

Chinese Culture 6

Charles S. Prebish  
On-cho Ng *Editors*

# The Theory and Practice of Zen Buddhism

A Festschrift in Honor of Steven Heine

 Springer

# **Chinese Culture**

Globality, Connectivity and Modernity

Volume 6

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Charles S. Prebish · On-cho Ng  
Editors

# The Theory and Practice of Zen Buddhism

A Festschrift in Honor of Steven Heine



Springer

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# Editors and Contributors

## About the Editors

**Charles S. Prebish** held the Charles Redd Chair in Religious Studies at Utah State University from 2007 until 2010 and also served as Director of the Religious Studies Program. He came to Utah State University following more than thirty-five years on the faculty of the Pennsylvania State University. He now has emeritus status in both universities. He has published two dozen books and nearly one hundred scholarly articles and chapters. His books *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* (1975) and *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America* (1999) are considered classic volumes in Buddhist Studies. He is the leading pioneer in the establishment of the study of Western Buddhism as a sub-discipline in Buddhist Studies. In 1993, he held the Visiting Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary and in 1997 was awarded Rockefeller Foundation National Humanities Fellowship for research at the University of Toronto. He has been Officer in the International Association of Buddhist Studies and was Co-founder of the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religion. In 1994, he co-founded the Journal of Buddhist Ethics, which was the first online peer-reviewed journal in the field of Buddhist Studies and in 1996 co-founded the Routledge “Critical Studies in Buddhism” series. In 2005, he was honored with a “festschrift” volume by his colleagues titled *Buddhist Studies from India to America: Essays in Honor of Charles S. Prebish*.

**On-cho Ng** is Professor of History, Asian Studies, and Philosophy and Former Head of the Asian Studies Department at the Pennsylvania State University. Primarily Specialist in late imperial Chinese intellectual history, he has published extensively on a wide range of topics, such as Confucian hermeneutics, religiosity, ethics, and historiography. His books include *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism in the Early Qing*, *Mirroring the Past*, and *The Imperative of Understanding*. His dozens of articles have appeared in major outlets such as *Journal of Chinese Religions*, *Dao*, *Philosophy East and West*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *Journal of World History*, and the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. He is Co-editor of the Book Series on Chinese intellectual



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# “Introduction: A Valedictory and an Inaugural”



Charles S. Prebish and On-cho Ng

*To take advantage is to lose the advantage*

Blue Cliff Record

The temper and economics of the times seem not to be entirely congenial to the assemblage of *Festschriften*, whose appearance has become quite infrequent as a part of academia's published stock-in-trade. But on the occasion of Steven Heine's retirement, which must be regarded as a significant event that forbodes the passing of an era in Zen/Chan studies, the absence of such a valedictorian anthology would be gross dereliction on the part of his colleagues, insofar as they, over the past few decades, have benefitted not only from Heine's scholarship but also friendship. We are thrilled that a proper tribute in the form of the present volume has become reality, thanks to the unstinting support of his peers who answered our call for dedicatory essays with the utmost alacrity and enthusiasm. Brevity of this introduction does not spare it the responsibility of conveying the magnitude of Heine accomplishments, and so here, we endeavour to offer at least some impressions of his enormous stature.

Dubbed affectionately and tellingly the “Godfather of Zen” at a recent conference, Heine is a leading, prolific scholar who has published three dozen monographs and edited volumes on East Asian Buddhism and culture, in addition to well over one hundred peer-reviewed articles and book chapters in flagship venues such as *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, *Japanese*

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*Journal of Religious Studies*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *Pacific World*, and *Philosophy East and West*, among others. A book review of *From Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen in Choice* remarked: "Few scholars of Zen are as approachable and rewarding to read as Heine. And even fewer book-length studies treat the transfer and transformation of Zen (Ch'an) from China to Japan. Heine focuses on the religious and cultural innovations that occurred as Zen migrated from China to Japan in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries." Another review has said that Heine's work "is both meticulously planned and intellectually fecund. He is a major scholar in the field of Japanese religion and philosophy as understood not only in terms of abstract tenets and constructions, but also as practiced as social reality. His approach is consistently systematic, comprehensive and nuanced."

Given his prodigious scholarship, both in terms of quality and quantity, it is small wonder and richly deserved that Heine, in 2007, received the prestigious Order of the Rising Sun (Emperor's) Award from the Japanese government for a lifetime of service to disseminating studies of Japanese culture in the United States. He is considered the first Western scholar in Buddhist studies to gain this remarkable acknowledgment of his efforts. As another recognition, during a 2020 meeting of FIU faculty with representatives of the Japan Foundation, it was said, "As director of Asian Studies, Dr. Heine has been very thoughtful, caring, flexible, and practical. He has shown inclusiveness and versatility over the years in order to bring the program together. He thinks about faculty with sincerity and attentiveness and helps us succeed individually and collectively."

Heine has served for nearly twenty-five years as Founding Director of a robust Asian Studies program at Florida International University, where he has won awards for research, scholarship, and service. He gained nearly four million dollars in external grant funding and mentored dozens of students in various subfields of Japanese and Chinese society. Professor of Religious Studies and History at FIU, Heine earned his B.A. at the University of Pennsylvania and M.A. and Ph.D. at Temple University. Before coming to FIU in 1997, he taught at Pennsylvania State University and directed the East Asian Studies Center there. Heine has taught a variety of courses at graduate and undergraduate levels, including Modern Asia, Dynamics of Asia, and Methods in Asian Studies, as well as Religion and Japanese Culture, Zen Buddhism, Ghosts, Spirits and Folk Religions, Religions of the Silk Road, and classes on other aspects of Asian thought, ritual, and lore.

Steven Heine has won numerous awards and honors over the years. He was a Fulbright Senior Researcher in Japan and twice was awarded National Endowment for Humanities Fellowships. He also gained funding from the American Academy of Religion and Association for Asian Studies in addition to the U.S. Department of Education, National Endowment for the Humanities, the Japan Foundation, Center for Global Partnerships, and Freeman Foundation. He has conducted research on Zen Buddhism in relation to medieval and modern Japan primarily at Komazawa University and University of Tokyo. Heine has lectured at these institutions in addition to Arizona, Brown, Buffalo, Cambridge, Chicago, Columbia, Duke, Emory, Florida, Florida Atlantic, Free University, Harvard, Hawaii, Iowa, Iowa State, North

Carolina, North Florida, Notre Dame, McGill, Ohio State, Oslo, Oxford, Princeton, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State, Rutgers, SOAS, Stanford, UCLA, Utah State, Waseda, West Florida, Yale, Zurich, and other institutions such as Japan Society and The Smithsonian as well as many national or international conferences.

A two-term chair of the Japanese Religions Group at the American Academy of Religion, Heine also co-founded the Sacred Space in Asia Group and the Zen Reading Group. He is editor of the *Japan Studies Review* and a former book review editor for Japan for *Philosophy East and West*. In 2016, Heine along with his colleague Hitomi Yoshio led a National Endowment for Humanities Summer Institute on the cultural history and geography of Tokyo. Participant Patricia Welch of Hofstra University noted, "Thank you again for your time and attention last month as part of the NEH summer institute on Tokyo. It was wonderful to be with such interesting people studying one of the world's great mega cities. I very much enjoyed my time at FIU." Another participant who later came to FIU to study with Heine said, "I was thrilled to be able to use material from the readings and lectures for my Fall course on the cultural history of Tokyo and other cities in Japan. I could not have taught the course without this information."

While Steve Heine is no doubt an able academic administrator and program builder whose service to his own university and our wider profession is legion, his godfatherhood of the field of Zen/Chan studies, as it were, could not have been attained had he not been arguably the most productive scholar of his generation. A glance at the bibliography of his publications, which we make a point to include in this volume, will readily dispel doubts that such a claim is just honorary hyperbole. Heine is primarily known for his copious scholarship on the life and thought of the Japanese Zen Master, Dōgen (1200–1253). One third of his books examine diverse aspects of Dōgen's teachings, including philosophy, poetry, *kōan* interpretations, meditation, and social ethics. Heine published the first translation of Dōgen's *waka* collection, the pioneering major study of Dōgen's compilation of *kōan* cases, and the introductory material showing how the contemporary movement known as Critical Buddhism (Hihan Bukkyō) appropriated Dōgen's approach to Zen in modern ethical perspectives. Heine's provocatively titled monograph, *Did Dōgen Go to China?*, is considered to be one of the mainstay sources in the field for challenging conventional wisdom while demonstrating in intricate details the traditional accounts of Dōgen's travels.

In the early 2010s Heine produced two edited volumes, *Dōgen: Textual and Historical Studies* and *Dōgen and Sōtō Zen*, both featuring the contributions of leading Dōgen scholars. In 2020 he published a major study of the *Shōbōgenzō*, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, in addition to the book, *Flower's Blooming on a Withered Tree*, which offers the first translation of Giun's early fourteenth-century Chinese verse commentary on Dōgen's masterwork. According to the publisher release for *Readings*, "[w]ith clarifying beams of insight, Heine deftly evinces how Dōgen's teachings are a creative response to a range of Buddhist sutras, *kōans*, and Chinese and Japanese teachers. Illuminating with philosophical virtuosity the dynamic nature of Dōgen's written teachings and erudite explication of entangled versions of Dōgen's writings, Heine animates

Dōgen's teachings and practices as he offers nuggets of sagacity throughout." As the undisputed leading expert on Dōgen, Heine has given numerous workshops on the Japanese master at various Zen centers, such as the San Francisco Zen Center's Tassajara Monastery and Green Gulch Zen Center, Ancient Dragon Gate Zen Center, Upaya, Zen Mountain Monastery, the European Center of Zen in Paris, and others.

One of Heine's most important publications is *Chan Rhetoric of Uncertainty in the Blue Cliff Record*, a comprehensive study of the premier Zen Buddhist collection of one hundred *kōan* cases with prose and verse commentary. The *Blue Cliff Record* was originally produced in the 1100 s at Mount Jiashan, a Buddhist temple in a remote part of Hunan province in China, also known for initiating the fusion of Zen and Tea, where Heine did fieldwork in 2015. His book shows there is considerable controversy about the origins and distribution of the collection in the twelfth century, when it was supposedly destroyed by the author's main disciple for being overly erudite, as well as how the text found its way to Japan during the following centuries.

In any event, the *Blue Cliff Record* has long been celebrated for its innovative discursive structure that espouses a philosophy based on embracing "uncertainty," or the fundamentally ambiguous and indeterminate nature of reality in a way that recalls modern Western concepts expressed in literature and philosophy of science. A review in *Reading Religion* noted with approbation: "The work of author Steve Heine is a study focusing on, but not limited to, the *Blue Cliff Record*. By placing the *Blue Cliff Record* into an extended historical framework, Heine provides perspicacious analysis on the commentary tradition of Chan Buddhism... Heine offers a more holistic study on the *Blue Cliff Record* in comparison with other academic works focusing on the same topic. The great value of Heine's work is its unique vision, and the angle of seeing and addressing problems... All in all, Heine's innovative interpretations of the *Blue Cliff Record* will benefit scholars studying the fields of religion, literature, philosophy, and history."

Another book on the *kōan* tradition, *Like Cats and Dogs*, Heine's detailed study of various versions of the so-called Mu *Kōan*, which inquires as to whether or not a dog has Buddha-nature, broke ground in the field of *kōan* studies. According to a review, "Heine's done it again—produced a fine piece of scholarship on a really important topic for Zen practice, provides many juicy historical tidbits and context, a fine sampling of original sources (this time including some material from the Korean tradition—often overlooked in Zen studies, it seems to me) some translated here for the first time, and advances a provocative revisionist theory of the history of Zen while also rolling some inspired Dōgen study into the mix."

Another main feature of Heine's publications involves his numerous edited works, including two main series, which illustrate his approach to building bridges and forging collaborations by thoughtfully highlighting the scholarship of numerous colleagues at various stages of their career. The first series is a set of four books Heine edited and partially translated by the eminent modern Japanese philosopher of Zen, Masao Abe. Abe's book of essays, *A Study of Dōgen*, has long been a standard text used in classrooms. The second series is a group of five books

co-edited with Dale Wright, covering diverse dimensions of Zen *kōans*, texts, institutions, rituals, and teachers. Many of these works are cited frequently by eminent scholars in the field. Other edited books include *Buddhism in the Modern World* (co-edited with Charles Prebish), *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives* (co-edited with Heine's doctoral mentor, Charles Wei-Hsun Fu), which includes a contribution by Nobel Laureate Oe Kenzaburo, and *Zen and Material Culture* (co-edited with Pamela Winfield). A review by Fabio Rambelli has this to say: "*Zen and Material Culture* is a welcome addition to the growing arena of material studies of Japanese religions... by directly engaging the material culture of Zen Buddhism in multiple forms, this book is an important contribution to the study of Zen and Japanese culture. It can be used productively in the classroom, both in undergraduate and graduate courses, and it will surely generate further investigations."

Furthermore, Heine has published several innovative monographs on diverse topics that relate Zen or Japanese religion to modern Asian and/or Western society. His book, *White Collar Zen*, dealing with professional strategies for advancement, garnered much attention from the popular press, and was reviewed by the *Harvard Business Review*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and other major outlets. His *Sacred High City and Sacred Low City: A Tale of Religious Sites in Two Tokyo Neighborhoods*, examining temples and shrines in modern urban settings, is, according to a reviewer, "undoubtedly an important contribution to scholarship on Japanese religiosity, and will provide food for thought for both researchers and students of Japanese studies, but it will also appeal to the general public. The author narrates his walks around the Akasaka and Inarichō neighborhoods in a way that might well be replicated by the reader, and the book's maps, pictures and detailed descriptions of the religious sites themselves, their history and function nowadays provide a deluxe and highly documented guidebook to Tokyo's Sacred High City and Sacred Low City."

We must also not forget Heine's *Bargainin' for Salvation: Bob Dylan, A Zen Master?*, which was positively reviewed and led to numerous speaking opportunities, including one at the opening of the Bob Dylan Center in Tulsa that holds the 2016 Noble Laureate for Literature's ample archives. A review from *The Examiner* commented, "In *Bargainin'*, Heine...interprets the oeuvre of Dylan's career through a Zen Buddhist perspective and includes but digs much, much deeper than Dylan's obvious Buddhist influences—the references in songs and interviews, his travels to Japan, his kinship with Allen Ginsberg and other Beat writers who were involved in Zen practice—by presenting Dylan's entire career trajectory as a demonstration of attainment of the 'Middle Way' in Buddhist teaching, or the avoidance of all extremes and the refraining from opposing positions." The *Library Journal* observed, "Heine offers a fresh look at Dylan's spiritual side and clearly demonstrates his mastery of Zen Buddhism as well as Dylanology. His book deserves to stand next to other studies of Dylan and religion, such as Stephen Webb's *Dylan Redeemed: From Highway 61 to Saved* and Scott Marshall's *Restless Pilgrim: The Spiritual Journey of Bob Dylan*."

To the extent that Steven Heine has built his stellar career and produced his admirable scholarship in the past quarter of a century as a faculty member at FIU, it behooves us to highlight his many achievements at that very institution. Heine received numerous grants from prestigious agencies that have helped build the Asian Studies Program at FIU with nearly 150 undergraduate majors, several hundred minors, and an M.A. degree that has averaged eight graduations per year, most of whom he mentored, plus two joint PhD programs. The grants he received seeded six full-time faculty positions, including three in Asian languages, resulting in a vigorous academic unit with student demand further leading to a robust group of more than fifteen faculty. Heine has organized the annual Southern Japan Seminar, an interdisciplinary conference on Japanese studies held on FIU's campus. In 2006, he was awarded the Kauffman Entrepreneurship Professors Award in FIU's Global Entrepreneurship Center housed in the College of Business Administration. This resulted in various research projects involving graduate students, several conferences, and a new seminar offered on Asian Cultural Values in Business. For many years, Heine has also led professional development K-12 teacher workshops for the National Consortium for Teaching About Asia project held at FIU and has worked closely with hundreds of schoolteachers in Miami-Dade and South Florida.

Throughout the years at FIU, Heine's teaching and mentoring has included but not been limited to topics on Zen or Japanese religion, as he has trained students in many interdisciplinary subfields of Asian Studies involving the arts, humanities, and social sciences. As of this writing, among Heine's former students are several faculty teaching at various institutions in the U.S. and abroad, doctoral candidates at Brown University, Guangzhou University, University of California at Santa Barbara, University of Michigan, and Waseda University, JET Program awardees teaching in Japan, administrators at the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens in South Florida, State Department interns or agents, and many others who have gained success in various academic and professional fields ranging from law and engineering to translation and travel consultation.

In 2019, Heine received a visit from one of his former B.A. students, Tony Vega, who is legally blind but travelled and studied extensively in Japan before settling in Hawaii. Vega interviewed and featured Heine's story in Episode 11 of the Japan Station podcast published on the "Japankyo" website. Heine spoke at length about his book *Sacred High City, Sacred Low City*, commenting further on the history of Tokyo and its surrounding areas. Another noteworthy example of interaction involves one of Heine's M.A. graduates from 2007, Zhiying Qian, who went on to earn her Ph.D. in East Asian Languages at the University of Illinois and became an assistant professor in East Asian linguistics at Florida State University. Dr. Qian visited FIU in 2018 to present her research and expressed that her dedication in the field was greatly influenced by Heine's mentorship.

The foregoing impressions of Steve Heine's multifarious accomplishments, however laconic or even fugitive, should convey the fact that he and his work have left a huge legacy at FIU and the scholarly community in the south Florida area. His academic endeavours and program-building efforts have exerted great influences

and benefitted all, faculty and students alike, who work on the religions and cultures of Japan and China. The significant growth of the Asian Studies Program at FIU would not have been possible without his leadership, entrepreneurship, and commitment. A seven-year program review written by Morten Schlütter of the University of Iowa who visited FIU in 2017 as an external consultant stated: "Asian Studies has been highly successful for more than a decade in developing strong interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate academic programs, under the accomplished leadership of Steven Heine. Dr. Heine has been remarkably effective in getting external grant support for the ASP and has been able to expand the number of faculty teaching in the interdisciplinary program considerably, along with carrying out a number of scholarly and community engagement activities that has greatly raised the profile of the program." Another observer commented, "Seeing what you have done also gives me hope and I just wanted to reach out and let you know that I appreciate it. I think that building an Asian Studies program is nothing but an act of love."

To duly recognize and honor the scholarly accomplishments and influences of Steven Heine, no celebratory academic conventions are more appropriate and solemn than a purposefully curated *Festschrift*. Hence this tribute volume. To be sure, such a tome must be both retrospective and prospective in purpose and intent. As a valedictory, it acknowledges the foundational work that Heine has forged and the inspiration that he has sparked. But to truly honor his scholarship, we, in the process of paying homage, must also be his interlocutors and perhaps even critics. In engaging in dialogues with his multidimensional works, we, too, generate research that is complementary and original. The chapters in this *Festschrift*, armed with their own takes on Zen/Chan, and adorned by the weighty academic paraphernalia of notes and citations, are thus inaugurals that use Heine's work as the point of departure while making their own interventions with the various facets of Buddhist traditions.

It needs no belaboring that Zen/Chan, as a field of study, is by no means a homogeneous totality. Our volume aims precisely to showcase its many-splendored manifestations, and to appropriate the much-used but apt Zen/Chan metaphor of the root-and-branch, we give it a bipartite structure. The first part is composed of essays that address the many historical iterations of Zen/Chan, while the second comprises pieces that ponder the tradition's contemporary relevance and resonance.

**John Tucker's** "Searching for the Historical Bodhidharma in Goblet Words," takes us back to the Bodhidharma, the first patriarch, and examines the religious, philosophical, and literary allusions central to accounts of the transmission of the Chan (Zen) patriarchy from Bodhidharma to Huike, the second patriarch. Scholars recognize that details about the life and times of the first patriarch, Bodhidharma, might have a kernel of historical credibility, even though most of the more striking details are legendary, faith-statements issuing from within a community of adherents intent on creating spiritual biographies for the designated founding figures of Chan. Much the same, Tucker suggests, occurred with tales of the supposed founder of Daoism, Laozi, often though surely apocryphally referred to as the author of the *Daodejing*. Rather than a comprehensive search for the historical Bodhidharma, his



paper focuses on the well-known account of the transmission of the Chan patriarchy from Bodhidharma to Huike, suggesting that it was a reappropriation of an episode in the Inner Chapters of the ancient Daoist philosophical work, the *Zhuangzi*, wherein Zhuang Zhou, its author, reconceptualized the philosophical relationship between Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, and his favorite disciple, Yan Hui, for the sake of reimagining Confucius and Yan Hui as Daoist master and disciple engaged in their own transmission of the Dao. Tucker claims that the *Zhuangzi*'s Daoist reconceptualization of the Confucius-Yan Hui relationship exemplified its overall theory of language described in Chap. 27 of that text and focused on its notion of "goblet words" (*zhiyan*), or "words that are not words." Tucker further suggests that through this Chan reappropriation, the new form of Buddhism wove some of its core foundational claims in deeply with genealogies, philosophical and otherwise, of Confucianism and Daoism, thus making its teachings all the more deeply rooted in Chinese cultural traditions even as it somewhat irreverently suggested that Bodhidharma and Huike were religio-philosophical reincarnations of Confucius and Yan Hui.

**Mario Poceski's** "Chan and the Routinization of Charisma in Chinese Buddhism," offers additional insight into the early growth of Chan in China by examining the larger developmental trajectory of the tradition of through the conceptual lens of Max Weber's (1864–1920) theory of the routinization of charisma, which will help ascertain some of the major factors that shaped the historical growth and transformation of Chan during the main phases of its historical development, especially from the Tang (618–907) to the Song era (960–1279). As Poceski tells us, during the formative stage, there was a plethora of approaches to Chan doctrine and practice, and Chan was a widely diffused movement led by charismatic monks that on the whole didn't adhere to a rigid orthodoxy or narrow soteriological outlook. In contrast, as Poceski contends, by the Song era, Chan matured into a state-sanctioned orthodoxy with a narrow conception of religious authority, centered around an institutionalized model of spiritual lineage, fixed technique of contemplative practice, codified rules for monastic life, and authoritative canon of (semi-)sacred writings.

**Morten Schlütter** tackles a most important *sūtras* in his chapter, "The Platform Sūtra and Its Role in Chinese Zen Buddhism." The *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* is one of the most famous texts in all of Chinese Buddhism, and a signature scripture of the Chan/Zen tradition. But what makes the *Platform Sūtra* especially unique among Chinese Buddhist texts is the fact that it is extant in a number of editions. First created around 780 as a polemic document, it appeared in several substantially different versions over the following half millennia and eventually emerged as an orthodox statement of Chan Buddhism. Thus, the *Platform Sūtra* is not just one single, stable text, but rather a dynamic textual entity, the longest of which is almost twice as long as the shortest. In this essay, Schlütter engages with the *Platform Sūtra* as a window into the early formation of Chan, and as a kind of laboratory where a number of crucial changes and developments in Chan Buddhism can be observed over a period of more than 500 years. He shows how the *Platform Sūtra* was crucial, in many ways, for the development of Chinese

Chan, but also how it was sidelined and how later editors had to struggle to keep it relevant to mainstream Chan.

**Dale Wright** takes us to Japan. His "Eloquence and Silence: How Dōgen's dharma match with *Vimalakīrti* Turns Out," juxtaposes positions adopted by Dōgen on the skillful, liberating function of language and the possibility of its full eclipse in the deep silence of zazen with those same themes in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. Focusing directly on passages from Dōgen's *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (*Shōbōgenzō*) in which he criticizes or defends Vimalakīrti, especially Vimalakīrti's silent refusal to join the other bodhisattvas in addressing the theme of non-duality, Wright finds Dogen circling back behind his critique to revive the importance of its contrary, thus maintaining the kind of strong interconnection or non-dualism between eloquent language and non-language that we find fully manifest in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. Wright claims that it is perhaps not surprising that two of the most highly acclaimed literary texts in the history of Buddhism overlap in their abilities to question the adequacy of language while at the same time employing language to brilliant effect in communicating Buddhist insight with fine-tuned literary precision. His essay works back and forth between these two texts to analyze their positions on eloquent speech and the Buddhist refusal to allow words to replace mindful awareness.

**Taigen Dan Leighton**, in his "The Relationship of Dōgen's Vision of Nature with His Practice of Devotion and Faith," informs us that in one of his masterworks, *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen's essay *Keisei Sanshoku*, "The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains," commences with a reference to a poem by the great Song dynasty poet Su Dongpo:

The sound of valley streams are Buddha's long broad tongue.

The shape of the mountains are no other than his unconditioned body.

[Realizing this,] eighty-four thousand verses came forth throughout the night.

At some later time, how could I say anything about this?

Leighton explores how Dōgen uses this verse to show the relationship of the natural world of mountains and rivers to the structure and rhythm of sacred awakening practice. Dōgen cites several traditional Zen teaching stories (*kōans*) thereafter in the essay to further exemplify the capacity of the phenomenal world to support awakening. The last sections of *Keisei Sanshoku* include the elements of a chant in the liturgy of the Sōtō Zen school that was founded by Dōgen, *Eihei Kōso Hotsuganmon*, "Dōgen's Words on Arousing the Vow." This text speaks of the importance of faith, repentance, and confession, and ends, "This is the one color of true practice, of the true mind of faith, of the true body of faith." Leighton also refers to other *Shōbōgenzō* essays. The "Self-Fulfillment Samadhi" section of the essay *Bendōwa*, "Talk on Engaging the Way," describes the meaning for Dōgen of zazen, his primary practice of meditation. He emphasizes the intimate connection and mutual guidance between practitioners and the environment, even proclaiming that when one person displays the Buddha position and attitude with whole body-mind even briefly, then all the space of the environment awakens. Another

Shōbōgenzō essay, *Sansuikyō*, “The Mountains and Water Sutra” further describes the spiritual power and impact of the natural landscape, and its deep relationship to devoted practice. Leighton also refers to the commentary by the American Zen pioneer, Gary Snyder, in his books *The Practice of the Wild* and *Mountains and Waters Without End*.

**On-cho Ng** explores Chan’s interaction with Confucianism in his “Theorizing the Chan-Confucian Encounter in Late Imperial China: the Chinese Cultural *Habitus* and the Buddhist *Doxa*.” The paper examines the question of the role of Buddhism, specifically, Chan/Zen, in the Confucian intellectual discourse. The fact that Chan, as a predominant Sinitic Buddhist sect, exerted enormous influences on the origination and development of Neo-Confucianism is commonly acknowledged and generally well-known. Ng aims to theorize the fraught relationship between the two religio-philosophical traditions through the intervention of Pierre Bourdieu’s descriptive-analytic ideas of “*habitus*” (a continuous system of ideational and ideological dispositions constituted historically) and “*doxa*,” (the cultural realities that are taken for granted, consciously or subconsciously). Ng argues that Chan, while being branded as a heterodoxy at odds with the Confucian orthodoxy, was integrally and functionally a part of the Confucian cultural capital. Their respective doctrinal clarity relied on their self-identification in terms of each other. At the same time that they sought to negate and denigrate each other, they became mutually reinforced.

**Charles Prebish’s** “The Zen Explosion in America: From Before the Pre-boomers to After the Zoomers” ushers in the second part of our volume on the contemporary expressions of Zen, explaining and describing the remarkable growth of Zen in America. Prebish tells us that when he was a young Buddhist Studies professor in the early 1970s, he was always excited when one of his students would raise an interesting and probing question about Buddhism. It convinced him that there was a new and growing interest in the Buddhist tradition throughout the world. As such, in one of his early classes, a very bright and forward-looking student raised his hand and asked, “What do you think about the Zen Explosion in America?” That question fueled his career-long inquiry regarding the development of the Zen tradition on North American soil. Beginning with the World Parliament of Religions, which was held at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, and was the critical event foreshadowing the entry of Zen Buddhism to the United States, Prebish’s chapter explores the various “stages” of development of Zen, from the entry of Sōyen Shaku to the current development of all the various schools, sects, and communities currently flourishing on the American scene. It documents some of the leading early Japanese Zen practitioners such as Taizan Maezumi Rōshi and Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi, as well as highlighting some of the foremost early American Zen teachers, most notably Philip Kapleau and Robert Aitken. It reflects on “Beat Zen” and “Square Zen,” and also presents a short case study of a very popular and influential Zen community: Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, New York. It concludes with a commentary on the future, “zooming” ahead to what might be anticipated in the coming decades.

**Richard Jaffe's** "The Role of *Zazen* in D. T. Suzuki's Zen" informs us that although Suzuki Daisetsu (aka, Daisetz Teitarō Suzuki, 1870–1966) was one of the most prominent and effective proponents of Zen Buddhism globally during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, for much of his career, he wrote relatively little, particularly in English, about the practice of seated meditation (*zazen*). In his public lectures as well, he rarely went into detail about the role of *zazen* practice in understanding Zen. This has led many who have written about Suzuki to underplay the significance of *zazen* practice in Suzuki's presentation of Zen. Here, Jaffe examines Suzuki's writings, primarily in Japanese, in which he details the use of formal *zazen* practice for the cultivation of moral character and enhancing religious understanding, with an eye towards analyzing Suzuki's shifting understanding of that pillar of Zen Buddhism.

**Albert Welter's** "Zen and Japanese Culture: Nativist Influences of Suzuki Daisetsu's Interpretation of Zen" offers another analysis of Suzuki's interpretation of Zen. Welter reiterates Suzuki's (more commonly known in the West as D.T. Suzuki) indisputable influence over modern Zen throughout the twentieth century. Indeed, Suzuki has been the subject of pointed commentary from the 1990s. Many have noted the correspondence between Suzuki's interpretation of Zen and the *Nihonjin ron* (Japanism) agenda of the Kyoto School. Others have pointed to the influence of William James on Suzuki's understanding of religion and Zen. While these approaches have positioned Suzuki's interpretation of Zen against threats to Japan's cultural autonomy from the West, Welter's study also situates the discussion as a rearticulation of notions of Japanese culture formed in *Kokugaku* (Nativist) agendas of the Edo period. His contention is that Suzuki's interpretation of Zen not only parallels post-Meiji Japanese ideals articulated in Kyoto School rhetoric, broadly conceived, but also reflects substantially the pre-Meiji origins of these ideals expounded in Tokugawa era Nativist discourse. Further, Welter considers the extent to which Suzuki's interpretation of Zen may be considered a product conditioned by this Japanese cultural discourse rather than a precisely Zen inspired agenda.

**James Shields**, in his chapter, "Zen and the Art of Resistance," ponders Zen as a form of political activism. He points out that in the Western and oftentimes Asian imagination, Buddhism generally—and Zen more specifically—is understood as being resolutely disengaged, attaching itself to a form of awakening that is not only, as the classical phrase has it, "beyond words and letters," but in the modern summation by D. T. Suzuki, perfectly compatible with any and all forms of political and economic "dogmatism," whether capitalist, communist, socialist, or fascist. Of course, as numerous scholars have shown over the past century, on the level of historical actuality, Buddhist and Zen teachers and institutions have long participated in (usually hegemonic) economic and political structures. The scholarship on Buddhist and Zen "social history" is large and growing. And yet, according to Shields, much less attention has been paid to the philosophical and doctrinal sources for political activism and, in particular, resistance to prevailing economic and political structures. With the possible exception of Buddhist-inspired peasant revolts of medieval and early modern periods China and Japan, the first sustained

efforts to develop an “alternative” form of Buddhist engagement arose in early twentieth century-Japan, with a number of groups associated with New Buddhism. While most of the New Buddhist were doctrinally influenced by Shin (Pure Land) and Nichiren teachings, several currents of New Buddhism correlate with classical Zen teachings, and thus provide possible foundations for a theory of “Zen resistance” —one that, Shields argues, complements the more recent Zen-inspired movement known as Critical Buddhism.

**Michaela Mross**, “‘Can You Hear the Great Sound of the Holy Footsteps?’ A Case Study of the 650th Death Anniversary of Gasan Jōseki,” examines Sōtō Zen’s effort of continuing consolidation via the act of memorialization. In 2015, Sōtō Zen clerics commemorated the 650th grand death anniversary of Gasan Jōseki (1276–1366), the second abbot of the head temple Sōjiji. Despite not being a widely known eminent monk, Gasan was highly influential and was responsible for establishing the institutional system that made Sōjiji one of the most powerful Sōtō temples in Japan. For this reason, monks of the Sōjiji’s branch of Sōtō Zen have commemorated grand memorial services for Gasan every fifty years since his death. These memorial services used to be conducted in a purely monastic setting. However, in 2015 Sōtō monks used Gasan’s grand death anniversary as an opportunity to also promote Sōtō Zen and Sōjiji to a wider audience by means of modern media such as film, and internet. Additionally, they commissioned a new piece for orchestra and sutra chanting that celebrated the famous “Gasan Way” that Gasan was supposed to have run every morning when he was abbot at both Sōjiji and nearby Yōkōji. Based on field-work at Sōjiji, Mross studies Gasan’s 650<sup>th</sup> death anniversary, examining how Sōtō monks promoted the memorial service. How was Gasan’s life and the history of Sōjiji narrated and remembered? What elements were adopted from previous death anniversaries and what elements were new? What sectarian agenda stood behind the celebration and promotion of Gasan’s 650th death anniversary? By analyzing these aspects, Mross argues that grand death anniversaries are not only times of remembrance but also provide an opportunity to create a thriving future for a particular Buddhist school or branch.

**Paula Arai**, in her “Sōtō Zen Women’s Wisdom in Practice,” explores Sōtō Zen from the vantage point of women’s wisdom, which is manifest in both monastic and domestic spheres. Ethnographically driven research has been essential to learn about them, for even textual materials about them are rarely catalogued in libraries or included in collected works purporting to be “complete.” Nuns’ activities and contributions stretch back to Dōgen’s time. They gained prominence in the institutional structure of the sect in the early part of the twentieth century as they changed the sect practices to be in accord with Dōgen’s teachings on equality in the Dharma. They founded their own training monasteries to cultivate nuns and won the right to have official recognition in teaching ranks and temple leadership on par with their male counterparts. Their effectiveness in addressing these issues was based on their depth of understanding Dōgen’s teachings—especially that all can actualize Buddha-nature, including women—rigorous discipline, and serious motivation to ameliorate suffering. In domestic contexts, women’s influence is imparted through embodying the teachings in daily life, imbuing households with

Dharma in action. Not unlike monastic practice, cooking and cleaning are rich opportunities to practice in the home. The rhythms of family life, however, are often unpredictable. They require acute awareness to respond to the vicissitudes of emotions and health needs of a family, which can be painful, demanding, and messy. Giving birth, raising children, caring for the sick, and ushering transitions into death are hallmarks of domestic life. Arai describes how women creatively generate healing practices inspired by Zen teachings that weave wisdom into the fabric of a home.

**Pamela Winfield**, in her "To Tame an Ox or to Catch a Fish: A Zen Reading of *The Old Man and the Sea*," examines the traditional exegesis of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures and use them as a hermeneutical lense through which to reread Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Since at least the twelfth century in China, the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures have famously illustrated the process of awakening the mind through zazen seated meditation. The visual parable of ten circular frames sequentially shows how a young boy-novice gradually tames the wild bull of the mind (frames 1–6), realizes its fundamental emptiness (frames 7–8), and then re-emerges from the rigors of the experience, universally recognized as a great Zen master who compassionately helps the next boy-novice along his path (frames 9–10). Arai first presents the traditional exegesis of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures and their accompanying verses. She demonstrates that this series not only symbolizes the process and outcome of calm and insight meditation (J. *shikan*; Skt. *samatha/vispassana*), but also experientially indicates the three-fold process that asserts, negates, and reaffirms the self in and as the world. As Dōgen states, "To study the self is to forget the self; to forget the self is to be confirmed by all dharmas." In addition to this traditional reading of the series, however, the second half of Arai's essay offers a new and highly original application of the Ten-Ox-Herding motif to Ernest Hemingway's well-known literary classic, *The Old Man and the Sea*. This 1952 novella offers a similar transformative account of capturing and harnessing an equally powerful yet unruly creature that likewise has a mind of its own. It too describes its utter and complete decimation (in this case, by sharks), and the old man's final return to the other shore, where the boy-narrator recognizes his unquestioned mastery despite seeing only the skeletal traces of his struggle. Arai posits that reading Hemingway's work through the lens of Zen's ox-herding pictures provides a fresh perspective on both the book and the Buddha way.

**Steven Odin** directly engages with Steven Heine's interpretation of Zen in his "Steven Heine on the Religio-aesthetic Dimension of Zen Buddhism." Since Heine has been so prolific and written on so many diverse topics, Odin acknowledges that he can highlight only a few of Heine's important contributions to Zen and Buddhist scholarship. Odin points out that starting with *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dogen* (1985), Heine argues that both Heidegger and Dogen describe the dynamism, nonsubstantiality and impermanence of being-time. But Odin has argued that in this very important early work on east-west comparative philosophy, Heine should have given more emphasis to the element of radical discontinuity in Dogen's phenomenological analysis of being-time and impermanence-Buddha-nature, as well as his existential analysis of

authenticity/enlightenment through mindfulness of impermanence, nothingness and death at each moment. In Odin's view, in *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow* (2008), Heine endeavours to navigate between two very different streams of Zen Buddhist scholarship. Heine posits two competing approaches to Zen: Traditional Zen Narrative (TZN) versus Historical and Cultural Criticism (HCC). Heine claims that the romanticized Zen aestheticism of D. T. Suzuki and his followers are examples of those to be classified as TZN or "traditional Zen narrative," whereas HCC or historical and cultural criticism includes their antagonists. Heine makes a major contribution to Zen Buddhist scholarship by attempting to both clarify and then reconcile these two otherwise conflicting approaches of TZN versus HCC. Odin then discusses Heine's book focusing on the famous Mu *kōan*, entitled *Like Cats and Dogs: Contesting the Mu Kōan in Zen Buddhism* (2014). The Mu *kōan* has emerged as the single most popular *kōan* in the history of Zen Buddhism and therefore warrants special consideration. Heine analyzes the history, meaning and significance of the Mu *kōan* in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and Western traditions of Linji/Rinzai Zen Buddhism, also showing the religio-aesthetic function of the Mu *kōan* as well as its use in artistic media such as poetry, literature and film. Finally, Odin addresses Heine's *The Zen Poetry of Dogen* (1969) and *A Blade of Grass: Poetry and Aesthetics of Dogen Zen* (1989), in which Heine analyzes the much-neglected religio-aesthetic context of Dogen's Zen metaphysics of being-time. Moreover, Heine translates and interprets the major poems of Dogen, showing how Dogen's Zen theory and practice are condensed into poetic verse. Dogen's Zen metaphysics describing the wholeness, totality and fullness of being-time in the flux of impermanence is crystallized by such evocative poetic images as "moonlight in a dewdrop." Dogen's poetry, which itself reflects Zen philosophy of being-time, is deeply influenced from the canons of taste that emerged in the Japanese religio-aesthetic tradition, especially such literary and aesthetic categories of *mono no aware* or the sadness and beauty of perishability, and *yugen* or the beauty of perishability, and *yugen* or the beauty and mystery of depth.

**Jin Park**, in her "Authentic Time and the Political: Steven Heine on Dōgen, Heidegger, and Bob Dylan," offers us another direct engagement with Steven Heine's scholarship by discussing the existential dimensions of Zen Buddhism with reference to Heine's reading of Dogen, Heidegger, and Bob Dylan. What do Dōgen (1200–1253), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and Bob Dylan (1941–) have in common? What kind of philosophical and religious arguments and meanings can we draw from this collection of lives and ideas? These three individuals include a highly complex Zen Master in premodern Japan, a sophisticated German philosopher who had a significant impact on continental philosophy, and an American singer and songwriter especially known for his engagement with the civil rights and anti-war movements. According to Park, Heine's understanding of Zen Buddhism enables him to bring together these seemingly unrelated lives and ways of producing meaning, opening up a possibility for different approaches to philosophy to come together. By doing so, as Park argues, he also offers diverse ways of understanding Zen Buddhist tradition in our times.

In sum, the contributions in this tribute volume look back in admiration and awe at the intellectual horizons that Steven Heine, a towering figure in Zen/Chan studies, has developed. But their authors also seek to build on the grounds that have been broken, thereby inaugurating new works on this enormously important religio-cultural tradition. The academic ritual of assembling a *liber amicorum* is based on the presumption that sterling scholarship should be honored by a conscientious counterpart. Therefore, the time to enact this ritual is now, as Steven Heine gradually eases himself onto the many-fold path of retirement. To be sure, he will continue to have much to say to us, but we, as acolytes and colleagues, want to have a direct dialogue with what he has said in his massive oeuvre to date. So, in the *festive* spirit of a *Festschrift*, let this tribute, at once a valedictory and inaugural, be the textual encapsulation of the confabulatory voices of Heine and his interlocutors, which sound out, not so wordlessly, Zen/Chan-inspired messages.

**Charles S. Prebish** held the Charles Redd Chair in Religious Studies at Utah State University from 2007 until 2010, and also served as Director of the Religious Studies Program. He came to Utah State University following more than thirty-five years on the faculty of the Pennsylvania State University. He now has emeritus status in both universities. He has published two dozen books and nearly one hundred scholarly articles and chapters. His books *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* (1975) and *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America* (1999) are considered classic volumes in Buddhist Studies. Dr. Prebish is the leading pioneer in the establishment of the study of Western Buddhism as a sub-discipline in Buddhist Studies. In 1993 he held the Visiting Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary, and in 1997 was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation National Humanities Fellowship for research at the University of Toronto. Dr. Prebish has been an officer in the International Association of Buddhist Studies, and was co-founder of the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religion. In 1994, he co-founded the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, which was the first online peer-reviewed journal in the field of Buddhist Studies; and in 1996, co-founded the Routledge "Critical Studies in Buddhism" series. In 2005, he was honored with a "festschrift" volume by his colleagues titled *Buddhist Studies from India to America: Essays in Honor of Charles S. Prebish*.

**On-cho Ng** is Professor of History, Asian Studies, and Philosophy, and Former Head of the Asian Studies Department at the Pennsylvania State University. Primarily a specialist in late imperial Chinese intellectual history, he has published extensively on a wide range of topics, such as Confucian hermeneutics, religiosity, ethics, and historiography. His books include *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism in the Early Qing*, *Mirroring the Past*, and *The Imperative of Understanding*. His dozens of articles have appeared in major outlets such as *Journal of Chinese Religions*, *Dao*, *Philosophy East and West*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *Journal of World History*, and the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. He is co-editor of the Book Series on Chinese intellectual history published by National Taiwan University, and serves as associate editor of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. He is also the Vice-President of the International Association for Yijing Studies (Beijing), and sits on the editorial boards of several academic publications.

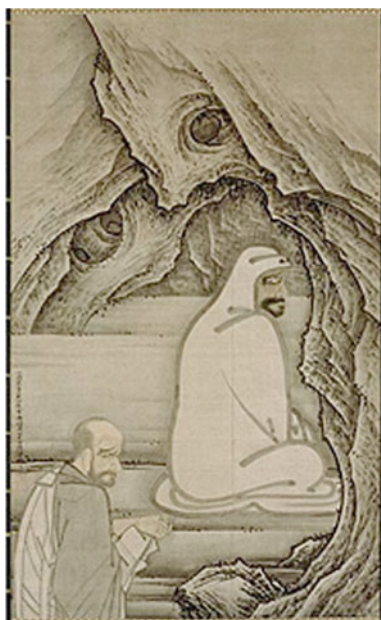


# **Zen Roots**

# Searching for the Historical Bodhidharma in Goblet Words



John A. Tucker



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## 1 Introduction

Sesshū's 雪舟 (1420–1506) masterwork in portraiture—*Huikē's Severed Arm*<sup>1</sup> (*Eka danpi zu* 慧可断臂图)—depicts the first patriarch of Chán, Bodhidharma<sup>2</sup> (ca. sixth century), emerging from meditation, bulging eyes rolled to the jagged ceiling of a cave on Mount Sōng 嵩山 where he reportedly practiced “wall meditation” (*bì guān* 壁觀). Sesshū is best known for his landscapes minimizing humanity while capturing the beauty of emptiness enveloping mountains and water. Yet with this portrait of Bodhidharma and his would-be disciple Huikē 慧可 (J: Eka, ca. 485–ca. 555), the 77-year-old painter rendered facial expressions realistically, infusing life and feeling into one of the most surreal, even grotesque moments in early Chán lore: just after Huikē's presumed amputation of his left arm and just as the reputed first patriarch turned his gaze back toward the self-amputee. With frontal encounter—yet to happen in the painting—Bodhidharma reportedly recognized Huikē as a man ready for discipleship, and shortly thereafter, destined to become his successor, the second patriarch of Chán.

Sesshū's realism makes the encounter seem rock-hard historical. Admittedly, Huikē's severed left arm is stylized, bloodless and too cleanly cut. And Sesshū brushed two cavities—arguably Zen circles (*ensō* 円相)—in the upper reaches of the cave. Construed as ocular allusions, they suggest an additional hidden-in-full-view presence, the surreal face of Zen personified as glaring-eyed cavern, itself meditating on the meditator known for his wall-meditation practice, engulfing him and Huikē, foreshadowing imminent self-realization. Otherwise, the painting breathes life and history onto paper, making the moment seem historically demonstrable, and as solid, true, and substantially moving as ink and paper might render it. Apart from the cavities, there is not a hint of emptiness.

Contemporary scholars assess the encounter differently, concluding that while there might be historical crumbs, most of the striking details are legendary, even ideological faith—statements issuing from a community of adherents intent on creating a dramatic spiritual biography—hagiography—for the designated founding figure and then from that, a paradigmatic lineage of Chán orthodoxy. D. T. Suzuki early on commented that “there must have been some necessity to invent such a [transmission] legend” to and from Bodhidharma for the “authorization” of Chán as a Chinese Buddhist teaching in competition with others. Suzuki added that early Chán transmission lore “is so mixed with legends that no reliable facts can be gathered from it.” Regarding Huikē's self-amputation, Suzuki judged, “the story is more or less fictitious.”<sup>3</sup> Concurring, John R. McRae has observed,

The image of Bodhidharma that has been transmitted to us is the result of a long hagiographical process, and it is not ‘biographical’ in some sense of being a more-or-less ‘accurate’ depiction of the man's life. Rather, it is the idealized image of a sage.... It is ultimately impossible to reconstruct any original or accurate biography of the man....<sup>4</sup>

Bernard Faure has even parodied futile efforts to establish the facts of Bodhidharma's life by relating, “In the case of Bodhidharma, there is not even a skeleton—only one sandal left, according to legend, in an empty grave.”<sup>5</sup>

The legendary, fictitious, and even patently fabricated lore about Bodhidharma and Huikē is hardly unique. Much the same applies to the supposed founder of Daoism, Lǎozǐ 老子, often though apocryphally credited with authoring the *Dàodéjīng* 道德經.<sup>6</sup> Even with the sage of China, Confucius (Kǒngfūzǐ 孔夫子, 551–479 BCE), biography and apocrypha overlap. Early, somewhat credible, quasi-historical accounts appear in Sīmǎ Qiān's 司馬遷 (c. 145–c. 86 BCE) *Historical Records* (*Shǐjì*).<sup>7</sup> Yet wildly fictitious and, for the purposes of this chapter, far more relevant accounts of Confucius surface in the ancient Daoist text, the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子.

Cognizant that the historical Bodhidharma is nowhere to be found, this chapter seeks to offer insights into the literary and religio-philosophical origins of the “mature” Bodhidharma legend<sup>8</sup> featuring the encounter with Huikē that Sesshū depicted, adding thereby some textual insights if not biography itself in relation to the otherwise illusory search for the historical Bodhidharma. The chapter suggests that the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter structurally reconfigures an episode in the “Inner Chapters” of the *Zhuāngzǐ* wherein Zhuāng Zhōu 莊周 (c. 369–c. 286 BCE), its author,<sup>9</sup> honorifically known as Zhuāngzǐ 莊子, reinterpreted the philosophical relationship between Confucius and his most promising yet tragically short-lived disciple, Yán Huí 顏回 (521–481 BCE),<sup>10</sup> for the sake of reimagining the two erstwhile Confucians as Daoist master and disciple engaged in a transmission of Daoist teachings and practice. Analogously, the Chán reconceptualization of this Zhuāngzǐ episode elevated Bodhidharma and Huikē, supplanting Confucius and Yán Huí as paradigmatic exemplars of a preferred form of religio-philosophical thought and practice. In certain respects, then, the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter highlighted Bodhidharma as the new Confucius, and Huikē, as a longer-lived if self-mortificatory Yán Huí in a transmission narrative coopting, sublating, and satirizing the earlier one in the *Zhuāngzǐ*.

Interpreting the Daoist-Chán structural dialectic from within Chinese thinking rather than by appeal to European theory, the chapter suggests that the *Zhuāngzǐ*'s reconceptualization of the Confucius/Yán Huí relationship exemplifies what that work calls “goblet words” (*zhī yán* 卮言), words that are “no-words” (*wú yán* 無言), or, more positively, words that blend (*hé* 和) the dialectically rich plenitude of the *dào*, harmonizing all contraries within the perspective of heaven. Arguably, Chán hagiography, by its reconfiguration of the structural dynamic in the *Zhuāngzǐ*'s Confucius/Yán Huí episode, itself bought into the goblet-word mode of discourse. The emerging hagiography thus entwined its core foundational claims deeply with philosophical practices, genealogies, and language strategies that already positioned Confucianism and Daoism dialectically, and in doing so made Chán teachings all the more akin to Chinese thinking even as it iconoclastically hinted that Bodhidharma and Huikē were religio-philosophical sublations of Confucius and Yán Huí.<sup>11</sup>

In the process, Bodhidharma and Huikē emerged as structural doppelgangers of Confucius and Yán Huí, duals yet ones simultaneously engaged in a dharma duel<sup>12</sup> with the Confucian-then-Daoist pair, with Chán hagiography at once sinking Chinese roots and making a stand as the dharma contest victor. In highlighting these

religio-philosophical parallels in literary structure and content, the chapter suggests the relevance of the *Zhuāngzǐ*'s thoughts on language for understanding historical dimensions of Chán discourse, or the lack thereof, about the Bodhidharma/Huikě encounter. Put generously, the famous encounter need not be dismissed by stating the obvious, i.e., that it's historical fabrication, nor need it be cast necessarily as a conflict-driven duel. Instead, it might well be read as an expression of goblet words spilled beyond the confines of the *Zhuāngzǐ* and harmonizing the very beginnings of Chán transmission literature by allowing for overlap and intercourse in religio-philosophical borders, thus revealing more porous traditions than sectarian accounts sometimes claim.

## 2 The Bodhidharma/Huikě Encounter: Structure and Evolution

A survey of the Bodhidharma/Huikě encounter helps establish its most characteristic and defining structural features. Though hardly exhaustive, the texts examined reveal variant renditions of the encounter as well as its resilience within early Chán hagiographies, eventually leading to its mature form.

### 2.1 *Records of the Monasteries of Luòyáng*

First it must be noted that the Bodhidharma/Huikě encounter was not invariable part of accounts of Bodhidharma. An early text, Yáng Xuànzhi's 楊衒之 (d. 555) *Records of the Monasteries of Luòyáng* (*Luòyáng Qiélánjì* 洛陽伽藍記), describes an individual by the name of Bodhidharma (Pútídámó 菩提達磨) as a 150 year-old, non-Chinese monk visiting the Yǒngníngsì 永寧寺, a temple with a relatively new nine-story pagoda. Bodhidharma reportedly thought it "a truly impressive spiritual achievement."<sup>13</sup> This brief passage is noteworthy because it adds a unique detail to the lore, Bodhidharma's visit to the Yǒngníngsì, but otherwise does not broach most of the details included in later narratives. In particular, there is no mention of Huikě, wall meditation, or other signature particulars integral to Bodhidharma lore, leading some to question whether the Bodhidharma referred to was the first patriarch or another with the same name. Whatever the case, *Records of the Monasteries of Luoyang* establishes that not all accounts of Bodhidharma linked him with Huikě.

## 2.2 *Biographies of Eminent Monks, Continued*

Another early source, Dào xuān's 道宣 (596–667) *Biographies of Eminent Monks, Continued* (*Xù gāosēng zhuàn* 續高僧傳, 667), though terse, conveys more of the standard, mature hagiography. Dào xuān notes, for example, that Bodhidharma practiced “Mahāyāna wall meditation” (*dà shèng bì guān* 大乘壁觀).<sup>14</sup> And, the transmission to Huikē is broached but without the drama of self-amputation. Dào xuān relates that at age 40, Huikē met Bodhidharma, described as an Indian śramaṇa (*tiānzhu shāmén* 天竺沙門) who had traveled to Mt. Sōng. Huikē revered Bodhidharma as a man who knew the way, and Bodhidharma in turn “was pleased with Huikē with one glance,” allowing him to become a disciple. Later, when Bodhidharma died, Huikē reportedly buried him by the Luo River. Dào xuān also relates that Bodhidharma handed a copy of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (*Lèng qié jīng* 楞伽經) to Huikē adding that if he practiced its teachings he would cross over to liberation.<sup>15</sup>

Dào xuān does not mention self-amputation but instead remarks that Huikē “encountered thieves who cut off his arm” (*zāo zéi zhuó bì* 遭賊斫臂).<sup>16</sup> Also noteworthy is that Huikē's relationship with Bodhidharma unfolded via mutual recognition, without resistance from the master or self-mortification by the aspiring disciple. Dào xuān recognizes that Huikē had lost an arm but does not posit him cutting it off himself and presenting it as a token to Bodhidharma. Instead, Dào xuān explains that Huikē had been victimized by thieves. It could well be that Dào xuān had the truth, and that Huikē was rendered armless by bandits. Yet later accounts, rather than repeat that Huikē was brutalized, transformed the loss of limb into a deed done by Huikē himself as evidence of his disregard for his physical self and his readiness for *satori*. In any event, the differing accounts suggest that however it happened, Huikē had presumably lost a limb.

