed to evoke Yuanwu's assertion that their inner minds, “the thousand sages do not transmit?” To put it differently, if the inner mind of Mahāvairocana is “what is not transmitted to people,” and if Zen is concerned with “what the sages do not transmit,” does this not imply that Zen is concerned with the inner mind of Mahāvairocana? When the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* differentiates between this inner mind and the outward traces of deity *yoga* established as but a provisional means to aid the deluded, could this have failed to bring to Enni's mind Yuanwu's conclusion that, “practitioners toil with forms like a monkey

of the *dharma*kāya preaching. As all language is derived from tantric syllables, everyday and doctrinal forms of speech also are denied to have ultimate validity. However, unlike in Chinese Chan, everyday and doctrinal modes of speech are not the primary referent of “not establishing words and letters.”

59 As Robert Sharf has argued, Yixing is one of the links that already in China connected tantric traditions to the rise of Chan. See Sharf, “Buddhist Veda.” However, this tradition did not have a significant impact on Japanese discourse.

60 DRJS, 172b; also T 39: 646b.

grasping shadows?"⁶¹ In short, Enni interpreted Chan or Zen according to what he considered a common conceptual structure and phraseology it shared with the *Vairocanāsaṃbodhi* and its exegetical tradition.

Unfortunately, the fourth fascicle of Enni's sub-commentary on Yixing's exegetical work, which ought to contain his interpretation of the passage concerning the impossibility of transmitting the mind I have just quoted, appears to be lost.⁶² However, comments on the nature of Zen's relationship with the tantric teachings are scattered throughout this work, and they offer a coherent and comprehensive account. In the context of his exegesis of the *Vairocanāsaṃbodhi*, Enni posited *kōjō*, the mysterious apex of Zen communicative devices discussed in the previous chapter, as a third mode of apprehending the unknowable mind besides those used in the exoteric and tantric teachings. The exoteric teachings, caught as they are in a dichotomy between signified and signifiers, between being without perceptual characteristics and being endowed with them, see the Buddha mind as a sterile void beyond signification. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, understand that being without and being endowed with perceptual characteristics entail each other, as can be understood from the paradoxical syllable *a*. The tantric teachings, in other words, communicate the formless through form. Zen, finally, does away with the very distinction of being with or without perceptual characteristics. We might even go so far as to stipulate that Enni differentiated exoteric, tantric, and Zen teachings by the kind of signs they used: the learned words of the teachings, the mantric *abugida*, and the finger silently pointing at the moon.

Enni's discussion of Zen in the seventh fascicle of the *Dainichikyō gishaku kenmon* occurs in the context of his exegesis of the "Wheel of Letters" (C. *Zilun pin* 字輪品, J. *Jirinbon*) chapter of the *Dari jing*. Enni developed his account of the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings from the following observation by Yixing:

The practitioner having given rise to the first syllable *a*, this is the essence of the mind of awakening (*bodaishin tai* 菩提意体).⁶³

This mind of awakening, Enni elaborated, is the common ground of all Mahāyāna scriptures and teachings regardless of their superficiality or

61 See the previous chapter for details.

62 However, Enni's student Mujū, in his *Shōzaishū*, observes that the language of the *Vairocanāsaṃbodhi* and its exegetical tradition closely resemble the style used in the Zen school, especially on the notion of "non-transmission." See *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 5, 440b.

63 DRJS, 486b; DNKSKM, 485b.

profundity. They might be fast or slow in delivering the practitioner from suffering, subtle or coarse in their instruction, easy or hard to put into practice, yet their essence is singular and beyond discrimination. Enni continued:

In this reality beyond distinctions (*jissai* 実際), the great and small [vehicles], the provisional and true [teachings of the Mahāyāna], the exoteric and the tantric, the basic indication of Zen and the doctrinal gates of the teachings (*zenkyō no shūshi kyōmon* 禪教'宗旨教門), their paths are cut off entirely, their names are forever naught. However, establishing within this essential nature of "in truth no awakening and no attainment" (*jitsu mukaku mujō* 実無覺無成), which is the true meaning of awakening, the path of mechanisms (*ki no dō* 機之道) and transmitting in the style of established schools / principles (*risshū no fū* 立宗之風), again the superficial and the profound are produced, the skillful and the clumsy are roused.⁶⁴

The foundation of all Buddhist teachings is a unitary one, namely the inner essence of awakening itself. This is the mind without perceptual characteristics free from attainment or delusion. However, Enni continued, as soon as one tries to establish mechanisms for communicating this inner essence, the differences between the schools arise as some fumble for a timely word while others skillfully hit the mark. In what is a key passage to understand his thought, Enni elaborates on the kind of mechanisms used in the Zen tradition:

The gate of the school outside the teachings (*kyōge no shūmon* 教外'宗門), within this non-awakening and non-attainment (*mukaku mujō*) considers single transmission of direct indication (*tanden jikishi* 单伝直指) to be the basic principle (*shū*). Therefore, the thousand phrases and ten thousand words, response and stimulus, all have lost their taste; all have lost the path of reason. For this reason, it is outside the meaning of words. That is, *richi* and *kikan* equally are grasping by directly confronting it (*jikimen no teiji* 直面'提持). As, if one is not an exalted personage of superior spirit (*ryōri butsume no hito* 靈利物外'人) there is no portion of thorough alignment, it is called "not establishing words and letters, separate transmission outside the teachings."⁶⁵

64 DNKGSKM, 486a.

65 DNKGSKM, 486a. I have retained some previously introduced *kanji* for ease of reference.

The key to unlocking the significance of this passage is “*richi* and *kikan* equally are grasping by directly confronting it.” This is without doubt a reference to the important passage from Yuanwu that is the likely source for the distinction between *richi* and *kikan*, or doctrinal teachings and Chan or Zen encounter dialogue, as used by Enni.⁶⁶ Although we have extensively discussed this passage in the previous chapter, I repeat the most relevant lines for the sake of convenience:

Ever since there have been patriarchs, they have only striven to singly transmit direct indication (*danchuan zhizhi*). [...] In the 28 generations [of Indian ancestral teachers] from Mahākāśyapa onwards, they have rarely used devices (*jiguan*) and often revealed doctrinal principles (*lizhi*). [Yet w]hen it comes to imparting and receiving, how could there not be directly confronting and grasping it (*zhimian tichi* 直面提持)?⁶⁷

Enni, in other words, is channeling the spirit of the ancestral teacher of Chan, Yuanwu, right into the foundations of the *maṇḍala*. What Zen “directly indicates” is nothing but the “non-awakening and non-attainment” from which the tantric teachings derive via the meditation of the syllable *a*. The boldness of Enni’s move is apparent even on the textual level, or rather on the level of scriptural *canones*: In the works included in the Taishō edition of the East Asian Buddhist canon, the term “directly confronting and grasping it” only occurs in texts associated with Chan or Zen lineages, while the term “non-awakening and non-attainment,” with a single exception, occurs exclusively in tantric commentaries.⁶⁸ From this we can gauge how innovative Enni’s short-circuiting of the two terms, and discourses, really was.

The “single transmission of direct indication” of Chan or Zen, Enni claimed, drains both *richi* and *kikan* of all meaning and reason. Instead of persuasion or argument, their function is to make the practitioner “confront directly” the mind of “no awakening and no attainment.” In other words, Enni considered both doctrinal teachings and Chan or Zen encounter dialogue or *kōan*

66 The phrase *zhimian tichi* is used only four times in the Taishō canon. Furthermore, Yuanwu is the only one to use it in combination with *lizhi* and *jiguan*.

67 *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* 円悟仏果禅師語錄, T 47: 766c.

68 The single exception is Guchū Shūkyū’s 愚中周及 (1323–1409) *Recorded Sayings*, in which the phrase appears twice. However, one of these is a quotation attributed to the *Vairocanaḥbhisambodhi*. In fact, Guchū misquotes from Yixing’s commentary. See *Daitō zenji goroku* T 81: 64c. Even when on rare occasions they might have used the phrase, Zen masters were aware of it actually being a tantric loan.

extraneous to the heart of Chan or Zen, which consisted solely in the “single transmission of direct indication” of which the former are but “outward traces.”

If the single transmission he had gleaned from Yuanwu occupies the hidden heart of the *maṇḍala*, where does this leave the tantric teachings? Enni clarified:

As for the secret teaching of *mantra* (*shingon hikyō* 真言秘教), within this non-awakening and non-attainment it establishes the gateway of provisional means (*hōben no dōmon* 方便道門). That is to say, it considers the letters, insignia (*in* 印), and appearances [of deity *yoga*] as its basic principle (*shū*). By this [tantric practitioners] progressively establish the five letters *a ā am aḥ āḥ* and consider them the beginning, middle, and end of attaining Buddhahood, that is to say, this is the attainment (*jōdō*) of the five points of awakening the mind, practice, awakening, liberation and ultimate provisional means. [...] The beginning and end of the likes of the five letters and five points,⁶⁹ all these are the establishment of the teaching gate of provisional means. They are not at all the essence of no awakening and no attainment of the true meaning. Therefore, when the practitioner leaves the outer traces of becoming a Buddha and rises above the teaching gate of provisional means, the meaning and shapes of letters are lost, the insignia and appearances [of the deities] are forgotten, one dwells in where words are forgotten and thought is extinguished.⁷⁰

Even though he is operating in a tantric universe, Enni displaced the *mantra* path from its central position and relegates it to the level of outer traces. But does this imply that the inner mysteries of the mind beyond all perceptual characteristics are entirely closed to the *māntrika*? Not quite, Enni replied. However, the manner in which most tantric practitioners approach the inner mystery of the mind is gradual instead of the direct immediacy offered by the Zen teachings.

Enni elaborated on this point through a discussion of the standard tantric classification of practitioners' capabilities into those who enter into the center of the *maṇḍala*, or the Buddha's inner verification, gradually (*zennyū* 漸入), those who enter in leaps and bounds (*chōshō* 超昇), and finally those who

69 This perhaps refers to the second practice taught as fundamental in Enni's *Womb* lineage, the five permutations of *a va ra ha kha*, which generate the body / environment of the central deity. See DNKKM, 66a.

70 DNKGSKM, 486ab.

enter suddenly (*tonnyū* 頓入).⁷¹ While those of the lowest capabilities gradually traverse the *maṇḍala* in order, proceeding from the outermost gates to the innermost lotus, those of middling capabilities can, as it were, leap over certain stages of the path, or sections of the *maṇḍala*. Finally, those of sudden capabilities can,

directly enter the treasury of the central dais [upon which Vairocana resides in the bliss of his own inner verification] before the eight leaves [of the lotus flower at the center of the *maṇḍala*] and three layers [of the Womb *maṇḍala*] have opened and appeared. Why is this? Because there being no circumference, there is no center. Because it enters into and directly verifies the essence of the Vairocana of the singular *dharma* realm in this life, it is called the mechanism of wisdom without perceptual characteristics (*musō shikie no ki* 無相識恵機).⁷²

Those of sudden disposition, in short, directly enter the inner verification of Vairocana without having to rely on the mediation of the *maṇḍala*. Their superior wisdom opens to them mechanisms that are independent of phenomenal characteristics.

As we have seen above, already in the *Dainichikyō kenmon* Enni had associated sudden entry with being without perceptual characteristics. This point would have offered Enni an opportunity to reconcile the tantric with the Zen teachings and argue for their ultimate unity in the formless. Such an accommodationist line is taken, for instance, in the *Shinzen yūshingi*. This text advocates the unity of esoteric and Zen teachings. It identifies the practice of the three mysteries without perceptual characteristics (*misshū musō sanmitsu jitsugyō* 密宗無相三密実行) with the separate transmission outside the teachings of Zen. Although in the *Dainichikyō kenmon* Enni did touch on the problem of the *musō sanmitsu*, in the *Dainichikyō gishaku kenmon* he did not use this concept to offer the tantric teachings an olive branch. Instead, Enni insisted that,

the mechanisms [of those who] suddenly enter into what is without perceptual characteristics, although they suddenly enter into the true intention of *bodhi* and do not one-sidedly rely on letters, insignia, and

⁷¹ These three can already be found in Yixing's commentary. See T 39: 644b, which Enni quotes. However, Yixing does not offer definitions, and later scholiasts disagree on their implications. For an account of the three roots in Tendai, see for example Ōkubo Ryōshun, *Taimitsu kyōgaku*, pp. 268–271. For Shingon, see Tado, *Chūsei tōmitsu*, pp. 155–185.

⁷² DNKGSKM, 487a.

appearances [as used in deity *yoga*], they are not without *richi* and doctrinal discourse. For this reason, they cannot be the same as the principal indication (*shūshi* 宗旨) of directly confronting and grasping it [of Zen].⁷³

Unlike the Zen practitioner, even the *māntrika* who suddenly enters into the innermost mind cannot be entirely free from doctrinal discourse. But what does it mean in concrete terms that even one who does not one-sidedly depend on letters, insignia, and appearances is not entirely without them? Enni explained:

For those of small wisdom, who enter gradually, are taught the provisional means with perceptual marks. Those with great intelligence and superior wisdom hear the provisional means with perceptual marks and directly enter into the *Dharma* without perceptual characteristics.⁷⁴

Here resurfaces the paradox of the syllable *a*, which shows what it means: When the superior *māntrika* hears the words of the teachings or sees the letters, insignia, and divine bodies of the *maṇḍala*, she or he does not separately attend to their doctrinal meanings but apprehends them directly as phenomena that reveal their own absolute ungraspability. Yet in so far as even the superior *māntrika* uses the specific words of the tantric scriptures, or the definite shapes of the *maṇḍala*, as springboards into the markless, she or he is not entirely beyond them but rather, “awakens to the markless by according with marks,” as Enni put it.⁷⁵ In this the *māntrika* differs from the Zen practitioner, who does not depend on any established doctrines or teachings.⁷⁶ Tantric

73 DNKGSKM, 488a.

74 DNKGSKM, 489b.

75 DNKGSKM, 516b.

76 Some tantric thinkers sought to counter such claims by disassociating the three mysteries without characteristics from any specifically tantric forms. In so doing, they relied on a redefinition of “three mysteries without characteristics” as “the three mysteries without [even a single] characteristic [they are not endowed with].” As such, the three formless mysteries became associated with the idea of all speech being *mantra*, all movement of the body *mudrā*, and all thought contemplation. See for instance Shōken’s 聖憲 (1307–1392) *Daisho hyakujō daisanjō* 大疏百條第三重, T 76: 616c. The basic idea seems to be that the natural, “uncultured” or “uncultivated” activities of body, speech, and mind provide the basis for the “cultivation” of specific ritual technologies such as *mudra*, *mantra*, and visualization. Tantric practice thus not only establishes perceptual marks or characteristics in the fundamental mind, but also in the “fundamental body,” as it were. The three mysteries without characteristics so understood eventually became a conduit for the adoption of Zen thought and slogans in Shugen 修驗 mountain asceticism, which used phrases such as “Buddhas and patriarchs do not transmit,” “not establishing words

teachings and Zen, in other words, are equally founded on the inner verification of Mahāvairocana indulging in the bliss of its own awakened mind. They differ, however, in the directness of their approaches. While the tantric teachings indeed, “make provisional means the ultimate,” Zen does away with all mediation.

8 Draining the Ocean of Conditionality: Zen and the Teachings

Enni’s elucidation of Zen in the context of a tantric world is as simple and elegant as it is radical. It is also beset by a now familiar problem, namely that if Zen does not have teachings, how is it to be communicated? Or as Enni’s interlocutor in the *Gishaku kenmon* put it, “How could it be that the gate through which one enters the way, while being connected to mechanisms, does not depend on provisional means?”⁷⁷ How could there be communicative devices that are not teachings adapted to their audience? Or to put it differently yet again, how can Zen be both connected to devices and outside the teachings?

Enni developed his answer in the 9th fascicle of the *Gishaku kenmon*, which contains his sub-commentary on the 30th chapter of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, “[On the] Mundane and Supra-mundane Recitation of Mantra.” This very short chapter teaches the “secret method of reciting *mantra*”⁷⁸ based on breath and mental concentration, and hence is considered by Yixing to transmit the essentials of *mantra* practice.⁷⁹ The starting point of Enni’s inquiry is the following passage from Yixing’s commentary:

Now, contemplating letters and seeing letters, contemplating insignia and deities and seeing them, this is being with perceptual characteristics. If the practitioner sees the true and real characteristics of these, he no longer dwells in perceptual characteristics, but has not yet entered into being without perceptual characteristics. If one contemplates the mind of awakening, it is entirely without perceptual characteristics. This mind itself is Buddha. Buddha itself is this body [i.e. oneself]. Oneself

and letters,” and “transmitting mind with mind” to proclaim its independence from Buddhism. See for instance *Shugen sanjūsantsūki* 修驗三十三通記, NDZK, vol. 37, 417b. For a translation of the relevant passage, see the conclusions to this study.

77 DNKGSKM, 522a.

78 Giebel, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra*, p. 201.

79 DRJS, 647b; DRJS, T 39: 785b.

becoming Buddha, a single characteristic without conceptions of difference. Therefore it is called “without perceptual characteristics.”⁸⁰

Enni undertook an examination of what Yixing here meant by being “without perceptual characteristics.” Enni stipulated that there are two kinds of absence of perceptual characteristics, namely “absence of perceptual characteristics [according to] the outer trace of attaining Buddhahood” (*jōbutsu gejaku no musō* 成仏外迹/無相) and “absence of perceptual characteristics [according to] the true intention of *bodhi*” (*bodai jitsugi no musō* 菩提実義/無相). Let us consider these two more closely.

In the quote above being “without perceptual characteristics” is discussed as contingent upon attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, Enni concluded, it represents the “absence of perceptual characteristics [according to] the outer trace of attaining Buddhahood.” This he defined as follows:

The meaning of the absence of perceptual characteristics of attaining Buddhahood is to arrive at the fundamentally unproduced on the basis of conditioned phenomena (*engi no hō* 緣起/法), [that is to say, it is] absence of self-nature (*mujishō* 無自性).⁸¹

The fundamental principle of “absence of perceptual characteristics [according to] the outer trace of attaining Buddhahood,” therefore, is conditionality. Conditioned, perceptible phenomena serve the practitioner as provisional means or footholds in order to enter into the nature of mind.

However, Enni continued, there are two kinds of conditionality, namely the impure and the pure. Unlike what certain heretic “*mantra* masters of the eastern temple” (*Tōji no shingonshi* 東寺/真言師), that is to say members of tantric lineages derived from Kūkai, believed, the difference between the exoteric and the tantric teachings does not depend on whether perceptual characteristics are inherent in the mind or not. Rather, the difference is to be found in the two teachings’ respective depth in their understanding of conditionality (*engi* 緣起). The exoteric teachings understand conditional arising to merely apply on the level of the impure (*sen engi* 染緣起).⁸² Consequently, they see perceptual characteristics as pertaining to the realm of delusion only. To enter into what is without perceptual characteristics consequently implies removing

80 DNKGSKM, 514b. See also DRJS, T 39: 785c, DRJYS, 649a.

81 DNKGSKM, 515ab.

82 DNKGSKM, 518ab.

impurities.⁸³ Impurities removed, only the unconditioned, liberated mind without perceptual characteristics remains.

The tantric teachings, in contrast, understand conditionality to operate also in purity. In other words, in so far as the inner verification of the tantric teachings is endowed with perceptual characteristics, “these are the perceptible characteristics (*shikisō* 色相) of pure conditional arising, the manifestation of the inner verification of the various Buddhas (*shobutsu naishō no kaihotsu, jō engi no shikisō* 諸仏内証/開発、淨縁起/色相).”⁸⁴ This being the case, “although one sees the perceptible characteristics of the various Buddhas, one merely sees unproduced absence of characteristics (*fushō musō* 不生無相), because one sees the essential characteristic (*taisō* 体相) of the uniformity of the *dharmadhātu* (*hōkai ichinyō* 法界一如).”⁸⁵

Unlike what the scholiasts of Tōji claimed, the tantric teachings are not inherently (*honnu* 本有) endowed with perceptual characteristics, but rather produce them dynamically from the Buddha’s inner verification. Consequently, both the exoteric and tantric teachings are predicated upon conditionality, which gives rise to perceptual characteristics, which in turn enable signification through provisional means. The tantric teachings are superior in so far as they allow for conditioned arising in the purity of the Buddha’s inner verification, and therefore can manifest superior provisional means such as the syllable *a*. However, in so far as they can only communicate the Buddha’s inner verification through provisional means, they remain on the level of the “absence of perceptual characteristics [according to] the outer trace of attaining Buddhahood.”⁸⁶

What about the “absence of perceptual characteristics [according to] the true intention of *bodhi*?” Enni defined it as follows:

This is where neither Buddha nor patriarch can reach; there are not the principle indications of what is taught in the exoteric and the tantric teachings. In other words, being the principle indication of transcending

83 DNKGSKM, 518ab.

84 DNKGSKM, 517b.

85 DNKGSKM, 517b.

86 Enni’s insistence that even the pure perceptual marks arising from the Buddha’s inner verification are conditional, are confined to the level of outer traces, and hence lack self-nature or substance, would appear to be the basis of Jōmyō’s criticism of Enni’s position discussed in the previous chapter. As we have seen, Jōmyō explicitly chided Enni for the latter’s assertion that there is in essence “no self-nature” (*mu jissō*) and that perceptual marks only arise from functioning. In turn, Enni appears to have considered the emergent original awakening and oral transmission teachings’ assertion that there were essential perceptual characteristics to smack of the Tōji heresy of “inbornness” (*honnu*).

the Buddhas and going beyond the patriarchs, it is turning upward outside the teachings (*kyōge no kōjō* 教外ノ向上).⁸⁷

As he elaborated a little later in the same passage:

Where not a single *dharma* is established, before the first sprout of conditionality, there is opened and established the basic indication of the single transmission of direct indication (*tanden jikishi no shūshi* 单伝直指/宗旨). Therefore it is said, “the principle of transcending Buddhas and going beyond patriarchs, the way Buddhas and patriarchs do not reach.”⁸⁸

Both the tantric and the exoteric teachings are teachings predicated on and elucidating the monkey play, as Yuanwu would have it, of conditionality. The “separate transmission,” however, is beyond conditionality, where not even Buddhas and patriarchs can reach. Being beyond even a Buddha, how could there be teachings? Being without teachings, how could there be awakening? Hence, Enni concluded, Zen is the innermost essence disclosed in the *Vairocanāśaṃbodhi*, that “in truth, [there is] no awakening and no attainment.”

This differentiation into the exoteric and tantric teachings based on conditionality, on the one hand, and the direct indication of the Buddhas and patriarchs, on the other, however, is still somewhat dissatisfactory. As Enni’s interlocutor pointed out, if Zen refers to a place where not even a single *dharma* is established, does it not then fall again into the sterile voidness of the teachings? Not so, Enni explained, as

[t]o have perceptual characteristics or not, all such talk and principles, they are all established upon conditionality and are topics of the gate of teachings. The exoteric and tantric teachings differ, and the principles of pure and impure conditioned arising are not the same. However, as they are both established upon conditionality, the tantric teachings scoff at the exoteric teachings as those wipe away the phenomena of impure conditionality and make absence of perceptual characteristics the ultimate, therefore being ignorant of pure conditionality and blind to the perceptible forms of self-verification [i.e. the tantric provisional means of *mudrā*, *mantra*, and *maṇḍala*]. The Zen school outside the teachings

87 DNKGSKM, 515a.

88 DNKGSKM, 522a.

from the first does not see the two teachings (*hō* 法) of pure and impure conditionality, and therefore it cannot be doubted [in this manner].⁸⁹

Zen is entirely outside of the conditional nexus from which perceptual characteristics and the discourses relating to them arise. If one even raises any question regarding these topics, one has already missed the mark. Or as Enni explained to his disciple Mujū:

As for the reality mark (*jissō*), because it is produced from the essence of inner verification it is called the characteristic of the real. It is the ultimate of the teachings, the ocean of a single taste [into which the myriad streams of the various teachings all equally enter]. When the ocean is dried up, that is not establishing words and letters [i.e. Zen].⁹⁰

All teachings, from the most basic to the most refined, are still teachings on something, provisional means towards something. Zen, on the other hand, drains away all words, all conditionally established perceptual characteristics. It forces the student to confront directly what the teachings only talk about, be it in terms of doctrinal squabbling or of mantric recitation. Zen thus has communication of mind in directly pointing at mind, but it does not have a provisional means for communicating anything about mind. To stick to Enni's own example, Zen has no words to tell you anything about the moon, but it has a finger to point at it.

9 Conclusions

If one had to sum up Enni's understanding of the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings, one might formulate the following quasi-syllogism:

The tantric self-verification of Mahāvairocana is beyond provisional means (tantric ritual technology) and cannot be transmitted.

The Zen direct indication of mind or *kōjō* is beyond provisional means (*kōan* and doctrinal teachings) and cannot be transmitted.

∴ The tantric self-verification of Mahāvairocana is the direct indication of mind (or *kōjō*) of Zen.

89 DNKGSKM, 525b–526a.

90 *Itsudai Mujū kiki-gaki*, CZS, vol. 5, 476.

Enni contextualized Zen by combining two taxonomic models, namely the Japanese tantric distinction between the exoteric and the tantric teachings, on the one hand, and the Chan or Zen differentiation between the teachings and the patriarchal transmission, on the other. In so doing, Enni inscribed Zen into and with a tantric distinction. This inscription served Enni as a guide in reading Zen through the structure of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*. Enni shared in a broader medieval discourse that (re-)emphasized this early tantric concern with a mind beyond perceptual characteristics, “without awakening and without attainment.” Enni argued that the “single transmission” of the Chan and Zen traditions was nothing but the “direct indication” of this innermost mind of the main tantric deity, the transcendent Mahāvairocana underlying the two main *maṇḍala*. The teachings, on the other hand, regardless of whether they are exoteric or tantric in nature, are based on conditional perception and provisional signs. While they talk about the mind, Zen shows it. Zen, therefore, establishes the communicative mechanism of pointing at the mind, but it does not have provisional means. Tantra, on the other hand, establishes a communicative mechanism in the form of the provisional means of mantric mediation. The paradigmatic mantric mediator is the liminal syllable *a*, through which the mind without perceptual characteristics may be glimpsed. Finally, the exoteric teachings cannot establish communicative mechanisms for the mind. Their provisional means are purely negative ones in that they are restricted to abolishing deluded thought. Table 3 summarizes Enni’s systematization of Zen, the tantric, and the exoteric teachings.

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the interpretative strategy through which Enni established this structure in the *Gishaku kenmon* is closely entwined with the text and phraseology of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* and its exegetical tradition. Unlike what has been presupposed in previous scholarship, Enni did not, for instance, build on some vague “one mind” (C. *yixin*, J. *isshin*) derived from texts such as the *Zongjing lu* in order to integrate tantric and Zen teachings. Rather, Enni had a very specific understanding of what kind of mind he was analyzing, namely the mind “without awakening and without attainment,” a technical term found almost exclusively in tantric literature.

It is this essentially tantric mind that at Enni’s hands came to provide the referent for Yuanwu’s imperative to “confront it directly” beyond either doctrinal deliberations or Chan encounter dialogue. Likewise, when Enni elucidates “not establishing words and letters,” again, he gave this famous Zen slogan a very precise tantric meaning, namely, not to establish mantric seed syllables in the mind “without awakening and without attainment.” In short, in his tantric commentaries Enni did not merely “explain” or elucidate a Chinese Chan tradition in language comprehensible to Japanese Buddhists, he re-made what

TABLE 3 The structure of Zen, Tantric, and Exoteric Teachings in the *Gishaku kenmon*

				Communicative mechanism	Provisional means
Outside teachings	Unconditioned		Zen	○ (direct indication)	×
Teachings	Conditioned	Pure	Tantric	○	○ (syllable <i>a</i>)
		Impure	Exoteric	×	○

he had learned in China in the framework of the Tendai tantric traditions he had inherited. Hence, Enni’s Zen presupposes the Japanese Buddhist doctrinal and exegetical tradition. This does of course not mean that Chan or Zen for Enni lost its integrity, or that it was in some sense dissolved into the tantric teachings. It does indicate, however, that the way in which Enni constructed, deployed, and made Zen meaningful was inextricably bound up with his tantric thought in very definite ways. To put it perhaps somewhat crudely, Enni preached Zen in a Japanese tantric dialect.⁹¹

Enni was clearly aware of the fact that what he was doing was something new, something that had no precedent in either the Japanese tantric traditions or Chinese Chan. As Enni explained to his student Mujū in a passage already cited above, he had yet to see in the *mantra* teachings a single sentence that would declare any intention of going beyond the syllable *a* in order to establish a “direct indication” similar to the one of Zen. On the other hand, Chan or Zen was not simply self-aware of its transcendence of the syllable *a* and the mant-ric teachings established upon it. As Enni further instructed Mujū:

91 On this point I disagree with Matsunami, who, however, wrote without the benefit of being able to consult Enni’s tantric commentaries. Matsunami argues that Enni should not, as has been suggested in previous scholarship, be seen as somebody who combined the practice of tantric teachings and Zen (*kenshū*) but rather as a Zen monk who also practiced tantric teachings. See Matsunami, *Zenshū shisōshi kenkyū*, p. 330. In contrast, I would argue that the structure of Enni’s thought remained fundamentally tantric. I will return to the question of whether this implies that Enni should be seen as a *tāntrika* first and a Zen master second in the conclusions to this study.

The mind of awakening without perceptual characteristics of the gate of the [Zen] school connects to where not the first reckoning [of conditionality] has yet arisen. It does not establish the syllable *a* and principles like non-production or suchlike. It connects to the place of no awakening and no attainment. Only, the manner of the [Chan or Zen] school does not call it like this.⁹²

By rendering Zen into a tantric patois, Enni thus consciously went beyond what either tradition could achieve by itself. And it speaks to Jōmyō's perceptiveness and subtlety as a scholiast that he identified exactly the establishment of communicative devices in the markless mind as the point on which Enni parted company with his fellow Zen enthusiasts. Only Enni had used the tensions inherent in the combinatory architecture of the Tendai tantric tradition to pry apart its loosely fitting joints and peek beyond the *maṇḍala* into what even the thousand holies upon their lotuses could not transmit.

92 *Itsudai Mujū kikigaki*, CZS, vol. 5, 471.

The Heart of Flesh in the Body of the Teachings

Variations on Esoteric Zen in Enni, Chikotsu, and Kokan

1 Introduction

The specificity with which Enni rethought Chinese Chan teachings so as to fit them into the doctrinal space of Japanese Buddhism gave rise to a particular tension. Even if Enni considered Zen superior, he still articulated it, and perhaps had no choice but to articulate it, in dependence on the doctrinal categories of Japanese tantric Buddhism. This dependency rendered Enni's depiction of the Zen tradition volatile. Internally, it threatened to dissolve into tantric discourse, whereas externally it was under increasing pressure to assert itself as a lineage independent from exoteric and tantric teachings.

In the present chapter, we will investigate the contrasting solutions to this problem proposed by Enni's student Chikotsu Daie and Enni's second-generation successor in a different branch of the Shōichi lineage, Kokan Shiren. These two masters offered almost completely opposite remedies to the tension inherent in the esoteric Zen teachings they inherited from Enni. Chikotsu emphasized the dependency of Zen on tantric physiology and consequently affirmed the latter's superiority over the former. By abandoning provisional means and denying the myriad virtues of the maṇḍalic mind, Chikotsu argued, Zen locked itself into a marginal position useful only to those of superior capabilities. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, could bring the mind to blossom forth into the mantric syllables through which the essence of the teachings could be communicated widely.

Kokan, on the other hand, sought to disassociate Zen from the tantric teachings while still preserving the most effective of the doctrinal innovations Zen's encounter with them had generated. Kokan exploited these innovations so as to improve the Zen tradition's ability to meet the challenges addressed to it by its scholarly critics. These challenges for the greater part derived from Japanese tantric doctrinal speculation. Among other problems, the question arose of whether Zen as the teaching of the mundane Śākyamuni Buddha should not be considered inferior to the teachings of the *Lotus* and the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, which were preached either in part or in their entirety by supra-mundane bodies of the Buddha. Although not entirely unknown, these kinds of problems were not discussed prominently in Chinese Chan. Kokan therefore could not

simply fall back on his tradition's continental heritage. Instead, he had to draw on the very Japanese doctrinal resources he hoped to overcome. In so doing, he developed his own unique interpretation of the doctrine that the *dharmakāya* actively expounds the *Dharma*. Kokan based his interpretation exclusively on the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*. In this way he sought to undermine the theory of the *dharmakāya*'s teaching as explained in the tantric traditions, thereby proving Zen's independence from the latter.

These intellectual developments among Enni's heirs were no mere doctrinal glass bead games. They reflected important changes in the institutional position the Zen traditions found themselves in vis-à-vis the established schools. The first Japanese temples to house Chan or Zen lineages, such as Enni's Tōfukuji or Lanxi Daolong's Kenchōji 建長寺, were essentially private institutions serving the needs of their patrons. Yet as the Hōjō 北条 clan, many members of which were avid supporters of the new Zen institutions, expanded its political clout within the Kamakura military government, the growing Zen lineages took on more official roles. In 1283, Hōjō Tokimune 北条時宗 (1251–1284) appointed Engakuji 円覚寺 in Kamakura as a temple at which prayer services on behalf of the polity were to be carried out. In 1308, the court, acting on a petition by the Hōjō, recognized both Engakuji and Kenchōji as official prayer temples.¹ The privilege to carry out funerary, memorial, and apotropaic ritual services on behalf of the imperial house, the court, and the ruling elites had previously been reserved for the powerful institutions of the established schools, such as the Tendai stronghold Enryakuji 延暦寺 on Mt. Hiei or the Nara monastic complex of Kōfukuji 興福寺. As Zen temples continued to expand their sacerdotal privileges and performed official rites in the fashionable continental style, relations with the established schools, never too cordial to begin with, became increasingly testy. This culminated in a series of violent confrontations in the second half of the 14th century.²

Their greater independence and prominence as institutional actors also affected the intellectual atmosphere within Zen institutions as a whole. Beginning with Lanxi in 1246, Chinese Chan monks continued to arrive in Japan, bringing with them detailed knowledge not only of Chinese monastic life but also of the cutting edge intellectual and artistic trends on the continent. The most important of these Chinese immigrant masters was perhaps Yishan Yining 一山一寧 (1247–1317), known in Japanese as Issan Ichinen,

1 Harada Masatoshi, "Nihon no gozan zenshū," p. 82.

2 In 1345, monks from Enryakuji sought to prevent Musō Soseki's temple Tenryūji 天竜寺 from offering a memorial service for Godaigo 後醍醐 (1288–1339), and in 1368 a dispute erupted over Nanzenji's 南禅寺 toll gate. See Adolphson, *The Gates of Power*, pp. 307–315.

who arrived in 1299. After a brief spell of imprisonment on spying charges, Yishan went on to an impressive career that included abbotships at Kenchōji, Engakuji, and Nanzenji 南禅寺, the leading Zen institutions of his time. Yishan, a highly sophisticated monastic *literatus*, instituted at the monasteries he presided over entrance exams modeled on the Chinese bureaucratic examination system. Success in these demanding examinations required a thorough knowledge of not only general Buddhism and Chan or Zen, but of the intricacies of Chinese literature, customs, and culture.³ Among Yishan's students were some of the most celebrated representatives of Zen at their time, including Kokan.

Figures such as Enni drew on the doctrinal language of medieval Japanese Buddhism to articulate their understanding of Zen. The efforts of émigrés such as Lanxi and Yishan, as well as the increasing number of Japanese monks who travelled to the mainland to apprentice directly under Chinese masters, rendered the continental idiom of Chan increasingly available to Japanese enthusiasts. In 1325, Shūhō Myōchō 宗峰妙超 (1282–1337), the founder of Daitokuji and, retrospectively, second patriarch of the Ōtōkan lineage, decisively won a debate against scholiasts from the established schools. When one of his learned rivals asked, “What is this Zen, [which claims to be] a separate transmission outside the teachings?” Shūhō shot back, “An eight-sided millstone spins through the air!” (*hakkaku no maban kūri o hashiru* 八角磨盤空裏走). Flabbergasted, Shūhō's opponent lost the debate.⁴ Shūhō's was not a spontaneous outburst, but rather a quotation from an interlinear commentary on the 47th case of the *Bīyan lu*.⁵ This suggests that in the first half of the 14th century, Zen “crazy talk,” as Nichiren had styled it, had become embedded in the Japanese religious imagination to the point that it could hold its own without having to resort to doctrinal discourses.

Although the historical circumstances are somewhat murky, it would appear that the increasing ideological, sectarian, and institutional self-consciousness of Zen as an independent movement was felt within Enni's lineage, as well. Eventually, the pressures that arose from this discourse led to the dissolution of the unstable accommodation between doctrinal and Zen teachings Enni had put in place also on the level of institutional transmission. One early modern source from the Ōsu archives, the *Bichū Ōsu Shinpukuji sanryū no uchi Anyōji hō no engi* 尾州大須真福寺三流之内安養寺方之縁起, suggests that Chikotsu still transmitted the Zen and tantric lineages he had received from Enni together. In the second generation after him, the two traditions had parted ways and

3 Heine, *From Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen*, pp. 124–125.

4 See *Honchō kōsōden* 本朝高僧伝, DNBZ, vol. 102, 338.

5 T 48: 183a. The phrase is also found in various places in Yuanwu's *Recorded Sayings*.

came to be handed down separately.⁶ A source as late as the *Ōsu Shinpukuji sanryū no uchi anyōji hō no engi* of course cannot be trusted to serve as a reliable witness to the medieval history of Enni's transmissions. Yet it does seem to capture, if not the concrete details, then a broad trend that unfolded in the roughly first couple of generations after Enni. Chikotsu transmitted Zen and tantric teachings together, and his surviving *oeuvre* includes works devoted to the teachings of both lineages, as well as reflections on how they relate to each other within a common doctrinal and exegetical framework. This is no longer the case with Kokan. Kokan, too, was an avid practitioner of tantric teachings. Having initially studied the tantric teachings of Kūkai's faction at Ninnaji 仁和寺 and Daigoji 醍醐寺, he went on to receive initiation (*kanyō* 灌頂) from one of Chikotsu's disciples, thereby succeeding to Enni's tantric in addition to his Zen lineage. Finally, in his mid-thirties, Kokan received secret texts and instructions from the Tendai patriarchs Saichō and Ennin 円仁 (794–864) in a series of visions or dreams.⁷ Yet despite his deep personal interest in tantric thought and practice, in Kokan's voluminous *oeuvre* they appear only as targets of his stinging polemic. Furthermore, his own encyclopedic learning notwithstanding, Kokan is reported to have exhorted his students to devote themselves exclusively to mastering the “ancestral school of the mind” (*shin sōshū* 心祖宗), that is to say Zen. To master Zen, Kokan argued, renders all other learning superfluous.⁸ As we shall see below, Kokan gave this understanding concrete form in so far as he no longer relied on exoteric or tantric dogmatics to render Zen discourse meaningful. On the contrary, he inverted the three traditions' respective positions in order to posit Zen *qua* the teaching of the *dharmakāya* as the “fundamental ground” from which exoteric and tantric teachings arise. Kokan thus marks a threshold at which Zen monks still operated within the paradigms put in place by tantric scholasticism, yet no longer depended on their opponent's vocabulary for formulating their self-understanding.

2 Enni, Zen, and the *Yuqi jing*

In order to understand Chikotsu's interpretation of the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings, we must first turn to Enni's reading of the *Yuqi jing* 瑜祇經 (J. *Yugikyō*). The *Jingangfeng louge yiqie yuqie yuqi jing* 金剛峯樓

6 See *Bichū Ōsu Shinpukuji sanryū no uchi anyōji hō no engi*, reproduced in Sueki, “Shōichi ha,” 620–622.

7 See Yamaguchi Kōjun, “Kokan Shiren,” p. 69.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

閻一切瑜伽瑜祇經, to give its full name, is a text putatively translated into Chinese by Vajrabodhi (671–741), but most likely a Chinese apocryphal. Its exegetical tradition represents one of the most influential attempts to unify the two primary maṇḍalic realities, the *Vajra* and *Womb* realms, and hence came to play an important role in Japanese Tendai tantric circles. While the mainstream of the lineages deriving from Kūkai, with important exceptions such as the Kojimadera 子島寺 lineage of Shinkō 真興 (935–1004), understood the two *maṇḍala* to be non-dual, Tendai tantric thinkers interpreted them as separate transmissions and constantly were on the lookout for ways to integrate them.

The great Tendai scholiast Annen drew on the *Yuqi jing* to show how a tantric practitioner could physically realize the unity of the two *maṇḍala* in his body. This unifying process came to be interpreted in increasingly sexual terms, eventually giving rise to an embryology of awakening.⁹ Enni inherited this exegesis of the *Yuqi jing* through his tantric lineage flowing from Yōsai. In this lineage, sexual aspects had combined with the previously discussed emphasis on a single Buddha transcendent of the tantric world's cleft into *Womb* and *Vajra* realms. The transcendent unity of this Buddha came to be represented in male *yogin* and female *yoginī* becoming “one flesh,” as it were. It remains unclear, though, whether this image was also put into ritual practice.¹⁰

Before the discovery of the materials discussed in the previous chapter, namely his commentary and sub-commentary on the *Vairocanāśaṃbodhi*, Enni's take on the issue of the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings was known only from a single, enigmatic passage preserved in the *Yugikyō kenmon* 瑜祇經見聞, also known as the *Hikyōketsu* 秘經決, Enni's commentary on the *Yuqi jing*. An alternative version of this text also entitled *Yugikyō kenmon* and containing a previously unknown part of Enni's exegesis has recently been discovered. To avoid confusing these two versions of Enni's commentary, I will refer to the previously known version of Enni's lecture as the *Hikyōketsu*, and to the recently discovered version as the *Yugikyō kenmon*.

The *Yugikyō kenmon* preserves Enni's commentary on the opening passage of the *Yuqi jing*, which describes the Buddha as dwelling in the “palace of luminous mind” (C. *guangmíng xīn diàn* 光明心殿, J. *kōmyō shinden*).¹¹ Enni commented as follows:

9 On the corresponding development in Shingon lineages, see Kameyama, “Doctrinal Origins.”

10 On the *Yuqi jing* and its role in Tendai tantric lineages, see Misaki, *Taimitsu no kenkyū*, pp. 137–140, 508–509; Dolce, “Taimitsu,” pp. 758–761; Dolce and Mano, “Godai'in Annen,” pp. 773–775; Mano, “Yōsai,” p. 831; Mizukami, *Taimitsu shisō*, pp. 425–439; Mizukami, *Nihon tendai*, pp. 74–89.

11 T 18: 254a.

Luminosity is the virtue of the perceptual characteristics of mind. It is not the essential nature of mind. Therefore, an ancestral teacher of Zen said, “Exhausting the great earth, this light of wisdom. When the light has not yet shone forth, neither Buddhas nor sentient beings.” [...] Where light and perceptual realm are both forgotten, there are neither Buddhas nor sentient beings; this is the essential nature of mind. [...] The great intention of the tantric teachings is to explain that from the luminosity of the virtue of the perceptual characteristics of mind are produced all *dharma*.¹²

The “ancestral teacher” whose authority Enni invokes in this passage is no other than Yuanwu, from whose *Recorded Sayings* Enni quoted.¹³ Enni also quoted the same passage as part of one of his poems collected in his own *Recorded Sayings*.¹⁴ These multiple appropriations of a Chinese source text in a variety of genre provide an example for the intricate intertextuality that is characteristic of the Buddhism Enni and his successors practiced. In the *Yugikyō kenmon*, Enni used a quotation from a Chinese Chan text to illuminate the meaning of a tantric scripture, thereby transforming the hermeneutical paradigms according to which the Chan text in question is made to make sense.

In the passage just quoted, Enni reiterated that the nature of mind, the Buddha's self-verification, is beyond knower and known, a darkness without Buddhas or sentient beings. Buddhas and beings, knower and known, all arise from the mind illuminated, from the complex structure of knowing. While Zen, represented by Yuanwu's saying, pertains to the darkness before this illumination, the great purport of the tantric tradition is to show that all teachings and phenomena arise but from the luminosity of mind. In the *Hikyōketsu*, Enni offers the following metaphor to illustrate this state of affairs:

Question: [...], the unmanifest moon disc without perceptual characteristics (*musō no gachirin* 無相月輪), which is without even a single portion of brightness, is the pure, fundamental mind of self-nature. Again, the exoteric teachings take this mind to be the supreme utmost subtle essence. The tantric teachings open in this mind the gate of the syllable *a* by disseminating teachings in the fundamental first [phase of the new moon]. If, again, in this fundamental mind of self-nature there

¹² *Yugikyō kenmon*, CZS, vol. 12, 558.

¹³ See T 47: 753a.

¹⁴ See T 80: 22b.

has not yet arisen a single letter [such as *a*], is there directly establishing principles and providing [communicative] mechanisms?

Answer: Not establishing words and letter, directly pointing at the human mind is that!¹⁵

Enni here drew on a doctrinal motif we have already encountered in the previous chapter. The mind of self-nature is the foundation of all teachings, but the various classes of teachings differ in the manner in, and the degree to, which they can communicate it. The exoteric teachings take the ultimate mind to be an incommunicable void. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, establish within fundamental mind various provisional means such as *mantra* and *maṇḍala*, all of which derive, according to Enni, from the syllable *a*. Zen, finally, does away with the problem of signification altogether and simply indicates mind directly, an approach often likened to pointing at the moon. However, there is a twist. Rather than at the moon in general, which after all is a pan-Buddhist metaphor for the mind, Enni's finger points at a very specific moon, the "moon disc without perceptual characteristics." It is worth tracing the genealogy of this dark moon in order to appreciate the specificity of Enni's exegetical move.

3 The Genealogy of the Moon

To picture the mind, or rather the mind of awakening (*S. bodhicitta*, *C. puti xin* 菩提心, *J. bodaishin*), as the moon, and to use this image as the basis for contemplative practices, is a fundamental principle of East Asian tantric teachings. In its section on *samādhi*, the *Putixin lun* 菩提心論, a root text of the East Asian tantric traditions, explains that when teaching their secret *yoga*, the Buddhas,

make the practitioner contemplate in his heart a white moon disc, and by means of performing this contemplation [the practitioner] illuminates his fundamental mind, tranquil and pure like the light of a full moon filling space without discrimination. [...] One sees one's own mind like the disc of the moon. Why is the disc of the moon employed as a simile? Because the round, luminous essence of a full moon resembles the characteristics of the mind of awakening. The moon disc has sixteen

15 *Hikyōketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 479.

phases. This is a metaphor for the sixteen bodhisattvas, from Vajrasattva to Vajrasaṃdhi, realized in *yoga*.¹⁶

In this passage, the *Putixin lun* likens the mind of awakening to the full moon. The moon increasing in fullness and radiance day by day illustrates the yogic pilgrim's progress as the *tāntrika* gradually manifests the nature of mind. Although it might appear more or less completely, the fundamental brightness that is the nature of mind itself does not change in the slightest even as it traverses the rounds of rebirth. This brightness of the mind is,

like the light-essence that does not change in any one of the sixteen phases of the moon. A part of the light of the moon is stolen by the sun, such as at the time of the new moon; at that time, the nature of its light is not manifested, but afterward the moon arises, increasing its brightness day by day, until it reaches fullness after the fifteenth day. Therefore, a practitioner should first arouse the essence of brightness, which is inherent in the mind, by meditating on the syllable *a*; and he should gradually purify and brighten it and realize the ultimate cognition of non-arising.¹⁷

At the night of the new moon, the text explains, the sun steals, as it were, the moon's light, and the latter is dark and invisible even though in fact it still is possessed of brightness. Once this phase has passed, the visible brightness increases by the day until the moon is full. The process of tantric cultivation is just like this. At first the brightness of mind, just like the new, dark moon, is not manifested or perceptible by any characteristic. But by cultivating the syllable *a*, practitioners can coax forth the mind / moon's inherent luster, which they cultivate gradually until full awakening is achieved. Tantric practice, in short, is based on the un-manifest mind likened to the dark new moon, but it actually begins from the waxing moon's first slither of light, the illumination of the syllable *a*.

In the *Hikyōketsu*, Enni refers to exactly these passages from the *Putixin lun* when he discussed the details of the mind of awakening as moon disc. Enni summarized his interpretation as follows:

Among moon discs, there is the moon disc with perceptual characteristics and the moon disc without perceptual characteristics (*usō musō gachirin*

16 See T 32: 573c. For a different translation, which I have consulted, see Minoru, "Bodhicitta Śāstra," p. 119.

17 Adapted from Minoru, "Bodhicitta Śāstra," pp. 121–122. See also T 32: 574a.

有相無相月輪). That is to say, the general essence of the sixteen phases of the moon, which does not manifest during the new moon when [the sun] steals [the moon's] brightness, this is called the moon disc without perceptual characteristics.¹⁸

In being based on one of the fundamental texts of the East Asian tantric tradition, Enni's interpretation of the image of the full moon and its significance in tantric practice is impeccably orthodox. Somewhat more problematic is his use of the term "moon disc without perceptual characteristics" (*musō gachirin*). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the understanding that the practitioner proceeds from contemplating phenomena to a form of contemplation free from perceptual characteristics is fundamental to the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* textual circle and exegetical tradition. The problem now is the paradoxical notion of a moon disc without perceptual characteristics. To the best of my knowledge, this strange moon has no clear precedence in Indian or Chinese tantric thought but appears to be a Japanese innovation.

Annen authored an authoritative commentary on the *Putixin lun*, the *Taizō kongō bodaishingi ryaku mondōshō* 胎藏金剛菩提心義略問答鈔, to which I will refer to by the abbreviation *Bodaishingishō*. At one point Annen pondered the question whether the fundamental tantric ritual technology known as the *gosō jōjōgan* 五相成身觀 or contemplation of attaining the [Buddha] body with five marks, is a practice endowed with perceptual characteristics or rather is without them. Annen concluded that it is the former. As part of his deliberations on this question, Annen quoted the *Zhufo jingjie she zhenshi jing* 諸仏境界撰真実經, or *Sūtra of the Perceptual Realm of All Buddhas Established in Ultimate Reality*, the translation of which is attributed to Prajñā (fl. 9th century). According to this scripture, once a *yogin* has accomplished "those contemplations such as of the moon disc with perceptual characteristics and the like" (*youxiang yuelun deng guan* 有相月輪等觀), he is to proceed to the "subtle contemplation without characteristics" (*wuxiang miaoguan* 無相妙觀). The *yogin* is to set his body erect and to contemplate the moon disc, the *mudrā* and *mantra*, the array of ritual paraphernalia that hitherto supported his practice, indeed the entire world with its mountains, Buddhas, and kings, as entirely void and tranquil.¹⁹ Besides the *Zhufo jingjie she zhenshi jing*, Annen also cites

18 *Hikyōketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 476.

19 See *Zhufo jingjie she zhenshi jing*, T 18: 276b and *Bodaishingishō*, T 75: 514c.

a text entitled the *Zenmon yōshin* 禪門用心, or *Essential Points of the Gate of Meditation*,²⁰ to the effect, that

if contemplating the moon disc endowed with perceptual characteristics and the like the heart has attained purity and maturation, next contemplate what is without perceptual characteristics. Having finished contemplating what is without perceptual characteristics, there is neither having perceptual characteristics nor being without perceptual characteristics.²¹

This subtle re-reading of “being without characteristics” as being without *differentiating* characteristics (including the difference of being with and being without perceptual, and hence differentiating, characteristics) might have led Annen to a surprising conclusion regarding the practice described in the *Zhufu jingjie she zhenshi jing*. The scripture itself is quite clear that the “contemplation of what is without characteristics” begins from the “moon disc endowed with perceptual characteristics” and culminates in realizing the “void and tranquil” nature of all phenomena. Annen, on the other hand, interpreted the scripture to the effect that, “having contemplated the moon disc endowed with characteristics, one contemplates the moon disc without perceptual characteristics.”²² Consequently, rather than a movement from perceptually differentiated phenomena to non-differentiation, according to Annen we are dealing with one from differentiated to non-differentiated phenomena, arriving at a paradoxical moon disc without characteristics.

Even within Annen’s own work, the moon disc without characteristics remains a rarity, and it does not appear to have found much of an audience in the wider tantric community, either. The Tendai scholiast Kakuchō, whom we have already met in Chapter 1 as a transmitter of mirror lore, is one of the few to offer a brief discussion of the moon discs with and without perceptual characteristics. Kakuchō’s *Gosō jōjin shiki* 五相成身私記 records his personal reflections on the very same ritual practice in the context of which Annen had introduced the paradoxical moon disc in the first place. Kakuchō

20 Apart from Annen’s works, this text is only mentioned in the *Rokuge kyōtō mokuroku* 録外經等目錄, which attributes its importation to Ennin. See T 55: 1113a. Annen cites this information in his own extensive catalogue of esoteric scriptures imported from China, the *Shoajari shingon mikkyō burui sōroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總録, T 55: 1116a. As Annen quotes the text according to “meaning” (*ibun* 意文) rather than literally, I have not been able to further identify the source.

21 *Bodaishingishō*, T 75: 515a.