## 2.3 *Records of the Dharma–Jewel through the Ages*

Later renditions of Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter emerged legend-laden and intent on establishing the extraordinary if not numinous nature of the pair, thus defining their mature hagiography. Wúzhù's 無住 (714–74) *Records of the Dharma–Jewel through the Ages* (*Lìdài fǎbǎo jì* 歷代法寶記) presents Bodhidharma offering a butcher-block analysis of his followers, one repeated variously in later texts. It notes that Bodhidharma praised Huikē for having “gotten the marrow” (*suǐ* 髓) of his teachings, while others only got the flesh (*ròu* 肉) and bones (*gǔ* 骨).<sup>17</sup> Wúzhù adds that before being accepted as Bodhidharma's disciple, Huikē stood in a blizzard until nearly buried in snow, apparently hoping for Bodhidharma's attention. Finally noticing him, Bodhidharma spoke dismissively, stating, “One who seeks the dharma must not cherish their physical body or their life” (*fū qiú fǎ bù tān qū mìng* 夫求法不貪軀命), implying that Huikē was lacking. Hearing this, Huikē “cut off one arm” (*jié yī bì* 截一臂) “and then white milk flowed” (*nǎi liú bái rǔ* 乃流白乳). Thereupon,

“the Great Teacher” ... silently transmitted his mind’s pledge (*dà shī mò chuán xīn qì* 大師默傳心契) and passed on to him the saffron *kāṣāya* (*jiā shā* 袈裟) robe [of ordination].” Asked if the robe had been given to others, Bodhidharma replied, “I transmit the robe for the sake of verification of the teachings.... Possession of it represents the orthodox inheritance of the dharma teachings.”<sup>18</sup>

In Wúzhù’s narrative, Bodhidharma initially rebuffs Huikě, emphasizing that those seeking the dharma should not value their bodies or their lives, implying that simply standing in snow was not enough. In response, Huikě cut off an arm and was silently recognized as Bodhidharma’s successor. With Wúzhù’s account, the structural dynamic of the encounter thus begins to crystalize. The first movement consists of an aspiring student hoping to study with a revered teacher. This is followed by the teacher’s stern reluctance to recognize the student. In turn, the student refuses to be rebuffed even as the master continues to refuse recognition. Climax occurs with an act of self-mortification, here self-amputation. Denouement takes the form of the teacher’s recognition of the student as not only a worthy disciple, but as his successor. Another component, though not necessarily structural, is that the teaching is mind-focused and seemingly integral to meditation as exemplified by the teacher. As will become clear, an early iteration of this structural dynamic and a variant of the mental teaching auxiliary to it appears in the *Zhuāngzǐ* with the Confucius/Yán Huí encounter.

## 2.4 *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, Compiled in the Jǐngdé Period*

With Dàoyuán’s 道原 (ca. 1000) *Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, Compiled in the Jǐngdé Period* (*Jǐngdé chuándēng lù* 景德傳燈錄), the encounter achieved mature hagiographic form.<sup>19</sup> Preceding the encounter, Dàoyuán recounted an exchange between Bodhidharma and Emperor Wǔ 武 (r. 502–49) of the Liáng 梁 dynasty that supposedly occurred following Bodhidharma’s journey to China.<sup>20</sup> At the meeting, Emperor Wǔ asked about the merit (*gōng dé* 功德) he had achieved by having temples built, sutras copied, and rules and regulations for clergy set forth. Bodhidharma replied that Emperor Wu had achieved “no merit whatsoever” (*bìng wú gōng dé* 並無功德). When asked why, Bodhidharma explained that such deeds were “like shadows that follow forms, extant but having no reality” (*yǒu fēi shí* 有非實). Emperor Wǔ then asked what had merit. Bodhidharma replied, “achieving pure and complete understanding ... that the body and self are empty and still” (*tǐ zì kōng jì* 體自空寂), adding that “merit should not be sought in this world.” Emperor Wǔ inquired if this was “the first principle of sagely truth,” to which Bodhidharma replied, “with clear understanding, there is nothing that is sagely” (*kuò rán wú shèng* 廓然無聖). Emperor Wǔ then asked “Well then, who is this speaking to me,” to which Bodhidharma replied, “I do not know” (*bù shì* 不識). Realizing that Emperor Wǔ was not to be enlightened (*bù lǐng wù* 不領悟), Bodhidharma left.<sup>21</sup>

Significant here is that this encounter, which fails to produce enlightenment, is paired with the Huikě encounter that follows. In both, the exchanges are terse and the teacher, Bodhidharma, is reluctant to divulge anything without repeated probing. Also noteworthy is that in conversing with Emperor Wǔ, Bodhidharma emphasizes the emptiness of the physical body and the self, a theme reiterated in the following encounter with Huikě.

Next, Dàojuán relates that Bodhidharma traveled to the Shàolín Temple 少林寺 on Mount Sōng and began practicing “wall meditation, sitting all day in silence” (*zuò zhōng rì mò rán* 坐終日默然). In time, a well-educated monk, Shén Guāng 神光 (later renamed Huikě), with a grasp of profound principles (*xuán lǐ* 玄理), appeared. Critiquing Confucianism and Daoism, Shén Guāng noted that the ritual teachings of Confucius and Lǎozǐ were lacking, while those of “the *Zhuāngzǐ* and the *Book of Changes* failed to exhaust the mysterious principles of things (*Zhuāng Yì zhī shū wèi jìn miào lǐ* 莊易之書未盡妙理).” Shén Guāng added that earlier those searching for the way (*qiú dào* 求道) broke their bones to extract the marrow (*qiāo gǔ qǔ suǐ* 敲骨取髓), cut their own flesh to relieve hunger...and leapt from cliffs to feed tigers. If the ancients did as much, Shén Guāng concluded that he would too.<sup>22</sup>

On the ninth day of the twelfth lunar month, Shén Guāng stood outside Bodhidharma’s place of meditation during a blizzard until snow nearly buried his legs. Pitying him, Bodhidharma asked what he was doing. With tears, Shén Guāng replied that he wanted Bodhidharma to “open the sweet-dew gate that delivers all sentient beings.” Spurning him, Bodhidharma responded that the “the unsurpassed mysterious way (*wú shàng miào dào* 無上妙道) required long endurance and determination, doing the formidable, and enduring the unendurable.” Derisively, Bodhidharma asked Shén Guāng how he, a man of “small virtue (*xiǎo dé* 小德), small wisdom (*xiǎo zhì* 小智), a weak mind (*qīng xīn* 輕心), and prideful heart” (*màn xīn* 慢心) could comprehend the true teachings? Trying to do so would simply “useless effort and that resulted in his suffering.” Thereupon, Shén Guāng “took a sharp knife and cut off his left arm” (*qǔ lì dāo zì duàn zuǒ bì* 取利刀自斷左臂), and placed the severed limb before Bodhidharma.<sup>23</sup>

Bodhidharma then realized that Shén Guāng could be a “dharma vessel” (*fǎ qì* 法器), remarking, “the various buddhas of the past first forgot their physical forms (*wàng xíng* 忘形) when they sought the way to attain the dharma.” Bodhidharma then changed Shén Guāng’s name to Huikě, meaning “wisdom (*huì* 慧) and ability (*kě* 可).” When Huikě mentioned that his mind was not yet pacified (*wǒ xīn wèi níng* 我心未寧), Bodhidharma asked Huikě to bring him his mind. Huikě responded that he could not find it. To this, Bodhidharma replied that he had already pacified Huikě’s mind (*wǒ yǔ rǔ ān xīn jìng* 我與汝安心竟).<sup>24</sup>

Dàojuán rounded out his account by adding that Emperor Xiàomíng 孝明 of the Northern Wèi 魏 dynasty summoned Bodhidharma but the latter refused, preferring to remain at the Shàolín Temple.<sup>25</sup> After nine years there, he announced plans to return to the India. Before departing he asked his disciples for their words. One of them, Dàofù 道副, stated “the workings of the *dào* are neither dependent on nor separated from words” (*bù zhí wén zì bù lí wén zì ér wéi dào yòng* 不執文字不離文



字而爲道用). To this, Bodhidharma replied that Dàofù had gotten the “skin” (*pí* 皮) of his teachings. Next, the nun, Zǒngchí 總持 stated, “it is like seeing a portrait of the realm of Akṣobhya<sup>26</sup> Buddha. Once you have seen it, you need not look again.” Bodhidharma remarked that Zǒngchí had gotten his “flesh” (*ròu* 肉). Then Dàoyù 道育 related, “the four great elements are fundamentally empty and the five aggregates have no existence, so it is impossible for me to see a single dharma.” Bodhidharma judged that Daoyu had gotten his “bones” (*gǔ* 骨). Finally, Huikē bowed and stood still, saying nothing. To this, Bodhidharma declared that Huikē had gotten his “marrow” (*suǐ* 髓).<sup>27</sup> Bodhidharma then explained just as he had received the transmission, now he was passing it to Huikē along with the kaṣāya robe. Before parting, Bodhidharma gave Huikē a copy of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, calling it “the essential gate to the mind-ground of the Buddha for use in enabling other sentient beings to achieve enlightenment.”<sup>28</sup>

This hardly exhausts Dàoyuán’s narrative of the encounter, but it gives the gist of it climaxing with Huikē’s self-amputation and his later recognition as Bodhidharma’s successor. Structurally, it is noteworthy that the encounter is preceded and followed by Bodhidharma’s exchanges with two emperors, one face-to-face, and the other declined in favor of remaining at the Shāolín temple. Also, Dàoyuán’s version of the encounter addresses issues related to language, with Huikē’s standing in silence establishing that he had gotten the marrow of Bodhidharma’s teachings while Dàofù’s claim that neither words nor non-reliance on words captured the way gaining for him the lowest ranking as one who simply got “the skin.” Also, Bodhidharma notes how various buddhas of the past had “forgot their physical forms” (*wàng xíng* 忘形), a teaching with conspicuous parallels in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, especially in its epistemological appeal to forgetting (*wàng* 忘). Also noteworthy is that Dàoyuán’s account addresses the mind and its pacification, with Huikē asking for a teaching and Bodhidharma revealing the same. The overt centrality of the mind and mind control, along with other structural elements, resurface in the *Zhuāngzǐ*.

### 3 Confucius and Yán Huí in the *Zhuāngzǐ*

In the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, passages featuring Confucius and his disciple Yán Huí are the most prominent. They climax with a final pairing wherein Confucius, after repeatedly rebuffing Yán Huí, recognizes Yán Huí’s grasp of Daoist thought and practice and asks if he, Confucius, might become his disciple. While that episode in itself anticipates the structure of Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter, when considered in relation to earlier passages featuring Confucius and Confucians, the resonance deepens, suggesting intimate ties between these early-Daoist dialogues and later Chán hagiography.

### 3.1 Dialogue on Sitting with No-Mind.<sup>29</sup>

The Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter has its double in the “Sitting with No-Mind Dialogue” in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, Chapter Six, “The Greatly Revered Teacher” (*dà zōng shī* 大宗師). There Confucius, referred to by his courtesy name, Zhòng Ní 仲尼, and Yán Huí, his most promising but ultimately short-lived disciple, engage in terse exchanges regarding Yán Huí’s philosophical and spiritual development. While a key word, “sitting” (*zuò* 坐), suggests parallels with Bodhidharma’s meditative practice, equally important is the word *wàng* 忘, often translated as “forgetting.” Livia Kohn has noted, however, that “forgetting” fails to capture the appropriate nuance of *wàng* here because “forgetting” implies not remembering something that should be remembered, while in the *Zhuāngzǐ* passage, *wàng* signifies no longer being mindful of what one need not be mindful. Kohn adds that in its written form, *wàng* 忘 is composed of *xīn* 心 “the mind” and *wáng* 亡 “to perish, to destroy, to lose, to die,” prompting “oblivion” as her gloss for *wàng* 忘, and for the compound, *zuò wàng* 坐忘, “sitting in oblivion.”<sup>30</sup> Yet by the same token, alternative glosses of *wàng* 忘 might be “perishing the mind,” “destroying the mind,” or “having no-mind.” The latter alternative, rather than “forgetting” or “oblivion” is used here to capture what Yán Huí achieved and what Confucius asked to learn from him after hearing of it. While *wàng* 忘 does commonly mean “to forget” in ancient Chinese texts, in the *Zhuāngzǐ* it has a more philosophico-spiritual nuance encompassing epistemological achievement, not a lapse in cognition so much as attainment of non-cognition, or experiencing things “with no-mind.”

The “Sitting with No-mind Dialogue” opens with Yán Huí remarking, “I am improving!” When Confucius asks what this means, Yán Huí explains, “I have no-mind of compassion and rightness!” (*wàng rén yì yì* 忘仁義矣). Confucius replies, “That’s OK, but it’s lacking.” Yán Huí later returns to report once more that he is “improving.” Again, Confucius asks about the specifics, prompting Yán Huí’s reply that he has “no-mind of rites and music!” (*wàng lǐ yuè yì* 忘禮樂矣). Once more, Confucius demurs that Yan Hui is deficient. Later, Yán Huí returns, announcing that he’s making progress. Again, Confucius inquires. Yán Huí replies that he has “sat with no-mind!” (*zuò wàng yì* 坐忘矣). Taken aback, Confucius asks, “What is this sitting with no-mind?” Yán Huí replies, “I let my arms, legs, and body fall away” (*duò zhī tǐ* 墮肢體), “black out intelligence and perception (*chù cōng míng* 黜聰明), quit physical form and depart knowledge (*lí xíng qù zhī* 離形去知), and realize oneness in great understanding (*tóng yú dà tōng* 同於大通). That is what sitting with no-mind means.” Overwhelmed, Confucius observes, “In your oneness [with great understanding], you must be without partialities (*wú hǎo* 無好). In transforming with things, you must embody impermanence (*wú cháng* 無常). Are you not worthier than me? May I please be your disciple?”<sup>31</sup>

Some scholars have interpreted “sitting with no-mind” as forgetting oneself and everything, and thus achieving an awareness wherein there is “no-mind” (*wú shīn* 無心).<sup>32</sup> Even in the Tang dynasty, Bái Jūyì’s 白居易 (772–846) poem, “Waking Up and Sitting Tranquilly” (*Shuì qǐ yàn zuò* 睡起晏坐), claimed that “the practice

of Chán Buddhism and ‘sitting with no-mind’ (*xíng Chán yǔ zuò wàng* 行禪與坐忘) arrive at the same conclusion and are not different paths” (*tóng guī wú yì lù* 同歸無異路), establishing that similarities between the *Zhuāngzǐ*’s “sitting with no-mind” and Chán meditation, if not the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter, were noted early on.<sup>33</sup> With all due respect to Bái Jūyì, it seems fair enough to say that rather than being non-dual, sitting with no-mind and Chán meditative practice are closely related, though differing in sectarian identity.

Pertinent here is the structural similarity between the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter and that of Confucius/Yán Huí in the *Zhuāngzǐ*. In the latter, the *Zhuāngzǐ* presents a greatly revered teacher, Confucius, rebuffing his aspiring disciple time after time until finally Yán Huí gets Confucius’ attention by reporting on a practice, sitting with no-mind, that involves not only sitting in meditation but culminates reportedly in acts of self-mortification. The *Zhuāngzǐ* does not claim that Yán Huí actually engaged in these acts but rather intimates that he achieved them by putting his physical form out of his mind, realizing cognitive no-mind vis-à-vis everything, including himself. Following this self-mortification via no-mind, Confucius recognizes Yán Huí as one superior to himself and asks if he may become his disciple. There is no orthodox transmission of texts or clothing, only a recognition of Yán Huí as Confucius’ successor in Daoist enlightenment. Also significant here is that the episode makes no claims about its historicity, but instead, as will be discussed later, issues from the *Zhuāngzǐ*’s use of goblet words, or an effort via words to embrace all partialities.

### 3.2 *Dialogue on Fasting the Mind*

The “Sitting with No-mind Dialogue” continues the opening exchange of Chapter Four, “People in the World” (*Rén jiān shì* 人間世), referred to here as the “Dialogue on Fasting the Mind” (*xīn zhāi* 心齋). In the latter, the pedagogical dynamic is modified with Confucius resuming his status as an enlightened teacher, but here teaching Yán Huí a Daoist approach to remonstrating with abusive rulers. Needless to say, Bodhidharma’s own exchanges with Emperor Wǔ and Emperor Xiàomíng come to mind here. “Fasting the Mind” opens with Yán Huí consulting Confucius before travelling to the state of Wei 衛 to admonish the ruler there whose people lie dead thick as reeds in a swamp. Confucius warns Yán Huí that he will probably be executed for his do-good efforts, reminding him of the tragic fates of well-meaning men who earlier sought to rectify tyrants. Repeatedly, Confucius rejects Yán Huí’s strategies for dealing with the despot, ultimately declaring that Yán Huí’s fundamental mistake lies in using “the mind of a teacher” (*shī xīn* 師心). Instead, Confucius advises Yán Huí to “fast” (*zhāi* 齋). Clueless, Yán Huí notes his poverty and meager diet, asking if that’s what Confucius means. Confucius replies that he means “fasting the mind” (*xīn zhāi* 心齋) which involves “listening with generative force” (*tīng zhī yǐ qì* 聽之以氣). He adds that generative force is “empty and waits on things” (*xū ér dài wù* 虛而待物), noting that “only through the *dào*

[can one] accumulate emptiness” (*wéi dào jí xū* 唯道集虛). Summarizing the process, Confucius observes that “one who achieves emptiness, fasts his mind” (*xū zhě xīn zhāi* 虛者心齋).<sup>34</sup>

Yán Huí replies, “Before hearing of mind fasting, I thought I really was Yán Huí. Now I have practiced it, I realize that Yán Huí never was.” He then asks Confucius if this is what he meant by emptiness (*xū* 虛). Confucius nodded, adding, “If the despot listens, then speak but if not, stop. Where there is no gate (*wú mén* 無門), dwell in oneness, residing alongside the inevitable. Then you will have a chance.” Before concluding, Confucius emphasized the importance of dwelling in stillness, noting that through it good fortune and blessings gather. He warned against merely maintaining the appearance of stillness, comparing it to “sitting and yet galloping” (*zuò chí* 坐馳).” In the end, Confucius advised Yán Huí to allow perception to communicate with what is internal, putting the mind and knowledge outside. That approach he called “unfolding with the myriad things” (*wàn wù zhī huà* 萬物之化).<sup>35</sup>

Fukunaga Mitsuji explains that the message of the “Dialogue on Fasting the Mind” consists in one word, “emptiness” (*xū* 虛), which is the main point of Chapter Four as a whole. He also sees this passage and the “Sitting with No-mind Dialogue” as intimately related. Indeed, the “Dialogue on Fasting the Mind” stands as the first-act in an ongoing drama involving Confucius and Yán Huí wherein Confucius first teaches his disciple about fasting the mind and accumulating in emptiness, followed two chapters later by Yán Huí reporting mastery of his mind through sitting with no-mind, prompting Confucius’ request to follow him. The “Dialogue on Fasting the Mind,” also reiterates the structure of the “Sitting with No-mind Dialogue” by showing Confucius not just reluctant but pointedly critical of Yán Huí as mentally unprepared to admonish an abusive ruler and survive to tell the story. With the “Sitting with No-mind Dialogue,” Yán Huí emerges as a master of mind fasting, sitting with no-mind, without regard for mind, body, or the myriad things as he proceeds in emptiness with the changes of the world.<sup>36</sup> Resonance with the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter appears with Confucius’ teaching of “fasting the mind,” which has its double in Bodhidharma’s teaching on “pacifying the mind.”

### 3.3 *Dialogue on Losing Oneself*

A foretaste of the Confucius/Yán Huí dialogues appears in the “Dialogue on Losing Oneself” (*sàng wǒ* 喪我) in Chapter Two, “Making Things Equal” (*Qí wù lùn* 齊物論), featuring Zǐ Qí 子綦, a Daoist recluse living south of the castle wall in the state of Chǔ 楚, and his disciple, Zǐ Yóu 子游, who resides with the upper sorts inside the castle wall. The name, Zǐ Yóu, alludes to one of Confucius’ disciples in the *Analects*, which suggests in turn that Zǐ Qí, as his teacher, is a Confucius-surrogate, but as before here teaching his disciples Daoism.<sup>37</sup> As the passage opens, Zǐ Qí is “sitting” (*zuò* 坐) by his armrest seemingly vacant, looking up at the sky and breathing gently, absent mindedly having lost all awareness of his surroundings

(*sàng qí ǒu* 喪其耦). Sounding like a simple-minded Confucian, Zǐ Yóu asks “Can you actually make your body (*xíng* 形) like withered wood (*gǎo mù* 槁木) and your mind (*xīn* 心) as still as dead ashes (*sǐ huī* 死灰)?” His meditative state disturbed, Zǐ Qí upbraids Zǐ Yóu stating, “I had just now lost myself (*wú sàng wǒ* 吾喪我), but how could you comprehend that?” The dialogue concludes with Zǐ Qí telling Zǐ Yóu that he must listen to “the piping of earth” and “the piping of heaven” (*tiān lài* 天籟), not “the piping of people,” meaning by the former the sounds of the myriad things in their transformations. Zǐ Qí then asks, “who or what else is there?” (*shuí yé* 誰邪),<sup>38</sup> implying that he does not know whether there is anyone or anything responsible for it all, other than perhaps the *dào*.

Fukunaga explains “withered wood” and “dead ashes” as mundane descriptions of Zǐ Yóu’s state of complete tranquility, unentangled by passions (*mu hyōjō* 無表情) and emotional agitation (*mu kandō* 無感動). He adds that Zǐ Qí’s remark about losing himself (*sàng wǒ* 喪我) is the philosophical equivalent of “paying no-mind to [forgetting] oneself” (*wàng wǒ* 忘我), succinctly conveying the overall message of Chapter Two.<sup>39</sup> More comprehensively, Fukunaga sees the three dialogues—“Sitting with No-mind,” “Fasting the Mind,” and “Losing Oneself”—as ones addressing the mind much as do followers of Zen in talking of “leaving off the body and mind” (*shinshin o dashitsu suru* 身心を打失する).<sup>40</sup> Without noting resonance with the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter specifically, Fukunaga acknowledges significant parallels between the Confucius/Yán Huí dialogues and passages involving Confucius-surrogates such as Zǐ Qí and Chán discourse if not its hagiography of the first patriarch and his successor.

### 3.4 Dialogue on Dreaming and Waking

Another Chapter Six dialogue, “Dreaming and Waking” (*mèng jué* 夢覺), starring Confucius and Yán Huí, is also instructive. In it, Yán Huí notes how Mèngsūn Cǎi 孟孫才 showed neither grief nor sorrow at his mother’s funeral but still won fame for his behavior. Confucius explained that Mèngsūn Cǎi was “advanced in understanding” (*jìn yú zhī* 進於知) in not knowing why we live (*bù zhī suǒ yǐ shēng* 不知所以生) or die (*bù zhī suǒ yǐ sǐ* 不知所以死). Rather than trying to manage fate, Mèngsūn Cǎi went with the unknown. Confucius added that, unlike Mèngsūn Cǎi, he and Yán Huí were dreaming, not having yet awakened (*mèng wèi shǐ jué* 夢未始覺), while Mèngsūn Cǎi was exceptionally so. Hinting at his own level of Daoist comprehension, Confucius mentions that Yán Huí might dream he’s a bird or fish, soaring through the sky or diving deep into water, but that he, Confucius, does not know which is dream and which is not. Rather than try to categorize existence, Confucius suggests that Yán Huí should “be at peace and leave off worries about life’s transformations and so become one with heaven” (*tiān yī* 天一).<sup>41</sup>

The “Dialogue on Dreaming and Waking” follows the “Dialogue on Fasting the Mind” and precedes the “Dialogue on Sitting with No-mind,” supplying an

intermediary stage wherein Confucius still teaches Yán Huí Zhuāngzǐān Daoism even while admitting that he has not fully realized the post-Confucian mode he recognizes in Mèngsūn Cǎi. Confucius' remarks about his own inability to distinguish a dream from what is not reiterate a rumination at the end of Chapter Two relating Zhuāng Zhōu's uncertainty as to whether he is a butterfly dreaming he's Zhuāng Zhōu, or Zhuāng Zhōu dreaming he's a butterfly. Here, however, the indistinguishability of dream and reality is cast more authoritatively by having the revered teacher, Confucius, now posed as the Daoist master, emphasize it. In portraying Confucius as ready, in an anti-Confucian manner, to deconstruct funerary behavior to the simplest of levels, the "Dialogue on Dreaming and Waking" casts Confucius teaching Yan Hui one more lesson along the way to the latter's achievement of sitting with no-mind later in Chapter Six.

### 3.5 *Dialogues on Amputees*

No text in ancient Chinese literature devotes more philosophical attention to amputees than the *Zhuāngzǐ*. Chapter Five, "Tally of Full Virtue" (*dé chōng fú* 德充符), includes successive passages with individuals who have suffered amputation as punishment for some crime. A. C. Graham notes that this is a unique feature of the Inner Chapters which

show a remarkable interest, not shared by later Taoists even in the *Chuang-tzu* itself, in cripples, freaks, mutilated criminals, who are able to accept and remain inwardly unaltered by their condition. The criminal with a chopped foot carries about with him the visible proof of his crime and betrayal of his ancestors. For conventional opinion, he is of all men farthest from the Way. On the contrary, says Chuang-tzu, if he can accept the catastrophe as his destiny, care nothing for the demeaning judgment of others, remain inwardly unbound by the rules ... he is nearer to the Way than Confucius was.<sup>42</sup>

Chapter Five's keynote passage features Confucius in a dialogue with a disciple, Cháng Jì 常季, regarding a man, Wáng Tái 王骀, whose foot had been cut off as punishment. Nevertheless, according to Cháng Jì, Wáng Tái had as many followers in Lǚ 魯, Confucius' birthplace, as Confucius. Reportedly, Wáng Tái was one who "stands but does not teach" (*lì bù jiào* 立不教), "sits but does not discuss" (*zuò bù yì* 坐不議), yet students flock to him empty and leave full. Cháng Jì asks if Wáng Tái has a "wordless teaching" (*bù yán zhī jiào* 不言之教) or "in formlessness perfects his mind?" (*wú xíng ér xīn chéng* 無形而心成). Confucius explains quite simply that Wáng Tái is "a sage" (*shèng rén* 聖人), adding that he had neglected to study under him, but that if he were willing to do so, then all of Lǚ should as well. Here, Confucius is not the Daoist sage, but significantly enough he recognizes one in the amputee, Wáng Tái. Confucius goes on to note that "life and death ... do not alter him. ... As for things, he sees their oneness, not their loss. He regards the amputation of a foot as akin to excrement left in the dirt."<sup>43</sup> Yán Huí is nowhere to be found in this passage, but Confucius' recognition of the sagehood of the amputee, Wáng Tái, parallels Bodhidharma's recognition of Huikě as his successor.

Also, Wáng Tái's "wordless teaching" delivered while standing and sitting, fore-shadows Huikē's silent response to Bodhidharma's invitation to discourse on the dharma, a response that earned for him recognition for getting the marrow.

In a subsequent passage in "Tally of Complete Virtue," Confucius, now representing himself, the uptight Confucian sage, upbraids Shū shān No-Toes<sup>44</sup> for having lost his feet and becoming a hopeless amputee. No-Toes promptly reproaches Confucius for thinking that he, No-Toes, had come in search of anything. When Confucius tried to walk back his insult, No-Toes left. Later he told Lǎo Dān 老聃 (often identified as Lǎozǐ 老子) about the exchange, to which Lǎo Dān replied that Confucius was hardly an "utmost person" (*zhì rén* 至人). Lǎo Dān even suggested that No-Toes teach Confucius that life and death are a continuum, and "the acceptable and the unacceptable, a single thread." No-Toes declined, stating that heaven had punished Confucius (*tiān xíng zhī* 天刑之), so how could he be set free?<sup>45</sup> In addition to juxtaposing Confucius with amputees, this passage is significant for revealing that Confucius in the Inner Chapters is not always presented as a Daoist sage, but instead is cast in various hues of the philosophical spectrum including that of the hopeless Confucian as well as the masterful Daoist teacher, with casting reversals being as important as any assigned role.

#### 4 Goblet Words and Early-Chán Hagiography

The Inner Chapters presentation of Confucius, Yán Huí, and other Confucian-like characters could be dismissed as contradictory, fabricated, or even philosophically slanderous in casting the sage of Confucianism and his cohort in Daoist guise. But one thing is clear: in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, no one appears as often as Confucius, suggesting that the episodes presenting him, individually and collectively, make statements of some consequence. Also, throughout the *Zhuāngzǐ*, Confucius the Confucian is subjected to criticism by Lǎozǐ, the Old Fisherman (Yú fù 漁父), Robber Zhí (Dào Zhí 盜跖), and others. Yet rather than read this varied re-presentation of Confucius and company as ad hoc, disjointed, and merely miscellaneous, Chapter Twenty-Seven of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, "Allegories" (*yù yán* 寓言), tries to make philosophical sense of the back and forth via a meta-discussion of language shedding light on the Confucius/Yán Huí dialogues, as well as, presumably, how they prompted resonance in similar-but-different accounts of the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter.

With overlapping categories, Chapter Twenty-Seven inventories the *Zhuāngzǐ*'s words by noting that "allegories" make up nine-tenths, while "heavy words" (*zhòng yán* 重言) are seven-tenths. With allegories,<sup>46</sup> the *Zhuāngzǐ* crafts dialogues with various characters, such as Confucius and Yán Huí, brought in from "the outside," obviating endless monologic declarations prefaced by "Zhuāngzǐ said...." With "heavy words," the text preempts debate" (*yǐ yán* 已言) because they come from highly evolved individuals who understand things deeply. Such words are dogmatic yet profound. An example in Chapter One, presumably from Zhuāng



Zhōu, declares “the utmost man has no self (*zhì rén wú jǐ* 至人無己), the spiritual man achieves no merit (*shén rén wú gōng* 神人無功), and the sage gains no fame (*shèng rén wú míng* 聖人無名).”<sup>47</sup> These declaratives don’t invite discussion but rather deliver a philosophical verdict on how things are, plain and simple.<sup>48</sup>

A third type, “goblet words”<sup>49</sup> (*zhī yán* 卮言), emerge continuously, “harmonizing things with the subtleties of heaven” (*hé yǐ tiān ní* 和以天倪). Semantically vast, they pour forth endlessly. Yet rather than say much about them, the *Zhuāngzǐ* declares—resorting to “heavy words”—that there should be “no-words” (*wú yán* 無言), adding that by “speaking no-words” (*yán wú yán* 言無言), i.e., goblet words, one can speak forever yet never have said anything [contrary to the way], or one can never use them and never have said anything [not contrary to the way]. Chapter Twenty-Seven adds a related notion, “heaven’s harmonizing” (*tiān jūn* 天均),<sup>50</sup> equated with “the subtleties of heaven,”<sup>51</sup> suggesting that goblet words, rather than partial, biased, and argumentative, evoke the all-embracing, harmonizing vision of heaven.

Goblet words are hinted at in Chapter Two which acknowledges that it offers “enigmatic, paradoxical (*diào guǐ* 弔詭) words.”<sup>52</sup> There, it also claims to offer “wild words” (*wàng yán* 妄言), meant to be “listened to wildly,” suggesting that by means of them people can “harmonize [all partial perspectives] with the subtleties of heaven” (*tiān ní* 天倪), seeing that “right is not right” (*shì bù shì* 是不是) and “so is not so” (*rán bù rán* 然不然). Rather than debate and stubbornly disagree, the *Zhuāngzǐ* adds, “pay no-mind to [forget] the years, pay no-mind to [forget] ethical principles (*wàng nián wàng yì* 忘年忘義), rise to the infinite and dwell there,” proposing that by paying no-mind to [forgetting] partial claims, one grasps the limitless subtleties of heaven.<sup>53</sup> The “wild words” (*wàng yán* 妄言) announce, incidentally, a pun on “paying words no-mind” (*wàng yán* 忘言) advocated in Chapter Twenty-Six, “External Things” (*wài wù* 外物).<sup>54</sup> By doing either, “paying words no-mind” or using “wild words,” one relies on what Chapter Twenty-Seven calls goblet words as the latter convey an, at times, admittedly outlandish harmony with things through the perspective of heaven. Goblet words are thus words that philosophically resolve petty, conflicting opinions, dualities, and differences, offering harmonization by affirmation of right and not-right, so and not-so, thus paying no-mind to short-sighted and misguided divisions of language, people, and reality. Goblet words are “no-words” in the sense that they are not ordinary, partial, biased, bigoted words but rather ones evoking a grasp of the totality, and once effective, they are words to be forgotten.

Guō Xiàng 郭象 (252–312), offered another angle on goblet words by explaining that, when full, the goblet referred to turns upside down to empty its contents. Once empty (*kōng* 空), it rights itself for another fill, not clinging to one state or another.<sup>55</sup> Considered metaphorically, Guō’s explanation captures the ability of goblet words to affirm all sides of an equation rather than be partial and biased insofar as both full and empty are affirmed in a dialectic of harmony through alternation. Goblet words then are dynamic words, affirming contradictory positions, much as the proverbial goblet goes back and forth without stubborn stasis, capturing with its movement the dialectical unity of the subtleties of heaven. Guō’s



view, it seems, is the key to understanding the varying reversals evident in the Confucius/Yán Huí encounters and related passages, remaking Confucius as a Daoist, and then the Chán reconfiguration of the Confucius/Yán Huí exchange with that of Bodhidharma and Huikē, in each case reversing the established pole and so inclusively bringing its opposite into play rather than combatively denouncing and affirming with biased, one-sided claims. Understood in terms of the tilting goblet, goblet words allow for both the re-presentation of Confucius and Yán Huí as Daoists, and then their reconfiguration, arguably, as Bodhidharma and Huikē.

Goblet words are, then, fictitious, farfetched, preposterous, fathomless, precipitous, wild, enigmatic, and paradoxical words, but also words that are no-words, ones which people should use but to which they should ultimately pay no-mind. They are, in effect, paradigmatic expressions of the *dào*, communicating effectively via their readiness to be paid no-mind, forgotten, once the vision beyond true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, and this and that is achieved. In the Confucius/Yán Huí passages, goblet words join allegory and heavy words to record not a real, historic encounter, but rather messages about losing oneself, fasting the mind, and having no-mind for ethical teachings or one's own body. Structurally, they are words that when full, empty, and when empty, right themselves for another filling, i.e., dynamic, reversing words that turn things on their heads and then back again, as with Confucius and Yán Huí re-presented as Daoist teacher and disciple. In their ongoing reversals, they invite and accommodate their own undoing, opening up to the possibility of having all content, Confucius and Yán Huí included, replaced with Bodhidharma and Huikē in a decisive, structurally similar encounter wherein rebuffed, self-mortificatory disciple is recognized as his teacher's teacher or his teacher's successor. The resonance of the Bodhidharma/Huikē and the Confucius/Yán Huí encounters can, of course, be seen as sublation or a dharma duel, but this chapter suggests they might also be viewed as yet another expression of goblet words structurally communicating both a Chán message of orthodoxy, lineage, and teaching as well as the Zhuāngzǐan vision of all things affirmed and harmonized via a dialectic of affirmation of mutual extremes, the full and the empty, and their ongoing interplay, seeking a vision beyond sectarian bias and partialities that, as capturable in words, conveys the subtleties of heaven.

## Notes

1. Kyoto National Museum 京都国立博物館 curates this work and translates its title more interpretively as “*Huikē Offering His Arm to Bodhidharma*.” The painting, ink and color on paper, 199.9 × 113.6 cm, was designated a National Treasure in 2004. An inscription states that Saji Tamesada 佐治為貞, lord of Miyayama 宮山 castle in Owari 尾張 Province (Aichi 愛知 Prefecture), donated the painting to the Sainenji 齋年寺, a Sōtō Zen temple, in 1532. See <https://www.kyohaku.go.jp/jp/syuzou/meihin/suibokuga/item06.html>.
2. Bodhidharma is a Sanskrit compound meaning “awakening” (*bodhi*) “teaching” (*dharma*). It is the commonly used name for the reputed twenty-eighth patriarch of Buddhism and the first patriarch of Chán. John R. McRae, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan*

- Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 15, rethinks the lineage, suggesting that Bodhidharma and Huikē were “proto-Chán.”
3. D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (First Series) (London: Rider & Company, 1949), 168, 163, 196. Heinrich Dumoulin similarly noted, “The Bodhidharma legend ... in its wonderful and grotesque demeanor has the stamp of incredulity on its forehead too clearly for critically trained historians to take it at face value.” Dumoulin, “Bodhidharma und die Anfänge des Ch’an Buddhismus,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 7, no.1/2 (1951), 67–68. For a recent discussion of controversies involved in historical and religious studies, see Steven Heine, *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow: Will the Real Zen Buddhism Please Stand Up* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
  4. John R. McRae, *Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chán Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 37.
  5. Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 126. McRae’s view of Faure on “the historical approach” and Bodhidharma studies is noteworthy. See McRae, “The Hagiography of Bodhidharma: Reconstructing the Point of Origin of Chinese Chan Buddhism,” In *India in the Chinese Imagination: Myth, Religion, and Thought*, edited by John Kieschnick and Meir Shahar (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 131.
  6. A. C. Graham sees Lǎozǐ as a fictitious figure, a conflation of various legends meant to provide Daoism with a founder more ancient and esteemed than Confucius, the historical figure whose teachings launched what came later to be known as Confucianism. See A. C. Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 111–124. Also, see A. C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Seven Chapters and other writings from the book Chuang-tzu* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 3–6. And, Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989).
  7. A relevant study is H. G. Creel, *Confucius: The Man and the Myth* (New York: John Day, 1949). More recently, D. C. Lau’s *The Analects* (London: Penguin, 1979), 161–94, includes an appendix, “Events in the Life of Confucius” with a more historically credible chronology. Given ambiguities in the historical record, studies of Confucius have tended to be philosophical rather than biographical, taking the *Analects* (*Lúnyǔ* 論語) as the traditionally received if not thoroughly historical basis for analyzing Confucius’ thinking. One example is David L Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987).
  8. McRae, “The Hagiography of Bodhidharma,” 130–32.
  9. The “Inner Chapters” (*Nèi piān* 內篇) of the *Zhuāngzǐ* are considered the most authentic writings of Zhuāng Zhōu, while the “Outer Chapters” and “Miscellaneous Chapters” are attributed to later followers.

10. *Analects*, 6/3. Here, Confucius describes Yán Huí as peerless in his love of learning but fated to an early death. Reportedly, Yán Huí passed away at 29.
11. China's remaking of Buddhism as Chán is often noted. D. T. Suzuki remarked, "Zen Buddhism...is the product of the Chinese mind, or rather the Chinese elaboration of the Doctrine of Enlightenment." Cited from his *Essays in Buddhism*, p. 163. Daoist influences are often alluded to as well, albeit vaguely. Here, specific passages in the *Zhuāngzǐ* are emphasized as pivotal in the hagiography and historiography of the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter.
12. Drawing on "Bodhidharma as Textual and Religious Paradigm," 193. Faure appeals to Roland Barthes, *Image–Music–Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), 108.
13. *Luòyáng Qiélánjì* 洛陽伽藍記. T2092.51.1000b19–25. For a translation of this entry, see McRae, "The Hagiography of Bodhidharma," 130.
14. *Xù gāosēng zhuàn* 續高僧傳. T2060.50.0596c08–13. Faure considers Dào xuān's (645) account "the most important," noting that it is "fairly authentic." Faure, "Bodhidharma." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 993–96.
15. *Ibid.* T2060.50.0552a03–04; a07–08.
16. *Ibid.* T2060.50.0552b22. Dù Fěi's 杜胙 *Annals of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasure* (*Chuán fǎbǎo jì* 傳法寶紀), later criticized Dào xuān for this account of Huikē's missing limb.
17. *Lìdài fǎbǎo jì* 歷代法寶記. T2075.51.0181a06–08. For a translation, see Wendi L. Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 310–12. Also, Adamek, *The Teachings of Master Wuzhu: Zen and Religion of No-Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 79.
18. *Ibid.* T2075.51.0181a20–1b02. Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission*, 314. *The Teachings of Master Wuzhu*, 80.
19. Details in the *Jīngdé chuándēng lù* were widely repeated. Keizan's 瑩山紹瑾 *Denkōroku* 傳光錄 account of the Bodhidharma/Huikē encounter is largely based on the *Jīngdé chuándēng lù*. T2585.82.0377c16–0378c24. See Thomas Cleary, *Transmission of Light, Zen in the Art of Enlightenment by Zen Master Keizan* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 109–12.
20. The *Jīngdé chuándēng lù* opens its account of Bodhidharma by noting that he was "the third son of the King of Xiāngzhì 香至 in southern India," and a member of the *kṣatriya* caste. There is no consensus regarding the location of Xiāngzhì though some claim it refers to Kanchipuram. Reportedly, Bodhidharma was first named Bodhitara (*Pútíduōluó* 菩提多羅). However when the twenty-seventh patriarch, Prajñātāra (*Bōrěduōluó* 般若多羅), visited Xiāngzhì, he soon realized that Bodhidharma "had grasped the various teachings" (*zhū fǎ yǐ dé tōng* 諸法已得通), and so changed Bodhidharma's name from Bodhitara to Bodhidharma, recognizing his ability to penetrate and refine (*dá mó* 達磨) the dharma. T2076.51.0216c17–0217a18.

21. *Jīngdé chuándēng lù*. T2076.51.0219a22–a28.
22. *Ibid.* T2076.51.0219b03–11.
23. *Ibid.* T2076.51.0219b11–18.
24. *Ibid.* T2076.51.0219b18–b23.
25. This detail echoes the *Zhuāngzǐ*, Chapter Seventeen, “Autumn Waters” (*Qiū shuǐ* 秋水), where Zhuāngzǐ, while fishing, is approached by representatives of the King of Chu, relaying the king’s wish to turn the reins of government over to him. After musing about the fate of a sacrificial turtle earlier in the king’s court, Zhuāngzǐ declined the invitation, stating that he would prefer to remain where he was, wagging his tale in the mud.
26. One of the five “wisdom” Tathāgatas, or “thus gone ones,” typically associated with consciousness as a dimension of reality.
27. *Jīngdé chuándēng lù*. T2076.51.0219b27–c10.
28. *Ibid.* T2076.51.0219c19–c23.
29. Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司, *Sōshi* 莊子, *Naihen* 內篇 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1978), 311, refers to this passage as the *zabō mondō* 坐忘問答. References to *zuò wàng* 坐忘 appear, incidentally, dozens of times in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, though without significant mention of the *Zhuāngzǐ* where the compound first occurs.
30. Livia Kohn, *Sitting in Oblivion: The Heart of Daoist Meditation* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Three Pines Press, 2010), 1.
31. *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子, “The Greatly Revered Teacher” (*Dà zōng shī* 大宗師), Chapter Six, *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, Harvard–Yenching Index Series No. 20 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 19. For translations, see Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 90–91, A. C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 93, and Victor H. Mair, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu* (University of Hawai’i Press, 1994), 63–64.
32. Abe Yoshio 阿部吉雄, Yamamoto Toshio 山本敏夫, Ichikawa Yasuji 市川安司, and Endō Tetsuo 遠藤哲夫, *Rōshi/Sōshi* 老子/莊子 (*Jō* 上), *Shinshaku kanbun taikēi* 新釈漢文大系 vol. 7 (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1966), 276.
33. Akatsuka Kiyoshi 赤塚忠, *Sōshi* 莊子 (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1974), 321. Bái Jūyì’s poem is in the Qing compilation, *Complete Tang Poetry* (*Quán Táng shī* 全唐詩), vol. 430, and online through the Chinese Text Project at <https://ctext.org/text.pl?node=189651&if=en&remap=gb>. Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chū-i* (London: Routledge, 1949), pp. 86–87, notes that Bái Jūyì spoke of *dhyāna* “to quieten” his agitation; “sitting and forgetting,” “to guard his soul;” and “the sword of wisdom,” “to cleave my folly.” Waley suggests that “sitting and forgetting” is the “Taoist equivalent” of Buddhist meditation (*Dhyāna*.) Quite possibly, Bái Jūyì’s poem was perhaps not referring simply to the *Zhuāngzǐ*, but rather to the early–Tang Daoist master, Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn 司馬承禎 (647–735), who authored a text on the *Zhuāngzǐ* passage and its practice—*On Sitting with No–Mind* (*Zuò wàng lùn* 坐忘論). Kohn, *Sitting in Oblivion* includes a translation. Also, Kohn, *Seven Steps to the Tao: Sima*

- Chengzhen's Zuowanglun*. And, Thomas Cleary, *Taoist Meditation: Methods for Cultivating a Healthy Mind and Body* (Boston: Shambala Press, 2000), 81–106, for a translation of “Treatise on Sitting Forgetting.” See Jinhua Jia, “Study on the two Daoist Treatises of ‘Sitting in Oblivion,’” *Studies in Chinese Religion*, 2/3 (2016), 265–280, for authorship issues related to the texts traditionally attributed to Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn.
34. *A Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 8–9. Watson, 54–58; Graham, 66–69; Mair, 29–33.
  35. *Ibid.*, 9.
  36. Fukunaga. *Sōshi*, 172.
  37. Here, following Akatsuka, *Sōshi*, 66, who notes that the Zǐ Yóu referred to in this passage recalls Confucius’ disciple, Yán Yǎn 言偃, whose courtesy name was Zǐ Yóu 子游. In the *Analects*, Zǐ Yóu appears in eight passages (2/7, 4/26, 6/14, 11/3, and 19/12, 14, 15) and was respected by his teacher. According to Akatsuka, the courtesy name of Zǐ Qí’s disciple in the *Zhuāngzǐ* passage was also Zǐ Yóu, while his surname and given names were Yán Yǎn 顏偃, pronounced similarly to that of Confucius’ disciple but written with a different initial character, Yán 顏 rather than Yán 言. It should be added that the family name “Yan” attributed to Zǐ Yóu is the same as that of Confucius’ disciple, Yán Huí 顏, so that the Zǐ Yóu in the *Zhuāngzǐ* arguably alludes to two of Confucius’ disciples, Zǐ Yóu and Yán Huí. Fukunaga, *Sōshi*, 59, notes the same. This suggests that Zǐ Qí was possibly a surrogate of Confucius, making the episode yet another in which Confucius and one of his disciples teach the *Zhuāngzǐ*’s ideas about sitting with no-mind.
  38. *A Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 3. Watson, 36–37; Graham, 48–49; Mair, 10–12.
  39. Fukunaga, *Sōshi*, 59–60. Akatsuka, *Sōshi*, 66, adds that “withered wood” and “dead ashes” convey quiescence (*seishi fudō* 静止不動) and a state of no-mind (*mushin* 無心) free from obstructive thoughts.
  40. *Ibid.*, 311.
  41. *A Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 18: 75–82. Watson, 88–89; Graham, 90–91; Mair, 61–62.
  42. Graham, “Death and Mutilation,” 23–24.
  43. *A Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 12–13; Watson, 68–69; Graham, 76–77; Mair, 42–44.
  44. Following Watson, 71.
  45. *A Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 13. Watson, 71–72; Graham, 78–79; Mair, 45–46.
  46. Watson, 303, translates yù yán 寓言 as “attributed words.” Herbert A. Giles, *Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralism, and Social Reformer* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1889), 363, renders the notion in a phrase as “language is put into other people’s mouths.” Mair, 278, glosses them as “metaphors.”
  47. *A Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 2. Here reading wú 无 as wú 無.

48. Reading *ní* 倪 with nuances of “minute” (*wéi xiǎo* 微小) and “outline” or “main threads of” (*tóu xù* 頭緒).
49. Following Watson, 303–05 and Giles, 363. There Giles translates *zhī yán* as “language which flows constantly over, as from a full goblet.” Early Chinese usages of *zhī* do suggest its primary meaning is a wine goblet. Mair translates *zhī yán* as “impromptu words,” *yù yán* as “metaphors,” and *zhòng yán* as “quotations.” Mair states that Chapter Twenty-Seven is “[p]erhaps the most difficult chapter in the book...” as it “probes the question of language itself.” Graham does not include this chapter in his translation *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters* but does discuss it in *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argumentation in Ancient China* (Chicago: Open Court, 1989), 199–202. Also see Livia Kohn, *Zhuangzi: Text and Context* (St. Petersburg, FL: Three Pines Press, 2014), 168–177, for an analysis of the *Zhuāngzǐ*’s thinking about its language. Also, Wang Youru, “The Strategies of ‘Goblet Words’: Indirect Communication in the *Zhuangzi*,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 31/2 (2004), 195–218, Wang Youru, “An Inquiry into the Liminology of Language in the *Zhuangzi* and in Chan Buddhism,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1997), 161–17, Chung-ying Cheng, “On Zen (Ch’an) Language and Zen Paradoxes,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 1 (1973), 78–102, Wu Kuang-ming, “Goblet Words, Dwelling Words, and Opalescent Words—Philosophical Methodology of Chuang Tzu,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 15 (1988) 1–8, and Waiwai Chiu, “Goblet Words and Indeterminacy: A Writing Style that Is Free of Commitment,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 10, no. 2 (June 2015), 255–72.
50. Reading *jūn* 均 as “harmonizing” (*tiáo hé* 調和).
51. A *Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 75.
52. Akatsuka, *Sōshi*, vol. 2, 523. Endō Tetsuo 遠藤哲夫 and Ichikawa Yasuji 市川安司, *Sōshi* 莊子, vol. 2, *Shinshaku kanbun taikēi* 新釈漢文大系 vol. 8 (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1967), 705. Another commentator, Sīmǎ Biāo 司馬彪 (3<sup>rd</sup> c.), described goblet words as “disjointed, with neither head nor tail.”
53. A *Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 6–7.
54. Ibid., 75. There, the text notes that fish traps catch fish, and once that’s done they can be forgotten. Rabbit traps catch rabbits, and once that’s done, they can be forgotten. Words exist because of meaning, and once the meaning has been gotten, words can be paid no-mind [forgotten] (*wàng yán* 忘言). The text then asks, “Where can I find a man who pays no-mind [forgets] words so that I can have a word with him?” Also, the *Zhuāngzǐ*’s last chapter, “All Below Heaven” (*tiān xià* 天下), offers more insights into goblet words, explaining that Zhuāng Zhōu lived in a world beclouded, making it impossible for him to speak in sober terms. He therefore resorted to “fictitious and farfetched explanations” (*miù yōu zhī shuō* 謬悠之說), “preposterous words” (*huāng táng zhī yán* 荒唐之言), and “unbounded expressions” (*wú duān yá zhī cí* 無端崖之辭), trying to remain “unbiased.” With goblet words, he expressed the “expansive overflowing” (*màn yǎn* 曼衍) of things, with heavy words, their reality, and with allegories, their breadth. Without arguing over right and wrong, he roamed

above with what transforms things (*zào wù zhě* 造物者) and below with those beyond life and death, befriending the beginningless and endless (*wú zhōng shǐ zhě* 無終始者). *A Concordance to the Zhuāngzǐ*, 93.

55. Akatsuka, *Sōshi*, vol. 2, 523. Endō Tetsuo 遠藤哲夫 and Ichikawa Yasuji 市川安司, *Sōshi* 莊子, vol. 2, *Shinshaku kanbun taikēi* 新釈漢文大系 vol. 8 (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1967), 705. Guō Xiàng's commentary is entitled *Zhuāngzǐ zhù* 莊子注. Chéng Xuányīng 成玄英 (ca. 7th c.) authored the sub-commentary adding that goblet words are “words that convey no-mind” (*wú xīn* 無心). The goblet Guō Xiàng mentions seems related to the *Xúnzǐ* 荀子, Chapter Twenty-Eight, “The Warning Vessel” (*Yòu zòu* 宥坐). There, Confucius is described as visiting the ancestral shrine of Duke Huán of Lǔ when he sees a “tilting vessel” (*yī qì* 欹器). Confucius recognizes the movements of the vessel, but rather than seeing them as natural expressions of dialectical reversals, viewed the state of fullness as one of excess and so something to be guarded against. With moderation—in Confucius' view—one can avoid being “emptied out.” For a translation, see Eric L. Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 318. Other passages mentioning the tilting vessel appear in the *Discourses of the Confucian School* (*Kǒngzǐ jiāyǔ* 孔子家語), *Hán shī wài zhuàn* 韓詩外傳, *Huáinánzǐ* 淮南子, and *Wénzǐ* 文子. In the last two texts and those with Daoist leanings, Confucius' remarks on the tilting vessel shift toward Daoist explanations of the dialectic of “reversing” (*fǎn* 反).

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# Chan and the Routinization of Charisma in Chinese Buddhism



Mario Poceski

## 1 Introduction

One of the most important developments in Chinese religious life during the late medieval period was the emergence of Chan 禪 and its subsequent growth into the premier tradition of elite Buddhism in China. This had manifold ramifications and long-lasting effects not only on the religious and cultural landscapes of China, but also on the general growth of Buddhism in other parts of East Asia, especially Japan and Korea. Over the recent decades, much has been written on different aspects of that history, as well as on various facets of Chan doctrine, literature, and institutions. Nonetheless, many lacunae or areas of imperfect understanding remain, in terms of the larger picture as well as the smaller details of this fascinating chapter in Chinese religious history.

This chapter is primarily conceived as a broad sketch of Chan's protracted growth and transformation, with a focus on a crucial period that covers the Tang 唐 (618–907) and the Song 宋 (960–1279) eras. Specifically, it examines the larger developmental trajectory of the Chan tradition through the conceptual lens of Max Weber's (1864–1920) theory of the routinization of charisma (*Veralltäglicung des Charisma*). Its focus is on the mapping of changing notions of authority and exemplary religiosity, especially the images and functions of prominent Chan masters, as bearers of tradition and embodiments of distinctive Buddhist ideals. It also ties those vagaries to larger institutional developments, both within the Chan School and in relation to its place within Chinese society. That kind of analysis helps ascertain some of the major factors that shaped the historical growth and transformation of Chan, during what are unarguably the most significant phases of its historical development.

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During the formative stages of Chan's development, which roughly corresponds to the Tang era, there was a plethora of approaches to doctrine and practice. At that time, Chan was a widely diffused and somewhat heterogeneous movement led by charismatic monks, which overall didn't adhere to a rigid orthodoxy or narrow soteriological outlook. In contrast, by the Song era, Chan matured into a state-sanctioned orthodoxy with a narrow conception of religious authority. At its center, there was the office of the Chan master, which implied membership in a distinct Chan lineage imbued with mystical power and authority. Effectively, in lieu of a (somewhat) iconoclastic tradition that was largely based upon the authority of charismatic monks who challenged or reframed established religious norms, Chan turned into a linchpin of state-sanctioned orthodoxy centered around officially certified religious functionaries, whose authority rested on an institutionalized model of spiritual lineage. That was further buttressed by a fixed technique of contemplative practice, codified rules for monastic life, and an authoritative canon of (quasi-)sacred texts that was subjected to routinized modes of exegesis.

## 2 Weber's Theoretical Model

Weber's influential theory of the routinization of charisma is a key feature within his larger discussion of the main models of authority and leadership, which can be applied to religion as well as to other types of social and political institutions. In his formulation, the basic notion of charisma builds on early Christian writings, where charisma is described as something that is divinely conferred. Charisma is thus a gift of grace, bestowed by God to certain individuals or groups. Within Weber's system, he expands on this basic meaning, using the term in a more general sense, as a key sociological concept that describes a unique personal quality, which is especially related to the central issues of authority and legitimacy. According to his oft-cited definition,

[Charisma refers to] a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.<sup>1</sup>

In Weber's influential writings, the main or paradigmatic bearer of individual charisma is the prophet, the most important among the three main types of religious leaders (the other two being the magician and the priest). As an exceptional individual who possesses unique charisma, "by virtue of his mission" the prophet "proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment."<sup>2</sup> This can either involve the renewal or retelling of older traditions, or the founding of a new dispensation. Proclaiming a compelling vision of truth or an integrated system of meaning, the revolutionary and transformative power of the prophet's mission is grounded in his unique personality and appealing message. That inspires others to respect and follow him, thereby forming a strong master-disciple relationship.<sup>3</sup>

Within this conceptual scheme, the legitimacy of charismatic leadership is primarily based on belief in the prophet's possession of extraordinary gifts and unique qualities, which go well beyond the abilities of ordinary people. These can include magical powers, heroic disposition, inimitable wisdom, or divine inspiration.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the prophet's mission is not based or dependent on any extraneous human agency,<sup>5</sup> nor is it a direct reflection of the prevailing social and economic orders. In that respect, he stands in opposition to the priest (or clergyman), who as a religious functionary and member of an organized church or community only possess institutional charisma that is strictly based on his office, rather than on any personal qualities.

As a key form of religious or social authority, charismatic authority and leadership do not follow general norms, which Weber generally puts into the categories of "traditional" and "rational." Most importantly, charismatic rule can serve as an effective agent of historical change, holding a revolutionary potential inasmuch as it is not bound by fidelity to the existing order.<sup>6</sup> However, once the prophet passes away, inevitably there is a process of gradual transformation, whereas his original charisma becomes routinized and institutionalized. The routinization of charisma involves transformation of the prophet's original vision into fixed forms or formulaic teachings, namely a process of traditionalization. That is accompanied with the establishment of enduring religious communities and institutions, led by priestly bureaucracy. It is such religious congregations that curate and transmit the founder's supposed message by means of formalized creeds and fixed administrative structures.<sup>7</sup> These, in turn, tend to become integrated into the existing economic and political orders.

Weber's well-known model is mostly based on European history and experience, notwithstanding his admirable efforts to adopt a broad perspective and engage with non-European traditions, including Buddhism and Chinese religions. Obviously, some aspects of it cannot be readily fitted into the religious and social landscapes of medieval China. For instance, the figure of the prophet cannot readily be transposed into the Chinese context, or simply equated with the Chan master or other types of Buddhist saints, even though within Weber's system the Buddha is cited a prime example of an "exemplary prophet," one of the two main categories of prophets. Nonetheless, with appropriate caveats and modifications, Weber's theoretical template can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of important developmental trajectories in Chan history. Namely, it can help us ascertain how a tradition whose initial rise to prominence was largely predicated on the individual creativity and charisma of its leaders, eventually turned into a narrowly constructed orthodoxy, with its own canon and a tightly controlled institutional framework that was firmly embedded into the sociopolitical status quo of Song China.

### 3 Foundation of a Tradition

The inception and formative growth of Chan involved complicated historical processes that unfolded over an extended period. As suggested by the tradition's name, Chan (lit. "meditation") initially developed within the context of medieval monastic

communities with a contemplative orientation, such as those led by Daoxin 道信 (580–651) and Hongren 弘忍 (601–674). Later, these two meditation masters, both active in Hubei 湖北, were retroactively recognized as the fourth and fifth Chan patriarchs in China, respectively. They are usually identified as leaders of the so-called East Mountain tradition (Dongshan famen 東山法門), one of the earliest distinguishable groups within the nascent Chan movement.<sup>8</sup> While both monks were known for their introduction of some novel ideas and approaches, on the whole their meditation teachings were based on canonical models and did not deviate radically from other contemplative practices popular in seventh century China.<sup>9</sup>

With the development of a budding consciousness of Chan as a distinct tradition within Chinese Buddhism, there were growing concerns about the intertwined issues of origin and legitimacy. An important component in the fashioning of a distinctive identity was the advent of the notion of spiritual lineage, which over the centuries led to the construction of increasingly complex genealogical models. While monks associated with the nascent Chan movement certainly saw themselves as members of the larger Buddhist tradition, the preoccupation with spiritual ancestry was related to a growing concern about the drawing of lines of distinction between Chan and the rest of Buddhism, including schools of Buddhism with a contemplative orientation such as Tiantai 天台. That led to convoluted processes of lineage construction, as evidenced by the content of early Chan chronicles such as *Lengqie shizi ji* 楞伽師資記 (Record of the Teachers and Disciples of the Laṅkāvatāra), compiled by Jingjue 淨覺 (683–750),<sup>10</sup> *Lidai fa bao ji* 歷代法寶記, compiled in Sichuan circa 774,<sup>11</sup> and *Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳 (Baolin Biographies), compiled by Zhiju 智炬 (dates unknown) in 801.<sup>12</sup>

After decades of experimentation with various genealogical schemes, by the ninth century there was an emergent consensus centered around the well-known lineage of twenty-eight Indian and six Chinese patriarchs (*zu* 祖; sometimes translated as ancestor).<sup>13</sup> In addition to the Buddha, who according to Chan mythology is said to have originally transmitted the mysterious flame of awakening to his disciple Mahākāśyapa,<sup>14</sup> a pivotal figure within the central genealogical scheme and the evolving narrative of early Chan origins was Bodhidharma (Putidamo 菩提達摩, c. early sixth century). The actual historical legacy of Bodhidharma, a somewhat obscure meditation teacher born in India, is largely shrouded in mystery.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, over the centuries his legendary role as a key patriarch and crucial transmitter of Chan from India to China became a centerpiece of Chan/Zen ideology and identity, not only in China but also in Korea, Vietnam, and Japan.

During the eighth and ninth centuries, the Chan tradition increased its geographical blueprint and religious influence throughout the sprawling Tang Empire. Noted Chan masters such as Shenxiu 神秀 (606?–706) and Puji 普寂 (651–739), the leaders of the Northern School (Bei zong 北宗),<sup>16</sup> and Heze Shenhui 荷澤神會 (684–758), the divisive champion of the Southern School's putative orthodoxy, became prominent clerics in the two Tang capitals and attracted many disciples among the sociopolitical elite. Many more, such as Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–

788), the famous leader of the Hongzhou School 洪州宗, and his disciple Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (749–814), were active in the provinces.<sup>17</sup> As a whole, during this era the Chan movement tended to be heterogeneous and lacking an independent institutional structure. Nonetheless, there were overlapping spiritual orientations, shared perspectives on doctrine and practice, and critical stances towards assorted aspects of popular Buddhist piety that created a loose sense of unity and common purpose.

In that sense, while the boundaries between Chan and the rest of Buddhism tended to be somewhat fuzzy, there was a protracted process of forging a unique identity, largely centered around the potent image of the Chan master as a member of a distinct group of religious virtuosos. Among the central issues during this formative stage of historical growth, discussed in some of the early sources, is the basic identity the Chan master (*chanshi* 禪師) and the relationship between Chan and canonical (or mainstream) Buddhism. For instance, there is a record of discussion on this theme between Bo Juyi 白居易 (772–846; also known as Bai Juyi), the famous poet, and Xingshan Weikuan 興善惟寬 (755–817), a prominent disciple of Mazu who was active in Chang'an 長安, the main imperial capital. While accepting Bo's basic premise that Chan masters form a distinctive group, Weikuan goes on to point to the fundamental coherence and unity of Buddhism, which subsumes three main traditions: Chan (meditation), canonically based teachings (Dharma), and the Vinaya (monastic regulations), each represented by different types of prominent monks.<sup>18</sup>

Within the medieval Chinese context, there were many factors that contributed to the appeal of Chan, especially among the monastic and sociopolitical elites. That included the attractiveness of its doctrines and practices, which subsumed several different approaches to spiritual cultivation and contemplative lifestyle. Without going into the details, in the present discussion, it is important to note that the Chan School's rise to prominence was to a large degree predicated on the individual charisma of its leaders. That is clearly communicated in the relevant extant records, such as the stele inscriptions (*beiming* 碑銘), the records of sayings (*yulu* 語錄), and the hagiographies of eminent monks (*gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳).<sup>19</sup> While we have to be mindful of the conventions of the genres in which they were written, as well as the agendas of their authors and the communities that commissioned them, these records clearly lay stress on the unique religious personas and individual charisma of prominent Chan teachers such as Shenxiu and Mazu, which greatly influenced the growing popularity of the Chan school.

If we go back to Max Weber's tripartite typology of authority,<sup>20</sup> we can say that prominent Chan masters embodied traditional as well as charismatic religious authority, with a greater emphasis on the second. Their possession of traditional authority was based on their senior membership in the monastic order. That was further reinforced by the rarefied content of their religious message, which (for the most part) resonated with canonical traditions and established worldviews, notwithstanding the novelty of some of its parts. In their teachings, prominent Chan masters such as Puji and Weikuan combined knowledge of canonical texts and contemplative expertise, while being able to introduce new perspectives on familiar

Buddhist paradigms. The same was true of other prominent Chan monks, who made public displays of their mastery of these and other relevant areas of monastic expertise, including philosophical acumen and thaumaturgic prowess.<sup>21</sup>

More importantly, prominent Chan masters were also conspicuous bearers of charismatic authority, which as noted above disrupts established mores and traditions, and instead relies on the unique personal qualities of the religious leader. This was a prime aspect of their religious authority, which went long way towards legitimizing the Chan School within the wider religious landscape of Tang China. Such authority was largely predicated on a shared belief that Chan masters had singular insights into the true nature of reality, as well as uncommon abilities to communicate their inspired vision to others. We are thus faced with a balancing act that brings together two main elements: the potentially transformative or subversive power of the Chan master's personal charisma and unique message, along with his role as a particular type of exemplary monastic who draws on the revered authority of hallowed traditions. Accordingly, the Chan master was able to act outside as well as within the parameters set by existing norms and institutions, challenging as well as embodying normative monastic values and traditions.

#### 4 Plethora of Approaches and Perspectives

Notwithstanding the formation of a common identity, bolstered by notions about distinct spiritual ancestry and shared perspectives on doctrine and practice, among the most conspicuous features of Tang Chan is the sheer proliferation of lineages/schools/traditions.<sup>22</sup> Various Tang sources, including the writings of Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780–841),<sup>23</sup> depict a fairly unbounded and heterogeneous movement, within which it is possible to identify several doctrinal perspectives and diverse approaches to spiritual cultivation. Occasionally, those differences are expressed in partisan terms, especially in the context of ongoing competitions among different groups or lineages. A prime example of that are the aggressive—and largely self-serving—campaigns against the Norther School, undertaken by Shenhui during the middle part of the eighth century.<sup>24</sup> But that kind of acrimonious squabbles over orthodoxy were exceptions rather than the norm, and Shenhui and his followers were rightly criticized for their divisiveness and partisanship.<sup>25</sup> Generally, the dominant tone and attitude, prevalent with the main Chan milieus, were an embrace of diversity and a stated commitment to an open-ended quest for ultimate truth, which in the final analysis is ineffable and cannot be captured by any creed, dogma, or institution.

Among other things, early Chan records convey a sense of openness to experimentation with various meditation techniques, set against the theoretical backgrounds of the major systems of Mahāyāna doctrine.<sup>26</sup> Pertinent examples include Hongren's advocacy of the practice of "guarding the mind" (*shouxin* 守心) and Daoxin's "one practice *samādhi*" (*yixing sanmei* 一行三昧).<sup>27</sup> The same goes for Shenxiu's teaching about the "contemplation of mind" (*guanxin* 觀心). For instance,

in *Po xiang lun* 破相論 (Treatise on the Obliteration of Characteristics)—also known by the alternative title *Guanxin lun* 觀心論 (Treatise on the Contemplation of Mind)—this contemplative approach is depicted as an all-inclusive method that encompasses all practices and leads to the realization of awakening.

心者萬法之根本。一切諸法、唯心所生。若能了心、則萬法俱備。猶如大樹、所有枝條、及諸花果。皆悉依根而始生。及伐樹去根而必死。若了心修道、則省力而易成。不了心而修道、則費功而無益。故知一切善惡、皆由自心。心外別求、終無是處。

The mind is the basis of all phenomena.<sup>28</sup> All phenomena are solely produced by the mind. If one is able to comprehend [the true nature of] the mind, then the myriad practices are [all] perfected. It can be compared to the branches, flowers, and fruits of a large tree. The existence of all of them depends on the roots. If someone were to cut down the tree and get rid of the roots, then surely [they will all] die out. If one were to engage in spiritual cultivation [on the basis of] realizing the mind, then one can easily reach the goal with little effort. If one were to engage in spiritual cultivation without realizing the mind, that [will lead to] lots of wasted effort, without any [real] benefit. Therefore, it should be known that all good and evil [ultimately] can be traced back to one's own mind. It is completely off mark to seek [truth or liberation] outside of the mind.<sup>29</sup>

In its depiction of an inclusive practice centered on direct contemplation of the mind, this passage highlights two key points. First, there is the basic idea about the mind's role in the construction of phenomenal reality, which is primarily linked with the Yogācāra tradition of Mahāyāna philosophy (Yuqixing 瑜伽行; often referred to as Weishi 唯識). Second, there is the assertion that a genuine experience of spiritual awakening involves direct comprehension of the true nature of the mind, which points in the direction of the Buddha nature theory. That supposedly brings about perfection of the myriad practices, which are described in detail in Buddhist canonical literature. The above passage thus illustrates how, alongside the articulation of specific approaches to contemplative practice, the records of Tang-era Chan present a variety of doctrinal perspectives. In that sense, the above passage is fairly unremarkable, as that is a common feature of many Chan records from the Tang era.

While the philosophical reflections and soteriological formulations put forward by Shenxiu and other major Chan masters from the Tang era include new attitudes and viewpoints, for the most part they intersect with the major doctrinal systems of Mahāyāna philosophy, as presented in various canonical texts and elaborated by Chinese scholiasts such as Jizang 吉藏 (549–623), the famous exponent of the Middle Way doctrine and main thinker associated with the San Lun 三論 (Three Treatises) school. These include the theoretical frameworks and philosophical tenets of the Middle Way (S: *Madhyamika*; C: *zhong guan* 中觀), Yogācāra, and Tathāgatagarbha (C: *rulaizang* 如來藏) traditions. These connections are highlighted in Zongmi's writings about Chan, in which he correlates—albeit in a somewhat forced and oversimplified manner—the teachings of specific Chan schools (or lineages) with each of the three main systems of Mahāyāna philosophy that originally developed in India.

For instance, in *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序 (Preface to the Collected Explanations of the Chan Source)—meant to serve as a preface to a Chan canon that is not extant—Zongmi links both the Hongzhou School and the Heze School 荷澤宗 of Shenhui, which he claimed to represent, with the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine, which he places at the highest position in his taxonomy of Buddhist teachings (*panjiao* 判教). Similarly, he links the teachings of the Niutou 牛頭 School with those of Middle Way philosophy.<sup>30</sup> Putting aside some of the problems with Zongmi's analysis, which are largely related to his agenda of establishing a sense of hierarchy among the main schools of Chan, the main point here is that there was flourishing of varied doctrinal and soteriological perspectives within the burgeoning Chan movement.

Such penchant for creative ecumenicalism and diversity of outlook is illustrated by the passage presented below. It is excerpted from *Wuxin lu* 無心論 (Treatise on No-mind), a fairly short manuscript which was uncovered among the Dunhuang documents.<sup>31</sup> While its provenance is uncertain, it seems probable that this little-studied text originated within the general milieu of the Niutou School.<sup>32</sup> As indicated by its title, the text elaborates on the practice of no-mind (*wuxin* 無心), a key concept that also appears in other Chan texts from the Tang era. No-mind implies a pure state of mind that is devoid of the usual emotional responses and mental activities that gives rise to dualist thoughts. It also implies realization of the emptiness of all phenomena, which is perfected by the cultivation of radical non-attachment and non-abiding. Given that ultimate reality is ineffable and ungraspable, proper practice involves abandonment of all conceptual constructs, including all ideas about the true nature of reality. Here are a couple of brief excerpts that touch upon these ideas.

夫至理無言。要假言而顯理。大道無相、為接龐而見形...

The ultimate principle cannot be expressed by means of words. However, we need to deploy words in order to manifest the principle. The great way (Dao) is without form, but in terms of conventional reality, there is perception of appearances....<sup>33</sup>

定是無心。只為眾生妄執有心、即有一切煩惱、生死、菩提、涅槃。若覺無心、即無一切煩惱、生死、涅槃。是故如來、為有心者、說有生死。菩提、對煩惱得名。涅槃者、對生死得名。此皆對治之法。若無心可得、即煩惱菩提、亦不可得。乃至生死涅槃、亦不可得。

Positively, it is [just] no-mind. It is only because individuals (lit. “living beings”) are falsely attached to the notion of having a [substantive] mind, that there are all those [misconstrued ideas about] afflictions, samsara, awakening (*bodhi*), and nirvana. If they awake to [the recondite reality] of no-mind, then all [provisional designations such as] afflictions, samsara, and nirvana are no more. Therefore, the Tathāgata speaks about samsara to those who [mistakenly cling to the idea] of having mind. We can talk about awakening only in contrast to the afflictions. We can talk about nirvana only in contrast to samsara. All of them are expedient antidotes [meant to facilitate the removal of delusion]. If there is no [substantive] mind, then there are also no afflictions and awakening. Likewise, [all provisional designations], including samsara and nirvana, are unobtainable.<sup>34</sup>

The point of view presented in *Wuxin lu* contrasts with ideas featured in some other Chan texts. One such example is the oft-cited notion about “perception of [the



true] nature” (*jian xing* 性) that supposedly exists in each person, which appears many times in the *Platform Scripture of the Sixth Patriarch*, or *Liuzu dashi fabao tan jing* 六祖大師法寶壇經.<sup>35</sup> According to that point of view, each person is endowed with a true mind that constitutes his/her real nature. Enlightenment consists of immediate realization, or “seeing” (*jian* 見), of this innermost essence within oneself. In contrast, *Wuxin lu* argues that there is no true essence or substantive “mind” to be found anywhere, which tallies with the basic philosophical stance of the emptiness (S: *śūnyatā*; C: *kong* 空) doctrine.

In *Wuxin lu* and other Niutou texts—as well as in some texts associated with the Hongzhou school, including the records of Baizhang—we find the advocacy of doctrinal and soteriological standpoints that resonate with the classical Middle Way teachings about emptiness.<sup>36</sup> That stands in contrast to the embrace of one-sided and essentializing interpretations of the Tathāgatagarbha theory—found in other Chan texts, including the writings of Zongmi—which posit the existence of primordial true mind within each person. Within that theoretical paradigm, the attainment of awakening is effectively reduced to the realization of this kind of essential reality within oneself, rather than by emptying the mind of all conceptual constructs, including fixed notions about the character of ultimate reality.

Putting aside the finer theoretical details and the relative merits of individual doctrinal positions or articles of faith, the main point relevant to the present discussion is that during the Tang era the Chan movement was highly heterogeneous and imaginative. It encompassed a variety of theoretical and practical approaches to spiritual cultivation. These were articulated by charismatic Chan masters who were open to experimentation and ready to challenge established creeds and traditions, even as they still operated within the monastic mainstream. For the most part, they were weary of attaching to narrow dogmas or exclusivist conceptions of religious orthodoxy, thereby embracing a spirit of creative engagement and soteriological flexibility.

## 5 Critique of Narrow Conceptions of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

Chan texts presenting the purported sayings and ideas of prominent masters from the Tang era contain many instances of trenchant critiques of delimited conceptions of religious truth, encompassing both orthodoxy and orthopraxy. These are expressed in a variety of ways, often in the form of criticisms of all form of fixations and attachments, apparent and subtle, including preset notions about definitive truth and rigid formulations of a singular path to awakening. This kind of outlook is primarily based on acceptance of the basic notion that ultimate reality is ungraspable and ineffable, being beyond all words, concepts, and views. Accordingly, all religious teachings, including those promulgated in the scriptures and expressed by the Chan masters, are only provisional formulations, in accord with the well-known



Mahāyāna notion of *upāya* (*fangbian* 方便), often translated as skillful means. That does not necessarily mean that specific doctrinal formulations or methods of spiritual cultivation should not be deployed, as appropriate to circumstances or individual needs. However, they should never be attached to, or singled out as providing a unique access to a realization of absolute truth.

That being the case, all teachings and practices are not real in any absolute sense, being merely provisional constructs or heuristic devices. They are primarily meant to point towards ultimate reality—or nudge individual practitioners towards a transcendental direction—which is described as being beyond dualistic views and conventional frames of cognizance. What is more, those same teachings and practices can even become problematic or counterproductive, when they turn into rigid dogmas or objects of grasping. When that happens, even the most revered elements of the Buddhist path can end up becoming obstacles to clear vision and genuine transcendence. Accordingly, all Buddhist teachings and practices, including those articulated by prominent Chan masters, are meant to facilitate the mind's divestiture from established conceptual frameworks and habitual patterns of thought, thereby opening the way for new and (supposedly) unmediated ways of experiencing reality.

This kind of rarefied perspective—which points to the elitist character of the Chan movement—is articulated in number of passages from the records of major Chan teachers from the Tang era. In those texts we find inventive formulations of distinct approaches to Buddhist spirituality, positioned in relation to the oft-cited “sudden” (*dun* 頓) paradigm, which are embedded into larger narratives that showcase the representative features of classical Chan literature. At the same time, their basic tenor resonates with ideas presented in select canonical texts, as well as with viewpoints that had general currency within the elite intellectual milieu of Tang Buddhism. Here is an example from the record of Huangbo Xiyun 黃檗希運 (d. 850?), which forms his response to a question about the Buddha and his salvific activity.

凡所有相、皆是虛妄。若見諸相非相、即見如來。佛與眾生、盡是汝作妄見。只為不識本心、謾作見解。纔作佛見、便被佛障。作眾生見、被眾生障。作凡、作聖、作淨、作穢等見、盡成其障。障汝心故、總成輪轉。猶如獼猴放一捉一、無有歇期。一等是學、直須無學。無凡無聖、無淨無垢、無大無小。無漏無為。如是一心中、方便勤莊嚴。聽汝學得三乘、十二分教。一切見解、總須捨却。

“Whatever possesses any characteristics is unreal.<sup>37</sup> If [a person] perceives that all characteristics [we ascribe to phenomena] are not [real] characteristic, that is the same as perceiving the Tathāgata (Buddha).”<sup>38</sup> “Buddha” and “living beings,” they are all false views created by you. When you do not know the original mind, you are deceived into giving rise to [various] conceptions. When you engender a view of “Buddha,” you become obstructed by that [delimiting view of] Buddha. When you engender a view of “living beings,” you become obstructed by that [delimiting view of] living beings. Whatever views you create—about ordinary people and sages, or purity and defilement—they all turn into obstructions. Obstructing your mind, they cause the continued transmigration in samsara. It is like a monkey throwing one thing and picking up another, without any respite. At the initial stage there should be learning, but [eventually] you need to go beyond learning.<sup>39</sup> [Then, there are] no ordinary persons and no sages, no purity and no impurity, no large and

no small. It is untainted and unconditioned. “One practices single-mindedly like that, aided by expedients means.”<sup>40</sup> I have heard that you have studied the three vehicles and the twelve kinds of teachings [incorporated in the Buddhist canon]. They are all [mere] conceptions, and all of them should be given up.<sup>41</sup>

Instead of advocacy any specific philosophical standpoint, soteriological dogma, or contemplative technique, Huangbo offers a critique of all conceptual constructs or formulations of truth, and calls for the abandonment of all views. In several other passages, he advises his audience not to be attached to any specific doctrinal viewpoints or practice. That includes key elements featured in conventional formulations of the Buddhist path, such as the six perfections that constitute the core of the Bodhisattva path, as well as all other practices, all of which he puts into the category of provisional teachings.<sup>42</sup> Instead, he advocates the state of non-abiding (*wuzhu* 無住). He also encourages the cultivation of non-attachment (*wuzhuo* 無著) and non-seeking (*wuqiu* 無求), including any search for absolute truth outside of the mind.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout his records, Huangbo also calls for realizing a state of no-mind (*wuxin* 無心), which involves the ending of conceptual proliferation and wayward mental activity, without quite explaining how to get there in any systematic fashion. Importantly, throughout his sermons and discussions with disciples, he is not indicating a commitment to a narrowly constructed program of spiritual training, not to mention sole reliance a specific meditation technique. This rather unstructured and open-ended approach to Chan practice and realization tallies with what we find in the records of other Chan masters from the same era, including Dazhu Huihai 大珠慧海 (fl. 8th c.) and Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (749–814).<sup>44</sup> That stands in stark contrast to the visions of Chan orthodoxy and orthopraxy that became dominant during the Song era.

## 6 Evolving Institutions and Networks of Patronage

As was already pointed out, among the core articles of faith and linchpins of Chan/Zen ideology is the oft-cited notion of a mythical lineage that connects various generations of Chan masters into an unbroken line of transmission, which supposedly goes back to the historical Buddha. The notion of Chan lineage(s) was already present in nascent forms during the early Tang era, eventually coalescing into the aforementioned classical scheme of twenty-eight Indian and six Chinese patriarchs, which first appeared in *Baolin zhuan* (composed in 801). The traditional Chan conception of lineage evolved and became increasingly institutionalized during the Northern Song period, in part as a reflection of growing concern with highlighting the distinctiveness and supposed superiority of Chan in relation to the rest of Buddhism.

Prominent expressions of a growing preoccupation with lineage as a source of religious legitimacy and authority are the well-known genealogical schemata, which were used to highlight the illustrious spiritual ancestry of individual Chan

masters by situating them within a putative line of transmitters of the essence of Buddhism, viz. the experience of awakening. Chan genealogies also served as central organizational frameworks in the construction of important Chan texts belonging to the transmission of the lamp (*chuan deng* 傳燈) genre, which purported to chronicle the history of Chan. Representative examples include *Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Record of the Lamp's Transmission from the Jingde Era),<sup>45</sup> compiled in 1004, the best-known example of the genre, and *Zu tang ji* 祖堂集 (Hall of Patriarchs Collection), composed half a century earlier and then lost, only to be rediscovered in the modern era.<sup>46</sup>

The focus on lineage helped create an ahistorical sense of continuity within the Chan tradition, linking important early Chan masters from the formative and classical periods—roughly covering the Tang and the Five Dynasties (Wudai 五代, 907–960) eras—with prominent champions of Chan orthodoxy active during the Song era. That concealed important ruptures and paradigm shifts within a multifarious Chan movement, which unfolded during the Tang–Song transition. In effect, it created an illusion of continuity and homogeneity to what were essentially different Chan traditions. Continued acceptance of such distortions of evolving attitudes, teachings, and practices continues to impede the understanding of the larger developmental trajectories that marked Chan's convoluted history. Among other things, it obfuscates the very real and consequential differences that separate the dissimilar Chan traditions that flourished during the Tang and Song eras, even though harkening back to the perceived glories of Tang Chan was among the distinguishing features of Song Chan. Those divergences are reflected in several key areas, including doctrinal outlook, soteriological approach, textual production, and institutional arrangement.

The fundamental differences that separate Tang Chan from its Song counterpart were not the results of a sudden paradigm shift. Rather, they were products of protracted and multifaceted historical processes, which covered all the major areas noted above. They were closely linked to shifting patterns of patronage, which reflected important changes in the overall situatedness of Chan within the religious landscape, with important influences also emanating from the social and political spheres. At the core, there was a transformation of Chan into the main tradition of elite and court-centered Buddhism, with prominent Chan monks coming to occupy central positions in Chinese society. Of course, from early on there were important Chan monks, such as Shenxiu 神秀 (606?–706), being invited to the capital(s) and offered royal patronage,<sup>47</sup> but the situation that obtained from the tenth century onward was quantitatively and qualitatively different.

This process became prominent in the aftermath of the Tang dynasty's collapse, as the rulers of the new states established close links with prominent Chan monks and became key patrons of the lineages associated with them. That led to the establishment of close linkages between the Chan School and key nexuses of imperial power, with prominent Chan masters coming to accrue great prestige and wield influence within the newly formed states.<sup>48</sup> The same process continued after the unification of China under the Song dynasty in 960, as prominent Chan masters solidified and enhanced their status as standard-bearers of Buddhist orthodoxy. That

led to the formation of distinct religiopolitical networks, centered around intimate alliances between select Chan clerics, the imperial court, and other members of the sociopolitical elite. Among the most consequential results of these developments was an increasing embeddedness of Chan into the sociopolitical structures of China, with important ramifications for Chan teachings, practices, and institutions.

These changes were reflected in several key areas. For instance, there were significant developments in the realm of textual production, especially notable in the creation of new Chan genres such as the records of sayings (*yulu* 語錄) and the *gong'an* 公案 (J: *kōan*; lit. “public case”) collections.<sup>49</sup> There were also important developments in the institutional arena, with lasting ramifications for the subsequent history of Buddhism in China and beyond.<sup>50</sup> These are reflected in the increasing codification and formalization of monastic life and practice, especially at the elite level, which tended to be dominated by the Chan School. Relevant sources that help us ascertain the contours of these developments include legal documents, monastic hagiographies, and the Chan monastic codes (*qinggui* 清規, lit. “rules of purity”), such as *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries), compiled in 1103.<sup>51</sup>

The monastic codes, some of them compiled under imperial auspices, were meant to codify sets of regulations for special religious establishments designated as “Chan monasteries” (*Chan yuan* 禪苑 or *Chan si* 禪寺). During the Song era, that turned into an official designation, bestowed by the government to major publicly recognized monasteries associated with the Chan school.<sup>52</sup> That was a key part of the state’s extensive efforts to regulate and control Buddhism, which included a host of measures such as the registration and classification of monasteries, and the supervision of ordinations. The designation of Chan monasteries was linked to the earlier institution of a system of “public monasteries” (*shifang conglin* 十方叢林), which were under official state control. These included pretty much all the largest and most important monastic establishments in the empire, the majority of which were identified with the Chan School.

An important facet of the operation of elite monastic institutions during the Song era was the selection of abbots. There were several factors that affected this process, but among the key determinants was the ability of government officials to either influence or control the selection process. In many instances, that meant the involvement of local officials, but there were also examples of a prominent Chan master being appointed to an abbacy directly by the royal court.<sup>53</sup> A major stipulation for all Chan monasteries, which de facto meant most public monasteries, was that the new abbot had to be recognized as an official member of a Chan lineage. Consequently, the Chan master came to act as a sanctioned religious functionary, a prominent prelate endorsed by the state, rather than an independent spiritual virtuoso whose authority was to a large extent based on his personal charisma and unique vision.

The development of a distinct Chan identity, along with the institutional foundations that underpinned it, were to a large degree reliant on (and shaped by) the Song government’s patronage and promotion of the Chan School. The close connections between the Chan School and the Song state contributed greatly to the

proliferation of official Chan monasteries and the solidification of Chan's status as the main tradition of elite monasticism. However, there were also some less savory aspects and (perhaps unintended) consequences of such close relationship. For instance, given the power and prestige associated with the abbacy of a major monastery—which included opportunities for career advancement and personal enrichment, along with control of wealth belonging to the monastery—the selection of abbots opened the way to various machinations and abuses. Among other things, that included the selling of abbotships or the acceptance of bribes by local officials who controlled the selection process.<sup>54</sup>

Additionally, given that official membership in a Chan lineage was a basic prerequisite for the securement of abbotship, the procurement of an inheritance certificate (*sishu* 嗣書) became a major preoccupation for ambitious clerics. Such certificates were a peculiar feature of Chan Buddhism invented during the Song era, meant to attest that the recipient was a valid member of a Chan lineage, with the implication that he—and in rare instances she—was an enlightened sage and a bona fide Chan master. That apparently opened the way for various abuses, as keen but unscrupulous monks assorted to various machinations in order to secure the requisite credential, which would put them in a position to advance their clerical careers thought the procurement of a position of an abbot, preferably at a large and influential monastery.<sup>55</sup>

## 7 Singular Approach and Narrowing of Vision

The mainstreaming of Chan and the standardization of its institutions during the Song era were corelated with the tradition's increasingly tightfitting integration into the social and political systems of imperial China, which aided its procurement of a dominant position within the religious landscape. The institutionalization of Chan during this period, which can be seen as a continuation of developmental trajectories already evident during the Five Dynasties epoch, went together with an unambiguous trend towards increasingly rigid formalization of its teachings and practices. In practical terms, that meant the amalgamation and mutual reinforcement of several key areas—teachings, practices, institutions, literary endeavors, and systems of patronage—each of which affected the others in complex patterns of reciprocal interactions and causal linkages. Among the end results of the confluence of these varied factors were conspicuous trends towards standardization of practice and narrowing of vision, observable in the prevailing constructions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Traditionally, some of the best-known ideological stances and rhetorical strategies associated with the classical Chan traditions are linked with major masters from the Tang era. However, typically we are dealing with texts and ideas developed in Song milieus, which were retroactively imputed to earlier historical figures and traditions. These were parts of an overall legitimizing strategy—which was not always fully overt or deliberate—that was largely based on highlighting the

uniqueness of Chan and its separateness from the rest of Buddhism. That involved the creation of a distinct identity that moved towards a sectarian direction, even though Chinese Chan never morphed into a fully blown sect along the lines of the later Zen sects in Japan.<sup>56</sup> These kinds of attitudes are reflected in the oft-cited adage that describes Chan as a “separate transmission apart from the [canonical] teachings, which does not depend on words and letters” (教外別傳, 不立文字).

The narrowing of vision and tightening of the parameters of orthodoxy are readily observable in the life and teachings of Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163), the best-known and most influential Chan master from the Song era. Dahui was a prominent member of the dominant Linji school 臨濟宗, and well as a chief architect and promoter of the acclaimed meditation technique of observing the critical phrase. Often referred to as the practice of *kanhua* Chan 看話禪 (J: Kanna Zen; K: Ganhwa Seon),<sup>57</sup> this technique became the main form of Chan meditation, especially associated with Linji Chan. Before long, it was transmitted to Korea and Japan, and to this day it remains a major form of meditation practice in East Asian Buddhism. That is especially the case in Korea, where it is the emblematic type of contemplative technique promoted by the dominant Jogye order 曹溪宗, which presents it as the pinnacle of Seon/Zen orthodoxy, to be safeguarded with what is often tantamount to fundamentalist fervor.

For reasons of space, I cannot go into details about Dahui’s overall view of Chan. However, let me point a couple of relevant issues. First, while Dahui can definitely be described as a promoter of Chan-centered orthodoxy, his exclusivist attitudes did not stop there. Among other things, he is well known for his harsh and trenchant critiques of the alleged heresy posited by the main (and arguably only) alternative approach to Chan practice current at the time, the so-called “silent illumination” (*mozha* 默照) Chan advocated by the resurgent Caodong School 曹洞宗, under the leadership of Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 (1091–1157).<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, it was not only that Chan was to be recognized as the orthodox version of Buddhism, but it also had to be primarily—or even solely—identified with the teachings and practices of Dahui and his Linji lineage.

We cannot be certain about the exact motives behind Dahui’s manifest penchant for divisiveness and self-assertion. Cynical interpretations could point towards keen competition for patronage. There is also the possibility that he was driven by personal ambition, centered around a desire to bolster his position as the preeminent Chan master of his generation and the ultimate arbiter of Chan orthodoxy. More charitable readings of his monastic career could also suggest the presence of sincerely held convictions about the putative superiority of his singular approach, which echoed deeper concerns over authority and legitimacy in Song Chan.

More importantly, this kind of circumscribed conception of Chan orthodoxy was primarily expressed in terms of an even more restricted conception of Chan orthopraxy. Namely, Chan was essentially reduced to the *kanhua* method of contemplative practice. Intense concentration on the *huatou*—bolstered by a growing sense of doubt (*yi* 疑)—thus became the alpha and omega of Chan practice—or even of Buddhist spirituality as a whole—purportedly expressed in its purest and most potent form. In Dahui’s one-dimensional formulation, single-minded

dedication to a specific technique became the only path to spiritual awakening, to the exclusion of all other contemplative practices.<sup>59</sup>

Such delimiting attitude was accompanied with a tendency to gloss over or dismiss other traditional practices, including ritual chanting and philosophical reflection, as mere elements of an inferior “gradual” (*jian* 漸) approach. Even the traditional form of seated meditation was to be downplayed or avoided.<sup>60</sup> Instead, Dahui advocated the sole practice of his (purportedly) sudden approach, centered on the *kanhua* technique. Additionally, he suggested that the singular approach advocated by him not only led to the experience of sudden awakening (*dun wu* 頓悟), but also constituted a unique form of sudden practice (*dun xiu* 頓修),<sup>61</sup> even though what he described was essentially a gradual process of perfecting a concentration technique, linked with an essentialist interpretation of the Buddha nature theory.

This is not a time or space for a nuanced assessment of the potential merits or demerits of Dahui’s approach to Chan meditation, or to Buddhist teachings and practices more generally. For the present purpose, the most salient point is that Dahui’s uncompromising advocacy of the *kanhua* technique was a major step in the formalization and standardization of Chan practice, which ended up being immensely influential in terms of the later history of Chan/Zen across East Asia. Such narrow and inelastic conception of contemplative practice, or spiritual cultivation more broadly, also fitted with other important developments that came to the fore during the Song era, including the codification of Chan literature, institutions, and exegesis. The multivalent processes of routinization and standardization reflected, as well as reinforced, the prominent position of Chan in relation to the sociopolitical status quo. At the same time, they also meant a loss of some of the key elements that infused earlier Chan traditions with unusual openness, creativity, and vitality.

## 8 Changing Role and Image of the Chan Master

In the previous pages, I traced and sketched certain threads in the long and complex history of Chan, with the stated intent of relating some of the major developmental trajectories to Webber’s theory of the routinization of charisma. Over the course of about half a millennium, the Chan tradition was formed and transformed in a number of ways, small and large, with varied impacts on the general course of Chinese religious life. These vicissitudes are reflected in the evolution of assorted communal memories, beliefs, practices, texts, and institutions associated with Chan Buddhism. Many of the notable changes were results of internal dynamics within Chan, but we also need to be mindful of the ever-present influences from the outside, including the prevalent patterns of patronage, the state’s policies towards Buddhism, and the horizons of expectation prevalent among prominent segments of the social and political elites.



Some of these complex historical processes started during the Tang era, and then evolved or matured under the Song. Others were unique products of specific Song milieus, shaped by forces that can be located both within and outside of the Chan School. Eventually, they coalesced into the formation of a highly standardized Chan tradition, with bureaucratized institutions, codified “sacred” literature, regimented rituals, and a singular method of contemplative practice. The palpable distinctions between Tang and Song conceptions of Chan orthodoxy and orthopraxy are evident in a number of areas, but perhaps nowhere as much as in the divergent images of the Chan master as an exemplar of particular type of Buddhist spirituality.

The historical records about prominent Chan masters from the Tang era convey a sense of intellectual openness and religious creativity, as well as willingness to experiment with new paradigms and question all sorts of ideas and traditions. The archetypal Chan master comes across as a unique type of spiritual virtuoso, whose authority is largely based on his personal charisma and the power of his vision. While still largely operating within the religious mainstream, he is able and willing to challenge established norm and suppositions. He is also prone to warn of the dangers of attachment to any kind of fixed dogma or narrow conception of orthodoxy.<sup>62</sup>

While it may be unfair to say that there were no creative elements or room for individual charisma in Song Chan, undoubtedly the image of the Chan master underwent notable changes during this period. Within the new formulation, by and large the Chan master functioned as an ecclesiastical functionary in a highly formalized monastic system, which was regulated by the Song state. His ascendancy to such role was largely predicated to a standardized process of certification, in which senior Chan masters functioned as primary gatekeepers. Typically, the rise in clerical status was closely linked with the procurement of abbotship, which was supervised or controlled by the secular authorities. Within such system, religious authority was largely based on holding the concurrent positions of a Chan master and an abbot, with official blessings from the imperial government.

These markers of religious leadership were accompanied with expectations about the Chan masters’ mastery of a repertoire of cultural and religious skills deemed appropriate for high-ranking prelates, including literary expertise and facility to provide guidance in the practice of a preset meditation technique. Of course, it is possible to unwittingly minimize the formal elements of Tang Chan, or to overemphasize the ossification that evolved during the Song era. However, overall, we can readily identify steady processes of traditionalization and standardization, which involved the routinization of charisma, especially as reflected in the changing roles and images of leading Chan masters. This is among the relevant variables, I would argue, that helps us understand better the multifaceted changes that unfolded within (and around) the Chan tradition during the Tang-Song transition, with lasting impacts on the later history of Buddhism in East Asia.



## Notes

1. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. (A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, trans. New York: The Free Press, 1964) (orig. 1947 ed.), 358–359.
2. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*. Ephraim Fischhoff, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 46.
3. Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 295; Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 52.
4. Max Weber, *From Max Weber*, 296.
5. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 51.
6. Max Weber, *From Max Weber*, 296.
7. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 60–62, 70.
8. See John McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 30–43, 118–47.
9. Mario Poceski, “Conceptions and Attitudes towards Contemplative Practice within the Early Traditions of Chan Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 28 (2015a), 81–85.
10. T 2837, vol. 85. For a Japanese translation and a study of its contents, see Yanagida Seizan, *Shoki no zenshi I: Ryōga shijiki, Denhōbōki* 初期の禅史I—楞伽師資記, 傳法寶記 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1971), 49–326, and Yanagida Seizan, *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū* 初期禅宗史書の研究 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), 47–100. For an English translation, see J. C. Cleary, *Zen Dawn: Early Texts from Tun Huang* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1991), 19–78.
11. For Japanese and English translations, see Yanagida Seizan, *Shoki no zenshi II: Rekidai hōbōki* 初期の禅史II—歷代法寶記 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1976), and Wendi Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 300–405, respectively.
12. For the extant version of the Chinese text, see Yanagida Seizan, *Sōzō ichin hōrinden, dentō gyokuei shū* 宋藏遺珍宝林伝、伝灯玉英集 (Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1975). For its missing sections, see Shiina Kōyū 椎名宏雄, “Hōrinden itsubun no kenkyū” 宝林伝逸文の研究, *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō gakubu ronshū* 駒澤大學佛教學部論集 11 (1980a): 234–257, and Shiina Kōyū, “Hōrinden makikyū makijū no itsubun” 宝林伝卷九卷十の逸文, [*Komazawa daigaku*] *Shūgaku kenkyū* [駒澤大學]宗學研究 22 (1980b): 191–198.
13. For the early constructions of Chan genealogies, see Elisabeth Morrison, *The Power of Patriarchs: Qisong and Lineage in Chinese Buddhism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 51–87, and Mario Poceski, “Bo Juyi’s Memorial Inscription for Chan Teacher Weikuan,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 31 (2018):49–60.
14. *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 1, T 2076: 51.205b26–c6. There are many other texts that contain variant versions of the same story.

15. See John McRae, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Genealogy, and Transformation in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 22–33, John McRae, “The Hagiography of Bodhidharma: Reconstructing the Point of Origin of Chinese Chan Buddhism,” in *India in the Chinese Imagination: Myth, Religion, and Thought*, edited by John Kieschnick and Meir Shahar (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 125–138, Yanagida Seizan, “Goroku no rekishi: Zen bunken no seiritsu shiteki kenkyū” 語録の歴史—禪文献の成立史的研究, *Tōhō gakuho* 東方學報 57 (1985): 255–323, and Mario Poceski, “Conceptions and Attitudes towards Contemplative Practice within the Early Traditions of Chan Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 28 (2015): 73–76.
16. For more on the Northern School, see John McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, and Bernard Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy: A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
17. For a detailed historical study of the Hongzhou school, see Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For Baizhang’s life and legacy, see Mario Poceski, “Monastic Innovator, Iconoclast, and Teacher of Doctrine: The Varied Images of Chan Master Baizhang,” in *Zen Masters*, edited by Steven Heine and Dale Wright (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–32, and Steven Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Koan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999).
18. Mario Poceski, “Bo Juyi’s Memorial Inscription for Chan Teacher Weikuan,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 31 (2018): 64–66.
19. For a survey of the main Chan genres, with a focus on Tang and Song-era literature, see Mario Poceski, *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 93–132.
20. Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, 328.
21. For the role of thaumaturgy in Tang Chan, see Mario Poceski, *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature*, 62–77, and Mario Poceski, “Chan narratives about death premonitions and avoidance of fate,” *International Journal of Divination and Prognostication* 2 (2019): 304–308, 314–315.
22. The primary sources deploy several terms, such as *zong* 宗 and *pai* 派, which depending on context can convey a range of meanings. Accordingly, I use several English-language terms to express this kind of semantic ambiguity, which I vary according to context.
23. For Zongmi’s writings on Chan, see Jeffrey Broughton, *Zongmi on Chan* (New York: Columbia University, 2009) and Peter Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 224–252.

24. See John McRae, “Shen-hui and the Teaching of Sudden Enlightenment,” in Peter N. Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1987), 246–250.
25. Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 100–102.
26. For a survey, see Mario Poceski, “Conceptions and Attitudes towards Contemplative Practice within the Early Traditions of Chan Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 28 (2015): 67–116.
27. Bernard Faure, “The Concept of One-Practice Samādhi in Early Ch’an,” Peter N. Gregory, ed., *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1986): 99–128; John McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1986), 136–138; Mario Poceski, “Conceptions and Attitudes towards Contemplative Practice within the Early Traditions of Chan Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 28 (2015): 81–85.
28. The technical term *fa* 法, often used to translate the Sanskrit dharma, can refer to both phenomena and practices (or methods of spiritual cultivation).
29. *Po xiang lun* 破相論, in *Shaoshi liumen* 少室六門 1, T 2009: 48.366c21–27; for an alternative translation, parts of which I consulted when doing this one, see John McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, 207–208. Additionally, see *Guanxin lun* 觀心論, T 85.1271c14–20, and Bernard Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy*, 60–61.
30. Peter Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, 210–212, 224–225; Jeffrey Broughton, *Zongmi on Chan*, 26–37.
31. T 2831, vol. 85. The original manuscript is preserved in the British Museum (Stein manuscript 5619). For an English translation, see Urs App, 1995.
32. Traditionally, the text is attributed to Bodhidharma, as indicated at the beginning of the Dunhuang manuscript. However, it seems that such authorship attribution is not based on historical reality. The text appears to be of a later provenance, probably from the mid-Tang period. See Urs App, “Treatise on No-Mind: A Chan Text From Dunhuang,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 38/11 (1995): 76–79.
33. T 2831: 85.1269a23–24.
34. T 2831: 85.1269b26–c2.
35. T 2008, vol. 48; see also T 2007, vol. 48. In the widely used Yuan dynasty edition of the text, which is longer than the oldest version from Dunhuang, the term *jianxing* appears thirty-three times (per my count).
36. For pertinent examples from the records of Baizhang, in which he adopts Middle Way perspectives, see Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism*, 207–219.
37. Or, to put it into another way, all phenomena are unreal, since they lack any essential nature or immutable substance.

38. These two sentences are a quotation from the *Diamond Scripture*. *Jingang bore boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經 1, T 235: 8.749a24–25.
39. The sentence postulates the distinction between two types of practitioners: those who are at the stage of learning/practicing, and those who have transitioned to a higher stage that transcends learning.
40. This sentence is a quotation from the *Scripture of Brahmā's Net*, where it appears as two lines in a long verse. *Fan wang jing* 梵網經 2, T 1484: 24.1010a8.
41. *Huangboshan duanji chanshi wanling lu* 黃檗斷際禪師宛陵錄 1, T 2012B: 48.384c4–12. For a different (and a bit dated) translation, see John Blofeld, *The Zen Teaching of Huang-po on the Transmission of Mind* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 71.
42. *Huangboshan duanji chanshi chuanxin fayao* 黃檗山斷際禪師傳心法要, T 2012A: 48.379c–380a, 48.384b; Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way*, 201.
43. T 2012A: 48.381a7–8.
44. For Baizhang's conception of Chan doctrine and practice, see Mario Poceski, "Monastic Innovator, Iconoclast, and Teacher of Doctrine: The Varied Images of Chan Master Baizhang," 20–25, and Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way*, 193–219.
45. T 2076, vol. 51 (in 30 fascicles).
46. Since the text was lost, only to be rediscovered in the twentieth century, it is not included in major editions of the Buddhist canon. There are several modern editions, such as those published by Zhonghua shuju in 2007 (2 vols.) and Yuelu shushe in 1996, as well as facsimile of the original version included in the ancient Korean canon.
47. John McRae, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Genealogy, and Transformation in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 45–54.
48. Benjamin Brose, *Patrons and Patriarchs: Regional Rulers and Chan Monks During the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).
49. See Mario Poceski, *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature*, 111–126.
50. For the transition from Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen, see Steven Heine, *From Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen: A Remarkable Century of Transmission and Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
51. X 111.875a–942a. For an English translation of the first seven fascicles, see Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan Qinggui* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002). For a Japanese *yomikudashi* translation, see Kagamishima Genryū 鏡島元隆, et al., trans. *Yakuchū: Zennen shingi* 訳註—禪苑清規 (Tokyo: Sōtōshū Shūmichō, 1972). See also Griffith Foulk, "Chanyuan qinggui and Other 'Rules of Purity' in Chinese Buddhism," in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, eds., *The Zen Canon: Understanding the*

- Classic Texts* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 275–312, and Mario Poceski, “The Creation of Monastic Codes and the Gradual Transformation of Medieval Chinese Buddhist Monasticism,” in *Rules of Engagement: Medieval Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Regulations*, edited by Susan Andrews, Jinhua Chen, and Cuilan Liu (Bochum: Projektverlag, 2017), 163–196.
52. Morten Schlütter, “Vinaya Monasteries, Public Abbacies, and State Control of Buddhism Under the Song Dynasty (960–1279),” in William Bodiford, ed., *Going Forth: Visions of the Buddhist Vinaya* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 152–157.
  53. Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 70–73.
  54. Morten Schlütter, “Vinaya Monasteries, Public Abbacies, and State Control of Buddhism Under the Song Dynasty (960–1279),” 148–149.
  55. Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 63. A major source of information for these practices, cited by Morten Schlütter, is the diary of Dōgen Kigen 道元希玄 (1200–1253), the celebrated founder of the Japanese Sōtō 曹洞 sect.
  56. While each of the Japanese Zen sects assumed complete institutional independence, such situation never developed in China, where Chan always remained integrated into the main monastic order.
  57. For the development of *kanhua* Chan, see Robert Buswell, “The ‘Short-cut’ Approach of *K’an-hua* Meditation: The Evolution of Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism,” in Peter N. Gregory, ed. *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1987), 321–377, and Morten Schlütter, “*Kanhua* Meditation in Chinese Zen,” in Halvor Eifring, ed., *Asian Traditions of Meditation* (University of Hawaii Press, 2016), 165–184.
  58. For Dahui and his campaign against the heresy of silent illumination, see Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 104–121.
  59. Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 116.
  60. Morten Schlütter, “*Kanhua* Meditation in Chinese Zen,” 168–169.
  61. Robert Buswell, “The ‘Short-cut’ Approach of *K’an-hua* Meditation: The Evolution of Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism,” 348–349.
  62. Perhaps needless to say, here I am writing in very general terms, and it is possible to find exceptions to the generalized image of a Chan master I am outlining in the context of the present discussion.

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# Rhetoric in the *Platform Sūtra* and the Development of “Encounter Dialogue” in Chinese Zen



Morten Schlütter

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

A monk asked Huineng: “What kind of person can obtain the essential intent of the Fifth Patriarch?”

The master said, “Someone who understands the Buddha’s teachings.”

The monk said, “Has Your Reverence obtained it?”

The master said, “I don’t understand the Buddha’s teachings.”<sup>2</sup>

The above dialogue from the Yuan-dynasty (1279–1368) edition of the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*<sup>3</sup> between Huineng 惠能 (638–713), the main protagonist of the text, and an unnamed monk will be readily understood by many modern readers as a Zen dialogue or “kōan,”<sup>4</sup> an enigmatic, seemingly non-sensical, sometimes shocking, and often paradoxical Zen Buddhist verbal exchange.<sup>5</sup> Huineng is recognized in all of East Asian Buddhism as the pivotal Sixth Patriarch of Zen from whom the entire Zen school descends: he was a Chinese living Buddha to who was transmitted the wordless essence of the Buddha’s enlightenment by the Fifth Patriarch, Hongren 弘忍 (601–674), who himself had received it in an unbroken lineage going directly back to the historical Buddha in India through the mystical figure of the Brahmin Bodhidharma (Putidamo 菩提達摩, fifth century).<sup>6</sup> If anyone could claim to embody the Buddha’s teachings it would be Huineng, and so his answer above, that he does not “understand the Buddha’s teachings,” is both puzzling and disconcerting. However, in the context of its Zen Buddhist genre, Huineng’s answer is an expression of his enlightened mind and must be true.

Many generations of Zen practitioners have pondered kōans like this one and, since the twelfth century, used them as objects of formal meditation. Some are

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understood to have, in a flash of enlightened insight, mentally broken through their kōan and seen their own inherent Buddha-natures, ultimately becoming heirs to Huineng's lineage and Zen masters in their own right. Thus, this kind of dialogue has come to be considered central to all the East Asian Zen schools and virtually synonymous with Zen itself.