22 See *Bodaishingishō*, T 75: 515b.

explained that the moon as taught in the tantric traditions has the mind (*shin*) as its substance (*tai*). He then discussed this tantric moon as metaphor (*yu* 喩) and as what it is a metaphor for (*hō* 法). Within the latter, Kakuchō, like Annen referring to the *Zhufo jingjie she zhenshi jing*, differentiates between the “moon disc with perceptual characteristics” that pertains to the liberation of sentient beings, and the “moon disc without perceptual characteristics” that pertains to the inner verification of the sages.²³ To summarize these deliberations, the *Zhufo jingjie she zhenshi jing*, just like the wider tradition of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, understood being without perceptual characteristics or non-differentiation as transcending each and every specific phenomenon, including mind. Annen and Kakuchō, on the other hand, paradoxically understood the dark moon as the non-differentiation of the mind, or rather of phenomena in general. Hence, as Kakuchō made clear, the moon disc without perceptual characteristics is a symbol for the inner self-verification of the Buddha’s mind.²⁴

Enni continued these speculations on the markless moon disc. In the *Dainichikyō kenmon*, Enni explained that,

[i]n the material [forms endowed with perceptual] characteristics (*shikisō*) [used in tantric] *yoga* such as the moon disc, there are those with perceptual marks and those without perceptual marks. The moon disc contemplated on the perceptual basis of a succession of mind, thought, and conceptualization is called “with perceptual marks.” The moon disc which is contemplated on the perceptual basis of transcending (*chō*) the

23 *Gosō jōshin shiki*, T 75: 791b. Other references to the moon disc without characteristics can be found in the *Asabashō* 阿娑縛抄, DNBZ, vol. 36, 37a, 206a. Both these passages appear to be based on Kakuchō. Finally, the moon disc without characteristics is also mentioned in a text attributed to Genshin, the *Myōgyō shin'yōshū* 妙行心要集, DNBZ, vol. 33, 157b. The actual origin of this text is unclear. Most scholars agree that it is not a work by Genshin, but dates from in between the 11th to the 13th centuries. See Sueki, *Kamakura bukkyō*, pp. 314–323. Sueki himself argues for mid-11th to mid-12th century. This text offers an interpretation of Pure Land practice in the light of mind-contemplation, and hence is to be positioned in the larger context of original awakening thought. As also Enni intellectually moved in this context, connecting the moon disc without perceptual characteristics to non-tantric practice might not be without precedent.

24 Kakuchō also noted the paradoxical nature of speaking of a “moon disc without perceptual characteristics” in his *Gosō jōshin shiki*. A moon disc, Kakuchō’s fictional interlocutor observes, has perceptual characteristics. How then can we speak of it as being without? Kakuchō replied that the moon disc is no metaphor established by comparison but rather based on corresponding to the essence of what it symbolizes, thereby as much avoiding as answering the question. *Gosō jōshin shiki*, T 75: 691b.

discriminatory mind of conditioned thought, removed from voice, conceptualization, shape, and thought, that is called the “moon disc without perceptual marks.”²⁵

Elsewhere in this text, Enni related being without perceptual marks to “absolute contemplation” (*zettai kan*), which is “without mind and eliminating thought” (*mushin zetsunen* 無心絶念).²⁶ These are categories we have previously seen associated with Zen, both in Enni’s confrontation with Jōmyō and in the traditions associated with Enni recorded in the *Keiran shūyōshū*. Unlike the *Gishaku kenmon*, the *Dainichikyō kenmon* does not touch on Zen or its relationship with the tantric teachings directly. However, its treatment of the moon disc without perceptual characteristics, which in Enni’s exegesis of the *Yuqi jing* provided the conceptual space into which to receive the Chan or Zen mind, shows the significant degree to which Enni’s understanding of Zen was informed, and conditioned, by Tendai tantric speculations.

4 The Heart of Flesh

As pointed out above, Enni interpreted the moon disc without perceptual characteristics as the non-differentiating mind within which not a single mantric syllable, a single differentiation, has yet arisen. Therefore, it can only be directly indicated but not signified, as all signification is rooted in, or derives from, the mantric syllable *a*. According to Enni, it is this mind beyond all significations Yuanwu referred to when he spoke of the light of wisdom not yet having arisen. Here again we can observe how Enni gives a Zen saying a very precise technical meaning in terms of his tantric, and specifically his Tendai tantric, hermeneutics.

Enni takes this mind in which no mantric syllables are established as the referent of the Zen slogan, “not establishing words and letters, directly pointing at the human mind.” We will look at the first half of this saying more closely in a moment. First, I would like to dwell a little longer on the second half of Enni’s definition, “directly pointing at the human mind.” In order to make sense of the interpretation Enni offers of this saying, we must take note of a final detail concerning the moon / mind. As understood in Japanese tantric traditions, and as especially Annen has emphasized, the moon disc is not merely a metaphor,

25 DNKKM, 277b.

26 DNKKM, 141a.

nor is the mind it represents a bloodless abstraction. Instead, the tantric mind (*shin*) is the heart (*shinzō* 心臓), the concrete, physical organ inside the human chest. According to Annen's classical explanation in the *Bodaishingishō*:

Question: This *citta*, the great, all-pervading mind of awakening of self-nature, where is it to be contemplated (*kan* 観)?

Answer: Again, in the eight-part heart of flesh it is contemplated. In the *Womb* [lineage] it is contemplated as a lotus with eight petals, in the *Vajra* [lineage] it is contemplated as a moon disc.

Question: The ninth, eighth, seventh, and sixth consciousness of deluded beings, if these point to the heart / mind, where is that?

Answer: Again, it is the place of the eight-part heart of flesh.²⁷

And a little later:

Question: The *Putixin lun* says: "The heart / mind of deluded beings is like a closed lotus. The mind of the Buddha is like the full moon." Quote ends. If this is the case, and the eight parts of the *hṛdaya* [the heart or mind] are like a closed lotus, is the heart of the Buddha not like an open lotus?

Answer: The eight-part flesh-heart of sentient beings is like a closed lotus. If in the place of this heart you see the fundamental mind, its shape is like the moon disc.²⁸

The moon disc of tantric practice, in other words, has a clearly defined physiological location, namely the physical, fleshy heart. Furthermore, this heart has a definite shape, the eight parts of which are associated with the eight petals of a lotus flower such as the one found in the central section of the *Womb maṇḍala*, upon which the *maṇḍala*'s main deities dwell.

Enni inherited and developed this discourse on the physicality of the tantric mind. The appendix to the *Taimitsu keigushō* 胎密契愚鈔 records tantric lore of Yōsai's Yōjō lineage as transmitted by Enni. In a section entitled, "Oral Instructions on the Secret Unction" (*himitsu kanjō kuketsu* 秘密灌頂口決) Enni explained the efficacy of tantric initiation on the basis of three mysteries practice. Through the ritual technologies of the three mysteries, tantric practitioners can align their body, speech, and mind with those of the Buddhas and

²⁷ T 75: 454c.

²⁸ T 75: 457b.

other deities. This is possible, Enni explains, because tantric practice is based on concrete, phenomenal instantiations (*ji* 事), rather than just the abstract principles (*ri* 理) utilized in exoteric practices. In specific, Enni elaborated, “in the exoteric teachings they explain the physical shape of the mind organ, but they do not yet touch on the ritual procedures of letters, sigils, and shapes [used in tantric practice].”²⁹ Presumably, Enni here was alluding to the abhidharmic theory according to which the mind faculty (S. *mana-indriya*, C. *yigen* 意根, J. *ikon*) is based in a small cavern in the physical heart (S. *hṛdayavastu*). Enni claimed that although the exoteric teachings acknowledge the physicality of mind (or at least of its base), they lack the proper ritual procedures to transform it.

This physiological determination of the tantric mind raises a problem for Enni’s position according to which Zen directly points to the moon disc without perceptual characteristics. Where in the human body is this moon disc supposed to exist, and which shape does it have? Or to put it differently, if Zen is directly pointing at the mind before all syllables, then to which part of the body does it point?

5 A Pound of Flesh

Enni’s student Chikotsu responded to this problem, thereby pushing the integration of Zen with the tantric teachings to a new level. Chikotsu’s *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu* 菩提心論隨聞正決, a commentary on the *Putixin lun*, considers the threefold classification of teachings into the exoteric, tantric, and Zen teachings. While Enni had differentiated them on the basis of how they signify mind, Chikotsu instead ranks them according to how they ground mind:

The difference between the three schools of *kenmitsu* 顯密, the Zen gate, and the secret (*himitsu*) [i.e. tantric] properly is in their differences concerning the mind source (*shingen* 心源). Among them, the mind source illuminated by the secret teachings (*hikyō* 秘教) is the eight-part lump of flesh (*hachiben no nikudan* 八弁肉団) [that is the heart] like a closed lotus. What the Zen gate calls “not establishing words and letters, directly pointing at the human mind” does not refer to this eight-part flesh heart, but only to the square inch lump of flesh [of the physical heart organ]. In

29 *Taimitsu keigu sho*, 659.

the exoteric true vehicle (*jitsujō* 実乗) it is called the principle of [every] single thought of [sentient beings'] mind being the *tathāgatagarbha*.³⁰

According to Chikotsu, the exoteric teachings deal with mind in a primarily mentalistic manner by identifying the phenomenal mind of sentient beings with the *tathāgatagarbha* in principle only. Note that Chikotsu here departs from Enni, who did allow for the exoteric teachings to have at least a physical support for mind. Presumably, Chikotsu denied this point in order to differentiate Zen from the exoteric teachings more clearly. If Chikotsu were to acknowledge that also the exoteric teachings recognize a physical basis of mind, then it could be argued that Zen itself, in so far as it asserted this basis to be the “raw” heart, was merely an exoteric teaching among others. Instead, as we shall see below, Chikotsu argued that Zen, in so far as it did teach a physical heart, occupies the very pinnacle of the exoteric, the cusp at which the exoteric can just barely touch but not fully reach the tantric. Furthermore, both the Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma* tradition, which dominated in Japan, and the East Asian Yogācāra teachings deny the *hṛdayavastu* theory and instead define the immediately preceding thought moment as the mind faculty. Consequently, Chikotsu had a sound doctrinal basis from which he could argue the superiority of Zen and the tantric teachings over the exoteric teachings. Both affirm the foundation of mind to have a concrete physiological basis in the human heart, and in this sense both Zen and *tantra* are based on concrete instantiations (*ji*), not merely abstract principles.

Following up on Enni's contention that Zen directly points at the mind in which words and letters are not established, Chikotsu identified this mind with the square inch lump of flesh that is the heart organ within the chest. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, Chikotsu interpreted as having their foundation of mind in the very same organ, yet conceptualized as a flesh lotus with eight petals. According to Annen, within this lotus-shaped meat *maṇḍala* the moon disc illuminated by mantric syllables can shine forth. The mind of the tantric teachings, in other words, has a mantric and maṇḍalic potency the Zen mind lacks. In his *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu* Chikotsu even offered illustrations of the physiological difference between the mind of Zen and the tantric mind, as seen in Figures 1 and 2.

Chikotsu replaced, or rather complemented, Enni's distinction between a moon disc without and one with perceptual characteristics with the conceptions of the heart as a mere eight or ten ounces of meat, on the one hand, and

30 *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu*, CZS, vol. 12, 446b–447a.



FIGURE 1 The tantric mind as heart / lotus with the syllable *a*. From *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu*. Kept at Ōsu bunko, Shinpukuji. Used with permission



FIGURE 2 The Zen mind as square heart organ. From *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu*. Kept at Ōsu bunko, Shinpukuji. Used with permission

as a potential lotus in the flesh, on the other. These are by no means of equal value, as Chikotsu makes clear:

As for the Zen gate, because it transcends the teachings, as the pinnacle of the teachings is abolishing afflictions, it takes the square inch flesh lump (*hōsun no nikudan* 方寸肉団) and calls it the human heart, that is to say, makes it the fountain of mind. As [the Zen gate] does not yet reach the tantric vehicle (*mitsujō* 密乗), it truly does not talk about the eight-fold heart / mind. Understand! Śākyamuni twirling the flower, this truly points to the square inch lump of flesh. Vairocana of the secret enactment directly explains the eight-part lump of flesh (*hachiben no nikudan* 八弁肉団).³¹

Invoking the paradigmatic episode of Chan or Zen transmission, the Buddha silently imparting the *Dharma* to the first patriarch by holding up a single flower, Chikotsu inverted the value judgment of his teacher Enni as to the relative status of Zen and tantric teachings. Enni followed the tendency of some medieval thinkers to elevate what is without perceptual characteristics over what is endowed with them. Consequently, Enni heavily hinted that Zen, in directly pointing at the Buddha's inner verification, exceeds the tantric teachings, even if, to the best of my knowledge, he never said so explicitly. In contrast, Chikotsu's works exhibit a preference for elevating what has perceptual characteristics over what is without. Consequently, the eight-part flesh heart that supports the forms used in tantric practice, such as moon discs, lotuses, and syllables, is considered as being superior to the merely natural lump of meat before words and letters indicated by Zen. As Chikotsu elaborated:

In the Zen gate, they merely talk of the mysterious power penetrating emptiness, called the wind and light [i.e. the natural state] of the fundamental ground. In the inborn (*honnu*) Buddha nature of its heart place, the myriad virtues cannot be said to be established.³²

Chikotsu went on to illustrate the superior, tantric mind endowed with limitless virtues by citing the important Japanese apocryphal *Hongakusan* 本覚讃. This is a key text for the establishment of Tendai original awakening teachings and describes the heart / mind as fundamentally endowed with

³¹ *Bodaishinron tsuimon shōketsu*, 461ab.

³² *Bodaishinron tsuimon shōketsu*, 464ab.

the thirty-seven deities of the *Vajra* realm *maṇḍala*. Chikotsu also cited the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* on contemplating one's heart as a lotus endowed with the syllable *a*.³³

This notion that to directly enter into fundamental mind without characteristics is still somewhat insufficient in so far as it does not partake in the myriad virtues of the tantric mind has a precedent in the *Dainichikyō kenmon*. This text presupposes the circular structure of tantric practice we already have remarked upon in the previous chapter. In brief, the tantric practitioner enters the formless mind from the provisional forms utilized in tantric practice. Once the formless is realized, this process is reversed and the provisional means manifested from the formless. Hence to simply stop in the formless is to fail to complete the full circle of tantric practice.³⁴ Here again we can note how the tensions inherent in Enni's and Chikotsu's discussion of Zen, between form and formlessness, mediation and immediacy, the yearning for universal salvation and the elitism of superior roots, are determined at least in part by the conceptual structure of the tantric space into which Chan or Zen had to be fitted.

Chikotsu was scrupulous to not merely postulate that the mind of Zen is a lump of meat in the chest *ex cathedra*, as it were. Rather, he worked hard to actually support his position through the exegesis of Chan or Zen texts, which he interpreted according to tantric hermeneutic paradigms. In the quote above, Chikotsu used the phrase "the mysterious power penetrating emptiness, which is called the wind and light of the fundamental ground" (C. *xuche lingtong wei zhi bendi fengguang* 虛徹靈通謂之本地風光, J. *kotetsu ryōtsū kore honchi fukō to iu*).³⁵ This phrase is a quote from the *Mind Essentials* of none other than Yuanwu. As discussed above, Yuanwu was the "ancestral teacher" Enni invoked in the introduction to his commentary on the *Yüqi jing* in order to illustrate the essential darkness of mind. In the *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu*, Chikotsu presented this very same passage as one of two citations he offered as evidence for his identification of the Chan or Zen mind with the physical heart. As the quote from the *Mind Essentials* continues:

Beings and Buddhas not yet established, perfectly rounded without edges, existing in the square inch of the self, [it] is the host of the four

33 *Bodaishinron tsuimon shōketsu*, 464b.

34 See for instance DNKKM, 74a.

35 See x 69: 474a. The phrase does not appear in Yuanwu's *Recorded Sayings*, although the phrase *bendi fengguang* 本地風光 does. See for example T 47: 735a.

elements and five aggregates (*zai ziji fangcun zhong. wei shida wuyun zhi zhu* 在自己方寸中。為四大五蘊之主).³⁶

The Chinese term “square inch” has a semantic range similar to the English “heart.” It can refer both to the physical organ in the chest, and to the “heart” as the “organ” of mentation. This ambiguity provides Chikotsu with the opportunity to read tantric physiology into Chan or Zen discourse.

Following the quotation from Yuanwu, Chikotsu offered the second evidentiary passage for his claim to the physicality of the Chan or Zen mind. This is a gloss recorded in the Song period Chan monk Xingjing's 行靖 (d.u.) inter-linear commentary on the *Chanzong Yongjia ji* 禪宗永嘉集. As we have seen, the *Chanzong Yongjia ji* is also among the sources used by Enni. The gloss defines the “square inch” found in the phrase “enmity not yet extinguished in the square inch” (*hen weijin yu fangcun* 恨未盡於方寸) from the preface to the *Chanzong Yongjia ji* as the “lump of flesh heart” (C. *fangcun wei routuan xin ye* 方寸謂肉団心, J. *hōsun ha iwaku nikudanshin nari* 方寸ハ謂ク肉団心也).³⁷

As the above explorations suggest, the transition from Enni to his student Chikotsu follows a clear, tantric logic. From his reading of Yuanwu, Enni constructed three teaching mechanisms, culminating in the direct encounter of *kōjō*. Working within the exegetical traditions of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, Enni interpreted *kōjō* as the inner self-verification of Mahāvairocana beyond awakening or attainment. Finally, in his exegesis of the *Yuqi jing*, Enni likened this self-verifying mind to the dark moon without perceptual characteristics before the primordial mantric syllable *a* arises. According to Enni, it is this mind the Zen slogan “not establishing words and letter, directly pointing at the human mind” refers to. However, by drawing on the image of the mind / moon, Enni activated a wider conceptual network within which the physiological location of this mind / moon became a question. Chikotsu responded to this problem and, while continuing the careful use of Chan or Zen sources and tantric exegetical categories he had learned from his master, located the mind of Zen in the square inch lump of flesh. Zen thus indicates the natural, inborn heart organ as yet uncultivated by the disciplines of the tantric adept.

36 x 69: 474a.

37 For the original phrase see *Chanzong Yongjia ji*, T 48: 387c. The Japanese following the Chinese in the main text is Chikotsu's rendering in the *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu*, 461a. For Xingjing's gloss, see also *Kokuyaku zenshū Yōgashūjo* 国訳禪宗永嘉集序, 6. No continuous page numbers.

6 The Body of the *Dharma* and Teaching Beyond Teachings

Enni and Chikotsu both understood Zen as being “outside the teachings” in that it did not (primarily) communicate its message through the means of doctrinal discourse. This begs the question of how Zen does communicate. And if, as Enni and Chikotsu further agreed, Zen and the tantric teachings indicate essentially the same mind, how then does the teaching of Zen relate to the tantric teachings, especially if the latter is defined as originating with the *dharmakāya*?

In the *Keiran shūyōshū*, Enni is recorded as offering the following simile as to the pedagogical philosophy underlying the various Buddhist teachings. Imagine you are confronted with a madman like Yajñadatta, who thought he had lost his head.³⁸ What do you tell him? According to Enni, the provisional teachings based on emptiness would counsel that there was no head in the first place, and hence no need to look for one. The Tendai teachings, on the other hand, understand that there is no delusion apart from the nature of phenomena (*hosshō* 法性), and that to think that phenomena have a nature is itself but a delusion. Therefore, Yajñadatta has to understand that it's perfectly acceptable to run around looking for his head, as there would be no head apart from looking for one. In sum, these two teachings are somewhat less than helpful in dealing with the situation.

The Shingon tradition engages Yajñadatta more craftily. Can you see colors and shapes, it asks of him, can you hear sounds, smell smells, taste, touch, and think? When Yajñadatta answers in the affirmative, the Shingon master enquires further, what sees colors and shapes, what hears sounds, smells smells, tastes, touches, and thinks? The eye, Yajñadatta replies, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind. The Shingon master next asks where these various organs might be located, and Yajñadatta replies that they are located in the head. “What head was that you were looking for again?” the Shingon master asks, and Yajñadatta understands he never lost his head. Enni calls this tantric pedagogy, “the six perceptual fields preach the *dharma*” (*rokuin seppō* 六塵說法). He closes his discussion of Shingon teaching methods by quoting two classic passages on the tantric version of the doctrine that the *dharmakāya* as the totality of the phenomenal realm, or the sum total of the potential content of the sense fields (including mind), preaches the *Dharma*. The first passage is from Annen's *Shingonshū kyōjigi* 真言宗教時義:

38 For the simile of Yajñadatta, see the apocryphal *Shou lengyan jing* 首楞嚴經, T 19: 121b.

The essence of the five elements is *mantra*. For this reason, the *māntrika* (*shingonsha* 真言者) who directly hears the voice of the valley and the sound of water awakens to and enters into the principle of fundamental non-arising of the syllable *a*. That is the voice of the *dharmakāya*.³⁹

The second passage is an even more famous quotation from Kūkai's *Shōji jissōgi* 声字実相義:

The five elements all have their reverberations;
 The ten worlds are endowed with language.
 The six sense fields all are letters;
 The body of the *dharma* is the mark of reality (*jissō*).⁴⁰

When Yajñadatta finally turns to a Zen teacher for help, he finds that Zen masters do not bother in the least about whether one has lost one's head or not, nor about whether one should be looking for it or not. They simply and silently point towards the bamboo in the garden, and knowing its rustling sounds for oneself, one understands that "the road turning upward the thousand sages do not transmit; students mistakenly grasp at shadows."⁴¹ We are already familiar with this phrase from the previous chapter. Enni borrowed this saying from Yuanwu, and used it as a catchphrase for *kōjō*, the direct indication of mind that is the heart of Zen beyond meditation and *kōan* crazy talk, as Nichiren would have it. *Kōjō*, or, as Enni calls it elsewhere, "directly confronting and grasping it" right here and now, is to immediately encounter phenomena in a vividly liberating manner.

In Enni's comparative Buddhist pedagogy, the tantric teachings and the Zen traditions differ from the exoteric approaches in that they teach not, or not exclusively, through words. Rather, they guide practitioners through their physical embodiment within phenomena, that is to say, not only through theory but also through concrete practice and sensory experience. However, they do so in different ways. The tantric tradition relies on what we might term "interpreted phenomena." By this term I mean phenomena understood as, to stick with Annen's example, *mantra*. Such phenomena are inherently semiotic as per the classic definition of a sign as that which stands for something else. As the above quotations from Annen and Kūkai make clear, the sound of the valley liberates when heard as the syllable *a*, as the voice of the *dharma* body;

39 See *Shingonshū kyōjigi* 真言宗教時義, T 75: 422a.

40 *Shōji jissōgi* 声字実相義, T 77: 402b.

41 KRJYS, 542a.

the sense fields are communicative as mantric letters. In other words, as in the case of the syllable *a* discussed in the previous chapter, practitioners perceive the mark of reality through and in the phenomena they contemplate. Zen, on the other hand, relies on what might be termed “uninterpreted phenomena”; just the sound of bamboo rustling in the garden, just the color of leaves on autumn hills. Yet despite this difference in emphasis, Enni clearly connected the communicative mechanism of *kōjō*, the direct indication of mind, to the tantric doctrine of the *dharmakāya* preaching, and on this connection we now need to expand.

7 The *Dharma* Body Preaching as Phenomena

Enni's assertion of a certain family resemblance between the Zen approach to communicating Buddhist truth by facing phenomena and the notion that the *dharmakāya* as the totality of phenomena preaches the law is not as surprising as it might appear. In Japan, the doctrine of the *dharmakāya* preaching, or at least a certain version of it, came to be associated closely, if not quite exclusively, with the tantric teachings. However, already Chinese Buddhists had discussed the manner and implications of the *dharmakāya* preaching the law. In the Chan tradition, the *Chuanxin fayao*, which also was an important Chinese source for early medieval Japanese Zen, contains the following discussion of the Buddha's various bodies and their teaching of the law:

The Buddha has three bodies. The *dharmakāya* teaches the *Dharma* of the pervasiveness of self-nature (*zixing xutong* 自性虛通). The *sambhogakāya* teaches the purity of all *dharma*. The *nirmāṇakāya* teaches the *Dharma* of the myriad practices of the six perfections. The *dharmakāya* preaching the law, it cannot be obtained in the sounds of words or the shapes of letters. Inexplicable and unverifiable, it is the pervasiveness of self-nature and that is all. Therefore, it is said [in the *Diamond sūtra*], “There is no explaining the *Dharma*. This is called explaining the *Dharma*.”⁴²

In this passage, the *Chuanxin fayao*'s presumed author Huangbo defines the *dharmakāya*'s teaching as its own all-pervasiveness. Yet if the *dharmakāya* is all-pervasive, then it does not make sense to speak of its teaching, for this teaching cannot be distinguished from something that would not be its teaching.

42 T 48: 382a. For the quote from the *Diamond sūtra*, see *Jīngāng bōrě boluómì jīng* 金剛般若波羅蜜經, T 8: 751c.

Huangbo cites the *Diamond sūtra*, famous for its statements of the type “x is not x, therefore it is x,” as scriptural support for this paradoxical teaching of the *dharmakāya*.

At the same time, Chan teachers such as Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (864–949) associated this paradoxical teaching beyond words and letters with encountering phenomenal reality. As Yunmen remarked in his *Recorded Sayings*:

Taking up the *dharmakāya* teaching [Yunmen said], “Green, most green, the young bamboo exhaustively is the *dharmakāya*.’ Such a general outline does not yet take up the opportune moment.”⁴³

The phrase “green, most green, the young bamboo exhaustively is the *dharmakāya*” in Chan literature often is associated with the doctrine of the non-sentient being endowed with Buddha-nature due to the latter’s all-pervasive character.⁴⁴ Yunmen commented on the notion that, as all phenomena are permeated by the Buddha-nature, their activities in general should be considered the teaching of the *dharmakāya* as totality of phenomena. However, Yunmen critically remarked, such a generalized understanding of “teaching” obscures the specific circumstances, the uniquely opportune moment at which a skilled teacher can communicate the Buddhist truth. In this sense, Yunmen’s remark might be interpreted as rejecting the notion that the *dharmakāya* qua the totality of all phenomena teaches, or teaches anything useful, for being all phenomena equally at all times it lacks the specificity of what makes a teaching a useful teaching.

For our purposes, we can set aside questions as to what the steadfastly obscure Yunmen exactly might have meant with his pronouncement. It suffices to note that the understanding that the *dharmakāya* preaches beyond words and letters by pervading the phenomenal world was known in Chinese Chan circles from early on. Yet unlike the loaded subject it became in Japanese doctrinal deliberations, apart from early disputes among soon to be extinguished lineages such as the Oxhead and Heze factions concerning the soteriological status of non-sentient phenomena, it does not appear to have been a major point of controversy.⁴⁵

43 Yunmen *Kuangzhen chanshi guanglu* 雲門匡真禪師廣錄, T 47: 557b.

44 See Okuno, *Busshō shisō*, p. 371, p. 377, fn. 34.

45 On early controversies regarding the question of whether Buddha-nature permeates all phenomena or only sentient beings, see Ibuki, “Zenshū no seiritsu.”

Zhiyi, the Chinese Tiantai patriarch, also remarks upon the paradoxical entwinement of the *dharmakāya* preaching the *Dharma* of its own all-pervasiveness with the impossibility to preach such a *Dharma*. In his line-for-line commentary on the *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa*, the *Weimo jing wenshu* 維摩經文疏, Zhiyi characterizes the *dharmakāya*'s teaching as follows:

Without explanation and without indication, beyond the letter *ḍha*⁴⁶ there are no letters to explain it. Yet when we speak of [the *dharmakāya*] explaining the *Dharma*, the *dharmakāya* is the *dharmadhātu* [the totality of the phenomenal realm]⁴⁷ constantly and pervasively benefitting all sentient beings; this is called the *dharmakāya* teaching the *Dharma*.⁴⁸

According to Zhiyi, the *dharmakāya* can be said to teach in so far as it is identical with the totality of phenomena, or the *dharmadhātu*, yet words and letters cannot capture its teaching. As Zhiyi put it according to an abbreviated rendition of his commentary, the *Weimo jing lueshu* 維摩經略疏, “no teaching and yet a teaching, this is the *dharmakāya* teaching the *Dharma*” (*wushuo er shuo ji shi fashen shuofa* 無說而說即是法身說法).⁴⁹

The resemblance between Chan or Zen theorizing on the phenomenal world teaching beyond letters, on the one hand, and the teachingless teaching of the *dharmakāya* as conceptualized by Zhiyi, on the other, was not lost on early Japanese Zen's perhaps most clear-eyed critic, the Tendai scholiast Jōmyō. According to a record preserved in the *Keiran shūyōshū*, when queried on the way in which Zen is taught, Jōmyō emphasized the paradoxicality of Zen claiming to teach through phenomena. However, he nonetheless defended this approach with reference to the *prajñāpāramitā* class of scripture, to which also the *Diamond sūtra* quoted by Huangbo in the *Chuanxin fayao* belongs. Furthermore, Jōmyō referred precisely to the passage from the *Weimo jing lueshu* noted above.⁵⁰ In short, the Tendai scholiast was clearly aware of the links that connected Zen, Tiantai teachings, and tantric speculations on the preaching of the *dharmakāya*.

46 The syllable *ḍha* is the last syllable of the *arapacana* syllabary. What is “beyond the letter *ḍha*” is beyond what can be expressed in words.

47 In abhidharmic contexts, the *dharmadhātu* refers to the perceptual realm of the mind organ. Yet as all perceptual objects are potentially perceptual objects for the mind organ, *dharmadhātu* eventually came to mean the totality of perceptual objects, or the totality of phenomena.

48 *Weimo jing wenshu* 維摩經文疏, x 18: 466a.

49 *Weimo jing lueshu* 維摩經略疏, T 38: 566c.

50 KRSYS, 537a.

As these few rough strokes indicate, the notion that the *dharmakāya* as the totality of phenomena can preach the *Dharma* has deep roots in the East Asian Buddhist tradition. However, this understanding of the *dharmakāya* passively teaching through “uninterpreted phenomena,” which also might be called the “weak” interpretation, falls short of the “strong” version of this theory advocated in Japanese tantric circles.⁵¹ According to the Japanese tantric tradition, the *dharmakāya* actively and personally teaches through phenomena interpreted as mantric. Or to put it differently, according to the weak theory the *dharmakāya* preaches the *Dharma* in the sense that as the matrix of all possible phenomena it provides the most general condition for any teaching to arise. In contrast, according to the tantric, strong version, the display of the phenomenal world itself is the intentional exposition of the *dharmakāya*.⁵²

Enni in his comparative pedagogy remained ambiguous on the exact relationship between these two theories, and consequently stopped short of outright asserting that it is the *dharmakāya* teaching Zen, although he did hint heavily at some sort of equivalence between *kōjō* and *hosshin seppō*. Enni’s student Chikotsu and his second-generation successor Kokan were far more bullish on this point. Both men outright asserted that the Zen teachings were taught by the *dharmakāya*. They disagreed, however, on what this common source implied for their respective superiority or inferiority. Chikotsu considered Zen a lesser, bloodlessly abstract teaching lacking the personal touch and charisma of the tantric sovereign Mahāvairocana. Kokan, on the other hand,

51 I am using the terms “weak” and “strong” to indicate the number and gravity of additional commitments adherence to a given theory incurs. In the present case, holding the weak theory of the *dharmakāya* teaching incurs no metaphysical commitments beyond those generally held in East Asian Mahāyāna thought, whereas holding the strong version forces one to commit to additional propositions regarding the *dharmakāya*, such as its capacity for active self-expression.

52 Among tantric lineages, again, there are at the very least two broad versions of this stronger claim. As the Tendai scholiast Shōshin has pointed out in the context of the interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, which Kūkai cites as evidence for his position, Kūkai’s faction posits that the *dharmakāya* itself preaches as a body possessed of physical form (*hosshin ushikishin seppō nari* 法身有色身說法也). In order to demonstrate that this position is in contradiction to scripture, Shōshin quotes the very passage from Zhiyi’s abbreviated commentary on the *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa* we have noted above and explains that in the Tendai school the *dharmakāya* preaches through mysteriously permeating all phenomena. See *Tendai shingon nishū dōishō* 天台真言二宗同異章, T 74: 422a. As Ōkubo Ryōshun has pointed out, it was Annen who elaborated the Tendai tantric understanding of the *dharmakāya* teaching. Annen’s distinctive interpretation of this doctrine was inspired by Zhiyi’s commentaries on the *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa*. See Ōkubo Ryōshun, “Godai’in Annen,” pp. 157–159.

asserted Zen's superiority on the grounds of the brute physicality of the Zen approach when compared to the ethereal spirituality of tantric bodies.

8 The Fragile Bodies of Silly Little Men

What caused Chikotsu's and especially Kokan's more offensive approach might have been the increasingly aggressive pushback the Zen teachings experienced. One of the ways in which this pushback manifested was for both scholiasts from the established schools and for fellow reformers such as Nichiren to assert that the Zen teachings were the fabrications of a lesser Buddha body, the *nirmāṇakāya* Śākyamuni Buddha. For instance, in his *Risshōkanshō* 立正觀抄 from 1274, Nichiren explains that while the *Lotus sūtra* is taught by the constantly abiding Buddha of Infinite Life (*jumyō muryō jōjū fumetsu no hotoke* 壽命無量常住不滅ノ仏), the Zen school is a nihilist heresy (*gedō no mu no ken* 外道ノ無ノ見) preached by the Buddha of liberation through extinction (*metsudo no hotoke* 滅度ノ仏).⁵³

Along similar lines, but from the perspective of the tantric teachings of Kūkai's faction, the scholiast Raiyu asserted that the inventor of Zen, Śākyamuni, was a mere transformation body (*keshin*) Buddha, who hawked a lesser teaching to that "silly little man" (*senkin no shōnin* 淺近之小人) Mahākāśyapa.⁵⁴ Raiyu's younger confrere Gōhō asserted that Zen as the teaching of the response body (*ōjin* 応身) ought to be counted among the inferior exoteric teachings.⁵⁵

The hostility of the *Lotus* fundamentalist Nichiren or the tantric scholiasts Raiyu and Gōhō is to be expected. More surprising, and more interesting, is that also members of Yōsai's Yōjō lineage, which one would expect to exhibit a more positive attitude towards Zen teachings, appear to have used the same motif of the all-too-human Śākyamuni to put Zen teachings into second place. The *Keiran shūyōshū* contains an entry entitled "On placing the Shingon School Atop the Zen school" (*shingon shū o motte zenshū no ue ni tatsu koto* 以真言宗立禪宗上二事). The entry claims to reflect the views of Yōsai's disciple Kensai 見西 (d.u.), from whom Enni in 1224 received a full transmission of tantric teachings.⁵⁶ In comparing Zen to the tantric teachings, Kensai explained:

53 See *Risshōkanshō* 立正觀抄, NSBS, 351. To be fair, in this text the ever vitriolic Nichiren also attacked the tantric teachings in no uncertain terms.

54 *Kenmitsu mondōshō*, CZS, vol. 7, 498b.

55 See *Kaishinshō* 開心抄, T 77: 736a.

56 *Shōichi kokushi nenpu* 東福寺開山聖一國師年譜, DNBZ, vol. 95, 131a.

Next, as for the great intention of the *mantra* teachings (*shingonkyō*), it is not reached by the three disciplines of precepts, concentration, and wisdom; [instead] the ocean of *dhāraṇī* governs [the three disciplines] because it is the teaching of the attainment of Buddhahood by the all-pervading body of self[-nature] (*hen issai sho no jishin jōbukkyō* 遍一切所/自身成仏教). Now, although the Zen school might be elevated, it is taught by Śākyamuni the transformation body (*keshin*).⁵⁷

Kensai then drew on two similes to illustrate the achievement gap between the tantric Buddha and the teacher of Zen. The first image derives from the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經, one of the main sources for the *bodhisattva* precepts in East Asian Buddhism. According to this scripture, the fundamental Rocana Buddha dwells on a lotus flower of a thousand leaves; on each leaf dwells a lesser Śākyamuni Buddha; finally, within each leaf are contained another ten billion even baser Śākyamuni Buddhas. The teacher of Zen is but one of these leaf-dwellers.⁵⁸ Kensai's second simile provides the basis for the riddle concerning the three Buddhas sitting in a *maṇḍala* with which I have opened the present study. According to this simile, which well illustrates the use of *maṇḍala* as doctrinal thinking machines (*S. yantra*), the teacher of Zen is the lesser Śākyamuni dwelling towards the Womb *maṇḍala*'s outskirts. As such, he cannot compare to the main deity, Mahāvairocana, who occupies the *maṇḍala*'s central lotus dais.

9 Chikotsu and the *Dharmakāya* Teaching Zen

Zen's critics used the tradition's own claim to derive from the historical Buddha against it by emphasizing the inferior nature of any merely human figure when compared to the metaphysical splendor of the fundamental, supra-mundane Buddha with whom the tantric and *Lotus* teachings originate. Chikotsu sought to counter such criticism by affirming that Zen was in fact taught by the *dharmakāya*, if in a manner less complete than the tantric teachings. Chikotsu most fully set out his qualified defense of Zen in his commentary on tantric initiation in the *Yuqi jing* ritual lineage, the *Kanjō hikuketsu* 灌頂秘口決 or *Secret Oral Determinations on Unction*. In this text, Chikotsu asserted that the exoteric, Zen, and tantric teachings differ according to which mind or heart they indicate and which body of the Buddha teaches them. The

57 KRSYS, 761a.

58 KRSYS, 761ab. For the simile from the *Fanwang jing*, see T 24: 997c.

exoteric teachings teach an abstract, mentalist mind. They are preached either by the *saṃbhogakāya* manifested for the sake of others (*tajuyū* 他受用) in the case of teachings aimed at advanced *bodhisattva*, or, in the case of teachings aimed at deluded beings, by the *nirmāṇakāya* of the Buddha. The Zen and the tantric teachings, on the other hand, both indicate the physical heart organ as the source of mind. As the substance of their teaching is the same, both traditions are taught by the *dharmakāya* of self-nature (*jisshō hosshin* 自性法身).⁵⁹ We have already discussed Chikotsu's theories regarding the heart or mind organ grounding the tantric and Zen traditions. Here we need to focus on the different modalities in which the *dharmakāya* teaches Zen and the tantric teachings.

Chikotsu explained that Zen is the teaching of the *dharmakāya* according to the law being taught (*yakuhō hosshin* 約法法身), whereas the tantric teachings are the teaching of the *dharmakāya* according to the person teaching it (*yakunin hosshin* 約人法身).⁶⁰ As for the former, when the Buddha upon awakening preached the *Avataṃsaka sūtra*, he did so in his *saṃbhogakāya* form. Having finished this discourse, he assumed a physical *nirmāṇakāya*, in which for the rest of his worldly life he preached for the benefit of deluded, sentient beings incapable of perceiving any of the Buddha's more subtle bodies. This, however, does not mean that the Buddha somehow lost his *saṃbhoga*- or even his *dharmakāya*. Rather, only those with the right kind of spiritual faculties could perceive it. However, even those equipped with the appropriate receptive devices could only glimpse the *dharmakāya* through the Buddha's physical, *nirmāṇakāya* form. In support of this position, Chikotsu cited from the Tiantai scholiast Shanyue's 善月 (fl. 12th–13th cent.) commentary on Zhiyi's *Foshuo renwang huguo bore boluomi jing shu* 仏説仁王護国般若波羅蜜經疏, the *Shenbao ji* 神宝記. Shanyue argued that,

taking the *tathāgata* [preaching] the three collections [of the Buddhist canon, that is to say the lowest, *nirmāṇakāya* Buddha,] as the perceptual basis (*jingben* 境本), the four [kinds of practitioners endowed with different spiritual capacities] do not see the same physical characteristics (*sexiang* 色相).⁶¹

Taking as his frame of reference the four kinds of teachings set forth in elementary Tiantai and Tendai dogmatics, Chikotsu explained that practitioners

59 *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 551b.

60 *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 557b.

61 *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 552a; *Shenbao ji*, T 33: 291b.

suited to the lowest teachings (*sanzō*) perceive the inferior *nirmāṇakāya*, those suited to the common teachings (*tsūkyō*) perceive the superior *nirmāṇakāya*, those suited to the separate teachings (*bekkyō*) perceive the *saṃbhogakāya*, and finally those of superior roots and capabilities suited to the perfect teachings, “perceive the physical marks (*shikisō*) of the *dharmakāya tathāgata* through / according to / by means of the inferior *nirmāṇakāya*” (*retsuō ni soku shite* 即劣応). Now, Zen practitioners, just like *tāntrika*, are superior to practitioners of the exoteric perfect teachings in that they perceive the mind as the physical heart. How could they fail to perceive the *dharmakāya* while gazing at Śākyamuni preaching?⁶² Consequently, Zen is the teaching taught by the *dharmakāya* through the *nirmāṇakāya*.

To prove this position also from a Chan or Zen point of view, Chikotsu continued by citing the same passage from the *Chuanxin fayao* concerning the teaching of the *dharmakāya* we have already discussed above in connection with the paradoxical explication of the *Dharma* through the totality of phenomena. Chikotsu thereby shifted the interpretation of the *dharmakāya* in question from a passive support to an active preacher. This is another example of how the likes of Chikotsu and Enni read their Chinese sources through the lens of their Japanese tantric interests and concerns and hence generated new doctrinal patterns.

How does this *dharmakāya* teaching Zen “according to the law” differ from the tantric *dharmakāya* “according to the person”? Chikotsu explained as follows:

The *dharmakāya* according to the law [who preaches Zen] is so called because it is the *dharmakāya tathāgata* those of superior faculties and beneficial roots perceive in place of the inferior *nirmāṇakāya* Śākyamuni that is seen by both fools and sages. What is called the *dharmakāya* in the tantric teachings cannot be seen by fools and deluded beings because it is the *dharmakāya* seen only by sages that without any of the defilements of sentient beings dwells in the palace of inner verification. As within and without it is the *dharmakāya* of self-nature, it is called the *dharmakāya* according to the person.⁶³

The difference between the *dharmakāya* teaching Zen and the *dharmakāya* teaching the tantric teachings, therefore, is not one of substance but rather of perceptual modality. Although the Buddha teaching Zen inwardly partakes of

62 *Kanjō hi kuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 551b–552a.

63 *Kanjō hi kuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 557b–558a.

the *dharmakāya*, it manifests as the *nirmāṇakāya*. The tantric Buddha, on the other hand, both in its inner verification and in its concrete body is the complete *dharmakāya* itself.

Chikotsu effectively addressed and defused the critique we have seen forwarded by Nichiren, Raiyu, and others, namely that Zen is a lesser tradition because it has been expounded by the inferior, worldly body of the Buddha. On Chikotsu's logic, this criticism simply shows that they are possessed of inferior roots, and consequently unable to discern the *dharmakāya* in Śākyamuni raising the flower. In order to arrive at this conclusion, Chikotsu followed the same exegetical strategy as Enni had pioneered: both masters built on a selective use of Chinese Chan sources, which they then carefully positioned within and read through a tantric hermeneutical framework. Both Enni and Chikotsu's Zen, in other words, presuppose a tantric body inhabiting a tantric world. In the next generation of the Shōichi lineage, Kokan Shiren broke with this venerable precedence.

10 Kokan and the One Vehicle Buddha Preaching Zen

Although Kokan is the author of one of the main sources for studying the history of Japanese Zen, and indeed Japanese Buddhism, the *Genkō shakusho*, especially in English little research is available on his *oeuvre* as a Buddhist thinker and polemicist.⁶⁴ In Japanese language scholarship, lately Kokan has begun to attract attention in the context of the re-evaluation of the categories used to discuss Kamakura Buddhism and Zen. Kokan, this scholarship demonstrates, deserves attention as a key figure in the process through which Zen gained self-consciousness as an independent institution of Japanese elite Buddhism.⁶⁵ On the doctrinal level, one of Kokan's major contributions to this process was to formulate an account of the Zen tradition as the preaching of the *dharmakāya* independent of, yet still responsive to, the tantric framework. While Chikotsu continued to work within and affirm the superiority of the tantric, Kokan, perhaps the Japanese Zen traditions' most enthusiastically caustic and pugnacious polemicist, flat-out rejected the tantric claim to exclusivity regarding the preaching of the *dharmakāya*. Kokan instead turned to the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* in order to develop his own doctrine of the *dharmakāya*

64 See for instance Jorgensen, "Zen Commentary," pp. 1–60; Licha, "Separate Teaching," pp. 87–124.

65 For recent Japanese contributions to the re-discovery of Kokan, see Sakuma, "Kokan Shiren"; Kikuchi, "Shūha bukkyō."

teaching. The *Lañkāvatāra sūtra* was an inspired choice to use as the scriptural basis for such an undertaking. This text had provided Kūkai with key pieces of evidence in constructing his tantric version of the *dharmakāya*'s teaching.⁶⁶ It also had been associated with the Chan movement since its inception on the continent. According to early versions of the school's patriarchal myth, Bodhidharma transmitted this text to his successor Huìkē 慧可 (487–593).⁶⁷ The *Lañkāvatāra sūtra* thus offered Kokan the opportunity to claim the primacy of the Zen lineage by going back beyond Kūkai. Kokan did so by connecting the text's scriptural account of the *dharmakāya*'s teaching (*hōbussetsu* 法仏説) with the “turning upward” of the Zen school, a motif we already saw hinted at, though not realized, in Enni. In this manner, Kokan inverted the tantric and Zen traditions' relative positions by making Zen the mind ground from which the tantric teachings flow.

This strategy is apparent from the following exchange preserved, or perhaps rather imagined, in the collection of Kokan's poetic and essayistic works, the *Saihokushū* 濟北集. Although somewhat long, I reproduce it here in full so as to give a taste also of Kokan's intricate and cutting polemical style.

A lecturer asked, “In the gate [of your Zen] school, you have talk about going beyond the Buddhas and surpassing the patriarchs, even of turning upward [beyond] the *dharmakāya* (*hosshin kōjō* 法身向上). What about this?”

The master [Kokan] said, “Let us try to take up [some *kōan* cases] and see.

A monk asked Yunmen, ‘What is this talk about going beyond the Buddhas and surpassing the patriarchs?’ Yunmen said, ‘Cookies’ [lit. ‘sweet fried rice cakes’].⁶⁸

Shushan [Kuangren 疎山匡仁 (837–909)] addressed the assembly, ‘This old monk, before the Xiantong years, only understood the outskirts of the *dharmakāya*. After the Xiantong years, I have understood what turns upward [beyond] the *dharmakāya*.’ Yunmen asked, ‘What are the outskirts of the *dharmakāya*?’ Shushan replied,

66 See for example Kūkai's *Ben kenmitsu nikyōron* 弁顯密二教論, T 77: 379a.

67 See for example *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (T 50: 552b). On the importance of the *Lañkāvatāra sūtra* to the early Chan movement, see McRae, *The Northern School*, pp. 88–91.

68 See *Yunmen Kuangzhen chanshi guanglu*, T 47: 548b.

‘Wilted camellias.’ Yunmen asked, ‘What turns upwards [beyond] the *dharmakāya*?’ Shushan replied, ‘Not wilted camellias.’⁶⁹

A monk asked Weifu Dajue (d.u.), ‘Who is the teacher of Vairocana, the host of the *dharmakāya*?’ [Da]jue said, “If not for the rain of Heaven falling, how would you be able to face the teacher’s face?”⁷⁰

A monk asked Guisheng, ‘Who is the teacher of Vairocana, the host of the *dharmakāya*?’ Guisheng replied, ‘The monastic community fights over [the number of] rainy seasons [one has spent as a monk, the way to fix monastic seniority], the worldly [naturally] follow seniority.’ The monk asked, ‘Is there again turning upward [beyond what you just said]?’ Guisheng replied, ‘There is.’ The monk said, ‘What is this turning upward?’ Guisheng said, ‘The gentleman has gone far away. Saddened at the departure, who could I blame?’⁷¹

Cases like these, I have no time to take them up in detail.”

The lecturer said, “I do not use Zen lingo, I only use the words of the Buddha.”

[Kokan], said, “In the *Laṅkāvatāra* it is said, ‘Thusness and the extent of emptiness, *nirvāṇa* and the *dharmadhātu*, the various kinds of mind made bodies, I declare all these to be mental conception.’ This ‘thusness’ and ‘*dharmadhātu*,’ they all point to the *dharmakāya*. Now they are reproved as mental conceptions. How could this not be turning upward [beyond] the *dharmakāya*?”⁷²

In Kokan’s *Saihokushū*, the figure of the “lecturer” generally does not represent any specific doctrinal point of view, but rather is shorthand for “an intellectually challenged member of the established lineages who opposes the Zen teachings.” In the present case, the lecturer inquires about the Zen saying concerning the necessity to go beyond the *dharmakāya* itself, a saying he associates with the expression “going beyond the Buddhas and surpassing the patriarchs.” This very expression, we recall, Enni used in a poem included in his *Recorded Sayings* to indicate, “turning upward” or *kōjō*, which he capped by the phrase “mountains are mountains.” This latter phrase is one of the “last words” some Zen teachers are capable of uttering according to Jōmyō and Shinga.

69 This exchange appears in a slightly expanded form in *Yunmen Kuangzhen chanshi guang lu*, T 47: 574a.

70 See *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* 天聖広灯録, x 78: 475a.

71 See *Xu chuandeng lu* 續伝灯録, T 51: 470c.

72 SHS, 251–252.

After the lecturer's initial inquiry, Kokan offered a master class in the kind of teaching style John McRae (1947–2011) ascribed to D.T. Suzuki, “whose most cherished methodology seems to have been to describe some aspect of Zen as beyond ordinary explanation, then offer a suitably incomprehensible story or two by way of illustration.”⁷³ Kokan's strategic use of Zen crazy talk has its desired effect when the lecturer declared himself at a loss. This offered Kokan the opportunity to explain himself in more readily comprehensible doctrinal language, citing the *Laṅkāvatāra* to the effect that even terms for the supreme Buddhist truth, as terms, are but mental fabrications. To understand that “*dharmakāya*” is just such a fabrication, how could this not be going beyond the *dharmakāya*? Scripture and Zen saying, in short, communicate the same point, the *dharmakāya*'s upward-spiraling self-transcendence.

Kokan sought to exploit the relationship between Zen and the *Laṅkāvatāra* he had established through his interpretation in order to attack the notion that the tantric teachings alone were the revelation of the *dharmakāya*. Kokan attacked this notion in three steps: first, he undermined the tantric teachings' claims to exclusivity in being preached by the *dharmakāya*; next, he argued that the teaching of the *dharmakāya* expounded in the *Laṅkāvatāra* and in Zen are the same; and finally, he drew out the consequences of the first two steps for the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings. Let us investigate each of these points in turn.

Already in 1295, Kokan had vowed to write a commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, a text he revered due to its connection with the Chan lineage. It was not until 1325 that Kokan actually composed his commentary, the *Butsugo shinron*, 仏語心論, or *Treatise on the Heart of the Buddha's Words*. In his remarks opening this text, Kokan boldly declared that, “the preacher [of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*] is the *Dharma* body Vairo[cana. ...] The *Dharma* Buddha (*hōbutsu* 法仏) teaches the perceptual realm of the sagely wisdom of his own awakening.”⁷⁴ Kokan's claim is exceedingly bold in both a Chinese and a Japanese doctrinal context. In China, already scholiasts such as Kuiji 窺基 (632–682), the erudite East Asian Yogācāra systematizer, had discussed the *Laṅkāvatāra*'s notion of the *dharmakāya* preaching. Kuiji concluded that the *dharmakāya* preaches only in so far as it is the foundation of all *dharmas*, but not in any active sense.⁷⁵

73 See McRae, *Seeing through Zen*, p. 74.

74 BGSR, 178b. The last part is a quote from the four fascicle *Laṅkāvatāra*, see T 16: 485a. In general, Kokan relies on the four fascicle version of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* translated by Guṇabhadra (394–468), the *Lengqie abatuoluo baojing* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經, as it was this version Bodhidharma is supposed to have transmitted to Huìkē. Kūkai, instead, relies on Bodhiruci's (?–527) translation, the *Ru lengqie jing* 入楞伽經.