My focus in this essay is actually not the kōans themselves but “encounter dialogue” (*jiyuan wenda* 機緣問答).<sup>7</sup> “Encounter dialogue” describes an exchange like the one above that takes place between a Zen master and someone else—whether a monastic student, a Buddhist master from another tradition, or a lay visitor, etc., and it is found widely in Zen literature from the tenth century onward. It is only when an encounter dialogue becomes the subject of commentary by a later Zen master that it becomes considered a kōan. “Encounter dialogue” is a neologism, and although it clearly is a distinct genre of Zen literature, there is no consistent traditional label for it; it can be difficult to define or identify in general terms, and it tends to be something that “you know when you see it.”<sup>8</sup>

Although cases of encounter dialogue were later ascribed to early Zen figures such as Bodhidharma and Hongren, sources near contemporary to them do not contain encounter dialogue, and it did not come into common use in Chinese Zen until the tenth century. The first publication that has encounter dialogue as a major feature is the 952 *Zutang ji* 祖堂集 (Collection from the Patriarchs' Hall), and it is also here we first find the encounter dialogue with Huineng cited above.<sup>9</sup> Even this work was never widely circulated in China; instead the *Jingde chuangdeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Transmission of the Lamp from the Jingde era) from 1004,<sup>10</sup> which sharpened some of the dialogues found in the *Zutang ji* and included many new ones, became the standard source for encounter dialogue in Zen Buddhism—even as later collections added to the corpus.

In this essay, I will argue that the *Platform Sūtra* holds a special place in the history of the development of encounter dialogue. The orthodox Yuan-dynasty edition of the text cited at the beginning of this essay was in fact the last major version of the *Platform Sūtra* in a long line of evolution that started 500 years earlier, beginning with the earliest extant version of it that was found in the cave library at Dunhuang and dates back to ca. 780.<sup>11</sup> Together, the different versions of the *Platform Sūtra* can tell us much about the early stages of encounter dialogue and its later development.

In an influential article from 2000, the late John McRae discusses the antecedents to encounter dialogue as found in early Zen works.<sup>12</sup> McRae suggests very plausibly that the quirky questions by early Zen figures recorded in the ca. 716 *Lengqie shizi ji* 楞伽師資記 (Record of the Masters and Disciples of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra), as well as dialogues and certain rhetorical strategies found in other early Zen works, helped set the stage for the development of encounter dialogue. However, McRae does not address the possibly crucial role of the earliest extant version of the *Platform Sūtra*<sup>13</sup> and other sources about Huineng that are contemporary with it. But it seems very likely that the early *Platform Sūtra* and stories about Huineng held an important role in shaping the genre of encounter dialogue and ushering it into prominence within the Zen tradition. Furthermore,



since the *Platform Sūtra* is extant in several quite different versions that appeared from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries, by studying changes in the text we can make some interesting inferences about the development and place of encounter dialogue in Chinese Zen.

## 2 Encounter Dialogue and Kōan in Chinese Zen

Much has been written about kōans and encounter dialogue and there have been many interesting attempts at analyzing how Zen masters have used them as pedagogical devices to help their students experience enlightenment.<sup>14</sup> Of course, from the perspective of the Zen tradition, any statement that tries to explain encounter dialogue will inherently be off the mark, because, paradoxically, the truths that are contained in them are beyond words. Encounter dialogue can be understood as Zen's attempt to use language to transcend the limitations of language, and it is conceived both as a tool that can inspire enlightenment in students and as an expression of a profoundly enlightened state of mind itself.<sup>15</sup>

By the eleventh century, commentary on encounter dialogue (kōan commentary) had become an important element of the sermons of Chinese masters, as can be noted from collections of their recorded sayings (*yulu* 語錄).<sup>16</sup> The cases of encounter dialogue that were most commonly raised for commentary came from the *Jingde chuandeng lu* and were almost all attributed to Zen masters from the "golden age" in the ninth century and earlier. Also, whole collections of multi-layered kōan commentary by a particular Zen master, usually with one hundred cases, such as the famous *Biyan Lu* 碧巖錄 (*The Blue Cliff Record*) completed in 1128,<sup>17</sup> became extremely popular reading among monastics and lay people alike.

However, the Chinese Zen tradition is far from monolithic, and encounter dialogue has been understood and used in many different ways within it.<sup>18</sup> Although, in some ways, encounter dialogue follows a relatively strict formula, at the same time it can also be highly innovative, and the master's punchline can take on an almost infinite variety of styles and forms. The punchline of some encounter dialogues can seem utterly mundane, if non-sequitur, like in this example with the famous Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778–897):

A monk asked: "I am confused and beg the master for instruction." The master said: "Have you had your morning porridge?" The monk said: "Yes, I have." The master said: "Then go wash your bowl." The student had a sudden experience of enlightenment.<sup>19</sup>

A master's punchline may also seem shockingly close to sacrilegious as in this dialogue which has a monk ask Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (862/4–949): "What is [the Buddha] Shakyamuni's body?" and Yunmen answers: "A piece of dried shit."<sup>20</sup> A punchline may also be non-verbal or even violent; in one story, a master hacks a cat in two, and in another, a master breaks the leg of a student by slamming a heavy gate on him (causing the student to have a great enlightenment).<sup>21</sup>

Eventually, the encounter dialogue and kōan commentary tradition gave rise to a new form of meditation in the Chinese Zen School. Around 1134, the famous Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163) began to instruct his students to reflect intensely on the punchline of an encounter dialogue during meditation.<sup>22</sup> Dahui most often instructed his students to use the story about Zhaozhou answering “no” when asked if a dog has the Buddha nature, which seems to contradict the almost universal understanding in Chinese Buddhism at the time that all sentient beings have the Buddha nature:

A monk asked Zhaozhou: “Does a dog have the Buddha-nature?” Zhaozhou answered: “No!” (無 *wu*, Jpn.: *mu*). This one word is exactly the knife that cuts off the cycle of birth and death. When deluded thoughts rise just hold up the word “no/wu.” Keep holding it up no matter what and suddenly there will be some definitive news, and you will return to your original home and sit at peace. Outside this there is nothing very special [you need to do].<sup>23</sup>

According to Dahui, this technique would generate a “big ball of doubt” that eventually would burst into a moment a great enlightenment.<sup>24</sup> *Kanhua* Chan 看話禪, as this came to be called, quickly became the standard form of meditation in Chinese Zen and also became an essential practice in Korean Zen and the Japanese Rinzai Zen school.

Although encounter dialogue can be difficult to delineate, I would like to present a stipulative definition that I believe works in most cases and that I will use for the purposes of this essay. Encounter dialogue must first of all take place between a Zen master (or in a few cases, someone similarly accomplished) and an interlocutor, typically a student, whose insight as a general rule is not up to the level of the master. Secondly, the interlocutor functions as a foil for the Zen master and usually starts by asking a question to which the master responds; there may be several back-and-forth exchanges, but, lastly, the Zen master usually delivers the punchline and has the final word (although sometimes an enlightened interlocutor gets the last word, which then typically is acknowledged by the Zen master). The punchline is to be understood as an expression of the enlightened Buddha mind, no matter how strange, disturbing, or enigmatic it may seem, and is also a challenge to the audience, and the readers of the dialogue, to see their own Buddha minds for themselves.

As seen above, it is sometimes noted after an encounter dialogue that the student had a great enlightenment as soon as the master had spoken (言下大悟). This creates a kind of immediacy and sense of the present, that heightens the realism of the dialogue and serves to give its readers a feeling of participation.

An issue that is often discussed in literature on Zen is whether, or to what degree, the encounter dialogues we now have available in written form derive from actual conversations between two people recorded by others present at the moment, or whether they are later literary creations. Many scholars seem to have assumed that, at least, the genre of encounter dialogue reflects an oral practice that took place in Zen monasteries in the Tang, and that most, if not all encounter dialogues are written versions of real conversations.<sup>25</sup>

It is not possible or necessary to go into detail with this question here, but it should be noted that encounter dialogues involving Huineng, like the one above, only appear in extant sources several hundred years after he passed away, and it seems clear that they are later attributions, as is the case with other early Zen masters. Although encounter dialogue famously has many vernacular features that normally would never be used in Chinese Buddhist writing, it actually displays a sanitized kind of literary orality that would have been both acceptable and appealing to the educated secular elite that was the main audience for Zen literature.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, there are actually fairly few cases of encounter dialogue overall associated with early Zen figures, whereas encounter dialogue associated with Zen Masters of the later Tang dynasty are abundant, which could indicate that encounter dialogue really did become an important feature of Zen in the Tang and later.

However, no matter what the origin of ancient encounter dialogue, it has come down to us as written text, and it is as *readers* that we, like the many generations of Zen enthusiasts before us, must interact with encounter dialogue. We must acknowledge that traditional encounter dialogue as we can know it is the product of a “writing act,” a literary performance of orality that follows the rules of textual production and of its own genre.<sup>27</sup>

So, we have to approach encounter dialogue as literature, and I believe it is particularly helpful to look at encounter dialogue through the lens of *genre*.<sup>28</sup> I will here skirt the many thorny issues of genre theory, and simply focus on how genres “provide expectations for interpretations.”<sup>29</sup> That is to say, it is the interpretational framework that comes with identifying a piece of writing as belonging to a certain genre that makes it meaningful in a particular way. This identification of genre ultimately resides with the reader (no matter what the intent of the author may have been) and may not always be a conscious act. For example, when encountering a poem in a novel, most readers will effortlessly transition into a different kind of reading simply based on past experience of the genre of “poem,” while a reader who does not recognize it as a poem will read it the same way that she is reading the main text and probably understand it very differently (as well as likely rather confused by it).

Similarly, recognizing the genre of encounter dialogue sets a framework for reading them that makes them meaningful. Encounter dialogue is always found embedded within other genres of text, and must be recognized by the reader to be invested with its special significance. The question-and-answer format, the frequent use of colloquial terms and expressions from oral language not found in formal writing, and the realistic feel of the exchange all help mark the genre. The general thrust of the genre demands that we read encounter dialogue as records of real exchanges between Zen masters and their interlocutors, and that we understand the punchline to be an expression of a transcendent insight—no matter how enigmatic, puzzling, or shocking that punchline may be.

I also think it is helpful to expand our definition of encounter dialogue by distinguishing between two kinds. The first is what I have discussed above and which is sometimes referred to as mature or “proper” encounter dialogue, which

features a punchline that to almost anyone will appear enigmatic, puzzling, and often unsettling. It is this kind of encounter dialogue that is usually focused on in writings on Zen, and I will call this “disruptive encounter dialogue.” However, it is helpful to include a second type of encounter dialogue, in which the Zen master’s punchline points to a deeper truth that may not have been obvious to the listener and, therefore, has a startling quality to it, but that nevertheless, on reflection, will be potentially understandable to someone familiar with Buddhist doctrine and Zen ideas. Other scholars have sometimes referred to this as a “proto-encounter dialogue” or “immature encounter dialogue,” but I will call this type “wisdom encounter dialogue.”

Although wisdom encounter dialogue developed first and clearly was a necessary precursor to disruptive encounter dialogue, we should resist a teleological triumph narrative, where wisdom encounter dialogue is seen as preparational and immature and disruptive encounter dialogue a sublime, but also logical, final development. In fact, each stage in any line of evolution exists independently and in its own right, and only in retrospect do we see it as a link in a chain and perceive an arc of history. Interesting and captivating as disruptive encounter dialogue is, it was by no means an inevitable development within Zen, and we should be careful not to presume that it somehow was superior to what became before it.<sup>30</sup> We must also note that both types of encounter dialogue co-existed throughout Zen history and that we have some early examples of disruptive encounter dialogue and late examples of wisdom encounter dialogue.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, disruptive encounter dialogue did become increasingly dominant in Zen literature from the tenth century onwards.

I will here treat encounter dialogues not as sources to give us insight into the thought of particular Zen masters but rather as materials that can further our understanding of Zen Buddhism at the time when the texts and collections in which we find them were compiled. It is also important to realize that we cannot understand the Chinese tradition of encounter dialogue and kōans through the lens of Japanese Zen, since there are fundamental differences between the two traditions.

### 3 Encounter Dialogue and Verbal Sparring in the Early *Platform Sūtra*

The earliest extant version of the *Platform Sūtra* is the Dunhuang version from ca. 780, although there may have been even earlier versions that are now lost. At the time the text was produced Chinese Zen was still in its formative stage, and the main agenda of the *Platform Sūtra* clearly was to establish Huineng as the rightful Sixth Patriarch, and the orthodoxy of his “Southern school” of Zen over the heterodox “Northern School” led by the heirs to his rival Shenxiu 神秀 (606?–706).

In all versions of the *Platform Sūtra*, the first part of the text contains a dramatic and unusual “autobiography” relating how Huineng, an illiterate seller of firewood

living in the southern borderlands, is initially enlightened upon hearing someone recite the *Diamond Sutra*.<sup>32</sup> This inspires him to travel to the monastery of the Fifth Patriarch of Chan, Hongren, where, in spite of the fact that Hongren immediately recognizes his deep understanding of inherent Buddha-nature, Huineng is employed as a lowly kitchen worker. Later Huineng decisively proves himself by composing a poem illustrating a supreme insight into the true nature of mind that is vastly superior to the understanding of Hongren's chief disciple, the above mentioned Shenxiu. Then, in the secrecy of night, Hongren gives Dharma transmission to Huineng as the Sixth Patriarch and also transmits the robe of the First Patriarch, Bodhidharma, to him. Fearing that jealous disciples will harm Huineng, Hongren sends him away and tells him to stay hidden for several years. Huineng has to elude those who want to kill him and steal Bodhidharma's robe, and finally escapes. He eventually becomes publicly recognized as the Sixth Patriarch, and the second part of the *Platform Sūtra* records Huineng's sermons and encounters with disciples and others, as well as protracted parting instructions to his disciples before his death.

The Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* contains a considerable amount of dialogue and some of it can be considered wisdom encounter dialogue by the definition I have outlined above. This is highly significant, because, aside from two cases in the records of the monk Shenhui 神會 (684–758), who claimed to be Huineng's disciple, which are in fact repeated in the *Platform Sūtra* (see below), we do not find this kind of dialogue in any Zen text earlier than the *Platform Sūtra*.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the early development of encounter dialogue may be directly associated with the *Platform Sūtra* and its promotion of Huineng and "Southern Zen." Early readers of the *Platform Sūtra* may very well have come away with a sense that the lively narrative and punchline-oriented dialogue in the text was a kind of hallmark of the Southern School, as opposed to the reviled Northern School, and have begun to emulate it. This connection between the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* and emerging encounter dialogue has not been fully explored in previous scholarship.

The first instance of encounter dialogue (although not always recognized as such) in the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* is also the most well-known. It concerns Huineng's first meeting with the Fifth Patriarch, Hongren, after having made the arduous journey to his monastery. Huineng tells the story in the first person:

The Venerable Hongren asked me: "Where are you from? Coming to this mountain to pay your respects to me, what is it that you want from me?" I replied: "I am from Lingnan, a commoner from Xinzhou. I have come this long distance only to pay my respects to you. I am seeking no particular thing, but only to become a Buddha."<sup>34</sup> The Master then reproved me, saying: "If you are from Lingnan then you are a Southern barbarian. How can you become a Buddha?" I replied: "Although people from the south and people from the north differ, there is no north and south in Buddha nature. Although my barbarian's body and your Venerable's body are not the same, what difference is there in our Buddha nature?"<sup>35</sup>

The doctrine of universal inherent Buddha nature was widely accepted in eighth century Chinese Buddhist circles, and Huineng's punchline could hardly have been a surprise to educated readers. However, the conceit of the narrative clearly is that Huineng's answer shows a stunning insight and that Hongren was testing him with

his challenging question. In this way, the reader is somehow in on the story, realizing that Huineng's punchline about the Buddha nature is understood to be startling, and also able to be nodding knowingly.<sup>36</sup> The text goes on to state that Hongren wanted to talk more with Huineng, but seeing other disciples nearby (who clearly wouldn't understand—and who would be jealous as we learn later) he sends him off to work in the kitchen.

This crucial early example of encounter dialogue gives the student the last word. But Huineng is no ordinary student, as Hongren knows right away, and as almost all readers would know even before picking up the text: Huineng is in a very real sense a Buddha in disguise. Still, seemingly leaving the student with the punchline appears to have been disturbing to the compilers of the later *Zutang ji* from 952 (the first work to collect encounter dialogue), and they added a last-word rejoinder from Hongren: "If you already have the Buddha nature why do you seek my instruction?"<sup>37</sup> Huineng is said to have marveled at this answer, but the story with this addition is not found in any other source.

A number of months after Huineng's arrival, Hongren announces to his students that whoever can present him with a verse that demonstrates his, the student's, insight into the original nature of mind will be appointed Sixth Patriarch and receive Bodhidharma's robe. The favored candidate, the chief disciple Shenxiu, unsure of himself, writes a verse on a temple wall in the middle of the night; Hongren praises the verse, but privately tells Shenxiu that he has not reached true understanding yet. Shenxiu's verse said:

The body is the Bodhi tree,  
The mind is like a clear mirror.  
At all times we must strive to polish it,  
And must not let the dust collect.<sup>38</sup>

Huineng, who working in the back of the temple, hears a young monk recite the verse, and immediately knows the writer has not seen his own true nature. He then asks someone to take him to the wall and have them write down a different verse he has composed. Huineng's verse said:

Bodhi originally has no tree,  
The mirror also has no stand.  
Buddha nature is always clean and pure;  
Where is there room for dust?<sup>39</sup>

Hongren recognizes this verse as expressing perfect insight, but to protect Huineng declares it also to be not quite right. However, in the context of the narrative, Shenxiu's verse is clearly understood to represent a gradual "Northern school" approach, whereas Huineng's "Southern school" rejoinder delivers a punchline that is meant to startle and surprise us: the mind is Buddha nature, which cannot be polished because it is inherently pure and complete, and has no substance that can be objectified (thus deftly combining the teachings of Buddha nature and

emptiness). Together, the two verses together function very much like a piece of wisdom encounter dialogue.

The *Platform Sūtra* goes on to describe Huineng's secret transmission as the Sixth Patriarch by Hongren, and eventually how he resides at the monastery at Caoxi. After delivering a lengthy sermon Huineng is asked by a high-ranking official in the audience about a curious exchange between the First Patriarch of Zen, Bodhidharma, and Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (464–549), who was known as a great supporter of Buddhism.

The magistrate said: "I have heard that, when Bodhidharma was teaching the Dharma to Emperor Wu of Liang, the emperor asked Bodhidharma: 'I have spent my whole life up to now building temples, giving alms, and making offerings. Have I gained merit?' and that Bodhidharma answered saying: 'Actually, no merit!' Then the emperor was greatly disappointed and banished Bodhidharma across the border. I don't understand this story and beg you to explain it."<sup>40</sup>

Bodhidharma's punchline answer of "No merit" definitely has a surprising quality to it, because in all of Buddhism doing good works, especially those that benefit the Buddhist establishment, is a crucial source of good karma, or merit. However, Huineng proceeds to give the rational explanation that the Emperor was simply selfishly seeking blessings, and that true merit only comes with the right state of mind. Such a measured comment goes against the spirit of the later encounter dialogue/kōan tradition, where rational explanations are never offered, but nevertheless the dialogue itself can be seen as an early example of wisdom encounter dialogue. In fact, the story is treated like encounter dialogue in the famous *Biyān lu*.<sup>41</sup>

Both of the encounter-dialogue episodes above, but not the verse exchange, are first found in the records of Shenhui.<sup>42</sup> Shenhui was a very well-known monk in his own time who devoted himself to tirelessly promoting Huineng as the Sixth Patriarch of Zen, and to attacking the "Northern school" of Shenxiu for teaching an inferior doctrine of gradual enlightenment and for trying to usurp Huineng's rightful position in the patriarchy. Shenhui presented himself as the main disciple of Huineng, and clearly hoped to be recognized as the Seventh Patriarch. It is very likely that Huineng would never have come to be considered Sixth Patriarch of Zen without Shenhui's efforts. But while Shenhui was ultimately highly successful in promoting Huineng, his own role was largely forgotten.

Aside from the two cases above, the extant texts associated with Shenhui do not contain encounter dialogue. However, much of the material in Shenhui's records consists of dialogue between Shenhui and another party, although in a formal register.

Shenhui's works soon fell out of circulation, and now are almost exclusively known from the Dunhuang manuscript cache, but they were extremely influential in the late eighth century and Shenhui's claims about Huineng and other early Zen figures eventually came to dominate the emerging Zen school. The *Platform Sūtra* was clearly inspired directly by Shenhui's works, as were two other Zen texts created around the same time, the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* 曹溪大師傳 (Biography of



[Huineng] the Great Master from Caoxi)<sup>43</sup> and the *Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記 (Record of the Dharma-Jewel Through the Generations).<sup>44</sup> Both these works promoted Huineng as the Sixth Patriarch of Zen,<sup>45</sup> and both contain the encounter dialogue of Huineng's first meeting with Hongren, although only the *Lidai fabao ji* has the story about Bodhidharma's meeting with emperor Wu of Liang. Together with the *Platform Sūtra*, they mark a new kind of Zen Buddhist text, which aside from some early encounter dialogue also feature sections with a more naturalistic and lively dialogue.

The compilers of the *Platform Sūtra* do not seem to have had any knowledge of the two other works, and their compilers do not seem to have known the *Platform Sūtra* either.<sup>46</sup> Both the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* and the *Lidai fabao ji* became obsolete, probably because of the increasing popularity of the *Platform Sūtra*, and together with Shenhui's works they disappeared from the scene in China.<sup>47</sup>

But although the *Platform Sūtra* is not unique in featuring these early examples of encounter dialogue, it was ultimately highly successful in making them widely known. Furthermore, the early *Platform Sūtra* also contains lively and witty dialogue between Huineng and his disciples, that also has no parallels in earlier Zen works, and also seems more realistic and more hard-hitting than the dialogue found in either the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* and the *Lidai fabao ji*. The very format of these encounters with their relatively colloquial and engaging dialogue form the basis of the encounter dialogue genre, and even if they themselves do not quite qualify as encounter dialogue their inclusion in the *Platform Sūtra* may have had a significant impact on the further development of encounter dialogue in Chinese Zen.

The first example of this is Huineng's encounter with Zhicheng 志誠 (d.u.), who is sent by Huineng's rival Shenxiu to learn about Huineng's teachings and report back to him. However, as soon as Zhicheng hears Huineng preach he is enlightened to his own true nature. He immediately gets up, bows, and declares to Huineng:

"Master, I come from Yuquan Temple, but under my teacher Shenxiu I have been unable to gain awakening. But now, on hearing your sermon, I have awakened to my original mind. I wish that, in your compassion, you would give me instruction." Huineng said: "If you come from that place then you must be a spy." Zhicheng answered: "I'm not!" The Master said: "Why not?" Zhicheng said: "Before I said anything I was a spy, but now I have spoken I am not." The Sixth Patriarch said: "'The very passions are enlightenment' is also like this."<sup>48</sup>

This may not quite qualify as encounter dialogue, but Huineng's seemingly non-sequitur reply is the sort of last word that points to a higher truth, but leaves the audience puzzled. "The very passions are enlightenment" was a common expression that signifies the understanding that everything is ultimately a manifestation of the Buddha nature,<sup>49</sup> but Huineng's meaning in this context is not immediately clear. Interestingly, the orthodox version of the *Platform Sūtra*, which as we shall see added a considerable amount of encounter dialogue, deleted Huineng's reply entirely, as if the compilers felt that it looked too much like encounter dialogue without actually fitting the format for the by then well-established genre.<sup>50</sup> Huineng's conversation with Zhicheng continues with a doctrinal discussion that features a more formal dialogue.



The next episode is with the monk Fada 法達 (d.u.) who had been reciting the *Lotus Sūtra* for seven years, but who was still confused about the true meaning of the text. When he visits Huineng to seek his help, Huineng makes an amusing play on Fada's name (*fa* means "Dharma" and *da* means "reach/penetrate/attain"):

Fada, the Dharma penetrates completely, but your mind does not penetrate.<sup>51</sup>

Huineng then explains that he cannot read, and ask Fada to recite the *Lotus Sūtra* for him, so he can clarify it for him. The shocking implication here is that Huineng is unfamiliar with *Lotus Sūtra*, one of the most fundamental texts of Chinese Buddhism, but also that he will understand it completely as soon as he hears it. Huineng goes on to expound the sūtra for Fada. Then, in another play on words, here with the term *zhuan* 轉 which can mean both "recite" and "turn," he ends by saying:

"Fada, when you practice with the mind you turn the *Lotus*; if you do not practice with the mind, you are turned by the *Lotus*. If your mind is correct you will turn the *Lotus*; if your mind is incorrect you will be turned by the *Lotus*. When [your mind] is opened to Buddha understanding, you will turn the *Lotus*; if [your mind] is opened to worldly beings' understanding, you will be turned by the *Lotus*." The Master said: "If you diligently practice according with the Dharma, then this is turning the sūtra." Fada, upon hearing this, at once gained great enlightenment and breaking into tears he said: "Master, indeed up to now I have not turned the *Lotus*, but for seven years I have been turned by it. From now on I shall turn the *Lotus*, and in each consecutive thought practice the Buddha practice." The Master said: "The very practice of Buddha (enlightenment), this is Buddha." Among those in his audience at that time there was none who was not enlightened.<sup>52</sup>

Again, this is not quite encounter dialogue as I have defined it, but the playful elements and Huineng's last somewhat cryptic remark can perhaps be seen as inspiration for later encounter dialogue. Like in the case above, this remark was not included in the orthodox version: again, probably too much like encounter dialogue without being "real" encounter dialogue.

After this the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* has an episode with the monk Zhichang 智常 (d. u.) who comes to visit Huineng and asks him a question about the Three Vehicles of Buddhism versus the Supreme Vehicle.<sup>53</sup> Here is no back and forth dialogue, but Huineng's answer ends with the challenging and rather abrupt statement: "You yourself must practice, don't come and ask me!"<sup>54</sup>

This is followed by final episode in this section, that describes the first meeting between Huineng and Shenhui, the tireless promoter of Huineng referred to above. Here, however, Shenhui is presented as an overconfident young monk who is put in his place by Huineng.

[Shenhui] asked: "Master, when you sit in meditation, do you see or not? The Master got up and hit Shenhui three times. Then he asked: "Shenhui, when I hit you, did it hurt or didn't it?" Shenhui answered: "It hurt and it also didn't hurt." The Sixth Patriarch said: "I see and I also do not see." Then Shenhui again asked: "Master, why do you see and not see?" The Master answered: "My seeing is always to see my own errors, that's why I call it seeing. My non-seeing is not to see the evils of people in the world. That's why I see and also do not see. What about your hurting and also not hurting?" Shenhui said: "If it did not hurt, I would be the same as an insentient tree or rock. If it did hurt, I would be the same as a

common person, and resentments would arise.” The Master said: “The seeing and non-seeing you asked about just now is dualistic; hurting and not hurting are birth and death. You don’t even see your own nature; how dare you come and toy with me!” Shenhui bowed down several times and did not speak further. The Master said: “Your mind is deluded and you cannot see, so you go and ask a teacher to show you the way. You must awaken with your own mind and see for yourself, and you must practice according to the Dharma. Because you yourself are deluded and you do not see your own mind, you come asking me whether I see or not. My lack of self-knowing cannot take the place of your delusion; even if you see for yourself, you cannot take the place of my delusion. Why don’t you practice for yourself and then ask me whether I see or not?”<sup>55</sup>

The lively repartee in this dialogue seems to foreshadow later encounter dialogue.

The evidence from the *Dunhuang Platform Sūtra* strongly suggests that the wide dissemination of this text may have had a considerable influence on the development of encounter dialogue.<sup>56</sup> With its dramatic narrative that explains why Huineng was the rightful Sixth Patriarch, its early encounter dialogue, and the lively verbal sparring exhibited in Huineng’s encounters with his disciples the text likely made a big impact in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. At the same time, it seems clear that the *Platform Sūtra* was tapping into an emerging genre of encounter dialogue in eighth and early ninth-century Zen, so let us now turn to examples of encounter dialogue in other early Zen sources.

## 4 Other Early Encounter Dialogue

The developments in encounter dialogue that are reflected in the *Platform Sūtra* can also be detected in the two contemporary works, the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* and the *Lidai fabao ji*. Thus, the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* has an episode with Huineng and Shenhui that is similar to the one we have just seen in the *Platform Sūtra*. However, right before this, the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* includes a dialogue not found in the *Dunhuang Platform Sūtra* that seems close to disruptive encounter dialogue:

[The Master] said: “I have a Dharma that is nameless and unlettered, eyeless and earless, bodiless and mindless, wordless and signless, headless and tailless, without exterior or interior, nor with in-between, not going or coming, not green, yellow, red, white or black, neither existent nor non-existent, neither cause nor result.” The Master asked: “What is this?” The assembly looked at each other in pairs, and did not dare reply. At the time there was a young novice monk, Shenhui of Heze Monastery, just in his thirteenth year, who answered: “This is the original source of the Buddha.” The Master asked: “What is the original source?” The novice replied: “The original source is the original nature of the buddhas.” The Master said: “I talked about the nameless and unlettered. How can you say the Buddha-nature has name and letters?” The novice said: “The Buddha-nature is nameless. It was your question that gave it a name. When the name is correct, that is nameless.” The Master then hit the novice several times.<sup>57</sup>

The entry then continues with a dialogue between Huineng and Shenhui about the feeling of pain that parallels the *Platform Sūtra*. However, Huineng’s cryptic question about a formless Dharma, and his violent rejection of Shenhui’s answer presages later disruptive encounter dialogue.

There is another story with encounter dialogue that is also first found *Caoxi dashi zhuan*, and which later in an updated form became the probably most often quoted encounter dialogue associated with Huineng. It takes place after Huineng comes out of hiding and visits the monastery of Dharma Teacher Yinzong 印宗 (627–713) who recognizes him as the Sixth Patriarch of Zen and gives him tonsure as a Buddhist monk. Yinzong is alerted to Huineng's enlightened state of mind in the following episode:

[At Yinzong's monastery] a flag was hung out. The assembly members that night discussed the meaning of the flag. The Dharma Teacher (Yinzong) listened to it through the wall along the corridor. The first discussant had it that the flag is insentient, and moves due to the wind. The second person criticised this, saying: "The wind and the flag are both insentient, so how can they move?" The third person held that they move because of the coming together of causes and conditions. The fourth person said: "The flag doesn't move, the wind merely moves of itself." The members of the assembly argued noisily without stopping. Master Neng, in a loud voice, stopped them, saying: "The flag is unlike the other forms of movement. That which is called "movement" is the mind of the person moving itself."<sup>58</sup>

This is an interesting example of actual encounter dialogue, which does not have any parallel in the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra*, and it shows how encounter dialogue was already in the process of development around 781 when the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* was compiled. The episode is also found in the *Lidai fabao ji*, although in a somewhat different form that suggests the story was circulating early on in a number of different variants.<sup>59</sup> The story was eventually incorporated into the *Platform Sūtra*, as we shall see.

There are other examples of encounter dialogue that are dateable to a time shortly after the *Caoxi dashi zhuan* and the *Platform Sūtra*. Funerary inscriptions for Chinese Zen masters indicate that such encounter dialogue became increasingly common leading up to the 952 publication of the *Zutang ji*, as pointed out by Jinhua Jia.<sup>60</sup>

For example, the epitaph for Jingshan Faqin 徑山法欽 (714–792), written by Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758–814) in 793, records an interesting dialogue between Faqin and a student. The student asks a hypothetical question about two messengers staying at a postal station who heard that the station master was going to slaughter a sheep for them; one went to save the sheep, but the other did not. How would their karmic reward and punishment be different? Jingshan answered, "The one who wanted to save (the sheep) was compassionate, the one who didn't was emancipated."<sup>61</sup>

Also, in the epitaph for Ehu Dayi 鵝湖大義 (746–818), written by the scholar Wei Chuhou 韋處厚 (773–829) in 818, an encounter dialogue between Dayi and the future Emperor Shunzong 順宗 (r. 805) can be found.

[The prince] asked: "What is the Buddha-nature?" [Dayi] answered: "It is the same as that which Your Highness is asking."<sup>62</sup>

It is said that the prince silently gained entry into the enlightened way of the Buddha with these words. Ehu Dayi was a disciple of the famous Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788), who is often presented as the quintessential iconoclastic Zen master, and there are many disruptive encounter dialogues associated with him,

beginning with the *Zutang ji*.<sup>63</sup> Mazu's own inscription from 791, however, does not include any encounter dialogue or anything that reminds us of it.<sup>64</sup>

The *Baolin zhuan* from 801, a work that features the lineage of Huineng but much of which is now lost, may have had several encounter dialogue episodes. One such encounter dialogue has survived in a quotation. It describes how Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓 (677–744), who came to be seen as one of the two the most important disciples of Huineng, visited Laoan 老安 (582–709) (a.k.a. Huian 慧安) who was a disciple of Hongren.

[Laoan] asked: "Why did you come here?" Huairang said: "To pay my respects to you, Venerable." The Master said: "You need the secret function." Huairang said: "What is the secret function?" Laoan did not say anything, but opened and closed his eyes. Huairang immediately had a penetrating enlightenment.<sup>65</sup>

We can conclude that encounter dialogue did not originate with the early *Platform Sūtra*, but rather that the *Platform Sūtra* must have been an important vehicle for promoting it and spurring its further development.

## 5 Encounter dialogue in later versions of the *Platform Sūtra*

After the Dunhuang version, the next extant version of the *Platform Sūtra* was prepared by the monk Huixin 惠昕 (d.u.),<sup>66</sup> and appeared in 967 according to the cyclical date in the preface, although recent research opens the possibility that it was composed before 801.<sup>67</sup> The Huixin version improved on the language of the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* and expanded upon the text and changed it in various ways, but, interestingly, there is little addition of encounter dialogue.<sup>68</sup>

One major change Huixin must have introduced in his version of the *Platform Sūtra* was to Huineng's verse in the contest with Shenxiu.<sup>69</sup> The next-to-last line was changed so that the poem now reads:

Bodhi originally has no tree,  
The mirror also has no stand.  
Fundamentally not a single thing exists,  
Where is there room for dust?<sup>70</sup>

The verse is now squarely referring to the emptiness doctrine, but it is also much more hard-hitting and startling, and it became a signature Zen expression of the enlightened state of mind. A tradition that understood Huineng's verse to include this new line may have come into place well before Huixin's edition of the *Platform Sūtra*, if it indeed dates to 967, since it is cited several times in the *Zutang ji*.<sup>71</sup> Huineng's verse in this form was commented on widely by later Zen masters.

The Huixin edition also expanded on the episode where Hongren secretly gives the transmission to Huineng in middle of the night. In both the Dunhuang and

Huixin versions, Hongren expounds the *Diamond Sūtra* to Huineng, who then has an enlightenment experience.<sup>72</sup> But the Huixin edition adds the specific passage from the *Diamond Sūtra* that causes Huineng's enlightenment, thus making the episode more in line with an encounter dialogue narrative that results in a student's awakening:

When [Hongren] reached "One should generate a mind that are not fixed on anything,"<sup>73</sup> as soon as I heard these words I awakened [and realized that] all the myriad dharmas in this world are not separate from our own true nature.<sup>74</sup>

Also, a scene with interesting dialogue has been added as Huineng is leaving the Fifth Patriarch's community after secretly receiving the transmission. In the Dunhuang version, Hongren takes Huineng down to the Jiujiang (Nine Rivers) station and bids him farewell. However, in the Huixin edition, Hongren and Huineng set off together in a boat to cross the river and when Hongren grabs the oars the following conversation ensues:

I [Huineng] said: "Master, please sit down. It is your disciple who should row." The Fifth Patriarch said: "It is only fitting that I should ferry you over. It cannot be that you ferry me over, there is no such thing." I said: "When your disciple was still deluded, you, Master, had to ferry me over. But now I am already enlightened, it is fitting that your disciple ferry you over, rowing this boat across the river. Although "ferry over" is the same expression, its functions are different. I was born in the border lands and my pronunciation is not correct. You, my first teacher, taught me the essential meaning and gave me Dharma transmission, and I have now attained enlightenment. So it is fitting that with my own true nature I ferry myself over." The Fifth Patriarch said: "So it is, so it is. Because of this insight, Buddhism will later flourish greatly [with you]."<sup>75</sup>

There is another play on words here. What I have translated as "ferry over" (*du* 度) is in Buddhist texts often used to mean "save" or to "cross over someone to the shore of liberation." Thus, this passage serves to further develop the playful, yet serious, nature of the dialogue in the *Platform Sūtra*.

It is interesting there is no real encounter dialogue added in Huixin's edition of the *Platform Sūtra*, although a number of encounter dialogues involving Huineng were circulating well before 967. Also, Huixin did not address the fact that none of the disciples listed in the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* were actually considered important heirs to Huineng in the tenth century, and he did not update the list of disciples in his edition. This could perhaps be seen as a confirmation of a pre-801 compilation date, but it is significant that Huixin's version was often cited, and reprinted with very little editing, well into the twelfth century, indicating that the lack of encounter dialogue was no obstacle to the popularity of the text.<sup>76</sup>

The next major version of the *Platform Sūtra* is the Chao version, a text almost certainly first edited by Chao Jiong 晁迥 (951–1034) in 1031, later found and published by his descendant Chao Zijian 晁子健 (d.u.) who wrote a preface for it in 1153. It is now primarily known from a Japanese printed edition found at the temple Kōshōji 興聖寺 in Kyoto.<sup>77</sup> The Chao version is based on Huixin's edition, and mostly improves on the style, making it conform better to standard literary Chinese.

However, the Chao edition also included two pieces of encounter dialogue, both of which by the time of Chao Jiong must have been circulating very widely.

The first is set after Huineng has received Hongren's transmission and is pursued by Hongren's jealous disciples who want to kill him and steal Bodhidharma's robe. In the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* we hear how a fierce monk by the name of Huiming 惠明<sup>78</sup> (d.u.), a former general, caught up with Huineng. However, when Huineng surrenders the robe Huiming refuses it and declares that he only seeks the Dharma. Huineng then preaches to him and Huiming is immediately enlightened.<sup>79</sup> The Huixin version and the Chao version both have the episode in almost the same words as the Dunhuang version, but at the end of the section the Chao text has a note inserted in small writing:

The Patriarch [Huineng] said to Huiming: "When you don't think of good and don't think of evil, exactly at that time what is your original face?" Huiming had a great enlightenment.<sup>80</sup>

This dialogue first appears in the Huangbo Xiyun's 黄檗希運 (d. 850) *Chuanxin fayao* 傳心法要 which may date back to 857,<sup>81</sup> and was also included in the *Zutang ji*.<sup>82</sup> Chao Jiong may have felt that the dialogue was so well known at his time that he had to include it, even if just in a note.

However, the encounter dialogue with the flag and the wind that was first found in the *Caoxi dashi zhuan*, as seen above, but not included in either the Dunhuang or Huixin versions of the *Platform Sūtra* is in the Chao version fully incorporated into the text. After the episode in the main text with Huiming, the Chao version goes on to tell the story of how Huineng came to Yinzong's monastery and observed the monks argue over the flag and the wind. Here the dialogue is given in a more hard-hitting encounter dialogue fashion:

At the time the wind was blowing and the flag was moving. One monk said: "The flag is moving." Another monk said: "The wind is moving." Huineng said: "It is neither the flag nor the wind moving, it is the human mind itself that moves." Yingzong was startled when he heard this.<sup>83</sup>

In spite of these examples of encounter dialogue added to the *Platform Sūtra*, it seems clear that neither Huixin (nor any of the editors of the subsequent editions of his text) nor Chao Jiong felt any strong need to include much encounter dialogue in their editions of the text. And Chao Zijian who published Chao Jiong's edition in 1153 also did not seem to think anything was missing. His edition was republished at least once, during the period 1200–1205.

The orthodox version is by far the longest of the extant versions of the *Platform Sutra*. We have two editions of this text, first published in 1290 and 1291, respectively. The precursor of the two editions was likely prepared in the late Song dynasty (960–1279), and it drew heavily on the Chao edition of the *Platform Sūtra*, supplemented by material from the *Chuandeng lu* as well as from several other sources.<sup>84</sup> This text became the one legitimate version of the *Platform Sūtra* in China, and all other versions of the text seem to have quickly fallen out of circulation.

The orthodox version of the *Platform Sūtra* includes several pieces of new encounter dialogue, like the one quoted at the beginning of this essay, almost all of which was adopted from the *Chuangdeng lu*. The passages from the earlier *Platform Sūtra* that have already been discussed above have all been preserved in the orthodox *Platform Sūtra*, and in many cases made more elaborate. As already noted, the list of Huineng's disciples in the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* was already completely outdated by the time of the Huixin version repeated it in 967, and none of the disciples mentioned here were in fact considered important much past the eighth century. The orthodox *Platform Sūtra* keeps the list as is, and in fact adds encounters with most of these disciples, and also carefully notes that each of them experienced enlightenment after their exchange with Huineng (with the notable exception of Shenhui).<sup>85</sup> The text also adds a number of encounters with disciples who are not on the list, but who had come to be understood as the main heirs of Huineng already in the eleventh century.

Below I will address Huineng's encounters with Qingyuan Xingsi 清原行思 (d. 740) and Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓 (677–744), the two heirs to Huineng from whom all the later branches of the Zen school were understood to have descended.

[Xingsi], hearing that the Dharma seat at Caoxi was flourishing in educating and transforming students, went straight to pay his respects and did his obeisance. He then asked: "What task should one undertake so as not to [backslide and] fall down the stages?" The master said: "What have you done in the past?" [Xingsi] said: "I have not performed even the sagely truth." The master said: "What stages would you fall down into?" [Xingsi] said: "Without having performed the sagely truth, what stages can there be?" The master was profoundly impressed by Xingsi, and made him the chief among his followers.<sup>86</sup>

The entry then simply says that Xingsi attained Huineng's Dharma and went on to spread the Buddhist teachings and convert people.

The episode with Huairang is quite similar, but also predicts the emergence of Huairang's student Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788), who became a towering figure in Zen lore.

[Huairang] first studied under National Master [Lao]an of Mount Song. Laoan sent him to Caoxi to consult [Huineng]. When Huairang arrived and did his obeisance, the master asked: "Where have you come from?" [Huairang] said: "Mount Song." The master said: "What kind of thing is it that has come like this?" [Huairang] said: "If you say it's like a single thing, then you're off the mark." The master said: "Then can it be cultivated and realized?" [Huairang] said: "It is not that cultivation and realization does not exist, but defilement does not occur." The master said: "Only this kind of non-defilement is the mindfulness maintained by all the buddhas. You are like this, and I am also like this. As Prajñātara of Western India predicted, 'Beneath your feet will come a horse (Ma[zu]), who will trample the people of this world to their deaths.'<sup>87</sup>

We are then told that Huairang experienced a sudden clear comprehension that matched that of Huineng perfectly.

There are a several more examples like this in the orthodox *Platform Sūtra*. However, most of Huineng's encounters with disciples in the orthodox *Platform Sūtra* do not contain encounter dialogue, because the *Chuangdeng lu* which they



were copied from does not contain them. In fact, all the encounter dialogue material associated with Huineng's disciples found in the *Chuangdeng lu* was adopted by the orthodox *Platform Sūtra*.

## 6 Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to show that the early *Platform Sūtra* very likely influenced the later development of encounter dialogue, but also that encounter dialogue was only slowly introduced into the successive versions of the *Platform Sūtra*. I believe this points to some larger issues concerning encounter dialogue and the evolution of Chinese Zen.

First, it is clear that encounter dialogue has roots that reach back to the beginnings of Zen, and that further developments in encounter dialogue took place within the movement to promote Huineng and the "Southern School," likely beginning with Shenhui. By 952, the *Zutang ji* clearly had a rich fount of encounter dialogue to draw from; however, few sources that can be reliably dated to the previous century and a half contain any encounter dialogue. Thus we find no encounter dialogue in the works of Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780–841),<sup>88</sup> and only very little that can be labelled this way in Huangbo Xiyun's 黄檗希运 (d. 855) *Chuanxin fayao* 傳心法要 (Essentials of the Transmission of Mind).<sup>89</sup> The *Zongjing lu* from around 960 also contains relatively little that can be called encounter dialogue; as Albert Welter points out, there is no reason to assume that its author Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–975) was anything other than a fairly typical Zen master of his time.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, it seems clear that the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth century versions of the *Platform Sūtra* were only minimally concerned with encounter dialogue. We have seen how the Huixin version added some extra incidents with snappy dialogue that resembles encounter dialogue, but no actual encounter dialogues. Evidently, this was not seen as a lack in the text since it was republished several times over the next several centuries. The Chao edition, first published in 1153, did include two pieces of actual encounter dialogue that must have been very well known at the time, but otherwise followed the Huixin edition closely and did not add other encounter dialogue although by this time there was an abundance of sources that could have been drawn upon. The Chao edition was also republished, at least once in the beginning of the thirteenth century. All of this points to a relative low concern with encounter dialogue all the way up to the thirteenth century.

The orthodox version of the *Platform Sūtra* that we now know from the Yuan-dynasty editions changes all of that. Now all the encounter dialogue involving Huineng that its compilers could find is included. Although the orthodox version contains about 90% of the text of the Chao version, that text has been considerably rearranged and, of course, added to. The orthodox version quickly became that accepted standard in China, and all the other versions soon fell out of circulation and eventually completely disappeared from China. After the Dunhuang



version of the *Platform Sūtra* was found, and published in 1930,<sup>91</sup> it was mostly rejected as a corrupt or abbreviated edition of the orthodox *Platform Sūtra* (a view still held by some scholars). Clearly, ever since its publication the orthodox version was eagerly embraced in Chinese Zen, reflecting a time from the thirteenth century onward when the Sixth Patriarch could no longer be imagined without the encounter dialogue associated with him.

Encounter dialogue is a fascinating and interesting development in Zen Buddhism, and is very much worth our attention. But we should be careful to put it into its proper context.

## Notes

1. I humbly dedicate this essay to my friend and colleague Steven Heine, in appreciation of his immense contributions to the study of Zen Buddhism.
2. CBETA, T48, no. 2008, p. 358, a10–12. This exchange, in a slight different form, first occurs in the *Zutang ji*, CBETA 2020.Q4, B25, no. 144, p. 347a10–12. In the *Jingde chuandeng lu* the same dialogue is ascribed to Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700–790), CBETA, T51, no. 2076, p. 309, b18–20, however, this version is only found in a few places, whereas the one with Huineng is often repeated.
3. The full title of this version of the *Platform Sūtra* is *Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing* 六祖大師法寶壇經 (The Dharma treasure Platform Sūtra of the great master, the Sixth Patriarch).
4. This is the Japanese term, in Chinese it is *gong'an* 公安. It means a “public case,” an expression taken from the language of law.
5. “Zen” is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese term “Chan” 禪; I am using the better known word “Zen” throughout this essay.
6. Very little is known for certain about Bodhidharma, or about Huineng and any of the other early Zen “Patriarchs”.
7. The earliest occurrence of the English term “encounter dialogue” (Jpn.: *kien mondō*) appears to be in John McRae, “The Ox-head School of Chinese Buddhism: From Early Ch’an to the Golden Age,” in R. M. Gimello and P. N. Gregory, eds., *Studies in Ch’an and Hua-yen* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1983), p. 244, n. 48, where McRae refers to an essay he translated, Yanagida Seizan, “The Development of the ‘Recorded Sayings’ Texts of the Chinese Ch’an School” in Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster, eds., *Early Ch’an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley: Lancaster-Miller Press, 1983), 185–205. However, the Japanese term does not appear in the latter article (although there is a discussion of the first part, “encounter” 機緣). Yanagida does use the term *kien mondō* in his *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), and in several articles, but as far as I am aware he does not give a clear definition of it anywhere.
8. As suggested in John R. McRae, “The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Chan Buddhism,” in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, eds., *The Koan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, 46–74, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 48.

9. See note 2. The *Zutang ji* is the first fully fledged example of what I have called “Transmission histories,” collections of short biographies, sermons, poems, and encounter dialogue associated with different Chan masters and arranged according to lineage affiliations. See Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), pp. 21–23.
10. CBETA, T51, no. 2076.
11. See Morten Schlütter, “A Study in the Genealogy of the *Platform Sūtra*,” *Studies in Central and East Asian Religions* 2 (1989): 53–114 and “Textual Criticism and the Turbulent Life of the *Platform Sūtra*” in *Studies in Chinese and Sino-Tibetan Linguistics: Dialect, Phonology, Transcription and Text*, edited by Richard VanNess Simmons and Newell Ann Van Auken, 399–427 (Taipei: Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, 2014).
12. McRae, “The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue”.
13. Three complete copies and several fragments of the early *Platform Sūtra* were found in the famous library cave in the Western Chinese oasis of Dunhuang in 1900. On the Dunhuang cache, see Rong Xinjiang, translated by Valerie Hansen, “The Nature of the Dunhuang Library Cave and the Reasons for Its Sealing,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* (1999): 247–275.
14. Several of Steven Heine’s books deal with these issues, see, e.g., *Chan Rhetoric of Uncertainty in the Blue Cliff Record: Sharpening the Sword at the Dragon's Gate* (Oxford University Press, 2016); *Like Cats and Dogs: Contesting the Mu Koan in Zen Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2013); and *Opening a Mountain: Koans of the Zen Masters* (Oxford University Press, 2003).
15. See the introduction in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, eds., *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 3 (based on reflections I contributed).
16. The earliest Chan masters to have kōan commentary in their extant Recorded Sayings are Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (862–949) and Fenyang Shanzhao 汾陽善昭 (947–1024). See Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, p. 110.
17. CBETA 2020.Q4, T48, no. 2003. See also Thomas Cleary and J. C. Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record* (Shambhala, 1989).
18. A point made by Steven Heine in several of his books.
19. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, CBETA 2020.Q4, T51, no. 2076, p. 277c5–6.
20. The punchline can also be understood to mean “a shit-wiping stick” (used like toilet paper), CBETA 2020.Q4, T47, no. 1988, p. 550b15.
21. See the *Wumen guan* 無門關 (Gateless gate), CBETA 2020.Q4, T51, no. 2076, p. 277c5–6 and the *Biyan lu*, CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2003, p. 145c16–22. 2.
22. See Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, Chap. 5.
23. CBETA 2020.Q4, T47, no. 1998A, p. 903c2–7.
24. See Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, p. 109.
25. See the discussion of different positions on this issue in Jinhua Jia, *The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth through Tenth-Century China*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 3.

26. This fact, at the very least, betrays significant editing. McRae, “Antecedents,” points out that in many cases the protagonists of encounter dialogue would have been speaking a dialect, which would have had to have been translated into the standard Chinese used in the encounter dialogue literature.
27. See Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 233, cited in Jiang Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute: The Reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 248.
28. Only after finishing this essay did I become aware of Ben Van Overmeire, “Encounter Dialogue: The Literary History of a Zen Buddhist Genre,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2016, which offers a very different approach to encounter dialogue as genre. See also Ben Van Overmeire, “Reading Chan Encounter Dialogue during the Song Dynasty: *The Record of Linji*, the *Lotus Sutra*, and the Sinification of Buddhism,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Volume 37, (2017): 209–221.
29. Ralph Cohen, “History and Genre,” *New Literary History* 17, no. 2 (1986): 203–128. For an excellent introduction to genre theory see John Frow, *Genre*, 2nd edition, (Routledge, 2014).
30. See Mario Poceski, *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 171, which argues that disruptive encounter dialogue represents a sort of corruption of earlier Zen Buddhism.
31. A celebrated story that I would consider wisdom encounter dialogue concerns Mazu diligently meditating and his teacher Huirang sitting down in front of him and rubbing a tile. When Mazu asked, “What are you doing?” Huairang said, “I’m rubbing the tile to make it a mirror.” Mazu said, “How can you make a mirror by rubbing a tile?” Huairang answered, “If I can’t make a mirror by rubbing a tile, how can you achieve Buddhahood by sitting in meditation?” See the *Zutang ji*, CBETA 2021.Q1, B25, no. 144, p. 370a14–b3.
32. This section is adapted from Morten Schlütter, “Transmission and Enlightenment in Chan Buddhism Seen Through the *Platform Sūtra*,” *Chung-hwa Buddhist Journal*, No. 21 (2007): 379–410.
33. The lively narrative in the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra* more closely resemble the naturalistic anecdotes that became popular in the Tang, many of which are collected in the *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記; See <https://ctext.org/taiping-guangji/zh>.
34. The Dunhuang editions of the *Platform Sūtra* here all have rather garbled *wei qiu fofa zuo* 唯求佛法作 “only seeking Buddha-teaching practice”, but this is clearly a mistake since all other sources, including Shenhui’s writings where the story is first found, have 唯求作佛 “only seek to become a Buddha” (the rest of the dialogue confirms this reading).
35. CBETA 2020.Q3, T48, no. 2007, p. 337a27–b5. See also Guo Fuchun 郭富纯 and Wang Zhenfen 王振芬, eds., *Lüshun bowuguan zang Dunhuangben Liuzu tanjing* 旅顺博物馆藏敦煌本六祖坛经 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe,

- 2011), p. 7. This work collates the text of the Duanhuang *Platform Sūtra* based on the three copies and two fragments of the text found at Dunhuang, and I have used this edition for my translations in this essay. My translation here is based with some changes on Philip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 127–128.
36. It should be added that the biographical section of the early *Platform Sūtra* in some form may also have been used in settings of public storytelling, and here Huineng's answer may truly have been surprising to the audience. Huineng's barbarian status is also noteworthy, he both is (because of his being from the South) and isn't (because his father was a high official from the North).
  37. CBETA 2020.Q3, B25, no. 144, pp. 343b13–344a5.
  38. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2007, p. 337c1–2.
  39. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2007, p. 338a7–8.
  40. CBETA 2020.Q4, T48, no. 2007, p. 341a22–25.
  41. CBETA 2020.Q4, T48, no. 2003, p. 140b9–13.
  42. See Yang Zengwen 楊曾文, coll. and annot., *Shenhui heshang chan yulu* 神會和尚禪語錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), p. 18 and p. 109. The wording in both instances is somewhat different from that of the *Platform Sūtra*.
  43. CBETA 2021.Q1, X86, no. 1598 // R146 // Z 2B:19. The text is internally dated 781.
  44. CBETA 2021.Q1, T51, no. 2075.
  45. Although the *Lidai fabao ji* promotes Huineng as the Sixth Patriarch it really aims to advance the Chan master Wuzhu 無住 (714–774), who the text claims was in possession of the robe that Hongren had transmitted to Huineng. See Wendi Adamek, “The *Lidai fabao ji* (Record of the Dharma-Jewel through the Ages),” in *The Zen Canon: Understanding the Classic Texts*, edited by Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 81–106.
  46. Comparing the biography of Huineng word-for-word in the three works with Shenhui's record, it is clear that the *Lidai fabao ji* and the *Platform Sūtra* are based on the Shenhui text, but not on each other. The *Caixi zhuan* also seems to derive information from Shenhui, but is considerably more distant from it than the two other works.
  47. The *Caixi dashi zhuan* was brought to Japan from China by the monk Saichō 最澄 in 805 and preserved there, but did not survive in China. The *Lidai fabao ji* is only known from the Dunhuang manuscript cache.
  48. CBETA 2020.Q3, T48, no. 2007, p. 342b12–17. The Stein manuscript is missing part of this dialogue.
  49. Especially associated with the de facto founder of the Tiantai school, Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), who often uses this and related expressions, see e.g., CBETA 2020.Q4, T46, no. 1911, p. 6a22.
  50. CBETA 2020.Q4, T48, no. 2008, p. 358b20.
  51. This could also be read: “When it comes to the Dharma you are very penetrating, but your mind is not penetrating” (法即甚達汝心不達). See Yampolsky, the *Platform Sūtra*, p. 165.

52. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2007, pp. 342c29-343a7, translation based on Yampolsky, the *Platform Sūtra*, p. 167–168.
53. This is a reference to the Burning House parable in the *Lotus Sutra*, see CBETA 2021.Q1, T09, no. 262, pp. 12b13–13c18, and Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 56–62.
54. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2007, p. 343a15; Yampolsky, *Platform Sūtra*, p. 169.
55. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2007, p. 343a15–b1.
56. In a forthcoming paper I will show that the dissemination of the early *Platform Sūtra* must have been wider than has been commonly recognized by scholarship.
57. CBETA 2021.Q1, X86, no. 1598, p. 51b2-9 // R146, p. 969b2-9 // Z 2B:19, p. 485b2-9. Translation with some changes from John Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), pp. 689–690.
58. CBETA 2021.Q1, X86, no. 1598, p. 50c6-12 // R146, p. 968a12-18 // Z 2B:19, p. 484c12-18. Translation with some changes from Jorgensen, *Inventing Hui-neng*, p. 686.
59. CBETA 2021.Q1, T51, no. 2075, p. 183c15-20. See also the translation in Wendi Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 329–330.
60. Funerary inscriptions can generally be dated with some confidence and therefore are relatively reliable sources. See the discussion in Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, pp. 1–9.
61. QTW 512.5207a6-8, cited in Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, p. 48.
62. QTW 715.7353a11, cited in Jinhua Chen, “One Name, Three Monks: Two Northern Chan Masters Emerge from the Shadow of Their Contemporary, the Tiantai Master Zhanran (711–782),” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 22. 1, 1999:1–92, and Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, p. 49.
63. Mazu has a very long entry in the *Zutang ji*, CBETA 2021.Q1, B25, no. 144, pp. 558a02–563b1; translated with commentary in Poceski, *The Records of Mazu*, pp. 198–238.
64. Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818), *Tang gu Hongzhou Kaiyuan si Shimen Daoyichanshi beiming bingxu* 唐故洪州開元寺石門道一禪師碑銘并序, QTW 501.2260b-c. Translated with commentary in Poceski, *The Records of Mazu*, pp. 175–194.
65. Cited in Shiina Kōyū 椎名宏雄, “Hōrinden makikyū makijū no itsubun” 宝林伝巻九巻十の逸文, [*Komazawa daigaku*] *Shūgaku kenkyū* 22 (1980): 191–198. Interestingly, later versions of this story emphasize that Huairang did not experience enlightenment with Laoan, but had to go and see Huineng to reach full understanding.
66. The Huixin edition has been reconstructed in Ishii Shūdō 石井修道, “Ekinbon ‘Rokuso dankyō’ no kenkyū (zoku)–teihon shisaku to Tonkōbon to no taishō 恵听本「六祖壇經」の研究(続)–定本の試作と敦煌本との対照,” *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyō Gakubu kenkyū ronshū*, 12 (1981):68-132; and “Ekinbon

- ‘Rokuso dankyō’ no kenkyū –teihon shisaku to Tonkōhon to no taishō 惠听本「六祖壇經」の研究–定本の試作と敦煌本との対照.” *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyō Gakubu kenkyū ronshū* 11 (1980): 96–138.
67. Wu Xiaobin has found evidence that suggests this Huixin may have been a Tang monk who died in 801, thus placing his edition of the *Platform Sūtra* much earlier. See Wu Xiaobin 吴孝斌, “Huixin ben *Tanjing* chukao 惠听本《坛经》初考,” *Guanxi minzu baowang* 05/27 (2019), web source: [http://www.gxmzb.net/content/2019-05/27/content\\_1445.htm](http://www.gxmzb.net/content/2019-05/27/content_1445.htm), and, “*Liuzu tanjing* yu Nanning Luoxiu shan 《六祖坛经》与南宁罗秀山,” *Wenshi Chunqiu* 4 (2019): 58–60. I find this research very interesting but not conclusive, and will address the issue in a future publication.
  68. It is very likely Huixin worked from a version of the *Platform Sūtra* known as the *Fabaoji tanjing* 法寶記壇經 that appeared sometime before 847. This text must have been similar, but not identical to, the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra*. See Schlütter, “Pojo Chinul 普照知訥 (1158–1210), the *Fabaoji tanjing* 法寶記壇經, and the Evolution of the *Platform Sūtra*,” forthcoming.
  69. It is clear that the verse was not found in its new form in the *Fabaoji tanjing*, see Schlütter, “Pojo Chinul”.
  70. See the Huixin edition in Ishii, “Ekinbon ‘Rokuso dankyō’ no kenkyū,” p. 113b.
  71. See CBETA 2020.Q4, B25, no. 144, p. 341a4, p. 416b12, and p. 641b14.
  72. This could be seen as a somewhat inconsistent narrative, since Huineng is already depicted as having been enlightened when he heard the sūtra recited before he visited Hongren.
  73. The *Diamond Sūtra*, CBETA 2020.Q4, T08, no. 235, p. 749c20–23. Interestingly, this passage is quoted several times in Shenhui’s writings, see Yang, *Shenhui heshang chan yulu*, p. 9 line 12, p. 75 line 2, p. 119 line 14.
  74. Huixin edition in Ishii, “Ekinbon ‘Rokuso dankyō’ no kenkyū,” p. 116b.
  75. Huixin edition in Ishii, “Ekinbon ‘Rokuso dankyō’ no kenkyū,” p. 116b.
  76. See Schlütter, “A Study in the Genealogy of the *Platform Sūtra*,” and “Textual Criticism and the Turbulent Life of the *Platform Sūtra*”.
  77. See Schlütter, “A Study in the Genealogy of the *Platform Sūtra*,” and “Textual Criticism and the Turbulent Life of the *Platform Sūtra*”.
  78. He is actually called Huishun 惠順 in the Dunhuang *Platform Sūtra*, but everywhere else he is Huiming, also in Shenhui’s writings where he first appears. See Yang, *Shenhui heshang chan yulu*, p. 110.
  79. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2007, p. 338a25–29. A similar version of the story is also found in the *Caoxi dashi zhuan*, CBETA 2021.Q3, X86, no. 1598, p. 50b14–19.
  80. See the text in Ishii, “Ekinbon ‘Rokuso dankyō’ no kenkyū –zoku,” p. 130a.
  81. CBETA 2020.Q3, T48, no. 2012A, p. 384a1–6.
  82. CBETA 2020.Q3, B25, no. 144, p. 342a9–12.
  83. See the text in Ishii, “Ekinbon ‘Rokuso dankyō’ no kenkyū –zoku,” p. 130a.

84. See Schlütter, “A Study in the Genealogy of the *Platform Sūtra*.” The minor differences between the two editions need not concern us here. I will refer to the edition found in the Taishō canon T48, no. 2008.
85. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2008, p. 355a–359c; McRae, *Platform Sūtra*, pp. 53–79. The downgrading of Shenhui probably took place early on, in reaction to his implied claims to be the Seventh Patriarch of Zen. See Schlütter, “Transmission and Enlightenment in Chan Buddhism”.
86. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2008, p. 357b12–18; translation with some changes following McRae, *Platform Sūtra*, p. 66.
87. CBETA 2021.Q1, T48, no. 2008, p. 357b12–28; translation with some changes following McRae, *Platform Sūtra*, pp. 66–67.
88. See, e.g., Zongmi’s *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序, T48n2015; or *Zhonghua chuan xindi chanmen shizi chengxi tu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖, X63n1225.
89. T48n2012.
90. See Albert Welter, *Yongming Yanshou's Conception of Chan in the Zongjing lu: A Special Transmission within the Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
91. Yabuki Keiki 矢吹慶輝, *Meisha yoin – Tonkō shutsudo miden koitsu Butten kaihō* 鳴沙餘韻: 敦煌出土未傳古逸佛典開寶 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1930).

**Morten Schlütter** discusses the evolution of a key aspect of Zen in his chapter, “Rhetoric in the *Platform Sūtra* and the Development of “Encounter Dialogue” in Chinese Zen.” The *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* is one of the most famous texts in all of Chinese Buddhism, and a signature scripture of the Chan/Zen tradition. However, the text is also unique because it exists in a number of quite different versions that evolved and expanded from the 8th to the 13th centuries and that can give us a window into important developments in Zen Buddhism. A crucial innovation within Chinese Zen the beginnings of which is reflected in the *Platform Sūtra* is “encounter dialogue,” the enigmatic, often startling, and sometimes shocking exchanges between Chan masters and their disciples or other interlocutors, on which kōan (Ch.: gong’an, “public case”) practice is based. Schlütter’s essay explores the evolution of encounter dialogue through an examination of the *Platform Sūtra* and other Chan sources, and offers a new perspective on the development of encounter dialogue in Chinese Zen Buddhism.

# Silence and Eloquence: How Dōgen's Dharma Match With Vimalakīrti Might Have Turned Out



Dale S. Wright

## 1 I

Although a heroic protagonist and close associate of the Buddha in a major Mahayana sutra, the bodhisattva Vimalakīrti is a frequent recipient of Dōgen's ire. On several occasions in the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen lashes out in critique of Vimalakīrti. He claims that those who admire Vimalakīrti are "completely without the life-saving path of the Buddha dharma...They are completely without the light of discrimination."<sup>1</sup> Those who repeat what Dōgen considers perverse claims made by Vimalakīrti are "guilty of an offence graver than committing the heinous deeds, are more fiendishly evil than Devadatta."<sup>2</sup> Much like Vimalakīrti, Dōgen doesn't mince words.

The thesis of this essay is twofold. The first is that the real target of Dōgen's criticism isn't the central character in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* but instead Chan masters inspired by Vimalakīrti whose radical antinomianism threatened, in Dōgen's mind, to undermine the institutions and practices of the Buddhism. Second is that the positions attributed to Vimalakīrti by Chan teachers to which Dōgen objects result from hasty mis-readings of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, and that, in fact, of all the sutras that were available to Dōgen, this one may very well have been closest to Dōgen in style and substance. Therefore, readers who follow Dōgen's critique of Vimalakīrti in a direct and literal way are missing what Dōgen may also have missed—the affinity of approach between these two important monuments of Buddhist literature.

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## 2 II

Although by the time Dōgen went to China in the Song dynasty, references to Buddhist sutras by Chan masters were rapidly dwindling in frequency and significance, a couple of themes from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* were regularly invoked. One of these was the counterintuitive claim made in the sutra that Vimalakīrti was a layman whose realization far outstripped the Buddha's closest monastic disciples. In "The Thirty-seven Factors of Bodhi," Dōgen is adamant that this is impossible. He argues that "the claim that the mind of the householder and the mind of the renunciant are equivalent" is absurd, and that "there was not a single instance of a householder gaining the way"<sup>3</sup> "because the householder life is not a practice place for studying the way of the Buddhas and because it presents many obstacles."<sup>4</sup> Focusing specifically on Vimalakīrti, Dōgen writes:

Do you not see that, had old Vimalakīrti left home, we would see a bhikṣu Vimalakīrti superior to Vimalakīrti?...That such radiance and virtues are not seen in Vimalakīrti is because he did not leave home; had he left home, he should have these virtues. Now, the Chan masters of the Tang dynasty and Song dynasty, having failed to master these essential points, rashly hold up Vimalakīrti, thinking that what he did was right, and saying that what he said was right. These types are to be pitied: they do not know the spoken teachings and are ignorant of the buddha dharma.<sup>5</sup>

Although Dōgen writes much more favorably about the laity on other occasions, in this text it appears that the target of his forceful critique would have been Chan advocates in China who argued that lay Buddhists could just as easily attain the highest levels of awakening as monks and nuns. At least a few of these Buddhists used the example of Vimalakīrti's awakened but non-monastic status to curry favor with powerful government officials and wealthy literati who were pleased to think of themselves as acclaimed masters of the Buddhist dharma. Simply because it requires rigorous, long-term contemplative practice, Dōgen claims that "the mind of the Buddha dharma" cannot be duplicated in the busy and unmindful world of government affairs. Dōgen puts his condemnation of this Chan tendency in strong language:

For the last two or three hundred years, in the land of the Great Song, many calling themselves monks of the Chan school have said that the study of the way of householders and the study of the way of renunciants are equivalent. They are a gang that has become dogs only in order to eat the shit and drink the piss of the householders. Sometimes, they tell the king and his ministers that the mind of the myriad affairs of state is the mind of the ancestors and the buddhas, apart from which there is no other mind. The king and his ministers, not having distinguished the true teachings and true dharma, are delighted and confer on them titles of master and the like. Monks with words like this are Devadattas... How lamentable. They are not the followers of seven buddhas, they are minions of Māra and beasts.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the lay status of Vimalakīrti himself, there is just one narrative segment in the sutra that had occasionally been interpreted in China to claim that "leaving home" to enter monastic life was unnecessary to a profound practice of Buddhism. Although Dōgen does not cite this passage to argue against it, it would

certainly have been in the minds of the Chan teachers who Dōgen criticizes on this issue. In this passage, Rahula, the Buddha's son, refuses the Buddha's request that he go visit Vimalakīrti to check up on his health. To justify his refusal, Rahula tells the story of an unnerving encounter with Vimalakīrti. Rahula was teaching a group of young men "the virtues and benefits of leaving the world" when Vimalakīrti appeared to question him explaining that "you should not teach the benefits and virtues of renunciation in the way that you do."<sup>7</sup> Vimalakīrti then goes on to explain the problem with Rahula's approach.

Although this passage had been read superficially to reject monastic life, nothing in a careful reading of it would support that interpretation. Vimalakīrti's critique focuses on the "way" Rahula was teaching renunciation rather than on whether renunciation ought to be taught. He claims that renunciation isn't about a worldly quest for "virtues and benefits," as the passage claims. "It is the path of liberation... It is the bridge over the swamp of desire, without grasping, and free of the habits of 'I' and 'mine.'...It is irreproachable in all respects and so is called renunciation."<sup>8</sup>

Vimalakīrti's sermon is intended to elevate the understanding that Rahula and these prospective renunciates have of what is entailed in an ordained commitment to the dharma. Renunciation and ordination are not about benefits that are available to be acquired. They are about "the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment"<sup>9</sup> in which the greed of the possessive, acquiring self is overcome. In this crucial passage, Vimalakīrti can best be understood as attempting to purify and to elevate the order of monks and nuns rather than discarding it. As the passage says, "renunciation is irreproachable in all respects," when properly understood. Moreover, almost all characters with speaking parts in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* are monks, and no passage in the text criticizes or in any way questions their having taken these vows. On the contrary, virtually everything said seeks to awaken those who make a commitment to monastic life.

That Vimalakīrti himself chose not to "leave home" is one dimension of the "skillful means" employed in the sutra in order to encourage universal, "great vehicle" engagement with the dharma. But even though the sutra does present an image of an enlightened lay person, that presentation is clearly not part of a larger effort to dissuade anyone else from making a monastic commitment. The implication, in fact, is that in previous lives, Vimalakīrti had taken vows and through that means had attained awakening at the highest level. He is said to have "served the ancient buddhas." "He has penetrated the profound way of the dharma. He was liberated through the transcendence of wisdom" and was therefore "praised, honored, and commemorated by all buddhas."<sup>10</sup>

Vimalakīrti enters this life in this world in the lesser status of the laity in order to fulfill his bodhisattva vow to awaken "all living beings," including the laity. He strives to awaken the laity from their "inferior aspirations" and, more importantly, to challenge monks and nuns to raise the level of their practice and realization so that they might become living examples of liberation in this world. Nowhere in the text do we find discouragement about the aspiration to enter monastic life. In spite of that, however, it is clear that among certain Chinese Buddhists, the sutra was used as a justification for arguing against the importance of ordination and among

certain sycophantic clerics as a way to praise the elevated status of powerful aristocrats who were pleased to be considered not just politically and economically superior but spiritually as well.

Dōgen argues that “the householder life is not a practice place for studying the way of the Buddhas and because it presents many obstacles.”<sup>11</sup> The “obstacles,” all the tasks and responsibilities of ordinary work and family life, stood in the way of intense and long-term engagement in meditation. And even less amenable to serious contemplative practice are occupations involved in “the myriad affairs of state,”<sup>12</sup> government officials and those in positions of power. Some Chan advocates had clearly been arguing that meditation is not an essential element of Buddhism practice. Therefore, the argument went, those without the time or inclination to engage in these practices were somehow not disadvantaged in their quest for awakening. It is clear that the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* had occasionally been used in China to justify this dismissive posture toward rigorous meditation practice.

That dismissive reading, however, fails to take account of the many ways that the sutra praises the practice of meditation. It describes Vimalakīrti as a master of meditation, as a practitioner who had sought and attained “the *pāramitā* of meditation” and who repeatedly valorized the practice of meditation in his teaching.<sup>13</sup> Even though a layman, Vimalakīrti was described as fully devoted to a life of meditation. Nevertheless, there is one narrative segment in the sutra that had been interpreted to argue against meditation. In this well-known passage, Śāriputra refuses the Buddha’s request to go check up on the health of Vimalakīrti because of an embarrassing encounter with Vimalakīrti in the past. Śāriputra explains that he “was sitting at the foot of a tree in the forest absorbed in meditation” when Vimalakīrti arrived to persuade him “that this is not the way to absorb yourself in contemplation.”<sup>14</sup> Vimalakīrti then teaches Śāriputra “how he should absorb himself in meditation.” He says: “Absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest the nature of an ordinary person without abandoning your cultivated spiritual nature....You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you are released in liberation without abandoning the passions that are the province of the world.”<sup>15</sup>

Other structurally similar sentences go further to elaborate Vimalakīrti’s teachings on “how” to “absorb yourself in meditation.” Far from an effort to persuade Śāriputra not to meditate, each of these sentences provides instruction on *how* to do that. These instructions insist that meditation need not entail retreat from the world, that the otherworldly understanding of meditation may be misleading, and that the point of meditation is more skillful involvement in the world. But nothing in this passage discourages the practice of meditation. It is instead an admonition to think differently about what that practice is and how one ought to engage in it. So although a few monks and other Buddhists used this passage in Vimalakīrti to argue against the importance of meditation in the pursuit of wisdom, that reading of the sutra would have been anathema to the author of the sutra. If Dōgen was appalled by this defamation of Buddhist practice, he would have been unknowingly siding with the way Vimalakīrti is represented in the sutra even if against the way some Chinese Buddhists had been using that text.

### 3 III

Aside from claims about the equality of lay status in the pursuit of awakening and its related subordination of meditation practice, a second theme from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* was much more frequently invoked in Chinese Chan, becoming something of a foundational principle of Chan identity. This is the assertion that Vimalakīrti's refusal to join his own challenge to bodhisattvas to speak about the "entrance into awakened non-duality"—Vimalakīrti's "thunderous silence"—was the only truly honest portrayal of the highest goal of Buddhism. Chan masters frequently claimed that what they sought could not be approached by way of discourse and texts, no matter how inspired, and that therefore words should be abandoned in preference for the silent illumination of meditative absorption. More Chan slogans refer to this theme than any other, and by the time Dōgen made his pilgrimage to monasteries in China, the Buddhist teachings were regularly silenced in deference to an increasingly uninformed and clichéd rejection of serious doctrinal discussion.

As we know, Dōgen was adamantly opposed to these diminished versions of the dharma. He railed against what he called the "many misguided people who think that speech and behavior are provisional dharmas, whereas silence and stillness are true reality."<sup>16</sup> Dōgen advised: "Do not listen to the imperfect words of the Chan masters... We should not sit with them; we should not talk with them; we should not rely on them."<sup>17</sup> Dōgen's disappointment in the Buddhism he encountered in China was substantial:

When we look at the Land of the Great Song at present, it is as if those who study the great way of the buddhas and ancestors are extinct... There are only those who think that Vimalakīrti was right in his silence, while now those who are not silent are inferior to Vimalakīrti; they are completely without the life-saving path of the buddha dharma.<sup>18</sup>

Vimalakīrti had in effect become a symbol of the radical and antinomian spirit of Chinese Chan. His "thunderous silence" was frequently invoked to justify the dismissal of sutra study as a form of religious practice as well as the anti-intellectual orientation that came to be implied in that rejection. As a consequence, new methods of teaching employed shock techniques of "hitting and shouting" to evoke an abandonment of intellectual inquiry in preference for sudden and intuitive insights.

In articulating the nuance of Dōgen's position in response to these Buddhist developments, Steven Heine draws on the "Mountains and Rivers Proclaiming the Sutras" and the "Entangling Vines" fascicles of the *Shōbōgenzō*. In *Sansui kyō*, Dōgen maintains that "Just because some teachers say that such stories are not subject to rational understanding, you should not fail to learn through your training the intellectually comprehensible pathways of buddhas and ancestors."<sup>19</sup> Having trained extensively in the sutra study and philosophical traditions of Tendai monasticism, Dōgen was surprised and disappointed by the lack of this traditional Buddhist training in Song China.

Heine writes: “Dōgen provides a philosophy that stresses the necessity and efficacy of employing language at every single stage of the transmission process without ever dismissing its utility. In contrast to numerous Zen thinkers for whom language tends to conceal by representing ‘clothing that hides truth,’ for Dōgen literary discourse operates as a window that divulges reality by providing an opportunity to convey authentically any circumstance...”<sup>20</sup> Heine demonstrates how Dōgen’s image of tangled wisteria vines symbolizes the complexity of the relation between language and silence and between teachers and students, and goes further to clarify how the depth and nuance in Dōgen’s treatment of language and silence is developed through his concepts of “nonthinking” (*hishiryō*) and “non-speaking” (*higogen*). These crucial concepts refer “to the capacity to disclose the Dharma in a way that is unlimited by the usual distinction between speech and verbosity or silence and reticence, since both modes of communication are ultimately avenues for conveying genuine awareness.”<sup>21</sup>

Based on Heine’s analysis, it is clear that Dōgen’s understanding of the relationship between speech and silence would have been far more nuanced than those he encountered while studying in China. Unsurprisingly, Dōgen sought to preserve the tension between discursive efforts to articulate the deepest meanings of the Buddhist dharma and the opposite instinct to honor its transcendence through contemplative explorations in the deep silence of *zazen*. Some Dōgen passages come out decidedly on one side or the other of this dichotomy while others nurture a collage of diverse views. The overall effect is the latter, to welcome the richness of perspective that contrast of view brings to the non-dual whole.

The sophistication of Dōgen’s understanding of these issues would have easily underwritten a powerful critique of the simplistic identity that Chan teachers often proclaimed between Vimalakīrti’s act of silence and the awakening that they sought. But, aware that important narratives from the tradition also valorized the Buddha’s own acts of silent response, Dōgen felt compelled to articulate an important distinction between these two acts of silence. He wrote: There are those who “say that Vimalakīrti’s instructing the bodhisattvas in silence, without a word, is equivalent to the Tathāgata’s being without a word for the sake of the other. This has to be called knowing nothing of the buddha dharma and having no ability to study the way...The silence of the Tathagata and the silence of Vimalakīrti do not even warrant a comparison...”<sup>22</sup> Since, as Dōgen says, these two acts of silence “don’t warrant a comparison” he doesn’t give us one. Rather than explanations of the difference, we get adumbration that they are beyond compare thus opposing the equally unexplained chorus of praise in Chan for Vimalakīrti’s refusal to articulate the dharma of non-duality.

What is interesting in this extensive discussion is that Dōgen’s critique of Vimalakīrti doesn’t ever examine or refer to the source of the Vimalakīrti legend, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. For a Buddhist as thoroughly familiar with the sutra tradition as Dōgen, and one so adept at creative interpretation, this may seem surprising. What emerges instead in Dōgen is the obvious disappointment that he experienced in the emergent Chan tradition in China, directed on occasion toward Vimalakīrti precisely because many of the Chan teachers he encountered there employed the

critical spirit of the *Vimalakīrti* narratives to support the radical edge of the Chan tradition which undermined dimensions of the dharma that Dōgen considered to be essential. *Vimalakīrti*, in a sense, became a symbol of irreverent Chan teaching techniques, and Dōgen made no effort to question that identification. So although Dōgen adamantly rejects the stereotypical Chan position on these issues, what he doesn't reject is their reading of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.

## 4 IV

It is not difficult to imagine Dōgen having opted for another tactic, given the range of approaches that Dōgen employed in addressing classic texts. In characteristic Dōgen style, he could have presented an alternative interpretation of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* showing how these Chan masters had failed to read the sutra mindfully and as a result got it all wrong. While in many other sections of the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen undermines common and clichéd ways to understand the tradition through creative reinterpretation of key texts, in the case of the Chan appropriation of *Vimalakīrti*, Dōgen doesn't distinguish between the two, submitting both to adamant repudiation.

How might Dōgen have stood firmly in opposition to the anti-intellectual and anti-dharma tendency in Song style Chinese Buddhism while defending the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* against reductionist distortions? A starting point in this rerouting would be to recognize that the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is a *tour de force* of Mahayana doctrinal development. In chapter after chapter the character *Vimalakīrti* is represented as intellectually engaged with the teachings in a way that elevates their level of insight and understanding in many of the same ways that Dōgen's writings do. Far from a rejection of thoughtful discourse, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is an exemplary expression of what Dōgen hoped to rescue from the antinomian excesses of Chan critique. In this endeavor, *Vimalakīrti* is praised in the sutra for his eloquence, valorized for the skill with which he is able to teach the fundamental principles of the Buddhist tradition with an uncanny depth of insight and realization.

The author of the sutra manages this effort without being forced to opt for one or another side in the tension between the profound silence of meditative mindfulness and the articulation of the teachings in discursive form. One of the alternative titles for the sutra, "The Sutra on Reconciliation of Dualities," is applicable to the dichotomy between meditative silence and discursive insight. The resulting reconciliation dismisses neither side, while weaving meditative repose and rigorous thinking together in a nuanced non-dualistic fashion.

Although the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the Perfection of Wisdom sutras were both written early in the Common Era as dialogues on newly emerging Mahayana Buddhist themes, there is one crucial difference. This is that the author of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* stages each episode of dialogue as a debate where serious differences of opinion are weighed. Although the Wisdom sutras feature insightful Buddhist dialogue, in these conversations there is no disagreement between

interlocutors. The expression, “So it is,” is the Buddha’s standard response to the dharma insights articulated by his disciples who all share a general understanding of the dharma. The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, by contrast, describes a series of debates in which different ways of conceiving and practicing the dharma are placed in juxtaposition, in every case for the purpose of raising the level of understanding by showing the superiority of one view over another.

The tactic of counterposing distinct ideas is one that Dōgen brought to heightened sophistication. His critiques of an enormous variety of Buddhist views may be more extensive than any other writer in Buddhist history. There is a spirited quality of playful critical thinking that Dōgen and the author of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* share and this quality of overt authorial participation is very rare in Buddhist writing. Reading both, we sense fiery, energetic personalities behind the compositions of these texts, each with exceptionally astute powers of comprehension and critique. They both had something very important to say and were not shy about making their case at the expense of what they considered to be inferior modes of dharma conception.

Writing centuries after the sutra’s composition, while relishing the same spirit of debate and rational difference, Dōgen could be even more nuanced than Vimalakīrti in the way he handles divergent points of view, sometimes refusing to name any one position as the logical outcome of discussion. In these cases Dōgen’s tactic is to cultivate the capacity to hold a variety of views simultaneously, each representing a facet of insight that isn’t visible from other perspectives, so that together these many facets generate a more comprehensive view. In this respect, there are moments in Dōgen’s massive corpus of writing that feel distinctively contemporary.

A millennium earlier, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* can be understood to have made a significant step toward Dōgen to advance Mahayana literary styles and teachings by explicit engagement with differing positions. The author of the sutra clearly relished debate to a degree that no prior Buddhist text demonstrates. This is hardly a factor in support of the anti-intellectual proclivities that at least some Song dynasty Chan teachers attributed to Vimalakīrti. On the contrary, it valorizes the depth of his doctrinal prowess. Seen in context, Vimalakīrti’s silence is simply one non-discursive moment in a sutra that is otherwise entirely devoted to doctrinal persuasion.

Had the sutra’s author considered Vimalakīrti’s “thunderous silence” to be the culmination or the ultimate teaching of the sutra, the text would surely have ended with that capstone act of brilliance. But this is not how the sutra comes to conclusion as several more chapters continue on with further conversation and debate. In fact, even the climactic chapter on “non-dualism” doesn’t end in Vimalakīrti’s silence. Instead of stopping right there, Mañjuśrī steps forward to praise the act of silence: “Excellent! Excellent, Noble Sir,” he says. “This is indeed the entrance into the nonduality of the bodhisattvas. Here there is no use for syllables, sounds, and ideas.”<sup>23</sup> But clearly there *is* a “use for syllables, sounds, and ideas” or he wouldn’t have interrupted the silence in order to speak them. The sutra’s author apparently thought that the act of silence was insufficient to stand on its own. In order to make

certain that this act was noticed and appreciated, the author felt the need to draw further attention to it and to praise it.

Nuance can be added to this view by noticing that Vimalakīrti's withdrawal from discourse is not the only act of silence made thematic in the sutra. Earlier in the text, other moments of silence were described, and in each case these silences were anything but praiseworthy. On two occasions, Śāriputra's silence was taken as a sign of failure by other dialogue participants. When he "faltered" in conversation and fell silent, once unable to respond to Vimalakīrti's dharma insight and once in debate with the Goddess, Śāriputra was understood to have demonstrated a diminished capacity for insight into the dharma. When he opted for silence in response to the Goddess, Śāriputra was chided for the dualism embedded in his understanding and told that you "can't point to liberation by abandoning speech."<sup>24</sup> In these situations, silence was a distinctly unenlightened response.

Therefore, when Vimalakīrti was described as receding into silence, the author sought assurance that this speechless vacuum would not be misconstrued as a failure or incapacity akin to Śāriputra's. The author wanted Vimalakīrti's absence of words to be featured as a brilliant evocation of non-dual vision rather than an inability to understand. This tells us that even if silence had brought the discussion of non-duality to completion, it accomplished that only when given meaning by Mañjuśrī's non-silent explanation. Chan readers of this text completely miss the irony of using "syllables, sounds, and ideas" to make the case that "there is no use for syllables, sounds, and ideas" just as they fail to notice that Vimalakīrti's highly regarded silence was almost immediately erased by Mañjuśrī's verbal praise of it.

Reading further, we notice that the sutra's narrator steps back into the text in order to make certain that readers would understand how momentous this verbal discussion and its capstone gesture of silence had been. The author reports that "When these teachings had been declared, five thousand bodhisattvas entered the door of the dharma of nonduality and attained tolerance for the emptiness of all things."<sup>25</sup> The full chapter of verbal teachings and the concluding act of silence together had this enlightening effect. But this authorial strategy of ending the chapter in mass awakening is not unique. Other chapters in the sutra conclude in a similar declaration, that when these teachings were articulated huge numbers of listeners were awakened. These realizations from the sutra highlight for us the central role that language had played at the heart of the Buddhist dharma, including its role in tandem with the silence of meditation. Although silence has a role to play in the community of awakening that the sutra envisions, it is enveloped by and enframed within a full and rigorous articulation of the Buddhist dharma.

Nevertheless, as Buddhism developed in China and Chan traditions emerged, Vimalakīrti's "thunderous silence" was singled out as the most profound moment in the sutra, eventually undermining any justification there might have been for actually reading the sutra. This memorable trope was evoked early in the emergence of the Chan tradition in Shenhui and in the *Platform sutra*, it appears repeatedly throughout the Transmission of the Lamp narratives, and in koan literature it surfaces most notably in case #84 of the *Blue Cliff Record* and in case #48 of the *Book of Equanimity*. Silence came to play a specific but crucial role in the Chan dharma.



It functioned as the dharma's own self-questioning, as a warning about the dangers of attachment to the Buddhist teachings, and it reminded practitioners about unexpected reappearances of ego assertion and dogmatism. The valorization of silence served as a repudiation to intellectual arrogance and as a disclaimer to the presumption of closure and finality, while at the same time alerting practitioners to delusions that can undermine the freedom discovered in silent meditation. Nevertheless, performing all of these important functions required that discursive teachings accompany sacred expressions of silence in complex cooperation.

The author of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* seemed, intuitively at least, to understand these complexities. Centuries later, Dōgen could articulate them explicitly as part of his profoundly self-aware method of teaching. But the accord between these two formidable Buddhists in both style and content brings them together in spite of the enormous distances and historic differences between them, and in spite of Dōgen's ardent critique. The alignment between *Vimalakīrti* and Dōgen can clearly be seen in each of their efforts to maintain a non-dual relation of cooperation between dharma discourse and meditative silence. For both of them, the centrality of a conceptual articulation of the point and procedures of Buddhist practice comes together seamlessly with the necessity, in silence, to experience and to acknowledge the "empty" finitude of all human thinking.

Because charismatic Buddhists in China had been justifying their rejection of many elements of the Buddhist tradition by appealing to the radical edges of *Vimalakīrti*'s critique, Dōgen felt compelled in turn to condemn *Vimalakīrti* as a way to push back against what he believed to be undisciplined pretenders to the dharma in China. But given Dōgen's uncharacteristic lack of attention to the original sutra sources of these ideas, and the way he tended to run his critique of rogue monks in China together with their appeals to the authority of *Vimalakīrti*, it would appear that Dōgen didn't really have a critique of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. Had he taken the alternative tact in condemning the lack of discipline in Song dynasty Buddhism while reclaiming the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, Dōgen may very well have discovered a close kinship with the *Vimalakīrti* of this early Mahayana sutra, a kinship in which they now stand alongside each other as two of the most provocative characters/authors in the long and impressive history of Buddhism.

## Notes

1. Dōgen, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*. *Sanjūshichi hon bodai bunpō* The Thirty-seven Factors of Bodhi 60:75, translated by Carl Bielefeldt and cited here with the permission of the translator, 300.
2. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:66, 295.
3. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:65, 294.
4. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:65, 294.
5. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:72, 298–299.
6. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:63, 292.
7. *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti*. Translated by Robert A. F. Thurman. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 31.

8. *Vimalakīrti*, 32.
9. *Vimalakīrti*, 32.
10. *Vimalakīrti*, 20.
11. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:65, 294.
12. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:65, 294.
13. *Vimalakīrti*, 20.
14. *Vimalakīrti*, 24.
15. *Vimalakīrti*, 24.
16. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:74, 300.
17. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:65, 294.
18. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:75, 300.
19. Dōgen, *Sansui kyō*: 1.320. cited from Steven Heine. *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 153.
20. Steven Heine, *Readings*. 151.
21. Steven Heine, *Readings*. 146.
22. Dōgen, The Thirty-seven Factors 60:72, 298.
23. *Vimalakīrti*, 77.
24. *Vimalakīrti*, 59.
25. *Vimalakīrti*, 77.

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# Dōgen's Vision of the Environment and His Practice of Devotion and Faith



Taigen Dan Leighton

## 1 Introduction

In many of his writings, Eihei Dōgen (1200–1253), considered the founder of the Sōtō branch of Japanese Zen Buddhism, celebrates the natural landscape, *sansui*, literally mountains and waters. He sees this landscape as an inspiration, but also as an active source and agent of awakening teaching, the Buddha Dharma. While this is implied elsewhere in his writings, one of his essays, *Keisei Sanshoku* “The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains,” serves as an explicit bridge from the realm of nature to the important role of faith, devotion, and religiosity in the practice Dōgen advocates.

## 2 The Sound of Streams as Buddha's Voice

Eihei Dōgen's 1240 essay *Keisei Sanshoku* “The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains” appears in one of his masterworks, *Shōbōgenzō* “True Dharma Eye Treasury.”<sup>1</sup> Near the beginning of this essay, Dōgen refers to a poem by the great Song dynasty poet Su Shi, also known by his literary name Su Dongpo (1037–1101; Jpn.: Sotōba):

The sound of valley streams is the universal long broad tongue.

[or: Buddha's long broad tongue].

The shape of the mountains is no other than the unconditioned body.

[Realizing this,] eighty-four thousand verses came forth throughout the night.

At some later time, how could I say anything about this?”

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Su Shi was a major Chinese cultural figure, celebrated for his calligraphy and painting as well as being a major statesman who was exiled from the capital twice due to political intrigues. Also a Chan practitioner, he is remembered as one of China's greatest poets. In this verse, Su Shi describes his realization that the voice of ultimate awareness, or the very Buddha, is present in the sound of the flowing mountain streams, and that the form, shape, or colors of the mountains are the body beyond conditioning of a buddha. The ultimate is not at all separate from the phenomenal world, the landscape of nature around us. Not only awakened human sages but the very mountains and waters pour forth exalted inspiration.

With this realization, the great poet felt myriads of verses arising in and flowing forth from him. But simultaneous with this outpouring of awakening expression, the poet pondered how he might ever share this wondrous vision with other beings. This question is identical to the Buddha's own question upon awakening some twenty-five hundred years ago, whether anyone could ever understand what he had realized, and how he could share this awareness. For Śākyamuni Buddha, this led to an acceptance of his role, expounding the four noble truths, and to a lifetime of a range of skillful teaching throughout what is now India.

After quoting the poem, Dōgen relates that Su Shi's verse was approved by his teacher Zhaojue Changzong (1025–1091; Jpn.: Shokaku Jōso), a disciple of Huanglong Huinan (1002–69; Jpn.: Ōryū E'nan), founder of the Huanglong (Yellow Dragon) branch of Linji/ Rinzai Chan. Dōgen traced his own precepts lineage to both this Huanglong branch of Linji as well as his main Caodong/ Sōtō lineage. The other main Linji lineage, the Yangqi (Willow Branch), was the Linji branch that became predominant in Japanese Rinzai Zen.

Commenting on Su Shi's verse, Dōgen calls it regrettable that mountains and waters conceal the awakened sounds and forms, and yet it is delightful at the time when the sounds of the tongue are finally heard and the forms of the body appear. Dōgen wonders whether these sounds and forms are more intimate when concealed or when apparent. This is a stimulating consideration, as Dōgen often points to the inner closeness or intimacy with oneself promoted by his practice of zazen (seated meditation), and how this intimacy is echoed by practitioners in their active relationship with teachers or in their everyday affairs. Dōgen continues in the essay by affirming that bodhisattvas studying the way must know that mountains flow and waters do not flow. Beyond our conventional conceptions, supposedly static forms such as mountains constantly shift, while ephemeral sounds like the flowing streams are constant.

Previous to his realization celebrated in the verse, Su Shi had inquired of Changzong about the story of nonsentient beings expressing the Dharma. This is a crucial story in the Caodong lineage central to the awakening of its founder Dongshan Liangjie (807–869; Jpn.: Tōzan Ryōkai).<sup>2</sup> The story is complicated, but briefly, Dongshan inquired of two teachers, Guishan Lingyou (771–854; Jpn.: Isan Reiyū) and then Yunyan Tansheng (781–841; Jpn.: Ungan Donjō), about a prior statement by the National Teacher Nanyang Huizhong (d. 776; Jpn.: Nan'yō Echū). When asked about the mind of the ancient Buddha, Nanyang responded that it was wall and tile rubble, and further that the earth and all supposedly non-sentient

beings expound the Dharma ceaselessly.<sup>3</sup> The National Teacher's statement emerged from the developing discourse in parts of pre-Chan Chinese Buddhism about buddha nature not being restricted to humans or even animals, but also for trees and grasses, and even supposed non-sentient beings, and for some teachers even to the nature of all reality itself.<sup>4</sup> Dōgen developed the buddha nature teaching further, clarifying the non-separation of sentient being-buddha nature, explicated by Dōgen via many classic stories about buddha nature in his celebrated 1241 *Shōbōgenzō* essay *Busshō* "Buddha Nature."<sup>5</sup>

After Dongshan's inquiries about non-sentient beings expounding reality, Guishan would go on to become a founder of one of the five houses of Chan. Yunyan would become Dongshan's formal lineage teacher, as they would have further significant interactions. After his dialogue with Yunyan about non-sentient beings, Dongshan had some realization and wrote in a verse, "The Dharma expounded by non-sentient beings is inconceivable. Listening with your ears, no sound. Hearing with your eyes, you directly understand."<sup>6</sup> Later in 1243 Dōgen wrote about this story of Dongshan and the issues involved in a *Shōbōgenzō* essay *Mujō Seppō* "Non-sentient Beings Express the Dharma."<sup>7</sup>

As he continues to comment on Su Shi's verse in "The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains," Dōgen notes that Su Shi did not have any realization after hearing Changzong comment on the story from Dongshan, but later that towering waves struck the sky when Su Shi heard the sound of the valley streams. However, Dōgen speculates that it was still his teacher's previous words mixed with the sounds of the streams that awakened Su Shi. The impact of teachers' Dharma expressions is not necessarily immediate, but may seep unto awareness gradually, like the flowing streams. Dōgen further wonders if it was Su Shi who awakened, or the mountains and waters themselves that awakened. Elsewhere Dōgen speaks of mountains and waters not only expressing awakening but awakening themselves through practice.

Aside from *Shōbōgenzō*, which is written in Japanese, Dōgen's other massive masterwork is *Eihei Kōroku* "Dōgen's Extensive Record," which includes his writings in Chinese from throughout his career, but predominately includes short formal Dharma hall discourses to his monks, mostly from his later years after he left Kyoto in 1243 for the northern mountains of Echizen, now Fukui. It comprises the majority of his writings from Eihei-ji, the temple he established there, still one of the two headquarter temples of Sōtō Zen. One of the verses from the last of the ten volumes of *Eihei Kōroku* is from his later years when he wrote about his contemplative life in the mountains, and specifically refers to Su shi's verse. Dōgen wrote:

Sitting as the night gets late, sleep not yet arrived,  
 Ever more I realize engaging the way is best in mountain forests.  
 Sound of valley streams enters my ears; moonlight pierces my eyes.  
 Other than this, not a thought's in my mind.<sup>8</sup>

Here Dōgen celebrates the sound of the valley streams, echoing the verse that leads off and inspires “The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains.” But in that essay the sounds of the streams and the shapes of the mountains provoked a sudden awakening experience for Su shi. In this verse, Dōgen is describing a settled practice place in the mountains and a sustained sitting practice in which the awakening mountain forms and sounds of the valley streams are ever present as ongoing inspirations.

### 3 Other Stories of Awakening Amid Landscapes

In *Keisei Sanshoku* “The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains” after discussing Su Shi’s verse about the sound of the valley streams and the form of the mountains, Dōgen mentions a few other traditional stories of awakening occasioned by natural landscapes. The first two are about prominent disciples of Guishan, who Dongshan had consulted initially in his inquiry about non-sentient beings expressing the Dharma.

The first story involves Xiangyan Zhixian (d. 988, Jpn.: Kyōgen Chikan). Guishan once said to Xiangyan that he was very knowledgeable, but would he say something from before his parents were born. Xiangyan was struck speechless, could find nothing to say. He consulted his large collection of sutras and Buddhist commentaries. Xiangyan was very well read, it’s well known, but was unable to respond at all. Then he burned all his books, saying, “A painting of a rice cake does not satisfy hunger.” The books were just painted cakes to him, not the experience of the real thing. He gave up study of the way and became a serving monk, working as a kitchen assistant and serving gruel to the monks. He then asked Guishan for some assistance, but Guishan just said, “If I told you, later you would resent me.” After some years Xiangyan departed and served as groundskeeper at the memorial site of the National Teacher Nanyang, whose teaching about non-sentient beings expressing Dharma had impelled Dongshan’s inquiries, first to Guishan.

One of Dōgen’s most memorable *Shōbōgenzō* essays, *Gabyō* “Painting of a Rice Cake” from 1242 is based on this story of Xiangyan.<sup>9</sup> Dōgen starts with this saying by Xiangyan about the painted rice cakes not satisfying hunger, and with characteristic, extensive wordplay he proclaims, for example, that a painted rice cake is the moment of realization, totally turning around the saying’s original meaning. Dōgen adds many more such utterances. For painting rice cakes, rice flour is used. A painting of a mountain is made with rocks and trees. A painting of a person is made from the four great elements and the five skandhas. All buddhas are painted buddhas and all painted buddhas are actual buddhas. The entire phenomenal universe and the empty sky are nothing but a painting. Dōgen ends up saying, “There is no remedy for satisfying hunger other than a painted rice cake. Without painted hunger, you never become a true person. There is no understanding other than painted satisfaction.”<sup>10</sup> Dōgen is not rejecting all study of texts, like Xiangyan he

was also well-read. But he is certainly pointing to the primacy of actual practice awareness.

As the story of Xiangyan proceeds, one day he was sweeping the ground in a bamboo grove at the memorial site of the National Teacher Nanyang. He swept up a pebble and it knocked against the bamboo. At this sudden sound, Xiangyan was awakened. He faced the direction toward Guishan, and made offerings and did prostrations. Xiangyan wrote a verse that Guishan later approved, including the lines:

With one blow, subject and object vanish.  
 I no longer practice to solve things on my own.  
 In all my activities I celebrate the ancient path,  
 And do not fall into passivity.<sup>11</sup>

Xiangyan's awakening triggered by the stone and bamboo led to enhanced active devotion to the ancient way.

Lingyun Zhiqin (n.d.; Jpn.: Reibun Shigon), another disciple of Guishan, had practiced for thirty years. Once when traveling in the mountains, Lingyun rested and saw peach blossoms opened in a distant village. He was suddenly awakened. He wrote this verse, later presented to Guishan:

For thirty years I sought a swordsman.  
 How many times leaves fell and new ones sprouted.  
 Once seeing the peach blossoms,  
 Nothing more to doubt.

Guishan responded that those who enter through conditions never regress. Dōgen comments rhetorically, "Does anyone enter except through conditions? Does anyone ever regress?" Thus Dōgen implies here that all awakening is through interaction with the natural landscape of phenomena.

The two stories of disciples of Guishan are followed by a brief exchange with Changsha Jingcen (d. 768; Jpn.: Chōsa Keishin), who was asked by a monk, "How does one return the mountains, rivers, and the great earth to oneself?" Changsha responded, "How does one return oneself to the mountains, rivers, and the great earth?" Dōgen here reaffirms and emphasizes the intimate relationship between people and the whole natural environment. Changsha had moreover emphasized the need for the practitioner to actively engage that relationship.<sup>12</sup>

These stories all point to the importance of the natural, phenomenal world as a focus and trigger of awakening. However, one of the most influential early commentaries on the *Shōbōgenzō* is by the fifth abbot of Eihei-ji, Giun (1253–1333), consisting of four-line verses for each of the sixty-essay edition of *Shōbōgenzō*. This commentary became the only one studied until the seventeenth century. Giun's verse on *Keisei Sanshoku* directly echoes Su Shi's verse, but begins with the capping phrase, "Transcends seeing and surpasses hearing."<sup>13</sup> This capping phrase

points to something beyond perception, which resonates with Dōgen's early teaching of the self-fulfillment samādhi, to be discussed in the next section, and leads into aspects of the later devotional sections of *Keisei Sanshoku*.

After all the previous stories in the *Keisei Sanshoku* essay, Dōgen goes on to speak about the situation of his contemporary practitioners in Japan and to the serious dangers to practitioners of seeking fame and gain. Amid these reflections are embedded Dōgen's expressions of the importance of vow, faith, repentance, and confession. These devotional concerns in *Keisei Sanshoku* have been integrated into a chant used in modern Sōtō liturgy. Before returning to focus on Dōgen's celebration of the process of faith, I will look at two other *Shōbōgenzō* essays that amplify and deepen Dōgen's related vision of the critical importance of the natural landscape.

## 4 The Whole Environ Awakens

The young Dōgen returned from four years of practice in China in 1227 "with empty hands," but with transmission in the Caodong/ Sōtō lineage and with a new approach to zazen, seated meditation practice. One of his first major writings, in 1231, was *Bendōwa* "Talk on Wholehearted Practice of the Way."<sup>14</sup> It was not part of the early editions of *Shōbōgenzō*, although it is part of the modern inclusive ninety-five essay editions. *Bendōwa* expresses Dōgen's vision and proclamation of the inner deep meaning of zazen, especially in the portion of the essay called *jijuyu zanmai*, the "Self-Fulfillment or Self-Enjoyment Samādhi (meditation)," which is chanted as part of modern Sōtō liturgy.

This "Self-Fulfillment Samādhi" claims an extraordinary relationship between practice and the natural landscape, the world of phenomena. Dōgen says, "When one displays buddha mudra with one's whole body and mind, sitting upright in this samādhi for even a short time, everything in the entire dharma world becomes buddha mudra, and all space in the universe completely becomes awakening."<sup>15</sup> This proclamation is an extraordinary, radical perspective, inconceivable to conventional logic. Stating that by taking the posture and attitude, or mudra, of a buddha in body and mind, even for a short time, one effects the awakening of all phenomena and of all space itself, Dōgen removes this practice from the realm of self-help or of the personal self at all. For him this practice is intimately connected with the whole environment of the practitioner. In many ways the whole body of Dōgen's work in the rest of his life might be seen as commentary on this one sentence. This radical claim is amplified further in the passages that immediately follow this sentence.

Dōgen goes on to say that the zazen practitioner and the awakening of all things "intimately and imperceptibly assist each other." At this time "earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in ten directions, carry out buddha work, therefore everyone receives the benefit." In this early writing Dōgen is exposing a reality in which humans and the natural



landscape are not only intimately interrelated, but actually are mutually supportive and assist each other. This imperceptible mutual assistance between practitioner and the environment is an extraordinary viewpoint. The world supports us and we support the world when we express this awakened presence. All are involved in the “buddha work.” Furthermore, this mutual interaction is not only between humans and the so-called natural world of earth, grasses, and trees, but for Dōgen also interactive with fences, walls, and tiles, what we might think of as “unnatural” human-made artifacts. This echoes the subject of Dongshan’s early inquiry about nonsentient beings expounding the Dharma. Dongshan cited the response of the National Teacher Nanyang about the mind of the ancient Buddha as wall and tile rubble.

In this writing about the function of zazen and the awakening of all space, or reality, Dōgen is speaking about the natural landscape, but also the whole phenomenal world as including humans, who are implicated in the natural landscape and the meaning of zazen practice. He echoes or foreshadows the subtle, ephemeral beauty of the landscape paintings of China and Japan, in which humans are subtly included. The people appear therein as small figures, pilgrims walking along trails or sitting in hermitages, blended in amid the much vaster landscapes. People are integrated with the natural landscape of mountains and waters, but only as one element, not as the masters or stewards of the environment, but capable of mutual interactive guidance with the natural world.

## 5 The Mountains and Waters Sūtra

One of Dōgen’s key works describing the richness of our landscape is the lengthy *Shōbōgenzō* essay, *Sansuikyō* “The Mountains and Waters Sutra” from 1240, his only writing that he designates as a sutra.<sup>16</sup> It is recorded as having been presented later in the same year as the *Keisei Sanshoku* where Dōgen discussed Su Shi’s verse on the sound of the streams and the forms of the mountains. Thereby we might well see this “Mountain and Water Sutra” as an extension of *Keisei Sanshoku*. However, it must be noted that Dōgen was continuously re-editing many of his *Shōbōgenzō* essays throughout his life. Earlier or later passages from these various renditions are still being found in attics of Sōtō temples. Versions published in the modern ninety-five fascicle editions, which may be especially relevant for issues addressed here in *Keisei Sanshoku*, might not reflect the original 1240 essays.<sup>17</sup>

It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a full discussion of Dōgen’s “Mountains and Waters Sutra,” fully worthy of the sutra designation, but I will simply mention several passages that express Dōgen’s vision of the natural landscape and the interplay and function of mountains and waters. Dōgen’s essay might alternatively be translated simply as the “Landscape Sutra,” as *sansui*, literally mountains and water, as a compound means “landscape.”

“The Mountains and Waters Sutra” commences with another of Dōgen’s radical assertions, “The mountains and waters of the immediate present are the

actualization of the path of the ancient buddhas. Together occupying their own dharma positions, they have fulfilled the virtues of thorough exhaustiveness. Because they have been active since before the kalpa of emptiness, they are the livelihood of the immediate present. Because they are the self since before any subtle signs emerge, they are the penetrating liberation of actual occurrence.” Dōgen here expresses the ontological primacy of the mountains and waters and of the natural landscape as the present manifestation of the awakening process of all buddhas. He places this landscape prior to all temporality, while also embodying all time. The concrete landscape of mountains and waters functions as the substantiation of ultimate reality. It may be seen as the Dharmakaya, the awakened body of all reality. Thus this landscape expresses for Dōgen the self that precedes and includes all limited selves.