75 See, for instance, *Dasheng fayuan yilin zhang* 大乘法苑義林章, T 45: 358b.

Such an understanding was far too weak for Kokan's polemical and doctrinal needs. Likewise, from a Japanese doctrinal perspective, Kokan's assertion was problematic, as the following criticism offered by a lecturer in the *Saihokushū* demonstrates:

A lecturer said, "You make the *Laṅkāvatāra* into the teaching of the *dharmakāya* (*hosshin setsu* 法身説). The *dharmakāya* of the gate of the teachings (*kyōmon*) is without perceptual marks and [hence] without teaching. I fear these [two explanations, yours and that of the gate of the teachings] are in contradiction. Furthermore, the *tāntrika* (*missha* 密者) say that the *dharmakāya* Buddha teaches the tantric scriptures (*mikkyō* 密経). The *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya* teach the exoteric scriptures. The *Laṅkāvatāra* is not a tantric scripture. How could it be taught by the *dharmakāya* Buddha?"⁷⁶

Kokan's proposal that the *Laṅkāvatāra* was taught by the *dharmakāya* violated the doxographic bifurcation of the Buddhist teachings into the exoteric and the tantric, a bifurcation that by the medieval period had become paradigmatic. As the lecturer observes, according to the exoteric teachings, the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha was without perceptual characteristics. Therefore, it could not have teachings in any meaningful sense. On the other hand, the *Laṅkāvatāra* is not a tantric scripture, either. Hence, again, it could not be taught by the *dharmakāya*. Kokan answered the lecturer with his usual polemical swagger:

I laugh [at the lecturer's ignorance], and explain, "Verbiage and explanation have for long afflicted people. For you, it has been a particularly long time, has it not? The *dharmakāya* being without teaching or perceptual characteristics is the provisional teaching (*gonkyō*). It is not the real teaching (*jikkyō* 実教). The *dharmakāya* not teaching the exoteric scriptures, those are the words of the *tāntrika*. They are not a commonly accepted principle."⁷⁷

According to Kokan, the bifurcation into the exoteric and tantric teachings and their respective teachers is itself but a provisional and sectarian affair, not the original, unitary intention of the Buddha. What, then, is the original intention of the Buddha? Kokan explained it as follows:

76 SHS, 238.

77 SHS, 238.

Now, in the preaching of our Buddha there is [the preaching according to] the one vehicle and [the preaching according to] the three vehicles. In the teaching of the three vehicles, principle and instantiation are not integrated. The three bodies [of the Buddha] are separate and different, for reasons of the Buddha teaching according to the provisional faculties [of his listeners]. In the one vehicle teaching, instantiation and principle are integrated, and the three bodies have a single mark, for reasons of the Buddha preaching according to mature faculties. [...] In the three vehicles teaching, instantiation and principle are not integrated and the *Dharma* and reward bodies are distinct. In the teaching of the one vehicle, instantiation and principle are integrated, and *Dharma* and reward body are of a single mark.⁷⁸

The true teaching of the Buddha, in other words, is the teaching of the one vehicle, according to which the very question of which Buddha body preaches which teaching makes little sense due to their mutual integration. To see the historical Buddha preach is to see the *dharmakāya* preach as they are of the single mark of non-differentiation. As the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* itself explains:

Delusion is the grasper and the grasped [i.e. falsely discriminating consciousness and its falsely discriminated object]. Dwelling in the truth of suchness, delusion is non-arisen. That is called the awakening of the one vehicle.⁷⁹

In sum, Kokan argues that the differentiation into the exoteric and the tantric teachings itself already is derivative from the non-differentiated *dharmakāya* of the one vehicle. The *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* communicates the unitary intention of the Buddha, and in this sense it is more fundamental than the doctrines of both exoteric and tantric teachings.

Having in this manner discredited the exclusivist claims of the tantric teachings, Kokan next set out to demonstrate that the teaching of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* and of the Zen lineage extending from Bodhidharma were indeed one and the same. Kokan undertakes this in his commentary on the following passage from the *Laṅkāvatāra*:

Mahāmāti! If the own-nature of [substantial] nature (*shō jishō* 性自性) and the marks of difference and sameness (*jigu sō* 自共相) are taught,

⁷⁸ SHS, 300.

⁷⁹ T 16: 497b.

these are all the teaching of the transformation Buddha (*kebutsu* 化仏). They are not the teaching of the *Dharma* Buddha (*hōbutsu*). Again, these various discourses all arise dependent on the wishes, desires, and views of the deluded [to whose capacities they must adopt] and they do not separately establish the realm (*shū* 趣) of the *Dharma* of own-nature (*jishō hō* 自性法) and indicate [it] separately for those who dwell in the enjoyment of the concentration of own-awakening which attains the supra-mundane wisdom.⁸⁰

All teachings endowed with essential marks and perceptual characteristics, in other words, are but relative, provisional teachings taught by one of the Buddha's many transformation bodies in response to the communicative devices available to its audience. The true preaching of the *dharmakāya* is separate from all of these relative teachings, or, as the *sūtra* puts it, it is a "separately established realm." This passage provided Kokan with the opportunity to present what he considered his crowning argument:

Our first ancestor Bodhidharma coming from the West and preaching the separate transmission outside the teachings now is the "separately established realm" of this passage [of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*]. Furthermore, his [i.e. Bodhidharma's saying] "seeing nature and fulfilling Buddha[hood]" is now [in the *sūtra*] the "perfected own-nature." For this reason, [Bodhidharma] indicated this *sūtra* and considered it the scripture which explains the verification of the Buddha mind.⁸¹

The "separate transmission outside the teachings" is nothing but the *dharmakāya*'s own realm of self-awakening separate from all relative marks, roots, and discourses. Hence, Zen and the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* equally transmit the teaching of the *dharmakāya*, the non-differentiation of the one vehicle beyond mental conceptions, the continual turning upward beyond delusion and clinging.

In the preface of his perhaps most famous polemic text, the *Shūmon jissshōron* 宗門十勝論, Kokan addressed the question how his notion of the self-transcendent one vehicle affects the relationship between the tantric and the Zen teachings. A lecturer wonders why, when it comes to Buddhism, the whole world thinks of Zen, but not the teaching houses. Kokan replied:

80 T 16: 491b.

81 BGRS, 338b.

These [various teaching houses] are merely differences in the private [opinions of] worthies. [...] Tendai and Kegon were established in China, how could they not be private [opinions]? The *Three Treatises* [on which the Sanron tradition is founded], their titles and so on are [based on] private views (*jiken* 自見). The Mind Only [tradition], although it received help [from Maitreya bodhisattva in a vision received by Asaṅga], is established [according to the] private [opinions] of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The *vinaya* [i.e. the Buddhist monastic code] stems from the Buddha, but it is only the manner of the Small [Vehicle]. [During the] Tang [dynasty, the *vinaya* scholar Dao]xuan 道宣 (596–667) aligned [the *Vinaya*] with the Great [Vehicle] but he again fell into establishing private [opinions]. The tantric [teachings] establish Vairo[cana] but they cannot avoid [relying on] feeling imparting (*kanju* 感授). Only our Zen gate has a legitimate link to the transmission directly handed down by the Bhagavān [i.e. the Buddha]. [...] Our Zen school is separated (*ri* 離) from the mark of discourse (*gonsetsu no sō* 言説相) and does not belong to the realm of what is comprehensible (*shigi no kyō ni arazu* 非思議境) [through intellectual effort]. Those of superior roots and great capabilities merely verify and thus know.⁸²

Kokan argued that apart from the tantric and Zen lineages, all the doctrinal traditions of Buddhism represent but the private opinions of admittedly gifted but still deluded individuals. Only Zen and the tantric teachings have a direct connection with the Buddha, and hence are superior to all other forms of Buddhism. However, tantric and Zen teachings differ according to the nature of the connection they have with the Buddha, for the tantric teachings have to rely on “feeling imparting.” This very strange term appears again in Kokan’s *Shōbōron* 正旁論. In this essay, Kokan argued against the suggestion, which we have already encountered above, that the tantric teachings, as the teaching of the *dharmakāya*, should be considered superior to Zen, which after all does rely on the merely human, historical Buddha as the origin of its lineage. Kokan replied:

You do not yet precisely [understand] the two Buddhas, [and therefore there] is this confusion. I shall now explain in detail. In the Buddha’s *Dharma* there is the teaching of the three vehicles and the teaching of the one vehicle. In the one vehicle teachings, the three bodies [of the

82 SHS, 269.

Buddha] are integrated (*yūsoku* 融即). In the three vehicle teaching, the three bodies are different. What you are saying is the talk of the three vehicles. What [I] am now establishing is the explanation of the one vehicle. [...] Furthermore, in my *Dharma* there is bodily imparting and there is feeling imparting. Feeling imparting is the branches [i.e. secondary]. Bodily imparting is the root [i.e. primary]. The twenty-eight bearers of the *Dharma* [i.e. the Indian Zen patriarchs], [that is] bodily imparting. The tantric transmission, that is feeling imparting. [...] The Tathāgata's living body imparting to the living body of the disciple, and again later generations' living bodies imparting and receiving (*juju* 授受), that is bodily imparting. The Tathāgata's transformation body (*keshin*) imparting to the disciple's concentration body (*jōshin* 定身), that is feeling imparting. Again, the various stimulus-responses (*J. kannō* 感応), these are feeling imparting.⁸³

Kokan here again utilized the one vehicle teaching to undermine the very distinction on which the tantric claim to superiority rests. Led astray by their misconception concerning the Buddha's bodies, tantric practitioners have to rely on a complex system of metaphysical bodies to mediate the presence of the Buddha. Zen practitioners, on the other hand, removed from "the marks of discourse," rely on the non-differentiated Buddha body of the one vehicle, the *dharmakāya* incarnate. It is the specificity and concreteness of this Buddha body as a physical, historical, patriarchal body that is the mark of the superiority of the Zen teachings, the seal of which Bodhidharma passed down in the form of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*.

Kokan inherited from his predecessors a set of questions, for example on the physiological nature of Zen awakening, or on which Buddha body preaches the Zen teachings. These questions had arisen from the Chan or Zen lineages' confrontation with the indigenous doctrinal traditions of Japanese Buddhism, and especially the tantric teachings. Yet instead of attempting to resolve these tensions within the shared tantric framework he held in common with his fellow scholiasts from the established schools, as his predecessors Enni and Chikotsu had done, Kokan instead attempted to undermine it. In order to do so, Kokan returned Zen to the scriptural authority of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* as taught by the one vehicle *dharmakāya* Buddha before the split into the exoteric and the tantric. In making Zen the very source of tantric and exoteric teachings both, Kokan turned the tantric cosmos on its head and substantially

83 SHS, 287.

altered the strategies for articulating esoteric Zen. Yet in so far as he remained bound backwards to tantric paradigms such as the *dharmakāya* actively disseminating the *Dharma*, Kokan did not escape the *maṇḍala*.

11 Zen Alternatives

Before concluding this chapter, and with it the first part of this study, I would like to emphasize that Kokan's esoteric strategy for dealing with the complex and often strained relationship between Zen, on the one hand, and the exoteric and the tantric teachings, on the other, at this point in history was no longer without alternatives. One of the alternative approaches to this relationship that began to develop within the contemporary Rinzai faction we have already touched upon in the above, namely Shūhō's flat-out refusal to engage in doctrinal discourses at all. Instead, Shūhō used the cryptic, shocking rhetoric of Chan or Zen encounter dialogue to literally silence the opposition. This approach would become common in the lineages deriving from him, namely the factions of the Zen movement centered on Daitokuji and Myōshinji. In the generations following Shūhō, these lineages developed a method of Zen training that focused on drilling practitioners in *kōan* language through set curricula of cases to be studied. These cases were investigated by appending to either the entire case or its parts the kind of pithy, punchy one-liners Shūhō used to win his debate. These one-liners were typically culled from the extensive body of Chinese literature both Buddhist and secular, and often accompanied by explanatory notes in Japanese. Few Japanese Zen practitioners had the linguistic abilities to access the sophisticated, intentionally enigmatic texts of the Chinese Chan tradition directly, much less creatively adapt their idiom. Yet through the pedagogical method just outlined, even the average Zen student could acquire a functional smattering of *kōan* speech. At least rhetorically and performatively, and certainly for strategic and sectarian reasons, these lineages therefore could renounce Buddhist scholasticism and its doctrinal languages in preference of a more exclusive and distinctive "Zen style." One of the lineages deriving from Shūhō succeeded in capturing the Rinzai mainstream during the early modern period. Consequently, the strategic rejection of Buddhist learning until the present day continues to dominate the image of Zen as somehow apart from the wider intellectual world of (Japanese) Buddhism in the public, and often the scholarly, imagination.

Not everybody was happy about such a radical rejection of Buddhist scholasticism in favor of acquiring through repetitious language drills *kōan* skills barely sufficient for fooling the audience. Kokan Shiren's great contemporary

and fellow student of Yishan, Musō Soseki, sharply rebuked what appears to be the style of Zen favored by Shūhō and his followers:

Practitioners of today often fumble about in books and pick up the words of the elders, piling them up in their breasts. Substitute words (*daigo* 代語) and alternative phrases (*betsugo* 別語) never stop, questions and answers [flow] freely, [and] they say to themselves, “The profound meaning of the ancestral teachers is just like this.” This is [...] crazy and biased thinking!⁸⁴

Instead of outright rejecting Buddhist scholasticism, Musō emphasized the need for true insight into the “fundamental portion” (*honbun*) of mind. Both Zen and the teachings are but a provisional means towards attaining this insight. Zen recommends itself for its directness and efficacy, but once insight is gained, there is no longer any use in clinging even to Zen language.⁸⁵ Rather, if carried out with correct understanding, everything can become Zen practice, including, for instance, the *nenbutsu* 念仏 or invocation of the grace of the Buddha Amida 阿弥陀. Due to its devotional focus, this practice is often considered the very opposite of the proudly self-reliant path of Zen meditation.⁸⁶ Finally, according to Musō also the practice of tantric rituals was just such a preliminary means aimed at facilitating an understanding of mind.⁸⁷

While this stance at first glance might appear to resemble Enni’s understanding of the relationship between the Zen and tantric teachings, Musō differs from Enni on two important and closely related points. First, Musō no longer defined the understanding of mind, Zen’s “directly pointing at the original portion” (*jiki ni honbun o shimesu* 直二本分ヲ示ス), in tantric terms, as Enni had done by identifying it with the inner self-verification of Mahāvairocana. Second, and consequently, Musō inverted Enni’s hermeneutical intuition. Now

84 See *Seisan yawa*, T 80: 495a.

85 See *Muchū mondōshū*, 110–111, 176. In the context of discussing the fundamental import of the tantric teachings (*shingon hihō no hon'i* 真言秘法ノ本意), Musō is also asked about the contention of many Shingon masters that what is endowed with perceptual marks is superior to what is without as the latter represents the inferior exoteric teachings. Fascinatingly, Musō takes a leaf out of Ryōjo’s playbook by invoking the authority of both the *Vairocanāsambodhi* and Yixing’s commentary to defend a transcendent formless. See *Muchū mondōshū*, 53–54. This shows again how permeable the discursive borders between lineages truly were, especially when it comes to Zen and Tendai original awakening discourses.

86 See *Muchū mondōshū*, 224–228.

87 *Muchū mondōshū*, 68.

it was the Zen teachings that provided the categories for understanding *tantra*, not the other way around.

Kokan, Shūhō, and Musō in a sense represent three different ways of conceptualizing Zen during the late 13th and 14th centuries. Kokan continued the *Problembewusstsein* of the esoteric Zen he had inherited in the Shōichi lineage, offering innovative new answers to old problems such as which body teaches Zen. Shūhō rejected, at least in terms of self-presentation if not in actual practice, the artifice of Buddhist scholasticism *in toto*, emphasizing instead an exclusive devotion to *kōan* language. Musō, finally, perhaps came closest to following in the footsteps of his Chinese teachers. The central Buddhist insight, he argued, was the one transmitted by the Zen patriarchs, but all Buddhist discourses and practices could serve as pointers towards this insight. Consequently, the tantric teachings became a preliminary means towards Zen insight.

12 Conclusions

This chapter has brought to light a gradual shift of emphasis among the three representatives of the Shōichi lineage we have investigated. Enni was in the main concerned with integrating Zen and the tantric teachings through a careful hermeneutic of Chan or Zen texts and concepts in tantric terms. In his exposition of the *Yuqi jing*, Enni, via a carefully chosen *bons mots* from Yuanwu, linked the mind of Zen to the image of a moon disc without perceptual characteristics, a metaphor specific to the Japanese tantric tradition. In so doing, Enni activated a conceptual network surrounding the mind / moon image, which, again in its specifically Japanese form, sought to locate the mind of awakening represented by the moon disc in the concrete particulars of human physiology.

Chikotsu built on his master's legacy and identified the mind of Zen with the one square inch of flesh that is the human heart. This one square inch was the Zen equivalent of the eightfold flesh lotus that grounded the mind of awakening according to the tantric teachings. Chikotsu also took up Enni's suggestion of a resemblance between Zen pedagogy and the tantric doctrine of the *dharmakāya* teaching the law. Zen, Chikotsu concluded, just like the tantric teachings, was the teaching of the *dharmakāya*, but in so far as it was restricted to an uncultivated, naturalistic heart, it was a lesser teaching that could not compete with the splendor of the tantric Mahāvairocana. Chikotsu followed through on possibilities only implicit in Enni's esoteric reading of Zen by establishing a physiology of Zen teachings, according to which questions of the body, be it a body of flesh or a body of the spirit, became central concerns.

Kokan, in turn, sought to overcome the dependence on tantric dogmatics both Enni and Chikotsu had taken for granted. In a move reminiscent of the Heideggerian destruction of tradition, Kokan sought to return Zen to a fundamental ground more original and primitive than the split into tantric and exoteric teachings. Kokan found this ground in the one vehicle teachings of the *dharmakāya* preached in the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*. Identifying this primeval one vehicle with the transmission of Bodhidharma, Kokan could provide Zen with a discourse capable of rebutting scholiasts' criticisms without having to remain dependent on their doctrinal categories. Thus, Kokan's Zen was characterized in no small measure by "separating from the marks of discourse" of the tantric and exoteric teachings. Yet this act of separation did not imply a complete divorce. Kokan's Zen discourse remained bound, if not to the positive doctrines, then to the fundamental doctrinal orientations of Japanese tantric speculations. Apart from these, there would have been no imperative for Kokan to develop a Zen version of the *dharmakāya* teaching. This dependency on tantric structures is also apparent from Kokan's own Zen physiology, according to which the brutishly physical bodies of the patriarchs themselves are the *dharmakāya*. The second part of this study, upon which we now embark, is dedicated to tracing this embodied Zen, in the form of an embryology of *kōan* study, into the early modern period.

Means of Mediation

Kōan Interpretation from Enni to Sôtō Lineages

1 Introduction and Outlook on Part 2

The introduction of Zen to Japan meant, among other things, the introduction of a new religious idiom. On this point, the situation differed from when the Tendai *Lotus* and tantric teachings arrived from the continent. These traditions' claims and doctrinal positions, though perceived as outlandish at the time, still were communicable and intelligible in the language of scholastic Buddhism. This was not the case with Chan or Zen, which renounced scholastic disputation for spectacular poetics. This novel idiom presented considerable problems for the established schools, for how does one go about debating somebody who talks what appears to be literally nonsense?

This problem clearly vexed Zen's early critics, such as the Tendai scholiast Ryōjo hōshinnō, the hundredth abbot of the Tendai stronghold on Mt. Hiei. Ryōjo's *Tendai isshū chōka darumashō* 天台一宗超過達磨章, or *Writ on the Single Tradition of Tendai Surpassing Daruma* takes the form of a fictitious debate between Ryōjo himself and three prominent Zen representatives, namely, Nanpo Shōmyō 南浦紹明 (alt. Jōmyō; 1235–1309), the Chinese émigré Yishan Yining, and Kōhō Kennichi 高峰顯日 (1241–1316), the teacher of Musō Soseki. Ryōjo parodies the Zen style of debate as follows:

Meditation master Yishan said, "Roughly speaking, the one road turning upward is what even Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit. If this is the case, then how could the *Buddhadharma* of Tendai be established above what even the Buddhas and patriarchs do not transmit?"

I [Ryōjo] answer, "Three thousand in a single thought!"

Yishan asked, "Before a single thought has arisen, how could you have three thousand?"

I answer, "Three thousand in a single thought of fundamental principle (*honri no sanzen ichinen* 本理/三千一念)!"

Yishan asked, "Before a single thought of fundamental principle has arisen, how could you have three thousand?" And so on.

At that point, Yishan began to whistle softly.¹

1 *Tendai isshū chōka darumashō*, 522.

To the outside observer it might not be entirely clear who is supposed to emerge from this encounter looking the less foolish. In the slightly later *Keiran shūyōshū*, on the other hand, we find signs that by the time of its composition Tendai monks had started to get a grip on the game Zen practitioners played:

[The Shingon scholar] Ryōhen 了遍 (1223–1311) from Ninnaji was facing Nanpo [Shōmyō]. The Zen master said, “This Dainichi of yours, it’s a pile of dog shit.” Ryōhen could not answer. ...

I say, “[When Nanpo says that,] ‘This Dainichi of yours, it’s a pile of dog shit!’ then one ought to reply, ‘You, priest, indeed are Dainichi!’”²

Scatological rhetoric famously has been pioneered by Chinese masters such as Yunmen Wenyan, who responded, “A dry stick of shit!” when asked about the nature of the Buddha.³ Once such rhetoric became accepted as a valid way of expressing Buddhist truth, Chan and Zen masters could use the shocking, non-sensical, and illogical language paradigmatically displayed in the *gongan* or *kōan* to literally silence the opposition. Given this important polemical function of the *kōan*, it comes as little surprise that later generations of scholiasts continued to focus their efforts on discrediting Zen’s religious idiom.⁴

These efforts continued into the early modern period. The *Shūmon missan* 宗門密參, an early 17th century document of Sōtō Zen *kōan* lore, is an example of how Tendai criticisms continued to spur Zen monks to creatively re-articulate their *kōan* traditions. The *Shūmon missan* seeks to defend the Sōtō faction from the perennial Tendai criticism of Zen as a vicious, nihilist quietism by deflecting it onto the Rinzai 臨濟 lineages. In order to do so, the *Shūmon missan* relies on two closely related structures intended to show how Sōtō *kōan* training, unlike its quietist Rinzai counterpart, is based on mediation between a markless, primordial mind and the multiplicity of phenomena. The text thus provides an introduction to the conceptual schemes that ground medieval Sōtō *kōan* lore. These very same conceptual schemes also supported the development of embryological readings of *kōan*. Such embryological readings became widespread in both the Sōtō faction and in the various lineages of the Rinzai Genjū faction. It is on these conceptual schemes, specifically the so-called Three and Five Positions as means of mediation, that the present chapter is focused. It will introduce the main terminologies and conceptual

2 KRSYS, T 76: 543b.

3 See for instance *Wumen guan*, T 48: 295c.

4 On the polemical use of *kōan*, see also Faure, “Fair and Unfair.”

structures that facilitated and supported what I argue constitute late medieval and early modern specimens of esoteric Zen discourses.

For ease of orientation, however, allow me to first cast a glance ahead and anticipate the still distant conclusions to be pursued in this second part of the present study. In response to criticism from the established schools, and under the influence of cosmological speculations based on the *Yijing* and its Neo-Confucian exposition, Sōtō lineage *kōan* lore came to operate in a cosmos in which the paradigmatic soteriological operation was cast as a return to the mark- or formless, both cosmic and personal, origin. In order to, literally, flesh out this soteriological vision, Sōtō and Genjū lineage Zen masters drew on a set of ideas, symbols, and images that was closely connected to the tantric embryologies that had developed from about the 12th century onwards. The intellectual and personal networks within which Enni and his lineage successors moved were of utmost importance in the establishment, development, and transmission of these tantric embryologies. Especially in Chikotsu's thought, Zen and embryology were connected to the complex of tantric physiology as it emerged from the exegetical and initiatory traditions of the *Yujing*. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, it is from this tantric physiology that major motifs reappearing in Sōtō *kōan* traditions are derived, for instance the prominent image of the syllable *a* entering the womb as a literally impregnating seed. By adopting these motifs, in late medieval and early modern esoteric Zen the primordial origin came to be read in embryological terms and liberation became a return to the womb.

The hermeneutical and exegetical patterns guiding the Sōtō and Genjū factions' embryological lore at least in part can be traced to a discourse that self-consciously articulated Zen in reference to the tantric teachings. Hence, this lore can be counted a late example of esoteric Zen in that it fulfills the genealogical criterion I have outlined in the introduction. The existence of embryological *kōan* readings as part of the early modern Sōtō and Genjū mainstream demonstrates that the exposition of Zen texts and practices through tantric hermeneutical models, or what I term "esoteric Zen," did not, as has often been claimed, come to an end once "real" Zen had been established. Rather, it remained one among a plurality of valid ways to configure Japanese Zen.

2 The *Shūmon missan*

The *Shūmon missan* strenuously argues for the unity of Tendai and Zen teachings. According to its postscript (*shikigo* 識語), the text was written in the

autumn of 1633 by the otherwise unknown Sôtō faction monk Fuzen Dōjin 不染道人 (d.u.), who donated it to the Tōshōgu 東照宮 in Nikkō 日光 at the request of Tenkai 天海 (1536–1643).⁵ Tenkai, the most powerful Japanese Buddhist prelate of his, and perhaps any, age, acted as the religious adviser to the first three Tokugawa rulers, and is best known for masterminding the deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616).

Tenkai had a vested interest in the unity of Tendai and Zen teachings, or what he referred to as “the single stream of Tendai which propagates the exoteric, tantric, and Zen [teachings]” (*ken mitsu zen gutsū no tendai ichiryū* 顕密禪弘通之天台一流).⁶ In keeping with these interests, Tenkai granted the Rinzai Zen monk Koō Enni 虚応円耳 (1559–1619) initiation into Yōsai’s tantric Yōjō lineage in an attempt to revive the combinatory practice of Zen and the tantric teachings.⁷ The *Shūmon missan* clearly is an attempt at addressing the competitive disadvantage at which the Sôtō faction found itself due to Tenkai’s preference for the Rinzai faction, and especially Yōsai’s lineage.

The text argues that Tenkai’s preference is unfounded, for it is in fact the Sôtō faction that is the true guardian of the Tendai school’s universalist vision:

When speaking of [the combined practice of] exoteric [i.e. Tendai], tantric, and Zen, ... the practice of Sôtō, by establishing stages, is the true [practice] used in the exoteric [Tendai] school. Truly, the founder Eihei [Dōgen] spread the secret import (*mitsui* 密意) of Sôtō while thoroughly investigating the teaching house of Tendai. Until today the observances of the 12 hours [at Dōgen’s monastery] of Eihei have not abandoned the old *Dharma* of the exoteric school. Among the lineages of Eihei there is no Sôtō that does not know the exoteric. Again, among the descendants of Tendai there is no exoteric that does not know Sôtō.⁸

In this passage, Fuzen claimed that Dōgen had never rejected the Tendai teachings he had learned in his youth before apprenticing in Yōsai’s lineage and travelling to China. Therefore, it actually is the Sôtō faction that is the Zen that had been transmitted together with the Tendai exoteric teachings since ancient times. The reason for this compatibility between Sôtō and the Tendai exoteric teachings is that the Sôtō faction propagates a gradual practice of cultivation in stages. This is not the case for the Rinzai tradition:

5 The text has been reproduced in Iizuka, “Chūsei Sôtōshū,” pp. 291–306. Here, p. 306.

6 See Okonogi, *Chōrakuji monjo*, p. 114.

7 Ōyama, “Taimitsu,” p. 8.

8 *Shūmon missan*, 306.

If [one] aligns with a single phrase (*ikku kaitō sureba* 一句契当スレバ), the six realms [of rebirth] and the four births [from eggs, wombs, moisture, and through transformation] all become playful absorption (*yuge sam-mai* 遊戯三昧). In the Rinzai house, they reach the final turning upward (*matsugo kōjō* 末後向上) at this stage. Therefore, they are called the style of a single phrase. ... Although said to be the [accord of] exoteric, tantric, and Zen, the Zen of the Rinzai house has no practice of stages.⁹

The Rinzai school simply aligns with a single *kōan* phrase. Rinzai practitioners, the text continues, pay a heavy price for their one-sided fixation:

What is called fundamental emptiness (*honmu* 本無) is mind emptiness (*shinmu* 心無). Pointing to the one mind originally not fallen into being or nothing, [that] is called fundamental emptiness. The one device Zen (*ikki zen* 一機禪) of the [Rin]zai house entirely falls into the emptiness of extinction (*danmu* 斷無).¹⁰ The Zen of Sōtō hits fundamental emptiness.¹¹

The *Shūmon missan* seeks to deflect the common criticism of Zen as falling into the mindless emptiness of extinguishing thought onto the Rinzai tradition alone. Sōtō Zen, the text claims, aligns with Tendai by observing stages of practice. These stages the text explains as follows:

The twenty-seven levels contract into the Five Positions, the Five Positions contract into the Three Positions, the Three Positions into the One Position. The One Position is the essence of emptiness.¹²

The Three and Five Positions here mentioned are the central mediating structures around which premodern Sōtō Zen *kōan* practice was organized. According to the *Shūmon missan*, these mediating structures emerge from the fecundity of fundamental emptiness, and hence can, in the reverse process, guide the practitioner back towards it. These mediating structures, the text

9 *Shūmon missan*, 292.

10 “Extinction emptiness” is also one of the heresies denounced by the Rinzai reformer Hakuin Ekaku. Hakuin’s emphasis on action, effort, and productivity appears a long way from the no-mind (*mushin*) or no-thought (*munen*) advocated by the likes of Enni or Shinchi Kakushin. This suggests a definite change in which mental states Zen practitioners valued and sought to cultivate. This change certainly is not unrelated to the development of a capitalist and mercantile economy.

11 *Shūmon missan*, 304.

12 *Shūmon missan*, 305.

argues, are the same as the stages of practice expounded in the Tendai faction. Consequently, the *Shūmon missan* concludes, the practice of Sōtō *kōan* and of Tendai are the same. We therefore now need to turn to an examination of these mediating structures and their relation to fundamental emptiness.

3 The Three Positions

As Andō Yoshinori 安藤嘉則 has pointed out, to classify, hierarchize, and interpret *kōan* systematically, although not entirely unknown in China, is a mostly Japanese endeavor. Each faction and even each lineage of the Zen movement developed its own unique framework to realize this ambition. Perhaps due to being addressed to an elite monastic of Tenkai's stature and intended to plead the case for the Sōtō faction's superiority over its rivals, the *Shūmon missan*, though still riddled with doctrinal errors and misunderstandings, is more forthcoming and self-reflective regarding its interpretative framework than most other *kōan* manuals found in either the Sōtō or Rinzai factions. This is obvious in that it makes its system of ordering and reading *kōan* or *kōan*-like phrases explicit:

When only the Three Positions are probed, then in “self” (*jiko* 自己), in “what knowledge does not reach” (*chifutō* 智不到) and in “where” (*nahen* 那邊), to the extent of the teacher's skill, they are probed in drawing on and quoting old [*kōan*] cases. This is the method of treating single cases. Now, the headings of the Three Positions, dividing three into nine, each [of nine] levels in order to pass the village of practice and know meritorious effort. Again dividing the nine headings into twenty-seven, this is called the twenty seven nights of the nightly assembly (*yasen* 夜参).¹³

The Three positions are “self,” “what knowledge does not reach,” and “where,” also known as “when” (*naji* 那時). Their concrete definitions, internal structure, and the terminology used to describe them differ widely between Sōtō lineages. To give but one example, the *Sōtō san'i chūkyaku* 曹洞三位注却, a Tokugawa 徳川 (1603–1867) period text, offers the following explanations for each of the Three Positions. On “self,” it explains:

¹³ The *yasen* was a teaching event characteristic of the Sōtō faction during which secret *kōan* lore was imparted to a select group of students. See below.

First, there are many explanations of what is called “self.” The “self” of the time of “self and phenomena (*mokuzen* 目前) [being one]” is the phenomenal realm (*kyōkai* 境界) shattered and broken, the realm of one breath cut off.¹⁴

On “what knowledge does not reach”:

What is called “what knowledge does not reach,” that is ... the wisdom of Śākyamuni, Bodhidharma, Tokusan, and Rinzai. ... It is called “pure wave not hindered.” The “pure wave” is an example of the *Buddhadharma*. At the time of not hindering, the wave does not arise. For this reason, what is called “one color,” the sky is [reflected] in the water, the water is [reflected] in the sky. The moon as well, the cool snow as well, the white reeds as well, in white there is not one spot (*itten no majiri mo nashi* 一点ノマジリモ無). [...] Snow, moon, and white flower, the same autumn sky.¹⁵

Finally, on “where,” here called “when”:

As for “when,” “self” is discarded, “what knowledge does not reach” is cast off, there is no talk of nobody (*mujin no sata* 無人ノサタ), either. Again, it is deepest, moonless darkness, without a glimmer of brightness. Even the thousand Buddha and the ten thousand patriarchs do not know it.¹⁶

Although appropriately cryptic, these passages suggest that the Three Positions, at least in the *Chūkyaku*, describe a gradual process of cultivation. This process begins with actively abolishing conceptual thought and the reification of subject/object structures accompanying it. Next, the practitioner passes through a state of equality or integration before finally entering a resultant state of sheer and simple non-differentiation.¹⁷ Note that the final phrase, “[e]ven the thousand Buddha and the ten thousand patriarchs do not know it” closely resembles the key words of Enni’s third mechanism, *kōjō*, namely that “the Buddhas and patriarchs [or the thousand sages] do not transmit.” In general, there appears to be a substantive overlap between the *kōan* lore of the Sōtō lineages and Enni’s favorite old chestnuts. We will return to this

14 *Sōtō san'i chūkyaku*, 107.

15 *Ibid.*, 108.

16 *Ibid.*, 109.

17 This progression carries an uncanny resemblance to the order of tantric initiation discussed in the next chapter, that is to say from a union of opposites, via a unity that is produced from opposites, to a unity beyond opposites.

point in more detail below when investigating the relation between Sôtō *kōan* and meditation teachings, on the one hand, and Enni's Three Mechanisms, on the other.

The *Shūmon missan* suggests that there are different ways in which the Three Positions can be used in *kōan* instruction, namely singly or in combination. The text itself does not provide further details on the first use, but other Sôtō faction *kōan* manuals do offer some clues. The *Keian ichiha mokuroku no shidai* 快庵一派目錄之次代 is a collection of two hundred and two cases, which are interpreted using the Three Positions. The collection contains, among others, the following items:

- | | | |
|--------|--|---|
| nr. 14 | Three types of sick man ¹⁸ | This is the three levels of "self," "knowledge does not reach," and "when." |
| nr. 29 | Jōshū's four gates ¹⁹ | This is "knowledge does not reach." |
| nr. 33 | Bright star awakening to the Way ²⁰ | This is the unity of "self and object." |

As these examples show, the Three Positions can be identified either with parts of a single case, as in nr. 14, or otherwise whole cases can be assigned to one of the Three Positions, as in nrs. 29 and 33.²¹

By far the most common usage, however, was to combine the Three Positions with each other in order to create internally complex hierarchies. Ideally, though rarely in practice, these hierarchies comprised nine or twenty-seven levels. These levels were connected with the process of imparting secret *kōan* lore during the *yasan* 夜參 or nightly assembly, a teaching event typical of Sôtō lineages. Whereas the morning assemblies (*chōsan* 朝參) held in all Zen lineages transmitted common or public *kōan* lore, the nightly assemblies transmitted secret *kōan* knowledge to a select audience of advanced disciples. As an esoteric transmission devoted to the nightly assembly, the *Yasanban* 夜參盤, explains:

The *yasan* is the secret words (*mitsugo* 密語). It is the shadow [private] method (*inbō* 陰法). The *chōsan* is the revealed words (*kengo* 顯語). It is the bright [public] method (*yōhō* 陽法). [...] Because the *chōsan* is the

18 This is a reference to a parable from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*, T 12: 762c.

19 This is a reference to a *kōan* about Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778–897). Dōgen mentions the *kōan* in one of his poems, T 82: 313a.

20 This is a reference to the Buddha gaining liberation when seeing the morning star.

21 The *Keian ichiha mokuroku no shidai* is reproduced in Andō, *Chūsei zenshū*, pp. 482–484.

revealed method, it always ought to use commonly known devices (*ki* 機). Because the *yasan* is the secret words, it always ought to use devices not commonly known.²²

This connection between the Three Positions and the extended process of transmitting initiatory *kōan* lore is also illustrated in a Sōtō transmission document entitled *Yasan no zu* 夜参之図 or *Diagram of the Nightly Assembly*.²³ This document is organized around three circles. A circle divided into white and black halves at the top represents “self,” a white circle represents “what knowledge does not reach,” and a black circle represents “when.” Such circles are closely connected to the second major interpretative framework used in medieval Sōtō lineages, the Five Positions, as will be discussed below. In fact, the use of identical, or at least closely resembling, sets of circles to represent the items of different, otherwise unrelated, conceptual structures was one important exegetical sleight of hand used to suggest the substantive identity of the schemes in question. In the case of the *Yasan no zu*, the three circles bear the following inscriptions, from top to bottom:

Virtuously entering the Buddha’s intention
Penetrating Great Wisdom
Facing the Other Shore [of *nirvāṇa*]

As suggested also in the *Shūmon missan*, the *Yasan no zu* divides each of the Three Positions further into three parts. The “self” associated with the uppermost circle is made up of “self of self” (*jiko no jiko* 自己之自己), “self of what knowledge does not reach” (*jiko no chifutō* 自己之智不到), and “self of where” (*jiko no nahen* 自己之那邊). Similarly, “what knowledge does not reach” comprises the levels of “what knowledge does not reach of self,” “what knowledge does not reach of what knowledge does not reach,” and “what knowledge does not reach of where”; and “where” the levels “where of self,” “where of what knowledge does not reach,” and “where of where.” The result is a nine-fold hierarchy with three levels of three items each.

Each of the Three Positions further is identified with a nightly session of instruction given in the course of the *yasan*. “Self” is the “first night” (*shoya* 初夜), “what knowledge does not reach” the “second night” (*niya* 二夜) and “where” the “third night” (*sanya* 三夜). Each “night” in turn is divided into three

²² Reproduced in Andō, *Chūsei zenshū*, p. 719.

²³ ZSS, vol. 2, 724.

steps, the “beginning” (*sho* 初), middle (*chū* 中), and “end” (*matsu* 末). Thus “self of self” corresponds to “beginning of first night,” “self of what knowledge does not reach” to “middle of first night,” and so forth. In sum, according to the *Yasan no zu*, the Three Positions served not only to systematize and categorize *kōan*, but also structured the concrete process in which this *kōan* lore was to be transmitted during nightly initiatory sessions.

The nine headings generated from combining the Three Positions with themselves could be divided once more according to the same principle, thereby generating twenty-seven levels. Of such a hierarchy the *Shūmon missan* explains that it corresponds to the twenty-seven sessions of secret instruction that make up the full circle of nightly assemblies. The *Shūmon missan* itself divides these twenty-seven levels as follows. First, there are three parts to the top layer of the hierarchy, namely,

- 1) nine levels of going
- 2) nine levels of coming
- 3) nine levels of all activities

Each of these three is in turn composed of three levels. In the case of the first, “nine levels of going,” these are:

- 1.1) going – three levels of self
- 1.2) going – three levels of what knowledge does not reach
- 1.3) going – three levels of where

Each of these levels in turn is composed of three items. In the case of “going – three levels of self” of the “nine levels of going,” these are:

- 1.1.1) self of self
- 1.1.2) middle of self
- 1.1.3) advancing of self

The second three of the “nine levels of going,” the “going – three levels of what knowledge does not reach” are:

- 1.2.1) beginning of what knowledge does not reach
- 1.2.2) middle way of what knowledge does not reach
- 1.2.3) advancing of what knowledge does not reach

And so forth. In this way, three parts of three levels each with three items per level we arrive at the complete twenty-seven items.

As the above outline has made clear, the Three Positions function to structure the processes of *kōan* interpretation and transmission on two levels. On the level of content they provide criteria according to which *kōan* can be organized into clusters of related cases, and on the formal level the Three Positions could be combined with each other to mechanically generate graded hierarchies. The main point the *Shūmon missan* seeks to convey is that these three,

nine, or twenty-seven levels, unlike the single phrase of the Rinzai school, correspond to the stages of practice as taught in the Tendai tradition:

In the Sōtō school, going has nine levels, coming has nine levels, all activities has nine levels. Combined, three times nine, twenty-seven levels. The fifty-two [stages of practice of the Tendai school] are contracted and divided into twenty-seven. [...] Sōtō studies the Six Degrees of Identity (*rokusoku* 六即) and fifty-two stages.²⁴

To match the fifty-two stages of practice commonly found throughout Mahāyānist Buddhist literature with its own specific system of Six Degrees of Identity between practitioner and Buddha has long been the Tendai go-to strategy for incorporating other Buddhist systems into its own scheme of doctrinal classification. The *Shūmon missan* adapts this strategy to its argument that Sōtō Zen is in alignment with Tendai exoteric teachings. The twenty-seven levels of the Three Positions hierarchy, the text claims, correspond to the common fifty-two stages of *bodhisattva* practice. These in turn correspond to, or can be arranged within, the Six Degrees of the Tendai school. Consequently, the *Shūmon missan* concludes, Sōtō *kōan* teachings are compatible with, or even identical to, the Tendai stages of practice and attainment.

Finally, the *Shūmon missan* bluntly asserts that the basic principles of its *kōan* hierarchy, the Three Positions, are the same as the Tendai Three Truths of emptiness (*kū*), provisional existence (*ke*), and the middle (*chū*):

The Three Positions are “where,” “what knowledge does not reach,” and “self.” The three levels of “emptiness,” “provisional,” and “middle” correspond to the Three Positions. “Emptiness” is “where,” “middle” is “what knowledge does not reach,” “provisional” is “self.”²⁵

In short, the *Shūmon missan* argues that the gradual practice of *kōan* as taught according to the Sōtō faction’s Three Positions is based on the same structural and dogmatic principles as the Tendai teachings. Consequently, Sōtō *kōan* lore is the true complementary of Tendai practice, not the Zen of simple “shout and staff” propagated in Rinzai lineages, which leads to “extinction emptiness.” Yet as anticipated above, the Three Positions themselves owe a not inconsiderable debt to the Rinzai faction, and especially to Enni’s Three Mechanisms.

²⁴ *Shūmon missan*, 292.

²⁵ *Shūmon missan*, 292.

4 Trio Variations

Just like the Three Positions, also Enni's Three Mechanisms defy a single, exhaustive definition. Rather, owing to the master's own ambiguities in setting them forth, over time they developed in a number of different directions according to the needs and interests of each faction or lineage. Scholars such as Sahashi Hōryū 左橋法竜 (1928–2007) have asserted that the Three Positions of the Sōtō faction are identical to Enni's Three Mechanisms. Andō Yoshinori, however, has rightly cautioned that there are significant conceptual differences between the two sets.²⁶ To note but some that are of immediate importance to the present investigation, the Three Positions are a system to order and interpret *kōan*. The Three Mechanisms as set out by Enni himself, on the other hand, also cover doctrinal discourses, with both *kōan* and scholastic discourse being surpassed by *kōjō* or direct indication.

Furthermore, one of the most important functions of the Three Positions was to provide a mechanism for constructing hierarchies through which the practitioner would gradually progress during his training. The Three Mechanisms, on the other hand, even when interpreted hierarchically, do not seem to possess such a gradual character. Their correlation with superior, mediocre, and inferior spiritual capacities certainly is a prominent feature of their stereotyped presentation in Tendai and Nichiren sources. This presentation of the Three Mechanism also is bolstered by certain passages in Enni's *Recorded Sayings*. According to this presentation, the Three Mechanisms develop from the simple and unitary to the complex and plural in an effort to respond to sentient beings' ever-duller capacities with ever more loquacious teachings. The common *sūtric* teachings are found at the bottom, followed by the Zen devices of *kōan*, and culminating in direct indication. However, here there is no sense of an individual practitioner traversing this hierarchy gradually and in order. In short, even when read hierarchically, the Three Mechanisms represent a hierarchy of teachings, not levels of practice. Thus in so far as both their exclusive/inclusive function, as well as their hierarchical nature, differ significantly, it seems unlikely that the Three Mechanisms are the forerunners of Three Positions' *kōan* hierarchies in any linear or direct sense.

Yet despite these considerable disparities, it is still probable that the Three Positions derive, if by many a twist and turn, from the Three Mechanism. Some among Enni's descendants did develop the Three Mechanisms in ways that emphasized both an exclusivist reading focused on *kōan* and their hierarchical nature. Furthermore, there are Sōtō Zen materials that strongly suggest that

26 Andō, *Chūsei zenshū*, pp. 606–607.

not only were Sōtō masters familiar with Enni's mechanisms, they also actively appropriated them, or rather the knowledge associated with them, to their own needs. Let us look at these two developments in some more detail, beginning with the variations on the Three Mechanisms Enni's students proposed.

In Enni and Mujū, the Three Mechanisms appear as an inclusive structure comprising both Zen and the doctrinal teachings. Mujū considered *kikan* and *richi* to be different modalities of *kōjō*, arriving at the conclusion that, "although *richi* are the common scholastic phrases, when used by a Zen master, they are direct indication."²⁷ This accommodating stance increasingly lost ground with the strengthening of Zen's institutional independence and the hardening of lineage-centered self-consciousness that accompanied it. Already Enni's second generation successor Kokan Shiren, the noted polemicist and key player in formulating Zen's medieval identity, in his *Butsugo shinron kuketsu* 仏言心論口決, or *Oral Instructions on the Butsugo shinron*, his auto-commentary on his exposition of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, defined *richi* as a *watō* 話頭 or headword used in *kōan* introspection, thereby removing the terms original doctrinal associations.²⁸

Nanpo Shōmyō, who was also Enni's nephew, often followed his uncle's Zen precedents.²⁹ For instance, he exemplified *kōjō* with the phrase, "mountains are mountains, water is water,"³⁰ or emphasized the importance of the fact that, "Buddhas and patriarchs do not transmit."³¹ Yet despite these many continuities, Nanpo differed from his uncle in that he defined all Three Mechanisms in the context of *kōan*.³² Although there are said to be 1700 *kōan*, Nanpo observed, in fact mountains, rivers, and the great earth, grasses and trees, everything touched by the eye or heard by the ear is a *kōan*. These *kōan* in the Zen school are sorted according to three meanings (*gi* 義), namely *richi*, *kikan*, and *kōjō*. *Richi* are the reasoned words (*ri* 理語) of Buddhas and patriarchs when discussing "the nature of mind" or similar. *Kikan* are their compassionate activities such as wriggling one's nose or twinkling one's eyes, or again their enigmatic pronouncements such as "a mud ox flies through space, a stone

27 *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 5, 437ab.

28 BGSF, 234ab.

29 Takeuchi Michio 竹内道雄, *Nihon no zen* 日本の禅 (Tōkyō: Shunjūsha 春秋社, 1976), 245.

30 See *Daiō kokushi hōgo*, 12. Also quoted in Yanagida, *Zen bunken*, p. 525, who also quotes Enni on the Three Positions. Yanagida however does not quote the passage on mountains and water Nanpo refers to, thus seemingly failing to recognize the close connection between the two. Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen*, pp. 146–147, cites the same passages as Yanagida.

31 *Daiō kokushi hōgo*, 4.

32 On this problem, see also Davin, "Datsu kamakura zen?"

horse enters the water." *Kōjō*, finally, is the "direct explanation" (*jikisetsu* 直説) in line with the true mark of all *dharma*.³³ For Nanpo the three communicative mechanisms were no longer a means of integrating Zen into an esoteric world by deemphasizing the *kōan* in preference for the direct indication of the Mahāvairocana Buddha's mind. Rather, Enni's nephew placed *kōan* at the heart of Zen practice. This approach to the Three Mechanisms continued to be transmitted in the *kōan* manuals of the Daitokuji and Myōshinji factions descending from Nanpo.³⁴

The developments we see in Kokan and Nanpo might also have influenced the understanding of the Three Mechanisms as elaborated in the scholastic traditions. In his polemic against the Zen school mentioned above, Ryōjo complained that Zen masters used unnecessarily flowery language instead of the plain talk preferred in the Tendai school. As one example of such excessive obliqueness, Ryōjo adduces the Three Mechanisms:

As for the Bodhidharma school being a school of provisional means, the transmission of the separate transmission outside the teachings [of Zen] is the principle of the reality mark of thusness (*shinnyo jissō* 真如実相). [But the Bodhidharma school] does not straightforwardly call it "reality mark of thusness." They either name it *richi*, or they call it *kikan*, or they term it *kōjō*. In hearing about the gate of the reality mark, they set up three provisional means. *Richi* is guarding the one letter *mu* 無, or observing [the mind] before a single thought arises. As for *kikan*, it is to impart meaningless phrases like "A bamboo pole propping up the sky," or "A stone horse crossing the ocean," in order to bring an end to the train of deluded thought. Thereby they establish the one thousand seven hundred *kōan*. Fools knocking at the gate, all of them! As for *kōjō*, "Raising a swirl of smoke, not a single mote of dust is received," "Buddhas and patriarchs do not transmit." All of these are provisional means that are outside the gate of the reality mark of the separate transmission outside the teaching. ... The Tendai school is direct and discards all provisional means. [...] It directly turns to the three thousand [phenomena] in a single thought that is the nature of mind. Suddenly, it transcends the virtual and marvelous awakening [of the most advanced *bodhisattva* and the Buddhas,] and returns to the palace of the mind ground unknown to former generations [i.e. stopping and contemplation (*shikan* 止觀) as taught by Zhiyi].³⁵

33 *Daiō kokushi hōgo*, 12.

34 See the *missanroku* reproduced in Andō, *Chūsei zenshū*, p. 519.

35 *Tendai isshū chōka darumashō*, 523.

In this passage, Ryōjo charged that the Zen school, because of its reliance on *kōan* word play, remains on the level of mere provisional means. It is the Tendai teaching of calming and contemplation that directly turns to mind and hence represents the true separate transmission outside the teachings. Ryōjo explicitly defined *richi* as the character *mu*, the perhaps most famous *watō* of them all. Ryōjo's criticism shows that already in the generation after Enni an understanding of the Three Mechanisms as exclusively referring to *kōan* had begun to spread. Eventually, this understanding came to supplant the earlier discussions found in Nichiren or Jōmyō, which still considered *richi* to refer to common Buddhist doctrine, not Zen "crazy talk."

Not only did the Three Mechanisms become more exclusive, also their hierarchical aspect became more pronounced. One example of this tendency is Chikotsu's *Zenshū kukonki kuketsu* 禪宗九根機口決, or *Oral Instruction on the Nine [Levels of] Roots and Triggers of the Zen School*. In this text, Chikotsu analyzed Yuanwu's epistolary collection, the *Yuanwu xinyao*, as addressing practitioners possessed of nine different levels of spiritual capacities.³⁶ Chikotsu construed these nine levels in a manner similar to the nine-fold *kōan* hierarchies of the Sōtō school by combining three basic levels, namely superior (*jō* 上), mediocre (*chū* 中), and inferior (*ke* 下) endowment, with each other, resulting in nine levels: superior of superior (*jō no jō kon* 上之上根), mediocre of superior (*jō no chūkon* 上之中根), inferior of superior (*jō no kekon* 上之下根), followed by superior of mediocre (*chū no jōkon* 中之上根), and so forth.

The highest three of Chikotsu's three levels are comprised of practitioners who are either inherently endowed with the seeds of awakening, or in one of their previous lives had met a true teacher and received them. For these superior individuals, cultivation in the present life is unnecessary. At most, they need to glance at a teacher to realize their full potential. In contrast, the watchwords for the second highest level of practitioners are "direct indication" (*jikishi* 直指) and "sudden awakening" (*tongo* 頓悟).³⁷ Unlike those of superior capacities, mediocre practitioners rely on the teacher's use of the "preliminary means of direct indication" (*jikishi hōben* 直指方便), which reveal the Buddhist truth in a single, sudden flash of insight. Practitioners belonging to this level

36 See *Zenshū kukonki kuketsu* 禪宗九根機口決, CZS, vol. 4, 569–571. For a brief discussion of the text and its contexts, see Wada, "Zenshū."

37 "Sudden awakening" has a long and controversial history in East Asian Buddhism. Chikotsu's immediate sources likely are the *Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄, which equates "sudden awakening and sudden practice" (C. *dunwu dunxiu* 頓悟頓修; J. *tongo tonshū*) with the practice of those endowed with "superior superior roots" (C. *shangshanggen* 上上根). The *Zongjing lu* bases itself on the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*'s teaching of the four suddens and four graduals. See T 16: 485c–486a.

differ from each other only to the extent to which they have to engage in either sudden or gradual practices in order to polish and confirm the realization they gained from direct indication. Enni and Mujū also used the somewhat paradoxical term “preliminary means of direct indication” in their respective expositions of Zen pedagogy.³⁸ Chikotsu directly drew on the terminology of the Three Mechanisms found in Enni’s *Recorded Sayings*, identifying the most talented of mediocre practitioners as “personages of tuning upward” (*kōjō jin* 向上人). Finally, the lowest level of practitioners is incapable of understanding the teacher’s sudden indication. Consequently, these inferior individuals have to rely on various forms of cultivation. The most gifted strive by not giving rise to a single thought (*ichinen fushō* 一念不生), thereby progressing from sudden practice to sudden awakening (*tonshu tongo* 頓修頓悟). Chikotsu did not elaborate on those of even lesser gifts, apart from labeling them “sudden practice and gradual awakening” (*tonshu zengo* 頓修漸悟) and “gradual practice gradual awakening” (*zenshu zengo* 漸修漸悟).

To give a final example of a hierarchy of Zen mechanisms related to Enni’s teachings, the *Zenke setsu* is a text associated with Dainichibō Nōnin’s lineage. It contains a series of vernacular lectures (*hōgo* 法語) that impart hands-on instructions rather than abstract philosophical musings. Therefore, the *Zenke setsu* offers a rare glimpse of how Zen was actually taught and practiced during this period.³⁹ As one of the sermons mentions the final period of the *Dharma* (*mappō* 末法) having begun two hundred odd years previously, and as the final period of the *Dharma* is reckoned to have begun in 1052, the sermons can tentatively be dated to the mid- to late 13th century.⁴⁰ These vernacular sermons use a threefold classification of Zen teaching methods resembling the one found in Enni. Zen practitioners, the text explains, come in superior and inferior quality. Those of superior quality from the beginning were not deluded, and therefore there is for them no awakening, either. Those of inferior qualities, on the other hand, have long been mired in delusion, and they need to hear a teacher’s instruction in order to attain awakening.⁴¹

Among those inferior personages who have to depend on a teacher, again three levels can be differentiated, namely those of superior, middling, and inferior capabilities. Those of superior capabilities only need to be told to, “Know thyself!” (*jiko o mi yo* 自己ヲ見ヨ) in order for them to “turn the light [of the mind inwards] and reverse [the] illumination [of mind]” (*kaikō henshō* 廻光

38 See *Shōichi kokushi goroku* 聖一国師語録, T 80: 20c; *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 4, 437ab.

39 See *Zenke setsu* 禅家説, CZS, vol. 4, 411–420.

40 *Zenke setsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 414a. See also Sueki and Wada, “Kaidai,” pp. 586–587.