The next section introduces the theme of mountains walking, expressed in the utterance of the important Caodong lineage teacher Furong Daokai (1043–1118; Jpn.: Fuyo Dōkai), who established standards for monasticism in the Caodong/ Sōtō tradition. Furong Daokai said, “The green mountains are constantly walking. A stone woman gives birth to a child in the night.” Dōgen comments in various ways, “Mountains lack none of their proper qualities; accordingly, they are constantly settled and constantly walking. We must devote ourselves to a detailed study of this virtue of walking. The walking of the mountains is like that of people. Do not doubt that the mountains walk simply because they may not appear to walk like humans. ... Because the green mountains are walking, they are constant, and their walk is swifter than the wind; yet those in the mountains do not notice this, do not know it.” The mountains, our image of stability, indeed are constantly eroding, and the animals, trees, and even rocks that are their surface features, their skins, are constantly shifting, albeit at varying paces. In geological time scales, mountains and even continents certainly move here and there.

Dōgen continues, “They who doubt that the mountains walk do not yet understand their own walking. It is not that they do not walk, but that they do not yet understand and have not yet clarified walking itself.<sup>18</sup> To understand one’s own walking one must also understand the walking of the green mountains. The green mountains are neither sentient nor nonsentient; the self is neither sentient nor nonsentient. Therefore, we can have no doubts about these green mountains walking. We do not realize that we must clarify the green mountains on the basis of innumerable dharma realms.” From the perspective of a sutra, or from multiple phenomenal realms, our existence, while smaller and shorter than that of mountains, walks alongside mountains, even if we are on such a different scale as to make this imperceptible to us. But Dōgen appeals to a radical imagination.

In Dōgen’s “Mountains and Water Sutra,” as for mountains so for water. Further along in the essay, he says, “Water is neither strong nor weak, neither wet nor dry, neither moving nor still, neither cold nor hot, neither existent nor nonexistent, neither deluded nor awakening. Frozen, it is harder than diamond; who could crack it? Melted, it is softer than milk; who could break it? This being the case, we cannot doubt the many qualities it realizes.” After surveying the range and fluidity of the forms of water, Dōgen turns to how it is apprehended by varying beings. “Seeing

mountains and rivers differs according to the type of being seeing them. There are beings who see what we call water as a jeweled necklace. This does not mean, however, that they see a jeweled necklace as water. How, then, do we see what they consider water? Their jeweled necklace is what we see as water. Or, again some see water as wondrous flowers, though it does not follow that they use flowers as water. Hungry ghosts see water as raging flames or as pus and blood. Dragons and fish see water as a palace or a pavilion, or as the seven treasures or jewels. Others see water as woods and walls, or as the dharma nature of immaculate liberation, or as the true human body, or as the physical form and essence of mind. Men see these as water. And these different ways of seeing are the conditions under which water is dead or alive. Thus, what different types of beings see is different; and we should reflect on this fact. Is it that there are various ways of seeing one object? Or is it that we have mistaken various images for one object?" Here Dōgen demonstrates the paltry limitations of our conventional human perceptions and viewpoints, but also he opens up possibilities for many wider varying awarenesses.

Toward the end of this colorful and provocative essay, Dōgen declares, "It is not the case simply that there is water in the world; within the realm of water there are worlds. And this is true not only within water: within clouds as well there are worlds of sentient beings, within wind, within fire, within earth there are worlds of sentient beings. Within the dharma realm there are worlds of sentient beings, within a single blade of grass, within a single staff there are worlds of sentient beings. And wherever there are worlds of sentient beings, there, inevitably, is the world of buddhas and ancestors." Dōgen adds, "As for mountains, there are mountains hidden in jewels, there are mountains hidden in swamps, mountains hidden in the sky. There are mountains hidden in mountains. There is a study of mountains hidden in hiddenness." Here Dōgen opens up the deep complexity, interconnect-edness, and mutuality of mountains, waters, and all entities, including even human beings. Within all these realms and dimensions buddhas exist and function, though often hidden, beyond the capacity of beings' awareness.

American Zen pioneer and poet Gary Snyder in his masterpiece *The Practice of the Wild* has an illuminating chapter commenting directly on Dōgen's "Mountains and Water Sutra." Snyder notes, "One does not need to be a specialist to observe that landforms are a play of stream-cutting and ridge-resistance and that waters and hills interpenetrate in endlessly branching rhythms. The Chinese feel for land has always incorporated this sense of a dialectic of rock and water, of downward flow and rocky uplift, and of the dynamism and 'slow flowing' of earth-forms." Snyder here clarifies the literal dynamic interplay and functioning of mountains and waters underlying all their metaphoric resonances in Dōgen's sutra. Snyder adds, "'Mountains and waters' is a way to refer to the totality of the process of nature. As such it goes well beyond dichotomies of purity and pollution, natural and artificial. The whole, with its rivers and valleys, obviously includes farms, fields, villages, cities, and the (once comparatively small) dusty world of human affairs."<sup>19</sup> Snyder's comments clarifying mountains and waters as the expression of totality set the stage for Su shi's sudden realization of the streams' sounds as the voice of the

ultimate and the mountains' forms as the very body of awakening. Su shi's resulting poetic outpouring flows on through the ages, for example in the writings of Eihei Dōgen and Gary Snyder.

## 6 The True Mind and Body of Faith

Returning to the essay *Keisei Sanshoku* "The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains," after the first section with Su shi's verse and the traditional stories of awakening experiences in the world of natural phenomena, what follows takes an interesting turn. The second portion of the essay proceeds by affirming that thanks to the virtue of the sounds of the valley streams and the colors of the mountains, the great earth and all sentient beings simultaneously attain the way and countless buddhas awaken upon seeing the morning star. This is clearly not a matter of merely personal liberation. Dōgen urges his contemporaries to be inspired by these examples and strongly warns against concern for fame and gain. He expresses special concern for people of Japan, and laments that they do not seek the Dharma simply for the sake of Dharma, but instead seek personal praise.

Dōgen then introduces encouragements to arouse the vow to aspire for awakening. The rest of the *Keisei Sanshoku* essay intersperses warnings against practice aimed at seeking personal gain with devotional encouragements for arousing vow, confessing the patterns of misguided, unwholesome karma, and arousing faith. Many of these devotional passages are compiled in a separate text, *Eihei Koso Hotsuganmon* "Great Ancestor Eihei's Words for Arousing the Vow," which is part of Sōtō liturgy.

The devotional material in *Keisei Sanshoku* begins: "As soon as you arouse the aspiration for awakening, even if you transmigrate in the six realms and four forms of birth, transmigration itself will become practical vows of awakening. Although you may have wasted time so far, before this present life ends you should immediately vow, 'Together with all sentient beings may I hear the true dharma from this birth throughout future births.'" In keeping with contemporary Buddhist cosmology, Dōgen's vow applies to his concern for assuring his beneficial activity in whatever future realms he is born into. He continues, "When I hear the true dharma, I will not doubt or distrust it. When I encounter the true dharma, I will relinquish ordinary affairs and uphold the buddha dharma. Thus, may I realize the way together with the great earth and all sentient beings.' This vow is the ground for genuine aspiration. Do not slacken in this determination."

Dōgen emphasizes a vow that includes all beings and extends through all time. Immediately thereafter, Dōgen notes that Japan is a remote country and Japanese people are extremely ignorant. He warns those who aspire to the way and to awakening to keep their practice private, not to seek praise for their practice. He recounts examples going back to the time of Śākyamuni Buddha in India of people who sought praise or rewards for their practice. Dōgen describes seeking fame and gain by practitioners as a disease, and he recommends instead the admirable

aspiration to seek the way joyfully. He speaks about the legendary Chan founder Bodhidharma, and how the leading teachers of the time in China, Bodhiruci and Guangtong, proud of their status, attacked Bodhidharma “like wild animals.” He warns that the merit of practice may lead to worldly power, but this is a trap that leads away from true understanding and practice.

Most of the rest of the *Keisei Sanshoku* invokes devotional practice. The text proceeds: “Endeavor wholeheartedly to follow the path of earlier sages. You may have to climb mountains and cross oceans when you look for a teacher to inquire about the way. Look for a teacher and search for understanding with all-encompassing effort, as they come down from the heavens or emerge from the earth. When you encounter the teacher as they invoke sentient beings as well as nonsentient beings, hear them with the body, and listen with the mind. To hear with the ear is an everyday matter, but to hear with the eye is not always so. When you see buddha, you see self-buddha and other-buddha, a large buddha or a small buddha. Do not be frightened by a large buddha. Do not be contemptuous of a small buddha. Just see large and small buddhas as valley sounds and mountain colors, as the broad long tongue and as eighty-four thousand verses. This is liberation, this is complete seeing. ... An earlier buddha said: ‘It covers heaven, it encompasses the earth.’ This is the purity of the spring pine and magnificence of autumn chrysanthemums.” Here Dōgen emphasizes the role of a good teacher, and compares their function to the seasonal splendors of the natural world.

Dōgen then warns that anyone who has not realized this awareness should not guide others, lest they harm these students. Much of what follows is incorporated in the “Eihei Kōso Hotsuganmon.” He states that those who are lazy or insincere should earnestly repent before the buddhas. “Doing so, the power of repentance will rescue and purify you. This power will nurture faith and effort free from hindrance. Once pure faith emerges, self and others are simultaneously transformed. This benefit reaches both sentient and non-sentient beings. Repenting, one declares: ‘Although my past unwholesome actions have accumulated, causing hindrance in the study of the way, may buddhas and ancestors release me from the burden of these actions, and liberate me. May the merit of practicing dharma fill inexhaustible phenomenal worlds, and may compassion be extended to me.’” Although invoking buddhas and ancestors for support, Dōgen’s faith is not merely belief in some external entities, but confidence in the possibilities of awakening and universal liberation. His repentance and confession are not about some fundamental sin or guilt, but of habitual karmic patterns that obstruct practical ability to foster awakening in self or others.

Dōgen continues expressing this faith, “Before awakening, buddha ancestors were as we. Upon awakening, we shall come to be buddha ancestors. When you look at buddha ancestors you are a buddha ancestor. When you look at their aspiration for awakening, you have the aspiration. Working with compassion this way and that, you achieve facility and you drop off facility. Accordingly, Longya (835–923; Jpn.: Ryūge) said<sup>20</sup>:

If you did not attain awakening in the past, do so now.  
 Liberate this body that is the culmination of many lifetimes.  
 Before awakening, ancient buddhas were like us.  
 When awakened we will be like those of old.

“This is the understanding of a realized buddha. We should reflect on it. This is the exact point of a realized buddha. With repentance you will certainly receive invisible help from buddha ancestors. Confess to the buddhas with mind and body. The power of repentance melts the roots of unwholesomeness. This is the single color of true practice, the true mind of faith, the true body of faith.”

How these encouragements to faith and repentance relate to the appreciation and connection to the natural landscape invoked in the first part of the essay may not be immediately clear. In his brief closing to the essay Dōgen says, “When you have true practice, then valley stream sounds and colors, mountain colors and sounds all reveal the eighty-four thousand verses. When you are free from fame, profit, body, and mind, the valley streams and mountains are also free and generous. Through the night the valley stream sounds and mountain colors do and do not actualize the eighty-four thousand verses. When your capacity to talk about valley streams and mountains as valley streams and mountains is not yet mature, who can see and hear you as valley stream sounds and mountain colors?”.

It is striking that an essay that initially focuses on the awakening power and wonder of the natural landscape, embodied in the shapes and colors of mountains and the sounds of valley streams, should culminate in a call for repentance of karmic transgressions and for the importance of faith. The relationship of appreciation of the natural environment to devotional practices such as repentance and confession would not necessarily seem obvious to traditional Western perspectives, and not to a conventional view of Zen Buddhist practice. Perhaps more expected responses to the power of nature are expressed by Su Shi’s verse in a sense of wonder and awe. One might also anticipate a spiritual sense of deep gratitude at this experience. But Su Shi invokes a related sense of responsibility to share this awakening with others. “At some later time, how could I say anything about this?” Xiangyan similarly seems impelled by the pebble striking bamboo to devoting himself to sharing this awareness. In another dialogue mentioned by Dōgen earlier in the essay, Changsha asked, “How does one return oneself to the mountains, rivers, and the great earth?” It is the responsibility invoked in this question that Dōgen emphasizes in the second half of *Keisei Sanshoku*.

Dōgen examines the actual practices of sharing the awakening process with others. He emphasizes how self-aggrandizement hinders spreading of the true practice. Deeply embedded karmic habits of seeking fame and gain are obstructions and require, along with clear awareness, repentance and confession to uproot. Dōgen recommends calling on the example and inspiration of the ancestral teachers and their dedication. Even while exalting these ancestral teachers, he expresses their humanity, their fundamental congruity with his current students and their capacities. Dōgen affirms that with such trust, that with expressions of repentance and faith,

practitioners might actually be able to express something to encourage others in this process. Thus, we can see Dōgen's exhortations to repentance and devotion as actual practical instructions in response to Su Shi's question, how to share with others the wonders of the mountain colors as the form of the Buddha body and the sound of the valley streams as the Buddha's voice. Here Dōgen provides a link between his own deep appreciation of our environmental landscape, common to his Japanese culture, and devotional religious practices that support this awareness of interconnectedness and responsibility.

## 7 The Hotsuganmon as a Genre

Much of the last devotional section of *Keisei Sanshoku* is incorporated in a Sōtō shū liturgical text called Eihei Kōsō Hotsuganmon "Great Ancestor Eihei [Dōgen's] Words for Arousing Vow." The historical relationship between the two texts is unclear. It might seem reasonable to speculate that the liturgical text was extracted from some edition of the *Shōbōgenzō* essay. At least the original rendition of *Keisei Sanshoku* was reportedly compiled in 1239 or 1240, but Dōgen regularly revised these essays throughout his life. In a personal communication, William Bodiford reported that at least part of the Hotsuganmon text is from a piece of paper in Dōgen's calligraphy from late 1247 written in Kamakura. Dr. Bodiford speculates that this Hotsuganmon was incorporated into a version of *Keisei Sanshoku* sometime between 1248 and 1252.<sup>21</sup> However, in a later discussion Bodiford admitted to uncertainty about the chronology.

Here is a translation of the Eihei Kōsō Hotsuganmon:

We vow together with all beings, from this life on throughout numerous lifetimes, not to fail to hear the true dharma. Hearing this we will not be skeptical and will not be without faith. Directly upon encountering the true dharma, we will abandon mundane affairs and uphold and maintain the buddhadharma; and finally, together with the great earth and all animate beings, we will accomplish the Way.

Although our previous unwholesome karma has greatly accumulated, producing causes and conditions that obstruct the Way, may the buddhas and ancestors who have attained the buddha way be compassionate to us and liberate us from our karmic entanglements, allowing us to practice the Way without hindrance. May the merit and virtue of their dharma gate fill and refresh the inexhaustible dharma realm, so that they share with us their compassion. Ancient buddhas and ancestors were as we; we shall come to be buddhas and ancestors. Venerating buddhas and ancestors, we are one with buddhas and ancestors; contemplating awakening mind, we are one with awakened mind. Compassionately admitting seven and accomplishing eight obtains advantage and lets go of advantage.

Accordingly, Longya said:

What in past lives was not yet complete, now must be complete.

In this life save the body coming from accumulated lives.

Before awakening ancient buddhas were the same as we.

After awakening we will be exactly as those ancient ones.

Quietly studying and mastering these causes and conditions, one is fully informed by the verified buddhas. With this kind of repentance certainly will come the inconceivable guidance of buddha ancestors. Confessing to buddha with mindful heart and dignified body, the strength of this confession will eradicate the roots of wrongdoing. This is the one color of true practice, of the true mind of faith, of the true body of faith.<sup>22</sup>

Whatever the relationship and chronology between *Keisei Sanshoku* and Eihei Kōsō Hotsuganmon, the latter is almost certainly attributable to Dōgen himself. Such short Hotsuganmon texts existed in China, Korea, and Japan before Dōgen, and were written by a number of early Sōtō successors of Dōgen, very likely inspired by him.<sup>23</sup> The phrase hotsuganmon was used in a number of Mahāyāna Sūtras for passages in which particular buddhas, such as Amitabha, or bodhisattvas, such as Samantabhadra, aroused particular sets of vows. But Tiantai, Huayan, and Chan sources refer to numbers of short texts called hotsuganmon by historical figures describing particular expressions of vows. Among those that might have inspired Dōgen are the hotsuganmon texts by the early Chan master Yongjia Xuanjie (675–713; Jpn.: Yōka Genkaku) and by his contemporary, the Korean Huayan (Hwaeom) master Uisang (675–702).<sup>24</sup> Yongjia, a successor of the Chan Sixth Ancestor, is best known for his long poem “Song of Awakening,” and he was cited six times by Dōgen in his *Eihei Kōroku*. Yongjia’s hotsuganmon is five and a half times longer than Dōgen’s. It features detailed descriptions of what positive qualities Yongjia hopes to receive in his future lives in order that he may have happy circumstances, serve Buddha, and help awaken suffering beings. He also details qualities he wishes to avoid, such as stinginess, and not to suffer many particular hellish consequences. Here is a small sample from near the beginning of Yongjia’s hotsuganmon, somewhat similar in tone to Dōgen:

I now bow my head to the ground, taking refuge in the Three Treasures.

Universally, for all living beings, I give rise to bodhicitta.

For all those living beings drowning in the sea of suffering,

may all buddhas, the dharma, and sangha bring forth their power.

May kindness, compassion, and skillful means uproot all suffering,

without giving up the expansive vow to aid all living beings.

By the transforming power of unhindered salvation without exhaustion,

may living beings as numerous as the sands of the Ganges attain true awakening.

I speak this verse:

I repeatedly bow my head to the ground, taking refuge in all buddhas in the ten directions

and three times, the dharma and sangha, receiving the power of the Three Treasures.

With determined heart, giving rise to the vow to practice unsurpassed bodhi,

I now resolve to give over this life to reach the completion of true awakening.<sup>25</sup>

Dōgen may have also been inspired by important Japanese Buddhist predecessors who wrote hotsuganmon texts. The great Saichō (767–822), founder of the Tendai school in which Dōgen was initially ordained, was reportedly the author of the



Rōzan Hotsuganmon that Dōgen may likely have known, although Saichō's authorship has been questioned by modern scholars.<sup>26</sup> Closer in time to Dōgen, Jōkei (1155–1213) an influential teacher of the traditional Japanese Hossō or Yogacara school also wrote a hotsuganmon text.<sup>27</sup>

A few important followers of Dōgen in the century after his life wrote short hotsuganmon texts that survive.<sup>28</sup> These included his immediate disciple Kangan Giin (1217–1300), who visited China after Dōgen's death and returned to establish an important, still surviving branch of Sōtō in Kyushu, the Japanese Southern island. The fifth abbot of Eihei-ji, Giun (1253–1333), aside from his hotsuganmon text, wrote an important commentary in verse form on the sixty chapter version of *Shōbōgenzō*, which remained the primary commentary on Dōgen for centuries.<sup>29</sup> Keizan Jōkin (1268–1335) is the third generation successor of Dōgen and is considered the second founder of Sōtō Zen, responsible for its wide spread, and also wrote a short hotsuganmon text. Here is Kangan Giin's complete hotsuganmon, similar in sincerity and devotion to Dōgen's:

In the authentic sanzen of China, it is necessary above all to arouse sincere heart and pure vow, to put yourself in the sight of the buddha ancestors, offer incense and make prostrations, and entreat the buddhas. May the ocean of vows of the three jewels be dedicated to this body received from our father and mother. May lack of faith in every fluctuation or condition be wiped away, and from our current body until reaching the buddha body may we serve buddha and not be separated from the buddha dharma through lifetimes and generations of birth and death. May we fully liberate sentient beings from all locales and situations without becoming weary. Whether atop the sharp trees of sword mountain or inside a fiery furnace of molten iron [in hell realms], simply hold this true dharma eye treasury [*shōbōgenzō*], taking responsibility and managing it everywhere. Humbly we request the buddha ancestors, who have verified the three jewels, to protect and attend to this.<sup>30</sup>

## 8 Conclusion

The hotsuganmon texts are a traditional devotional form that long preceded Dōgen and that he perpetuated such that some of his successors continued them. Whether the Eihei Kōsō Hotsuganmon text was extracted from the *Shōbōgenzō* essay *Keisei Sanshoku* "The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains" or inserted into a later version, the full essay that exists today links together both traditional stories celebrating the virtues and liberative impacts of the natural landscape and Dōgen's devotional invocation of vows and karmic repentance. Su Shi's dramatic realization sparked by the sounds of the valley streams and the shape of the mountains inspired both Su Shi and Dōgen. In many of his writings Dōgen speaks of the inspiration from the natural landscape and his deep sense of wonder and gratitude.

Dōgen's radical view of the environmental landscape and its liberative power is not limited to the traditional anecdotes of awakening experiences in the essay "The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains." In the "Self-Fulfillment

Samādhi” section of *Bendōwa* he proclaims the active but imperceptible mutual guidance of practitioner and environment, with space or reality itself awakening. In the “Mountains and Waters Sutra” *Sansuikyō* he reveals the subtle interplay and nuanced functioning of the landscape that is the backdrop for the practice he expounds. Throughout these expressions are invocations of gratitude to the buddhas and ancestors and to the beauty and inspiration of the landscape. But in “The Sound of the Streams, the Shape of the Mountains” *Keisei Sanshoku*, the text’s celebration of natural landscape links directly, seamlessly to a devotional call to dedication and to vows of beneficial awakening activity for all beings and repentance of hindrances from personal karma that obstruct such vows. Thereby appreciation of nature and devotional practice, including even repentance and confession, are intertwined for Dōgen.

### Notes

1. Yaoko Mizuno, ed., *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993) 107–27. Excerpts herein are my own renderings except where noted. I have consulted the following translations. Thomas Cleary, trans. *Rational Zen: The Mind of Dōgen Zenji* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 116–96. Francis Cook, trans. *How to Raise an Ox: Zen Practice as Taught in Zen Master Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002). Originally published (Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1978), 101–14. Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans. and ed. *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*. Vol. 1 (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), 85–94. Gudō Wafu Nishijima and Chōdō Cross, trans. *Master Dōgen’s Shobogenzo*. Book 1 (Woods Hole, MA: Windbell Publications, 1994), 85–96. *Shōbōgenzō* consists of various historical compilations of many of Dōgen’s essays. The largest version, referred to here, includes ninety-five essays.
2. Taigen Dan Leighton, *Just This Is It: Dongshan and the Practice of Suchness* (Boston: Shambhala, 2015), chapter one, “Nonsentient Beings Expounding the Dharma,” 19–32.
3. William Powell, trans. *The Record of Tung-shan* (University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 24.
4. Leighton, *Just This Is It*, 21–25.
5. Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 1, 72–126. Norman Waddell and Masao Abe. *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 59–98. Nishijima and Cross, *Master Dōgen’s Shobogenzo*. Book 2, 1–32.
6. Leighton, *Just This Is It*, 26.
7. Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 3, 54–73. Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 548–57. Nishijima and Cross, *Master Dōgen’s Shobogenzo*. Book 3, 113–124.
8. Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, trans. *Dōgen’s Extensive Record: A Translation of Eihei Kōroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 639.

9. Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 2, 97–106. Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 444–49. Nishijima and Cross, *Master Dōgen's Shobogenzo*. Book 2, 277–84.
10. Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 449.
11. Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 411.
12. Changsha, disciple of Nanquan (748–835; Jpn.: Nansen) and Dharma brother of Zhaozhou (778–897; Jpn.: Jōshu), was the teacher who encouraged students to take a step from the top of a hundred-foot pole.
13. Steven Heine, *Flowers Blooming on a Withered Tree: Giun's Verse Comments on Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 128.
14. Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 1, 11–49. Shohaku Okumura and Taigen Daniel Leighton, *The Wholehearted Way: A Translation of Eihei Dōgen's Bendōwa With Commentary by Kōshō Uchiyama Roshi* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1997). Waddell and Abe. *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 7–30. Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 3–22. Nishijima and Chōdō Cross, trans. *Master Dōgen's Shobogenzo*. Book 1, 1–23.
15. Okumura and Leighton, *The Wholehearted Way*, 22. The Self-Fulfillment Samādhi is the section beginning, “For all ancestors and buddhas who have been dwelling ...” and ends with the beginning of the long section of questions and answers.
16. Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 2, 184–204. Thomas Cleary, trans. *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 87–101. Carl Bielefeldt, trans. “Sansuikyō” in Shohaku Okumura, *The Mountains and Waters Sutra: A Practitioner's Guide to Dōgen's “Sansuikyō”* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2018), 15–36. Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 154–164. Nishijima and Chōdō Cross, trans. *Master Dōgen's Shobogenzo*. Book 1, 167–179. Excerpts provided in this section are the author's renderings, with above translations consulted.
17. I am indebted to personal communications with William Bodiford for clarification of this process and the complexity of dating *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles. See also William Bodiford “Textual Genealogies of Dōgen” in Steven Heine, *Dōgen: Textual and Historical Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15–41. Steven Heine has offered much helpful work on the variety of *Shōbōgenzō* editions, for example in *Flowers Blooming on a Withered Tree*, and in Steven Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).
18. For a highly illuminating study of human walking, see Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001). Solnit is herself a zazen practitioner.
19. Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1990), 109. See also Snyder's monumental book-length poem, at least partially inspired by Dōgen's “Mountains and Waters Sutra,” Gary Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 1996).

20. Longya Judun (Jpn.: Ryūge Koton) was a successor of Caodong/ Sōtō founder Dongshan Liangjie. Dōgen praises Longya highly as a founding ancestor of his family lineage, see Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 315–316.
21. In his personal communication, William Bodiford noted that this explanation for the source of Eihei Kōsō Hotsuganmon from a 1247 writing from Kamakura is from a brief explanation from Ito Shūken in Dōgen Zenji Zenshū, vol. 7.
22. For this translation by Taigen Dan Leighton, see: <https://www.ancientdragon.org/eihei-koso-hotsuganmon/>. For an alternate translation, background, and sources see Shōhaku Okumura. “Original Vow and Personal Vow” in Shōhaku Okumura et al., *Boundless Vows, Endless Practice: Bodhisattva Vows in the 21st Century* (Bloomington, Indiana: Sanshin Zen Community Dōgen Institute, 2018), 3–5. Eihei Kōsō Hotsuganmon is included in Eihei Koso Gosuikun (Instructions by High Ancestor Eihei) published by Eiheiji in 1976.
23. I am deeply indebted and grateful to Korin Charlie Pokorny, fellow faculty member of the Institute of Buddhist Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, for his unpublished extensive research into hotsuganmon texts. I am citing in what follows in this chapter only a small fraction of what he uncovered. Also very helpful was supplementary research by Kokyo Henkel.
24. See Hwaōm i: The Mainstream Tradition, < [http://international.ucla.edu/media/files/04\\_Hwaom\\_I\\_web-re-sld.pdf](http://international.ucla.edu/media/files/04_Hwaom_I_web-re-sld.pdf) > , in: The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism, Edited by Richard D. McBride II.
25. From a draft translation by Kokyo Henkel, used by permission, from Taisho Volume 48, Text 2023 (1064b16 - 1065a28).
26. See Paul Groner, *Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School* (Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1984), 208n, for this text's source, and Groner's claim of its unreliability.
27. See James L. Ford, “Jōkei and the Rhetoric of ‘Other-Power’ and ‘Easy Practice’ in Medieval Japanese Buddhism” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1/2 (Spring, 2002), 67–106. The text is called the Busshari Kannon Daishi Hotsuganmon “Vow to the [Buddha's] Relics and the Great Sage Kannon.”
28. For hotsuganmon texts and backgrounds for Giun, Kangan Giin, and Keizan Jōkin, see Okumura, “Original Vow and Personal Vow” in Okumura et al., *Boundless Vows, Endless Practice*, 17–28.
29. Heine, *Flowers Blooming on a Withered Tree*.
30. Translation by Taigen Dan Leighton. See also Okumura, “Original Vow and Personal Vow” in Okumura et al., *Boundless Vows, Endless Practice*, 23.

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# Theorizing the Neo-Confucian-Buddhist Encounter: The Chinese Religious Habitus and Doxas



On-cho Ng

That Buddhism has long been recognized and acknowledged as one of the Three Teachings (*sanjiao*), alongside with Confucianism and Daoism, in the Chinese cultural habitus, conceived in Pierre Bourdieu's sense of a continuous system of ideational and ideological dispositions constituted historically, is common knowledge that needs no belaboring. Students of Chinese thought have long accepted their coexistence and in the sinological quarters, some have in fact been wont to regard that phenomenon as evidence of China's cultural proclivity for intellectual accommodation and aversion to sectarian intolerance. This is of course not to say that there were no vociferous and vituperative doctrinal polemics on the relative merits (and demerits) of the Three Teachings. The Weberian myth of a harmonious Chinese religio-philosophical world has long been debunked.<sup>1</sup> Intense and age-old tensions among the various teachings, including internecine subdivisions within a putative common tradition, were evident and functioned as a major hermeneutic dynamic that spurred intellectual growth. A case in point was the relation between Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism. Although Buddhism, especially Chan, no doubt exerted enormous influences on the origination and development of Neo-Confucianism, it was the latter's foremost goal to repudiate the former. The present essay aims to conceptualize the fraught relationship between the two religio-philosophical traditions, especially in the late imperial period, through the intervention of Pierre Bourdieu's descriptive-analytic ideas of "habitus" (a continuous system of ideational and ideological dispositions constituted historically) and "doxa" (the cultural realities that are taken for granted, consciously or sub-consciously). It argues that Buddhism, branded as a heterodoxy at odds with the Confucian orthodoxy, was nevertheless integrally and functionally a part of the Confucian cultural capital. Their respective doctrinal clarity relied on their self-identification in terms of each other. At the same time that they sought to negate and denigrate each other, they mutually reinforced as enduring and accumulating cultural capital.

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A good deal of the scholarship on Chinese (or for that matter, East Asian) religions has worked within the theoretical framework of syncretism, which on the surface is a useful perspective in which to view and examine the pattern and nature of the interactions between diverse traditions.<sup>2</sup> Especially with regard to the intellectual developments in late imperial China, three important books appeared in the 1980s. Their authors focus on the thoughts of three respective late Ming literati as illustrations of the defining intellectual trait of the period, which, to borrow some key words in the monographs' titles, was "syncretic" "reconstructing" and "synthesis" of the three teachings. Chün-fang Yü, in her study of Zhuhong (1535–1615), claims that "research into Ming Buddhism leads me to believe... its tendency toward syncretism... differentiated it from its predecessors," and this syncretism "is evidenced in both the internal combination of Buddhist schools and the external rapprochement with Confucianism and Taoism."<sup>3</sup> Edward Ch'ien argues that syncretism "in late Ming is unique in both strength and significance, especially in terms of its implications for the constitution of Confucianism as a philosophy," noting the "tendency to inject Buddhism and Taoism into Confucianism."<sup>4</sup> Ch'ien describes the subject of his study, Jiao Hong (1540–1620), as "a syncretist who advocated unequivocally the 'oneness of the Three Teachings'."<sup>5</sup> Judith Berling seeks to demonstrate this late Ming syncretism through the life and thought of Lin Zhao'en (1517–1598), who employed Buddhist and Daoist terms and concepts to corroborate and reinforce his Confucian ethical concerns, establishing a religious sect called the "Three Teachings." But was such effort syncretism as such, if the term refers to a purposeful and deliberate attempt to unite and reconcile diverse and divergent beliefs and practices? Of the three authors, Berling is the most diligent in exploring the meanings of syncretism, which she defines "as the borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols, or practices of one religious tradition into another by a process of selection and reconciliation." But then, she immediately goes on to say that such "borrowing may not be entirely conscious,"<sup>6</sup> thereby mitigating intention or volition in the process. Moreover, Berling maintains that "syncretism is a process of religious interaction and change,"<sup>7</sup> that "covers a wide variety of phenomena."<sup>8</sup> Such a conception of syncretism, which both Chün-fang Yü and Edward Ch'ien seem to share, appears to be too broad to be particularly useful; one may as well just use a descriptive term of art such as eclecticism or inclusivism. In fact, looking at the three historical personages, to the extent that Lin Zhao'en and Jiao Hong remained committed Confucians, notwithstanding their appropriation and accommodation of Buddhist and Daoist elements, and insofar as Zhuhong stayed a devoted Buddhist, their thoughts may better be conceptually understood as expressions of a religious habitus in which the correlation, communication, and cooptation between the Three Teachings were endemic, necessary, and taken for granted.

Indeed, given how broadly and imprecisely the concept of syncretism has been employed, Timothy Brook has cast doubt on its usefulness for the study of the history and development of Chinese religions, for it has been stretched to represent many forms of religious experiences and congresses, such as ecumenism (the universality of truth), inclusivism (the elucidation of the tenets and structures of one

tradition with reference to another), compartmentalism (the recognition that different traditions shed light on varying aspects of reality in divergent ways), or eclecticism (the appropriation of useful and usable ideas by one tradition from another), which are not necessarily and ultimately syncretic. For Brook, syncretic integration means some basic and fundamental reconciliation that dissolves “the natural dissonance between different systems of religious ideas and gestures,” which rarely took place in the Chinese circumstances.<sup>9</sup> Brook posits that as far as the patterns of religious interconnections in late imperial China were concerned, what was in play was not syncretism but eclecticism, which he calls “a condominium” of the Three Teachings.<sup>10</sup> He cautions us that even though it is a fact that both in historical sources and historiographical representations, we encounter the protuberant phenomenon of the pluralistic commingling of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, variously expressed as *sanjiao heyi* (the unity of the Three Teachings), *sanjiao guiyi* (the Three Teachings go back to the one [source]), *sanjiao yiyuan* (the Three Teachings have one origin), *sanjiao tonyuan* (the Three Teachings have the same origin), *sanjiao yijiao* (the Three Teachings are one teaching), it signals eclectic meshing rather than syncretic fusion.<sup>11</sup>

In a study on the celebrated late Ming-early Qing, monk, Ouyi Zhixu (1599–1655), who is famously known for his *Zhouyi Chanjie* (A Chanist Explanation of the *Changes*), a commentary on the *Yijing* (The Classic of Changes) from the Chan perspective, and also for his commentaries on the Confucian Four Books, Yuet Keung Lo similarly rejects the use of the label of a “syncretist” that is all-too-often applied to Ouyi. As Lo makes clear, “Ouyi did not purposefully select any particular Confucian concepts, symbols or practices for integration into his eclectic Buddhism; nor did he attempt to reconcile the two distinct doctrines.... Ouyi was not so much interested in reconciling Buddhism with Confucianism as fathoming the multifarious nature of Change.”<sup>12</sup> Lo, in the final analysis, as with Timothy Brooks, sees Ouyi as an eclecticist.<sup>13</sup>

Daniel Overmeyer, in a review of Judith Berling’s book on Lin Zhao’en, pointedly remarks that syncretism, as an analytic concept, is problematic, not only in the case of studying Lin of the imperial period but also the history of Chinese religion and thought in general:

Syncretism assumes a relatively pure set of factors that consciously interact, but in China such doctrinal “purity” had scarcely existed after the Han dynasty. From that time on, a dominant theme in Chinese thought was correlation within a hierarchical system, perhaps based on the model of the family with its assignment of social roles within a centered context. The sense of balanced interrelationship between all phenomena has been pervasive, symbolized by yin and yang, the five phases and the hexagrams of the *I Ching*. It is well known that in this context originally Buddhist values and terms have long been correlated with Confucian and Taoist, and the other way around. To be sure, each tradition maintained distinctive elements, around which correlation might take place, but the basic Chinese world view assumed that a high degree of interaction was both necessary and inevitable.<sup>14</sup>

This “basic world view” that Overmyer refers to may well be seen as a religious habitus, in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense of the structures and generative principles that



govern distinct practices. Therefore, it is my view that when it comes to examining and understanding the interactions between the various Chinese religious traditions, it seems useful to employ and appeal to this very framing notion of a *habitus*, whether we are looking at supposed accommodations or apparent antagonisms. I further argue that even in cases of exclusion, rejection, and contention, insofar as the ways and patterns of intervention display family resemblances (*à la* Wittgenstein) – in the sense that the interacting traditions share a series of traits or characteristics<sup>15</sup> – the conflicting ideas are actually familiar, internalized *doxas* to the contending parties. These *doxas*, again, as Bourdieu tells us, are a community's accepted and indubitable truths, albeit being presented and argued differently by divergent partisans. In short, I find it fruitful to locate the Confucian-Chan encounters, both antipathetic and sympathetic, in this theoretical framework of a *culturo-religious habitus* with its pervasive and domestic *doxas*. Indeed, even in the case of intra-Confucian polemics, Buddhism plays crucial arbitrating roles because it is integrally a part of the *habitus*.

Accordingly, this essay looks at the unfolding of the Neo-Confucian-Buddhist intercourse through Bourdieu's lenses of a *habitus*, a continuous system of dispositions constituted historically by the cultural and social conditions of a particular social group, which, in the case of China, were the Confucian and Buddhist literati. As Bourdieu explains, the dispositions are "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations." Yet, this process of structuring or being structured is by no means determined "obedience to rules" or "conscious aiming at ends."<sup>16</sup> Instead, as a historically acquired system of "generative schemes," it enables the "free production of all thoughts" that are "inherent in the particular conditions" of the production of the *habitus*. In other words, ideas and thoughts are grounded in a durable repository of dispositions or predispositions. Their germination is governed by the historical and social conditions that set definable limits that filter out and preclude aberrant, fickle, novel ideas. However, new ideas are not merely "mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning." The *habitus* enables the production of all the "reasonable" and "common-sense" ideas that are in accord with the objective historical conditions. At the same time, the *habitus* denies a place to those that are at odds with the historical characteristics of a space in time. *Habitus* is "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history." The past is the "accumulated capital" of a cultural community, the enactment of which produces ideas. In this way, the *habitus* "produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence of change." But since such change is circumscribed, generated within the *habitus*, it is readily predictable and familiar. In other words, *habitus* demands the "art of assessing likelihoods," and reaffirms the "sense of realities."<sup>17</sup>

Thus, even though Buddhism, especially Chan, was often branded as heterodoxy (*xie*), its engagement with the so-called orthodoxy of Confucianism, in Bourdieu's terms, was in actuality an experience of *doxa* that transcended the orthodox-heterodox dichotomy of antagonistic beliefs. This was so because Chan Buddhism was a constitutive part of the *habitus*. It was a taken-for-granted component of the

“world of tradition experienced as a ‘natural world,’” to use Bourdieu’s words.<sup>18</sup> The Neo-Confucian-Buddhism encounter actualized the structuring dispositions in the Chinese religious habitus. No matter how heated the debate might be between the Chan and Confucian adherents, there was no perception of the established cosmological and political order in which they argued as arbitrary, that is, “as one possible order among others.” Such polemics and differences unfolded within the “*unanimity of doxa*.” In other words, the Confucian doxa was an “aggregate of ‘choices’” that ineluctably included Buddhism as one of those choices. As Bourdieu explains, when philosophical and religious oppositions arise, a “field of opinion” of opinion is constituted, but it is constituted within the natural and self-evident world of doxa. While competing discourses of Confucian and Buddhism raged to establish their respective versions of truths, all these versions were intrinsic to and embodied in the traditional Chinese intellectual universe. They were “competing *possibles*” made possible by the Chinese cultural doxa. The Neo-Confucian-Buddhist congress in fact demonstrated the boundaries and limits of “*the universe of possible discourse*” or “the universe of the thinkable.”<sup>19</sup>

It is a well-known fact that Neo-Confucianism, or the Learning of the Way (*daoxue*), the great synthesizer of which was Zhu Xi (1130–1200), who claimed the mantle of Cheng Yi’s (1033–1107) Confucian learning, borrowed and integrated a good deal of Buddhist (and Daoist) elements, especially the metaphysical and cosmological ones, fabricating them into a coherent religio-philosophical system, even though Zhu certainly would not admit to the Buddhist inspiration and provenance. Indeed, as the self-touted vanguard and defender of the *daotong*, the lineage of the authentic Chinese and Confucian Way, Zhu took to task what he saw as the errors of the Buddhist ways. As Wing-tsit Chan has shown, Zhu was versed in the Buddhist texts and had friendly contacts with monks with whom he exchanged poems and gifts. But in the end, even though Zhu “was socially amiable toward Buddhist priests,” he decisively parted ways with them, so “philosophically he remained critical of them.”<sup>20</sup> Charles Wei-hsun Fu, looking at the intellectual developments in the Tang-Song period, points to the indisputable fact that Buddhism posed both as a challenge and stimulation that prompted the Confucian literati to rediscover “the metaphysico-religious significance of the fundamental principles existent in early Confucian classics, and reestablished these principles as the chief philosophical weapons to launch forceful attacks against (Mahayana) Buddhism in China.”<sup>21</sup> The recent anthology of essays edited by John Makeham, *The Buddhist Roots of Zhu Xi’s Philosophy Thought*, is in many ways a substantial elaboration of Fu’s thesis by focusing on Zhu Xi’s intimate intellectual connections to Buddhism. The contributors to the volume take pains to lay bare the manifold aspects of Zhu Xi’s engagement with Buddhism, revealing in the process not only Zhu’s criticism, excoriation, and spurning but also his appropriation, incorporation, repurposing of Buddhist ideas.<sup>22</sup>

One important dimension of this Confucian-Buddhist contention was the crucial role played by Buddhism in intra-Confucian intellectual contestations. In 1164, Zhu Xi composed the “Critique of Adulterated Learning” (*Zaxue bian*), which comprises passages he assembled from commentaries on the classical texts written by

some reputed Song literati. Zhu subjected them to line-by-line critique because, much to his outrage, these works wrongly argued that Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism formed a single Way. Zhu regarded such indiscriminating eclecticism as a danger to and perversion of the *daotong*, the lineage of the true Confucian Way. In particular, Zhu railed at their unsavory act of blithely incorporating Buddhist notions into interpretations of Confucian texts. The unfortunate result was that these uncritical scholars ended up imbuing the key Neo-Confucian teachings on the heart-mind (*xin*), principle (*li*), investigation of things (*gewu*), and extension of knowledge (*zhizhi*) with a pronounced Chan flavor. Zhu Xi was especially perturbed by the ways these concepts were linked to *gongan/kōan* meditation that would supposedly lead to instantaneous enlightenment. Because these literati, such as Zhang Jiucheng (1092–1159) and Lü Benzhong (1084–1145), had been led astray by Buddhism and impugned the purity and probity of the Confucian Way, Zhu's philosophical assault on them were severe and often ad hominem. His rancorous attack was perhaps his way of atoning for his self-perceived sins of fraternizing with Buddhism when he was young, but he did appreciate the fact that his knowledge of the false teaching enabled him to call out and root out its creeping and corroding influences in the thoughts and writings of his unfaithful Confucian peers who failed to fully follow the learning of the Way.<sup>23</sup>

Zhu Xi's "Critique of Adulterated Learning" would lay bare their Buddhist inclinations and proclivities, and then rectify them with genuine Confucian teachings. For instance, in a commentary on the *Daxue* (*Great learning*), Lü Benzhong had claimed that "when principle has been thoroughly plumbed, knowledge is attained naturally. It is the same as with Yao and Shun, who naturally come to discernment in an instant, realizing it in a tacit manner." Zhu refuted, "This is regrettably the Buddhists' vacuous talk of 'attaining complete awakening after hearing [the dharma] once' and 'directly entering [dharma's gate] in one transcending [thought],' not the practical endeavor of illuminating goodness and making oneself sincere of the sagely tradition [i.e., Confucianism]."<sup>24</sup> Expiating the notion of *gewu* (investigation of things), Lü had posited, "Concerning the principle of flora and implements, I preserve [it] in my mind-heart and come to know it instantaneously. This is how things are investigated." Zhu readily dismissed it because of its fallacious Buddhist thinking: "This is again the Buddhist discourse on 'knowing the way by hearing a sound and enlightening the mind by seeing one color.'"<sup>25</sup>

In "Critique of Adulterated Learning," Zhu was similarly dismissive of Zhang Jiucheng's classical commentaries because they were blemished by Buddhist influences. Zhu reported that Zhang had been commended by his teacher, the famed Buddhist monk, Dahui Zonggao (1089–1163), for having "grasped the main point [of Chan]." The monk had further admonished Zhang: "Now, when you instruct others you should present your teaching in a variety of guises and preach the Dharma as you think appropriate to the circumstances. Make it so that those on different paths end up arriving at the same place. Then there will be no ill feelings between those who have left the world [Buddhists] and those still in it [non-Buddhists]."<sup>26</sup> Zhu characterized this as deception: "As a result of this, all of

Zhang's writings are outwardly Confucian but secretly Buddhist. When he moves in and out of [Buddhism and Confucianism] his purpose is to confuse the world and lull men to sleep so that they enter the Buddhist school and cannot extricate themselves from it even if they want to."<sup>27</sup> In his "Commentary on *the Doctrine of the Mean*" (*Zhongyongjie*), Zhang Jiucheng had averred: "Everyone uses their knowledge to judge right and wrong. But they don't know how to apply their knowledge to being cautious [over what is not seen] and apprehensive [over what is not heard]. If they would shift the heart-mind that judges right and wrong toward being cautious and apprehensive, they would know which is greater." Zhu Xi countered:

The existence of approbation and disapproval is a normative pattern-principle for all under Heaven, and all people possess the heart-mind of right and wrong. This is why it is considered the beginning of knowledge and if one were to lack it, one would not be human. Therefore, to judge approbation and disapproval is to engage in the thorough examination of pattern-principles and is a priority for students. Mr. Zhang rejects this. We now see how he gives full rein to his idiosyncratic and forced speculations. He is incapable of according with the correctness of Heavenly pattern-principle. But aren't his words what the Buddhists call "directly grasping hold of the unexcelled Bodhi without concern for approbation and disapproval"? Alas! Don't these words show the fundamental difference between Confucianism and Buddhism!<sup>28</sup>

It is noteworthy that Zhu's routine summoning of Buddhism as exemplification of negative and invalid thinking in his effort to distinguish Confucian orthodoxy speaks not to its odd foreignness but its domesticated familiarity – Buddhism was an integral part of the Chinese habitus and could hence be readily weaponized in a battle between the orthodox and the heterodox, both of which were doxic knowledge and information, well-known and taken-for-granted. In other words, by the twelfth century, the culturo-religious habitus consisted of a structure of Confucian metaphysics and cosmology that could not have existed without the adaptation and integration of Buddhist theories. Their centuries-old intercourse engendered ideational dispositions that made possible not only modes of mutual accommodation but also exclusion, both of which were imbued with a cultural logic that was readily understood. Moreover, in this nexus of interaction, Buddhism was seen to have infiltrated the cultural body of Confucianism whose veracity, authenticity, and purity ultimately depended on the former's expulsion. Buddhism was thus drawn into the intra-Confucian contestations of doctrinal correctness. The allegedly wrong views were wrong precisely because they embraced and contained Buddhist elements disguised as and confused with Confucian ones. By contrast, the right views were right because they escaped defilement and distortion by deceptive Buddhist ideas. These perspectives would continue to define the culturo-religious habitus in which the late imperial scholars and literati inhabited.

As the late eminent Araki Kengo remarked long ago, one of the most notable developments in the late Ming was the revival of Buddhism, which was closely related to the rise of the so-called Confucian school of mind (*xinxue*), represented first by Zhu Xi's contemporary, Lu Xiangshan (1139–1192), and then Wang Yangming (1472–1529), whose philosophy that focused on the *xin*, the mind or the

mind-heart, became immensely popular and predominant in the intellectual world. Unlike Zhu who premised his metaphysics on principle (*li*), Wang, following the cues of Lu Xiangshan, held that the mind-heart itself was endowed in its entirety and totality with principle, such that the mind-heart was invested with the authority and capacity to direct principle. Wang Yangming and his predecessor-master, Lu Xiangshan, given the presumptive roles respectively as the transmitter and founder of the school of mind, came to be in contention with the school of principle, first initiated by Cheng Yi (1033–1107) and subsequently consolidated by Zhu Xi.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly enough, Araki reminded us that Chan Buddhism should also be considered a school of mind, to the extent that it saw the mind as the unifying substance embracing “subject and object, spirit and body, internal and external worlds,” grasping “this mind as a naked man who has discarded all doctrinal embellishments and traditional norms.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, by the sixteenth century, there were the triangulated relations between three strands of thought or doxa: first, the Cheng Yi-Zhu Xi, or more commonly, Cheng-Zhu, school of principle; second, the Chan school of mind; and third, the Lu Xiangshan-Wang Yangming, or more commonly Lu-Wang, school of mind..<sup>31</sup> That is, there was first, a Confucianism touted by its followers as orthodox; second, Chan Buddhism; and third, a Confucianism seen to be Chan-infected and hence heterodox but embraced as genuine Confucian teaching by its adherents.<sup>32</sup> In short, the arbitration between Confucian orthodoxy and un-Confucian heterodox involved the intervention of Chan, and all of them, notably, were familiar doxic sources of wisdom in the late Ming.

What unmistakably occurred in late imperial China, as far as the world of thought in the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries was concerned, was a good deal of intellectual fungibility as a result of the emergence and prevalence of the aforementioned third strand of religio-philosophical thinking, leading to the phenomenon generally described in the contemporary literature as *sanjiao heyi*, the oneness and continuity of the Three teachings, which, as ascertained earlier, were peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance rather than syncretism as such. Wang Yangming, who unflinchingly labeled himself a staunch Confucian, had nevertheless loosened the boundaries between teachings: “If learned correctly, even heretical teaching could be useful in the world, but if learned incorrectly, even Confucianism would be accompanied by evils.”<sup>33</sup> His latter-day followers were more explicit in endorsing the mutual accommodations among traditions. Wang Ji (1498–1583) proclaimed that “Confucians of today do not know that the teaching of Buddhism was originally the great way of Confucianism,”<sup>34</sup> and Jiao Hong, the subject of Edward Chien’s monographic study, maintained, “The Buddhist texts are commentaries on Confucianism. The contents of Buddhism are the flowers of Confucianism.”<sup>35</sup> On the Buddhist side, Zhuhong, the protagonist of Chün-fang Yü’s book, contended that “the laws of Confucianism and those of Buddhism are similar, but they differ in details.”<sup>36</sup> Ouyi Zhixu, as already pointed out, offered a thorough reading of the Confucian *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing*) from the Chan perspective, even though he was not a syncretist in the strict sense of the word. The preface of Ouyi’s commentary announced that he wanted to introduce

“Chan into Confucianism in order to entice the Confucians to understand Chan.”<sup>37</sup> It should be remembered that in the late Ming, Ouyi (and many others as well) wrote commentaries on the Four Books (*Sishu*) from the Buddhist vantage point.<sup>38</sup> Ouyi stressed the foremost importance of these Confucian texts when it came to understanding learning, the *dao*/Way, and the mandate of heaven (*tianming*), but his primary goal was to “use the Four Books to help bring to light the foremost [Buddhist] truths (*di*).”<sup>39</sup> For instance, while discussing the notion of the Way (*dao*) in the *Analec*s (*Lunyu*), Ouyi faulted the Confucian view to be too narrow insofar as the Way was merely conceived as being connected to heaven and earth, whereas from the Buddhist standpoint, the Way is “knowing the emptiness of life in great awakening, like the vast expanse of the ocean.”<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Ouyi did time and again reinforce the idea of the mutual complementarity of Buddhism and Confucianism: “The rise and fall of the Buddha Dharma is contingent upon the rise and fall of Confucianism. The virtuous action and learning of Confucians are the life of Buddhists.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, he ultimately realized that “Confucianism, Daoism, Chan, *Vinaya*, Doctrinal Buddhism were nothing but yellow leaves and empty fists,”<sup>42</sup> that is, they were varying and expedient skillful means to teach the truth, which is the “One” (*yi*) or “One Principle” (*yili*): “Once the One is intelligently attained, everything can be concluded. What kind of thing is this One after all?... Thus I know, to someone who truly understands it, each and every event and thing is the One.”<sup>43</sup>

In an age where there was the rage for harmonious accommodation and adaptation, however, it became difficult for the schools of mind “to settle upon any real principle, for they were strongly disinclined to abide by any fixed standard of value,” to borrow the words of Araki, who further pointed out that in this situation, they were “bound to be criticized by the School of Principle as no more than the play of subjective speculation.”<sup>44</sup> The Cheng-Zhu camp did indeed castigate the Lu-Wang partisans, and did so by linking them to Buddhism, thereby rendering their teaching as heretical, and thus fraudulent and fatuous, Confucianism. The poignancy and intelligibility of this heresiological attack depended on a host of familiar ideas and tropes, or doxas, provided by Chan: emptiness, detachment, social withdrawal, a-rationality, anti-intellectualism, and so on. But most notably, the attack centered on the Lu-Wang school’s understanding of the mind-heart, which was improper and incorrect because of its Chan connotation and inflection. A prime example of such a condemnation from the Cheng-Zhu followers was Zhang Lie’s (1622–1685) *Questioning the Dubious in Wang [Yang-ming]’s Learning* (*Wangxue zhiyi*), with a preface dated 1681. Lu Longqi (1630–93) and Zhang Boxing (1652–1725), powerful early Qing scholar-officials, contributed endorsing prefaces and helped its publication. The work may thus be seen as the orthodox Cheng-Zhu’s critical response to Wang Yangming and the school of mind-heart.<sup>45</sup>

In this work with three fascicles (*juan*), Zhang Lie addresses the three principal subjects that Wang expiates in his renowned *Record of Instructions for Practical Learning* (*Chuanxi lu*): “the mind-heart is principle” (*xinzhili*); “extending knowledge and investigating things” (*zhizhi gewu*); “unity of knowing and acting”

(*zhixing heyi*). Zhang first takes issue with Wang's assertion of the primacy and priority of the mind-heart as the highest good. Wang says:

To seek the highest good in various things and affairs is extraneous to rightness. The highest good is the original substance of the mind-heart. It is simply the manifestation of one's luminous character to the point where there is supreme and refined single-mindedness. But it is never detached from things and affairs.... The mind-heart is principle. Under heaven, are there things outside of the mind-heart? Are there principles outside of the mind-heart?