41 *Zenke setsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 411a.

返照). They awaken with a single shout, a single blow, or a single word. Those of middling capacities, on the other hand, are unable to immediately grasp the teacher's instruction and need to ceaselessly and energetically ponder it in their hearts. Interestingly, these middling practitioners are called "doubters" (*gijin* 疑人). They seek to eradicate discriminating consciousness by means of *watō* 話頭 inspection. Finally, those of inferior capabilities have minds too weak to sustain the unceasing effort of focusing on a headword. Their thoughts are constantly pulled this way or that by outward *stimuli*. Therefore, they need to devote themselves to the practice of seated meditation or *zazen* 坐禪. Formal meditation consists of keeping constant vigilance over one's mind. As soon as a sound or sight arises, one is to pull the mind back from wanting to know what it is, directing it instead towards inquiring from where hearing and seeing arise in the first place.⁴²

As these examples show, Enni's Three Mechanisms stand at the beginning of a lively, variegated conversation concerning Zen pedagogics and teaching devices, not only in the lineages directly deriving from the master, or even within the Zen faction, but also involving Tendai scholiasts such as Jōmyō and Ryōjo, and even other Kamakura era reformers such as the consummate *Lotus* fundamentalist Nichiren. Needless to say, the Sōtō faction could not ignore this discourse, either, and it is to its reception of Enni's Three Mechanism we now turn.

5 Positioning Mechanisms: The Sōtō Reception of Enni's Three Mechanisms

The structural resemblance between Chikotsu's nine-fold hierarchy and the Three Positions hierarchies developed in the *Shūmon missan* and the *Yasan no zu* suggests that the two kinds of systems shared a close connection. This influence might even date back to the formative period of Sōtō oral transmissions lore. The *Sankon zazen setsu* 三根坐禪說, or *Explanation of the Three Roots of Zazen*, is a short text in Chinese attributed to Keizan Jōkin, Dōgen's third generation heir and founding patriarch of the dominant lineages of the medieval Sōtō faction. It was published in 1681 by Manzan Dōhaku, the instigator of the faction's early modern reform movement.⁴³ As Keizan is said to have studied with two of Enni's leading disciples, Tōzan Tanshō 東山湛照 (1231–1291) and Hakuun Engyō 白雲慧暁 (1223–1298), it is certainly possible that he was

42 *Zenke setsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 411b–412a.

43 Reproduced in SSZS, vol. 2, 428ab.

familiar with the threefold schemes used in the Shōichi lineage. However, a nearly identical text, although in vernacular Japanese, can be found in the sermons of Meihō Sotetsu 明峰素哲 (1277–1350), one of Keizan's most prominent disciples.⁴⁴ Thus although the *Sankon zazensetsu* cannot be attributed to Keizan with final certainty, it likely dates to the generation of his disciples at the latest.

As the title suggest, the *Sankon zazensetsu* divides the practice of Zen into three levels, superior, mediocre, and inferior. These three levels represent a progression from basic to more refined modes of practice.⁴⁵ The lowest level is described as sitting like a wooden Buddha statue, all movement stilled and all entanglements banished from the mind. Neither open nor closed, the eyes do not differentiate shapes and colors. The mouth is firmly shut and does not speak even of the *Dharma*, the hands are tied in the meditation *mudrā* and do not pick up even the scriptures. In this way, the path of both good and bad is cut off and the Buddhist truth revealed through physical and mental restraint.

On the mediocre level, one seeks to cast aside all phenomena and to rest all conditions. This is done by focusing on the breath or by taking up a *kōan*. Practicing in this manner, one “does not fall into the discrimination of conceptual thinking; not understanding and not knowing, nothing is not understood. Bright and clear, it permeates past and present; hitting it head on, the worlds in the ten directions are illuminated.”⁴⁶ In such a state, the text elaborates, one dwells “in one's own home in the original face (*jike honrai menmoku* 自家本来面目) and does not enter into life and death, coming and going.”⁴⁷

Finally, on the most superior level of practice all differentiations and efforts are forgotten, one simply “eats when hungry and sleeps when tired.” Not a single thing is appropriated as the self, and neither understanding nor ignorance is present. One does not even care about “the reason the Buddhas have appeared in the world,” nor ponder, “the mystery that Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit.”⁴⁸

The common patterns between the *Sankon zazensetsu* and the various formulations of the Three Mechanisms are clear, even if the Sōtō faction text expresses them in an original fashion. To begin with the superior roots, these mark a level on which both awakening and delusion are absent, a level that is characterized by “the mystery that Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit.”

44 See *Meihō kana hōgo* 明峰仮名法語, in ZHS, vol. 2, 1–2.

45 Carl Bielefeldt has described this progress as being from the ethical via the psychological, to the philosophical. See Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals*, pp. 152–153, fn. 33.

46 SSZS, vol. 2, 428a.

47 SSZS, vol. 2, 428a.

48 SSZS, vol. 2, 428a.

In the Three Mechanisms context, this is a catch phrase of *kōjō*. The second level of practice the *Sankon zazensetsu* defines as dwelling in the intimate surroundings of one's "original face." In both his *Zenshū kukonki kuketsu* and one of his tantric commentaries, the *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu*, Enni's disciple Chikotsu likewise associated the "original face" with the second of three levels of Zen mechanisms.⁴⁹ Furthermore, this level is associated with concentration on *kōan* cases, likely the *watō* method Keizan also recommended in his other meditation treatise, the *Zazen yōjinki* 坐禪要心記. *Kōan* use also is the characteristic of *kikan*, the second of Enni's mechanisms and its variants.

In the Three Mechanisms schemes, the inferior level of practice is the most varied. Whereas Enni, Mujū, Jōmyō, and Nichiren understood it to refer to doctrinal discourse, Kokan, Nanpo, and Ryōjo considered it a type of *kōan*. Furthermore, the encyclopedic *Tendai myōmoku ruijushō* 天台名目類聚鈔 by the Tendai scholiast Jōshun 貞舜 (1334–1422), which contains a great amount of doctrinal information also on contemporary Zen movements, explains that on the level of *richi*,

[t]hose of inferior roots attain awakening through the meditative concentration (*zenjō* 禪定) explained in the *sūtra* and *śāstra* taught by the Buddha. ... The inferior roots are called "*tathāgata* Zen." For example, it is like the *sūtra*-based practice of Tendai.⁵⁰

In other words, the *Tendai myōmoku ruijushō* equates the lowest roots with the common practice of meditative absorption as taught in scholastic Buddhism. This resonates well with the *Sankon zazensetsu*'s advocacy for a contemplative renunciation that seeks to withdraw the senses from the world and rest them inward instead.

According to his postscript to the *Sankon zazensetsu*, Manzan found the text appended to a practice scroll (*anken* 行卷) of a certain unnamed Zen practitioner. Such practice scrolls seem to have been close relatives of *missan* or *monsan* *kōan* manuals. Manzan's acquaintance, the Ōbaku 黄檗 monk Chōon Dōkai 潮音道海 (1628–1695), was a stern critic of Japanese *kōan* Zen. Japanese Zen practitioners, Chōon complained, followed the heretical practice of arranging *kōan* together with their *jakugo* and vernacular explanations (*heiwa* 平話) into fixed collections. These collections they kept in "bags of practice scrolls (*anken fukuro* 行卷袋) and boxes of secret attendances (*missan hako* 密參箱)." These bags and boxes were considered the "causes and conditions of the great

49 *Bodaishinron zuimon shōketsu*, CZS, vol. 11, 441.

50 See *Tendai myōmoku ruiju shō*, TSZS, vol. 22, 46b.

matter" (*ichidaiji innen* 一大事因縁) of the Zen school. Should they burn or drown, Chōon mockingly asked, is the great matter then lost? Manzan's practice scrolls, in other words, appear to have been closely connected to manuals of *kōan* practice. This would suggest that the *Zazen sankonsetsu* with its three levels of Zen practice functioned as part of the same regime of esoteric transmissions that also included *kōan* teachings such as the Three Positions and Three Mechanisms.

The *Sankon zazensetsu* is not the only work attributed to Keizan that contains elements suggesting influence from, or at least familiarity with, Enni's Three Mechanisms and their associated phraseology. The *Himitsu shōbōgenzō* 秘密正法眼藏 is a commentary on ten *kōan* that is widely if dubiously associated with Keizan. This text contains sayings we have seen to be closely associated with *kōjō*, including the signature phrases, "mountains fundamentally are mountains, water fundamentally is water," and "the Buddhas and patriarchs do not transmit."⁵¹ The same holds true of another apocryphal *kōan* commentary, the *Hōonroku* 報恩錄, which widely employs the framework of the Three Positions. This text, apart from likewise containing Enni's favorite sayings, even directly identifies "when" (or "where"), the third of the Three Positions, with "turning upward," the third of the Three Mechanisms.⁵² The point is not whether these works indeed record Keizan's words. Most likely they do not, or at least not faithfully. What is important is that they demonstrate that *kōan* knowledge circulated quite freely among different lineages, and hence that such knowledge as associated with Enni's Three Mechanisms could contribute to the formation of the Three Positions.

Finally, the *Eihei kana hōgo* 永平仮名法語 is a set of vernacular lectures attributed to Dōgen. However, this is almost certainly an early modern text circulated under the Sōtō founder's illustrious name. The *Eihei kana hōgo* devotes a section to *kōjō*, *kikan*, and *richi*, each. In the section on *kōjō*, we immediately encounter phrases we are already familiar with from our discussion of Enni. *Kōjō*, pseudo-Dōgen assured his audience, is the direct teaching of the Buddhas and ancestors, that "the sky is the sky, the earth the earth, mountains are mountains, and water is water."⁵³ This is the "single road upwards that Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit."⁵⁴ The entries for *richi* and *kikan* likewise show evidence of Enni's influence. For instance, on *richi* the text quotes

51 See *Himitsu shōbōgenzō*, sszs, vol. 2, 432a, 434b.

52 See *Hōonroku*, sszs, vol. 2, 569a. The text also mentions "mountains being mountains," 553b, the "single road turning upwards," 603b, as well as variations on the topic of "Buddhas and ancestors" or the "thousand holies not transmitting," 517ab.

53 *Eihei kana hōgo*, zhs, vol. 2, 1.

54 *Eihei kana hōgo*, zhs, vol. 2, 2.

Yuanwu, whom we have also identified as the main source for Enni's elaboration of the Three Mechanisms. Finally, pseudo-Dōgen defined *kikan* as the *kōan* by means of which a single thought does not arise and life and death both are exhausted.⁵⁵ This demonstrates that Enni's Three Mechanisms continued to provide a source of inspiration even to members of the Sōtō faction and well into the early modern period.

In sum, there is no single transmission event or smoking gun we could point to in order to connect the Three Positions of Sōtō *kōan* lore with Enni's Three Mechanism. In this sense, we definitely have to agree with Andō Yoshinori, who questioned the supposed identity of the two schemes as stipulated by earlier scholars such as Sahashi and Bodiford. On the other hand, I would suggest that the materials surveyed in the above make a strong, if admittedly circumstantial, case that the Three Positions nonetheless developed from the same contextual space as similar tripartite schemes in other Zen lineages, a space that originated in Enni's Three Mechanisms.

The *Shūmon missan* drew on this rich background of medieval *kōan* lore to deflect the criticism of Zen as a mind-less quietism onto the Rinzaï faction alone, which it claimed was stuck with using only a "single device" and hence fell into the nihilist emptiness of extinction. Sōtō teachers, on the other hand, used the Three Positions in order to guide students to a productive "fundamental emptiness." In order to fully understand this last claim to a fecund void, we have to turn to the association between the Three and the Five Positions, as medieval Sōtō thinkers used the latter to imbue their *kōan* lore with cosmogonic significance. But first we need to understand the importance of *Yijing* style cosmology as another of the new religious idioms prominent in early medieval Zen, including in the Shōichi lineage.

6 The Tantra of the Changes: Mujū on Tantric Empowerment and *Yijing* Cosmology

On the continent, Chan and the newly prominent Neo-Confucianism of figures such as Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) were sister movements. Each sought to re-brand its parent tradition in such a way as to appeal to the *literati* elite of the Song.⁵⁶ Chan replaced the scholastic idiom of traditional Buddhism with plentiful allusion to the Chinese literary and philosophical tradition. It also offered lay practitioners easy to perform meditative

55 *Eihei kana hōgo*, ZHS, vol. 2, 3–6.

56 Bol, *Culture*, p. 34.

techniques.⁵⁷ In a similar manner, Neo-Confucianism reduced the textual corpus that had to be mastered by streamlining Confucian teachings on the basis of an integrated cosmological and metaphysical model. This model was complemented with an accessible spiritual technique of “investigating things.”

Neo-Confucianism first reached Japan as part of the large-scale transfer of knowledge and culture during the Southern Song, which from the Kamakura period onwards was conducted mostly by Chan or Zen monks.⁵⁸ Accordingly, Neo-Confucian thought became an established part of the monastic curriculum. In the course of their studies, Zen monks delved into the mysteries of the *Yijing*, the Chinese divinatory classic. Educated monastic *literati* drew on the language and symbolism of the *Yijing* to express Zen concepts. Thus the trigrams *kan* 坎 ☵ and *li* 離 ☲, for instance, were used to symbolize the sayings “Buddha is mind” and “mind is Buddha.”⁵⁹ This terminological nonchalance caused conceptual slippage. To give but one example, the Buddhist notion of nature (*shō*) came to be glossed as the Great Ultimate (*taikyoku*). This added to the former term a substantive and cosmological connotation at odds with its doctrinal implications.⁶⁰

In the Shōichi lineage, it was none other than Enni himself who first introduced terminology derived from *Yijing* cosmological speculation. In Chapter 2 we have discussed one instance in which Enni used the term “single *ki*” (*ikki* 一氣) to discuss the progressive differentiation of the Three Mechanisms. Enni used the very same term also when discussing the secret unction (*himitsu kanjō* 秘密灌頂) in his commentary on the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, the *Dainichikyō kenmon*. According to Enni, in this secret unction the two basic maṇḍalic realities of the Womb and Diamond realm are unified:

In the unified practice of the Tani 谷 lineage [one of the main Tendai tantric lineages], the gusts of the two *ki* of *yin* and *yang* mingle and harmonize (*wagō* 和合). In the Confucian teachings (*jukyō* 儒教) it is primordial chaos of a single *ki* (*ikki konton* 一氣混沌), the place where the clear and the turgid undivided have not yet been divided. The secret unction is in the main non-duality. This being the case, it is the single *ki* of empty

57 See Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals*, especially chapters 3 and 4. Song Chan meditation manuals clearly were addressed to a lay, not a monastic audience. “Easy to perform” here indicates simply that in terms of both the practices described and their theoretical discussion, these Song Chan manuals were significantly more accessible, even just in length, than their counterparts in the scholastic traditions.

58 Haga, *Chūsei zenrin*, pp. 51–57.

59 Ibid., p. 77.

60 Ibid., p. 83.

roundness (*koen* 虚円). ... Furthermore, it is the practice method of the mysterious unified [Buddha body] of single wisdom (*icchi myōgō* 一智冥合). That is to say, it is the syllable *a* of the inner voice [i.e. the syllable *a* uttered as sound inherent in other syllables].⁶¹

To explore the full significance of this suggestive passage would require a study of its own. Allow me to merely hint at some of the most important themes and implications by focusing on the term, “empty roundness.” In the works of Enni and later Chikotsu, from which it proliferated into a variety of contexts, including medieval *kami* teachings, this term’s associations include: the moon disc with all its own connected imagery; the first stage of the developing fetus in the womb, *kalala* (J. *kararan* 羯刺藍), which arises from the unification of female blood and male seed and which is graphically represented by an empty circle; and the mirror, including the mirror used to represent the deity in some *kami* contexts.⁶² All these complex motifs in their own way relate to the tension between what is endowed with perceptual marks and what is not, and how this tension is overcome in primordial unity. Consequently, each motif or topic became a site at which the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings could be negotiated. In the following chapter, we shall return to the embryological context in specific. For now we merely need to note that in Enni’s work an alternative terminology for discussing this primordial unity was provided by *Yijing* cosmology, and that the use of such cosmological terms occurred in both Zen and tantric contexts. The *Yijing*, in other words, provided meta-terms, as it were, which could be applied in diverse doctrinal contexts, thereby, if not quite uniting, then at least bridging the distances between them.

To be certain, not everybody was happy about the profligate mingling of Chinese learning and Buddhist thought. Chikotsu in his *Kobokushū* 枯木集 dismissed both Daoism (*dōkyō* 道教) and Confucianism (*jukyō*), as well as their attendant cosmologies, as heretical. According to Chikotsu, these philosophies made either the void (*komu* 虚無) or singular *ki* (*ikki*) the origin and substance of the myriad phenomena, which in a circular movement both emerged from and eventually reabsorbed into them. Consequently, Daoism and Confucianism lacked any real understanding of causality.⁶³ Not to be outdone, the reliably acerbic Kokan even scorned Zhu Xi as a fake Confucian.⁶⁴

61 DNKKM, 208a.

62 See Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, pp. 231–300, on Enni esp. pp. 274–284.

63 See *Kobokushū*, 6–7.

64 See SHS, 364.

More generally, however, Neo-Confucianism and especially the *Yijing* came to be seen as an alternative, stylishly continental language in which to express Buddhist concepts. In his *Shōzaishū*, Mujū did just this with the tantric notion of empowerment. The notion of empowerment serves to explain how the grace or inner self-verification of the Buddha, which is markless and free from impurities, can work in deluded beings' minds, and by extension in tantric ritual. In his exposition of this idea, Mujū first cited the following Japanese poem as a natural expression of the all-encompassing quality of empowerment:

In the sky, or in the water?
In the water, or in the sky?
I do not remember;
Shining everywhere,
The autumn moon.⁶⁵

As Mujū put it in a more philosophical dictum,

in the markless manifesting the marked, provisionally [there are] the distinct shapes of ordinary men and sages. Although the pure and polluted are distinct, single, non-abiding nature (*mujū ichishō* 無住一性) does not change; changing, phenomena are not isolated [from nature. ...] The ten thousand waves of the ocean's water, all equally have the taste of salt.⁶⁶

Mujū also used the language of *Yijing* cosmological speculation to express the principle of tantric empowerment, drawing on precisely the terminology Enni had used before him:

When heaven and earth were undivided, there was the single *ki* (*ikki*) of primordial chaos. The clear rose upward and became heaven; the turbid sank downward and became earth. *Yang* and *yin* divided, birthing the three powers [of heaven, earth, and man]. In the *Daodejing* 道德經 it says, "The Way births one, one births two, two birth three, three birth the ten thousand things."⁶⁷ "The Way" is the great way of emptiness (*komu*), it is like the essence of non-abiding mind (*mujō no shintai* 無住心体). "One *ki* of primordial chaos" is the minute karmic consciousness of a single

65 *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 4, 449b.

66 *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 4, 449b.

67 This is the opening of chapter 42 of the *Daodejing*.

thought arising. The “two” are heaven and earth. The “three” are heaven, earth, and man; the proliferation of the three subtle and six coarse [kinds of nescience] on the three paths [of *samsāra*, namely defilement, ignorance, and karma]. From this the ten thousand phenomena are born. As Sengzhao 僧肇 (384–414) says, “Heaven, earth, and I have the same root, the ten thousand things and I are one body.”⁶⁸

The principle that the single Buddha mind is unchanging yet still shines forth in the myriad phenomena can be expressed equally in the Buddhist dogmatic and the Chinese cosmological idiom. Mujū continues to assert that,

the insight of the Buddha (*bucchiken* 仏知見) is directly revealed in the mind of the deluded. This is called “Bodhidharma’s directly pointing at the human mind, seeing nature, and fulfilling Buddhahood.” It is exactly the same as what in Shingon is called, “The body and mind of sentient beings is the complete body of Vairocana.”⁶⁹

Mujū considered Japanese poetry, Chinese *Yijing* speculation, tantric empowerment, and Zen’s direct indication to be expressions of the same fundamental principle. In successfully translating the tantric notion of empowerment into the *patois* of Chinese cosmology, Mujū demonstrated that in its complexity and metaphysical expressiveness the idiom of *Yijing* cosmogony rivaled tantric Buddhism as a universal metaphysical language. Also, I would like to note the first quotation above, “the way births one,” and so forth. Mujū is citing the very sentence from the *Daodejing* that Enni had referred to when constructing his tripartite hierarchy of the Three Mechanisms understood as descending from unitary intent towards plural responsiveness. As we shall now see, later generations of especially Sōtō thinkers were eager to avail themselves of all these new forms of expression with their explicit or implicit connections in order to construct their own Zen metaphysics based on the *Yijing*.

68 *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 4, 449b. The last quote is from the fourth essay, “Niepan wu ming lun” 涅槃無名論 or “Treatise on *nirvāṇa* not having a name,” of Sengzhao’s *Zhaolun* 肇論. See T 45: 159b.

69 *Shōzaishū*, CZS, vol. 4, 450a. The text reads, “*shiro zentai*” 思慮全体, which I take to be a copy error and read, *biro zentai* 毘盧全体. Compare KRSYS, 701c, which might be connected to Yōjō lineage transmissions.

7 Cosmogonic Fivestep: The *Yijing* and Five Positions in Medieval Sōtō Zen

Yijing thought and symbolism permeated the medieval lore of the Sōtō faction and left its indelible mark on the second of the two systems of mediation emphasized in the *Shūmon missan*, the Five Positions. One reason for the popularity of *Yijing* style cosmology in the Sōtō movement was that already its supposed continental ancestor, the Caodong 曹洞 house, was steeped in the symbolism of the *Yijing* due to the latter's alleged association with just these Five Positions teachings.⁷⁰

The Five Positions were attributed to the Caodong house's putative founder, Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (807–869), but their actual authorship remains unclear.⁷¹ Fortunately we do not need to delve into the scheme's longwinded history nor into the subtleties of its permutations. Suffice it to say that the Five Positions were a dialectical investigation into the relationship between emptiness and phenomena from five points of view, proceeding in three steps from their opposition via their mutual involvement, towards their non-differentiation or unity.

In the Song period, a new branch of Five Positions lore inspired by the enigmatic poem *Baojin sanmei ge* 宝镜三昧歌 or *Song of the Jewel Mirror Samādhi* appeared. This text first was published in Juefan Huihong's 觉範智洪 (1071–1128) *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* 禅林僧宝传. Although Juefan claimed otherwise, he is also the poem's likely author.⁷² The *Song of the Jewel Mirror Samādhi* is a poetic meditation on the Five Positions, and contains the following verse:

The six lines of [the hexagram] stacked *li* (*zhongli* 重離), the Slanted and the True mutually revolve, piled up becoming three, change exhausted becoming five.⁷³

70 Far from historical realities, the notion of five houses or traditions of Chan, each possessed of a distinct teaching style, actually is a retrospective fiction. However, it is precisely as textual fiction that the notion did exert some influence on later Chan and Zen history. See Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, pp. 20–26.

71 Ishii Shūdō argues for Dongshan's student Caoshan Benji 曹山本寂 (840–901) being the scheme's author. See the same, “Sōsan Honjaku.” The earliest source to attribute the Five Positions to Dongshan is the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德伝灯録 from 1004. See T 51: 336a. The earlier *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧伝 from 988 ascribes the Five positions to Caoshan. See T 50: 786b.

72 Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, p. 158; Kobayakawa, “Ungan hokkyō zanmai,” p. 87.

73 T 47: 515a.

In his *Zhizheng zhuan* 智証伝 or *Transmissions of Wisdom and Verification*,⁷⁴ Juefan interpreted this verse as suggesting that the manipulation of trigrams and hexagrams could show the internal workings of the Five Positions. This reading is based on a pun of sorts: the terms “true” and “slanted” can refer to both emptiness and phenomena, the starting points of the Five Positions dialectic, and, in the technical language associated with the exposition of the *Yijing*, to the position of *yin* and *yang* lines within a trigram.⁷⁵ Exploiting this ambiguity, Juefan interpreted the “true” and “slanted” occurring in the verse quoted above to refer to the *yin* and *yang* lines composing the hexagram *li* 離☲. The rest of the verse is then accordingly construed as explaining the transmutations of this figure into four others, so that each of the Five Positions ends up being represented by a hexagram or trigram from the *Yijing*. Alternatively, these hexagrams and trigrams could be replaced by a related set of five circles in order to represent the Five Positions, as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4 Five Positions and their Symbols^a

Turning to the Slanted from the True (C. <i>zheng zhong pian</i> 正中偏; J. <i>shō chū hen</i>)	<i>xun</i> 巽 (J. <i>sen</i>)	☴	◐
Turning to the True from the Slanted (C. <i>pian zhong zheng</i> 偏中正; J. <i>hen chū shō</i>)	<i>dui</i> 兌 (J. <i>da</i>)	☱	◑
Coming from the True (C. <i>zheng zhong lai</i> 正中來; J. <i>shō chū rai</i>)	<i>dagua</i> 大過 (J. <i>taika</i>)	☱☲	⊕
Arriving from the Slanted (C. <i>pian zhong zhi</i> 偏中至; J. <i>hen chū shi</i>)	<i>zhongfu</i> 中孚 (J. <i>chūfu</i>)	☴	◯
Arriving in Concurrence (C. <i>jin zhong dao</i> 兼中到; J. <i>ken chū tō</i>)	<i>li</i> 離 (J. <i>ri</i>)	☲	●

a See *Rentian yanmu* 人天眼目, T 48: 316b.

74 See X 63: 194a.

75 Counting from the bottom upwards, the first, third and fifth positions are considered *yang* positions, and the second, fourth and sixth *yin* positions. If in a given hexagram an unbroken *yang* line rests on a *yang* position, or a broken *yin* line on a *yin* position, it is considered “true,” otherwise it is “slanted.”

In medieval Japan, Sôtō teachers interpreted this multilayered symbolism of trigrams, hexagrams, and circles as signifying that the *Yijing* and the Five Positions referred to the same cosmological process. This cosmological process was the circular manifestation and absorption of the phenomenal universe from and into an undifferentiated primordial unity. This tendency is already discernible in the works of Keizan's heir Gasan Jōseki 峨山韶碩 (1274–1366), but it reached a first zenith in the works of Ketsudō Nōshō 傑堂能勝 (1355–1427) and his disciple Nan'ei Kenshū 南英謙宗 (1387–1460).⁷⁶ Ketsudō and Nan'ei's signature achievement is the degree to which they systematized the relationship between the cosmology associated with the *Yijing*, on the one hand, and the Five Positions, on the other. In doing so they labored under the long shadow of Neo-Confucian thought and extensively argued with its main thinkers.

As is well known, one of the main sources for Neo-Confucian cosmological thought is the *Xici zhuan* 繫辭伝.⁷⁷ This text is one of the Ten Wings (*shi yi* 十翼), a collection of early commentaries on the *Yijing* traditionally attributed to Confucius himself. The *Xici zhuan* describes the formation of the basic units of the symbolic system associated with the *Yijing*, the Eight Trigrams, as follows:

Therefore, the *Yi* has the Great Ultimate. It produces the Two Principles. The Two Principles produce the Four Images. The Four Images produce the Eight Trigrams.⁷⁸

This passage became the foundation of Neo-Confucian cosmogony and cosmology as formulated by Zhou Dunyi in his *Taiji tushou* 太極図説 or *Explanation of the Chart of the Great Ultimate*. This chart and its associated commentary describe an emanative cosmology which derives the production and change of the ten-thousand things from the unchanging Unsurpassed Ultimate (*wuji*

76 The Five Positions are an important topic in Gasan's vernacular lectures, the *Gasan oshō hōgo* 峨山和尚法語. See *Gasan oshō hōgo (ichi)*, in *Gasan Jōseki oshō hōgo shū* 峨山韶碩和尚法語集, zsszs, vol. 1, 6b–7a. However, in this text the Five Positions are not connected to *Yijing* cosmology. This tendency is apparent in another text attributed to Gasan, the *San'un kaigetsu* 山雲海月, which claims to be Gasan's final, secret instruction (*hiketsu* 秘訣) to his monastic successors. See *San'un kaigetsu*, sszs, vol. 5, 44a. In addition to the Tokugawa period text published in sszs, see Iizuka, "Ennōji zō," pp. 199–227. While the *San'un kaigetsu* shares some material with the *Hōgo*, it appears to be a later text fraudulently circulated under Gasan's name.

77 See Peterson, "Making Connections," pp. 67–116.

78 Takada and Gotō, *Ekikyō*, p. 241.

無極).⁷⁹ This cosmology provides a blueprint for the Neo-Confucian path of spiritual cultivation as the sages conform themselves to the cosmological process and trace it backwards to its origin.⁸⁰

Ketsudō and Nan'ei's ambition was to provide the Sōtō faction with a similarly secure cosmological ground, a program they explicitly announce towards the beginning of their main work, the *Kenketsu kōun hyōchū shogetsu kunsekikō* 頭訣耕雲評註種月拮據藁⁸¹:

The mundane law (J. *seken hō* 世間法), the Great Ultimate, the One Simplicity (*ichieki* 一易), the Two Principles, the Four Images, the Eight Trigrams, is precisely the supra-mundane law (*shusse hō* 出世法) of instantiation and principle (J. *jiri* 事理). Here [in the supra-mundane law] the Five Positions of coincidence (J. *kentai* 兼帶) are clearly set out.⁸²

In this passage, Nan'ei referred to the notion, widespread in East Asian Buddhism, that the realm of mundane activity is ultimately not separate from the supra-mundane realm of Buddhist soteriology. Mundane activity, which here refers to cosmogony, is structured by five cosmogonic stages loosely based on the *Yijing*, namely Great Ultimate, One Simplicity, Two Principles, Four Images, and Eight Trigrams. Buddhist soteriology, on the other hand, is governed by the Five Positions. These two sets, Nan'ei strongly implies, are structurally identical. The Confucian sage and the Sōtō Zen master thus undertake a similar program of cultivation that leads them back towards the both personal and cosmic origin. Yet whereas the sage is confined to the mundane, the Zen master carries out this program on both the mundane and the supra-mundane levels.

79 An alternative rendering of these terms is the "Great Pivot" for the Great Ultimate and the "Pivotless" for the Unsurpassed Ultimate. The image underlying this terminology is that *yin* and *yang* revolve around a central or great pole or pivot, that is to say the point at which they are not yet differentiated. The Pivotless, finally, is beyond even this non-differentiation, a horizon of transcendence at which the very notion of differentiation has not yet arisen.

80 See ZQ, vol. 13, 70.

81 Another version of this text is known as the *Tōjō ungetsuroku* 洞上雲月錄, which in parts differs significantly from the *Kunsekikō*. According to Matsuda, the *Kunsekikō* should be considered the more accurate record of Nōshō and Kenshū's views on the *Yijing* and cosmology, even if it cannot in its entirety be considered authentic. See Matsuda, "Kenketsu," p. 203f.

82 sszs, vol. 14, 134b. I have adopted the term "One Simplicity" from Graham, *The Book of Lieh-Tzu*, p. 18.

In order to show, rather than merely argue, this identity between the two spheres of cosmology and soteriology, Ketsudō and Nan’ei exploited the fact that Zhou’s cosmogonic diagram uses circles to represent the successive stages of cosmic self-differentiation. Ketsudō and Nan’ei identify these circles with the circles representing the Five Positions, and interpret this common use of circles as indicating the identity of the *Taiji tushou*’s cosmology with the Five Positions:

The master [Ketsudō] says: These verses [attached to the five circles symbolizing the Five Positions] take the *Yi[jing]*’s five diagrams, the Great Ultimate, the One Simplicity (*ichieki*), the Two Principles, the Four Images and the Eight Trigrams and equalize (*dō* 同) them with Arriving in Concurrence, Approaching Concurrence, Coming from the True, Turning to the True from the Slanted and Turning to the Slanted from the True [that is to say, the Five Positions].⁸³

Table 5 summarizes the correspondences between the Five Positions and the various systems of cosmogony Nan’ei and Ketsudō frequently refer to.

TABLE 5 Correspondences between Sôtō, Neo-Confucian and *Yijing* cosmology

Five Positions	Sôtō cosmological stages	Neo-Confucian cosmological stages	<i>Xici zhuan</i>
Arriving in Concurrence	Great Ultimate	Unsurpassed Ultimate	Great Ultimate
Approaching Concurrence	One Simplicity	Great Ultimate	
Coming from the True	Two Principles	Two Principles	Two Principles
Turning to the True from the Slanted	Four Images	Four Images	Four Images
Turning to the Slanted from the True	Eight Trigrams	Eight Trigrams	Eight Trigrams

83 *Kunsekikō*, sszs, vol. 14, 178ab. Ketsudō and Nan’ei were aware that in introducing the “One Simplicity” so as to bring the cosmogonic stages up to five they departed from the model of the *Xici zhuan*, a move they extensively discussed in reference to the Liezi 列子 and Zhuo Dunyi. See *Kunsekikō*, sszs, vol. 14, 181.

I have described the relationship thinkers such as Nan'ei postulated to hold between the cosmological stages derived from Neo-Confucianism and the *Yijing*, on the one hand, and, the Five Positions, on the other, as “structural identity.” The reason for this terminological choice is that whereas these two sets refer to the same cosmic structures, they represent two different processes occurring therein. These two processes are the process of the emanation and of the absorption of the ten thousand things from and into the undifferentiated ground or origin, as the following passage explains:

The five diagrams of the *Yi[jing]*, i.e. the five cosmological stages and their representations] show the way of stepping forth [i.e. emanation]; for this reason they begin from the Great Ultimate and arrive in the Eight Trigrams. The verses [appended to the circles of the Five Positions], on the other hand, show the way of entering [i.e. re-absorption]; thus they [begin] from the Eight Trigrams and end in the Great Ultimate. This stepping forth and entering are the essential *samādhi* (J. *shūshi sammai* 宗旨三昧).⁸⁴

Whereas the *Yijing* describes an emanative, cosmogonic process from unity to diversity or “stepping forth,” the Five Positions describe the reverse movement from differentiation to simplicity or “entering.” The key term in the above passage is “essential *samādhi*.” According to Nan'ei and Ketsudō, to practice Zen is to actualize in one's spiritual development the cosmic process of evolution from and return to the primordial origin. In this sense, Buddhist soteriology is to undo and renew Chinese cosmogony.

8 The Semiotics of Hexagrams: From Divination to Zen Practice

What Ketsudō and Nan'ei gained from these conceptual maneuverings is access to Neo-Confucian divinatory semiotics as developed especially by Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi claimed that the figures of the *Yijing* do not function as symbols but rather as indices that show their divinatory situation. They are never separated from their original ground in the Great or Unsurpassed Ultimate and encapsulate within themselves the process of their creation.

Consider the act of drawing a trigram or hexagram on an unmarked sheet of paper. As each line is set down, it results from a process of differentiation, this broken line, not that unbroken one. This process mirrors the binary

84 SSZS, vol. 14, 179b.

progress of *yin* and *yang* as they differentiate out from the Unsurpassed and Great Ultimate. At the same time, each specific line drawn reveals the originally undifferentiated whiteness of the paper and thus, in a sense, the totality of all lines that could be drawn. Non-differentiation, or to be empty of any specific line, means the potential for any and all possible lines. Hence the drawing of each single possible line contains within itself the principle of all possible lines. When we contemplate a hexagram, it is not through some associated verbal explanation that we comprehend its relationship to the Ultimate in a specific *yin/yang* constellation. Rather, we see through its form the differentiating process by which it formed from and rests within the Ultimate. This line of reasoning has been recognized by the *Yijing*'s commentators, and Nan'ei quotes Zhu Xi to the effect that within heaven and earth there is nothing but the mystery of the *yin* and *yang* of the Great Ultimate, which even before its self-differentiation already contains all possible forms.⁸⁵

Nan'ei explicitly addressed the semiotic problem of how the non-differentiated formless (*mugyō* 無形), or the Great Ultimate, could be realized in form, or the hexagram *li*, the central symbol of the *Yijing*-based interpretation of the Five Positions:

[Nan'ei had previously hung an image of the hexagram *li* on the wall and explained its symbolic significance.] Again [Nan'ei] asks, "The Great Ultimate is the extreme of no form. *Li* is an image that has form. It is simply because the explained [verbal] principles are in accord that *li* aligns with the Diagram of the Great Ultimate. This being the case, ought one make the Diagram of the Great Ultimate or draw *li* [at all, given that they are but conventional symbols]?" [Substituting for himself, Nan'ei says,] "If intent is complete, do not demand resemblance of appearance. The precedent is the supreme judge of horses, Juefang Gao."⁸⁶

Juefang Gao is featured in the *Liezi* as the highest authority on horses. He does not judge them by their appearance, but rather by discerning the "heavenly mechanism" (*tianji* 天機) at work within them. In just such a manner, the sage perceives the progress of the formless within what has form, a cognitive strategy I have exemplified in the previous paragraph by the way in which a hexagram is contemplated. Needless to say, this notion of non-apprehending the formless through form, not by coincidence, I suggest, strongly recalls

85 See *Kunsekikō*, sszs, vol. 14, 183b–184a.

86 The last sentence is a quotation from a poem by Chen Yuyi 陳與義 (1090–1138). *Kunsekikō*, sszs, vol. 14, 135b.

Enni's explanation of how the superior *tāntrika* fathoms the markless inner self-verification of Mahāvairocana through the phenomenal appearances of tantric ritual technology.

But to return to our immediate context of Sōtō *kōan* lore, the *Shūmon missan*'s central problem was to differentiate the fundamental, creative emptiness of the Sōtō faction from the vicious quietism of the emptiness of extinction propagated by the single phrase of Rinzai. We can now anticipate why the *Shūmon missan* invoked the Five Positions in order to make its case. When integrated with the *kōan* lore of the Three Positions, which contributed a graded hierarchy of *kōan*, the Five Positions and their associated symbolism, properly reconfigured by being read through the *Yijing*, provided a cosmological model and theory of semiotics capable of explaining how the plurality of *kōan* as linguistic entities relate to the simple, silent self-presence of the Buddha's mind.

9 *Kōan* Changes: The Five and Three Positions in Medieval Sōtō Zen

What propelled the association between the Five and Three Positions conceptual schemes is that the Five Positions themselves could be read in a tertiary manner. Originally, the Five Positions described the relationship between two elements, the True and the Slanted, in three steps, from their opposition, via their mutual involvement, to their coincidence. In medieval Sōtō sources, however, we find a reading of the Five Positions that considered them based on three primary elements. One of the earliest sources describing this shift is the 15th century *Tendai myōmoku ruijushō*. According to this source, the Five Positions are based on the three roots (*sankon* 三根) of the True, the Slanted, and the Middle. The Middle, the text explains, is the common essence (*sōtai* 総体) within which True and Slanted coincide (*sōsoku* 相即).⁸⁷ On this tripartite reading, the text continues, the three roots of the Five Positions can be considered identical to the Three Truths of the Tendai school, with True corresponding to emptiness, Slanted to provisional existence, and the Middle to the truth of the middle way. It will be recalled that the *Shūmon missan* in like manner associated the Three Positions with the Three Truths of Tendai.

This change from the Middle as the coincidence (*ken* 兼) of True and Slanted to the Middle as their common essence and a third element in its own right is reflected even on the linguistic level in the way in which at least some medieval Sōtō materials rendered the Chinese terminology of the Five Positions into Japanese. The *Kango fukun* 閑語不見 by Shōsan Zenju 勝山禪殊 (d.u.), a

87 *Tendai myōmoku ruijushō*, TSZS, vol. 22, 56a–b.

17th century compilation of Sôtō *kōan* interpretations, for instance, renders Coming from the True (*shō no naka yori kitari* 正中来), the third of the Five Positions, as “truly coming from the Middle” (*masa ni chū yori kitari* 正中来).⁸⁸

Due to their close association, in medieval Sôtō oral transmission materials the Three and Five Positions often were symbolized by the same graphic means. A record of *kirigami* transmission materials held at Sōrinji 雙林寺 and dated to 1609 contains an entry for a *Chart of Three and Five Positions, Together with the Fundamental Cases of the Five Positions* (*Goi san'i zu narabi ni goi hon-soku* 五位三位図并五位本則).⁸⁹ Unfortunately, the Sōrinji archive as published by Iizuka Hironobu does not contain a document fitting this description, but a text entitled *Chart of the Three Positions Chart of the Five Positions* (*San'i no zu goi no zu* 三位之図五位之図) transmitted at Kōtaiji 広泰寺 has been published by Ishikawa Rikizan 石川力山 (1943–1997).⁹⁰ This document contains two stylized images, which represent the two sides of a coin. The two images represent the Three and Five Positions, the coin their common essence. Each of the two images/sides of the coin is divided into smaller circles. The first image is concentrically divided into three circles, representing the Three Positions. The second circle is divided into a black and a white half. Along the dividing line of the two halves, three smaller, partially hidden, coaxial circles are inscribed, the middle of which is dotted. The two halves and three coaxial circles represent the Five Positions. In sum, the *Chart* represents the unity of the Three and Five Positions by drawing on the image of the two faces of a single coin.

The use of coins to represent the Five Positions dates back to the oldest layer of Sôtō transmission materials. The *Ichimonzen no kirigami* 一文銭之切紙, which was transmitted from Chikusan Tokusen 竺山得仙 (1344–1413) to his disciple Ichū Shūkin 惟忠守勤 (?–1447) in 1411, is the oldest known *kirigami* document in existence. In this text, the symbolism of a Chinese coin (*taihei tsūhō* 太平通宝), a common currency used in Japan at the time, is employed to explain the Five Positions.⁹¹ Ketsudō and Nan'ei, too, were dedicated numismatists. The two masters referred to the use of coins as divinatory implements in order to explain that in Sôtō Five Positions teachings True is associated with *yin* and Slanted with *yang*, the opposite of the traditional interpretation.⁹² Nan'ei even went so far as to claim that the principles underlying coin divination were a

88 See *Kango fukun* 閑語不見, reproduced in Iizuka, “Chūsei Sôtōshū,” p. 204.

89 Reproduced in Iizuka and Tsuchiya, “Rinka Sôtōshū (jūni),” p. 185.

90 See ZSS, vol. 2, 824–825.

91 Reproduced in ZSS, vol. 1, 382–383.

92 See Licha, “Sôtōshū.”

“secret transmission” (*mitsuden* 密伝) that rendered his own lineage the sole repository for the orthodox exposition of the Five Positions.⁹³

Another important set of symbols used to represent the Five Positions were circles. As explained above, the common use of circles provided Ketsudō and Nan’ei with a visual argument for identifying the Five Positions with the cosmogonic stages of the *Yijing*. Also the Three Positions came to be represented with circles, as we have already seen in the case of the *Yasan no zu*. To cite one more example, a *kirigami* document from Yōkōji, the *Sōtō san’i no daiji* 曹洞三位之大事 or *Great Matter of the Three Positions of Sōtō* from 1650, represents the Three Positions as black, red, and white circles, while dedicating its second half to an examination of the circles associated with the Five Positions. The *Sōtō san’i no daiji* concludes with the following discussion of the two sets’ relationship:

The “self” of “self [and what is] in front of the eyes” (*jiko mokuzen to iu toki no jiko* 自己目前トイフ時キノ自己), in terms of the Five Positions, it is Turning to the Slanted from the True. This, in the way of the *Yi[jing]*, is also called the One Simplicity.⁹⁴

This passage clearly identifies with each other the Three Positions, which are the main structure of *kōan* interpretation, the Five Positions, the main soteriological structure, and the five emanative stages derived from the *Yijing*, the main cosmological structure of medieval Sōtō lore. This graphically and discursively mediated alignment allowed cosmological and cosmogonic associations to be transferred into the field of *kōan* interpretation. I will close this long investigation with two examples of such cosmologized *kōan*.

The *Nenge kirigami* 拈華切紙 is an undated document kept at Yōkōji 永光寺 temple, the title of which translates as *Kirigami on Twirling the Flower*.⁹⁵ This is a reference to the famous story of the first transmission of the Chan or Zen lineage from Śākyamuni Buddha to Mahākāśyapa. Śākyamuni was preaching the *Dharma* on Vulture Peak. Wordlessly, he picked up a flower and presented it to the assembly, twirling it between his fingers. Nobody understood but Mahākāśyapa, who smiled, whereupon the Buddha instituted the Chan or Zen lineage by making Mahākāśyapa his heir.⁹⁶ The *Nenge kirigami* offers

93 See *Jūri jōhenketsu* 重離疊變訣, sszs, vol. 14, 43–47.

94 Reproduced in zss, vol. 1, 289–290.

95 Reproduced in Iizuka and Tsuchiya, “Rinka Sōtōshū (go),” pp. 169–170.

96 The story is almost certainly based on the *Dafan tianwang wenfojueyi jing* 大梵天王問仏決疑經, a Chinese apocryphal text. See Ishii Shūdō, “Daibon tennō,” pp. 187–224. The notion that Mahākāśyapa became the Buddha’s successor can be found in materials

an interpretation of this episode that focuses on a chart clearly inspired by the Neo-Confucian diagram of the Great Ultimate, with which it shares some graphical elements. The uppermost two, black and red circles are identified as the Unsurpassed Ultimate and the Great Ultimate, respectively. The third circle, which in turn contains a smaller circle with red and black halves, shows the One Simplicity and the Two Principles. Underneath this circle, the inscription, “In front of the eyes of self” (*jiko mokuzen* 自己目前) is placed, a reference to the “self” from the Three Positions. Underneath this third circle, the chart of the *Nenge kirigami* rejoins the Diagram of the Great Ultimate, with a circle alternately colored red and black representing the movement and stillness of *yang* and *yin*; a chart showing the interaction of the five phases or elements of Chinese cosmological thought; a red and black circle representing male and female; and finally, a simple circle representing the creation of the ten-thousand things.

This chart is accompanied by an explanatory text that links the cosmogonic process encoded in the chart to the human body, the five elements, the five organs, the five basic Buddhist precepts, and so forth. Thankfully, we do not need to go into the exposition’s profuse and somewhat arbitrary details. What is important for us to note is that the *Nenge kirigami* document uses the cosmogonic language and concepts of the *Yijing* together with a technical term from the Three Positions in order to explicate a *kōan*. As the text itself concludes:

In between Heaven and Earth, everything is but the transformation of this one flower. All sentient beings appear from inside this flower, all dwell within this flower. Using the Diagram of the Great Ultimate, the story of picking up the flower is thoroughly investigated and becomes intimate[ly understood]. Apart from the Great Ultimate, there is no *Buddhadharma*; without the *Buddhadharma*, no Great Ultimate is established.⁹⁷

The *Nenge kirigami* thus conceptualizes the transmission between the Buddha and Mahākāśyapa, or rather interprets the *kōan* recording this transmission, in terms of the generative process derived from the *Yijing*. The flower, the means of the Buddha’s direct indication of his inner self-realization, functions like the Great Ultimate, or perhaps its diagram, productive of all differentiation, yet always beyond all distinction. This framing became possible through the

such as the *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經. See T 12: 377c. This tradition can be traced in Indian sources. See Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, pp. 695–699. However, in Indian sources Mahākāśyapa and his successors transmit the *vinaya*, not the *Dharma*.

97 Iizuka and Tsuchiya, “Rinka Sōtōshū (go),” p. 169.

complex interplay of associations between *Yijing* cosmology, the metaphysics of the Five Positions, and the *kōan* lore of the Three Positions. In the *Nenge kirigami*, this interplay culminates in the assertion that the *Buddhadharma* itself is but *Yijing* cosmological speculation.

In materials such as the *Nenge kirigami* the *Yijing* and its cosmos have replaced the tantric structures that guided earlier readings of Zen phrases developed by the likes of Enni or Chikotsu. As we saw in Chapter 4, Chikotsu had relied on a tantric physiology of the heart/mind in order to interpret the very same episode of the Buddha transmitting to Mahākāśyapa by means of a flower. In Chikotsu's account, the flower the Buddha had picked up corresponds to the physical heart organ in the chest, which in turn is part of a wider network of associations and doctrinal motifs focused on the central lotus flower of the *maṇḍala*. In the *Nenge kirigami*, on the other hand, the Buddha's flower had come to refer to the outward-spiraling forces of cosmogony that structure a Chinese cosmos beyond the *maṇḍala*. This is an extraordinarily clear example of how *kōan* interpretation, even the interpretation of a single case, can differ fundamentally depending on the hermeneutical model used to guide one's reading.

Let us look at another generative interpretation of *kōan*. The *Hekigan sanzen ryūhitsu kirigami* 碧巖參禪了畢切紙 or *Kirigami on Completing Instructions on the Hekigan* from 1646 is a text that purports to offer an explanation of the entirety of the *Biyān lu* 碧巖錄 in a single diagram.⁹⁸ At the top is a black circle. On the left the words “Bodhidharma does not know” (*daruma fushiki* 達磨不識) are written, on the right the words “First principle of holy truth” (*shōtai daiichigi* 聖諦第一義). Underneath, three more circles are placed in the shape of a triangle pointing downwards. On the left is a black circle. It is accompanied by the words “water” and “moon.” On the right is a red circle identified as “fire” and “sun.” Beneath and in between these two circles is a white one. It bears the words “wind” and “bright star.” As we shall see in the following chapter, the images of sun/moon/stars and fire/water/wind are closely associated with the three elements involved in conception, namely male seed, female blood, and the rebirth consciousness.

To return to our diagram, below this constellation of circles is placed another circle horizontally divided into an upper white and a lower black half. Left of it is the phrase “The blown-hair sword” (*suimō no ken* 吹毛之劍). On the right, “Open and wide, nothing holy” (*kakuzen mushō* 廓然無聖). A final circle at the bottom of the diagram is accompanied by the phrases “Beginning and end are equal,” “Six years of silent sitting,” and “Hell” on the left, and the

98 YK 340.

complementary phrases “Hundred *kōan*,” “Nine years gazing at the wall,” and “Heaven’s palace” on the right. Let us look at these elements one by one.

The two phrases associated with the uppermost black circle, “Bodhidharma does not know” and “First principle of holy truth,” are references to the first case of the *Bīyan lu*. Bodhidharma is asked what “the first principle of holy truth” is, to which he replies, “open and wide, nothing holy” (*kakuzen mushō*). When pressed on who he is to declare such a thing, Bodhidharma answered, “[I] don’t know.”⁹⁹ The red, white, and black circles presumably represent the Three Positions and associated triads. An identical way of representing the Three Positions can also be found in other transmission documents dedicated to their exposition, for instance the *Sōtō san’i no daiji* already quoted above. The inscriptions accompanying the black-and-white circle are references to the first and last case of the *Bīyan lu*. As already pointed out, the phrase, “nothing holy” appears in the first case. The “blown-hair sword” is a blade so sharp as to cut in two a hair brushing against it in the breeze, one of Baling Haojian 巴陵顥鑑 (fl. 10th century) “Three Barriers” discussed in the *Bīyan lu*’s last case.¹⁰⁰ Finally, the inscriptions accompanying the lowermost, white circle are self-explanatory, each phrase on the left corresponding to its mirror phrase on the right, from the outermost to the innermost pairs of phrases: The “hundred *kōan*” are the hundred cases of the *Bīyan lu*, which from first to last equally reflect the same single “holy truth” that “Bodhidharma does not know.” The Buddha, the first Chan or Zen ancestor, contemplated this truth for nine years sitting perfectly still under the *Bodhi* tree, whereas Bodhidharma, at the same time the last Indian and first Chinese ancestor, wrestled with it for six years staring at a wall. Finally, heaven and hell of course are the highest and the lowest realm of rebirth, which Zen masters understand to be but mind’s shadow stages.

In short, the *Hekigan sanzen ryūhitsu kirigami* treats the text of the *Bīyan lu*, one of the epitomes of Chinese Chan literature, as a complex symbol in a manner similar to how Nan’ei treated the hexagram *li* or the chart of the Unsurpassed Ultimate. The *kirigami* shows how an undifferentiated ground, the “holy truth” unknown even to the Buddhas and ancestors, proliferates into, or can be shown by, a plurality of *kōan* cases. This process functions according to the same principles as the one through which the trigrams and hexagrams emerge from the Great Ultimate in divinatory action. This latter process itself is but a reflection or re-enactment of the cosmic drama of emanation and inherence. This generative grammar of *kōan* language, as it were, is condensed into a

99 See T 48: 140a for the case.

100 See T 48: 223b.

chart that not by coincidence resembles the diagrams of both Neo-Confucian cosmology and the Five Positions we have discussed above. All three kinds of charts were understood to show the same creative and productive interplay between the formless and its forms. This is the fecund void of Sōtō *kōan* traditions, which the *Shūmon missan* argues eludes the nihilistic quietism of the Rinzai lineages.

10 Conclusions

The question of how the formless (*mugyō*) can be discerned in what has form is structurally similar to the question of how what is without perceptual characteristics (*musō*) can be discerned within or through what is endowed with perceptual marks. This latter problem was a central concern of early medieval Buddhism that we saw to significantly contribute to Enni's formulation of what I term "esoteric Zen." As seen in Chapters 2 and 3, Enni's Three Mechanisms developed from the problem how the inner self-verification of the Buddha could be communicated, and Chapter 3 in specific discussed how the semiotic nature of signs determines Enni's understanding of the relationship between Zen and the teachings in both their exoteric and tantric forms. The *Shūmon missan* is animated by similar concerns transposed into the context of early modern sectarian polemics, namely how to avoid the accusation of propagating a vicious quietism so as to promote the Sōtō faction as the true Zen in accord with Tenkai's Tendai teachings.

The *Shūmon missan* invokes a rhetoric we have first encountered at the very inception of our inquest: that Zen *kōan* merely eradicate thought and hence fall into the quietist trap. Only Enni was said to have escaped this trap by formulating his Three Mechanisms. This escape was made possible, I have argued, by reading the highest Zen mechanism, *kōjō* or the direct indication of mind, into a tantric world and thereby providing it with communicative mechanisms. Yet despite Enni's success, later generations of scholiasts continued to press the charge of quietism in an attempt to delegitimize the idiom of *kōan* as a valid form of "buddhology" or "Buddha talk."

The *Shūmon missan* sought to deflect such criticism onto the Rinzai tradition. Rinzai practitioners, the text asserts, do nothing but contemplate the "one phrase" *watō*, a practice that leads into the emptiness of extinction. Sōtō practice, on the other hand, is guided by the Three and Five Positions, through which its *kōan* studies realize the generative power of "fundamental emptiness." Although not identical with Enni's Three Mechanisms, the Three Positions belonged to the discursive context of tripartite schemes of

Zen teaching devices elaborated in many early medieval Zen lineages on the basis of Enni's original design. Although Enni's Three Mechanisms had been inclusive of doctrinal teachings, some of these tripartite schemes eventually came to be seen as exclusively representing types, and potentially hierarchies, of *kōan*. The Five Positions, on the other hand, acted as intermediaries through which the Sōtō faction could absorb the cosmological language of the *Yijing*, which already thinkers such as Enni and Mujū had begun to adopt as an alternative idiom equally expressive and flexible as the tantric *patols*. Especially in the Sōtō faction *Yijing* inspired cosmology became a conceptual framework free of tantric elements in which the oscillation between the markless mind and the phenomenal means of mediation could be thought.

In the previous chapter, I have discussed a similar process of tantric Buddhism's gradual displacement from its dominant position within medieval Japanese Buddhism. Kokan inherited from his predecessors the complex of problems surrounding Zen physiology, a knotted issue that had arisen from Enni's identification of Zen with the incarnate tantric mind. Yet instead of utilizing the conceptual apparatus of the tantric teachings, Kokan chose to address these problems in a new, non-tantric manner. Likewise, medieval Sōtō *kōan* lore had to confront the criticism of *kōan* practice being a form of quietism but was no longer confined to answering it in the diction of the established schools. Rather than being understood as a communicative means indicating the Mahāvairocana Buddha's inner self-realization, *kōan* practice now could be shown to mirror the self-differentiation of the Great Ultimate.

I have repeatedly emphasized the creative, productive, or generative power inherent in the Great Ultimate pregnant with the transformations of *yin* and *yang* as shown in the *Yijing*'s trigrams and hexagrams. This is more than a simile. Generation in the sense of procreation was a central metaphor organizing medieval tantric teachings according to which the soteriological operation mirrored the processes of ontogenesis. In the next two chapters, we shall see that this was another pattern that Zen lineages adapted, an adaption made possible and facilitated by the cosmological and cosmogonic understandings of *kōan* language discussed above.

The Topology of the Womb

Enni, Chikotsu, Dōhan, and the Beginnings of Zen Embryology

Ex utero, ante luciferum, genui te.

...

From the womb before the Morningstar I begot thee.

Vulgate, Psalm 109

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1 Introduction

Although today Buddhism often is interpreted with reference to the concepts of psychology and mental health, escape from the ravages of saṃsāric becoming has been the normative soteriological preoccupation for most of its history.¹ To put it perhaps a little polemically, the aim of Buddhist discipline was not to become a wholesome, happy, well-integrated sentient being, but rather to stop being a being in the first place, and to join the ranks of what the Russian *savant* Alexander Piatigorsky (1929–2009) memorably described as the “non-sentient non-beings” known as Buddhas.²

Given this preoccupation with ending birth, it comes as little surprise that since its inception Buddhism had both a strong interest in, and a rather complicated relationship with, the womb as *saṃsāra*’s matrix. As the Buddha declared of himself in the *Dhaniya sutta*, “I have broken my bonds as a bull or an elephant tears a rotten vine. I will not again lie in the womb.”³ Piatigorsky comments:

1 The term “normative” is used to indicate that whereas Buddhist practitioners and institutions had varying motivations, from gaining worldly benefits to immortality in the flesh, which on the individual, institutional, or societal levels might have trumped liberation from *saṃsāra* as the *telos* of Buddhist disciplines, on the doctrinal and ideological levels these interests still at least had to pay lip service to ending the circle of becoming.

2 Piatigorsky, *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 23.

3 SN 1.2.

The womb [...] reflect[s] two quite different and even contrary ideas: (A) that of the whole of nature to be dismissed [...] and (B) that of the universal (and also 'natural') 'instrument of transformation', by means of which alone, a sentient being can be born as a man and thereafter become an arhat [...]. It is obvious that in the latter case we are dealing with the womb as a *conditio sine qua non* of Buddhahood too.⁴

As Piatigorsky points out much more eloquently, the soteriological status and value of the womb is ambiguous. On the one hand, it reflects the order of the natural world that is to be renounced in the process of religious cultivation; on the other, it represents the origin of the only means by which such cultivation is possible, namely the body, and specifically the ideal, male human body of the Buddhist ascetic.

This both positive and negative link between taking life in the womb and the soteriological endeavor was not lost on the Buddhist scholastic tradition. It is apparent, for instance, in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* of Vasubandhu (fl. 4th–5th century). In this text, the five stages of ontogenesis, which will concern us below in more detail, are taught in conjunction with the twelve links of dependent co-origination (*S. pratītyasamutpāda*), which describe the processes that establish a conditioned, causal and karmic, continuity between lives.⁵ According to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the exegetical traditions devoted to it, the fourth and fifth conditional links, namely the psychophysical apparatus of the new life taking to the womb and its endowment with the six sense organs, correspond to the five stages of ontogenesis.⁶

Insight into the workings of rebirth and dependent origination is a central motif in the mythology of the Buddha's liberation.⁷ The soteriological strategy

4 Piatigorsky, *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 28.

5 The doctrine of dependent origination is commonly understood to describe the processes of rebirth over two or three lifetimes. However, the abhidhammic or abhidharmic traditions of, for instance, the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda have also proposed complementary interpretations of dependent origination applicable to a single mind moment. Some modern interpreters have rejected the multiple-lifetime model. For a brief overview, see Anālayo, "Development of Insight," pp. 155–156.

6 See *Apidamo jushe lun* 阿毘達磨俱舍論, T 29: 47c–48a. Also Fukauchi, *Kushagaku gairon*, p. 142. The fourth link of dependent origination, *nāmarūpa* (*myōshiki* 名色), corresponds to the first four stages and one part of the fifth stage of embryological development, whereas the fifth link, *ṣaḍāyatana* (*rokusho* 六處), corresponds to the completion of the fifth phase of embryological development.

7 During the night of his awakening, the Buddha is said to have gained three kinds of knowledge, namely of his own past lives; of how all sentient beings traverse the circle of rebirth according to the karmic law; and of the four Noble Truths. See for instance MN 36. According

derived from this mythology is predicated on undoing the conditional links that lead to return to the womb. This would suggest that conception, during which a new being becomes in the womb through the unification of, according to the Buddhist understanding, the three elements of male seed, female blood, and the rebirth consciousness linking to the previous lifetime, is a soteriologically potent moment at which the *saṃsāric* circle can either be broken or renewed. To take this thought one step further, one could imagine a soteriological operation of returning to the very moment of conception in order to nudge the incipient life from the conditions leading to an impermanent, suffering, sentient body trapped in *saṃsāra* towards those productive of the perfected body of a Buddha.

Despite being pregnant with the discursive possibilities and symbolical resources that would enable it to articulate an embryological soteriology similar to the one just sketched, the classical tradition of Indian Buddhist scholasticism never actually did so. Instead, it emphasized the negative connotations of the womb as the unclean passageway into the invariable miserableness of human existence.⁸ In his *Visuddhimagga* or *Path of Purification*, the great commentator Buddhaghosa (fl. 5th century) memorably compared the fetus in the womb to a worm dwelling in rotting fish.⁹

It was not until later that a more positive evaluation of the soteriological potential of sexuality and procreation emerged. Regardless of denomination, the practices described in the literature produced by the tantric movements often focused on the manipulation and sacramental consumption, oral or otherwise, of sexual substances such as semen or uterine blood, or on harnessing the power of sexual bliss for the psychophysical transformation of the practitioner in a ritual or initiatory context.¹⁰ Knowledge of fetal development was necessary as a detailed understanding of the human body, especially in its

to later systematizations, following his release, the Buddha dwelled in a state of meditative bliss for seven days. Emerging from it, he reflected on the twelve links of dependent origination in both forward and reverse orders. See of instance Ud 1.1–1.3.

8 Garrett, *Religion*, p. 106.

9 Buddhaghosa, *Path of Purification*, p. 512. Where the Indian scholastic tradition maps embryological material onto the stages of the spiritual path, this is often done in a clearly metaphorical manner. See for example the **Daśabhūmika sūtra śāstra* (C. *Shìdì jīng lùn* 十地經論), which likens dwelling in the womb to the *bodhisattva* stages. T 26: 124a, 127b. However, there is no suggestion that the “baby *bodhisattva*’s” spiritual practice in any way is connected with procreation beyond the images of infancy and maturation.

10 As David Gray has argued in his study of the *Cakrasaṃvartantra* and its commentaries, the sacramental consumption of sexual fluids appears to be the older practice, which was gradually refined into practices centered on the subtle body and the generation of bliss, and finally into a symbolic or meditative performance suitable to a monastic setting.

subtle, energetic form, was required to achieve the tantric transmutation from a merely human into a perfected body. Furthermore, the transition from the intermediary state between rebirths to conception, and through growth in the womb to birth, provided the advanced *tāntrika* capable of consciously undergoing and influencing this process with the opportunity to purify habitual saṃsāric tendencies and emerge from the womb an awakened being.

The tantric affirmation of the sexual body's capacity for liberation did not translate into an entirely positive understanding of the womb or of rebirth *per se*. The continuing ambiguity associated with them can be deduced from the development of practices to "close the womb's door" as described by Frances Garrett in her study of Tibetan embryology. In these auto-contraceptive methods, knowledge of procreation and the earliest stages of fetal development is used to prevent the intermediary consciousness from entering into the womb, thereby bringing the circle of rebirths to an end.¹¹ Thus even in the late tantric context, the womb retained some of its ambiguity as a place of both liberation and saṃsāric bondage.

Until recently, our understanding of Buddhist embryology has for the most part been restricted to the scholastic and late tantric traditions outlined above. Recently, two more sources of Buddhist embryology have increasingly drawn scholarly attention: First, the medical and alchemical embryology embedded in the traditional Buddhist meditation techniques of South and Southeast Asia now known as *borān kamatṭhāna*; and second, the initiatory embryology of medieval Japanese tantric Buddhism and its variations. To but briefly sketch the former before turning for the remainder of this chapter to the latter, *borān kamatṭhāna*, "ancient practices," or "Southern Esoteric Buddhism," are terms bestowed by scholars on a family of meditative systems used in South and Southeast Asian Buddhism until their increasing marginalization and near extinction during the modernist reforms of the late 19th and 20th centuries. In some places, such as Laos, for instance, these meditative systems appear to have been considered orthodox until the mid-seventies, and they are still practiced and taught by a small number of adepts throughout Southeast Asia.¹² Building on the pioneering efforts of the French anthropologist Francois Bizot scholars such as Kate Crosby have excavated the outlines of a tradition of religious practice that extensively draws on ayurvedic and alchemical knowledge

See Gray, *Cakrasamvara Tantra*, pp. 103–141, esp. pp. 118–141. Also Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 243–277, esp. pp. 262–266. Also Dalton, "The Development of Perfection."

11 Garrett, *Religion*, pp. 109–112.

12 For a description of *borān kamatṭhāna* style *ānāpānasati* or mindfulness of the breath in contemporary Thailand, see Skilton and Choempolpaisal, "Ancient Theravāda Meditation System."

to conceptualize its contemplative practices. One of the dominant models of spiritual cultivation used in these traditions is that of the practitioner as a womb within which the embryo of awakening matures. As Crosby has shown, ayurvedic obstetrics serve as a practical framework through which to interpret the meditative concepts and prescriptions of the *abhidhamma* tradition. For instance, ayurvedic treatments seek to induce in the growing embryo desirable qualities by applying various alchemical substances, which often are delivered through the nasal passage of the mother. *Borān kamaṭṭhāna* meditation practitioners use *nimitta*, signs of meditational development, or the letters representing them, in like manner. These are moved from the tip of the nose, where *nimitta* are often said to occur, through the nasal passage and other prescribed points in the body into the practitioner's "womb." There they serve to nourish the embryo of awakening.¹³ As Crosby emphasizes, the close connection between the canonical *abhidhamma* and its commentaries, on the one hand, and the terms and concepts used in *borān kamaṭṭhāna*, on the other, make it unlikely that this system of meditation arose from a direct cross-fertilization with latter period tantric Buddhism and its sexual practices. Rather, she argues, both *tantra* and *borān kamaṭṭhāna* should be seen as arising from a common background that included medicine and alchemy. These fields provided technologies, or delivery mechanisms, to borrow Crosby's apt metaphor, thorough which the theoretical prescriptions of abhidhammic discourse could be realized.¹⁴

The second strand of Buddhist embryology that recently rose to prominence belongs to medieval Japanese Buddhism. Both sectarian heresiology and modern scholarship until recently have labored hard to create an image of Japanese tantric traditions as free from what they considered deviant practices and sexual perversions. Evidence of such shenanigans that could not be ignored was attributed to a single, rogue lineage, the infamous Tachikawaryū 立川流.¹⁵ More recent research has demonstrated that sexual and embryological teachings were not heresies but a perfectly respectable part of the medieval Buddhist mainstream. These teachings likely originated among practitioners and patrons of elite social status before radiating outwards into the general Buddhist public, where they contributed to and mixed with more popular

13 Crosby, *Esoteric Theravada*, pp. 360–372. For a more technical discussion of *abhidhamma* and *nimitta* in *borān kamaṭṭhāna*, see Crosby, "Abhidhamma."

14 For some discussion of how this common alchemical and medical background might have looked like, see White, *Alchemical Body*.

15 For the Tachikawa lineage as medieval "heresy," see Rappo, "Heresy and Heresiology"; the same, "Deviant Teachings."

forms of knowledge.¹⁶ In this manner, embryology and sexual symbolism became one of the mainstays of premodern Japanese religious traditions, including the Zen movements.

The present chapter discusses the importance of embryological and sexual teachings in the Shōichi lineage and their doctrinal and socio-political background. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Enni drew on the *Yuqi jing* to define Zen as the endarkened mind before the rise of tantric seed syllables. Enni's student Chikotsu Daie inherited and developed this definition by identifying endarkened mind with the square inch lump of flesh that is the tantrically uncultivated physical heart. As shall become clearer below, what for Chikotsu set both Zen and tantric teachings apart from the doctrinal lineages was that the former two traditions understood human beings to be inherently, or to put it differently, by virtue of birth, endowed with the mind of enlightenment as a concrete, physical reality. The doctrinal lineages, on the other hand, could only grasp this mind in abstract, mentalistic or theoretical, terms. Furthermore, Chikotsu transmitted tantric initiatory rituals based on the *Yuqi jing*, which actualized the understanding that the process of initiation mirrored the process of fetal development as described in Buddhist scholastic sources.

However, neither Enni nor Chikotsu directly linked Zen practice with embryology. It appears that especially Chikotsu understood embryology to be the hallmark of the tantric teachings. Consequently, to unqualifiedly include Zen in embryological discourses would have run counter his doctrinal convictions regarding tantric superiority. It appears that the earliest attempts to link Zen with embryological teachings came from a competing lineage, namely Dōhan's faction of the tantric teachings deriving from Kūkai. Dōhan belonged to the very same network of sponsorship surrounding the regent Kujō Michiie as did Enni, and his use of terminology associated with the Zen school might have been an attempt to assert the hermeneutical superiority of his own tantric lineage over the new Zen teachings. Interestingly, such Zen terminology first appeared in Dōhan's commentary on the *Yuqi jing*, which he composed from notes based on a lecture on this scripture requested by Michiie and delivered in 1241. This is the very year in which Enni returned from China. Given these connections, below we will first consider the importance of embryological theories and practices in the context of the networks of sponsorship

16 For miscasting the Tachikawaryū, see Iyanaga, "Tachikawa-ryū"; Iyanaga, "Mikkyō girei." For sexual practices in medieval tantric lineages, see Dolce, "Embryonic Generation"; the same, "Duality and the 'Kami.'" For traditional scholarship on the Tachikawaryū, as well as a collection of primary sources related to it, see Mizuhara, *Jakyō Tachikawaryū*.

surrounding early Zen figures such as Enni, before turning to the embryologies of the Shōichi faction in specific.

2 The Bliss of the Jade Woman: The Background of Shōichi-ha Lineage Embryology

One way of approaching the importance of embryological materials for Japanese Zen pioneers like Enni is through a consideration of their relationships, both to their sponsors and to their monastic ancestors and peers. As already mentioned, one of Enni's patrons was Kujō Michiie, perhaps the most influential aristocrat in the capital at the time. The Kujō were one of the powerful *sekke* 摂家 or regent branches of the Fujiwara 藤原 clan, which between them monopolized the office of regent. The Fujiwara had long maintained their position by joining their daughters to the imperial line as empresses or consorts, to then rule through their offspring. The degree of entwinement between the Fujiwara and the imperial line can be gathered from a glance at Fujiwara no Michinaga's 藤原道長 (966–1027) family relations. Michinaga, under whom the power of the Fujiwara reached its zenith, was the father-in-law of four emperors, and the grandfather of three. Successful imperial procreation thus was of vital interest to the regents on both the personal and the political level; not only was it their female relations who had to undergo the dangers of pregnancy, but the fortune of their houses also depended on avoiding obstetric calamity. In order to ensure a successful pregnancy, they employed the most advanced medical technologies available to them, which prominently included tantric rituals.

The tantric adepts charged with carrying out these rites were often related to their aristocratic patrons and clients by ties of blood. One prominent example of a blood relationship between patron and cleric is the Tendai prelate Jien 慈円 (1155–1225), the brother of Michiie's grandfather and regent at the time, Kujō Kanezane 九条兼実 (1149–1207). On occasion of imperial pregnancy and birth, Jien was charged with performing tantric rituals to ensure a safe delivery. These interventions often relied on the rites dedicated to the tantric deities Aizen 愛染 and the Buddha mother Buddhalocanā (*butsugen butsumo* 仏眼仏母). These highly advanced tantric teachings used sexual imagery to convey the non-duality of the Buddha realm. Due to both their importance to imperial succession, and their loaded symbolism, these rituals had a rather limited circulation. As the Buddhalocanā ritual relied on the image of the “mother of all Buddhas” from whose womb all awakening springs, it naturally recommended itself for apotropaic use during pregnancies.¹⁷ These Buddhalocanā rituals

17 See Mizukami, *Taimitsu shisō*, pp. 472–477.

were based on the *Yuqi jing*, which was one of the main inspirations behind the Japanese tantric use of sexual and embryological symbolism.¹⁸

This embryological symbolism is apparent in a dream regarding the Buddhalocanā ritual Jien recorded in his *Biseibetsu* 毘麗別:

Concerning the [three] regalia of the sovereign (*kokuō* 国王): [From among] the sacred jewel (*shinji* 神璽) and the jewel-sword (*hōken* 宝劍), the jewel is the jewel maiden. This jewel maiden is the body [or essence] (*tai* 体) of the empress. For the sovereign to enter the body of the jewel maiden pure by nature (*jishō sejō* 自性清淨) and to have intercourse, neither the active [partner] nor the passive [partner] has [committed] any fault! For this reason, the sacred jewel is the jewel of purity.¹⁹

Jien continued to describe how, halfway between dream and waking, the following associations, inspired by the sword-in-sheath-*mudrā* (*tōshōin* 刀鞘印) of Fudō myōō 不動明王, occurred to him: the jewel sword, one of the imperial regalia, is the emperor; the male deity Fudō; the male deity Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣacakra, the Buddhamother's partner in the *Buddhalocanā* rite; and the central Mahāvairocana of the Diamond realm. The sacred jewel is the empress; the female jewel maiden; the female deity Buddhalocanā herself; and the central Mahāvairocana of the Womb realm. Born from their union is the imperial prince, who corresponds to the sacred mirror from among the three regalia; to the ancestral deity Tenshō *daijin* 天照大神, better known under the Japanese reading of her name, Amaterasu, as the ancestress of the Japanese imperial line; and finally to the fundamental Mahāvairocana transcending the two maṇḍalic realms that we also saw to be a central concern of Enni's exposition of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*.²⁰ While drawing on the image of the female deity Buddhalocanā as the mother of all Buddhas, Jien here built on Annen's use of the *Yuqi jing* to unite the two primary maṇḍalic realms. Casting this fundamental, maṇḍalic union in explicitly sexual terms, Jien saw it made incarnate in the sexual relations of emperor and empress as they begot the imperial prince.²¹

18 Another important source, upon which I will not touch in the present study, is the *Risshukyō* 理趣經, which contains the sentence, "the intercourse of the two [sexual] organs, the objects of the five senses fulfill the great matter of the Buddhas [appearing in the world]." T 19: 612b.

19 *Biseibetsu*, ZTSZS, vol. 9, 231b.

20 See *Biseibetsu*, ZTSZS, vol. 9, 232b. Also Mizukami, *Taimitsu shisō*, p. 472.

21 The "jewel maiden" or "jade woman" was an object of considerable fascination to medieval Buddhist practitioners, who often encountered her in dreams. Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), the founder of the True Pure Land school, is known for having had a dream

By making this link, Jien recaptured some of what I have described above as the ambiguity of the tantric Buddhist stance towards the womb as both the pathway into bondage and a necessary condition of liberation. Especially when it came to the practical implications to be drawn from the image of the womb as the arena of awakening, this ambiguity was not far from the minds of medieval Japanese tantric practitioners. This is apparent from Jien having had to address his, likely fictitious, interlocutor's doubts concerning the use of the "*maṇḍala* of the female body" (*joshin mandara* 女身曼荼羅): How did reliance on such a *maṇḍala* of flesh differ from the ordinary relations between men and women?²² This question was the more pressing in an environment in which many tantric practitioners, especially those of aristocratic extraction, fell far short of the ideal of monastic continence. Instead of answering this question directly, Jien sought to avoid it by sublimating it:

[To violate] the precept concerning sexual lust (*in'yoku kai* 姪欲戒) is called the fundamental transgression. It is the root of all delusion. It is the root of the *nirvāṇa* and awakening of the Buddha realm.²³

For Jien, lustful sexual union, which is a transgression of the third Buddhist precept, was but one side of a more fundamental, non-dual procreative force that begets and sustains the maṇḍalic realms and consequently upholds and transcends both delusion and awakening. This implies that unlike the starkly ascetic traditions of early Buddhism, thinkers like Jien considered lust and pleasure to be double edged:

of Kannon 觀音 appearing to him in the form of a jewel maiden. The maiden promised to become a sexual object Shinran could violate without having to fear karmic repercussions. This understanding of the jewel maiden also appears in the *Kakuzenshō*, DNBZ, vol. 47, 181b–182a. See also Faure, *Denial*, pp. 205–210. The *Asabashō* suggests that sexual rituals associated with the jewel maiden were connected to both Onmyōdō 陰陽道 practices and the Fujiwara clan. See DNBZ, vol. 40, 312b–313a. For a discussion of the conceptual complex of women/relics/jewels in the context of Fujiwara marriage politics, although not touching on the jewel maiden in specific, see Abe, "Dragon Princess," esp. pp. 45–50. For the connection between the jewel maiden and imperial power and ascension rites, see Grappard, "Foxy Ladies," pp. 134–145. Fascinatingly, already in China the jewel or jade woman was understood in the context of allowing the practitioner to imbibe solar and lunar plasma through sexual relations, thereby furthering his quest for immortality. See Schafer, "Jade Woman." As we shall see in the next chapter, the unification of astral bodies was an important element later medieval and early modern Zen embryologies shared with the likes of Jien.

22 See *Biseibetsu*, ZTSZS, vol. 9, 228b.

23 *Biseibetsu*, ZTSZS, vol. 9, 230a.

The way of lust (*in'yoku no michi* 姪欲之道) is like this. With worldly lust (*zokutai in'yoku* 俗諦姪欲), if there is a single transgression, one cannot leave the realm of life and death. With supra-mundane desire (*shintai no aizen* 真諦之愛染), a single act of faith and one does not return to the house of rebirth.²⁴

Playing on the name of the tantric deity Aizen, the “Lust Drenched One” from the *Yuqi jing*, Jien asserted that sexual thirst and spiritual longing are but flip-sides of each other. The sexual union of emperor and empress is the ideal expression of this non-dual procreative force. Not only is it rooted in lust, in so far as it is connected to the sacral fecundity of the imperial line it also expresses a properly sacramental dimension of sexual union. This understanding reflects Jien's social background as the scion of a lineage of regents that in part maintained its influence through what essentially was a breeding program that rendered the tantric teachings into a ritual biopolitics.

Through his patron Kujō Michiie, who was Jien's grandnephew, Enni was connected to tantric sexology and embryology in its political contexts. The same holds true for his monastic relations. Yōsai, the founder of the Yōjō lineage and Enni's grandfather in the *Dharma*, was Jien's monastic rival and a student of the same teacher, Kikō 基好 (d.u.). In his *Ingoshū* 隱語集, Yōsai, as well, used embryological and sexual imagery in order to explain the inner mysteries of tantric practice. A famous passage of the *Ben kenmitsu nikyōron* 弁顯密二教論 or *Treatise on the Elucidation of the Two Teachings of Exoteric and Tantric*, which generally is attributed to Kūkai, defines the tantric teachings as the enjoyment Mahāvairocana derives from communicating its own perfection to itself through the gate of its three mysteries.²⁵ Yōsai commented on this masturbatory bliss of the *Dharma* (*jiju hōraku* 自受法樂) as follows:

Only the man and the woman themselves know the bliss (*keraku* 快樂) they receive [in sexual union]. Others do not know it. This is the dharmic bliss received [by the Buddha in and for] itself. Again, it is the mysterious union of principle and wisdom (*richi myōgō* 理智冥合).²⁶

Yōsai likened the inner experience of the Buddha to the intimate bliss of sexual union. Of particular importance is the last line, which refers to the

24 *Biseibetsu*, ZTSZS, vol. 9, 229a.

25 T 77: 375a.

26 Quoted in Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, p. 516.

fundamental Buddha transcending the duality of the two *maṇḍala*.²⁷ This fundamental Buddha, Yōsai suggested, has the shape of copulation. This transcendent, ultimate Buddha also is a central concern in Enni's lineage.

Yōsai's use of sexual imagery is not limited to doctrinal discourses. Rather, the process of tantric practice itself is understood in sexual terms. For instance, Yōsai discusses one of the fundamental elements of tantric practice, Sanskrit syllables, quite literally as *seed* syllables (S. *bīja*, J. *shushi* 種子, alt. *shuji*). As he stated elsewhere in the *Ingoshū*:

At the time of intercourse between man and woman, the male and female sexual organs empower (*kaji* 加持) each other, and from each the natural seed of life is obtained. The male seed is white and the female seed is yellow. The yellow fluid of the woman is the function of the syllable *a* [the seed syllable of the central deity of the Womb *maṇḍala*]. For this reason, the syllable *a* is [graphically depicted or visualized as] golden. The white fluid of man is the function of the syllable *vaṃ* [the seed syllable of the central deity of the Vajra *maṇḍala*]. For this reason, the syllable *vaṃ* is [graphically depicted or visualized as] white.²⁸

The color in which mantric syllables are to be graphically represented or visualized is based in the physical properties of the sexual fluids with which they are associated.

This direct association between seed syllables and embryology is also present in Jien's *Biseibetsu*, in which the rationale behind the Buddhalaocanā rituals centered on the "mother of all Buddhas" is explained in terms of the *dharmamaṇḍala* (J. *hōmandara* 法曼荼羅). On the representational level, the *dharmamaṇḍala* is a *maṇḍala* in which the various deities are represented by their seed syllables. To simplify a complex argument, Jien based himself on the perfectly orthodox notion that *prajñāpāramitā* or the perfection of wisdom is the mother of all Buddhas. Furthermore, the *Longer prajñāpāramitā* class of Buddhist texts includes the so-called *arapacana* syllabary. This special arrangement of forty-two syllables originally functioned as a mnemonic device, but eventually came to be regarded as a holy alphabet of sorts. Now,

27 For instance, an appendix to the *Taimitsu keigushō* associated with Enni's lineage differentiates four different Mahāvairocana, the fourth of which is the "Vairo[cana] of principle and wisdom, the physical and mental [constituent] of the two [maṇḍalic] realms" (*ryōkai shikishin richi biro* 兩界色心理智毘盧). Reproduced in Mizukami, *Taimitsu shisō*, p. 657. For a discussion of the transcendent Buddha in Yōsai and Enni, see also Mizukami, *Nihon tendai*, pp. 61–78, pp. 89–108.

28 Quoted in Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, pp. 514–515.

the Buddha originally preached the *prajñāpāramitā* texts in Sanskrit. Sanskrit as a language arises from the combinations of the forty-two syllables as its basic phonological elements. Therefore, all possible teachings including the *prajñāpāramitā*, the mother of Buddhas, in so far as they are linguistic entities, are generated from the forty-two syllables. Consequently, the syllables are, literally, the “seeds” from which Buddhas mature.²⁹ As we shall see in the following chapter, the notion of letters as seeds became popular not only in tantric, but also in the kind of embryological speculation associated with Zen lineages. Of specific importance in both systems was the understanding that the syllable *a* as the origin of all syllables and speech represents the seed from which the human embryo grows in the womb.

To return to the matter at hand, the following passage confirms in the clearest possible terms the homology between tantric cultivation and sexual intercourse in Yōsai's *Ingoshū*:

It is said, separate from bones [which develop from the white seed of the father] there is no flesh [which develops from the red or yellow seed of the mother]. Separate from the flesh, there are no bones. Flesh and bones being inborn (*honnu*) from the first, this is the *Dharma* gate of the inborn mysterious singularity (*honnu myōichi* 本有冥一). [...] For this reason, when men and women do not empower (*kaji*) each other, there is no bliss (*keraku*). When no bliss is received, the two white and yellow seeds cannot be produced. When the two fluids of white and yellow are not produced, the body [or essence] (*tai*) of the son cannot be produced. Now, if we consider this principle, principle and wisdom fundamentally empower each other and mysteriously align, the [...] pure and subtle *maṇḍala* of three and five divisions [the Womb and Vajra *maṇḍala*] are born.³⁰ If there is no mutual empowerment, there is no mysterious alignment. If there is no mysterious alignment, the bliss of the *Dharma* is not received. If there is no bliss of the *Dharma*, the enjoyment body [received as a result of awakening and used to awaken others, i.e. the perfected *tāntrika*'s body] is not born.³¹

29 See *Biseibetsu*, ZTSZS, vol. 9, 228b–230b. Although he does not touch on Jien's phonological theories, Ogawa Toyoo 小川豊生 has offered a masterful discussion on the link between tantric linguistics and sexology. See Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, 496–515.

30 The square brackets indicate two characters missing in the original.

31 Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 516–517.

Just as the lust of copulation produces the yellow and white seed from the union of which offspring is born, so the bliss of tantric ritual produces the seed syllables *a* of the Womb realm of principle and *vaṃ* of the Diamond, or rather, in this context, “thunderbolt pounder” realm of wisdom. From the union of these two realms Buddhas are born. The very structure of the human body, flesh and bone from mother and father, itself instantiates the unity of the two *maṇḍala*, that is to say the non-duality of the transcendent realm of awakening. The possibility of tantric practice, in other words, is a literally inborn one that is based in human physiology. As we shall see below, this notion of inborn-ness is fundamental to Chikotsu’s conception of initiation, and of how the tantric teachings relate to Zen lineages.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that the process of tantric practice encoded in the image of sexual union is a cyclical one. It proceeds from a fundamental, inborn unity (male bones and female flesh) with which the singular body of the practitioner is endowed, into a separation of this unity into a duality (male and female seed), and then through the mutual interaction of the poles of this duality (intercourse of male and female seed), to a re-establishment of the fundamental unity (unification in the womb, and consequent growth into non-dual body encompassing both male and female). As we shall see in the next chapter, this cyclical understanding of spiritual development is also fundamental to the embryological discourses found in Zen lineages.

Finally, apart from the generative legacies inherited from his own lineage, Enni also competed for Michiie’s favors with monastics from other tantric lineages. These were more than happy to provide the regent with sexual and embryological teachings. Matsumoto Ikuyo 松本郁代 has shown that Michiie was a keen patron of tantric masters from the Tōji faction founded by Kūkai, even receiving a *denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂 initiation. He actively contributed to the dissemination of Aizen rituals, which, as we saw above, were connected to his clan interest in protecting imperial fecundity.³² Among the masters from this lineage connected to Michiie were the famous scholiast Dōhan and his teacher Jitsugen 実賢 (1176–1249). As Ogawa Toyoo has pointed out, Michiie was especially interested in the tantric teachings of the Diamond textual circle, to which the *Yuqi jing* belongs. Michiie had commissioned the two tantric masters to deliver lectures on these materials, with Jitsugen providing the exposition, and Dōhan acting as scribe and editor. In one of these lectures, the *Bodaishinron dangiki* 菩提心論談義記, Dōhan recorded the following explanation of the meaning of the term “*yoga*”:

32 Matsumoto, *Chūsei ōken*, pp. 261–297.

Yoga (*yuga* 瑜伽) means union (*sōō* 相応). That is, the union of principle and wisdom. [...] *Yoga* is a name for concentration (*jō* 定). Concentration has the meaning of the harmonious alignment [or intercourse] (*wagō*) of concentration and wisdom. Concentration is called the female (*jo* 女). In the female, there is the name “wife” (*sai* 妻) [of which Chinese character *jo* 女 is the lower constituent]. Wife means equality (*zaitō* 齊等) [as the first character of this compound resembles the shape and reading of the character *sai* 妻, “wife”]. The womb store (*taizō*), called female, receives the male seed, and the two drops [of male seed and female blood] are equalized, hence the female is called wife. *Samādhi* (*sanmaji* 三摩地) is called “holding together equally” (*tōji* 等持) [as the literal meaning of the Sanskrit term “*samādhi*” is “to place together”]. This is again this meaning [of the wife holding equally the male and female seed in the womb]. For this reason, *yoga* is non-duality, and the pinnacle of non-duality is called *yoga*.³³

This extended riff on the meaning of the term *yoga*, its cognates and associated concepts, equates the tantric or maṇḍalic with the maternal womb, thereby creating a complex symbol of non-duality, the union of principle and wisdom, and of male and female seed.

As the above discussion has made clear, the religious world of elite aristocratic society, to which Enni was connected through his patron Michiie, was full of sexual overtones and embryological concerns. Many of these overtones and concerns resonated with, and indeed arose from, the *Yuqi jing*, a text that threw the spotlight squarely on deities such as the Buddha mother Buddhālokanā or the fierce Lust Drenched Radiant King, Aizen. It thus comes as little surprise that Enni and his disciples saw themselves forced to respond to the licentious spirit of the times.

3 An Equal Womb: Enni's Embryology

Enni touches on embryological symbolism both in his commentaries on the *Yuqi jing* and in the oral transmissions appended to the *Taimitsu keigushō*, the latter of which he supposedly received in the lineage of Yōsai.³⁴ As discussed

33 Quoted in Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, pp. 506–507.

34 According to the lineage recorded in the text itself, the oral transmissions have been transmitted from Yōsai through A'nin 阿忍 (d.u.) to Enni. See the reproduction in Mizukami, *Taimitsu shisō*, p. 653.

previously, two complementary versions of Enni's *Yuqi jing* commentary are in existence. As I did in Chapter 3, I will refer to them as *Hikyōketsu* and *Yugikyō kenmon*, respectively. Enni treats of embryology in both works. Fortunately, their interpretations derive from a consistent reading of the root text and its embryological implications, an interpretation also shared by the transmissions appended to the *Taimitsu keigushō*.

Enni is one of the earliest sources for what would become the standard medieval iconography of the embryological model of five stages in the womb (*tainai goi* 胎内五位). These five stages are: 1. *kalalam* (J. *kararan*), the first week after conception, during which male and female sexual fluids unify; 2. *arbuda* (J. *abudon* 頰部曇, alt. 阿部曇), the second week during which the embryo forms into a "pustule"; 3. *peśī* (J. *heishi* 閉尸), the third week during which flesh and blood begin to form; 4. *ghana* (J. *ken'nan* 健南), the fourth week during which the embryo begins to become firm; and finally, 5. *praśākha* (J. *harashakya* 鉢羅奢佉), the fifth to thirty-sixth weeks during which joints, hair, and nails form and the physical bases of the sense organs (*S. indriyāṇi-rūpīni*, J. *shikikon* 色根) are completed. These five stages derive from Indian medical knowledge, mostly transmitted in *sūtric* and *abhidharmic* sources. Their reception in Japan was also conditioned by Chinese understandings of the body and its constituents as a microcosm, thereby priming the five stages of fetal development to take on soteriological and cosmological associations absent in their original, Indian medical context.³⁵

It is unclear exactly when the five stages of fetal development came to be related to tantric cultivation, but the link had been established by the 11th or 12th century. The great reformer of Kūkai's faction, Kakuban, correlated the five stages of ontogenesis with the three transformations of the deity in tantric practice, that is to say from its seed syllable into its seal or implement, and finally into anthropomorphic form.³⁶ Iconographic representations of the five stages in the womb began to take shape in the 12th century. Often the *Yugikyō hiketsu* 瑜祇經秘決 is cited as the earliest source attesting these developments. This text discusses an "internal *maṇḍala*" (*nai mandara* 内曼荼羅) that corresponds to the standard representation of the five stages of ontogenesis. It furthermore suggests that the process of embryological development is linked to tantric initiation.³⁷ However, although the *Yugikyō hiketsu* generally is attributed to the founder of the Sanbōin 三宝院 lineage of Kūkai's faction, Jichūn

35 See Dolce, "Embryonic Generation," pp. 270–271.

36 Kameyama, "Doctrinal Origins," pp. 89–91.

37 See *Yugikyō hiketsu* 瑜祇經秘決, ShSZS, vol. 5, 14b–15a, 23b–24a. See also Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, 459–460.

実運 (1105–1160), this attribution is uncertain. This highlights the importance of Enni and his commentary as one of the earliest sources for medieval embryological teachings.

In the *Hikyōketsu*, Enni proved himself to be fully conversant with the embryological discourses of his time. He cited some of the widespread dictums of medieval tantric embryology, such as “the two waters [male seed and female blood] mix harmoniously and become the round pagoda [i.e. the fetus *qua* incipient, pagoda-like Buddha body, and also the circle which represents the first stage of embryonic development]” (*nisui wagō jō ichientō* 二水和合成一円塔).³⁸ The centerpiece of Enni’s embryological teachings, however, are the five stages in the womb and the chart illustrating them. In the *Hikyōketsu*, the five stages in the womb appear in the context of differentiating the shallow tantric teachings in theory only (*yuri himippō* 唯理秘密法) from the profound tantric teachings in both theory and practice (*jiri gumitsu no hō* 事理俱密法). The former, merely theoretical teachings do not open up the “diamond jewel treasury” (*kongō hōzō* 金剛宝蔵), which is the “mind of awakening of the inborn [Vajra]sattva” (*honnu satta no bodaishin* 本有薩埵/菩提心),³⁹ whereas the latter do.⁴⁰ Presumably, Enni here was referring to the notion that teachings such as the *Lotus*, which are “tantric only in theory,” understand the integration of phenomena and reality in abstract, philosophical or theoretical, terms. Consequently, they characterize reality’s freedom from perceptual characteristics in a purely negative manner. The tantric teachings “in both theory and practice,” in contrast, understand highest awakening to be endowed with, or rather non-differentiated from, perceptual marks and hence in some sense phenomenal.⁴¹ Consequently, they provide a concrete practice in the form of tantric ritual technologies through which awakening can be approached physically. When pressed on which marks the tantric teachings discern in the diamond jewel treasury, Enni presented a sequence of five graphic shapes, namely a circle, a ship-like shape, a three-pointed shape, a pagoda, and finally a fully

38 *Hikyōketsu* 秘経決, CZS, vol. 4, 463. This phrase also appears in later materials important to medieval tantric sexuality and embryology, for instance the *Sangen menju* 纂元面授 of the Daigoji 醍醐寺 Sanbōin lineage. Although traditionally considered to record oral transmissions from Shōkaku 勝覚 (1057–1129) to Jōken 成賢 (alt. Seiken, 1162–1231), recent research has suggests the text to have been compiled under the influence of Enni’s disciple Chikotsu. See Kameyama, “Chikotsu Daie,” pp. 1169–1174.

39 On the relationship between the inborn Vajrasattva of sentient beings and the mind of awakening, see also Annen’s *Bodaishingishō* 菩提心義抄, which states that, “the inborn [Vajra]sattva of all sentient beings is called the mind of awakening.” T 75: 527bc. The root text is the *Putixin lun* 菩提心論, T 32: 573c.

40 *Hikyōketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 485.

41 See the extended discussion in Chapter 3.

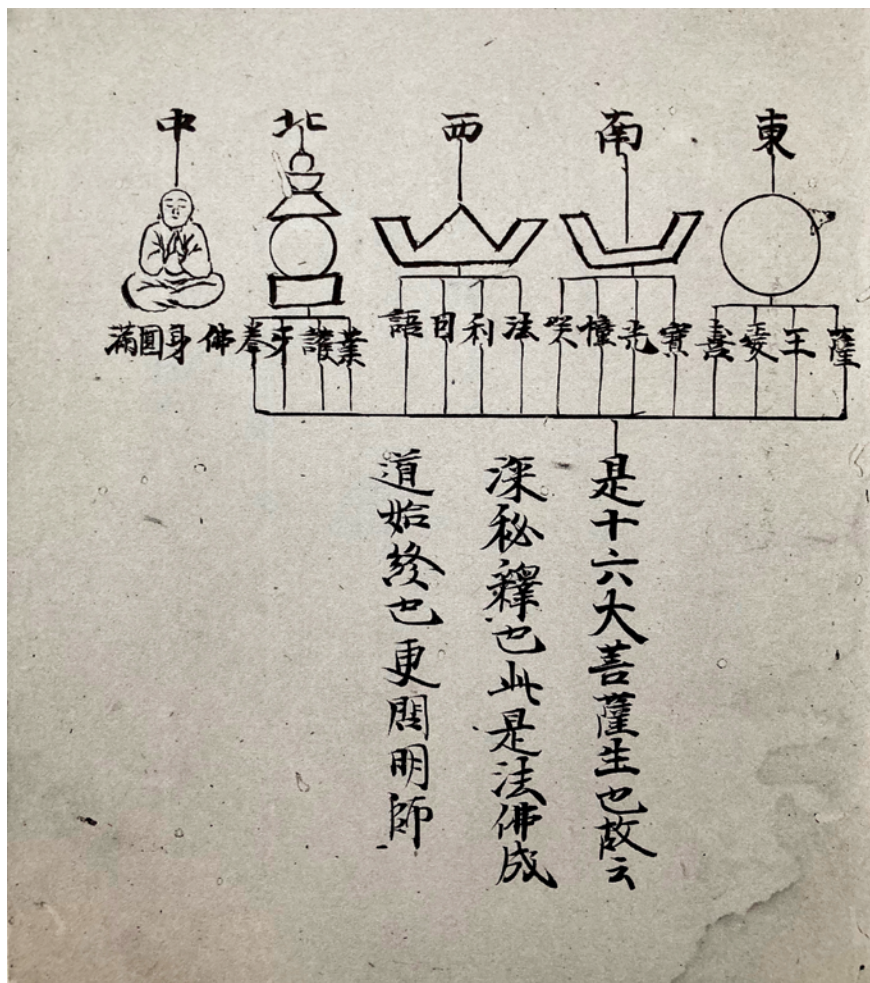


FIGURE 3 The five shapes in the womb

PHOTOGRAPH BY LUCIA DOLCE. USED WITH PERMISSION

formed human being sitting in a meditative posture.⁴² Each shape represents one of the five stages of embryonic development. Furthermore, in Enni's scheme each of the first four stages of fetal development is associated with four of the sixteen great *bodhisattva* (*jūroku daibosatsu* 十六大菩薩) of the Diamond realm. These sixteen *bodhisattva* are divided into four groups, each of which in turn is associated with one of the four Buddha that surround the

42 For examples of the graphic representation of the five stages in the womb, see for example Dolce, "Tantric Scripture," p. 20.

Mahāvairocana deity in the central part of the *maṇḍala*. The four *bodhisattva* that comprise each group represent the virtues of the Buddha they attend. On the level of practice, they represent the tantric pilgrim's progress from initially arousing the mind of awakening to the completion of a perfected Buddha body. This Buddha body is represented by the final, fifth stage of fetal development. In sum, whereas the teachings tantric in theory only perceive the mind of awakening as a markless void, the full-fledged tantric teachings understand it as a concrete body.

At first glance, this association between the five stages of ontogenesis and the sixteen great *bodhisattva* might appear random. However, it is the consistent and coherent result of the kind of topological, associative reasoning that underpins much tantric practice and doctrinal speculation. The line of reasoning becomes apparent from the *Yugikyō kenmon*, the second, recently discovered record of Enni's lectures on the *Yuqi jing*. In order to understand the topology according to which Enni proceeded, however, we first need to turn to the *Putixin lun* 菩提心論, a root text of East Asian tantric teachings. Here, the mind is explained as being symbolized by a moon disc:

[In the *Kongōchōkyō* 金剛頂經, the Buddha says,] "I see my own mind shaped like a moon disc." Why is the moon disc used as a simile? It is said that the complete bright essence of the full moon resembles the mind of awakening. Furthermore, the moon disc has sixteen phases. These exemplify the sixteen great *bodhisattva* from *Vajrasattva* to *Vajrasaṃdhi* of the [progressive stages of] *yoga* [practice].⁴³

The moon and its sixteen phases represent the stages of the development of the mind of awakening, which in turn correspond to the sixteen *bodhisattva*. In the *Yugikyō kenmon*, Enni developed this theme as follows:

The master [Enni] says, "The water wheel of the jeweled pagoda [the second, circular of the five shapes that comprise the perfected human *qua* pagodic Buddha body, which is at the level of the belly], that is called the moon disc. As it is said [on the level of the interpretation of] deep secrecy, the jewel pagoda is the true mark of the mind and body of all sentient beings, abidingly it is the [non-dual] Mahāvairocana and the inborn [Vajra]sattva (*honnu satta* 本有薩埵). This disc of the moon palace of the moon of the water wheel: that is the belly."⁴⁴

43 *Putixin lun*, T 32: 573c.

44 *Yugikyō kenmon*, CZS, vol. 12, 559.

As can be seen from this passage, Enni's line of association runs as follows: The sixteen *bodhisattva* correspond to the sixteen phases of the moon; the moon is the water wheel; the water wheel is the second, round shape compromising a five layered pagoda; when the five layered pagoda is used as a symbol for the perfected human body, the water wheel corresponds to the belly or womb; hence, the sixteen *bodhisattva* are (in) the womb.⁴⁵

In our discussion of Yōsai's and Jien's embryological phonology above we have touched on the idea that in tantric practice Sanskrit syllables are imbued with a double innuendo. On the one hand, they are the "seeds" of the *Dharma*, that is to say the basic, phonological elements from which all true speech is formed; on the other, they are the procreative seed fluids from which a human body is produced in sexual intercourse. In the chart of the five phases of embryological development included in the appendix to the *Taimitsu keigushō*, this procreative aspect of tantric linguistics is represented through a slight but significant variation of the iconography representing the first phase when compared with the chart included in the *Hikyōketsu*. In the otherwise identical chart from the *Hikyōketsu* the first circle is empty. In the chart from the *Taimitsu keigushō*, on the other hand, the circle representing the first stage of ontogenesis is inscribed with the syllable *a*. The accompanying inscription identifies this circle as the moon disc, the shape that the "harmonious unification of the red and white drops" of female and male sexual fluids assumes during the first seven days in the womb. In this image, the syllable *a* literally acts as a seed syllable, arising from the union of male seed and female blood so as to quicken the moon-like womb with life and awakening.⁴⁶

As this brief outline makes clear, in Enni's embryology the womb functioned as a tantric *topos*, a "common place," which, to borrow from Dōhan's play on words, "equally held" or "concentrated" within itself human seed, the moon, the mind, the syllable *a*, the sixteen *bodhisattva*, and the pagodic body.

4 Entering the Womb: Chikotsu, Tantric Initiation, and Embryology

Not all of Enni's students were comfortable with what they saw as the disruptive potential of such overtly sexual interpretations of the tantric teachings. In

45 The association between the womb and the moon had already been made by Kakuban, who interpreted the moon disc used in the visualization of the syllable *a* as representing the first stage of dwelling in the womb. See Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, p. 272.

46 According to Ogawa, it was Kōkei 皇慶 (977–1049) who first associated the syllable *a* with the seed entering the womb. See Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, pp. 456–457.

his collection of edifying and cautionary tales, the *Shasekishū*, Mujū issued a stark warning against what he considered a heretical understanding of practices such as those related to the deity Aizen. Mujū cautioned that if the sexual symbolism of such rites is not understood properly in the light of Buddhist teachings, and instead gives rise to impure actions, then the tantric practices degenerate into worldly sex magicks and will incur the punishment of the deities.⁴⁷

Enni's student Chikotsu, on the other hand, does not appear to have been beleaguered by such worries. Unlike Enni, Chikotsu unambiguously elevated the tantric teachings over Zen. Given this emphasis, in his general outlook and basic doctrinal orientation Chikotsu is often closer to the exclusivist interpretation of tantric teachings commonly found in the lineages deriving from Kūkai than to Enni, whose instincts ran towards the inclusive.⁴⁸ Enni, too, shows a deep familiarity with the ritual or doctrinal differences between the various tantric lineages derived from Kūkai and his own Tendai tantric heritage. In general, Enni favored the Tendai tantric interpretation, or otherwise stayed neutral.⁴⁹ Recent scholarship has shown that Chikotsu, on the other hand, might have actively and significantly contributed to the medieval development of Kūkai's faction, especially to the Sanbōin lineage. Chikotsu might even have had some connection to the supposed heresies of the so-called Tachikawa lineage.⁵⁰

Already lying on his deathbed, Chikotsu imparted his final instructions on the significance and ritual procedures of tantric initiation, which his students gathered together in the *Kanjō hikuketsu*, or *Secret Oral Instructions on Initiation*. As befits the last testament of a monk of Chikotsu's status and

47 *Shasekishū*, vol. 2, 72–74. The spelling “magicks” is a nod to Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), who can perhaps serve as an example for the kind of degeneracies Mujū had in mind.

48 See for instance Hiroumi, “Chikotsu Daie,” pp. 146–149. Hiroumi demonstrates that whereas Enni offered an inclusive interpretation of the system of roots and capabilities used in tantric teachings that could extend towards at least the exoteric *Lotus* teachings, Chikotsu instead proposed an exclusivist reading that restricted them to the tantric proper. However, already Yōsai cultivated a close relationship with figures from Kūkai's faction, perhaps due to the hostility he received from the Tendai faction because of his involvement with Zen.

49 For instance, in the *Dainichikyō kenmon* 大日經見聞 Enni asserts that Tendai is based on the syllable *a*, Tōji lineages on the syllable *hūm*. However, as *hūm* derives from *a*, the former understanding is superior. See DNKKM, 205ab. Again, in the interpretation of the *Yūqī jing*, Enni draws attention to the fact that in Tōji lineages the Aizen chapter is considered fundamental, in Taimitsu lineages the Butsumo chapter, without, however, expressing a clear preference himself. See *Yūqikyō kenmon*, CZS, vol. 12, 554.

50 Kameyama, “Sangen menju”; the same, “Chikotsu Daie.”

erudition, the text contains what might be considered not only the essence of Chikotsu's own understanding of the tantric teachings, but rather the basic principle of medieval Japanese Buddhist embryology in general:

For all sentient beings, to correctly indicate the process through which they take birth in the rounds of the wheel [of rebirth] is to directly indicate the attainment of the way of the *dharmabuddha*.⁵¹

Chikotsu here articulated the very insight expressed by Piatigorsky and quoted in the opening of the present chapter, namely that Buddhism's ambiguous fascination with the womb realizes the latter to be the central matrix of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* both. Yet unlike the Indian, and to an extant Tibetan, Buddhist tradition, which characterize the womb as a place of torments, Chikotsu, just like the ancient meditative traditions of Southeast Asia discussed by Crosby and others, emphasized the womb's potential for nourishing a Buddha. However, Chikotsu used the womb not as a model for meditative practice, but for tantric initiation.