Zhang counters by asking that if it is the case that "where there is the mind-heart, there are laws, then is it not the case that even the *Classic of Odes* and [the teachings of] Confucius are extraneous to rightness?"<sup>46</sup> For Zhang, to say that there are no principles outside of the mind-heart is to say that the mind-heart understands the principle in things, and by pursuing principle, the mind-heart can be realized.<sup>47</sup> This is what Zhu Xi means when he states that "the mind-heart embodies the various principles." Zhang thus rejects equating the mind-heart with principle:

The mind-heart can know and is conscious (*zhijue*). Manifested in selfish desires, it is the human mind-heart; manifested in principles, it is heaven's mind-heart. Therefore, [as the *Classic of Documents* says,] it is important to discriminatively identify its subtlety and abide by it with single-mindedness. [The idea] of the mind-heart being one with principle is unheard of [in the Classics]. Master Cheng [Yi] says, "Nature is principle." It is indeed true. [Mencius says that] moral principles please me as the meat of grain-fed animal pleases my palate. If we claim that the mind-heart is principle, then the palate is the meat of the grain-fed animal, sight is colors, and hearing is sounds.<sup>48</sup>

Zhang follows Zhu's conception of the mind-heart as the knowing and conscious faculty, ontologically different from the holistic, totalizing mind-heart of Wang Yangming. Zhang stresses the epistemic process centered on the mind-heart which, albeit in tune with principle, is separate from it. Mencius's metaphor of the relationship between delicious meat and our palate confirms this separation.

Zhang then rebuts Wang's argument that since virtues such as filial piety and loyalty inhere in the mind-heart, they do not exist, accrue, and become known through their practice on external objects like parents and rulers. Virtues are a priori principles in the mind-heart, not *sui generis* discoveries. "The mind-heart that is not beclouded by selfish desires is heaven's principle," and naturally compels one to care for parents and be loyal to one's ruler. The key to realizing virtues, for Wang, is therefore "to exert effort on the mind-heart so that selfish human desires are extirpated, and heaven's principles preserved." Zhang's counter argument is that first, practically speaking, it is most difficult to realize moral effort if one does not "identify selfish desires" and "inquire into heaven's principle" with "specific reference to things and affairs." Second, phenomenologically speaking,

... it is only when there is a father in my life that my mind-heart knows of filial piety. It is only when there is a ruler in my life that my mind-heart knows of loyalty.... Filial piety and loyalty are to be practiced respectively only on parents and rulers, and the knowledge of filial piety and loyalty is in the mind-heart.... This is what is meant by "outside the mind-heart, there is no principle." To pursue it [filial piety] with regard to the father and to



pursue it [loyalty] with regard to the ruler is the same as pursuing the mind-heart. This is known as the way to unite the internal and the external. If now, we assert that only the mind-heart be pursued, excluding the father and ruler, the father and ruler then become external. There are then things external to the mind-heart, principles external to the mind-heart.<sup>49</sup>

Wang's focus on the all-inclusive mind-heart ironically yields the externality of social relationships, while the Cheng-Zhu approach bridges the gap between the experiential and the metaphysical. Here, Zhang conveniently and deliberately avoids Wang's claim that the innate virtuous and knowing mind-heart is inexorably realized in action.

One of Zhang's major worry is that Wang's all-knowing mind-heart cannot be a reliable universal standard. Zhang asserts that just as weights, lengths, and heights of all things must be measured according to some generally accepted standards, so too must the mind-heart: "If the mind-heart is taken as principle, ignoring seeking principles in things and unworried about pride and partiality, then the problem of selfishness and self-regard is unavoidable."<sup>50</sup> To preclude solipsism, Zhang appeals to the normative time-honored ritual order (*li*), which we come to know through intellectual inquiry and learning, and in the process, we come to apprehend principle. While the sages, with their sincere mind-heart, were able to care for their parents without thinking and ritualized socialization, most people do not have that ability:

The ethical rites bequeathed by the ancients I do not naturally know.... It is only by examining past words and old deeds, every one of which touches my mind-heart, that I, with a sense of sympathy, think about filial piety. With understanding comes sincerity. This is a matter of learning.... It is certainly the case that many people do not know what heaven's principles are. But when things on which heaven's principles operate are shown, they can be readily registered in the mind-heart.... Heaven's principles exist everywhere.... The creation of rites and rituals via the sincere mind-heart is principle; the activating of the sincere mind-heart via rites and rituals is also principle.... The non-distinction between the self and the others, and the outer and the inner, is the substance of the Way as it naturally is. Therefore, the sages teach that to begin learning is to seek principles in things, and to see and hear often. In the natural course of time, the mind-heart can be reached.... But if we talk of seeking the mind-heart at the very outset, then there is no one who is not conceited and boastful of oneself.<sup>51</sup>

We need to learn and follow the rites in order to lead our mind-heart toward the cultivation and activating virtues, thereby realizing principle. Wang analogizes the following of rites without proper spirit to an actor acting out the rites, ignoring the role of the mind-heart. Zhang's concern is that Wang's position ultimately nullifies the rites themselves:

The analogy that the lack of goodness [in the mind-heart while performing rites] is like acting leads logically to the idea that the three thousand rites and three hundred rituals are all play-acting; the Three Bonds and Five Relationships, together with music, rites, laws and governance, are all consigned to the realm of games.... The Buddhist view of them as illusions is this idea.



Zhang clinches his argument by equating Wang's idea with the Buddhist view of the phenomenal world as illusory, thereby negating the utility of *li*.<sup>52</sup>

In the second fascicle, Zhang takes to task Wang's conception of "developing knowledge to the utmost and investigating things." For Wang, to investigate things is to "rectify" (*zheng*) things via the rectification of the mind-heart. The mind-heart's "will and thought" (*yingnian*) "discards the unrectified so that everything is rectified. This is the preservation of heaven's principles, which takes place everywhere all the time. This is plumbing principles." This is so because "knowing is the original substance of the mind-heart, and the mind-heart naturally knows." The mind-heart is innate knowledge of the good and it plays a central role in the effort of "extending knowledge to the utmost and investigating things:"

If the innate of the knowledge is manifested, there is no impediment by selfish thought. This is what is called the full expression of the mind-heart of commiseration so that the virtue of humaneness cannot be exhausted in its utility. But in [the mind-heart of] ordinary folk, there cannot be the absence of impediment by selfish thought, and so the effort of extending knowledge to the utmost and investigating things must be undertaken. To extend to the utmost its knowledge is the triumph over the self by returning to principle, so that the mind-heart's innate knowledge of the good pervades in its flow without impediment. When knowledge is extended to the utmost, the will becomes sincere.<sup>53</sup>

Zhang agrees that "making the will sincere" is discarding the unrectified and achieving complete rectification of the mind-heart. But Wang erroneously equates "preserving heaven's principle" with "plumbing principles," consequently failing to "distinguish what is real." To identify and distinguish heaven's principle must be the first step. Zhang asks, "What then should be regarded as heaven's principles? What ends up being preserved is all selfish thought.... There is then reckless and rash action. Conceitedly, one pridefully regards oneself as rectified, defining principle on one's own. Eventually, one only becomes fearlessly irresponsible."<sup>54</sup> Only with incremental learning and extensive investigation of things can one arrive at the true principle.

As a general principle, Zhang accepts Wang's argument that "the effort of making the will sincere is nothing but investigating things and extending knowledge to the utmost." But "making the will sincere" in itself cannot guide one's pursuit of learning and knowledge. Wang sees investigating things and extending knowledge as "shifting and wandering" pursuits, and so, according to Wang, Zhu Xi has to add and resort to the endeavor of "reverence" (*jing*) in order to bring *gewu zhizhi* to fruition. Wang points to the absence of "reverence" in the *Great Learning* and Zhu's unnecessary addition:

Doing good and removing evil are nothing but a matter of making the will sincere. If, in accordance with [Zhu Xi's] new arrangement, the first step is to investigate and plumb the principles of things, one will be shifting and wandering, leading to no result. Therefore, there must be the addition of the task of reverence so as to relate the investigation of things to one's body and mind.... If there was the need for adding the task of reverence, why then did the Confucian school leave out this most important item and wait for a thousand years before some later scholar made the addition? If making the will sincere is taken as the basis, there is no absolute need to add reverence.<sup>55</sup>

Wang warns that “plumbing principles with regard to things amounts to indulgent fiddling with things, killing the will.”<sup>56</sup> Zhang defends Zhu by underscoring the importance of making the will of the mind-heart sincere. The reference to seriousness is “the transmission of the successive sages’ message of the mind-heart (*xinfa*).” Reverence is nonetheless implied: “In sum, the one word of reverence is the foundation of establishing the mind-heart and controls completely the pursuit of learning. The notions of investigating [things] and extending [knowledge] and making [the mind] sincere and rectifying [the will] found in the Classics may be studied individually without the need to talk about [the implied] reverence.” Pointedly, Zhang maintains that the will cannot be made sincere without hard-earned knowledge of principles:

Making the will sincere is for the sake of doing good and discarding evil. Who does not know the two opposing things of good and evil?... If one wishes to know them well, one must inquire into the truth and falsehood of things encountered.... One must examine the classics and other writings, make inquiries among teachers and friends, and reflect upon one’s self, so that social relations and principles of things are investigated to the point of irremovable certitude. If something is true, I courageously undertake it. If something is false, I am determined to extirpate it. Thus, the will (*yi*) becomes sincere.... Thus, doing good out of a sincere will comes after the plumbing of principles with regard to things.

By contrast, Wang’s “investigating of things” points only to “discarding the selfish and preserving the principles, not knowing how the selfish and principle can be distinguished.” Zhang calls it “headless learning” that ignores the fact that action follows knowledge.<sup>57</sup> In the end, he is not convinced that the activating will (*yi*) concentrates the faculties of sight and hearing, such that “there are no principles that are not authentically understood.” He also rejects the conception of an innately knowing mind-heart capable of discriminating right and wrong, bypassing the investigation of things. While Wang discerns the inherence of ultimate truth in the mind-heart, Zhang fears the rise of antinomian ethical and moral confusions when the subjective mind-heart dispenses with objective measures of truths, so much so that even Confucius’s words may be contravened.<sup>58</sup>

In the third fascicle, Zhang condemns Wang’s notion of “the unity of knowing and acting.” Wang explains:

A person must have the desire to eat before one knows the food. This desire to eat is the will. It is already the beginning of action. The good or bad taste of the food cannot be known until the food has entered the mouth?... A person must have the desire to travel before one knows the road. This desire to travel is the will. It is already the beginning of action.... Whether the forks of the road are rough or smooth cannot be known until one has personally walked on them.

Zhang points to the two perspectives in which Wang looks at the knowledge-action nexus. First, there is knowledge before there is action. Second, what one already knows receives further illumination by personal realization of that knowledge, implying action before knowledge. Zhang endorses the first perspective and describes the second as “new and quaint” but “far from solid learning.” He elaborates:

To desire to eat is to know eating. How can desire be regarded as action? If desire is taken as action, then everything can be defined by the desire to perform. Is there the absolute need for the actual thing? Moreover, it is certainly so that the good or bad taste of food is known after the food has entered the mouth. But if we do not first determine which food is harmful and which is nourishing, and try to establish such knowledge after ingestion, it would be like Shen Nong attempting to taste the hundred herbs. He would experience many poisons in a day and would have been dead before long. An infant crawls on its hands and knees, and will eat worms and dirt that come its way. Do we then regard this as the innate knowledge of the good that defies learning and deliberation? It is not until the direction has been given by the protecting mother that [the infant] knows not to eat them. It is indeed quite obvious that action is preceded by knowledge, and that knowledge depends on investigation of things.<sup>59</sup>

Zhang also repudiates Wang's monistic dictum that "the genuine and earnest aspect of knowledge is action and that the supremely conscious and sagacious aspect of action is knowledge." If Wang is correct, "why then did the ancients establish the two complementary words [of action and knowledge]?" Zhang refers to the *Classic of Changes's* principles of dualistic opposition and interactive mutuality: "To establish the complementary pair of words is to ascertain them as separate matters which must not be confused with each other. This is the *Changes's* principle of opposition (*xiangdui*). It is only when there are two that there will be inexorable mutual reinforcement. This is the *Changes's* principle of dynamic movement (*lixing*)." Zhang criticizes both Wang's and Lu Xiangshan's penchant for unities and their failure to realize the division that comes before unity:

Now they adhere to unities and deny divisions, so much so heaven and earth are one thing; the sun and moon are one illumination; man and woman are one body; ruler and minister are one position; father and son are one name. How can this be right?... They like profound synthesis and dislike small analysis. They scathingly attack plumbing principles of things, and are afraid that in clearly showing separate things, [the supposedly all-embracing principles] emanating from the self will not have a place. Invariably, there will be folly and confusion, wreaking havoc too great to be mentioned!<sup>60</sup>

In the final analysis, Zhang's scathing critique of Wang is prompted by the latter's putative Buddhist identity, evidence of his devotion to Chan and not Confucianism. Zhang quotes Wang's words: "To recognize one's original state at the time of thinking of neither good nor evil is the Buddhist expedient or convenient way intended for those who do not yet recognize their original state. The original state is what our Confucian school calls innate knowledge of the good." This confirms for Zhang Wang's Buddhist sympathies. Although Zhang is aware of Wang's caution that selfish motivations are intrinsic to the Chan search for enlightenment, Zhang blithely casts it aside as weasel words.<sup>61</sup>

In the end, for Zhang Lie, Lu-Wang learning, incorporating and representing Buddhist thinking, "confuses Confucian scholarship and corrupts people's mind," for

...to enable good and evil to coexist eventually leads to the dominance of evil; to let the orthodox and the heterodox to stand together eventually leads to the domination of the heterodox;.. to blend Confucianism with Buddhism eventually leads to the dominance of

Buddhism. An analogy is the placing of white inside black. It will for sure become black and the white can no longer be seen again. Again, placing poison inside food will only make the whole thing poisonous, and the food can no longer be eaten.

Such you-versus-us invective underscores Zhang's fear that if Wang's Buddhist-infected learning, which "runs counter to the sagely school of Confucianism," is unchecked, there will be the complete "ignorance of Confucianism," and those who pursue Confucius's learning will not know where to begin if [the learning of] Zhu Xi is discarded." Zhu's learning represents "the Way," the Confucian *dao*.<sup>62</sup>

To conclude, let it be said once more that this essay is a brief interrogation of the commonplace, if not paradigmatic, perception of the religious landscape of late imperial China. Seeing the many clarion calls for the oneness and continuity of the Three Teachings in the late Ming and early Qing, a good deal of modern scholarship offers the conception of syncretism as a way to understand the seemingly capacious and commodious orientations on the part of Confucians and Buddhists alike. But while many of these historical protagonists were indeed pliant and tolerant, readily proclaiming common origins and ultimate goals so as to underscore the imperative of the flourishing of life, they must be seen as partisans. Ouyi stayed staunchly Buddhist and Lin Zhao'en remained devotedly Confucian, for instance. Even though their sectarianism consciously and purposefully displayed a cosmopolitan embrace of the other, their much-touted cosmopolitanism, announced in good faith, was firmly rooted in a specific teaching with which they deeply identified and from which they did not veer. On the other hand, it should be noted that this late imperial Chinese tendency toward compatibility and conciliation across the teachings was a departure from the uncompromising stance of fidelity to the Confucian lineage of the Way, the *daotong*, most notably articulated by Zhu Xi as the encapsulation of true and unadulterated Chinese culture and learning. This Way is by nature and definition necessarily exclusionary. Thus, we see the rebuff of both Buddhism as an external tradition as a whole and of Buddhism as the virulent transmitting agent of infectious and pernicious elements within Confucianism. This triangulated nexus of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Buddhist-tainted Confucianism (e.g., the Lu-Wang school), is often understood and conceptualized in terms of the opposition between *zheng*/orthodoxy and *xie*/heterodoxy.

The point that I want to hammer home is that looking closely at the history of the interaction between Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism within the culturo-religious landscape of China, neither the interpretive devise of syncretism nor the analytic scheme of orthodoxy-versus-heterodoxy seems to quite fit. The Three Teachings never really became syncretically one, notwithstanding the irenic rhetoric on commonality and harmony, and Sinitic Buddhism and Buddhist-influenced thinking were, at the risk of essentializing, never really extraneous to the Confucian way of thinking. Therefore, I propose that by way of Bourdieu's notion of a cultural habitus—a historically constituted system of dispositions—with its doxas—taken-for-granted verities and realities, we may better grasp the interactive

dynamics of the encounters and dialogues between Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism. Viewed from this perspective, the Neo-Confucian claim of doctrinal purity by way of the *daotong* was a self-made myth, and despite the attack on Buddhism for its heterodox thinking, it in no way subverted the intellectual order that witnessed the admixture, if not syncretism, of the Three Teachings. Therefore, whether we are talking about the disputatious discordance between Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang or the cordial inter-sectarian concordance espoused by a Ouyi Zhixu, we see the workings of the doxic ideas that were constitutive parts of the Neo-Confucian and Sinitic Buddhist habitus. Chan Buddhism could thus readily be used by Cheng-Zhu Confucianism as a litmus test to reveal how the Lu-Wang school was philosophically tarnished. The supposed orthodoxy of Confucianism needed alleged heterodox thinking to herald and distinguish its doctrinal purity and cultural fealty. In brief, they were two sides of the same culturo-religious coin.

### Notes

1. See for instance, Thomas Metzger, *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), Ying-shi Yü, "Confucian Ethics and Capitalism," in Ying-shi Yü, *Chinese History and Culture, Volume 1, Sixth Century B.C.E. to Seventeenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 208–216, and Horst J. Helle, *China: Promise or Threat?: A Comparison of Cultures* (Brill, 2017), pp.59–70.
2. See, for instance, Mark Meulenbeld, "Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Chinese Popular Religion," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* (Nov 2019) <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.126>, pp. 15–17.
3. Chün-fang Yü, *The Renewal of Buddhism in China: Chu-hung and the Late Ming Synthesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).
4. Edward T. Ch'ien, *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 5.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
6. Judith A. Berling, *The syncretic religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University press, 1980), p. 9.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
9. "Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21.1(1993):14.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
12. Yuet Keung Lo, "Change beyond Syncretism: Ouyi Zhixu's Buddhist Hermeneutics of the *Yijing*" *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35.2(June 2008):289.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 288–289; 274–275. Lo adopts Judith Berling's definition of eclecticism: "Eclecticism is idiosyncratic or whimsical, a bold openness to experimentation." See Berling, p. 5.

14. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 41.1(November 1981):95–96.
15. Timothy Fitzgerald, “Religion, Philosophy and Family Resemblances,” *Religion* 26.3(1996):215–236.
16. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of A Theory of Practice*, Richard Nice, trans. (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 71–2.
17. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Richard Nice, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 55–58.
18. Cf. Bourdieu, *Outline*, pp. 164–68.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 170.
20. Wing-tsit Chan, “Chu Hsi and Buddhism,” in his *Chu Hsi: New Studies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), pp. 520.
21. Charles Wei-hsun Fu, “Chu His on Buddhism,” in Wing-tsit Chan, ed., *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 378.
22. John Makeham, ed., *The Buddhist Roots of Zhu Xi’s Philosophy Thought* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2018).
23. Ellen Neskari and Ari Borrell, “Criticisms of Buddhism, Daoism, and the Learning of the Heart-Mind,” in Philip J. Ivanhoe, ed. *Zhu Xi: Selected Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 140–141. See also Ari Borrell, “*Ko-wu* or *Kung-an*? Practice, Realization, and Teaching in the Thought of Chang Chiu-ch’eng,” in Peter Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., eds., *Buddhism in the Sung* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), pp. 62–63.
24. *Zhu Xi ji* (Collected works of Zhu Xi) (Chengdu: Sichuan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), fascicle 72, p. 3791.
25. *Zhu Xi ji*, fascicle 72, pp. 3791–3792.
26. Quoted in Neskari and Borrell, p. 155.
27. Quoted in Neskari and Borrell, p. 156.
28. Quoted in Neskari and Borrell, p. 157.
29. Many scholars have found this division of the Song-Ming Confucianism into the schools of the heart and principle to be obfuscating rather than revealing, insofar as it undermines any nuanced portrayal of this richly textured tradition. On the diverse origins and variegated hues of the new Confucianism, see Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi’s Ascendancy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), in which he argues that we should not be unduly influenced by the narrow definition of this Confucianism found in the *Songshi* (the Official Dynastic History of the Song), which established the Cheng-Zhu tradition as orthodoxy. Lu Xiangshan, and other scholars such as Lu Zuqian (1137–81) and Chen Liang (1143–94) were all integral parts of the new Confucian learning in the Southern Song.
30. Araki Kengo, “Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming,” in Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed, *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 40.

31. It may be recalled that that the late Qian Mu contended that the “history of medieval Chinese thought, from the Sui-Tang Tiantai and Chan Buddhism to [the thoughts of] the late Ming, in the final analysis, may be called a history of the mind-heart and principle.” He also remarked that it was “Master Zhu who most meticulously analyzed the human mind-heart and therefore knew it the best.” See Qian Mu, “Zhuzi xinxuelun” (On Master Zhu’s Learning of the Mind) in his *Zhongguo xueshu sixiang luncong* (Anthology of essays on Chinese thought and learning) (Taipei: Dongda shudian, 1980), p. 157.
32. Araki, pp. 42–44.
33. Quoted in Araki, p. 44.
34. Quoted in Araki, p. 46.
35. Quoted in Araki, p. 47.
36. Quoted in Araki, p. 57.
37. Quoted in Lo, p. 281.
38. Araki Kengo, *Mindai shishō kenkyū* (Research on Ming thought) (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1972), pp. 300–304.
39. Ouyi Zhixu, *Sishu Ouyi jie* (Commentaries on the Four Books by Ouyi) (Nantou: Zhongtaishan Fojia jijinhui, 1997), p. 2.
40. Ouyi, *Sishu*, p. 87.
41. Quoted in Araki, “Confucianism,” p. 54.
42. Quoted in Lo, endnote 54, p. 294.
43. Quoted in Lo, pp. 278–279.
44. Araki, “Confucianism,” p. 61.
45. Another representative anti-Lu-Wang work was Chen Jian’s (1497–1567) *General Critique of the Obscuration of Learning* (*Xuebu tongbian*). See my “The Nature of a Confucian Discourse on Orthodox Learning: Chen Jian’s (1497–1567) *General Critique of the Obscuration of Learning* (*Xuebu tongbian*),” in Yen P’ing-hao and Wei Hsiu-mei, eds., *Tradition and Metamorphosis in Modern Chinese History: Essays in Honor of Professor Kwang-Ching Liu’s Seventy-fifth birthday*, Vol. 2 (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1998), pp. 763–97.
46. *Questioning the Dubious in Wang [Yang-ming]’s Learning* (*Wangxue zhiyi*); hereafter cited as WXZY, 1/1a.
47. WXZY, 1/1a-b.
48. WXZY, 1/1b.
49. WXZY, 1/2a.
50. WXZY, 1/2b-3a.
51. WXZY, 1/3b-4a.
52. WXZY, 1/4a-b.
53. WXZY, 2/1a.
54. WXZY, 2/1b-2b.
55. WXZY, 2/4b.
56. WXZY, 2/6b.
57. WXZY, 2/4b-6a.

- 58. WXZY, 2/4a-b.
- 59. WXZY, 3/1a-2a.
- 60. WXZY, 3/2a-b.
- 61. WXZY, 4/4b-5a.
- 62. WXZY, “self-preface” (*zixu*), 1b.

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# **Zen Branches**

# The Zen Explosion in America: From Before the Pre-boomers to After the Zoomers



Charles S. Prebish

## 1 Introduction

When I was a “newbie” Buddhist Studies professor in the early 1970s, I was always excited when one of my students would raise an interesting and probing question about Buddhism. It convinced me that there was a new and growing interest in the Buddhist tradition throughout the world. As such, in one of my early classes, a very bright and forward-looking student raised his hand and asked, “What do you think of Philip Kapleau?” Of course I had read Kapleau’s extremely popular mid-1960s volume *The Three Pillars of Zen*, so I began to give the student an exegesis of that volume. To be sure, it was just as popular as Jack Kerouac’s *The Dharma Bums* or Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Howl.” I had barely started when the student politely interrupted me and said, “I don’t mean to be disrespectful, but I’ve read *The Three Pillars of Zen* and can make up my own mind about its value. I want to know what you think of Philip Kapleau...rōshi.” There was an immediate silence in the classroom as I reached inside my shirt pocket for an unfiltered Camel cigarette, and lit up in hopes of forestalling my obvious and apparent nausea.

Prior to that moment, I had given nary a thought to Philip Kapleau, as a person or a Zen practitioner, who had created one of America’s most influential Zen centers of the time in Rochester, New York. He was simply a faceless author of a fun and important book. At that time virtually nobody thought about an American Buddhist tradition, despite the fact that Buddhism had been present on American soil for more than a century. To my benefit, the university at which I taught—Penn

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State University—offered a Ph.D. Program focusing on “Religion in American Culture,” and was the first American university to offer such a program. It gave me the perfect opportunity to begin an exploration of Buddhism in its expanding world format. And of course as we fast-forward a half-century, the study of American Buddhism has become an important sub-discipline in the field of Buddhist Studies.

## 2 The Zen Explosion

Perhaps the critical event foreshadowing the entry of Zen Buddhism to the United States was the World Parliament of Religions, held at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. One of the Buddhists in attendance was Sōyen Shaku, a Rinzai Zen master. Sōyen Shaku returned to the United States in 1905 as a guest of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Russell of San Francisco. Mrs. Russell particularly was a great friend to Zen Buddhism and was referred to by Nyōgen Senzaki as “the gate opener of Zen to America,”<sup>1</sup> and she arranged for Sōyen Shaku to visit many American cities during his stay. When he returned to Japan in March 1906, Sōyen Shaku selected three of his closest disciples to promote the Rinzai lineage in America: Sōkatsu Shaku, D. T. Suzuki, and Nyōgen Senzaki. Each of these remarkable disciples has left a lasting imprint on the development of Zen in America.

Nyōgen Senzaki arrived in California in 1905, but did not begin to teach Zen until seventeen years later, and did not establish any permanent facility until the 1920s. In the interim period he held many jobs ranging from waiter to hotel manager. Centers were eventually established in San Francisco (1928) and Los Angeles (1929), the latter of which he personally attended until his death in 1958. In an undated manuscript, Senzaki made his abundantly optimistic hopes for America quite clear:

Americans in general are lovers of freedom and equality; for this reason, they make natural Zen students. There are eight aspects of American life and character that make America fertile ground for Zen:

1. American philosophy is practical.
2. American life does not cling to formality.
3. The majority of Americans are optimists.
4. Americans love nature.
5. They are capable of simple living, being both practical and efficient.
6. Americans consider true happiness to lie in universal brotherhood.
7. The American conception of ethics is rooted in individual morality.
8. Americans are rational thinkers.

Pragmatism is truly an indigenous American philosophy. At the same time, however, it is but another name for one manifestation of the sparkling rays of Zen in the actual, practical world.<sup>2</sup>

This sort of approach gained Senzaki many disciples. His most immediate disciple, Robert Aitken, established the Diamond Sangha community group in

Honolulu. Although the Diamond Sangha was not founded until 1959, one year after Sensaki's death, it did help to sponsor some of the early visits of Nakagawa Sōen Rōshi to America. Although he had visited America as early as 1949, at Nyōgen Sensaki's request, Nakagawa Sōen returned to America after Sensaki's death to found the Los Angeles Bosatsuikai (later called the California Bosatsuikai). Both the Diamond Sangha and the California Bostsukai were under the leadership of Sōen Rōshi. Nakagawa Sōen was also responsible for bringing Eido Tai Shimano to America. Settling first in Hawaii in 1960, where he assisted the Diamond Sangha, Eido Tai Shimano moved to New York in 1965 and soon became to president of the Zen Studies Society. He eventually opened (in 1968) the New York Zendo Shoboji and in 1973 (less than a year after he received Dharma Transmission from Sōen Rōshi) opened the International Dai Bosatsu Zendo, named after a mountain in Japan. From the above progression of teachers and disciples, it is clear that Sōyen Shaku's student, Nyōgen Sensaki, left a firm imprint on the Rinzai movement that was to follow him in America.

Sōyen Shaku's second student, Sōkatsu Shaku spent two years in America from 1906 to 1908, and later came back (1909, 1910) to continue his work. When he finally returned to Japan, he left behind his own disciple, Shigetsu Sasaki, to continue the teaching. Unlike his predecessors, Sasaki immediately cultivated the East Coast. Since he had been only a lay disciple, he felt it necessary to return to Japan to complete his training and in October 1919 left New York. He became an ordained Zen master in 1928 (at age 48) and returned to America at the urging of his teacher. Having taken the name Sokei-an, he founded the Buddhist Society of America in 1930, and the group was incorporated in the next year. Five years before his death in 1945, Sokei-an married Ruth Fuller Everett, and in the year of his death, the organization was renamed the First Zen Institute of America. In 1935 Sokei-an remarked, "It is an unhappy death for a Zen master when he does not leave an heir."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, this was precisely the case for the Dharma heir of Sōyen Shaku's second disciple in America.

When Sōyen Shaku lectured at the World Parliament of Religions, one of the members of the audience was Paul Carus, the owner of Open Court Publishing Company. Favorably impressed with what he heard, he asked Sōyen Shaku to stay on in America as an editor in his publishing firm. The venerable rōshi declined, but suggested in his stead D. T. Suzuki, the third of his students in America. Despite the pioneering achievements of Sōyen Shaku's other disciples, neither was as instrumental as D. T. Suzuki in bringing Zen to public awareness in America. D. T. Suzuki worked for Open Court in LaSalle, Illinois from 1897 until 1909, at which point he returned to Japan. Although he would not return to America until 1936, Suzuki's career continued in brilliant fashion. Along the way, he married Beatrice Lane in 1911, and pursued his scholarly endeavors.

No single writer on Zen has been as prolific as Suzuki. Of his works still in print, the ones most often referred to are: *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk*, and *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (published in three series). In addition to his Zen publications, Suzuki was also fiercely interested in Indian Mahāyāna, an area in which he published extensively. Of primary interest are his

translations and study of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (published as two separate volumes), his many articles in *The Eastern Buddhist* (and English language journal that he edited and published in Japan), and his translation of substantial portions of the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*. A partial, but useful bibliography of Suzuki's writings appears in *On Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism*.

Suzuki spent the war years in Japan, but returned to America for a long stay between 1950 and 1958. During this time, he gave frequent lectures in American universities, the most notable of which were a series of talks he gave at Columbia University in 1951. Further, he served as president of the Cambridge Buddhist Association (founded in 1957), although his leadership was mostly from a distance. Suzuki received assistance with his work from the Zen Studies Society of New York, founded by Cornelius Crane in 1956. Prior to the upsurge of interest in Zen from the 1950s on, D. T. Suzuki remained the single most significant force in Zen's early presence in America—a fitting tribute for this exemplary student of Sōyen Shaku.

### 3 An Interlude: Beat Zen and Square Zen

By the mid-1950s, Buddhism in America was on the brink of several new developments. First, new forms of Buddhism were appearing on the American scene, particularly Sōtō Zen, Zen that combined Rinzai and Sōtō techniques, and the beginnings of Tibetan Buddhism. Second, and by far the most important development in Buddhism since its entry to America, was the emergence of “Beat Zen.” Although the Beat movement had its official beginning at the now famous reading at the Six Gallery in San Francisco in 1955, the movement had roots that went back considerably farther, farther even than the initial meeting between Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac near Columbia University in 1945. The Beats owed much to Whitman, Thoreau, and Emerson, while Ginsberg was profoundly indebted to William Carlos Williams, and Kerouac to William Burroughs.

Bruce Cook highlighted the essence of the Beat movement when he noted:

...the Beats had perceived and managed to touch something essential that was only then beginning to take shape in America in the 1950s. It was a very important and widespread something, compounded of a deep hunger for individual recognition, a desire to speak frankly and honestly about things that mattered, and, finally, a need for passionate personal involvement in major undertakings.<sup>4</sup>

Cook believed that the appeal of the Beats was founded on the basis of their American heritage, a heritage which they also, in large part, rejected. In building a myth of their own, the Beats replaced what they rejected of American culture with Zen culture. As Theodore Roszak perceptively remarked:

The way out of this corner was to arrive at a vision of sordidness and futility that made of *them* “spiritual facts” in their own right. The world might then be redeemed by the willingness to take it for what it is and to find its enchanting promise within that seemingly despiritualized waste.<sup>5</sup>

Further, Roszak went on:

It is indisputable, however, that the San Francisco beats, and much of our younger generation since their time, *thought* they had found something in Zen they needed, and promptly proceeded to use what they understood of this exotic tradition as a justification for fulfilling the need.<sup>6</sup>

The parallels between Zen and what the Beats thought they (themselves) represented are all too apparent. In the first place, the Beats identified with the spontaneity of the Zen tradition. Perhaps the most significant example of this, on the literary level, is Kerouac's "spontaneous prose," written on long rolls of paper, quickly and with no revisions. Just as Buddhists chose not to cling to a past that is already dead, Kerouac refused to polish his work. On the personal level, the Beats practiced a sort of perverted situation ethics. For them, the unifying character of this ethical system was (assumed) freedom, manifested in their blatant antinomianism. In addition, the Beats naively assumed that because some Zen monks wandered over the countryside as apparent "lunatics," in a style consistent with their satori experience, *all* Zen monks followed this practice. In so doing, the Beats not only ignored the very basis of Zen monastic life and its incumbent discipline, but they used this assumption to form the basis of a normative model (and justification) for their own itinerant lifestyle. The Beats also prostituted the supposed ecstasy of Zen experience. Consequently, the erotic quality of life was over-emphasized, as were their frequent excursions into the world of drugs and alcohol. Even in the musical styles favored by the Beats, they sought to convey the nonintellectual, intuitive style of Zen, exemplified by their fascination with Jazz improvisation. It was in this context that Allen Ginsberg first read his much acclaimed poem "Howl," a proclamation for the need to experience life directly in all its fullness.

The Beats had come close, with their zany tactics and the suppositions that they were founded on, to providing a real *American* beginning for Buddhism. Had they only understood more fully the Zen tradition they associated with, and incorporated an authentic Zen *lineage* into their tradition, genuine success might have been achieved. Of the lot, it was only Gary Snyder who had any acumen in properly understanding the meaning of Zen. Having studied Chinese and Japanese at Berkeley, he went to Japan in 1956 to learn meditation from the great masters. As it turned out Gary Snyder became the disciple of Seesō Oda Rōshi (who was a disciple of Sōkatsu Shaku's student, Zuigan Gōto), and he studied with Oda Rōshi until the master's death in 1966.

It is both curious and puzzling why the Beats did not adopt an approach more consonant with the one taken by Gary Snyder, apart from the fact that it may have required more responsibility than they seemed to possess. Whatever understanding Ginsberg may have attained seems to have come much later, and it is just not clear that Kerouac ever understood Buddhism very well, in spite of the fact that several of his novels (for example, *On the Road* or *The Dharma Bums*) were clearly Buddhist inspired. It is also strange that none of the Beats ever sought to identify the city as the domain of the American Zennist's search for satori, as the wilderness in which religious wholeness might be found. Had such a notion been propounded

and accepted, not only would the superficial layers of the forthcoming “back to nature” movement have been seriously undercut, but also the belief that the city is symbolic of inherent evil and darkness might have lost some of its apparent support, all with the result that Americans of the 1960s and 1970s would not incorrectly surmise that in order to practice Buddhism properly, Americans must desert the city and run to the naked wilds, raping it in the process.

If the Beats are reputed to have publicized Zen while possibly damaging it in the process, the other side of the proverbial coin was represented by the “Square Zen” of Alan Watts. Theodore Roszak, in a very sympathetic treatment of Watts (only some of which seems to be justified), noted that one academic referred to Watts as “the Norman Vincent Peale of Zen.” Perhaps “the Werner Erhard of Zen” would have been more appropriate. Watt’s influence has been more significant than that of the Beats, primarily through his prolific production of popular books; but in his somewhat amateurish attempt to explain Zen in the context of modern science and psychology, he had neither the Buddhological sophistication of D. T. Suzuki nor the deep, personal experience of Philip Kapleau or others. What Watts did have was a unique flair for writing to the average American in a fashion that was both provocative and romantic. He made Zen appear to be possible; that is, its fruits could be tasted by anyone who had sufficient perseverance to sustain its formidable rigors. What Watts sacrificed in accuracy, he made up for in zeal and by directing people onto the path and into the counsel of Zen masters who were capable of correcting the misunderstandings fostered by Watts’ books. Nevertheless, Watts, like the Beats, was sorely misunderstood and insufficiently appreciated.

My own suspicion is that it is movements like “Beat Zen” and “Square Zen,” due to their ample visibility and flexible attitudes, that cause scholars to grossly underestimate the integrity of the Buddhist movement in America. Thus by 1960, Buddhism in America was still groping for leadership, a Western identity, and a solid community of participants. Further, it was destined to be only a short wait until the Kennedy era was superimposed on the Beat movement, transmuting it into Hippiedom, and the “Death of God” theologians were to have their day.

## 4 Sōtō Zen and More Zen

Certainly what emerged in the years following 1960 was a Zen explosion. Apart from Zen’s becoming more practical than intellectual (as many scholars, including Rick Fields) have asserted, two more Zen traditions appeared. The first of these was one of the other traditional Zen schools of Japan: Sōtō. Sōtō Zen began to appear on the American scene around 1950. In 1949, Soyu Matsuoka Rōshi founded the Chicago Buddhist Temple (now called the Zen Buddhist Temple of Chicago). Eventually, he left the organization in the hands of his disciple Richard Langois,

one of the very first American rōshis, and moved on to serve other emerging Sōtō communities, especially in California. Matsuoka Rōshi was followed shortly by Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi (1904–1971), who was to become perhaps the most well known Sōtō master in North America. Suzuki Rōshi arrived in San Francisco on 23 May 1959 to become chief priest for the Japanese-American community at Sokoji Temple (also called the Sōtō Zen Mission on Bush Street). The temple had been in existence since 1934, having been founded by Hosen Isobe, a Sōtō missionary who also founded temples in Hawaii and Los Angeles. Although he initially practiced zazen alone, within a short time a number of American students began to join him for early morning periods of meditation, and in less than a year they had worked up a regular program, with Suzuki Rōshi offering lectures in English. The San Francisco Zen Center (SFZC) opened in 1961, and was incorporated the next year. Throughout, Suzuki Rōshi emphasized the primary Zen practice of *shikantaza*, “just sitting.”

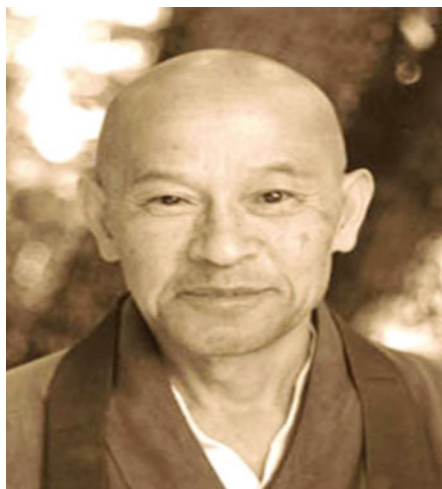
In 1967 the San Francisco Zen Center opened a country meditation center at Tassajara Hot Springs—also called Zen Mountain Center, Zen-shinji Monastery—in the mountains near Carmel, California. By 1969, SFZC had outgrown its modest accommodation at Sokoji Temple on Bush Street and purchased its current headquarters at 300 Page Street. Within a short time the center had opened a series of satellite *zendōs*, and in 1972 it began Green Gulch Farm on land purchased in Marin County. Early on, Suzuki Rōshi was assisted by Dainin Katagiri Rōshi (1928–1990), who came to the United States from Japan in 1964. He assisted greatly in the years after 1969, and although he wanted to begin his own group, he was always persuaded to stay at SFZC. He eventually moved to Monterey and establish a *zendō* in his home. A year after Suzuki Rōshi’s death in 1971, Katagiri Rōshi moved to Minneapolis and began his own center (which is now well established). Beginning in 1967, Kobin Chino Sensei also assisted the head of SFZC while heading the Los Altos Zendo. Almost from the beginning Richard Baker Rōshi (b. 1936) was Suzuki’s Rōshi’s closest student. He was ordained on the night before Tassajara’s opening, and on 21 November 1971, in the Mountain Seat Ceremony, was installed as his teacher’s successor. Within two weeks Suzuki Rōshi, who had been suffering from liver cancer for some time, was dead.

By 1983, SFZC operated, in addition to the three facilities mentioned above, the Green Gulch Grocery, Tassajara Bakery, Alaya Stitchery, and a vegetarian restaurant. It also had a scandal, reported extensively, following which Richard Baker was forced to resign his position as abbot after more than a decade of service. Zentatsu Richard Baker left SFZC, moving first to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1984 and then to Crestone, Colorado, in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. In July 1987, Baker Rōshi transmitted the Dharma to Philip Whalen, one of the original Beat poets.

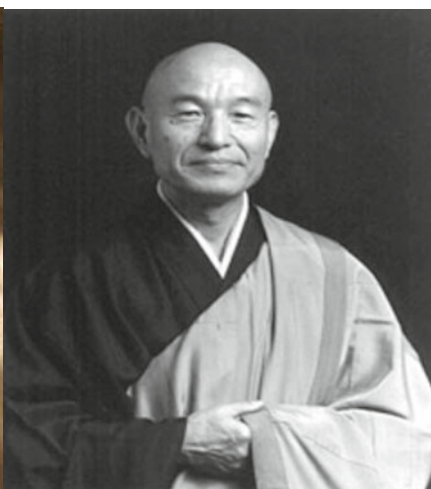


Another Sōtō organization begun in the 1960s is Shasta Abbey, initially referred to as “The Reformed Sōtō Zen Church.” It was begun as an outgrowth of the Zen Mission Society in Japan as part of its Foreign Guest Department. More importantly, its founder and teacher was Ji-yu Kennett Rōshi (1924–1996), one of the earliest Western women to be declared a rōshi. Born Peggy Theresa Kennett, she initially became involved in the Theravāda sangha in her native England. D. T. Suzuki’s visits to England advanced her study of Zen. In 1960 she met Chisan Kōhō Zenji, abbot of Sōjiji Temple, and accepted his offer to study with him in Japan. She was ordained a priest on 14 April 1962, and immediately encountered all the problems one would expect for a British Zen priest in Japan. Nevertheless, in little more than a year she received Dharma transmission, and shortly after the death of her teacher, acceded to his wish to establish a center in the West. She arrived in San Francisco along with two disciples in November 1969, and subsequently founded Shasta Abbey in 1970 in Northern California, which continued after her death. In 1978 the name Zen Mission Society was changed to the Order of Contemplatives, and the group was incorporated in 1983.

Along with Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi, one of the best known and most important Zen practitioners in America was Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi Rōshi (1931–1995), founder of the Zen Center of Los Angeles. He arrived in the United States in 1956 as a young monk who had come to the Los Angeles Sōtō Zenshūji Temple, the headquarters of the Sōtō school in America. As the son of Hakujun Kuroda Rōshi, he was ordained in the Sōtō lineage at age eleven. While he took courses at Komazawa University and trained at Sōjiji Monastery, he also began *kōan* study in Tokyo with Kōryū Ōsaka Rōshi, a Rinzai master. With this unusual background, he began his career in America, becoming friends with Nyōgen Senzaki and beginning to build a following of his own. Maezumi Rōshi completed his training in Japan and, in quite atypical fashion, received Dharma transmission from *three* masters: Hakujun Kuroda Rōshi, Kōryū Ōsaka Rōshi, and Hakuun Yasutani Rōshi. In so doing, he became a Dharma heir in all three Japanese lineages that have been imported to America. By the time of his death, Maezumi Rōshi had built the Los Angeles Zen Center into one of the most important Buddhist communities in the United States, established an academic enterprise known as the Kuroda Institute, which attracted many of the most erudite scholar-practitioners to its programs, and conferred Dharma transmission to twelve of his students, all of whom began their own sanghas throughout North America. One of his Dharma heirs, Bernard Tetsugen Glassman Rōshi, received *inka* from Maezumi Rōshi prior to his death. In his teachings, Maezumi Rōshi utilized both the *shikantaza* meditation practice of traditional Sōtō Zen and the Rinzai practice of *kōan* study. This was not his own innovation, but rather the creative approach utilized by Daiun Harada Rōshi (1871–1961), a most important figure for American Zen despite never having stepped foot on America soil.



Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi



Taizan Maezumi Rōshi

Another important American Zen teacher, Hakuun Yasutani (1885–1973), was an elementary school teacher by profession. He began training in *sesshins* in 1925, completed his *kōan* study in 1938, and received *inka* from the master in 1943. Following the completion of his training, Yasutani Rōshi established a small temple outside Tokyo where his students lived in their own dwellings and maintained outside employment. At this temple he founded a Zen tradition known as Sanbyo Kyodan, literally the “Order of the Three Treasures,” which offered to serious lay practitioners the respect and training previously available only to those willing to undergo complete monastic commitment. Because of its unorthodox approach, the new tradition broke from the Sōtō school in 1954. Owing to Yasutani’s spiritual training under Harada Rōshi, the lineage is also sometimes referred to as the Harada-Yasutani School of Zen.

Yasutani’s first visit to the United States was almost an accidental event. In 1962 Nakagawa Sōen Rōshi canceled a trip to America because of his mother’s illness, and suggested that Yasutani Rōshi replace him. His first *sesshin* was held in Hawaii, with an exhortation for the need to eliminate our laziness and experience *kenshō*. Many in attendance were not used to the combative atmosphere throughout, including periods of absolute silence and frequent use of the *kyosaku*. His first *sesshin* on the mainland was also held in 1962, in Los Angeles, assisted by Eidō Tai Shimano and Taizan Maezumi, neither of whom had yet attained the status of *rōshi*. Throughout the rest of his life Yasutani Rōshi was a frequent visitor to the United States. He died on 28 March 1973 in Kamakura. His work with Sanbyo Kyodan in Japan was left to one of his Dharma heirs, Koun Yamada Rōshi (1907–1989), and in America to Taizan Maezumi Rōshi and Eidō Tai Shiman Rōshi as well as two other teachers: Philip Kapleau and Robert Aitken.

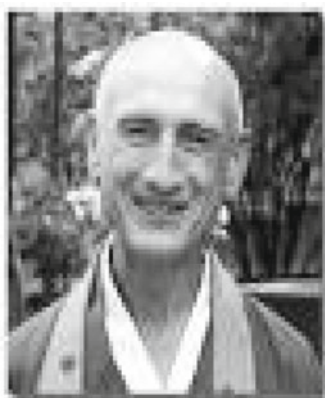
## 5 Philip Kapleau and Robert Aitken

Philip Kapleau (1912–2004) was a court reporter at the war-crimes trials in Tokyo in 1946. There he met D. T. Suzuki. And upon his return to the United States he began attending Suzuki's lectures at Columbia University. Kapleau returned to Japan in the 1950s to begin formal Zen practice. He first stayed at Ryutakuji Monastery and studied with Nakagawa Sōen Rōshi. After six months at Ryutakuji, he moved on to study with Harada Rōshi for three years. Because Kapleau was in failing health, Sōen Rōshi took him to Yasutani Rōshi, and in the midst of finally having his own living quarters and being able to negotiate his Zen training as a lay disciple rather than a monk, Kapleau recovered his health and attained *kenshō* within two years.

During his training with Yasutani Rōshi, the master allowed Kapleau to make notes on the *dokusan*—private encounters between master and disciple. These records, along with some of Yasutani's introductory talks at the beginning of *sesshins* and some additional materials, were collected into a book published in Japan in 1965 as *The Three Pillars of Zen* (mentioned above). By the time Kapleau received Dharma transmission from Yasutani Rōshi and prepared to return to America in 1966, the book (published in the United States as well) had made a huge impact. Rick Fields noted:

It was the first book written by a Westerner from within the Zen tradition, and the fact that Kapleau had convinced Yasutani-roshi to give him permission to use dokusan interviews along with the kensho experiences, made the book unique in any language. *The Three Pillars of Zen* made it clear that zazen was at the heart of Zen, and gave instructions on how to begin sitting. It made it possible for people who had never met a Zen teacher to begin practicing on their own.<sup>7</sup>

Philip Kapleau founded the Zen Meditation Center in Rochester, New York in August 1966, and it quickly became one of the most energetic and active Zen centers in the United States. It created affiliates throughout the United States and Canada. In his zeal to make Zen truly American, and less exotic, Kapleau was one of the first teachers to promote Zen as an American religious practice, adopting Western clothing during *zazen*, chanting in English, and so forth. When Kapleau decided to translate the famous *Heart-sūtra* into English, Yasutani Rōshi protested vigorously, an event that eventually led to a break between the two men in 1967. Kapleau eventually retired, but left his own line of students, most notably Toni Packer (1927–2013), who went independent and ran a non-Buddhist, non-Zen center of her own called the Springwater Center; Albert Low (1928–2016), who taught at the Montreal Zen Center beginning in 1979, and Michael Danan Henry (born 1939), who received Dharma transmission from Philip Kapleau in 1989, and founded the Zen Center of Denver. He also studied with Robert Aitken.



Philip Kapleau



Robert Aitken

Robert Aitken (1917–2010) was a construction worker on Guam when he was captured by the Japanese in the early stages of World War II and detained near Kobe, Japan. During his little more than a year of internment, he engaged in many conversations with Reginald Blyth, an Englishman and friend of D. T. Suzuki, who was in the same camp. Upon release, Aitken returned to Hawaii to finish his education and begin married life. While studying at the University of California at Berkeley, he met Nyōgen Senzaki. Though his initial training was with Senzaki, he was able to extend his training during a fellowship that allowed him to visit Japan as part of his graduate training in Japanese literature. He experienced his first *sesshin* at Engaku Temple in Kamakura in 1950, and soon afterward met Nakagawa Sōen Rōshi, who invited him to come to Ryutakuji, where he stayed for seven months. Upon the retirement of Yamamoto Gempo Rōshi as abbot of Ryutauji, Sōen Rōshi was installed as the new abbot, with Aitken as a student. Aitken finally returned to Hawaii following a bout of dysentery. In addition, his marriage failed, and he came back to the mainland in 1956. Eventually, he remarried (to Anne Hopkins) and made several trips back to Japan but settled in Hawaii, where he and his wife opened a bookstore in the Chinatown section of Honolulu.

They began a meditation group in 1959, which led to the formation of the Koko-an Zendo. They called their group the Diamond Sangha, and in 1961, Sōen Rōshi returned to lead two *sesshins*. Soon the *Diamond Sangha Newsletter* followed, and the Diamond Sangha became a pivotal link between the Zen tradition in Japan and that on the American mainland. Aitken also had the opportunity in the fall of 1961 to visit Japan and study with Yasutani Rōshi for an extended period. It was difficult balancing a career working for the University of Hawaii with an escalating involvement in Zen training, and in 1969 Aitken retired from the university and moved to Maui, where he and Anne started the Maui Zendo. With the blessing of both Nakagawa Sōen Rōshi and Yasutani Rōshi, Koun Yamada Rōshi

was invited to lead the Diamond Sangha, and he moved to Hawaii in 1971. By 1974, Aitken had received Dharma transmission from Yamada Rōshi. In the subsequent twenty years, Robert Aitken had a prolific career as an author, Zen master, and activist, becoming very involved in the activities of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Moreover, he became a noted authority on Buddhist ethics and the application of Buddhist values to the modern world. He had a long line of students, many of whom went on to create their own communities throughout the world.

## 6 A Case in Point: Zen Mountain Monastery

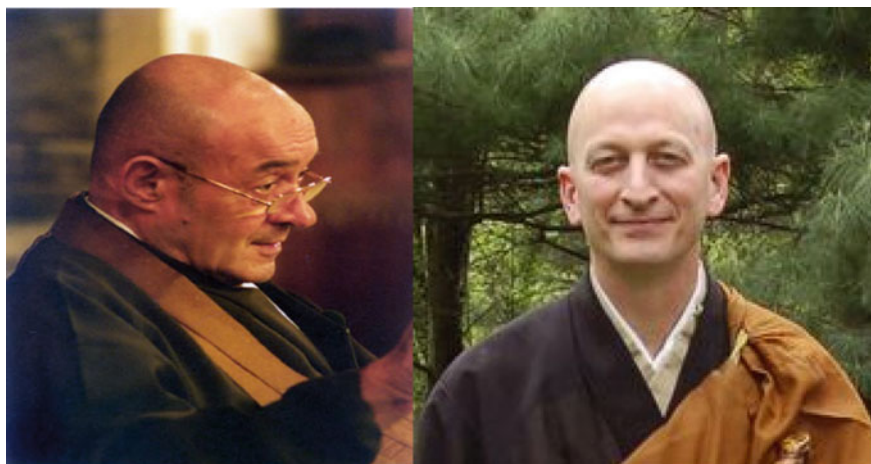
No doubt one could fill many more pages extending and updating the ongoing historical development of the Dharma heirs of the above teachers and the establishment of the many specific communities they have founded. Indeed, much of that work has been done by these individual communities themselves. A quick search at the World Buddhist Directory on the [www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net) website or a simple Google online search for Zen Buddhist centers in North America provides an enormous number of specific communities to be visited. Instead, I will document below a quick survey of one of the most comprehensive, open, and inclusive Buddhist communities in all of North America: Zen Mountain Monastery. It provides a clear example of the “explosion” of Zen in America, and the manner in which a Zen community has pervasively embraced American culture.

Before 1995, my only association with Taizan Maezumi Rōshi or his students was through courteous, professional acquaintances I maintained with members of the Kuroda Institute, one of the divisions of the Zen Center of Los Angeles (ZCLA). I had read much of the popular literature about his best-known students—primarily Bernard Tetsugen Glassman Rōshi, Dennis Genpo Merzel, Jan Chozen Bays, and John Daido Loori of Zen Mountain Monastery—but in midsummer 1995 I had no idea whatsoever of what to expect as I drove the twenty miles from Kingston, New York to Mr. Tremper, where I would meet the abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery (ZMM). When I was introduced to Abbot Loori by the monastery’s chief of operations, Geoffrey Shugen Arnold, I was rather stunned to notice a prominent tattoo on Loori’s forearm as we bowed first and then shook hands. Equally surprising was the abbot’s absolute lack of formality with me and his willingness to spend hours personally taking me on a tour of ZMM’s facilities. Early in my stay, I discovered that Abbot Loori and I shared a common professional background in food chemistry and a strong interest in computers. He was a kind and sharing host, answering all my questions with far more aplomb and candor than I would have imagined possible from someone of his stature and position.