For Chikotsu, the homology between rebirth and initiation implied that the two processes correspond to each other both on the doctrinal or ideological, and on the practical or ritual level. As for the first, doctrinal level, the system of initiation Chikotsu transmitted has three layers.⁵² The first level, which corresponds to the common *denbō kanjō*, transmits the two primary maṇḍalic realms separately. The second level, known as the *himitsu kanjō* or "secret initiation," transmits the two maṇḍalic realms as unified. However, in so far as this non-duality of the two realms is the product of unification, it remains bound backwards to duality. Finally, the third level transmits the two realms as a singularity. Chikotsu explained this level as follows:

Principle and wisdom in harmonious intercourse (*wagō*), red and white [sexual fluids] blending, the consciousness (*konshiki* 魂識) entrusted therein, the non-duality thus produced is called the great non-duality. The two essences [or bodies (*tai*) of the two maṇḍalic realms] do not exist, the two bodies are already forgotten, are completely one without second. [...] Therefore, this is named the *yoga* initiation (*sōō kanjō* 相応灌頂).⁵³

⁵¹ *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 517b.

⁵² See also Kikuchi, "Shōichi ha," pp. 287–288.

⁵³ See *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 518a–b.

The highest initiation in Chikotsu's system, in other words, is known as the "yoga initiation" in the sense of *yoga* we have already encountered in Dōhan above, namely absolute equality without even the slightest remainder of duality. This non-duality or singularity is represented by the rebirth consciousness having taken its dwelling in the harmonious mixture of parental sexual fluids in the womb.

For Chikotsu, this embryological imagery was not only a means to metaphorically convey a philosophical understanding of non-duality. Rather, in keeping with tantric emphasis on concrete, physical practice, it was a program to be implemented ritually. Chikotsu built such a ritual program on the identification of the five phases of fetal development with the 16 great *bodhisattva* divided into four groups of four. In this way, every step of the initiation corresponds to a *bodhisattva*, and consequently is subsumed into one of the four groups of *bodhisattva* and their corresponding stage of fetal development. For instance, to cover the disciple's face with a golden cloth, the color of which represents the harmonious mingling of female and male fluids, and to lead him into the ritual arena is understood as the ritual realization of the trans migratory consciousness taking up its dwelling in the admixture of male seed and female blood. Next, the first four ritual procedures carried out in the ritual arena, namely to cast a flower, to bow in the four directions, to purify one's mind, speech, and bodily conduct, and finally to symbolically don the armor of a tantric warrior-adept, correspond to the first four *bodhisattva* from the grouping of sixteen. Together, these ritual procedures comprise the first of the stages of dwelling in the womb, *kalala*, which is symbolized by the moon disc and the syllable *a*.⁵⁴ The remaining steps of the ritual of initiation are understood in like manner, so that to undergo the full ritual program of initiation is to recapitulate one's growth in the womb.

The basic outline and structure of Chikotsu's vision of tantric practice is as simple as it is compelling: tantric practice is a recapitulation of ontogenesis, a return to and rebirth from the womb understood as the non-dual matrix of awakening. However, this approach to Buddhist practice contains another of the ambiguities we encounter at every turn when it comes to the Buddhist womb. If the process of becoming a Buddha is essentially the same as the growth of the fetus, why is there still a necessity for tantric practice? This doubt is an echo of the one we have encountered above as articulated by Jien's interlocutor. If the *maṇḍala* is the body of a woman, what differentiates tantric practice from the worldly act of sexual congress routinely enjoyed by the deluded and the foolish? Or, as Chikotsu's befuddled interlocutor in the

54 See *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 521b–522a.

Kanjō hikuketsu asks in reply to the master's assertion that, "the transmigratory consciousness entering into the two drops [of male seed and female blood] completes the Buddha body [endowed with] the reality mark of liberation":

If this is the case, then where should the practitioner, having obtained the master's secret transmission and believing in the reasoning of this *dharmic* principle deeply without doubting it for [the duration of] even a single thought, still seek the way of becoming a Buddha?⁵⁵

Chikotsu replied with a surprisingly common-sense argument. Ultimately, Chikotsu explained, the *Dharma* realm is without (differentiating) perceptual marks. Hence the very difference between Buddha bodies and the natural bodies of sentient beings is moot. However, sentient beings give rise to deluded thought, and consequently fall into ignorance. Due to their fall into delusion, they begin to seek for awakening either without or within. In order to guide sentient beings, the Buddhas explain that beings possess the body of a Buddha simply by virtue of being born (*honnu*). There are, however, two different principles of such inborn Buddhahood, namely inborn Buddhahood without awakening (*mukaku honnu* 無覺本有), and inborn Buddhahood with awakening (*ukaku honnu* 有覺本有). The teaching of inborn Buddhahood without awakening is used to prevent beings from turning elsewhere but their own embodied existence when seeking the *Dharma*. However, this turn to one's living body's innate Buddhahood might give rise to the misunderstanding that because Buddhahood is inborn, it is already fully functional. In order to counter this second delusion, the Buddhas teach inborn Buddhahood with awakening. They enjoin beings to practice the three mysteries so that they can actualize the Buddhahood with which they are gifted from birth.⁵⁶ To offer a perhaps crude analogy, all sentient beings have Buddha bodies in the same sense a chain-smoking slob has the body of a marathon runner. They are fully endowed with legs and feet in principle, but it might still take a little discipline and specific training methodologies in practice.

But what is this elusive quality of inborn Buddhahood? Chikotsu addressed this question in another of his seminal tantric works, the *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu* 東寺印信等口決 or *Oral Instruction on the Seals and other Matters of Tōji*. Just like the *Kanjō hikuketsu*, this work treats a wide variety of doctrinal and ritual topics, including the classification of teachings. In this context,

⁵⁵ *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 523a.

⁵⁶ *Kanjō hikuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 523b–524a.

Chikotsu explained that the foundational *Dharma* from which all Buddhist teaching arise is of two kinds:

First, the *Dharma* of the inborn [Buddhahood] of the gate of awakening (*ukakumon honnu no hō* 有覺門本有法); and second, the *Dharma* of inborn [Buddhahood] of the gate without awakening (*mukakumon honnu hō* 無覺門本有法). As for the *Dharma* of the inborn [Buddhahood] of the gate of awakening, [it explains that] in sentient beings lost in ignorance there is the nature of awakening, and so forth. As for the *Dharma* of inborn [Buddhahood] of the gate without awakening, it directly indicates the body and mind of all sentient beings (*issai shujō shikishin* 一切衆生色心) and correctly clarifies them as the Buddha body [or essence] of true awakening. [...] This inborn [Buddhahood] of the gate without awakening is only [taught] in the esoteric teachings (*himitsu shūshi* 秘密宗旨).⁵⁷

Unlike the exoteric teachings, the tantric teachings are based on the fundamental, inborn qualities of “the body and mind of all sentient beings” being nothing but the body of Mahāvairocana, the main tantric deity in the East Asian tradition. This phrase, “the body and mind of all sentient beings,” is an allusion to Yixing’s commentary on the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, which asserts:

The true mark of the body and mind of all sentient beings from the beginning constantly is the wisdom body of equality of Vairocana.⁵⁸

According to Chikotsu, to clarify that this true mark of the body and mind of all sentient beings indeed is the inborn nature of the gate without awakening that is received in the womb is the hallmark of the tantric teachings.⁵⁹ In a word, Chikotsu used embryology to emphasize a biological or physiological understanding of inborn Buddhahood that separates exoteric from tantric teachings. The exoteric teachings, or the tantric teachings in theory only such as the *Lotus*, construct doctrinal schemes to be contemplated and analyzed in the abstract. The tantric teachings in both theory and practice, on the other hand, are based on a sensuous *Dharma* grounded in the living, natural body that Piatigorsky has described as the “*conditio sine qua non* of Buddhahood.”⁶⁰

57 *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 491ab.

58 T 39: 585b.

59 *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 496b.

60 In the later medieval period, this idea would culminate in the notion that even tantric cultivation was unnecessary. Those of excellent roots might awaken simply through the natural activities of the body or the “markless three mysteries” (*musō sanmitsu*) by being

Chikotsu's last comment that the inborn Buddhahood without awakening understood as the body and mind of sentient beings is the hallmark of the tantric teachings might very well be considered a textual observation. The overwhelming majority of occurrences of the phrase "body and mind of all sentient beings" (*issai shujō shikishin*) occurs in the tantric context, and especially in texts associated with the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* exegetical tradition. However, by associating this phrase with "inborn Buddhahood without awakening" in the *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu*, Chikotsu implied that there is one more tradition that likewise is based on a *physiologia* rather than a *theoria* of awakening: This is none other than Zen, or at least one group among the newly prosperous Zen lineages.

5 Tantric Flesh, Zen Meat: Chikotsu's Lacking Zen Embryology

The *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu* discusses three points of view on the problem of the relationship between Zen and the teachings based on the two traditions' respective views on the innateness of awakening. The first position asserts that Zen, being "outside the teachings," has no truck with ideas such as "inborn" or "awakening," which are but the twisting vines (*kattō* 葛藤) of discourse. Consequently, the very question of whether Zen and the tantric teachings have anything in common is literally meaningless. The second group of Zen practitioners instead emphasizes that Zen and the teachings both are part of the Śākyamuni Buddha's dispensation. The teachings are what the Buddha taught for most of his life, and when he felt his end approaching, he raised the single flower and transmitted Zen. Consequently, to think that there is a fundamental difference or even contradiction between Zen and the teachings is but a beginner's mistake.⁶¹

The third opinion is ascribed to "certain Zen masters" (*aru zenji* 有禪師), and it is the most important one for our purposes:

told that they are already Buddha. See for instance Shōken's 聖憲 (1307–1392) *Daishō hyakujō daisanjū* 大疏百条第三重, T 79: 616c. The concept of "markless" three mysteries already appears in Dōhan in order to solve the problem of how one can arouse the mind of awakening without engaging in formal tantric three mysteries practice. See Kitagawa, "Tōmitsu." The idea that aural initiation was sufficient for a liberating insight into one's own Buddhahood is also important in the Tendai original awakening teachings, which emphasized the second level of the Tiantai or Tendai six degrees of identity (*rokusoku*) between the Buddha and the practitioner, namely identity in name (*myōji soku* 名字即).

61 *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 503ab.

In our school we clarify inborn [Buddhahood] without awakening. For this reason, it states in [the introduction to] the *Ten Ox [Pictures]*: “Also in the Buddhas [it is] the true source, also in sentient beings [it is] what is inborn (*honnu*). Because of delusion one drowns in the three worlds, because of understanding one swiftly escapes the four [ways of] birth [from an egg, from a womb, from heat and moisture like insects, and through miraculous transformation, such as in heavenly abodes or Pure Lands].”⁶²

As will be recalled, in the introduction to the present study I have cited as an example of an esoteric reading of a Zen text Chikotsu’s interpretation of the “heart/mind” (*shin*) in the *Ten Ox Pictures* as the physical heart. Esoteric Zen, I have suggested, is not only, or not even primarily, the adoption of tantric discourses, practices, or symbols into a given Zen tradition, but rather to elucidate Zen within a tantric hermeneutical context. We are now in a position fully to appreciate the intricacies of Chikotsu’s exegetical proposal.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, Chikotsu understood Zen as being rooted in the “square inch lump of flesh” of the natural heart. In this sense, Zen, like the tantric teachings, is a tradition that is “inborn without awakening,” that is to say one that is rooted in sentient beings’ physical bodies rather than their spiritual minds. Yet Chikotsu stopped short of explicitly connecting the Zen teachings to embryology. In order to understand why this is, we need to consider how Chikotsu defined “inborn without awakening” as it relates to Zen. Although what follows is a somewhat long quotation, I offer it here in full as it provides a master class on the kind of intertextual exegetics at which medieval scholiasts such as Chikotsu excelled:

As for the true source and what is inborn (*shingen honnu* 真源本有) [mentioned in the introduction to the *Ten Ox Pictures* quoted above ...], willows by themselves are green, snow by itself is white. Each and every thing, their inherent *dharma* positions (*hōi* 法位), all are the essence [or body, *tai*] of the inborn (*honnu*) true source. How could this not be [what is] inborn without awakening? For this reason, an ancient one [Yuanwu], indicating this inborn without awakening, said, “Exhausting the great earth, this light of wisdom. When the light has not yet shone forth, neither Buddha nor sentient being.” You should know that where there are “neither Buddha nor sentient being,” when the “light has not

62 *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 503b. Chikotsu quotes the preface to the *Shiniutu song* 十牛圖頌, x 64: 773b.

yet shone forth,” the waters by themselves are wide and expansive; the flower by itself is red. This is called “the inborn true source,” and again, “the inborn [Buddhahood] of the gate without awakening.”

Question: What is the difference between this inborn [Buddhahood] without awakening of the Zen gate and the inborn [Buddhahood] without awakening of the tantric teachings?

Answer: A Zen master said, “As for my inborn [Buddhahood] without awakening, because it is the place where there are neither Buddhas nor sentient beings, the principles of the teachings (*hōgi* 法義) are not explained, one merely says, ‘Mountains are mountains, water is water, a monk is a monk, a valley is a valley; the green willow [and] the white cloud, again, they are like this.’” As for the inborn endowment of the tantric teachings, the body (*shiki* 色) [i.e. the physical constituents of the individual] means the womb, mind (*shin*) [i.e. the mental constituents of the individual] means wisdom, non-dual means the true mark. [Note that this sentence is a reference to the saying quoted above, “the true mark of the body and mind of all sentient beings.”] Because of principles like this, it is called the wisdom body of equality. This is not in the least the principle of the inborn [endowment] without awakening of where there are no Buddhas. This inborn endowment without awakening [of Zen] is without Buddha, that inborn endowment without awakening [of the tantric teachings] is with a Buddha.⁶³

This passage in many ways can serve as a summary of our investigation into the first two generations of the Shōichi lineage, weaving together its main strands and key terms. The quote of the “ancient one” Chikotsu uses to define inborn endowment without awakening according to Zen is exactly the same passage from Yuanwu that Enni used to elucidate the opening passage of the *Yuqi jing*, as discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, the inborn without awakening taught in the Zen school is what Enni identified as Mahāvairocana’s inner self-endarkenment before the first mantric syllables arise. Chikotsu in turn identifies the tantric deity’s inner mind with the square lump of flesh that is the physical heart. Or, to put it differently, it is what previously we have discussed as “uninterpreted” phenomena, red flowers, wide water, before the mind has characterized them as “red” or “wide,” as “flower” or “water.”

This naturalness or “uninterpretedness” is key to understanding the difference between tantric teachings and Zen. In the second exchange, Chikotsu quotes the Zen saying that “mountains are mountains, water is water.” As

63 *Tōji sanbōin injintō kuketsu*, CZS, vol. 4, 503b–504b.

previously discussed, this is a key phrase in the dispute between Enni and his Tendai critics. According to Enni, the understanding that “mountains are mountains” belongs to the third of his Three Mechanisms, *kōjō*, which corresponds to the inner verification of Mahāvairocana. However, this raises the problem of whether it is to be understood in a relative sense, that is to say as a negation of language, as the mere, brute fact that mountains are mountains, or in an absolute sense, in which language is ultimately affirmed, as in “mountains indeed are ‘mountains.’” As we have seen, Jōmyō and his heirs in the Eshin lineage gave Enni the benefit of the doubt and considered him capable of uttering a “final word,” just as the Tendai practitioner deep in contemplative concentration could nonetheless still see the paper screen as a “paper screen.”

Chikotsu, it would appear, was not as charitable towards his teacher and the new-fangled Zen teachings. For Chikotsu, the mind “before syllables” was an entirely natural and uninterpreted one in which mountains merely are mountains, and a body merely is a body. According to Chikotsu, Zen ultimately does deny language, or rather any form of (semiotic) mediation at all. Instead, Zen defines the natural state itself as perfect liberation. In so doing, however, it forecloses the possibility of cultivating the innate Buddhahood with which the body is endowed. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, reveal the ontogenetic process as the soteriological operation, and thereby provide the means to cultivate the body as the body of a Buddha. To borrow Chikotsu’s phrasing, Zen merely knows that the natural body and the undisciplined, physical heart/mind as natural phenomena bear the true mark of reality; just as do mountains by virtue of rising loftily, and roses by virtue of blooming red. Tantra, on the other hand, surpasses Zen because it understands that it is by virtue of this natural endowment that the practitioner’s heart and mind can be nourished into a Buddha’s. It is Zen’s very uncultured ruggedness, its rough and ready acceptance of the human meat, which prevents it from taking an interest in a topic as refined as the adorned tantric flesh.

In sum, Chikotsu, like Enni, esotericized Zen phrases like “exhausting the great earth, this light of wisdom; when the light has not yet shone forth, neither Buddha nor sentient being,” or “mountains are mountains” by interpreting them according to the rules of a tantric hermeneutics. Yet whereas Enni had for the most part made reference to the tantric mind, the inner realization of Mahāvairocana, Chikotsu instead took as his standard the tantric body. Within such a tantric physiology, Zen was superior to the exoteric and tantric in theory only teachings in that it recognized the innate Buddhahood of the meat, of the natural body. According to Chikotsu, for a Zen master to claim that Buddha nature is “inborn” in all sentient beings is practically the same as to say that all sentient beings have bodies. For a *tāntrika*, on the other hand, the very same

claim implied that this sentient meat could, through the practice of tantric ritual technologies, be sculpted into a *maṇḍala* of flesh. Embryology served as the discursive structure through which this transformation of meat into flesh could be doctrinally explained and ritually actualized. Consequently, embryology was essential to tantric practice, but superfluous to Zen.

6 Before Father and Mother Are Born: A Surprising Zen Embryology

As the preceding two sections have shown, embryology was an important component of Enni's and Chikotsu's teachings. Especially Chikotsu cast Zen as a practice rooted not in any abstracted spiritual faculties of the mind but rather in the biology of the physical human body. However, neither master directly connected Zen to embryology. As we shall see in the next chapter, later generations of Zen thinkers felt the lure of "womb talk" to be too strong to resist. Yet ironically, the earliest interpretation of Chan or Zen teachings in embryological terms might have been forwarded not by a Zen master, but by the Shingon scholiast Dōhan. Dōhan was part of the network of patronage surrounding Kujō Michiie, and thus Enni's direct competitor for the favors of one of his main patrons. Dōhan had been charged by Michiie to deliver or compile lectures on the Diamond textual circle, in which most sexual and embryological discourses are rooted. To read Zen in embryological terms, it could be speculated, might have been a strategy on Dōhan's part to assert the primacy of the tantric doctrinal framework when dealing with the new teachings by demonstrating that tantric hermeneutics could easily account for any seeming innovations or insights the Zen lineages might claim for themselves. Ultimately, of course, the tantric master's motives remain unknown.

One of Dōhan's strategies to draw Zen into the webs of tantric hermeneutics is centered on the syllable *a*. As we have discussed above, the syllable *a* is the paradigmatic seed syllable, the sonic nucleus of the Mahāvairocana of the Womb realm that represents female sexual fluids.⁶⁴ The visualization of the syllable *a* on a moon disc, a sign itself pregnant with embryological overtones, is one of the fundamental practices of the East Asian tantric traditions. In one of his manuals describing this practice, the *Shōsoku ajikan* 消息阿字觀 or *Contemplation of Resting in the Syllable A*, Dōhan adds a significant flourish to his discussion of this important practice:

64 This association is sometimes visualized as a kind of tantric ovism, in which the fetus taking residence in the womb is represented as a homunculus inhabiting the syllable *a*. See Dolce, "Embryonic Generation," p. 291.

Before even a single thought of good and bad has arisen, this is inherent (*honnu*) beginningless nature, the perfected and constantly abiding fundamental origin of the syllable *a*. In the Buddha mind lineage (*busshinshū* 仏心宗), this is discussed as “before father and mother are born,” as “the station before Heaven and Earth have separated,” as “the original face.” It is “what the thousand sages do not transmit,” and so on.⁶⁵

In this mesmerizing passage, Dōhan discusses the origin of the syllable *a* by correlating it with a number of slogans drawn from what he calls the “Buddha mind,” that is to say, Zen, lineage. Especially noteworthy is Dōhan’s reference to “what the thousand sages do not transmit.” As we have seen, this saying is closely associated with Enni, and specifically with his understanding of “turning upward,” the third and highest of the communicative mechanisms of the Zen lineage. “Turning upward” is the “direct indication” of the inner verification of the Mahāvairocana Buddha. Dōhan’s familiarity with, and use of, this phrase raises the possibility that Dōhan here is repeating something he has heard from Enni’s own lips.

Dōhan connected Zen sayings not only to the seed syllable *a*, but also to the womb. He did so in the context of the pneumatology of the syllable *hūṃ* presented in a commentary on the *Yuqi jing*, the *Yugikyō kuketsu* 瑜祇經口決. According to the colophon, this text is Dōhan’s account of a lecture delivered in the presence of none other than Kujō Michiie.⁶⁶ Dōhan’s (or his teacher’s) exegesis builds on the discussion of the life faculty (S. *jīvitendriya*, J. *myōkon*) found in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. This is a pointed reminder that even the heights of tantric *yoga* remain grounded in the abhidharmic tradition and are rendered incomprehensible when disassociated from it. In accordance with the Sarvāstivāda *abhidharma*’s pluralistic realism, the life faculty is considered not merely an epiphenomenon, but rather a separate *dharma* sustaining the vital functions of the body. Dōhan cites the following verse from the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*:

The life function, that is vitality (S. *āyus*, C. *shou* 寿, J. *ju*);
It sustains heat and consciousness.⁶⁷

Dōhan analyzes this verse as follows: “vitality” represents the syllable *a*, the mystery of speech, the eighth consciousness, and the elements of air and

65 *Shōsoku ajikan*, 23.

66 *Yugikyō kuketsu*, ShSZS, vol. 5, 135a.

67 *Apidamo jushe lun*, T 29: 26a.

space, among other correlations. “Heat” represents the syllable *vaṃ*, the mystery of the body, the ninth consciousness, and the elements of earth, water, and fire. Finally, “consciousness” is the syllable *hūṃ*, the mystery of mind, the consciousness element, and the mark of reality (*jissō*).⁶⁸ These correlations identify the basic vitality of the body with the mantric breath as the root of all life. Furthermore, it is through these three modalities of its vital force that the body is naturally endowed with the six elements (*hōni rokudai* 法爾六大), four *maṇḍala*, and three mysteries, the basic building blocks of tantric ritual practice. This natural endowment underlies both the inborn (*honnu*) and acquired (*shushō* 修正) qualities of awakening. The former are represented by the five stages in the womb, and the latter by a related set of five stages outside the womb (*taigai goi* 胎外五位), namely infancy, childhood, youth, maturity, and dotage. The vital force itself unites and yet transcends these two sets of five developmental stages, and hence Dōhan speaks of the “five positions of natural endowment” (*hōni goi* 法爾五位). But what does it mean for them to be “naturally endowed”? Dōhan clarifies:

“Natural endowment” means the single phrase, “before father and mother are born,” the single meaning before words and signs (*gonsen zen* 言詮前), before mechanisms (*kizen* 機前).⁶⁹

Dōhan here positions the very same Zen saying he had used to characterize the origin of the syllable *a*, “before father and mother are born,” in the context of a vitalistic understanding of tantric practice and liberation. According to Dōhan, in the womb one is endowed with the fundamental qualities of Buddhahood, which one then cultivates throughout the five stages of one’s post-natal life. Yet there is something, some quality, which does not change, a “natural endowment” that is a bare being alive. It is this level to which Zen refers. In this sense, Dōhan might unwittingly have been the first to offer a glimpse of how a Zen embryology might come to be constructed.

68 The identification of *hūṃ* with consciousness, and specifically the consciousness in the intermediary state between births can also be found in the influential commentary on the *Yūqi jing* attributed to Jichūn, the *Yūgikyō hiketsu*. According to this text, *a* and *vaṃ* represent female and male sexual fluid, whereas *hūṃ* represents the rebirth consciousness taking up residence within the mixed fluids and thus completes “the Aizen in body and mind” (*shinjin aizen* 身心愛染). See ShSZS, vol. 5, 14a.

69 *Yūgikyō kuketsu*, ShSZS, vol. 5, 72b.

7 Conclusions

Although there are considerable differences in terminology and doctrinal orientation, we can nonetheless make out a basic common understanding of Zen in relation to tantric Buddhism that unites Dōhan and Enni. For both masters, Zen pointed to a level fundamental to, or transcendent of, the concrete practices and skillful means of the tantric teachings. Yet the two masters differed on how this transcendence was to be understood. On the one hand, Enni followed contemporary trends within some Tendai lineages to emphasize that reality was ultimately beyond perceptual characteristics.⁷⁰ Consequently, he considered this transcendent space of Zen to be the inner, endarkened realization of the Mahāvairocana Buddha's mind. This mind is symbolized by the markless moon disc. In keeping with this doctrinal orientation, Enni, although he situated Zen in a tantric cosmos, made no attempt to connect Zen to tantric embryology in specific. Dōhan, on the other hand, was invested in the emphasis on perceptual marks. Consequently, he considered the transcendent space of Zen to refer to the bare, basic vitality of the tantric body in both its pre- and post-natal states. By binding Zen to such a body, Dōhan affirmed, if implicitly, the dependence of Zen on tantric hermeneutics.

Yet it is Chikotsu who forwarded the perhaps most innovative theory on how Zen and the tantric teachings were to relate to each other. Chikotsu followed his master Enni in proposing an esotericized reading of Zen, that is to say one in which Zen concepts and slogans were elucidated within a fundamentally tantric hermeneutical framework. However, for Enni "esotericization" had been a device to introduce Zen into a tantric world, and the referent of such esotericization had been the tantric mind or Mahāvairocana's verification of its own enjoyment of the *Dharma*. For Chikotsu, on the other hand, esotericization was a tool to assert Zen's inferiority to the tantric teachings. When Enni spoke of the realm of "exhausting the great earth, this light of wisdom; when the light has not yet shone forth, neither Buddha nor sentient being," he considered it as the essential mind-nature of Mahāvairocana. For Chikotsu, on the other hand, the mind of Zen, just like the tantric mind, referred to a physical organ. It is on how they relate to their common physiological basis that Zen and the tantric teachings differ. Whereas the Zen tradition understood returning to a recognition of one's mere endowment with a body as awakening, and consequently was without a "Buddha" or awakened body, the tantric teachings

⁷⁰ Although, of course, it is not always clear whether this should be interpreted as being free of perceptual characteristics as such, or as being free of *differentiating* perceptual characteristics. As mentioned previously, the "unmarked moon disc" is a paradoxical notion.

cultivated the sentient meat of the body by tutoring it into the ornamented flesh of a Buddha. Their primary means for doing so was initiation, a ritual process modeled on the structures of rebirth. By utilizing these structures and ritually re-enacting them, the practitioner could be equipped with a new, perfected body. Zen, by its very affirmation of the natural, uncultivated body, did not see the need for such teachings. Consequently, and in order to preserve the superiority of the tantric teachings as a vehicle for the attainment of an awakened body, Chikotsu never directly connected Zen to embryology. Yet in squarely affirming Zen's physiological basis while insisting on the soteriological importance of the embryological model of Buddhist practice, Chikotsu did put in place key elements from which a true Zen embryology potentially could, and eventually would, emerge. This Zen embryology will concern us in the next chapter.

The Womb Was Their Kōan

Zen Embryology in Late Medieval Genjū and Sōtō Lineages

[...] finally she and I took a warm bath together in the bathtub and could hear Alvah and Japhy discussing Zen Free Love Lunacy orgies in the other room.

JACK KAROUAC, *The Dharma Bums*



1 Introduction

Thinkers such as Dōhan and Chikotsu Daie began to consider the body of Zen in the same context as the embryologically inflected soteriology of the tantric teachings. However, their doctrinal commitments prevented them from outright proposing an embryology of the Zen body. Rather, for both Dōhan and Chikotsu Zen referred to a basic vitality that is presupposed by, but also more primitive than, the sophisticated tantric body. In the present chapter, we will trace the outline of a full-bodied Zen embryology as it emerges from the initiatory transmission documents of the Sōtō and the Rinzai Genjū factions. We will also consider how this Zen embryology is connected to both tantric discourses, and more general systems of knowledge widely shared among different groups during the medieval and early modern periods.

The Sōtō and Genjū factions had close personal links, and their esoteric transmission materials strongly influenced each other.¹ They differ from the *kōan* lore transmitted within the Myōshinji and Daitokuji lineages, the two families of lineages from which what would come to be regarded as the orthodox mainstream of the Rinzai school emerged. As Andō Yoshinori has shown, the Myōshinji and Daitokuji factions mostly drew their *kōan* curricula from the *Biyan lu* or the collections of cases compiled by Shūhō Myōchō, their common ancestor. The Sōtō and Genjū factions, on the other hand, also drew on the *Wumen guan*, a text mostly absent from Myōshinji and Daitokuji materials.

1 See Andō, *Kōan zen*, pp. 167–223.

This difference in *kōan* lore is reflected in the embryological discourses to be investigated below. While such embryological discourses appear, often in identical form, in the transmissions of both Genjū and Sōtō lineages, no such material has yet been discovered in Daitokuji and Myōshinji sources. While it is of course impossible to demonstrate the non-existence of any given object of investigation, this absence suggests that even if such embryological material existed, it was nowhere near as prevalent as it was in Sōtō and Genjū lineages.² To anticipate an argument to which we will return in the conclusions, I suggest that instead of interpreting this difference as one of orthodox Zen *versus* syncretistic Zen, or at least as deriving from a mixture of Zen and non-Zen elements, it better be understood as indicating that in premodern Japan there were in operation a number of mutually incompatible paradigms of how to construe the meaning of Zen in the first place.

Within Sōtō and Genjū lineages, a wide variety of embryological materials developed. These ranged from a direct and wholesale adaption of tantric schemes and technologies, on the one extreme, to the subtle, indeed sometimes almost imperceptible, introduction of embryological patterns into the interpretation of *kōan*, on the other. Unfortunately, due to the scarcity of available sources, it is at present still unclear exactly how and where specific embryological teachings first began to circulate among Zen lineages. Still, Andō Yoshinori has demonstrated the connection between embryological interpretations of *kōan* in the Genjū faction and Yoshida *shintō* 吉田神道 lore, as well as the influence of medical traditions on both.³ Below, I will suggest that many Zen embryological teachings likely developed from a common stock of knowledge concerning the human body and its development that circulated among practitioners of different, including non-Buddhist, traditions.⁴ It is this shared physiological paradigm that links the late medieval embryologies of the Sōtō and Genjū lineages with their distant ancestors found in the works of scholiasts such as Chikotsu, who himself might have been instrumental in spreading elite tantric discourses outwards from central institutions such as

2 See also Andō, *Kōan zen*, p. 212. Andō comments specifically on the difference between the Genjū and Myōshinji/Daitokuji factions, but given the overlap between Genjū and Sōtō materials, his observation can be taken to extend to the latter faction, as well.

3 See Andō, *Kōan zen*, pp. 213–220.

4 It should be noted, though, that although this stock of images was shared among traditions, in practical terms the images themselves always appear encoded as belonging exclusively or primarily to one tradition or the other. Thus although, for instance, both tantric and Zen traditions use, and hence in a sense share, the image of the body as a pagoda, in actual texts this image always is presented as the exclusive property, as it were, of the Zen or the tantric traditions.

Tōfukuji towards, for instance, his native Ise 伊勢. Thus, instead of thinking of the emergence of Zen embryologies as processes that proceeded in a single direction from the center into the peripheries, or from tantric to Zen lineages, it would perhaps be more accurate to see them as forming from feedback loops within complex networks involving both central and peripheral, both tantric and Zen, nodes.

2 Zen Dragons and Tantric Wombs

Let us first take a look at Sōtō transmission materials that directly appropriate the kind of tantric embryology we have discussed in the previous chapter. One striking example of such a Sōtō faction esoteric transmission that unabashedly draws on tantric embryology and sexual teachings is a document from Yōkōji in today's Ishikawa 石川 prefecture. This document is entitled *Ryūten jukai himitsu no hongyō* 竜天受戒秘密之本形, or *The Original Shape of the Secret of the Dragon Deity Receiving the Precepts*. It was copied in 1632, although the colophon states that it was first transmitted in 1604. The dragon deity is venerated in Sōtō lineages as a protector of the *Dharma*. To impart the precepts on, and thereby pacify or even coopt, supernatural entities was a central proselytizing strategy of Zen monks navigating the rural religious landscape, and the *Ryūten jukai himitsu no hongyō* fits this pattern.⁵

The text is dominated by a grotesque, eight-limbed creature inscribed onto a stylized lotus flower with eight petals, as shown in Figure 4. The creature wears the headgear of a monastic, and on its upper and lower body are inscribed two syllables *a*. Each of its eight extremities bears the character *i* 意, "intention," inscribed upon it five times in a manner resembling fingers or toes. The whole image bears the title, "Subtle Shape of Yin and Yang" (*in'yō myōzō* 陰陽妙像) and carries the warning "Secret!" (*himitsu* 秘密). The following inscription accompanies this figure:

The person having attained this figure is the monk penetrating the eight directions; is the *tathāgata* perfectly endowed with three bodies; is the originally unproduced and unobtainable syllable *a*; is the seed of the womb of *abudon* [i.e. the second of the five stages of fetal development.] The eight corners are the lotus with eight petals in eight directions. It is the formless deity. The black letter *a* is *yin*. The red letter *a* is *yang*. The characters *i* on the eight extremities are the hand of the Buddha

5 Bodiford, "Enlightenment of Kami and Ghosts," pp. 267–282.

protecting and rubbing the head [as a sign that the person whose head is being rubbed will attain Buddhahood in the future.] In general, the boundlessly wide *dharmadhātu* is the shape of the dragon deity here depicted. ... To receive the precepts in front of the Buddha is this shape. The fundamental root is without shape. Hence, in truth there is no fixed shape. It is the perfection and completion of five shapes [of basic syllables] being endowed with five dots [as diacritical marks.] It is the inexplicable shape.⁶

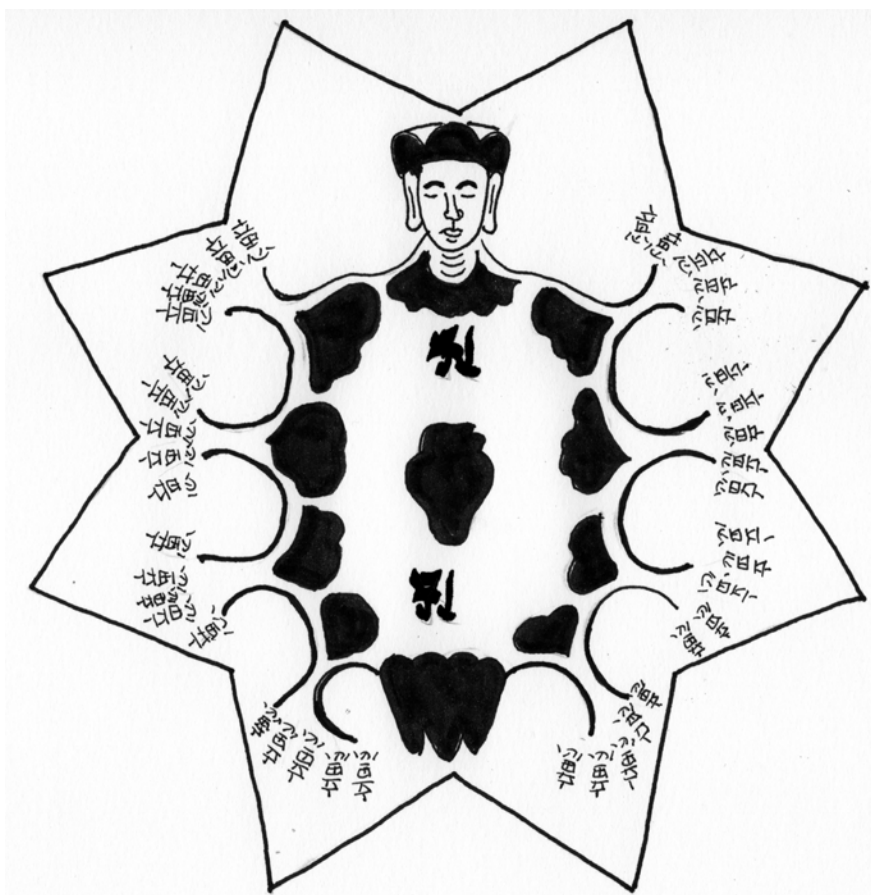


FIGURE 4 The Dragon Deity

SKETCH BY ELENA BERNARDINI. USED WITH PERMISSION

6 YK 5. See also Ishikawa, "Chūsei Sōtōshū kirigami (nijū)," pp. 104–105.

Through its reference to the procreative duality of *yin* and *yang*, symbolized by a black and red syllable *a*, as well as to *arbuda*, the second of the five stages of fetal development, this inscription makes it clear that one of the registers according to which the strange figure is to be made sense of is embryology. In fact, the central figure of the *Ryūten jukai himitsu no hongyō* appears to be a sanitized adaption of what has become known as the Tachikawa *maṇḍala*. This image shows two figures acrobatically entangled in sexual intercourse upon a lotus dais in such a manner that their heads point in opposite directions and their extremities align with the eight leaves.⁷ As Lucia Dolce has shown, such *maṇḍala* circulated widely in medieval tantric lineages and beyond, even if their ritual function is still unclear.

This sanitized image of procreative union opening the *Ryūten jukai himitsu no hongyō* is not the only feature that ties this document to tantric embryologies. Immediately following the explanatory note cited above, the document continues with an inscription consisting of twenty Sanskrit seed syllables, or rather four sets of permutations of the same basic set of five syllables representing the five elements. The first set comprises the five syllables *a va ra ha kha* without any diacritic marks. In the following three sets diacritic marks are added to these basic syllables to produce the syllable-sets *ā vā rā hā khā*; *aṃ vaṃ raṃ haṃ khaṃ*; and, finally, *aḥ vaḥ raḥ haḥ khaḥ*. According to Enni in his exposition of the *Vairocanābhishambodhi*, the *Dainichikyō kenmon*, these permutations of the basic five syllables of the elements are used by the *tāntrika* to generate the body and bodily environment of the central Mahāvairocana deity of the Womb realm. Consequently, these syllables can be considered the counterparts to the permutations of the syllable *a*, which represent the generation of Mahāvairocana's inner self-verification.⁸ The *Ryūten jukai himitsu no hongyō* thus applies the procreative and mantric technologies through which the tantric body is generated to imparting Zen precepts. To bestow on the dragon deity the Zen precepts, the text suggests, transforms a merely local deity into the universal Mahāvairocana by means of the very ritual technologies that allowed the tantric adept to regenerate his own body into the main tantric deity.⁹

7 See for example the groundbreaking if biased research of Mizuhara, *Jakyō Tachikawaryū*, photograph following p. 130. In the Sōtō school, both more abstract and more explicit versions of the so-called "Tachikawa *maṇḍala*" circulated. See Iizuka and Tsuchiya, "Rinka Sōtō shū (9)," p. 184; p. 194.

8 DNKKM, 66a.

9 It is likely no coincident that it is a dragon deity that in this transmission takes on the role of the main tantric sovereign Mahāvairocana. Since the Kamakura period there was a discourse on snake or dragon deities acting for the liberation of sentient beings by taking on bodies generated from the three poisons, just as the bodies of sentient beings are. See Itō, *Tenjō*,

3 A Dog's Buddha Nature and the First Shape in the Womb

A second example of a more or less direct appropriation of tantric embryological teachings into Sōtō Zen can be found in the *Chūteki himissho* 中の秘密書 or *Secret Writ of Hitting the Mark*. This text from 1659 by the otherwise unknown Sōtō monk Shōun 昌運 (d.u.) was composed to introduce beginners to the essentials of Sōtō Zen.¹⁰ In keeping with its pedagogical intention, the text includes a tripartite diagram summarizing its message.¹¹ The first two parts each center on a pagoda constructed from five geometrical shapes. Each pagoda is composed of a square, a circle, a triangle, a half-moon, and a flame-like shape, one on top of the other. These shapes represent the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space, with consciousness, the sixth element, pervading the others. The rightmost pagoda is inscribed with the five elements' seed syllables, *a vi ra ha kha*, each syllable embedded in one of the pagoda's constituent shapes. On the top and bottom of the pagoda are written, "pure yang" and "turbid yin," respectively. The pagoda on the left is inscribed with a stylized human figure, its five shapes aligning with the figure's feet, belly, chest, head, and crown. On the top and bottom the characters for "heaven" and "earth" are placed. Numerous correspondences are listed alongside each level of the two pagodas, including directions, internal organs, colors, Buddhas, religious slogans, and so forth.¹²

Some of these correspondences, such as the Five Positions, or the five cosmological stages derived from the *Yijing*, to which I return below, clearly are additions that have aggregated over the centuries. Yet the basic system and iconography of these pagodas, as well as the topological scaffolding surrounding them, derive from the great reformer of Kūkai's faction, Kakuban, especially his *Gorin kujimyō himisshaku* 五輪九字明秘密釈 or *Secret Interpretation of the Five Cakra and Nine Syllables*. In this text, Kakuban elucidated the somatic basis of the fundamental tantric concept of "attaining Buddhahood in/through/by means of this body" (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成佛) by drawing on the Chinese image of the body as a microcosm in resonance with the mostly fivefold patterns of the world around it. In so doing, Kakuban constructed a complex,

pp. 371–372. Also KRSYS, T 76: 517c, which explains that the unproduced, fundamentally existent body of deities arising from the three poisons always takes the shape of a snake. In this sense, the title of the *Ryūten jukai himitsu no hongyō* might perhaps also be translated as, *The Original Shape of the Secret of Receiving the Precepts of the Dragon Deity*, rather than the other way round.

10 Reproduced in sszs, Chūkai 5, 329–358.

11 sszs, Chūkai 5, 355–357.

12 Reproduced in Licha, "Embryology," pp. 484–485.

quintuple system of associations focused on the human body as a pagoda, a motif the *Chūteki himissho* inherited.¹³

The *Chūteki himissho* complements the two pagodas with an image of a syllable *a* to be drawn in the colors of the five elements, namely white, yellow, red, black, and blue.¹⁴ This colorful manner of inscribing the syllable is commonly found in tantric materials, with the five constituent parts of the syllable representing the five elements, five Buddha, five viscera, and so forth, in short, the very sets associated with the five levels or elements of the pagoda.¹⁵ The message of this diagram appears to be that the pagodic body represents an “unfolding” of the structures contained within the seed of the syllable *a*.

Taken together, the pagodic symbolism and use of the syllable *a* indicate that Shōun was conversant with the general outline of tantric physiology and embryology as well as with its basic iconography. However, the text also shows that late medieval and early modern Sōtō monks did not merely copy tantric precedents, but rather continued to create new esoteric teachings.¹⁶ This becomes apparent from the gloss Shōun added to the syllable *a*:

The syllable *a* is the first shape of humans entering the womb. The syllable *a* is the story of Jōshū's 趙州 dog. The syllable *a* is the character *mu* 無.¹⁷

Shōun read the syllable *a*, the tantric seed from which the human being arises, as identical with the *kōan* phrase *mu*. The latter is the famous head word derived from a monk asking the legendary Chan master Zhaozhou 趙州 (fl. 8th/9th century) if a dog had Buddha nature or not. Shockingly, the master answered, “No!” or *mu* in the Japanese reading of the Chinese negative *wu* 無.¹⁸

13 See *Gorin kujimyō himisshaku* 五輪九字明秘密釈. For the pagodas, see 8–9; for the associative system, see esp. 11–14; for the five viscera and their deities, see 23–25.

14 Reproduced in Licha, “Embryology,” p. 486.

15 See for example the illustrations in Dolce, “Embryonic Generation,” p. 288, p. 290.

16 On the problem of Zen monks adapting esoteric discourses, see also Hirose Ryōmon, “Kokuō sokuihō,” p. 267. Hirose characterizes this process as Zen monks rewriting tantric traditions to add a “Zen style” (*zenteki* 禪的) interpretation. This approach, however, raises the methodological problem of which standard would be used to identify any such “Zen style,” apart from the results of the process of rewriting themselves. See also the discussion in the conclusions.

17 *Chūteki himissho*, sszs, vol. 9, Chūkai 5, 357.

18 See *Wumen guan*, T 48: 292c. Although a literal reading of this story suggests that Zhaozhou simply denied that animals have Buddha nature, by the Song period, and especially in Japan, his answer, “No!” was interpreted as signifying the non-dual essence of Zen as such. See Yanagida, *Zen*, p. 157. On the literal level, the case might reflect a contemporary dispute concerning the Buddha nature of inanimate objects and animals.



FIGURE 5
Constituent elements of the character *mu* 無

On the most superficial level, this identification of *a* with *mu* is based on both having the grammatical function of negation. However, Shōun had in mind a more complex hermeneutical operation than simple token-to-token interpretation. Shōun interpreted *mu* as if the Chinese character were itself a tantric seed syllable that could be “unpacked” to reveal a cosmic blueprint, just as the tantric seed *a* could be unfolded into a pagodic body.

The syllable *a* can graphically be analyzed into its five component strokes, with each stroke representing one of the elementary constituents, or sets of constituents, that comprise the topology sustaining tantric doctrinal and ritual discourse. In other words, the mantric syllable’s “meaning” is not merely symbolic, but also iconic. Shōun applied the same interpretative strategies to the Chinese character *mu*. To this end, Shōun first divided the elements from which the character *mu* is composed into five sets, namely a black dot, two horizontal lines, four vertical lines, a horizontal line, and again four vertical lines, as can be seen in Figure 5.

The uppermost black circle indicates the initial, upper left dash when writing the character *mu*. It is identified with the Poleless or Unsurpassed Ultimate (*mukyoku*), the highest principle of *Yijing* cosmogonic speculation. The two horizontal lines represent the first and second horizontal lines of *mu*, or Heaven and man. The next four vertical lines correspond to the four strokes making up the body of the *mu* character, and to the four cardinal directions. The single horizontal line beneath represents the bottom horizontal line of *mu*, and Earth. The final four vertical lines represent the four dashes completing the character *mu*, and the four intermediary directions. Just as the syllable *a* is the seed of the embodied tantric cosmos, so the character *mu* enfolds within itself the primary constituents of a different cosmic matrix based on

the *Yijing*. By deft manipulation of symbols, Shōun integrated these the two cosmological visions.

In his explication of the character *mu* in in the main body of the text, Shōun makes full use of the possibility to swap, integrate, and conflate tantric and Chinese cosmologies in elaborating the embryological significance of the Zen *watō mu*:

The syllable *a* is the first shape of human beings. It is the single character *mu*, the shape of the perfection of the five shapes [i.e. the pagodic body]. Analyze *mu* [into its constituent strokes] and see [this. Here follows the discussion of *mu*'s graphical elements I have paraphrased above]. *Mu* is Together Arriving in the Middle. It is the Unsurpassed Ultimate (*mukyoku*), the mysterious, the mother's womb. It is the crown of all Buddhas, the central point of the [Zen] lineage. Therefore, it is called fundamental emptiness (*honmu*).¹⁹

In this exposition, *mu* takes the place of *a* as the seed from which the human being in all its soteriological significance grows in the womb. This womb itself is no longer the tantric womb. The key passage from the above quote that indicates this shift is, “*mu* is Together Arriving in the Middle. It is the Unsurpassed Ultimate, [...], the mother's womb. [...] Therefore, it is called fundamental *mu*.” This passage suggests that the womb now is part of a cosmos we have already encountered when discussing the structures of medieval Sōtō Zen *kōan* interpretation in Chapter 5. As we have seen, the *Shūmon missan* sought to counter the Tendai criticism of the Zen traditions as clinging to arid voidness. In order to do so, it emphasized the Sōtō faction's embrace of a fecund, generative “fundamental *mu*” or “fundamental emptiness” as opposed to the “extinction emptiness” (*danmu*) propagated in the Rinzai faction. The generative power of emptiness was predicated on the identification of the Five Positions, which encode soteriology as the supra-mundane law, with the five cosmogonic stages, which encode cosmology/cosmogony as the mundane law. In the *Chūteki himissho* this notion of “fundamental emptiness” becomes interpreted as identical to the mantric syllable *a*, most likely due to their common negative grammatical function. In this manner, the *kōan* phrase *mu* turns into a Zen seed syllable or impregnating *watō*.

19 *Chūteki himissho*, sszs, vol. 9, Chūkai 5, 358ab.

4 A Common Womb

In this new, Zen-style embryology elements derived more or less directly from tantric discourses, such as the seed syllable *a* and the pagodic body already found in Kakuban, were extended by combining them with notions such as the Five Positions and their associations, including the trigrams of the *Yijing* and Chinese cosmological concepts. Such extensions of the body as pagoda motif were not restricted to Zen sources. The *Unkai shi ryū no sho* 雲海土流之書 or *Text of Unkai's Lineage* is a medical text from the middle of the 17th century, and thus roughly contemporary with the *Chūteki himissho*. The *Unkai shi ryū no sho* opens with the very declaration we also found in the *Chūteki himissho*, namely, “The syllable *a* is the first shape of entering the womb.”²⁰ The text continues to present a number of images that encompass the greater part of the associations also present in the *Chūteki himissho*, including between the tantric pagoda and the trigrams from the *Yijing*.²¹ This suggests that the discourse Shōun drew upon when re-conceiving tantric embryology as the Zen *watō mu* was not his own idiosyncratic invention, but rather represents an understanding of the human body widely shared by both religious and non-religious actors.

One way of approaching this shared discourse is to descend from the dizzying heights of doctrinal speculation to the grisly nitty-gritties of Zen practice in premodern rural Japan. As William Bodiford has pointed out, Sōtō Zen monks “assumed many of the popular religious functions of the traditional Japanese rural ascetic.”²² These ascetics provided to the rural population some of the services their elite monastic cousins such as Jien provided to the aristocracy and the imperial court, including apotropaic intervention in pregnancy and childbirth. These interventions also included the ritual actions taken when things went horribly wrong, such as when the expecting mother died during pregnancy or birth. Such ritual action was required as it was believed that expecting mothers who had died might give birth in the grave and turn into a form of revenant known as *ubume* 産女. To prevent such an uncanny transformation, the fetus not only received a mortuary tablet and religious name of its own, but also had to be extracted from the womb.²³ Already Kanjin

20 See *Unkai shi ryū no sho*, 3u. Kept at Kyōto University library. Available online at <https://rmda.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/item/rb00001261#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=6&r=0&xywh=-4639%2C-141%2C14893%2C4160>; last accessed 02.08.2021.

21 *Unkai shi ryū no sho*, 50.

22 Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen*, p. 210.

23 For *ubume*, see Glassman, “Crossroads of Birth and Death.” On removal of the fetus in modern times, see Yamaguchi Yaichirō, “Shitai bunri maisō jiken.”

寛信 (1084–1153), a monk belonging to the Ono 小野 lineage of Kūkai's faction, described a (tantric) ritual technique for extracting the fetus in the context of imperial pregnancy rituals.²⁴

As rural Sōtō monks were routinely called upon to minister to the dead, the dangerous and polluting duty of dealing with the death of an unborn fetus fell to them.²⁵ They created a special funerary procedure to deal with a mother having died during pregnancy. In general, medieval Sōtō funerary rituals were modeled on monastic ordinations.²⁶ A *kirigami* entitled *Sasō gishiki* 作僧儀式, dated to the early 17th century, gives an outline of the post-mortem ordination ritual. According to this source, the officiating priest sprinkled the deceased's head with water after cutting its hair, just as would be done in the case of a living ordinand. *In lieu* of the 16 precepts used in regular ordination, however, the master imparted a special verse known as the "Stanza for Imparting the Precepts to the Dead" (*bōryō jukai no ge* 亡靈授戒之偈).²⁷ The text of this stanza is not recorded in the *Sasō gishiki*, but according to the *Bōryō jukai kirigami* 亡靈授戒切紙 from 1649 it runs as follows:

It is merely an accumulation of *dharma*
[that] unite and become this body.
When this body arises,
It is merely *dharma* arising.
When this body dissolves,
It is merely *dharma* dissolving.
When these *dharma* arise
Do not say "I arise,"
When these *dharma* dissolve,
Do not say "I dissolve."
Preceding thought and following thought
Do not oppose one another,
Preceding *dharma* and following *dharma*
Do not oppose one another.²⁸

24 See Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, p. 80.

25 For birth and death pollution, see Kataoka, *Nihon chūsei*, especially Part III, pp. 210–277. For how notions of pollution spread among the general public, see Taira, *Nihon chūsei*, pp. 245–255.

26 See Williams, "Funerary Zen."

27 See ZSS, vol. 1, 474–475.

28 Reproduced in ZSS, vol. 1, 475–476. The stanza is taken from the *Kaiin zanmai* 海印三昧 chapter of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*. See T 82: 144c. Dōgen's sources were the *Mazu Daoyi chanshi guanglu* 馬祖道一禪師廣錄, x 69: 2c, and ultimately Kumārajīva's 鳩摩羅什

Finally, the newly ordained corpse was presented with monastic implements such as a bowing cloth (*zagu* 坐具), a robe (*kesa*), and eating bowls (*hachiu* 鉢盂).²⁹

In the case of death during pregnancy, alterations had to be made to this basic ritual format. According to an undated text kept at Yōkōji, the *Nyoshi betsufuku kirigami* 女子別腹切紙, just after the corpse's hair has been cut, but before the precept stanza is imparted, there is the "manner of leaping [on top] (*yakutō no yōsu* 躍到ノ様子)." ³⁰ A particularly gruesome *kirigami* from Yōkōji discusses this procedure in detail.³¹

[The] oral transmission says, "Secretly recite the names of the Ten Buddhas three times leaning towards the deceased's left ear, blowing towards the inside of the ear. After this, write two mortuary tablets (*ihai* 位牌) for the child and mother and put them into the coffin.

△ [indicates next item] Next, write the character *i* 伊 on the inside of your own left hand, write the character *se* 勢 on two sheets of paper folded four times in half. Prepare much castor oil, insert about three times the amount used for eating, and soften. Press the aforementioned paper on which is written the character *se* against the soles of the deceased's feet. Afterwards, pour lukewarm water from the neck, spread out the talisman (*fu* 符), grab the deceased's topknot with the master's left hand on which [the character] *i* is written and pull the deceased forward into a bend position, shouting loudly (*hatsu to ikkatsu su* 叭ト一喝ス).³² Step on the hips of the deceased directly underneath and kick two or three times. Right there [it is] born."³³

The somewhat distasteful procedure here described uses a charm inscribed with the second character of *Ise*. The first character is inscribed on the left hand of the practitioner performing the ritual. I would like to focus on this talismanic use of the term *Ise*, which is also the name of the imperial ancestral shrine, and what it can tell us about the networks in which embryological discourses circulated in medieval Japan.

(334–413) translation of the *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa*. See *Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經, T 14: 545a.

29 See ZSS, vol. 1, 474–475. The text gives "*hoyu*."

30 ZSS, vol. 1, 487.

31 See also the 1637 *Moshi betsufuku no kirigami narabi zu* 母子別腹之切紙並図 in ZSS, vol. 1, 483f.

32 Ishikawa gives 叭 instead of 叭. See ZSS, vol. 1, 493.

33 Reproduced in ZSS, vol. 1, 493.

During the medieval period, thinkers associated with the Zen movements contributed significantly to the rise of a new, theological Shintō discourse. Medieval Shintō movements were characterized by seeking to understand the deities in a metaphysical fashion akin to Buddhist doctrinal speculation. The outcome was a new understanding of the *kami* and other local deities in a creationist and quasi-monotheistic framework.³⁴ Enni's student Chikotsu, himself a native of Ise, exerted a strong influence on the formation of Ise *shintō*. For instance, the *Tenji ryōkaku hisho* 天地靈覚秘書, one of the foundational works of theological thinking in the Ise tradition, draws on Chan or Zen texts such as Yuanwu's *Xinyao* 心要 or the *Chuanxin fayao* in order to elaborate its metaphysical reflections on the deities. As we have seen in previous chapters, these Chan materials were important sources also for contemporary Zen lineages.³⁵

Yet the lines of influence between medieval Shintō and Zen, just like those between the established schools and the new movement, did not run in one direction only. Rather, they formed complex feedback loops that also carried significant tantric information. Medieval Shintō traditions were heavily influenced by tantric Buddhism, and in the case of Ise, the tantric patterns helping to structure theological reflection on the site's deities contributed to identifying the two main shrines of the Ise complex with the two main maṇḍalic realms. Along these lines, the name "Ise" itself came to be interpreted as representing the female (*i*) and male (*se*) in procreative union.³⁶ This symbolism can also be found in the secret transmissions of the Genjū and Sōtō Zen factions. For instance, the Genjū lineage monk Kohan Shūshin 古帆周信 (d.u.) noted the following in his *Ganzō roku* 含雜録:

Furthermore, the two characters of Ise, *i* is male, *se* is female.³⁷ For this reason, from the two characters of Ise it is said that humans are born. It is the fundamental, unchanging Mahāvairocana. Heaven is the Mahāvairocana of the Diamond realm, the male. Earth is the Womb realm, the female. This is the polarity of *yin* and *yang*. For this reason, woman is said to

34 See Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, pp. 17–29. Also Itō, *Tenjō*, p. 386. This process is also apparent in Buddhist cults of local deities. For instance, the Sōtō cult of the deity of Mt. Hakusan 白山, while drawing on earlier *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 paradigms, came to redefine her as a symbol, or body, of transcendent Zen insight. See Licha, "Edo jidai zenki."

35 Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, pp. 161–164, p. 208.

36 On the interpretations of the two characters *i* 伊 and *se* 勢 in various Shintō and other lineages, see Itō, *Tenjō*, pp. 452–496; Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, p. 313, p. 496.

37 This is perhaps a mistake. Often the identification is inverted, the vocalic *i* representing the female, and the syllable *se* the male. However, Zen sources sometimes do invert traditional attributions of gender.

be the *bodhimaṇḍala* of the three worlds, the treasury of the eye of the true *Dharma* (*shōbōgenzō*), the subtle mind of *nirvāṇa* (*nehan myōshin* 涅槃妙心).³⁸

When the Buddha transmitted to the first ancestor, Mahākāśyapa, he famously declared this transmission to consist of “the treasury of the eye of the true *Dharma*, the subtle mind of *nirvāṇa*.” According to Kohan, the Buddha’s place of awakening, the *bodhimaṇḍala* where the treasury of the *Dharma* and the mind of *nirvāṇa* are conceived, is the female body, or more precisely, the womb where male and female, Diamond and Womb realms, *i* and *se*, unite. Kohan continued by relating the jewel gifted to the Buddha by the Dragon maiden in the famous parable from the *Lotus sūtra* to the jewel from among the three imperial regalia, and to the islands of Japan. We have already touched upon the embryological meaning Jien had bestowed on the jewel in his dreams, where it represented issue born from the union of the imperial couple. Kohan next correlated the divine ages with dwelling in the womb, and concluded by further linking womb dwelling to Buddhist practice:

Inside the mother’s bosom (*mune* 胸) [perhaps, “womb” *tai* 胎?] is like dwelling on the dew [covered lotus] leaves. At this point, there is no mind, this is called the circle shape [of the first of the five stages of dwelling in the womb, and the abstract Zen symbol of awakening].³⁹

In the Sōtō faction, an esoteric transmission of almost identical content and even wording circulated, namely the *Ise ni ji kirigami* 伊勢二字切紙 or *Kirigami on the Two Characters I and Se*.⁴⁰ The close resemblance between this *kirigami* and Kohan’s text demonstrates that the two Zen movements equally had access to a common pool of embryological lore, a pool also shared by medieval Shintō movements such as those connected to the Ise shrine. What is important to note in this regard is that such a shared discourse is not the result of syncretizing or hybridization processes. Rather, it extends all the way back to the very beginning of medieval theological speculation on the imperial shrine’s *kami*, to which practitioners like Chikotsu contributed. In short, medieval Shintō and the esoteric Zen of Sōtō and Genjū lineages developed together as sister movements sharing, at least on the point of embryology, in a common heritage.

³⁸ Reproduced in Suzuki, “Nihon ni okeru kōan zen,” p. 295.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Reproduced in Ishikawa, “Chūsei Sōtōshū kirigami (nijūni),” p. 133.

As a brief aside, the *Ise nijī kirigami* text also serves as a caution that embryological or sexual discourses centered on female procreative power are not necessarily liberating, and indeed often the opposite. The text emphasizes that women cannot awaken due to the defilements of their bodies. It is merely their wombs that serve as *bodhimaṇḍala* (*shobutsu dōjō* 諸仏道場), “container bodies” for the Buddhas.

The perhaps most eloquent testimony to the wide circulation of embryological speculation and its influence on the general religious landscape, including the Zen schools, is a text known as the *Sanken* (alt. *sangen*) *icchisho* 三賢一致書 or *Writ of the Unity of the Three Sages* (alt. *Sangai issshinki* 三界一心記 or *Record of the One Mind of the Three Realms*). This text, which has been edited by the otherwise unknown Rinzai monk Dairyū 大竜 (d.u.), was first printed in 1649. However, as Hirose Ryōmon 広瀬良文 has pointed out, it seems to have formed around an older kernel dominated by tantric and Shintō discourses stemming from the late Muromachi period. Dairyū added a veneer of Zen respectability to this older layer.⁴¹ The text vociferously advocates the unity of Buddhist, Shintō, and Confucian teachings, the three realms or sages of its title. Note, though, that Confucian here is defined as calendric speculation. What unites these discourses, the text argues, is their common concern with the womb. The text contains all the embryological tropes and symbols we have encountered so far, including the explication of the name Ise as what “begins from the comingling of the lust of the two drops of red and white.”⁴² The text also contains a version of the Tachikawaryū *maṇḍala*, the sanitized version of which we encountered in the *Ryūten jukai himitsu no hongyō*. In the *Sanken icchisho* this graphic representation of tantric union is called the “Chart of the Shape of the Completion of Yin and Yang” (*in'yō jōgyō zu* 陰陽成形成図). This chart is surrounded by the primary trigrams of the *Yijing*.⁴³ The text comments on the chart as follows:

The principle of the chart of the shape of the completion of *yin* and *yang* [...] interprets the heart of the *Yi[jing]*. This is [done] so that the great outline of the present text can be understood. In Shintō, Izanagi is the Mahāvairocana *tathāgata* of the Diamond realm, is the *yang* deity, is the father, is the male. Light and pure, rising he becomes Heaven. This is the essence of fire and water. That is to say, it is the Sunlight bodhisattva (*nikkō bosatsu* 日光菩薩). Izanami is the Mahāvairocana *tathāgata* of the

41 See Hirose Ryōmon, “Kinsei zenki,” pp. 556–559.

42 *Sanken icchisho*, 518.

43 *Sanken icchisho*, 521.

Womb realm. Is the *yin* deity, is the mother, is the female. Heavy and turbid, she sinks and becomes Earth. This is the essence of metal and water. The Moonlight bodhisattva (*gakkō bosatsu* 月光菩薩). In the *Yi*, this is the intercourse of sun and moon. In the mantric teachings (*shingon*) it is the intercourse of man and woman. It is the sagely Aizen 愛染. [...] In the *Buddhadharma* [of Zen], it is the saying “birth not yet divided,” Xiangyan’s story of [somebody being stuck] up a tree, the story of seeing the bright star and awakening [as the Buddha did. ...]. The two [seeds] of red and white of father and mother [...] become the syllable *a* in five colors.⁴⁴

This associative phantasmagoria on the womb maps out what by the early modern period had become a common, shared embryological discourse from which all religious traditions, and in fact also non-religious traditions, could draw equally.

As we have seen in this section, on both the ritual and the doctrinal or ideological level Zen monks constantly and actively participated in and contributed to such “womb talk.” Figures such as Enni and Chikotsu not only were early Zen practitioners but also major players in the formation of medieval tantric embryologies. The Zen they transmitted from the beginning existed in the same discursive space as tantric embryology, even if the two masters themselves do not appear to have made any attempt at outright combining the two. However, that such a combination was not far from scholiasts’ minds is evident from Dōhan’s seemingly natural yet perhaps not entirely innocent use of Zen slogans to indicate the origin of the syllable *a*. In some cases, late medieval and early modern Zen lineages sought to construct a direct, genealogical link to prominent figures such as Enni by producing lineage charts connecting these pioneers to later esoteric traditions. However, such links clearly are retrospective attempts at legitimization and do not reflect historical realities.⁴⁵ Rather than looking for elusive transmission events, the above considerations suggest that the origins of late medieval and early modern Zen embryologies be sought in what were common discourses cutting across denominational boundaries, discourses that themselves had their origins in the trans- or rather pre-sectarian debates of the early medieval period. As the *Sanken icchisho*

44 *Sanken icchisho*, 523–524.

45 For an example of a Sōtō transmission ritual attributed to Yōsai, see zss, vol. 2, 589–590. Hirose has drawn attention to a document concerned with the Sōtō version of the *sokui kanjō* 即位灌頂 or enthronement unction which claims of itself to originate with Yōsai and to have been transmitted through Enni to later Sōtō practitioners. See Hirose Ryōmon, “*Chūsei shintō*,” p. 680.

shows, this was certainly how at least some actors still understood the importance of the “common place” or *topos* of the womb even as late as the early modern period.

Medieval Zen lineages also developed their embryological theories in the context of *kōan* interpretation. We have already encountered traces of this process in the *Chūteki himissho*’s reading of the *watō mu* as the syllable *a*, and in the above quote from the *Sanken icchisho*, in which the womb is related to three *kōan* cases, including the famous story of Xiangyan’s man stuck up a tree. To a fuller account of the womb as *kōan* we now turn.

5 The Womb as *Kōan*: Embryological *Kōan* Interpretation in the Genjū and Sōtō Factions

In 1557, the Jesuit missionary Balthazar Gago (1520?–1583) completed his *Sumario de los errores de Japão de varias seitas* or *Summary of the Errors of Japan of the Various Sects*.⁴⁶ Heavily relying on native informants, Gago offered surprisingly detailed and accurate information on the contemporary Japanese religious landscape. He already differentiated various Buddhist movements and their signature practices. In this context, Gago also gave the perhaps first account of *kōan* practice in any European language. The *Sumario* describes a kind of “black-robed bonzes” (*bomzos de ábitos pretos*) who assign topics for meditative contemplation to their paying clients, asking them, for instance, “Who is breathing in and out?”⁴⁷ It is easy to recognize behind this description the black robed members of the Zen schools, whom already the rebellious monk-poet Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394–1481) had castigated for selling their *kōan* lore to laypeople.⁴⁸ The perhaps most striking meditation topic described in the *Sumario* is the following:

Let him ask another question in meditation, “Which is the mouth through which one goes to hell?” After having meditated well, he acquiesces to say that it is the place where a creature comes out from the womb of his mother that is the mouth of hell. That is to say, there is no other hell but this world.⁴⁹

46 Urs App, *Birth of Orientalism*, pp. 17–18.

47 *Sumario de los errores de Japão de varias seitas* or *Summary of the Errors of Japan of the Various Sects*, reproduced in Ruiz-de-Medina, *Monumenta Historica Japoniae*, p. 665.

48 Hirose Ryōkō, *Zenshū chihō tenkaishi*, p. 381.

49 Ruiz-de-Medina, *Monumenta Historica Japoniae*, p. 666.

The female sexual organ as the gate of hell might have appealed to the Jesuit's religious sensibilities in confirming the barbarous heathenism of the Japanese. Yet it does not appear as if Gago or his informant had misunderstood or misrepresented the black robed bonzes. Although not a *kōan* text in the strict sense, the *Sanken icchisho* concludes its description of fetal development as follows:

In the tenth month [of pregnancy], falling from the womb head over heel into being born, this is the beginning of the eighty-four thousand hells. [...] Being born head over heels means that if one awakens, then this very body is the Buddha. This is the origin (*shusshin* 出身) of all Buddhas. Entering [into the realm of death] is from the *yin* gate (*inmon* 陰門) [i.e. the vagina].⁵⁰

Preceding this passage, the *Sanken icchisho* describes the fully formed fetus as the *dharmakāya* Mahāvairocana dwelling in the Pure Land of the womb.⁵¹ To be born, in other words, is to fall through the vagina into the hellscape of *saṃsāra*.

As already D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966) observed with barely hidden contempt, such embryological interpretation was an indispensable aspect of the *kōan* studies conducted in both the Genjū and Sōtō factions.⁵² From a less judgmental point of view, Andō Yoshinori identified Kohan of the Genjū faction as the author of one of the texts Suzuki condemned as a Zen heresy. Kohan records a *kōan* exchange on the fifth case of the *Wumen guan*. In this case, which we have already encountered in the *Sanken icchisho* above, Xiangyan Zhixian 香嚴智閑 (?–898) confronts his disciples with the following scenario: Imagine you are stuck up a tree. Your hands and feet do not reach any hold, and you barely hang onto a single branch with your mouth. At this moment, somebody comes along and asks, “What is the meaning of the first ancestor, Bodhidharma, coming from the West?” That is to say, what is the essence of the *Buddhadharma*? You have to answer; yet when you open your mouth you drop to your death. So, what do you do? Kohan recorded the following exchange explicating this conundrum:

⁵⁰ *Sanken icchisho*, 531.

⁵¹ *Sanken icchisho*, 529–530. The illustration accompanying this description of the fetus is almost identical to the *Chart of the Five Viscera* (*gozō no zu* 五臓之図) found in medical texts such as the already mentioned *Unkai shiryū no sho*, 4u. This is another reminder of how closely medical and religious technologies were related in the premodern period.

⁵² See Suzuki, “Nihon ni okeru kōan zen,” p. 291, pp. 294–295.

The master addresses [the student], saying, "Tell me about the mouth biting a branch of the tree."

The student says, "It is someone dwelling in the womb sucking the milk root [which is said to suckle the fetus in the womb]."

The master explicates, saying, "This is dwelling sucking the milk root, gradually producing the fivefold [body like a pagoda] and being born after nine or ten months. [...] This fetus, dwelling in the womb, it dwells stilled in turning upwards (*kōjō no kiiki* 向上ノ機息). The breath of the child and the breath of the mother, in- and exhaling they are the same. [...] This fetus, when the single Buddha nature does not enter and leave at the tip of its nose, it loses its life."

The master addresses [the student], saying, "Tell me about being stuck in the tree."

The student says, "It is facing the wall [as Bodhidharma did for nine years.]"

The master addresses [the student], saying, "What is facing the wall?"

The student says, "Facing the wall is dwelling in the womb of the mother." [...]

The master addresses [the student], saying, "Tell me about the meaning of [Bodhidharma] coming from the West!" The explication (*ben* 弁) is detailed in [Zhaozhou's] oak tree.⁵³

In formal terms, this is a perfectly unremarkable example of the type of *kōan* instruction available in medieval Japanese Zen lineages. Master and disciple engage in a pre-scripted exchange of questions and answers, interspersed with some explanatory material. In the course of such exchanges, often cross-references to other cases would be established, thereby spinning an intertextual web of associations. In the above, such is the case between the main topic of Xiangyan's man stuck up in a tree and the subsidiary case of Zhaozhou's oak tree. The link between these two cases is that both of them treat the question, "Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?" Hence, they could be considered as illustrating different aspects of the same underlying principle. Investigating an array of connected *kōan* in this manner, students

53 Reproduced in Suzuki, "Nihon ni okeru kōan zen," pp. 291–292. The last exchange is a reference to the famous case of a monk asking Zhaozhou, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West?" and Zhaozhou answering, "The oak tree in the garden." On this case, see the introduction in Ōgawa, *Goroku no shisō*. Through a study of Zhaozhou's use of the phrase, Ōgawa shows that the statement "Oak tree in the garden" should be understood as an instruction in the sense of, "Look at the oak tree in the garden!" in order to gain a direct experience of the immediate workings of one's own mind.

were expected to become familiar with the vocabulary and conventions of *kōan* language.

What is remarkable, on the other hand, is that the answer to the question, “What is the essential meaning of the *Buddhadharma*?” turns out to be: Dwelling in the womb while sucking on the “milk root” through which the mother nourishes the fetus with life-sustaining breath/milk. This womb dwelling is read into the *kōan* in two ways: First, the man stuck in the tree himself is the fetus dwelling in the womb. Second, the first ancestor, Bodhidharma, famous for facing the wall of a cave at Shaolin monastery, is interpreted as dwelling in the womb.⁵⁴

The Genjū faction was by no means unique in casting Zen practice in embryological guise. Sōtō Zen lineages, too, felt a longing for the uterus and indulged it in even more graphic forms than the relatively discreet treatment just discussed. What can only be described as a full blown Sōtō Zen embryology is preserved in a document entitled *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* 禪門胎內五位之図 or *Chart of the Five Positions in The Womb of the Zen Gate* from 1632.⁵⁵ The basic framework employed by the text is the ontogenetic model of the five phases of fetal development with which we are already familiar from tantric embryology. These are combined with the Five Positions of Zen metaphysics, and the five stages of *Yijing* cosmological interpretation. The combined use of these latter two sets we have seen to play an important, even fundamental, role in establishing the cosmos within which medieval Sōtō *kōan* lore operates. In the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* this *kōan* lore is extended to ontogenesis: the five phases of fetal development are made to mirror cosmogony as well as the path to awakening. In order to achieve this effect, the text uses two sets of *kōan* to position the fetus in the womb, first as an awakened Buddha in the flesh, and second as a soteriological model that can be emulated by the practitioner.

The *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* opens by declaring that there is a lake, four *sun* wide, in the mother’s womb.⁵⁶ Within this lake, there is a single drop of pure fluid. The text identifies the father with heavenly *yang*, the Slanted position, and a white circle. Conversely, the mother is identified with earthly *yin*, the True position, and a black circle. The text continues to describe how at the beginning of the gestational process *yin* and *yang* essence, female and male seminal fluids, unite but do not yet mix. Adhering to each other, they fall into the lake of the womb. This stage of the ontogenetic process is symbolized by a half-black and half-white circle (◐).

54 Reproduced in Suzuki, “Nihon ni okeru kōan zen,” pp. 291–292.

55 Reproduced in ZSS, vol. 1, 508–509.

56 Four *sun* corresponds to about 12 cm.

After a period of seven days, the two fluids begin to mix. This second week is symbolized by a black circle, and identified with Arriving in Concurrence, the final of the Five Positions, and with the Unsurpassed Ultimate, the highest principle of *Yijing* cosmology. After another seven days, during the third week, the circle changes into a white one. In reference to the five stages of fetal development, this stage is called *abudon garan* 阿ブドン伽藍. It is defined as “a single condition not yet issued” (*ikki mihotsu* (alt. *mihatsu*) 一機未発).⁵⁷ In the fourth week, the white circle transforms into a diamond shape (◆). This period of the gestational process is defined as “a single condition issued” (*ikki hotsu* (alt. *hatsu*) 一機発). The text comments that, “[a]ccording to the [Sō]tō [school], this is also called the one point of coming” (*rai no itten* 来ノ一点) and symbolized by a dotted circle (⊙). This is an obvious reference to the third of the Five Positions, Coming from the True. Up until this point, the alignment of ontogenetic stages and Five Positions is fairly straightforward, and the circles associated with each stage of gestation follow the standard Five Positions sequence, that is black, white, and dotted.

This neat parallelism is abandoned from the fifth week onwards. The fifth week is symbolized by a white circle and treated quite briefly as the period during which the eyes begin to form. The next several weeks relate to the final stages of ontogenesis. During this period, the fetus will fully form and dwell in the womb for nine months awaiting birth. This fetus is first shown as an oblong bubble, with three smaller bubbles perturbing from its upper and two from its lower end. A second diagram identifies those bubbles as the head and the four limbs. The fetus is now equipped with the six sense bases and the six sense consciousnesses.⁵⁸

According to the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu*, this fully developed fetus dwelling in the mother's womb is nothing less than an awakened Buddha, and its birth identical to the continuation of the Zen bloodline. But instead of affirming this in any straightforward manner, the text initiates an obscure game of *kōan* referencing. The *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* illustrates the state of the fully

57 In other sources, the phrase *ikki mihatsu* also refers to a stage of cosmogony before conditional causality appears out of primal unity, especially in the context of *Yijing* speculation. The Tokugawa-period scholar monk Tenkei Denson 天桂傳尊 (1648–1735), for instance, speaks of “when original chaos is not yet separated, a single condition not yet arisen” (*konton mibun ikki mihatsu no toki* 混沌未分一機未発時). See *Hōonhen* 報恩編. T 82: 634c. This is congruent with the interpretation of the third week of the gestational process as corresponding to the Unsurpassed Ultimate.

58 See also the discussion of the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* in Licha, “Embryology,” pp. 507–510. The six sense bases and consciousnesses are those of the usual five (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) plus mind.

developed fetus dwelling in the womb with the phrase, “The head is crowned by the moon of the fifth night, the legs step on the land of yellow gold” (*atama ni goya no tsuki o itadaki, ashi kōkin no chi o fumu* 頭五夜月頂足踏黃金地). This is a misquote from an exchange that appears in the *Hongzhi chanshi guanglu* 宏智禪師廣錄, among other sources. The exchange runs as follows:

Again [Hongzhi Zhenjue 宏智正覺 (1091–1157)] raised [the case of] a monk asking Jiufeng 九峰 [Daoqian 道虔 (?–923)?], “At the end of the summer [retreat] in India, many have attained the fruit of the way [i.e. awakening]. Priest, among us, are there [any who have awoken] or not?” [Jiu]feng replied, “There are.” The monk asked, “What kind of people are they?” [Jiu]feng replied, “At their heads hangs the midnight (*goya* 午夜) moon, their feet stamp on the land of gold.” The monk said, “Have [these people] changed or not?” [Jiu]feng replied, “How could they not have changed?” The monk asked, “What is this change [like]?” [Jiu]feng replied, “From ancient times [people have] heard [of] dragons shedding their bones.”⁵⁹

The *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* uses this exchange to assert that the womb-dwelling fetus is just like the practitioner who has awoken during the summer retreat observed in Buddhist monasteries. Yet the text’s game of allusions to old cases does not stop here. Hongzhi comments on the exchange between Jiufeng and the unknown monk as follows:

[... I]t can be said, “The dragon singing in the dried-up tree, even now it is containing delight; the eyes in the skull, even now they are containing consciousness.” [Speaking] directly (*zhi* 直), this is the place where knowledge does not reach.⁶⁰

Hongzhi here refers to an exchange involving Shishuang (alt. Ciming) Chuhuan 石霜 (alt. 慈明) 楚円 (986–1039), an important contributor to Five Positions lore. In this exchange, Shishuang is asked by a monk, “What is ‘the dragon singing in the dried-up tree?’” to which he replies, “Even now it contains delight.” The monk continues, “What are ‘the eyes in the skull?’” to which Shishuang retorts, “Even now they contain consciousness.”⁶¹ This exchange in turn invokes

59 T 48: 16b. See also the version of this case recorded in the *Zongjian falin* 宗鑑法林. x 66: 670b.

60 T 48: 16b.

61 See *Biyan lu*, T 48: 142b.

a case concerning Xiangyan, who started our investigation by getting a man stuck in a tree. Now we see him putting a dragon into a similar predicament:

A monk asked Xiangyan, “What is the Way?” [Xiang]yan said, “In the dried-up trees, a dragon sings.” The monk asked, “Who is this man on the Way?” [Xiang]yan said, “Eyes in the skull.”⁶²

In the *Bīyan lu*, these two exchanges involving Xiangyan and Shishuang are quoted together with a third case involving Caoshan Benji, the successor of Dongshan Liangjie and systematizer of the Five Positions:

Again, a monk asked Caoshan, “What is this ‘dragon singing in the dried up tree’?” [Cao]shan replied, “The bloodline has not been cut.” [The monk asked,] “What are those eyes in the skull?” [Cao]shan said, “Dryness not complete.”⁶³

At the end of its description of gestation, the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* likens the fetus just about to be born to the position of Turning to the Slanted from the True, and the just born child to Turning to the True from the Slanted, the first two of the Five Positions. The newborn, the text states, will devote its life to the pursuit of the Buddhist way, reducing its bones to powder and breaking its body into pieces until finally re-ascending to the stage of Approaching Togetherness, which it had already occupied in the womb. This infant adept setting out on this journey is described as, “[t]he bloodline has not been cut, dryness not complete,” the very phrases used by Caoshan in the exchange quoted above. In this convoluted manner, the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* uses the Five Positions and highly elusive references to classic Chan or Zen literature, especially the *Bīyan lu*, in order to cast the fetus as the ideal awakened one. The spiritual path thus consists of a circular movement of birth from and return to the primordial origin. Note that this circular structure closely resembles the circular process of tantric practice described previously.

The *Zenmon tainai goi no zu*’s strategies of obfuscation might be motivated by the fact that the text encodes also the means to re-enter the womb. Returning to the image of the midnight moon and the golden land between which the fetus-as-awakened one is suspended, it comments as follows:

62 See *Bīyan lu*, T 48: 142b.

63 See *Bīyan lu*, T 48: 142b. The three exchanges are also quoted in the *Shōbōgenzō* chapter *Ryūgin* 龍吟. T 82: 232c.

The “moon” is the mother’s viscera. The “yellow gold” is dwelling stamping on the lotus seat inside the mother’s womb. From now on, after a further seven days, it becomes like this ○. This is hitting it true in seated meditation (*zazen shōtō* 坐禪正當). First, what is called the sitting power (*zariki* 座力), it is learning this. After another seven days, [the fetus] dwells putting on a robe [i.e. the placenta.] This is to don the Zen robe. [...] Also [on] the futon [i.e. in sitting meditation], it is learning to dwell stamping on the lotus seat at the root of the mother’s womb.

This passage makes two interpretive moves. First, a *kōan*-like phrase is explicated in physiological terms. The *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* identifies the moon and the golden land with concrete parts of the mother’s anatomy, namely the viscera and the womb. In the second move, the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* suggests that the paradigmatic practice of the Zen lineages, seated meditation, is nothing but dwelling in the womb.

Finally, the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* makes use of the image of the fetus dwelling in a tree that we already have encountered in the *kōan* traditions of the Genjū lineage. The *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* describes the suckling fetus as nesting leisurely in a tree. The text elaborates that “[w]hat is called the ‘tree mouth’ is learning to dwell with hands folded under the chin.” This exact same image of the fetus curled up and sucking on the “tree mouth” can be found almost *verbatim* in a *kōan* document of the Genjū faction, the *Missan anken* 密参行卷:

The interpretation (*ben* 弁) says, “‘Tree’ is the mother’s body. ‘In’ is the child dwelling inside the mother’s womb.”

[...]

The interpretation says, “‘To bite the tree’ [i.e. hang on to the branch with one’s mouth], is turning to the mother and to hold in one’s mouth the milk-source (*nyūkon* 乳根). ‘Not grasping the branches’ is to dwell folding one’s hands onto one’s chest.”⁶⁴

In sum, the *Zenmon tainai goi no zu* is based on correlating the Five Positions, the five cosmological stages, and the five phases of fetal development. It uses both a circle of related cases derived from the *Bīyan lu* and the story of Xiangyan’s man in a tree to read Zen practice as womb dwelling. In so doing, it draws on a common stock of images and *kōan* cases shared by the Sōtō and Genjū factions.

64 Reproduced in Andō, *Kōan zen*, p. 221.

6 The Meaning of Bodhidharma's Nose Coming from the West and the Wombs of Crows and Rabbits

The *topoi* used in interpreting *kōan* in physiological and embryological terms in the Sōtō and Genjū factions in turn were embedded in a wider conversation including the contemporary tantric traditions. In this section, we will examine one example of how this wider discourse both connected back towards themes first articulated in earlier embryologies such as those developed by Jien in the Tendai tantric and Chikotsu in the Shōichi lineage, and contributed to the generation of novel ways of reading *kōan*.

The *Kenkon jinshashō* 乾坤塵砂鈔 is a late 16th century text which offers an if not quite unique then highly idiosyncratic discussion of the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings. The text's author and line of transmission are unclear, but the only existent manuscript has been copied in 1586 by a certain Yūshun 祐俊 (d.u.). Yūshun traveled widely to collect and copy materials, with the bulk of his collection focusing on the Ono 小野 lineage of Kūkai's faction of the tantric teachings.⁶⁵ The body of the *Kenkon jinshashō* records a likely fictitious dialogue between a master and disciple discussing the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings on four levels or from four points of view (*shijū* 四重). The text opens by declaring that the tantric teachings,

are the bone and marrow of Vairocana. These teachings are not the teachings of the [Buddha] manifested in response [to sentient beings' needs] who has only a single lifetime [i.e. Śākyamuni]. They [i.e. the teachings of Vairocana] are the teachings that the ancestral teachers do not transmit (*senso fuden* 先祖不伝), that is to say, the transmission of mind by mind (*ishin denshin*). In the Zen gate, the intention of the patriarchs is [the meaning of] Bodhidharma coming from the West, the intention of the teachings is *tathāgata Zen* (*nyorai zen* 如来禅).⁶⁶

We can immediately identify in this passage a number of motifs we are already familiar with from our previous explorations. The text assimilates key Zen slogans to the tantric teachings, including “transmitting mind with mind” and Enni's favorite old chestnut, “what the sages do not transmit.”⁶⁷ Most important

65 See Abe, *Shōkyō tenseki*, p. 10.

66 Abe, *Shōkyō tenseki*, 28ab.

67 Under the influence of the Zen teachings, the notion of “transmitting mind with mind” gained a degree of prominence in some tantric lineages, where it was associated with

for our present purposes, however, is that the text invokes a polemic we have extensively discussed in Chapters 4 and 6, namely which body of the Buddha preaches Zen. As we have seen, the notion that Zen is the lowly teaching of the all-too-human Śākyamuni Buddha provides the immediate context in which to understand Chikotsu's failure to develop an explicit embryology of the Zen teachings. Zen, Chikotsu argued, was indeed the teaching of the *dharmakāya*, but only insofar as advanced practitioners glimpsed it through the mundane body of the historical Buddha by taking the latter as their perceptual basis. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, understood that the *dharmakāya* is present not only in spirit but also in the flesh. Hence, tantric teachings offer ritual obstetric methods that allow practitioners to regenerate or transmute their human bodies into those of Buddhas. This very same distinction appears again in the *Kenkon jinshashō*:

In the Zen faction (*zenke* 禅家), they do not establish [a teaching on] the intermediary state, they do not extol sentient beings in the intermediary state nor mother and father as the breath of one mind. [Considering the] *dharma* realm to be a single truth, [the Zen faction thinks that] emptiness and breath are not two [different] things. [According to them,] the most gifted individuals do not linger in the intermediate state, but directly return to the one true emptiness. [However, according to the tantric teachings,] Buddhas and patriarchs have great compassion in the intermediate state and from it take to the mother's womb.⁶⁸

Because of its direct affirmation of uninterpreted phenomena, to use terminology introduced previously, Zen has neither need nor regard for compassionate embryology. The tantric teachings, on the other hand, do.

The *Kenkon jinshashō*'s account of this tantric embryology is as elaborate as it is eclectic, at points verging on the obscure. Fortunately, for our present purposes it is enough if we consider two of the gestational models the text draws

the markless three mysteries (*musō sanmitsu* 無相三密), and even came to denote a form of internalized initiation. See for instance Yūhan's (alt. Yūban) 宥範 (1270–1352) *Dainichikyōshō myōinshō kuden* 大日經疏妙印鈔口伝, T 58: 200a, "To produce the mental *maṇḍala* (*shin mandara* 心曼荼羅) is the unction of transmitting mind with mind." Furthermore, tantric teachings as the direct communication of Mahāvairocana, or "what the ancestral teachers do not transmit," came to be contrasted with the ancestral transmission of the first patriarch Bodhidharma's intention in coming to the West. These developments reached their apex in Shugen lineages, which used Zen rhetoric to go beyond Buddhism itself. See the conclusions to the present study.

68 Abe, *Shōkyō tenseki*, 32a.

on, namely one predicated on essential breath and the other based on the union of astral bodies, specifically the sun and the moon discs. To first briefly outline the respiratory model of gestation, the text associates consciousness, and especially the rebirth consciousness, with breath.⁶⁹ When mother and father have intercourse, the rebirth consciousness rides either the maternal breath or otherwise the mixed maternal and paternal breaths downwards to take up residence in the admixture of male seed and female blood, thereby completing conception. The fertilized admixture continues to be nourished by the maternal breath. In this process, the nostrils play an important role as the start- and endpoints of the conduits through which consciousness and nourishment are transported; as breath/consciousness enters the maternal and fetal bodies through the nostrils, the new body is said to develop from its nostrils, which are the first organ to differentiate out of the admixture of seed and blood.⁷⁰

The second gestational framework used in the *Kenkon jinshashō* uses the image of sun and moon discs uniting to represent sexual intercourse and the intermixture of male and female sexual fluids in the lake of the womb. To add detail to this basic image, the text also invokes the identification of sun and moon with a three-legged crow and a rabbit, referring to the two seeds/astral bodies as “crow circle” and “rabbit circle,” respectively. Their union is symbolized by the “bright star” (*myōjō* 明星), that is to say Venus.⁷¹ This is of course the very Morningstar at the sight of which the Buddha is said to have attained awakening. We have already encountered this association between astral bodies, especially the moon, and the womb in Enni’s commentary on the *Yuqi jing*. However, this motif has an even more venerable pedigree. Already Kakuban had interpreted the fundamental tantric practice of visualizing one’s mind as a moon disc as signifying the unity of sun and moon inside one’s body. Kakuban linked the moon disc bearing the syllable *a* to the first stage of fetal development, during which the unification of white and red seed formed into a “round shape like dew.”⁷² As Lucia Dolce has discussed, one prominent sexual motif expressing the unification of opposites is the intercourse of the two deities Aizen and Fudō 不動.⁷³ According to Jien, Aizen and Fudō are actually visible

69 The association of breath and rebirth consciousness is well attested. See for instance *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀, T 46: 109a, which discusses the role of maternal breath in fetal development.

70 Abe, *Shōkyō tenseki*, 31b. This resembles the importance of using the nasal passage as delivery mechanism for *nimitta* in *borān kamatṭhāna* traditions as described by Crosby.

71 Abe, *Shōkyō tenseki*, 31b–32a.

72 See Ogawa, *Chūsei nihon*, p. 272.

73 Dolce, “Duality and the ‘Kami.’”

to the naked eye of the physical body of deluded beings. If one stares at the sun for a long time, then one will discern therein the shape of Aizen, and if one stares at the moon at its brightest, then one will discern therein the shape of Fudō. Worldlings know these two as the moon rabbit and the sun crow.⁷⁴

In sum, in the *Kenkon jinshashō* the main difference between tantric teachings or the teaching of Mahāvairocana and Zen or the teaching of Śākyamuni is knowledge of the womb. Among the various discourses the text uses to discuss the tantric womb, the breath focused on the nostrils, as well as the sun and moon discs symbolized as crow and rabbit are the most prominent. These very same motifs we encounter again in the *kōan* transmissions of the Genjū and/or Sōtō factions. To begin with the image of nasal breath, one Genjū faction *kōan* manual has the following interpretation to offer on the famous query, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West?”

The master, inviting [the student to answer], says, “Explain the meaning of the patriarchal master [i.e. Bodhidharma] coming from the West [from the point of view of the] self.”

The student says, “The patriarchal master is Bodhidharma. When the human body comes to be in the womb, it comes to be at first from the nose. In so far as the nose is produced from the lungs, they symbolize the West. Bodhidharma, being from India in the West, is symbolized by the nose.”⁷⁵

Bodhidharma is from the West, which corresponds to India. Indians have big noses, and noses are the first organs to grow in the womb. Hence, the meaning of Bodhidharma “coming from the West” is his gestation from the nose and birth from the womb. It is for this reason that in another Genjū faction *kōan* manual Bodhidharma acquires the moniker, “the nose patriarch.”⁷⁶

Also the second embryological motif found in the *Kenkon jinshashō*, the unity of sun and moon discs as complex image of procreation and ontogenesis, can be found in Genjū lineage transmissions, particularly in the exposition of a non-classical *kōan*, “Crow and Rabbit Fly Above the Head” (*uto hi tōjō* 烏兔飛頭上). By non-classical I mean that this *kōan* is not derived from Chinese Chan literature but rather appears to be a Japanese invention, and one arising directly from embryological discourses, at that. Kohan treated this case as the first of a series of three related cases, and interpreted it as follows:

⁷⁴ See *Shijō hiketsu* 四帖秘決, ZTSZS, vol. 9, 403ab.

⁷⁵ Reproduced in Suzuki, “Nihon ni okeru kōan zen,” p. 291.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Crow and rabbit fly above the head, who has already caught them?

Explication says, “This is about fundamental wisdom (*konpon chi* 根本智) [which is inborn] and acquired wisdom (*gotoku chi* 後得智) [which is acquired through practice]. All people are endowed with it; each one perfects it.

Addressing, say, “What proof of this?”

Explication says, “Taking a jewel and turning it towards the sun, it acquires fire [warmth], turning it towards the moon, it acquires water [coolness]. Acquiring fire or water, it is always called ‘jewel.’”

[...]

Handing down a word, say, “Heaven and Earth have the same root, the ten thousand things are a single body.”

Bow.⁷⁷

The text continues to explain that fundamental wisdom is *yin* and *yang* not separate, or the pure *yin* before its division into two. Acquired wisdom, on the other hand, is the beginning of *yang* from which the ten thousand things are born. *Yin* and *yang*, the text continues, are the moon and sun. Receiving the *yin ki* of the moon and the *yang ki* of the sun, the physical body is produced.⁷⁸

The key to understanding this *kōan* exposition is to remember that, as pointed out above, sun and moon are inhabited or represented by a three-legged crow and a rabbit, respectively. If we incorporate this piece of information into our reading of the *kōan*, we arrive at the following two lines of associations: rabbit – moon – *yin* – water – fundamental wisdom; and crow – sun – *yang* – fire – acquired wisdom. From the union of these two clusters, the physical body is produced, just as all things are produced from the intercourse of *yin* and *yang*, and a Buddha is produced from the union of the inherent potential for wisdom and its actualization through practice. The jewel, an image straight out of Jien’s wet dreams, symbolizes the newly created body.

A Sōtō *kirigami* document entitled *Shō jikkai shi jikkai sōtō himitsu shiketsu* 生十界死十界曹洞秘蜜旨訣 encodes the very same structure, but instead of casting it in *kōan* form, it presents it as a chart. At the upper end of the chart, we see a half black and half red circle. Black represents female *yin*, red male *yang*. The circle thus represents *yin* and *yang* in their original state of non-separation. Immediately beneath the half circle, we have a moon disc complete with a rabbit on the left, and a sun disc resplendent with a crow on the right. These two are identified with fundamental awakening (*hongaku*) and

⁷⁷ Reproduced in Andō, *Kōan zen*, p. 193.

⁷⁸ Andō, *Kōan zen*, p. 194.

initial awakening (*shikaku* 始覺), respectively. Underneath is drawn a human figure identified as Mt. Sumeru, among other associations. The explanatory text accompanying this chart states that this Sumeru is the body born from sun and moon, father and mother: “The origin of the seed of all things is born from the two natures of sun and moon, male and female, fire and water.” The text also stresses the association between the moon and the womb we are already familiar with from Enni. As the *Shō jikkai shi jikkai sōtō himitsu shiketsu* puts it, “within the moon disc, that is being inside the womb. Entering the womb is fundamental awakening.”⁷⁹ In this Sōtō chart, the non-classical *kōan* “Crow and Rabbit Fly Above the Head” acquires a precise, graphical meaning.

The *Kenkon jinshashō* and the Zen *kōan* transmissions discussed in this section are nearly contemporary documents. They all continue earlier discourses that can be traced to the likes of Kakuban, Jien, Dōhan, Enni, and Chikotsu. Medieval tantric and Zen embryologies, in other words, evolved together and from the very same circles or even texts. Their specific encoding certainly remained flexible and diverse. In the case of Zen materials this could feed into the physiological expositions of *kōan* materials or even cause new, uniquely Japanese *kōan* to emerge. Nonetheless, although separated by almost half a millennium and by the perhaps even wider gap between the refinements of the court and the rustic countryside, *tāntrika* such as Jien and the masters of the Sōtō and Genjū faction still shared these embryological motifs and images in common.

7 Propagating the Buddha Seed

It might be tempting to argue that embryology was of merely utilitarian interest to Sōtō and Genjū faction Zen masters, a type of skillful means or useful metaphor to communicate a deeper truth. This likely was not the case. Especially in the transmissions of the Sōtō lineages, we encounter embryology again and again, and often when touching upon the central aspects of the tradition's spiritual program. In this section, we will investigate a number of Sōtō lineage documents that explicitly link embryology to the process of Zen practice and lineage succession.

In the previous chapter, we have touched on Dōhan's interpretation of the life faculty (*myōkon*) as a non-dual force sustaining both delusion and awakening with which sentient beings are naturally endowed. This natural endowment the tantric scholiast had linked to the Zen slogan, “before father and

79 Reproduced in Iizuka and Tsuchiya, “Rinka Sōtōshū (roku),” p. 119.

mother are born,” thereby pioneering the interpretation of *kōan* in vitalistic terms. A similar interpretation of the life faculty as sustaining spiritual practice and awakening is developed in the Sōtō *kirigami* document *Seson tanza kirigami* 世尊端座切紙 or *Kirigami on the World Honored One’s Sitting Upright* kept at Yōkōji. This document claims to have been transmitted by Dōgen himself, but in fact likely dates to the 17th century, as do the majority of Yōkōji *kirigami* materials.⁸⁰ The *kirigami* offers a graphical interpretation of the two paradigmatic ascetic feats celebrated in the Zen tradition, namely the Buddha’s meditation under the *Bodhi* tree and Bodhidharma’s nine years of unmoving meditation facing a cave wall at Shaolin monastery. According to the text, these two are “the wellspring (*hongen* 本源) of all Buddhas, the life faculty of sentient beings.” In line with many of the charts found in Sōtō esoteric materials, the documents opens with a black circle. On the left, the inscription “[t]he World Honored One attaining Buddhahood” (*seson jōbutsu* 世尊成仏) is placed, on the right, “Bodhidharma gazing at the wall” (*daruma menpeki* 達磨面壁). Directly below the circle, the two phrases “no position” (*mui* 無位) and “fundamental root” (*konpon* 根本) are placed. The black circle is then followed by a red one, which bears the inscriptions “sentient and insentient beings at the same time attain perfect awakening” (*ujō hijō dōji jō tōshōkaku* 有情非情同時成正覺) on the left and “directly pointing at the human mind, seeing nature, and becoming Buddha” (*jikishi ninshin kenshō jōbutsu*) on the right. Beneath this red circle the two phrases, “not crossing into” (*fushō* 不涉) and “the two extremes” (*ryōhen* 兩辺) are written. Finally, the lowest level of the *kirigami* consists of a dotted circle like the one used to represent the third of the Five Positions. On the left and right, the phrases “the World Honored One sitting” and “Bodhidharma gazing at the wall” appear. Underneath these two phrases, “sitting” (*zazai* 座在) and “in the womb” (*tainai* 胎内) appear. The *Seson tanza kirigami* thus offers a vitalistic understanding of spiritual cultivation according to which dwelling in the womb and nurturing the bare life faculty becomes the paradigm of Zen meditative practices.

The womb as the matrix of awakening was no mere abstraction but rather could be located in the physical world, for instance in the material institution of the monastery. The *Shichidōzu* 七堂図 or *Chart of the Seven Halls* contains an anthropomorphic representation of monastic space by identifying the seven main structures of the ideal monastery with a body part each. The seven halls referred to in the title of this document are the seven structures comprising the ideal Zen monastic complex (*shichidō garan* 七堂伽藍). In the present context, these are the abbot’s quarters (*hōjō* 方丈), the Buddha hall (*butsuden*

仏殿), the main or “mountain” gate (*sanmon* 山門), the monks’ hall (*sōdō* 僧堂), the kitchen (*kuri* 庫裡, alt. *kuri* 文裏 or *kuin* 庫院), the latrine (*jinjū* 淨頭, alt. *jinzu*, *jōtō*, *chinjū*) and the bath house (*furo* 風呂). These are arranged on the outline of a human body. The abbot’s quarters correspond to the head, the Buddha hall to the heart, the monk’s hall to the right arm, the kitchen to the left arm, the latrine to the right leg and the bathhouse the left leg. The mountain gate (*sanmon*) is identified with the genital area.⁸¹ The inscription underneath this chart reads, “The place of fecundity of children and grandchildren, at the mountain gate it is intimately observed” (*satsugen* 撈眼).⁸² These lines certainly are titillating, but a related text, the *Sanmon no kirigami* 山門之切紙 is even more explicit:

The mountain gate, it is the gate through which all Buddhas pass (*shutsunyū* 出入). It is a single circle. It is the cover of a lotus flower. As for the lotus flower, it is the opening of the mother.⁸³

An abbreviated bloodline chart accompanies this message. The main element of the chart is a circle, which itself is a symbol for the womb. In this circle are inscribed the Chinese character for heart (*shin*), as well as the *siddham* seed syllables *a*, *vaṃ*, and *hūṃ*. The *Yugikyō hiketsu*, a commentary on the *Yugikyō* attributed to the Shingon master Jichiun on which we have touched before, explains that *a* and *vaṃ*, which combine into *hūṃ*, represent the two seminal drops of female and male, which combine into the deity Aizen as one’s own mind and body (*shinjin aizen*).⁸⁴ In short, in materials such as the *Shichidōzu*, the monastery, the place where Buddhas are (re)produced, is identified as a womb, and the monastery’s main gate as the vagina. This identification

81 Which buildings are counted among the seven halls differs according to school and sometimes lineage. For instance, the seven halls known in the Nara Buddhist institutions are the pagoda, main hall (*kondō* 金堂), lecture hall, bell tower, library, residence quarters, and dining hall. In the Zen lineages, normally the *Dharma* hall (*hattō* 法堂) replaces the abbot’s quarters. However, in *kirigami* materials, the *Dharma* hall can be replaced with the abbot’s quarters, as is done in the *Shichidōzu*. See for instance also zss, vol. 1, 281. Sōtō monks were aware of the different versions of the seven halls, and on this basis attacked each other’s orthodoxy, going so far as to deny that a model of seven halls existed in China. See the *Zenrin shichidōzu kirigami* 禪林七堂図切紙, reproduced in zss, vol. 1, 280.

82 zss, vol. 1, 393.

83 zss, vol. 1, 394.

84 See *Yugikyō hiketsu*, ShSZS, vol. 5, p 14ab.

is reinforced through a reference to tantric embryology in the form of seed syllables.⁸⁵

Much embryological and generative symbolism is focused on the lineage license known as *kechimyaku* 血脈 or “bloodline” associated with the precepts and imparted during transmission rituals. In medieval Buddhism, this “bloodline” on occasion was a literal one as monastics, especially but not exclusively those belonging to powerful aristocratic clans, would transmit teachings to either their sons or other close relatives. Sōtō esoteric transmissions retained this familial understanding of the “bloodline” and further conceptualized it drawing both on the notion of a non-dual vitalism centered on the life faculty and on cosmogonic terms. The *Kechimyakuzu narabi ni kechimyaku soden no manji* 血脈図並=血脈祖伝之万事 or *Ten Thousand Matters of the Blood Vein Chart and the Ancestral Transmission of the Blood Vein* is a *kirigami* from 1617 based on this symbolism.⁸⁶ It opens with a diagram of four circles connected by a red line. The black uppermost circle is accompanied by the inscriptions “life faculty of sentient beings” (*shujō no myōkon* 衆生之命根) on the left, and “life vein of all Buddhas” (*shobutsu no myōmyaku* 諸仏之命脈) on the right. Underneath are placed two more circles, a white one labeled “Heaven” on the left and a red one labeled “Earth” on the right. From the uppermost black circle, a red line emerges running downwards. On this line is written the phrase “the *bodhimaṇḍala* dwelling place of all Buddhas of the three worlds” (*sanze shobutsu anchi dōjō* 三世諸仏安土道場). The line enters a circle composed of five concentric circles, each of which is divided into a red and a white half in alternating fashion. The outermost white half-circle on the left is identified by the character “father,” the outermost red half on the right by “mother.” Under

85 As Alan Cole has shown, also Chinese Buddhists used procreative imagery in discussing the monastic institution. Especially the good mother as provider of milk served as a simile for the monastery, which likewise provides, poetically speaking, the stuff of life, the spiritual milk, or rather *ghee*, of the *Dharma*. This was contrasted with the bad mother, who was polluted by the blood of procreation, both from giving birth and from menstruation. See Cole, *Mothers and Sons*, pp. 192–225. The difference between Chinese and Japanese procreative discourses on the monastery, however, is that in the Chinese materials discussed by Cole there does not appear to exist an understanding of the procreative process as a model for spiritual cultivation. In other words, Cole’s discussion features neither a systematic model of ontogenesis nor a soteriological interpretation of this model. Furthermore, the discourses discussed by Cole obviously lack the genealogical connections to specifically Japanese tantric notions so fundamental to the sources discussed in the present chapter. Similarities between Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen “generative” discourses thus remain at best superficial and their facile comparison would be misleading.

86 ZSS, vol. 2, 677–678. See also Licha, “Embryology,” pp. 512–514.

the word “father” we can see another inscription, “the direct road of perfecting Buddhahood of all sentient beings” (*sho shujō jōbutsu jikidō* 諸衆生成佛直道). Under the word “mother,” there is the inscription “the *bodhimaṇḍala* of the Buddhas of the three worlds appearing in the world” (*sanze shobutsu shusse dōjō* 三世諸佛出世道場). We have already encountered the notion of the womb or mother as a *bodhimaṇḍala*. Underneath the red line re-emerges, bearing the word “blood vein” (*kechimiyaku*). It then turns upwards and enters the uppermost black circle from above, visually confirming the familiar motif of circularity. The text accompanying this diagram explains the meaning of the “bloodvein” as follows:

“Blood” is one circle. It is primordial chaos not yet divided (*konton mibun* 混沌未分). “Vein” is black and white not yet divided. This, because from these two positions of “blood” and “vein” comes protecting life, is called the fundamental origin of all Buddhas, the root of all sentient beings. [...] The blood vein is the life faculty of all Buddhas, the life vein of sentient beings, [...] the seed of the fundamental root of sentient and insentient beings. [...] The intercourse (*wagō*) of *yin* and *yang* is called the blood vein. *Yang ki* (*yōki* 陽氣) of Heaven is born (*shusse*), producing *yin* essence (*insei* 陰精) of Earth; their mixing is called the blood vein. When the time comes, men and women produce sexual desire (*inki* 姪氣) in each other, [and so] the seed (*shushi*) of all Buddhas, sentient beings, and the ten thousand phenomena is issued, manifesting the realm of [human] generations (*sekai* 世界) and not [letting its continuity be] cut (*fudan* 不斷): that is called the blood vein. The succession between master and disciple is [like] this.⁸⁷

Based on the notion of a life force permeating both Buddhas and sentient beings, here succession in the *Dharma* is linked to procreative union, which in turn mirrors the cosmogonic intercourse of *yin* and *yang* forces.

Some materials, such as the *Ishin denshin no sho hiketsu* 以心伝心之書秘訣 or *Secret Determination of the Writ of Transmitting the Mind with the Mind* relate the image of sexual, procreative union specifically to the Buddha and the first patriarch, Kāśyapa.⁸⁸ The phrase “transmitting the mind with the mind” is of course an important simile for the mode of transmission emphasized in the Zen lineages, which claim to directly initiate disciples into the mysteries

87 This translation has been adopted from Licha, “Embryology,” pp. 513–514.

88 ZSS, vol. 2, 739–740.

of the mind without relying on secondary means such as texts or rituals.⁸⁹ The *Ishin denshin no sho hiketsu* frames this transmission with two episodes of the Buddha's life. First, the text opens with a series of questions and answers examining the phrase "in between heaven above and earth below, I alone am [worthy of] veneration." The Buddha is supposed to have uttered this proclamation immediately after his birth. This already anticipates the procreative imagery the *Ishin denshin no sho hiketsu* imposes on transmission.

Second, in the body of the text the wordless transmission on Vulture Peak between the Buddha raising a single flower and Kāśyapa responding with a quiet smile is cited as the paradigmatic example of mind succession. Two circles, one red and one black, which are interlocked in the fashion of a Venn diagram, graphically represent this transmission. On their intersection, the character "heart/mind" (*shin*) is placed. Referencing this circle figure, the body of the text explicates the mind transmission between the Buddha and Kāśyapa as follows:

The World Honored One twirling the mind flower, Kāśyapa smiling, [this is] the penetration of mind (*shin no tsūsho nari* 心ノ通所也). This is said [to be] transmitting the mind with the mind. The two black and red circles coming together (*kōkai* 交会) is mind and mind meeting, the subtle mark (*myōsō* 妙相) of the intercourse of the World Honored One and Kāśyapa, the place of transmitting the mind with the mind. The red circle in between [i.e. the intersection of red and black circles], [red and black circle having] intercourse (*wagō shite* 和合シテ), [it is] the common [or equal] body (*ippan no tai* 一般体). [The red circle in between is] the World-honored One and Kāśyapa becoming one (*ichinyō shite* 一如シテ), [this is in] the shape of the realm of [human] generations arising from the place of the intercourse of men and women (*nannyō wagō* 男女和合).⁹⁰

In this passage the mutual penetration of the mind of the Buddha and of Kāśyapa minds is explicitly connected to sexual penetration and the generation of new bodies.

89 The phrase *ishin denshin* more commonly is translated, "from mind to mind." The annotation of the *Ishin denshin no sho hiketsu*, however, suggest that it should be read, "transmitting mind with mind" (*shin o motte shin o tsutau* 心ヲ以テ心ヲ伝フ). See zss, vol. 2, 740.

90 zss, vol. 2, 740.

A similar idea is also expressed in a *kirigami* document entitled *Bodda bocchi zusetsu* 勃陀勃地図説.⁹¹ This text does not refer to the Buddha and Kāśyapa's carnal knowledge of each other's minds directly but provides more information on what kind of body is generated through the procreative union of transmission. *Bodda bocchi* is a transcription of Sanskrit *buddha bodhi*, yet, as Ishikawa Rikizan has explained, in Sōtō esoteric transmission materials it signifies the unity of inherent and manifest awakening, of awakening and its object, and of master and successor.⁹² Furthermore, in some lineage licenses it is post-fixed to the names of the lineage holders.⁹³ The *Bodda bocchi zusetsu* centers on a complex diagram composed of eight circles that express the various stages of the transmission/procreative process. In brief, the first two black and red circles show the emergence of *yin* and *yang* as the Unsurpassed Ultimate and Great Ultimate. The next two circles, inscribed with the character "heart/mind" (*shin*) and a swastika, respectively, show the transformation of *yin* and *yang* into woman and man, or more concretely, female and male seminal essences, and their intercourse. This intercourse is described as "the [mutual] penetration of the hearts of master and disciple" (*shishi shinjin tsū zuru tokoro* 師資心々通ズル所), thus positioning the mutual verification of succession in the context of sexual union.

The fifth circle of the series is divided into a black and a red half. In its center is contained a smaller white circle, which in turn contains one red and one black circle. The text accompanying the diagram defines the meaning of this circle as follows:

The next [i.e. fifth] figure, the mingling (*kōkai*) of *yin* and *yang*, the mutual transformation of True and Slanted, the alignment (*gōdō* 合道) of lord and vassal [here: master and disciple], it is the place where "this" and "that" enter [each other] and merge (*konnyū* 混入), the place where my body for the first time dwells in the mother's womb.⁹⁴

As this passage makes clear, the body produced from transmission is no abstract entity, nor a metaphor for a purely spiritual reality. Rather, it is the concrete flesh of the human body, beginning with its dwelling in the womb after conception.

91 ZSS, vol. 2, 652–653.

92 ZSS, vol. 2, 651.

93 See *Shisho* 嗣書, in DZZ, vol. 15, 486.

94 ZSS, vol. 2, 653.

The *Bodda bocchi zusetsu* continues to explain the development of this body as it grows in the womb, emphasizing its endowment with the six sense bases (*rokkon* 六根). The diagram culminates in a sketch of a five-storied pagoda.⁹⁵ Above the pagoda are placed a black and red circle on the left and right, respectively. On this figure, the body of the text remarks as follows:

The next red and black circles [above the pagoda]; the black circle is the *tathāgata* of original awakening (*hongaku no nyorai* 本覺ノ如来), the root of *bocchi* (*bocchi no konpon* 勃地ノ根本). The red circle is the *tathāgata* of initial awakening (*shikaku no nyorai* 始覺ノ如来), the female body [or essence] of *bodda* (*bodda no nyotai* 勃陀ノ女体). [The two circles are] the pairs of Heaven/Father and Earth/Mother, of sun and moon, of water and fire. The five shapes [of the pagoda] are the unity of all things (*manpan icchi* 万般一致), my body completely endowed with the six sense bases (*rokunyū* 六入). It is the subtle mark of the succession of transmission (*dentei shizoku no myōsō* 伝底嗣続ノ妙相).⁹⁶

In this passage, the *Bodda bocchi zusetsu* draws on the same network of associations as invoked by the non-classical *kōan* “Crow and Rabbit Fly Overhead” discussed previously. If we consider that the pagoda itself represents the human body, we understand that in fact we are dealing with the very same chart as the *Shō jikkai shi jikkai sōtō himitsu shiketsu* had used to elucidate the origination of the body from sun-crow and rabbit-moon. In such images the process of transmitting the Zen teachings is modeled on the motif of conception, gestation, and birth. This understanding clearly resonates with Chikotsu’s reading of tantric unction as ontogenesis.

8 Conclusions

It often was the branches of central monastic institutions that transmitted elite doctrinal and ritual discourses to the regions. One example of such a process is Chikotsu, through whom the Zen and tantric terminologies and concepts coined or used by his teacher Enni entered the vocabularies of incipient *shintō* theologies, providing them with an advanced metaphysics and a new form of god talk. Through such contacts Zen as well as the tantric embryological discourses *en vogue* in the capital percolated through regional society and

95 This sketch is not reproduced in ZSS, vol. 2, 652.

96 ZSS, vol. 2, 653.

became part of the common topological network undergirding medieval religion. At the same time, Zen movements such as the Genjū and Sōtō factions spread throughout the Japanese countryside, relying on local elites and rural populations as their main supporters.

As they usurped the roles of the local ritual specialist and the rural ascetic, Zen monks absorbed the embryological knowledge transmitted as part of the common religious fabric. Drawing on this knowledge, as well as on their own *kōan* lore, Sōtō and Genjū faction Zen practitioners created new embryologies that more closely reflected their own spiritual tastes and practices. Yet through common *topoi*, these new embryologies still remained bound backwards to the elite discourses of scholiasts such as Jien or Enni. These Zen embryologies embodied specific soteriological orientations grounded in a non-dual vitalism, itself derived from the tantric scholarship of figures such as Dōhan and his exposition of the abhidharmic life faculty. However, it is possible to detect in this Zen vitalism, at least on the conceptual level, also echoes of Chikotsu, who asserted that Zen was nothing more than the entirely natural meat of the body.

Based on this soteriological orientation, formal seated meditation could be understood as a return to the womb, and the transmission of the *Dharma* as the mutual spiritual penetration of master and disciple modeled on the intercourse of man and woman. The practice of Zen, in short, was simultaneously a return to the womb, a re-conception, and a re-birth. It appears that this “womb Zen” was mainstream enough that when the black-clad bonzes of the meditation tradition first caught the eye of Western observers such as the Jesuit missionary Gago, it was not on abstract awakening that the latter commented, but rather on the bonzes’ heathenish talk of the fall from uterine paradise through the hell gate of the vagina.

Tantra, Zen, and Oranges

In his classic *Thoughts Without a Thinker*, American psychotherapist Mark Epstein recounts that in the mid-seventies the Tibetan *yogi* Kalu Rinpoche (1905–1989), famed for the many years he spent in Himalayan solitude, and the Korean Son teacher Seungsahn Sunim (1924–2004), equally famed for his confrontational teaching style, met in front of an audience of Western *cognoscenti*. Seungsahn reached into his robes and produced an orange. Thrusting it into Kalu’s face, he demanded, “What is this?! What is this?!” As Kalu remained unmoved, Seungsahn continued to press him, “What is this?! What is it?!” The elderly Tibetan began to whisper with his translator. Finally, the translator addressed the room: “Rinpoche says, ‘What is the matter with him? Don’t they have oranges where he comes from?’”¹

This scene of utter mutual incomprehension would not have felt entirely unfamiliar to early 14th century Japanese Buddhists trying to make sense of the newly arriving Chan or Zen teachings. The following exchange, imagined by Chikotsu Daie in his *Kobokushū*, suggests as much:

Question: In the Zen school, how many confusions are cut off, and what kind of understanding (*go* 悟) is attained?

Answer: Juzhi (Yizhi 俱胝一指, fl. 9th cent.) raised a finger when asked for the *Dharma*, MIMO Changyu (秘魔常遇, 817–888) struck with a forked stick (*cha* 叉). When there are people asking, “What is Buddha?” some Zen masters answer, “A dried stick of shit.” When people ask, “What are the Three Jewels?” some Zen masters answer, “Rice, millet, beans.” These stories should explain it.

Question: I don’t understand.

Answer: When it’s cold the hen climbs a branch, but the duck enters the water.

Question: I still don’t get it!

Answer: Eat rice cakes, drink cloudy sake.

Question: I don’t get it at all! Please, just explain the principle [of Zen] in detail so that I might understand!

Answer: River water is fresh, seawater salty.

Question: What is this? Are you mad or taking the piss!?²

¹ Epstein, *Thoughts*, pp. 53–55.

² *Kobokushū*, fasc. 2, ZHS, vol. 2, 12–13 (no continuous pagination).

Despite their supposedly universal teachings on the nature of mind, traditions such as Buddhism depend on shared cultural structures and institutions to communicate their message. This is especially true of the various movements grouped under the umbrella of “Chan,” “Son,” or “Zen,” which often reject more tempered, philosophically inflected forms of language in favor of dramatic gestures, enigmatic stories, and poetic reveries. This didactic choice presents the practitioner with specific interpretive problems. How, exactly, is one to go about seeing “one’s original face before mother and father were born” or answer a question while hanging off a tree branch by one’s teeth? For the practical intelligibility of its teachings, Zen has to depend on protocols, shared codes, and modes of translation that render its perplexing injunctions meaningful.

In its contemporary, globally disseminated form, Zen typically is made sense of in the languages of psychology and experiential spirituality. As the unrivalled Zen propagandist D.T. Suzuki put it, Zen consists in “opening the mental eye in order to look into the very reason of existence.”³ This programmatic statement could be applied equally to the Neo-Vedānta of Vivekananda (1863–1902), Sufism in the tradition of Iyanat Khan (1882–1927), or Meister Eckhart’s (1260?–1328?) modern acolytes. Needless to say, the seeming universality of such perennial ambitions tells us less about the historical traditions being reinterpreted than it does about the modernist proclivities of those doing the reinterpreting. Nonetheless, this dependence on a shared paradigm of intelligibility does not render modern, global Zen any less authentic than its premodern, more parochial forebears. On the contrary, it is only within such shared paradigms that Zen’s texts, rites, and practices can be made to make sense to contemporary, global audiences. However, it is also because of shared paradigms, and not simply due to some features inherent in the Zen traditions themselves, that we today use, for instance, the conceptual framework of meditation rather than that of tantric physiology to understand instructions for *zazen*. Consequently, we construe *zazen* as an inward discipline of cultivating the mind, rather than as a return to the womb. Zen, in other words, is not simply given in its texts, institutions, practices, or even in its practitioners. Rather, it arises from interpreting them, from the effort to make them make sense. To speak with a simile, even if Zen is a finger that points at the moon, we still have to agree on the rules for pointing, and that it is the moon that is important and not the quality of one’s manicure.

Such need to agree on the rules is not limited to the Western encounter with Zen, or Buddhism in general. Rather, as the above passage from Chikotsu and other episodes cited throughout this study suggest, the very same process was

3 Suzuki, *Training*, p. 105.

at play when in the early medieval period Japanese Buddhist monks encountered the continental Chan traditions. In trying to make sense of what they encountered, they relied, and had to rely, on the rules of interpretation they were familiar with from their own doctrinal, ritual, ascetic, and institutional traditions. Hence in learning Chan and appropriating it as Zen, Japanese Buddhists played language games significantly different from those used by their Chinese mentors. In doing so, they laid the groundwork for the emergence of a truly Japanese tradition of Zen.

To stress a point so obvious that it is easily overlooked and hard to reckon with, Japanese Zen pioneers, even though they traveled to the continent and apprenticed under Chinese teachers, did not simply know “what Zen is”; it was neither obvious nor transparent to them. Rather, they, too, had to do the work of interpretation and had to make Zen make sense, not only to others after their return but also to themselves. Zen in medieval Japanese Buddhist discourse, therefore, was not simply transmitted from the continent but actively constructed within and in response to the conceptual networks and doctrinal problems of the contemporary Japanese Buddhist tradition. “Esoteric Zen,” the main focus of these pages, refers to one such attempt at interpretation, one such framework within which an understanding of Zen could be articulated.

It was Enni who provided some of the most powerful examples of the ways in which Zen could be explicated in, or rendered comprehensible through, Japanese Buddhist doctrinal patterns or images. In the *Jisshū yōdōki*, Enni, or at least one or more of his close followers, drew on the images of the mirror and of wetness in order to articulate Zen in the conceptual space opened by early Tendai original awakening teachings. The new form of Zen propagated by Enni and his peers and students could easily colonize this space because as a doctrinal category Zen had been part of Japanese Tendai since its inception. During the early medieval period, Tendai scholiasts themselves revived this previously rather unproductive category of Zen as they sought to legitimize their own novel teachings in terms of Saichō’s mysterious Oxhead Zen transmission. Thus not only did the continental Chan teachings from their first arrival on Japanese soil have to compete with a pre-existent Japanese Zen, medieval Zen itself emerged from, and continued to harbor, a plurality of possible Zens.

In so far as Buddhist discourse in 13th century Japan was still dominated by tantric doctrine and practice, tantric scholasticism provided one of the most flexible and powerful frameworks within which to rearticulate Zen in a Japanese manner. This is clear from Enni’s exegetical works in the textual lineage of the, likely, Chinese apocryphal *Yuqi jing*. In these works, Enni appropriated the somewhat paradoxical image of the moon disc without perceptual characteristics, tentatively elaborated by scholiasts such as Annen, the *doctor*

angelicus of Japanese Tendai teachings, so as to position Zen within tantric discursive space. Zen thus became the inner self-verification or endarkenment of the single Mahāvairocana beyond the dual *maṇḍala*.

By using the conceptual structures and guiding images of the Japanese Buddhist, and especially the Tendai tantric, tradition, Enni could make Zen make sense in such a manner as was receptive to some of the important doctrinal problems and concerns he shared with his contemporaries. In many ways, these problems and concerns can be summarized as, "What is outside the teachings, how does it relate to the teachings, and how can it be communicated to sentient beings?" Throughout this essay, we have encountered a number of different variations of this problem, some common to the (East Asian) Buddhist tradition in general, others unique to Japan. These variations include questions such as the following: Do the *Lotus* perfect teachings in some way transcend common doctrinal doxographies, or are they included within them? Is there a common ground from which the two *maṇḍala* of tantric teachings can be derived? Are the *Lotus* and the tantric teachings unified, complementary, or hierarchically ordered, and how can this relation be established and textually verified? These variations arose from the interplay of a few fundamental chains of dichotomies, often running in parallel, which structure (East Asian) Buddhist metaphysical reflection. At the heart of these chains is the tension between what can be apprehended based on perceptual characteristics and what cannot. This dichotomy leads to the question of whether the markless and the marked should be considered relative and mutually exclusive, or rather absolute and in some sense mutually inclusive. Finally, there was the question of how the combinations deriving from these metaphysical options relate to the problem of communicating Buddhist truth. By its very definition, what is without perceptual characteristics cannot be a teaching as commonly understood, for to be a teaching is to be addressed to an audience and hence to be apperceptible by this audience. If Buddhist truth is free of perceptual marks, can it still be conveyed through communicative mechanisms? If yes, to which kind of beings, equipped with which kinds of receptive apparatuses, can it be communicated? Or does, on the contrary, the very fact that the Buddha did convey his truth, as evidenced by the teachings, imply that Buddhist truth is not without perceptual characteristics?

At first glance, these reflections on the translatability of Chinese Chan into Japanese Zen might appear to amount to little more than a reiteration of the preliminary means thesis discussed in the introduction to the present study. According to this thesis, teachers such as the supposed founder of Japanese Rinzai Zen, Yōsai, or indeed Enni himself actually wanted to establish Zen as the independent school they supposedly had encountered on the continent.

However, they refrained from doing so and instead promoted a combinatory practice of Zen and tantric teachings. This combinatory practice was to serve as a preliminary means (*hōben*) preparing the field for the eventual emergence of some supposedly real Zen. Once this was achieved, the combinatory trappings could be discarded, and a pure Zen based on Chinese monastic norms emerge. From this point onward, considerations of the Zen movements' relationship with the established traditions were of at best secondary importance, and in much previous scholarship it was indeed such a secondary position they occupied.

While the preliminary means thesis correctly identifies the need for translation, or for interaction with the established schools, we can now see that it is limited on at least two counts. First, thinkers like Enni did not merely preach or practice a fully formed Chan or Zen they had learned on the continent alongside, or in some combination with, Japanese tantric teachings. Rather, masters such as Enni purposefully departed from the standards of continental orthodoxy and orthodoxy, at least as these were understood in Japan. This departure was necessitated by the fact that tantric Buddhism as an interlocutor, while unavoidable in Japan, did not really exist in China. Consequently, Enni fundamentally refashioned Zen by fitting it into a Japanese doctrinal classification of teachings that also included the exoteric and tantric teachings as the constitutive others of Zen. There was nothing preliminary about Enni's rearticulation, as the painstaking textual hermeneutics according to which he developed it demonstrates. This point is obvious from the fact that esoteric Zen as it emerged from Enni's efforts and was developed by the likes of Chikotsu cannot be reduced to either Chinese Chan or Japanese tantric discourses. Rather, from Enni's fundamental hermeneutic intuition that Chan can be explicated in terms of tantric Buddhism, as well as from the less-than-perfect overlap of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist discourses, there arose specific and unique interpretative patterns that almost literally are unthinkable in the languages of either Chan or tantric Buddhism alone. These include, for instance, the interpretation of "not establishing words and letters" as referring to the mind endarkened before the first ray of Sanskrit syllables arose therein; the notion that this mind could be communicated by gesture even if not by *mantra*; and the understanding, explicitly formulated by Chikotsu but anticipated by Enni, that this mind resided in the physical heart.

The specificity of Enni's hermeneutical intuition raises an important, indeed fundamental point: Is Enni really best approached as a Zen practitioner, and if yes, what do we mean by Zen in this context? Of course, Enni's important role in the development of Japanese Zen is beyond doubt, even if still often misunderstood and sadly underappreciated in most scholarship. Yet Enni was

also a sophisticated and influential *tāntrika*. Many of the characteristic features that separate the medieval from the classical tantric tradition find early if not exclusive expression in Enni's works. One prominent example of such a development is the increasing importance of the *Yuqi jing* and the sexual and embryological teachings based on it. These teachings' influence would eventually come to engulf the entirety of the medieval and early modern religious, and even non-religious, landscape. As mentioned previously, one of the oldest charts depicting the five phases of fetal development in the womb can be found in Enni's commentary and oral transmissions on the *Yuqi jing*. In other words, to characterize Enni first and foremost as an important tantric adept is as justified as calling him a Zen master, and considering the respective space the two traditions occupy in his work, perhaps even more so. Matsunami Naohiro has suggested that we consider Enni best a Zen monk who also practiced tantric teachings. Matsunami wrote before Enni's tantric commentaries, on which the present study is based, had been discovered. In the light of these new materials and the doctrinal perspectives they lay out, I would suggest that we have to reverse Matsunami's finding: Enni was a tantric adept who also practiced Zen. What makes Enni's stance so intriguing and hard to grasp is that he considered Zen superior to the tantric teachings. Yet even to arrive at this conclusion he remained dependent on a tantric discursive cosmos centered on the maṇḍalic sovereign Mahāvairocana.

Once we recognize the multifaceted nature of Enni's thought and the complexity of his position in Japanese Buddhist history, two more observations become possible, the first relating to the nature of his Zen teachings, and the second to these Zen teachings' relationship with tantric Buddhism. For Enni, Zen was a "school" in the same sense as the Tendai *Lotus* and even the tantric teachings were. Zen was a textual tradition, a doctrinal (or perhaps rather adocrinal) school of thought, and a, if minimalistic, system of practice. As such, it could easily coexist with other such lineages within the same institution. As Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎 has aptly pointed out in his closing comments at a panel on "Enni and his Environs" at the 2022 Asian Studies Conference Japan, it was Enni's ambition to build a unified, consistent, comprehensive framework within which all the various schools of contemporary Japanese Buddhism could be accommodated. Enni's Zen and Enni's *tantra* both grew from this ambition. Consequently, the preliminary means thesis and its associated assumptions get it exactly backwards. The question is not why Enni combined Zen and tantric teachings. It cannot be, as Enni's esoteric Zen predates any conception of a pure, independent, exclusivist, and institutionalized Zen. On the contrary, the question is, to put it somewhat polemically, how the heresy of such a pure Zen could arise and carry the day.

The second, and consequent, point the preliminary means thesis misses is that esoteric Zen was no transitional phase on the road to purity. While it did change and adapt over time in response to the evolving Buddhist landscape, and especially the decreasing dominance of the tantric teachings, esoteric Zen remained part of the Zen traditions' mainstream until the early modern period. The business of periodization is always a perilous one, especially when dealing with a phenomenon as little studied, and studied still on such a limited textual basis, as esoteric Zen. Yet judging from the materials surveyed in the present study, we can roughly, and with a certain amount of trepidation, postulate three distinct phases of esoteric Zen. First, although they arrived at contrary value judgments, early thinkers such as Enni and Chikotsu explicitly and self-consciously used a tantric framework to elucidate Zen. The self-conscious nature of their endeavor is perhaps most clearly exemplified with reference to their system of classifying teachings. Both scholars used the distinction between the exoteric and tantric teachings (*kenmitsu*) as developed within the Japanese esoteric traditions, and on the basis of this tantric distinction, as it were, interpreted Zen's own constitutive differentiation between itself and the teachings (*kyōzen* 教禪). Enni and Chikotsu thereby arrived at a threefold scheme comprised of the categories of the exoteric, the tantric, and Zen (*kenmitsuzen* 顯密禪). Within this threefold scheme, Enni and Chikotsu established more or less definite relationships between Zen and tantric concepts. This phase corresponds roughly to what Katō calls Zen / Tantra (*zenmitsu*).

Kokan Shiren represents the second phase of esoteric Zen surveyed in the present study, although this phase perhaps can be more accurately considered a threshold or inflection point. During Kokan's lifetime, Zen practitioners increasingly rejected the embrace of the Buddhist establishment and began to act with growing political clout, institutional independence, and sectarian self-consciousness. These developments are reflected in Kokan's own pugnacious rhetoric and polemical vigor. As we have seen, Kokan strongly denounced the notion that Zen is in any way inferior to, or dependent on, the established schools. However, as Kokan's doctrine of the *dharmakāya* teaching shows, at least initially some Zen thinkers continued to respond to scholastic problems, even if they now could do so in a new, more congenial idiom. Already Chikotsu had discussed the preacher of Zen as the *dharmakāya*, but had done so in terms of tantric scholasticism. On these terms, the *dharmakāya* is seen, in principle only, through the historical Śākyamuni as superior practitioners take this human body as their perceptual object. Kokan, on the other hand, self-consciously distanced himself from the tantric framework. Instead he drew on the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, a text of longstanding connections with the Zen lineage, in order to assert the superiority of the physical, historical body of the

patriarchs over the spiritual, visionary, mind-woven body (*S. manomāyakāya*) of tantric initiation. In short, whereas Kokan inherited the problems or doctrinal patterns generated by the tantric exposition of Zen teachings, he no longer felt compelled to answer them in like language.

Two more developments that directly impacted the ways in which Zen could be articulated, or the paradigms in which it could be made to make sense, reached an inflection point during or around Kokan's lifetime. First, concurrently with the tantric teachings' slow, and in fact never quite complete, eviction from the apex of Japanese Buddhist discourse, new sources of meaning became available. Notable among these were cosmological and cosmogonic speculation based on the *Yijing* and elaborated by Neo-Confucian thinkers. As the example of Mujū's successful transposition of the tantric notion of *kaji* or empowerment into this newly available continental framework showed, this discourse could be used as an alternative source for Buddhist metaphysical speculation. The tendency to turn to Chinese learning rather than tantric scholasticism in order to riddle out the metaphysical complexities of the Buddhist cosmos was especially pronounced in the Sōtō faction due to its inheritance of the Five Positions. Already on the continent this metaphysical system had been associated with the symbolism of the *Yijing*.

The second development concerned the acceptance of *kōan* as legitimate religious speech. Although the language of the *kōan* had initially caused no little consternation, its charms increasingly won over the arbiters of Buddhist orthodoxy. This process is perhaps best captured by the image of Shūhō Myōchō, the founder of Daitokuji, in 1325 decisively winning a debate with scholiasts of the established traditions. When his learned rivals asked, "What is this Zen, a separate transmission outside the teachings?" Shūhō answered, "An eight-sided millstone runs through the air!"⁴ Dumbstruck, Shūhō's interlocutor lost the debate. The Zen master's victory shows that what Nichiren had dismissed as Zen crazy talk had become respectable as a religious idiom in its own right.

By Kokan's time, therefore, Zen's intellectual, as well as institutional, situation had changed dramatically. The Zen lineages now had at their disposal their own languages in the form of *Yijing* cosmology and the brutally efficient polemical tool of the *kōan*. They no longer depended on scholastic discourses, tantric or otherwise, to make sense of and communicate their tradition. At the same time, however, the Zen lineages still had to deal with continued attacks from the classical schools, on the one hand, and their own esoteric legacy, on

4 *Honchō kōsōden*, NBZS, vol. 102, 338. Shūhō's was not a spontaneous outburst, but rather a quotation from an interlinear commentary on the 47th case of the *Bōyan lu*.

the other. How each lineage chose to address these two challenges in no little way helped determine its in-house style, or the way in which it chose to make Zen make sense. Within what would become the *gozan* institutions, lavish endowments, connections to both the court and the military rulers, as well as continued connections to the China trade encouraged a blossoming of what has come to be known as “literary Zen” focused on the arts and continental culture. The lineages of Daitokuji and Myōshinji, on the other hand, chose to break with the *gozan* institutional framework and to cultivate their own client base among artists, artisans, and merchants in the capital. One of the most unique among the articles they had to sell was their *kōan* lore elaborated in the style of their founder Shūhō. It is to the development, advertisement, and commercialization of this inheritance that they devoted themselves. Thanks to the efforts of Hakuin, a reformed Daitokuji/Myōshinji style of *kōan* practice became dominant during the Tokugawa period, and eventually Hakuin’s Ōtōkan faction replaced all other Rinzai lineages. Although initially marginal, teleological scholarly imagination finally cast it as the Rinzai tradition’s mainstream.

The *gozan* institutions and the lineages dominant at Daitokuji and Myōshinji for the most part, if not entirely, appear to have broken with the patterns of esoteric Zen as established by Enni, Chikotsu, and others. These patterns continued to be transmitted and even to flourish, on the other hand, in the various branches of the Sōtō and Genjū factions. With them our discussion turns to the third, and most ambiguous, period of esoteric Zen. During this period, Zen practitioners continued to develop motifs that had first arisen in the context of a more or less self-conscious reflection on the relationship between tantric and Zen teachings. However, they appropriated these patterns, motifs, or orientations from within a Buddhist discourse no longer dominated by tantric structures. The perhaps most impressive example of this shift we have discussed are the two different interpretations of the flower by which the Buddha is supposed to have passed on his *Dharma* to Mahākāśyapa as offered by Chikotsu and in later Sōtō esoteric transmissions. Chikotsu interpreted this flower in the context of the tantric understanding of the practitioner’s physical heart as the central lotus of the Womb *maṇḍala*. In Sōtō esoteric transmissions, on the other hand, the twirled flower was seen as representing the centrifugal dynamic through which *yin* and *yang* differentiated themselves out from the Great Ultimate or Pole in the context of *Yijing* cosmogony. In this sense, the changing interpretation of Zen’s founding myth reflects a real historical change in the intellectual and discursive context in which the tradition was articulated.

A more subtle example of the same shift in exegetical paradigm we have studied in some depth were the Three Positions in the context of Sōtō *kōan*

lore, and their relationship to Enni's Three Mechanisms. Enni had developed these Three Mechanisms from opacities inherent in his Chinese sources in order to address the question how Zen, if it is outside the teachings, can communicate the Buddha mind. Enni's answer was that Zen, unlike the teachings in both their exoteric and their tantric forms, does not rely on semiotic mediation but rather "indicates" mind "directly" through the third mechanism, *kōjō*. In so far as Enni built his Three Mechanisms around a comparative semiotics of the ways in which exoteric, tantric, and Zen teachings related to the inner self-verification of Mahāvairocana, and hence around the very threefold division of Buddhist discourses outlined above, we are justified to conclude that Enni's Mechanisms can be cited as an instance of esoteric Zen.

After Enni, different interpretations of his Three Mechanisms arose, and their connection with scholastic, and specifically tantric, discourses became increasingly lost. Although originally not a scheme intended for the systematization of *kōan*, Zen sectarians such as Kokan soon began to interpret them in ways that encouraged such a reading. Although the exact details of how the Three Mechanisms penetrated Sōtō *kōan* lore are still unclear, what is without doubt is that the creators of these systems of *kōan* practice were familiar with the discourses surrounding the Three Mechanisms, as can be seen from the presence of key phrases such as "what the ten thousand sages to do not transmit" and the internally recurrent nine-fold structure of the *yasan* or nightly instruction in esoteric *kōan* lore.

Sōtō practitioners also were steeped in the teaching of the Five Positions they had inherited from the continental Caodong lineage (or at least from the Japanese image of the Caodong lineage), and the *Yijing* speculations accompanying them. Sōtō thinkers used the shared graphical symbolism of Five Positions metaphysics and *Yijing* cosmology, expressed mainly in circles and divinatory grammata, to establish an identity between the cosmogonic mundane and the soteriological supra-mundane law. Buddhist liberation came to be interpreted as a return to the primordial, formless cosmic origin. It is within this system that later medieval and early modern Sōtō thinkers interpreted the *kōan* lore of the Three Positions, a move that turned the old cases, or even complex textual structures such as the *Biyan lu*, into cosmological sigils akin to the trigrams and hexagrams of the *Yijing*. In other words, *Yijing* style cosmological speculations had replaced the tantric teachings as one of the main resources for interpreting, and creating, (esoteric) Zen teachings.

Even if the parameters within which the Three Positions of medieval Sōtō *kōan* lore functioned differed significantly from those of Enni's Three Mechanisms, certain concerns and obsessions transitioned rather well. Enni had construed the Three Mechanisms in part in response to the problem of

how the mind free of perceptual marks (*musō*) could be communicated by phenomena endowed with marks (*usō*). In the tantric teachings this tension was resolved through the *maṇḍala* that manifested from, and cyclically dissolved back into, mind. In like fashion, under the influence of the *Yijing* and the Five Positions, the Three Positions came to serve as a “generative grammar” to explain how cosmic and cosmogonic structures, including the formless (*mugyō*) origin, could show themselves in the language of the *kōan*. Conversely, the language of the *kōan* served as a guide back towards this cosmic origin.

Such common structures or concerns allowed the Sōtō and Rinzai Genjū factions to appropriate, for instance, the tantric embryological teachings that developed in networks such as that surrounding Michiie, Enni’s aristocratic patron. Enni and Chikotsu, the latter for clear doctrinal reasons, did not develop an explicit Zen embryology, but other *tāntrika* such as Dōhan suggested such a possibility. These incipient embryologies, often focused on the notion of a basic vitality transcendent of awakening and delusion, spread outwards to more localized, regional, or rural religious movements, and eventually percolated through the entirety of the religious landscape. It was in these liminal spaces with their highly permeable understanding of orthodoxy that a full-blown Zen embryology came to be developed. This Zen embryology constantly drew on earlier sources such as the mantric technology for generating the Buddha body also found in Enni’s tantric teachings; the solar crow and lunar rabbit Jien had glimpsed blinking at the heavenly bodies; or Dōhan’s non-dualistic vitalism.

Above I have referred to this last period of esoteric Zen as “ambiguous.” The reason for this choice of words is that at this late stage, esoteric Zen has moved far from the self-conscious efforts of Enni or the self-reflexivity of his disciple Mujū as they struggled to articulate Zen in a tantric world. Rather, we now are confronted with a pluralistic religious landscape no longer dominated by the tantric teachings, but rather shot through by a staggering array of criss-crossing discourses. Consequently, esoteric Zen is no longer a (relatively) obvious presence, as it had been, for instance, in Chikotsu’s square inch lump of flesh discussed in the introduction. The Zen embryologies investigated in the last chapter of the present study might illustrate the problem. Although some materials openly draw on tantric embryology and obstetric *téchne*, others contain but the remotest echo of a tantric embryological soteriology, for instance in the form of a reference to the life faculty. Hence, such latter materials display very little in the way of explicitly tantric elements.

This ambiguity surrounding esoteric Zen in its late stage of development shows itself not primarily on the level of definitions, as when we ask, “What is esoteric Zen?” Rather, it operates on the more fundamental level of establishing

“esoteric Zen” as an epistemological subject or category in the first place, as when we ask, “Is what I am looking at esoteric Zen?” To attempt an even only heuristically useful definition is downstream from this more fundamental problem of identification. In the introduction, I have suggested that while no normative answer might be possible, either now or in principle, one of the possible ways forward are case-by-case genealogical inquiries.⁵ Such inquiries would seek to trace a certain doctrine, ritual, or symbol, as found in a text transmitted as a Zen text, back to a recognized tantric source. What I mean by “transmitted as a Zen text” is simply that the material in question would have been identified as a Zen text by a majority of members in good standing of an institution understood by the wider Buddhist community to speak authoritatively on the matter of Zen. Likewise, by a “recognized tantric source” I mean but that the source in question presents itself, or is represented by others, in a manner adequately tantric according to the standards of the recognized community of tantric practitioners. In cases such a genealogy can successfully be established, we are in the presence of esoteric Zen.

It has to be admitted, of course, that in their formalism these two stipulations remain somewhat fuzzy and anemic. It will always be possible to make an appeal along the lines of, “But is it *really* tantric?” or “But why call it Zen in the first place, then?” To such appeals there is no defense, apart from asserting, with the scholar of religion Michael Bergunder, that all historical religious identities are founded on a primal and hegemonic act of naming. In such a baptism a certain identity is articulated, imposed, or claimed through brute discursive *fiat*.⁶ Once such an act of naming, or of claiming a name, is successful, that is to say replicated within a community and over time, there is no further appeal against it. To put it somewhat flippantly, if you get away with claiming to be a Zen master, or if another gets away with accusing you of being a *tāntrika*, and others replicate such claims (regardless of whether in good faith or not), then a Zen master, or a *tāntrika*, you are, at least for as long as the claim continues to be replicated.

Allow me to present one more example of a genealogical investigation aimed at establishing a given text as belonging to the category of esoteric Zen, one that is somewhat more involved than the comparatively straightforward case of Kokan’s preaching of the *dharmakāya*. Consider Figure 6. Such a strange squiggle also appears in a mid-17th century *kirigami* entitled *Shaka*

5 Needless to say, the concept of a genealogy is drawn, via Foucault, from Nietzsche. See Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” Another pertinent perspective is Eric Hobsbawm’s notion of “invented traditions.” See Hobsbawm, “Introduction.”

6 Bergunder, “What Is Religion,” p. 267.

gohangyō 釈迦御判形 or *Seal of Śākyamuni*, which however provides no further explanation as to its nature or meaning. Even the great pioneer of Sōtō *kirigami* studies, Ishikawa Rikizan, was sufficiently baffled by this document to have included it, almost without commentary, in a vague category of “*Kirigami* related to *bodhisattva*” (*bosatsu kankei kirigami* 菩薩関係切紙).⁷ There is certainly nothing here that would suggest that this document is related to any meaningfully tantric context.

A second, undated *kirigami* document, this one entitled *Shakamuni butsu shinshu kahan* 釈迦牟尼仏親手花判 or *Flower Imprint of the Śākyamuni Buddha's Own Hand* contains a nearly identical figure.⁸ In this document, the squiggle is accompanied by the following poem:

The authority of crane king and tortoise shape does not rest;
The writings and letters of the five sovereigns scare demons and gods.
Not one among Confucius' disciples understands;
The blue-eyed monk laughs nodding his head.

At first glance, this inscription might not appear helpful in deciphering the document's meaning. However, despite some copy errors that suggest that the copyist did not understand what was being transcribed, or otherwise was already working from a corrupted source, the inscription can still be identified as the first and last lines of a poem by the Tang Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (712–756), entitled “Fojiao fanwen anzi” 佛教梵文唵字 or “On the Buddhist Sanskrit Letter Am.” *Am* is one of the five variations of the fundamental mantric seed syllable *a* used to construe a perfected, tantric body according to the system of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* as interpreted in Enni's lineage. The body of the tantric practitioner sometimes was represented as, or inscribed in, the syllable *am*, thereby creating a kind of syllabic body *maṇḍala*. One specimen of this iconography called the “priest” or “*Dharma Master Syllable Am*” (*anji bō* アン字房 or *anji hosshi* アン字法師), in which the syllable is drawn in such a way as to represent a stylized human body, as can be seen in Figure 7. This way of drawing the syllable appears to be connected to the initiatory practices of the *Yuqi jing*, which in turn are a ritual process closely connected to tantric embryologies.⁹ It also bears a striking resemblance to the mysterious squiggle of the *Shaka gohangyō*.

7 ZSS, vol. 1, 396–397.

8 See Iizuka and Tsuchiya, “Rinka Sōtōshū,” p. 176.

9 See Ōno, “Ajikan,” pp. 31–33; also the same, “Mandara,” p. 41.



FIGURE 6 The Seal of Śākyamuni
SKETCH BY ELENA BERNARDINI.
USED WITH PERMISSION



FIGURE 7 Anji hosshi
SKETCH BY ELENA BERNARDINI.
USED WITH PERMISSION

In short, while the *Shaka gohangyō* at first appears inexplicable and unrelated to any tantric context, its genealogy can be traced back to the doctrinal and ritual practices of the *Yuqi jing*, one of the direct ancestors of medieval Zen theories of soteriological ontogenesis. Furthermore, the inclusion of Xuanzong's poem, an eulogy on the mantric power of *am*, in the *Shakamuni butsu shinshu kahan* suggests that at least initially the Sōtō Zen esotericist(s) who transmitted this sigil retained an awareness of its origin in *siddham* physiology. Of course, we do not know which oral explanations might have accompanied the transmission of such documents. Yet judging from both the copy errors in the poem itself, and its absence in the *Shaka gohangyō*, it would appear save to suggest that any awareness of the sigil's tantric origin was lost over time, resulting in the confounding curlicue that is the *Shaka gohangyō*.

The processes that led to the formation of transmissions such the *Shaka gohangyō* obviously differ from the majority of the cases discussed in the present study. Most importantly, the solitary figure of the *Shaka gohangyō* does not carry any sense of hybridizing or syncretizing what belongs to one tradition by combining it with what belongs to another. Rather, it is through a process of forgetting that the very same image that at one point was seen as fully tantric came to be seen as fully Zen, instead. In so far as it can be traced back to a tantric context, we cannot but by the definitions set out above consider it an instance of esoteric Zen. This is an important reminder that esoteric Zen itself is a pluralistic category, or to borrow an image from Wittgenstein, a family of related discursive operations that cannot be reduced to any one single common denominator, model, or indeed method.

The recognition that esoteric Zen is an internally diverse category also alerts us to a further possibility: if there is esoteric Zen, might there then not also be "zenic Esotericism," if such a neologism be allowed, that is to say a reading of *tantra* in Zen terms? As we have seen in Chapter 7, some tantric lineages used the saying, "what the ten thousand sages/ancestral teachers do not transmit" to emphasize the immediate nature of Mahāvairocana's self-revelation. This tantric immediacy they opposed to the need for patriarchal intercession or lineage mediation typical of the Zen teachings as the intention of "Bodhidharma coming from the West." Needless to say, this tantric rhetoric of immediacy, to borrow Bernard Faure's phrase, is based on Enni's esoteric Zen teachings. As we have seen repeatedly, "what the ten thousand sages do not transmit" is one of the key phrases Enni used to characterize *kōjō*. *Kōjō* in turn Enni defined as the inner, immediate self-verification of the maṇḍalic sovereign. In other words, Enni's thought enabled both a tantric interpretation of Zen and a zenic interpretation of the tantric teachings to emerge.

Eventually, these esoteric discourses even provided some religious practitioners with the means of going beyond Buddhism itself. We have previously mentioned that Chikotsu contributed to a new vocabulary of talking about the gods at Ise, thereby helping to inaugurate medieval Shintō theologies. To investigate in any comprehensive manner the question of how the hermeneutical devices and doctrinal orientations of esoteric Zen influenced medieval and early modern religions more generally would require a study of its own, but consider the following passage from a Shugendō 修験道 text:

The principle indication of Shugen is the *Dharma* principle of the three mysteries without perceptual characteristics (*musō sanmitsu*), the subtle principle of the singular equality (*ichinyō*) of the *dharmakāya*. [...] This is the true principle that the Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit. Mind transmitted by mind head on, it cannot be known by [the conceptualizing] mind (*i* 意), cannot be expressed by words. [...] For this reason, the established principles of Shugen do not depend on the teachings of the Buddha. Not establishing words and letters, [they] merely transmit mind with mind.¹⁰

In this passage, well known Zen slogans, including, again, Enni's favorite, "what the Buddhas and ancestors do not transmit," are employed to funnel Shugen through the three mysteries without perceptual characteristics into a realm beyond the *Buddhadharma*. Or to put it differently, esoteric Zen provided some Shugen ascetics with a vocabulary to claim their own, mountainous spaces "outside the teachings."

It might feel somewhat unsatisfactory to be confined to establishing esoteric Zen, or zenic Esotericism, in a piecemeal fashion through an open-ended genealogical project. On the other hand, such a self-limiting approach has the advantage of avoiding a construal of esoteric Zen that is either too narrow or too broad. Too narrow a definition would restrict esoteric Zen to superficial borrowings of tantric rituals, doctrines, or symbolism. Such borrowings do of course exist. One prominent, contemporary example is the Sōtō temple Eigenji 永源寺. Zen monks at this temple regularly perform the tantric *goma* 護摩 (*S. homa*) fire ritual.¹¹ Another, historical, example is the copious use of seed syllables in documents such as the *Shichidōzu* discussed in Chapter 7. However, such an explicit presence of tantric elements is not a *sine qua non* for identifying a certain phenomenon as representing esoteric Zen, nor even for the

10 See *Shugendō shuyō hiketsu* 修験道修要秘決, NDZK, vol. 37, 378b.

11 See Bodiford, "Zen and Esoteric Buddhism," p. 933.

much humbler claim of tantric influence. Rather, to insist on such an explicit tantric presence would limit the analytical usefulness of the category of “esoteric Zen” to exercises of stating the obvious, while at the same time excluding clearly tantric interpretations of Zen teachings. To again name but two obvious examples, Chikotsu’s flesh heart or the inconspicuous life faculty in Sôtō *kirigami* both clearly belong to the realm of esoteric Zen as defined above yet considered in themselves are not “tantric” in any meaningful way.

On the other hand, the genealogical requirement also prevents us from casting our nets too wide when looking for esoteric Zen. For instance, in older Japanese scholarship the description of Sôtō Zen after Keizan as “esotericized” or “tantresque” (*mikkyōteki* 密教的) seems to have referred to little more than the use of prayer rituals or other popular forms of religiosity aimed at accumulating blessings in this life and the next.¹² More recently, William Bodiford has revived such an overly broad understanding of the relationship between Zen and the tantric teachings by citing the use of *dhāraṇī* in Zen rituals as a prime example of esoteric Zen. Bodiford justifies this claim by asserting that these invocations constitute, “the final stage of East Asian esoteric [i.e. tantric] Buddhism.” Hence, “Zen can be seen either as included within Japan’s esoteric Buddhist tradition or as an outside rival to it.”¹³ However, as Richard D. McBride, II., and George Keyworth have argued in convincing detail, the use of *dhāraṇī* incantations, while of course also prominent in tantric Buddhism, is not itself a tantric practice but rather belongs to the broad East Asian Mahāyāna tradition as taught in standard Mahāyāna scriptures.¹⁴ Zen, Keyworth concludes, uses *dhāraṇī* not because it has been influenced by tantric Buddhism but because it is part of the East Asian Buddhist mainstream. Thus, although *dhāraṇī* were important in Zen thaumaturgy, or the pursuit of worldly ends through magical means, this does not mean that they can be considered an instance of esoteric Zen in the more narrow sense in which this term is used in the present study.

The genealogical approach is accommodating yet specific enough to allow us to discern esoteric Zen as a diverse and pluralistic, but coherent and identifiable, stream of Japanese Zen Buddhist thought and practice that originated in the early medieval period and continued to influence the development of Japanese Zen traditions into the early modern period. It existed in both central and liminal lineages, and in both Rinzai and Sôtō factions, although it never dominated either entirely. The ubiquitous presence of esoteric Zen is a reminder that the history of Japanese Zen cannot be written in a family-style

12 For a classic expression of this notion, see Kōchi, “Keizan zenji.”

13 Bodiford, “Zen and Esoteric Buddhism,” p. 928.

14 McBride, “Dhāraṇī and Spells,” pp. 85–114. Keyworth, “Hero’s March Spell,” pp. 107–114.

manner. Rather, from its very inception Japanese Zen existed in a creative tension with the established schools, and as I have already pointed out above, it is this very tensionality that makes the thinking of early Zen pioneers such as Enni irreducible to either of its poles. In so far as later generations of Zen practitioners continued to explore the space extending between the poles of Enni's thought, as betwixt the ox's horns, any history that wishes to account for the specificities of Japanese Zen traditions will have to take into account on some level their lasting relationships with the established schools.

This irreducibility of esoteric Zen is the final point I would like to emphasize before closing this study. Within the discursive space opened by Enni, and especially during the late phase of esoteric Zen as explored in these pages through some Sōtō and Genjū faction transmission documents, seminal syllables, pornographic *maṇḍala*, or the womb as *kōan* were not transmitted as preliminary metaphors, foreign borrowings, or hybrid miscegenations. Rather, they were perfectly orthodox specimens of Zen teachings. Let me make this point more clearly, I hope, with reference to the groundbreaking and erudite work of Hirose Ryōmon on enthronement precept initiations in Sōtō lineages. Despite the fact that hardly any member of the monastic community would ever actually have been in a position to perform them, enthronement (*sokui* 即位) rituals had developed in virtually all medieval Buddhist lineages, including Sōtō lineages. Hirose demonstrates that in creating their own enthronement lore, Sōtō practitioners drew widely on Tendai and tantric traditions. Hirose concludes that Sōtō monks,

did not passively receive the discourse of tantric Buddhism (*mikkyō*) but on occasion rewrote it in the form of their own secret texts (*hisho* 秘書) by giving it a Zen-style (*zenteki*) interpretation.¹⁵

Hirose here presupposes what might be considered a two-tier model of the esoteric lore transmitted in medieval Sōtō lineages, which he suggests arose from Sōtō practitioners adding a “Zen style” interpretation to tantric rituals. The assumption seems to be that at least in theory these two layers can neatly be separated. This assumption, however, raises the difficulty of which criteria would allow us to identify a Zen style in medieval esoteric transmission materials and clearly differentiate it from the tantric discourse contained within the very same materials. Medieval Sōtō practitioners themselves certainly gave no indication that they considered, for instance, systems of seed syllables as in any way foreign to their own tradition. In other words, if we wish to claim that

15 Hirose Ryōmon, “Kokuō sokuihō,” p. 267.

medieval Sōtō Zen is the hybrid or syncretistic bastard child of Zen and *tantra*, we would need to be able to account for how a non-hybrid, non-syncretistic, non-combinatory medieval Sōtō Zen would have looked like. If we are unable to do so, or if we were forced to conclude that in fact all forms of medieval Zen, in their own ways, were hybrid, syncretistic, and combinatory, then these terms lose all value in designating medieval Zen. From the perspective of the present essay, I would suggest that we could avoid such difficulties by recognizing that Sōtō practitioners operated within an epistemic set-up, namely esoteric Zen, within which supposedly tantric elements could be recognized as fully and authentically Zen. This understanding of Zen, I would, admittedly somewhat speculatively, submit, is not the product of a supposed act of cross-pollination, as Hirose would have it, but rather its condition.

To acknowledge the existence of esoteric Zen as an identifiable, longstanding, and influential paradigm of making sense of Zen in premodern Japan forces upon us, I would argue, the recognition that there existed in fact a plurality of sometimes mutually incompatible Zens or sets of rules for construing the meaning of the category “Zen” and the texts and practices associated with it. For instance, within that configuration of Zen I have termed esoteric the rules for interpreting *kōan* allowed these enigmatic stories to be read in terms of the physiology of reproduction. Hence, dwelling in the womb could be a coherent and faithful construal of a *kōan*’s meaning. Although much more textual research is needed on medieval *kōan* literature before any definite conclusion can be stated, this does not appear to have been the case in the medieval Daitokuji and Myōshinji lineages. At least I have not come across such embryological readings in the materials of *kōan* instruction transmitted within these lineages as I have been able to pursue. Sōtō and Daitokuji/Myōshinji lineages, in other words, used different standards in determining what is and what is not an acceptable or orthodox reading of a given case; they played the *kōan* game by different, and sometimes mutually exclusive, rules.

To note the mutual exclusivity of different set of rules governing its interpretation implies that Zen itself is not an obvious, self-sufficient, and transparent category that could be construed in simple continuity with either its Chinese heritage or its modern circumstances; analyzed according to its binary relationships with other Japanese Buddhist traditions; and positioned in mono-directional models of influence. Rather than taking Zen for granted as an epistemological handrail that can guide our inquiries into the past, it should be acknowledged that terms such as “pure” or “combinatory Zen,” “Zen/Tantra,” and even “Zen” itself stand in need of explication, of clarifying the process of their generation and of the rules governing their use. This need arises from the fact that different actors construed and construe these terms

differently according to their own cultural, religious, and epistemic models, be they ontogenesis as in medieval Sōtō lineages, or pop-psychology as in Western Zen centers. The question is how the term or category Zen is made meaningful in these diverse circumstances. Such an investigation, I venture, would reveal that what marks this querulous family of language games are discontinuities, breaks, and brute acts of appropriation as much as the continuities that arise from hindsight. To conclude on an analogy of my own, to interpret Zen in medieval Japan was, and is, like looking at three dots on a surface and trying to figure out which geometric figure they represent. As scholars, trained in the use of Occam's razor and biased towards parsimony, we might see a triangle. Other possibilities include a circle, or a wave. Medieval Buddhist scholiasts, with their corkscrew minds and encyclopedic learning, might have perceived a three-dimensional sphere, an orange, say, projected onto a two-dimensional surface. The task, for them, as for us, was and is to figure out the rules governing the interpretations of Zen.

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When a Zen teacher tells you to point at your mind,
which part of your body do you point at?

According to the Japanese master Chikotsu Daie (1229–1312), you should point at the fistful of meat that is your heart. *Esoteric Zen* demonstrates that far from an outlier, Daie's understanding reflects the medieval Buddhist mainstream, in which tantric teachings and Zen were closely entwined movements that often developed within the same circles of thinkers and texts.

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