Zen Mountain Monastery is a residential retreat center, an American Zen Buddhist monastery and training facility for both monastic and lay practitioners of both genders that is the nucleus of an umbrella organization known as the Mountain and Rivers Order (MRO).<sup>8</sup> The MRO also has a number of centers and affiliates in the eastern United States and abroad. The initial main house of ZMM was built nearly one hundred years ago by a Catholic priest and Norwegian craftsman, and in 1995 the state granted it the status of a historic landmark. During my initial visits to ZMM, the main building housed the *zendō*, kitchen and dining hall, training offices, library, Buddha Hall, dormitories, and private rooms. Now there have been many new building changes to expand ZMM enormously.

Abbot Loori, the spiritual leader of ZMM, is one of twelve successors to Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi Rōshi, founder of the White Plum Sangha. Before his death on 14 May 1995 at age 64, Maezumi Rōshi founded six temples in the United States and Europe that are formally registered with the headquarters of Sōtō Zen in Japan. The ZCLA continues as one of the most influential Zen groups on the North American continent, with more than fifty affiliate groups in North America and Europe. The White Plum Sangha, named after the rōshi's father, Baian Hakuju Daisho, was formed as a means of promoting harmony among the rōshi's Dharma successors.<sup>9</sup> This group included Bernard Tetsugen Glassman Rōshi, Dennis Genpo Merzel Rōshi, Charlotte Joko Beck, Jan Chozen Bays, Gerry Sheshin Wick, John Tesshin Sanderson, Alfred Jitsudo Ancheta, Charles Tenshin Flethcer, Susan Myoyu Andersen, William Nyogen Yeo, and John Daido Loori.

John Daido Loori came from a Catholic background. And worked in the food industry as a chemist who analyzed natural flavors so that they could be synthesized as food additives. But it was his lifelong interest in photography that led him to Zen. He studied under Minor White, from whom he also learned meditation, and eventually continued his Zen studies in New York and then at UCLA, finally taking ordination in 1977. With only a small amount of cash, in 1980 he purchased the acreage on which ZMM resides. In addition, the computer technology he learned as part of his work in the food industry informed his Buddhist practice in a useful way. Abbot Loori was one of the very first American Buddhists, if not the first, to appreciate how computer technology might enable American Buddhist communities to extend beyond the geographic, real-space location of any one particular sangha.



John Daido Looi

Geoffrey Shugen Arnold

Abbot Looi was a permanent resident of the community, which gave him a wonderful opportunity to develop a strong student–teacher relationship with practitioners in residential training. Trained in both the *kōan* style of Rinzai Zen and the quiet sitting practice (*shikantaza*) of Sōtō Zen, he continually tried to promote right action on the part of his students and approached all daily experiences as occasions for cultivating awareness. Looi’s penchant for reading and study was reflected not only by the various programs sponsored by ZMM, but also by his own writing: he was a highly prolific author of many valuable books on aspects of Zen. His fifth book, *The Heart of Being: Moral and Ethical Teachings of Zen Buddhism*, was especially significant in that it attempted to offer a modern interpretation of the traditional ceremony called *jukai*, and it resonated well with the abbot’s powerful concern for a morality in which individual and global ethics interpenetrate.

Early on, two other teachers assisted Looi in running ZMM. Each was a “Dharma holder” with extensive residential training. The early vice-abbess of ZMM was Bonnie Myotai Treace. She coordinated all the affiliate groups of the MRO and worked especially with the Zen Center of New York City. Like the vice-abbess, Geoffrey Shugen Arnold lived in residential training and served as chief of operations for the monastery, and supervised their prison sangha program (see below). Shugen (now a *roshi*) received Dharma transmission in 1997, and following John Daido Looi’s death in 2009, serves as abbot of ZMM and the Zen Center of New York.

As a comprehensive training center for both lay and monastic practitioners, ZMM offers a wide variety of programs that include, in addition to a daily routine of meditation, introductory weekends of Zen training, weeklong *sesshins*, or intensive periods of silent meditation retreat, and special retreats focusing on selected areas such as Buddhist Studies, Zen arts, and the like, all designed to



promote direct realization through practice. Because Abbot Loori was aware that many Western practitioners of Zen begin their training with no more than a modicum of background in Buddhism, he devised a training program known as “The Eight Gates of Zen,” designed to provide what he called a “training matrix.” The eight “gates” include, in order: (1) *zazen*, (2) the student–teacher relationship developed through face-to-face training, (3) academic study, (4) liturgy, (5) precepts, (6) art practice, (7) body practice, and (8) work practice. Each “gate” is fully explained in Loori’s book *Eight Gates of Zen*. Taken together, they address all the aspects of an individual’s life, providing the basis for actualization in daily life.

Over the years, the most popular program at ZMM has been the “Introduction to Zen Training Weekend,” in which those in attendance are given extensive instruction in *zazen* and body practice, participate in the liturgy of the community, and have wide opportunity to ask questions about Zen practice. The retreat is a requirement for all potential MRO students, and a prerequisite for *sesshin* attendance.

Some students at ZMM desire a more complete and intensive immersion in Buddhist teachings and Zen practice. For these students, it is possible to enter into a residency period. The residential training program is integrated into the overall seasonal practice of ZMM. For students participating in the general residential program, a monthly weeklong *sesshin* is required, while students pursuing a long-term residency often begin their training program with a monthlong retreat. In this way, students learn to eat together, work together, and discuss the Dharma together on a daily basis. One should not infer from the above that the atmosphere at ZMM is overly solemn or unpleasant, as anyone sharing lunch with the residential students quickly learn.

Combined with its other programs, ZMM is a leader in instituting programs of Buddhist social engagement, a feature that is quite typical of communities associated with Dharma heirs of Maezumi Rōshi. The two chief expressions of this approach are the ZMM Prison Program and the Zen Environmental Studies Center (ZESC). The ZMM Prison Program began in 1984 in response to an inmate in a New York state correctional facility to start a practice group there. Following a court battle, resolved by the New York Supreme Court, the first Zen prison practice group was formed. The ZESC began in 1992 as a means of integrating the monastery’s concern for environmental education, protection, research, and recreation. Within the monastery’s two hundred acres, opportunities abound for camping, boating, rock climbing, bird-watching, learning to understand deep ecology, and cultivating a proactive environmental activism.

The centers and affiliates groups of Zen Mountain Monastery include the Zen Affiliate of Vermont, the Buffalo Zen Dharma Community, and the Zen Institute of New Zealand. The general pattern in American Buddhist communities in the past has been for each organization to first establish a city center, only later opening satellite centers in the rural countryside. Despite its association with the White Plum Sangha (which emerged from the urban-based ZCLA), the MRO also founded the Zen Center of New York City (and called the Fire Lotus Zendo), was one of the first American Buddhist expressions of the reverse process: an affiliate city center



created *after* the establishment of a major center in a rural setting. ZMM also publishes a quarterly journal known as the *Mountain Record*, which has been in print for almost forty years.

Zen Mountain Monastery is by no means the largest Zen community in America. Yet it is in the quiet but eloquent manner in which it addresses the issues of Buddhist practice, education, work, relationships, ethics, aesthetics, social engagement, outreach, and concern for children that this community continues to make its impact on American Buddhism. This attainment was not based on the high-profile, even flamboyant approach utilized by some American Buddhist teachers, but rather one earned by a quiet, persistent attitude that revealed the naturalness of Daido Rōshi's style, and which is now continued by Shugen Rōshi's ongoing teaching.

During one of my many personal visits to Zen Mountain Monastery in the summer of 1995, Daido Rōshi invited me into the abbacy so I could see what his personal living arrangement was like. Once inside, he immediately showed me his computer facilities. He wanted to demonstrate all the sound and visual capabilities of his system, and how everything could be integrated into various multimedia presentations. There we were: two grown men, both past fifty, both former chemists, both Buddhists, and having spent thousands upon thousands of hours in sitting meditation. If anyone had peeked in on us that morning, they would have seen two little boys totally engrossed in exploring sounds and sights and images as if nothing else in the world mattered. We were two adult men with the open hearts of little children. I had come to ZMM to talk about American Zen with John Daido Looi, and without my having realized it along the way, he had me *doing Zen* instead.

John Daido Looi Rōshi died on October 9, 2009. With the magnificent help of his Dharma heir Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Rōshi and Jody Hojin Kimmel Sensei, who currently serves as MRO Director of Training and co-Director of the Zen Center of New York City, Zen Mountain Monastery continues as perhaps the landmark Zen Center of Buddhism in the United States.

## 7 Zooming Ahead

In the more than two decades since I published *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America*, the American Buddhist landscape has changed and grown enormously. Popular and scholarly publications on aspects of Buddhism in America abound everywhere. Buddhist inspired magazines, like *Tricycle*, *Lions Roar*, and *Buddhadharma* elicit marvelous support from readers, and their online presence augments their print versions. The sale of Buddhist products—from zafus to zabutons—has turned into an overwhelming cottage industry. And the growth of the Internet has made Buddhist Blogs—like *American Buddhist Perspectives*, run by Justin Whitaker—an everyday “must read” item for American Buddhists of all races, ethnicities, and sectarian affiliations. Yet the focus of all this Buddhist

activity in the years since 2000 tends *not* to be on one particular Buddhist tradition—like Zen—but rather on general issues which apply to all American Buddhists. Indeed, individual Zen communities garner attention from their members, but overall, the focus on Buddhism in America is more general as time moves forward. I would continue to argue, as I have for the previous quarter-century, that these concerns and considerations still can be summarized under several categories: ethnicity, practice, democratization (including changing patterns of authority and changing gender roles), social engagement, and adaptation (including ecumenicism).

Over the past decades, a number of prominent Buddhological scholars and scholar-practitioners—myself included—have offered significant (and sometimes even inflammatory and/or argumentative) reflections on how Buddhism in North America, including Zen, might effectively acculturate to its western environment in the light of various applications of the above categories. In addition to myself, this list would certainly include such well known individuals as Rick Fields, Robert Thurman, Kenneth Tanaka, Lama Surya Das, Don Morreale, Rita Gross, Richard Seager, and more recently, David McMahan, Jeff Wilson, Scott Mitchell, and Ann Gleig. By no means is this list to be considered “complete,” but rather a citation of the most prominent and vocal individuals.

On 17–19 January 1997, a “Buddhism in America” conference was held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. Robert Thurman was one of the many speakers who took part in the event. Apart from his clever, and sometimes outrageous statements, Thurman pointed out that Buddhism should not be taken for granted in America, for just as it appeared, so also it can disappear. Up to that point, nobody had ever suggested such a circumstance, and the audience, with many Zen teachers and practitioners in attendance, became utterly silent. The following evening, Lama Surya Das gave the final speech of the conference. On an optimistic note, Surya Das claimed that America afforded the first occasion in history for every Buddhist school from each Asian tradition to be together in one place and at the same time. However, he immediately followed his comment by suggesting that the Three Jewels of American Buddhism were *Me, Myself, and I*. Not wanting to leave the audience with a negative impression, he then outlined ten points that he thought would characterize the American Buddhism of the future. These included:

Dharma without Dogma

A Lay-oriented sangha

A meditation-based and experiential tradition

Gender equality

A nonsectarian tradition

An essentialized and simplified tradition

An egalitarian, democratic, and non-hierarchical tradition

A psychologically astute and rational tradition

An experimental, innovating, inquiry-based tradition

A socially informed and engaged tradition.

This accurate and helpful typology, which I have aggressively supported in my publications and presentations, pulled together ideas previously circulated by individuals such as Rick Fields, in his article "The Future of American Buddhism" in the *Vajradhatu Sun* 9, no. 1 (1987), Rita Gross in her book *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, published in 1993, Kenneth Tanaka and others.

As we moved ahead into the new century, a whole new input would be forthcoming from a group of younger, newer, and utterly creative scholars, and all of their contributions are having a profound impact on the current and future state of Buddhism in America... including Zen. One of the leaders in this new input was headlined by David McMahan's brilliant book *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, published in 2008. McMahan provided a whole new way of looking at Buddhism in America, and it paved the way for others to begin reevaluating the entirety of the current and future Buddhist movement in America, including the Zen tradition. McMahan's work was followed by that of Jeff Wilson, who has become the leading scholar of understanding the new approaches to Buddhism that are developing in America. Wilson has suggested two creative new ways of understanding American Buddhism in a totally different context. First, he suggests that the Buddhism which has been developing in the new century is engaged in what he calls "hybridity." This means that Buddhists and Buddhist communities of different sectarian backgrounds are beginning to respectfully share doctrinal information, practices, and community relationships. Much of this is explained in his 2004 volume *Dixie Dharma: Inside a Buddhist Temple in the American South*. He augmented this creative approach with another notion he refers to as "regionalism," arguing that American Buddhist communities differ widely as a result of their geographic location. In other words, Buddhist communities of different sectarian affiliations located in cities often have more in common with each other than with communities of their own affiliation located in rural environments. And of course the converse is true. Nonetheless this theory offers insights that can be significantly useful in understanding various Buddhist communities located throughout North America. And, to be sure, all of this emphasizes the now enormous role of the Internet and technology in creating better avenues of communication between all Buddhists.

Prior to 1979, when I published my first book on the topic of Buddhism in a western context, *American Buddhism*, there was only one book on this topic: Emma McCloy Layman's *Buddhism in America*. While there have been some anthologies on the topic published since then, such as *The Faces of Buddhism in America* and *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*, until recently, there were really only three scholarly major books focusing on the entirety of the Buddhist tradition in America: Rick Fields' *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*, (my book) *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America*, and Richard Seager's *Buddhism in America*. Now there are many, led by two profoundly useful and insightful books by younger scholars: Scott Mitchell's *Buddhism in America: Global Religion, Local Contexts* and Ann Gleig's *American Buddhism: Buddhism Beyond Modernity*. Each of these signals important new avenues of exploration of Buddhism in America, looking far ahead into the

future. To be sure, the Zen tradition will be a major feature in all of these new discussions and developments.

### Notes

1. Shigetsu Sasaski Rōshi, "Excerpts from Our Lineage," *Wind Bell* 8, No. 1–2 (Fall 1969), 8.
2. Louis Nordstrom (editor), *Namu Dai Bosa: A Transmission of Zen Buddhism to America* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1976), 58–59.
3. Mary Farkas, "Footsteps in the Invisible World," *Wind Bell* 8, No. 1–2 (fall 1969), 18.
4. Bruce Cook, *The Beat Generation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 9–10.
5. Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 130.
6. *Ibid.*, 134.
7. Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America* (3rd edition, revised and updated; Boston: Shambhala, 1992), 241.
8. The name of the order is taken from Dōgen's *Mountains and Rivers Sūtra*, a text that was of continuing importance for Abbot John Daido Looi.
9. Bernard Tetsugen Glassman Rōshi was the first president of the White Plum Sangha.

**Charles Prebish** held the Charles Redd Chair in Religious Studies at Utah State University from 2007 until 2010, and also served as Director of the Religious Studies Program. He came to Utah State University following more than thirty-five years on the faculty of the Pennsylvania State University. He now has emeritus status in both universities. He has published two dozen books and nearly one hundred scholarly articles and chapters. His books *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* (1975) and *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America* (1999) are considered classic volumes in Buddhist Studies. Dr. Prebish is the leading pioneer in the establishment of the study of Western Buddhism as a sub-discipline in Buddhist Studies. In 1993 he held the Visiting Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary, and in 1997 was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation National Humanities Fellowship for research at the University of Toronto. Dr. Prebish has been an officer in the International Association of Buddhist Studies, and was co-founder of the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religion. In 1994, he co-founded the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, which was the first online peer-reviewed journal in the field of Buddhist Studies; and in 1996, co-founded the Routledge "Critical Studies in Buddhism" series. In 2005, he was honored with a "festschrift" volume by his colleagues titled *Buddhist Studies from India to America: Essays in Honor of Charles S. Prebish*.

# D. T. Suzuki and Zazen



Richard M. Jaffe

One of the difficulties in writing about D. T. Suzuki (Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙; 1870–1966), is characterizing his role as an historical figure in just a few words. Was Suzuki a scholar, a religionist (*shūkyōka* 宗教家), a Buddhist missionary, a popularizer of Zen, or does he deserve all of the aforementioned classifications? Suzuki's elusiveness in this regard is indicative of his liminal position with regard to most institutions and specific schools of Buddhism and frequently independent approach to their teachings. Awarded a DLit degree from Ōtani University for his academic work on the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and a pioneer in the discovery and analysis of Dunhuang texts concerning the early history of Chan Buddhism, Suzuki famously rejected the exclusive importance of objective historical analysis. Instead he stressed the crucial role of deep insight into Zen, which he referred to as *prajñā*-intuition, for anyone who wished to write about Zen accurately. In his writings about Buddhism, Suzuki frequently focused on the neglected outsiders in various streams of Buddhism, for example Bankei Yōtaku 盤珪永琢 (1622–1693) in Zen and, in his work on the Jōdo Shinshū, the, at the time, relatively overlooked *myōkōnin* 妙好人 (wondrous good people) and the peripheral text, *Anjin ketsujō shō* 安心決定抄. Although Suzuki trained in Zen for many years at the Rinzaï Zen temple, Engakuji 円覺寺 with both Imakita Kōsen 今北洪川 (1816–1892) and Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 (1860–1919) and devoted much of his life to Buddhism, he remained a layman. Turned to by many, particularly Americans and Europeans, as a teacher of Zen and an authority on Buddhism, Suzuki eschewed the role of teacher, even as he engaged in ongoing discussions about Zen with numerous seekers, introducing many of them to recognized Japanese Zen masters.

Suzuki's marginality and independence also are reflected in his approach to the practice of seated meditation, *zazen*. As one of the most prolific proponents of Zen Buddhism for the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, Suzuki wrote and spoke very little about formal *zazen* practice. This reticence is closely intertwined with Suzuki's refusal to serve as a Buddhist teacher but also grew out of his evolving

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understanding of the history of Chan/Zen rooted in his scrutiny of Dunhuang texts and the *Record of Linji* (*Linji lu* 臨濟錄). Of course, in the history of Chan and Zen, there are relatively few works devoted specifically to the details of *zazen* practice, but given the volume of writings Suzuki produced and his role introducing Zen to those outside Japan, his growing reluctance to broach the topic of *zazen* in writing and his personal encounters is striking.

One of his most extended articles about *zazen* and sitting practice, *Seiza no susume* 静坐のすすめ (“A Recommendation for Quiet Sitting”), also is one of Suzuki’s earliest publications.<sup>1</sup> First published in 1900, the work credits Shaku Sōen as co-author of *Seiza no susume*. As the 1908 edition of the text, with commentary by one of Sōen’s clerical disciples, Seigo Hōgaku 棲梧宝岳 (1875–1942), makes clear, Shaku Sōen promoted the idea of using *seiza*, which is conflated with *zazen* in the essay, as a means to provide a practical method for helping the increasingly dissolute youth of Japan to cultivate their moral character. Taking up the task presented to him, Suzuki wrote *Seiza no susume*, demonstrating his bent for comparative thought and distinctive approach to Zen, even in that early publication.

In *Seiza no susume*, Suzuki gives a succinct presentation of a generalized sort of *zazen* practice, shorn of much of its ritual context. In the text, Suzuki recommends, without giving explicit directions, following the method of practice described in the *Zuochan yi* (*Zazengi* 坐禅儀), the succinct meditation text included in the thirteenth-century edition of the *Chanyuan qinggui* 禅苑清規 that was compiled by Changlu Zongze 長蘆宗頤. Throughout the brief, hortatory tract, Suzuki clearly distinguishes between the full-fledged *zazen* practice of the Zen school, which must include engagement with a koan and this simplified form of *zazen*, i.e., *seiza* practice, which does not require that one “...penetrate to the ‘true original face’ of religion...” The former practice, which can be extremely stressful and demanding, is not for everyone, Suzuki writes, whereas the simplified *zazen* practice or *seiza* (quiet sitting), is a simple, easily conducted exercise with clear psycho-physical benefits for the student.

In the essay, Suzuki suggests that the student, following the instructions in the *Zuochan yi*, light a stick of incense, then sit focusing on a phrase of the student’s choosing. Working with a koan, which would turn the practice into full-fledged Zen practice, Suzuki warns, is not advisable for those simply doing *zazen* for the purpose of building moral character, as koan work might prove too stressful for many. Instead, the young practitioner is advised to freely choose from any number of phrases to serve as objects of concentration during *zazen*. Fodder for such selection includes, according to Suzuki, “...the Bible’s Golden Rule, the splendid words of the *Analects*, or, again, the principles of utilitarianism, the expositions of the Stoics, or whatever...”<sup>2</sup> The student is advised not to put all his or her energy into the head, because, “...we think with our whole body.”<sup>3</sup> Instead, Suzuki advises that one “...put the force of one’s whole body in the abdomen, and it is essential that the lungs and heart function fully.”<sup>4</sup> Successfully engaging in this sort of simplified *zazen*, according to Suzuki, will have profound benefits, as, “Those who are cowardly become bold, those whose minds are filled with stress obtain leisure, those who are impetuous and lacking in patience obtain an interest in freedom from worldly cares,

those who cannot overcome immediate desires, cultivate the virtues of prudence and affability, and so on.”<sup>5</sup>

Suzuki devotes much of *Seiza no susume* to explaining what he theorizes to be the psycho-physical mechanisms that produce these salutary effects. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth-century, when all things European and American were the rage in Japan, Suzuki uses contemporaneous Euro-American psychological theory to convince his Japanese readers that his claims about the efficacy of zazen are grounded in scientific facts. By so doing, Suzuki hopes to convince even those youth prone to turning their backs on anything Japanese of the virtues of zazen. To this end, Suzuki utilizes the nineteenth-century theory concerning emotions and bodily sensations developed separately, but almost synchronically, by the American philosopher and psychologist, William James (1842–1910), and the Danish physician, Carl Lange (1834–1900), in order to explain the psycho-physical utility of zazen practice. In their two essays James, who published his work in 1884, and Lange, whose independent article appeared in Danish in 1885, contend, in James’ words, that,

Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect, that the one mental state is not immediately induced by the other, that the bodily manifestations must first be interposed between, and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry strike or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful as the case may be.<sup>6</sup>

Or, as Carl Lange summarizes in his 1885 essay,

We owe all the emotional side of our mental life, our joys and sorrows, our happy and unhappy hours, to our vasomotor system. If the impressions which fall upon our senses did not possess the power of stimulating it, we would wander through life, unsympathetic and passionless, all impressions of the outer world would only enrich our experience, increase our knowledge, but would arise neither joy nor anger, would give us neither care nor fear.<sup>7</sup>

This theory, according to Suzuki, explains the power that grows from the extracted zazen practice described in his essay. Doing zazen gives one the attentiveness and psycho-physical buffer required to quell the nascent sensations that left unchecked, would otherwise generate uncontrolled emotions.

If we look from our perspective, the doctors’ theory [that is, James and Lange’s] has some interesting points. According to the zazen method at hand, one strives to always keep the lower abdomen full of power, the breathing always uniform, the heart beat tranquil, the muscles of the whole body always resilient, so if, for example, a scary person should appear before one, because one’s chest would not palpitate or face lose its color, our mind would not be a bit different than usual, and one would remain calm and collected as if no one was there.<sup>8</sup>

In *Seiza no susume*, Suzuki distills zazen practice from its broader religious context, emphasizing its practical benefits as a stand-alone exercise, rather than as a means to penetrate to a full understanding of religion (*shūkyō* 宗教), which, even at this early stage, meant for Suzuki non-dual understanding of reality.<sup>9</sup> In the early

part of Suzuki's career, he would continue to write about zazen in this manner, emphasizing how the practice provided one with the psycho-physical reserves that prevented one from being emotionally buffeted by external circumstances. Even when speaking to an audience of practitioners, as he does in the brief, desultory lecture, "Zazen ron" 坐禅論, Suzuki restricts his comments about zazen to the same comparative and limited scope.<sup>10</sup>

When Suzuki began writing more extensively about Zen in English during the period from the start of World War I through the late-1930s, he often touched on the topic of zazen within the context of Zen, particularly Rinzai Zen, practice. During this period of prolific publication in English, Suzuki sprinkled mentions of zazen across such works as *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, and *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*.<sup>11</sup> In almost every case, Suzuki wrote very briefly about zazen alongside extensive descriptions of koan practice. Some of the works, for example, the famous, lengthy volume, *Essays in Zen Buddhism (First Series)*, contain but one indexed reference to zazen, with the brief mention of the practice being confined to a footnote. In just two instances, Suzuki provides concrete mention of how to do zazen. In the 1930 essay, "Passivity in the Buddhist Life," Suzuki provides a full translation of the *Zuochan yi* found in Changlu Zongze's edition of the *Chanyuan qinggui* and a slightly abbreviated version of the same text in the *Training of a Zen Monk*.<sup>12</sup>

In these English-language works, Suzuki moved quickly from concrete descriptions of zazen to lengthy discussions of koan practice and analyses of classic cases from Zen literature. According to Suzuki, in the mystical teachings (*shinpi kyō* 神秘教) found in many other religious traditions, for example, Christianity, the achievement of insight or religious awakening was possible but a matter of happenstance or fervent prayer. The discipline of seated meditation practice was distinctive to the East (*Tōyō* 東洋) Suzuki noted.<sup>13</sup> By contrast with "mystical teachings" and, even, other streams of Buddhism, the Rinzai use of zazen to review koan practically ensured awakening. "To those who pursue it judiciously under a really competent master, Zen-experience is possible and a state of *satori* will surely come."<sup>14</sup> It was the use of koan, not zazen alone, according to Suzuki, that "saved Japanese Zen from total annihilation."<sup>15</sup>

According to Suzuki's 1920–1930s-era formulation of the relationship between zazen and koan practice, zazen, while essential for Zen practice, was not sufficient by itself. In fact, Zen did not make "Dhyāna," that is zazen,

an end in itself, for apart from the *kōan* exercise, the practicing of *zazen* is a secondary consideration. It is no doubt a necessary accompaniment to the mastery of Zen; even when the *kōan* is understood, its deep spiritual truth will not be driven home to the mind of the Zen student if he does not practice *zazen*. *Kōan* and *zazen* are the two handmaids of Zen; the first is the eye and the second is the foot.<sup>16</sup>

As Suzuki continued to delve into the history of Zen during the Fifteen Years War period (1931–1945), particularly the early Chan tradition, through his pioneering editing and study of Dunhuang texts, his understanding of the relationship between zazen and koan or, as he would frequently express it, *dhyāna* and



*prajñā*, continued to evolve. During the 1930s, Suzuki co-edited with Kōda Rentarō 公田連太郎 a four-volume edition of Shenhui's collected sayings and two editions of the *Platform Sutra*, based upon Dunhuang texts and the Kōshōji version of the Platform Sutra.<sup>17</sup> Limited to publishing almost exclusively in Japanese during the peak war years, Suzuki also wrote a series of books concerning the teachings of Chan and Zen luminaries, including Huineng 慧能, Linji 臨濟, Dōgen 道元, Hakuin 白隠, and Bankei.<sup>18</sup>

Suzuki's research into the early history of Chan using the Dunhuang materials and, in a separate but related project, investigating the nature of Japanese spirituality (*Nihonteki reisei* 日本の靈性), stimulated him to modify his previous, more doctrinaire Rinzai perspective concerning practice. In the first volume of his history of Zen thought, *Zen shisōshi kenkyū—Daiichi—Bankei Zen*, Suzuki praised Bankei's "Unborn" Zen (*fushō Zen* 不生禪), describing it as providing a more accurate understanding of and approach to awakening. Comparing Bankei's approach to that of Dōgen and Hakuin, Suzuki believed Bankei to be most in tune with indigenous Japanese spirituality, as well as providing the most uncompromising presentation of practice.

The distinguishing feature of Bankei's pedagogy is his utter rejection of anything apart from himself in any way—whether spatial or temporal—and his endeavor to 'clear things up for people' through comments and criticisms directed to the person right before him at a given time. Here we see the reason for his refusal to place any reliance on sutras or words from Zen records, and for rejecting the use of Chinese. Zen has no part whatever in talking about what is past or with abstract, conceptual comments on things removed from oneself. Since the matter of 'you yourself today' is Unborn Zen, and since our everyday language serves perfectly well to say that we are cold when we are cold and hot when we are hot, Unborn Zen has from the first no need for a voluminous ninety-five fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, nor for the hundreds of old koans and cases that Dōgen deals with at great length in that work.<sup>19</sup>

Not only Dōgen, but Hakuin and the system of koan study developed by his successors as well, comes in for critique when compared to Bankei's natural approach to Zen. Suzuki astutely notes the differences between Hakuin's and Dōgen's approach to practice.

Hakuin Zen is koan Zen through and through. This means it has both the benefits and dangers inherent in such an artificial system. Dōgen's *taza* 打坐 Zen is without any limits, and from the beginning there is no possible way for us to grasp it. One may say that koans are also beyond our grasp as well, but when you work on a koan it is right there before you, and all your effort can be concentrated on it. With *taza* Zen, for all its talk of 'body-and-mind dropping off,' it is no easy matter to know where and how to begin. Koan Zen provides steps for the practitioner, and if he can somehow get a foothold on the first step he is brought along from there without much difficulty. This clearly is a problem, though one cannot deny its convenience.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike in the artificial system of koan Zen developed by Hakuin and his successors, Bankei's approach, according to Suzuki, is based on genuine natural internal probing, rather than an externally-generated problem. Suzuki notes that,

When an existential doubt wells up spontaneously from within and drives one to intense concentration, as it did in Bankei's case, he will as a natural result try to resolve it using any means he can devise. So when this total, all-out quest arrives at its denouement, genuine *satori* should result. On the other hand, left to a framework that depends on the use of koan, what will be created is a doubt that can only be termed artificial, not the kind of demand that rises deep from within. Bankei's criticism is based on his own experience...<sup>21</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the Fifteen Years War, Suzuki once again had frequent interactions with non-Japanese interested in Zen. Fluent in English and well known in Japan, Europe, and the United States, Suzuki was an expert on Zen open to discussing the topic with the numerous non-Japanese who entered Japan as part of the Allied Occupation. The group that began visiting Suzuki to investigate Zen at this time included such individuals as Faubion Bowers, Richard Crewdson, Richard DeMartino, Philip Kapleau, Donald Richie, Albert Stunkard, and Theodore VanItallie. When Suzuki returned to the United States, beginning with his participation in the 1949 East West Philosophers Conference, subsequent lecture engagements at various universities, and regular teaching at Columbia, some of those who met Suzuki during the Occupation continued visiting with him and attending Suzuki's lectures on a regular basis.

Although Suzuki would meet regularly with these people at his residence at Engakuji, he emphasized to them that he was not a teacher. In addition, the accounts of these acolytes reveal that Suzuki, although not opposed to the practice of *zazen*, did not place much emphasis on it. For most of these interlocutors, the discussion of Zen with Suzuki and reading his earlier publications concerning Zen piqued their interest in *satori* 悟り, a concept, which we well know, looms large in all of Suzuki's work. Stunkard, who met Suzuki in 1947 and became a regular visitor in Japan and the United States, recalls that his discussions with Suzuki,

Dr. Suzuki spoke about being alert all of the time and helped to create an atmosphere at his Sunday afternoons, an expectation, that lightning might strike at any time. This was a period, as I learned later, when he believed that *zazen* was not necessary to understand Zen. He may, in fact, have believed that it would interfere with an understanding of Zen. How he had come to this belief, and how it changed over the years was another fascinating aspect of this old man.<sup>22</sup>

Stunkard attributed Suzuki's downplaying the importance of *zazen* to Suzuki's study of the Dunhuang materials, particularly the teachings that Suzuki attributed to Huineng and Shenhui. Suzuki, however, Stunkard recalls, never considered *zazen* to be a "a hindrance to enlightenment," although for a time he seemed to think it was unnecessary."<sup>23</sup>

Others who worked with Suzuki after 1945 recalled or imbibed the same attitude towards *zazen* practice mentioned by Stunkard. Richard DeMartino, who probably was closer to Suzuki than almost any other American student, mentions in a 1983 interview with Susan Quinn about Suzuki and Karen Horney, "The first thing about Zen is that formal meditation doesn't mean a thing....Certainly from Suzuki she [Horney] never got the idea that she had to sit cross-legged. Because he understood that."<sup>24</sup> Elsie Mitchell who got to know Suzuki in Cambridge, Massachusetts, stated that the only person to whom Suzuki taught *zazen* was his wife, Beatrice

Erskine Lane Suzuki. Otherwise, Suzuki noted, he did not teach zazen to anyone. In addition, according to Mitchell, Suzuki refused to take on a teaching role with the nascent Cambridge Buddhist Association, instead, allowing Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, to lead the group and oversee zazen practice at the Association meetings while he was in residence in Boston in fall, 1957.<sup>25</sup> Robert Aitken, the head of the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii, recollected one memorable exchange that occurred during Suzuki's visit to the Kokoan Zendo in 1964. When asked by a student, "Is *zazen* (meditation) necessary?", Suzuki replied "*Zazen* is absolutely not necessary." According to Aitken, this response sparked a commotion among those gathered for Suzuki's lecture.<sup>26</sup>

Although Suzuki had taken the position that zazen practice was not essential for understanding Zen, he quite happily supported that endeavor, if those who worked with him were interested. During the Occupation years in Japan, Suzuki made it possible for Donald Richie, Stunkard, DeMartino, and others to join formal zazen practice at Engakuji and other monasteries in Japan. For example, Suzuki arranged for Stunkard to sit a modified sesshin schedule at Engakuji. Stunkard also recounted that Suzuki once enquired about how Stunkard timed his zazen periods when he sat on his own. When Stunkard replied he used a clock, Suzuki suggested using incense sticks to time the sitting and gave Stunkard an incense burner that Suzuki had used during his student years.<sup>27</sup> Suzuki thus encouraged those who persistently expressed interest in zazen without doing much to instruct them in that endeavor. Suzuki, who provided letters of introduction to various Zen teachers, also facilitated the formal Zen practice of Aitken, Kapleau, Bernard Phillips, Cornelius Crane, William Segal, and many others in the 1950s and 1960s.

Nonetheless, the remark that Suzuki made to the student at the Kokoan Zendo was not a one-off or unconsidered comment. Suzuki's dismissal of the necessity of zazen, rather, came after many years of considered study and practice. His position on zazen was rooted in his valorization of the approach taken in the *Platform Sutra*, Shenhui's writings, the *Linji lu*, and Bankei's collected sayings. Suzuki's unorthodox take on Zen practice was not made without consideration, nor was it intended solely for a non-Japanese audience. Rather, Suzuki's position concerning zazen could cause perplexity even among Japanese Zen practitioners and scholars. Perhaps one of the clearest exchanges on the topic of zazen occurred late in Suzuki's life, while he was escaping the heat of Kamakura summer in Karuizawa. In an interview with the Kyoto University philosophy of religion professor Ueda Shizuteru 上田閑照 (1926–2019) discussing Rinzai's teachings, Suzuki reiterated, with an explanation, his position concerning zazen. In response to Ueda's question, "Must zazen be thought indispensable for the realization of the Man [i. e., *nin* 人]?" the following exchanged ensued.

**Suzuki:** Rinzai's concern is not whether it's [zazen] indispensable or not.

**Ueda:** Yes, Zen itself is not zazen. Rinzai himself says doing zazen is useless. Yet he also says realization is not something one is born with but requires hard training and experience, with the awakening emerging suddenly from it. After his own

realization he continued to do zazen in the meditation hall. We read of this in his *Sayings*.

**Suzuki:** Yes, he probably did.

**Ueda:** If so, it would seem to me that zazen is after all the most fundamental step in realizing this Man...

**Suzuki:** That's a very delicate point. For instance the Man is not grasped because one does zazen....That is why I tell you must see that which makes one do zazen. When we are caught by zazen we come to see various strange mental pictures. Those who make zazen the focus are apt to take those pictures as essential.<sup>28</sup>

As in many areas of Suzuki's scholarship and practice, his approach to formal zazen, while grounded in what had become the orthodox Rinzai view, provided a different take on practice. His view of zazen forced even those close to him to arrive at rather convoluted explanations of Suzuki's position. When Aitken inquired with Suzuki's close associate, Masao Abe about Suzuki's seeming dismissal of formal zazen, Abe replied that what Suzuki meant was "...zazen is relatively necessary."<sup>29</sup> Speaking more generally, Fujiyoshi Jikai, who served as interpreter for Hisamatsu Shin'ichi in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1957, said during that visit, for much of which they were joined by Suzuki, "Dr. Suzuki is indeed a great man, isn't he?" Hisamatsu agreed, but warned, "Dr. Suzuki is unique, but we shouldn't try to imitate him. Others should be as strict and accurate as possible in speaking of Zen."<sup>30</sup>

In sum, Suzuki's unique attitude concerning formal zazen was a product of his long years of study of early Chan and Zen, as well as his own practice. As Suzuki immersed himself in such texts as the *Shenhui yulu* and the *Platform Sutra*, his attitude about meditation reflected the ambiguity about formal zazen expressed in those texts. As a result, perhaps, informed by those sources, Suzuki found himself in a position similar to Shenhui himself, who, Bielefeldt observes, was, "...left with little ground for cultivation and can only hint shyly at how one might go about practicing his Buddhism."<sup>31</sup> This perspective on Zen was coupled with Suzuki's refusal to take on the role of Zen teacher in any formal sense, forcing those students who were deeply interested in traditional practice to seek out other teachers to guide them.

## Notes

1. For my translation of *Seiza no susume*, see Suzuki, Daisetsu Teitarō. "A Recommendation for Quiet Sitting," in Richard M. Jaffe, ed., *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki. Volume 1: Zen*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015, 1–13. The *Selected Works* will hereafter be abbreviated, SWDS. See also, *Seiza no susume* in Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一, Yamaguchi Susumu 山口益, and Furuta Shōkin 古田紹欽, eds. *Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū* 鈴木大拙全集. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999–2003, 18: 391–404. (Hereafter SDZ.) The bibliography in SDZ 40: 146, lists *Seiza no susume* as being published June 5, 1899. The pamphlet of *Seiza no susume* in my possession, which was published in 1930, lists the first edition of the work as June 5, 1900, however, so I have used that date.

2. SWDS 1: 3.
3. SWDS 1: 3.
4. SWDS 1: 3.
5. SWDS 1: 3–4.
6. William James, “What is an Emotion,” in Carl Georg Lange, William James, and Istar A. Haupt. *The Emotions*. Psychology Classics. Baltimore,: Williams & Wilkins Company, 1922, 13.
7. Carl Georg Lange, “The Emotions,” in Lange, James, and Haupt, p. 80.
8. SWDS 1: 6–7.
9. In one of Suzuki’s earliest works, *Shin shūkyō ron* 新宗教論 (New Interpretation of Religion), he explains that non-dual understanding is the essence of religion. See SWDS 3: 12.
10. “Zazen ron,” (1910), in SDZ 27: 16–25. The lecture, given to members of the Zendōkai 禅道会, was originally published in the journal, *Zendō*, which Suzuki co-edited with Shaku Sōen.
11. Suzuki, D. T. *Essays in Zen Buddhism (First Series)*. London: Luzac and Company, 1927; *Essays in Zen Buddhism (Second Series)*. London: Luzac and Company, 1933; *Essays in Zen Buddhism (Third Series)*. London: Luzac and Company, 1934a; *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1934b; *Manual of Zen Buddhism*. Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1935.
12. Suzuki, D. T. “Passivity in the Buddhist Life.” *The Eastern Buddhist* 5, no. 2–3 (1930): 182–185; *The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk*. Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1934c. Suzuki included “Passivity” in *Essays in Zen Buddhism (Second Series)*, with the translation of the *Zuochan yi* on pp. 284–287.
13. “Zazen ron,” in SDZ 27: 18–19.
14. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, 121–122.
15. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, 122.
16. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, 110. Spelling and italics as in the original.
17. Kōda Rentarō 公田連太郎, and Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙, eds. *Tonkō Shutsudo Katakū Jinne Zenji Goroku; Tonkō Shutsudō Rokuso Dangyō; Kōshōjibon Rokuso Dangyō* 燉煌出土荷澤神會禪師語錄; 燉煌出土六祖壇經; 興聖寺本六祖壇經. 4 vols. Tokyo: Morie Shoten, 1934.
18. See SWDS 1: xxxi–xxxiv.
19. SWDS 1: 88. The chapter, “Dōgen, Hakuin, Bankei,” from *Zen shisōshi kenkyū—Daiichi—Bankei Zen* 禅思想史研究-第一-盤珪禅, is translated by Norman Waddell.
20. “Dōgen, Hakuin, Bankei,” SWDS 1: 90.
21. “Dōgen, Hakuin, Bankei,” SWDS 1: 91.
22. Stunkard, Albert “Suzuki Daisetz: An Appreciation.” *Eastern Buddhist* 36, New Series, no. 1/2 (2004): 192–228. Stunkard makes a similar statement in an interview he conducted with Michael Goldberg for the film, *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki*. International Videoworks and Nihon Kokusai Seinen Bunka

- Kyokai. *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki*. Tokyo: Japan Inter-Culture Foundation, 2006. In this citation and those that follow in this paper, I have used the full video interviews used for Goldberg's film that are in the D. T. Suzuki Documentary Project Collection at the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University. In the interview, done June 19, 2003, Stunkard stated that Suzuki was "firmly opposed to zazen. Or, he wasn't firmly opposed but thought it was totally irrelevant to Zen understanding."
23. Stunkard, "Suzuki Daisetz," 208.
  24. Susan Quinn, Interview with Richard DeMartino, November 11, 1983. Boston Psychoanalytic Institute, "Karen Horney Papers," Box 9, Folder 23.
  25. Elsie Mitchell Interview with Michael Goldberg, June 23, 2003. D. T. Suzuki Documentary Project Collection.
  26. Haar, Francis, and Masao Abe, eds. *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki Remembered*. 1st ed. New York: Weatherhill, 1986, 212. Italics as in the original.
  27. Stunkard, "Suzuki Daisetz," 200–203; 208.
  28. Suzuki, D. T. "The Sayings of Rin'zai: A Conversation between Suzuki, Daisetz & Ueda Shizuteru." *The Eastern Buddhist* 6, no. 1 (1973): 104–105.
  29. Haar, Francis, and Masao Abe, eds. *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki Remembered*. 1st ed. New York: Weatherhill, 1986, 212. Italics as in the original.
  30. Fujiyoshi, Jikai. "Daisetz Suzuki and Shin'ichi Hisamatsu." *Eastern Buddhist* 2, New Series, no. 1 (August 1967): 195.
  31. Bielefeldt, Carl. *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988, 92.

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# Zen and Japanese Culture: Nativist Influences on Suzuki Daisetsu's Interpretation of Zen



Albert Welter

## 1 Introduction

Suzuki Daisetsu's 鈴木大拙 (more commonly known in the West as D.T. Suzuki) influence over modern Zen 禅 was indisputable throughout the twentieth century and has been the subject of pointed commentary from the 1990s. Many noted the correspondence between Suzuki's interpretation of Zen and the *Nihonjin ron* 日本人論 (Japanism) agenda of the Kyoto School 京都派 (e.g., Faure, 1993: 74–88; Heisig & Maraldo, 1994; Heisig, 2001). Others pointed out the influence of William James on Suzuki's understanding of religion and Zen (Faure, 1993: 79; Sharf, 1995). While these approaches positioned Suzuki's interpretation of Zen against threats to Japan's cultural autonomy from the West, there is reason to also situate the discussion as a rearticulation of notions of Japanese culture formed in *Kokugaku* 国学 (Nativist) agendas of the Edo period. My contention is that Suzuki's interpretation of Zen not only parallels post-Meiji 明治 Japanese ideals articulated in Kyoto School rhetoric, broadly conceived, but also reflects substantially the pre-Meiji origins of these ideals expounded in Tokugawa 徳川 era Nativist discourse. Further, I consider the extent to which Suzuki's interpretation of Zen may be considered a product conditioned by this Japanese cultural discourse rather than a precisely Zen inspired agenda.

Essentially, this essay is a comparison of the rhetorical strategies employed by the Tokugawa era founder of the *Kokugaku* movement, Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), with those of Suzuki Daisetsu (1870–1966). Both were concerned about Japan's cultural autonomy in the face of an overwhelming tide of foreign ideological and cultural influences, and both sought cultural redemption in the allegedly unique recesses of Japan's spiritual culture. In his assertion of Japan's

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superiority in the face of overwhelming Chinese ideological influences, Norinaga's ideas about Japan's unique cultural legacy proved compelling and many fell under its sway. It formed the cornerstone of Japan's modern culture, reflected in such documents as the "Imperial Rescript on Education", and Japan's wartime "constitution," *The Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan* (*Kokutai no hongî* 国体の本義; Gauntlett, 1949). Given Norinaga's influence over ideas about Japan's culture, his influence over Suzuki's interpretation of Zen was considerable. I begin by reviewing some salient aspects of Suzuki's understanding of Zen, before moving on to address Norinaga's Nativist agenda. I conclude by drawing parallels between the two and addressing the extent and the ways Norinaga's Nativism influenced Suzuki's interpretation of Zen.

## 2 Suzuki's Modern Zen Orthodoxy

Although Suzuki's understanding of Zen was presented as a timeless and self-evident universal truth impervious to change, the formation of modern Zen orthodoxy is a complicated process rooted in Japan's reaction and adaptation to modernization and westernization. My aim here is not to replicate this process in its entirety, but merely remind us of what constitutes Suzuki's interpretation of Zen, and to indicate some noteworthy yet unreported aspects of the context it arose from.

From the final days of the Tokugawa regime to the outset of the Meiji period, Japan faced an imperialist, hegemonic threat from the West. Suzuki's interpretation of Zen must be framed within this context of Japan's response to the crises posed by this threat, especially as it was deemed to jeopardize Japan's cultural autonomy. The response inspired some Japanese intellectuals, like Suzuki, to re-imagine Japan's unique characteristics and contributions to world culture and counter pose these against dominant western ideas. The litany of characteristics associated with Suzuki's interpretation of Zen is familiar to the point of hardly needing mention. The following list includes elements that invite comparisons with Norinaga and has been composed paraphrasing Suzuki's own words. According to Suzuki:

- "Zen is decidedly not a system founded upon logic and analysis." It is the antithesis to logic, by which is meant a dualistic mode of thinking (Suzuki 1964: 38).
- "Zen has nothing to teach us in the way of intellectual analysis; nor has it any set doctrines or dogmatic tenets which are imposed on its followers for acceptance." It is entirely inaccessible by conventional means (Suzuki, 1964: 38).
- While Zen claims to be Buddhism, it approaches all Buddhist teachings as propounded in scriptures and commentaries with disdain, as impediments as opposed to aides to awakening (*satori* 悟り) (Suzuki 1964: 38–39).
- Zen is not a religion as commonly understood. It is free from religious encumbrances like worship and ceremony, and religious concepts like heaven or

soul; it “is emphatically against all religious conventionalism” (Suzuki, 1964: 39–40).

- Zen trains the mind to see the great mystery of life (i.e., a sense of awe) as it occurs daily and hourly in mundane events. Lived the Zen way, life becomes an aesthetic experience of the sacred as it manifests itself around us (Suzuki, 1964: 45).
- Zen aestheticism is exhibited through an artistic love of nature, the idea that the ultimate truth of life is intuitively and not conceptually grasped. This intuitive apprehension is the foundation of all other cultural activities. This is what Zen “has contributed to the cultivation of artistic appreciation among the Japanese people” (Suzuki, 1959: 219).
- “The supreme moment in the life of an artist, expressed in Zen terms is the experience of *satori*.... Every art has its mystery or spiritual rhythm (*myō* 妙); ...this is where Zen becomes intimately related to all branches of art. The true artist, like a Zen master, is one who knows how to appreciate the *myō* of things” (Suzuki, 1959: 219).
- *Haiku* 俳句 poetry, through its unencumbered brevity and its elevation of natural spontaneity, is a manifestation of a Zen-like poet’s *satori* (Suzuki, 1959: 225–226). This is indicative of the way in which Zen has penetrated the aesthetic sensibility of Japanese.
- Other Zen inspired arts, like the art or cult of tea (*sadō* 茶道 or *cha no yu* 茶の湯), exhibit their Zen-like quality through the ideas of *wabi* 侘 and *sabi* 寂. *Wabi* represents the “aesthetic appreciation of rustic simplicity, and the longing felt in the depths of our hearts to go as far back to nature as our human existence will permit” (Suzuki, 1959: 287). *Sabi* is explained as the beauty of imperfection or primitive uncouthness; “rustic unpretentiousness or archaic imperfection, apparent simplicity or effortlessness in execution;” *sabi* contains inexplicable elements, derived from the appreciation of Zen, that raise an object to the level of true art (Suzuki, 1959: 24).
- The true religious life is one of unfettered freedom and emancipation, not bound by moral rules. To be free of all conditioning rules or concepts is the essence of religious life. “When teleology enters into our life, we cease to be religious, we become moral beings.” The same is true of art (Suzuki, 1959: 376).
- “To understand the cultural life of the Japanese people in all its different aspects, including their intense love of Nature...it is essential...to delve into the secrets of Zen Buddhism. ...[W]hen Zen is grasped, we can with some degree of ease get into the depths of their spiritual life in all its varied expressions. This fact is recognized, consciously or unconsciously, by scholars and by men in the street. ...[T]he latter appreciate it by actually living it, in the delight they feel in listening to tales and traditions traceable somehow to the teachings of Zen Buddhism” (Suzuki, 1959: 345).

In addition to this list, I draw attention to other aspects of Suzuki’s interpretation that are important considerations in the comparisons that follow. First of all, I consider Suzuki’s critique of modernity, which he views as a scourge contaminating an

authentic relationship with the natural world. In a section extolling Japan's love of nature, Suzuki turns abruptly to the pernicious effects of modernity.

Some of the high mountains of popular interest in Japan are nowadays provided with a system of cable railway, and the summit is easily reached. The materialistic utilitarianism of modern life demands all such contrivances, and perhaps there is no escape from them; for I myself often resort to them, for instance, when I go up to Hiei in Kyoto. Nevertheless my feelings are revolted. The sight of the track lighted up at night by electricity reflects the modern spirit of sordid gain and pleasure hunting. (Suzuki, 1959: 335)

The second aspect of Suzuki's interpretation that I call attention to is Suzuki's view of the role of Shinto, a topic that arises especially in connection with comparison to Motoori Norinaga, for whom Shinto comprised the very essence of Japan's unique and superior culture. According to Suzuki, "There is in every one of us a desire to return to a simpler form of living, which includes simpler ways of expressing feelings and also of acquiring knowledge. The so-called "way of the gods" points to it" (Suzuki, 1959: 374). In this regard, Suzuki uses the phrase *kaminagara* (or *kamunagara*) *no michi* 神ながらの道 ("the road one takes while with the gods," or "the kami-like way") as the way to go back to, retain, or revive "the way in which the gods are supposed to have lived before the arrival of humankind," which was a way of "freedom, naturalness, and spontaneity" (Suzuki, 1959: 374–375). Elsewhere, Suzuki cites the words of an unidentified tea master claiming that the spirit of *sabi* originated from Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神 (Suzuki, 1959: 287). It is clear that for Suzuki, even though Shinto embodied this state of freedom, naturalness and spontaneity, it is through Zen that this spirit of *sabi* may be retrieved. Shintoism, according to Suzuki, "did not assert itself as doctrinally independent of either Confucianism or Buddhism," and "has no philosophy of its own to stand on." While Motoori Norinaga and his disciples "helped a great deal to usher in the new Meiji regime, ...their patriotic conservatism...was instigated more by political than by philosophical motives, ...and it is highly problematic whether their religio-nationalistic dialectic had much of the universal element" (Suzuki, 1959: 57).

Finally, as a corollary of the above two positions, Suzuki is forever warning us against the pernicious evil of Western materialism and its technological society, responsible for turning humans against the natural world and inventing the contrivances that symbolize "the modern spirit of sordid gain and pleasure hunting," and "the materialistic utilitarianism of modern life." To this end, Suzuki reminds us, ad nauseam, of the polarities that Western and Eastern (especially Japanese) cultures are reducible to. The West, according to Suzuki, is analytic, rational, and material; the East is intuitive, mystical, and spiritual.

The Western mind is: analytical, discriminative, differential, inductive, individualistic, intellectual, objective, scientific, generalizing, conceptual, schematic, impersonal, legalistic, organizing, power-wielding, self-assertive, disposed to impose its will on others, etc. Against these traits those of the East can be characterized as follows: synthetic, totalizing, integrative, nondiscriminative, deductive, nonsystematic, nondogmatic, intuitive (rather, affective), nondiscursive, subjective, spiritually individualistic and socially groupminded, etc. (Suzuki, 1963: 5)

For Suzuki, the Zen realization of *mushin* 無心 (no-mind) or *munen* 無念 (no-thought) represents the means to resolve the dilemma of existence as a kind of Gordian knot that, once severed, will reorient us toward our lapsed inheritance as enlightened beings and allows us to live in “the state of innocence enjoyed by the first inhabitants of the Garden of Eden” (Suzuki, 1959: 111n). When applied to Zen, this belief allows Suzuki to claim of a legendary Chinese Zen man, “Fu Daishi’s spade was once in Adam’s hands when he was still in the garden of Eden” (Suzuki, 1959: 202). The spade, in turn, is likened to “the sword of no-abode” wielded by the great samurai Zen swordsmen of Japan. The upshot is that the state of innocence enjoyed by inhabitants of the garden of Eden has been retained by wielders of the Zen spirit in Japan. While reference to the garden of Eden resonates well with a Western, English reading audience for whom it was intended, it is also useful to understand it as an analogue to the Japanese context. In the sacred history of Japan, the garden of Eden suggests the world of Amaterasu and the age of the gods, which for Shinto revivalists symbolized the sacred preserve of Japanese culture that distinguishes it morally and spiritually from the rest of the world, long severed from their original inheritance that Japan retained.

### 3 Motoori Norinaga’s *Kokugaku* Theology

According to a leading authority on Japanese thought, Koyasu Nobukuni, Motoori Norinaga has had a greater cultural and philosophical impact on Japan than any other individual, with the possible exception of Shinran 親鸞 (Bentley, 1998: 220). In spite of this influence, little attention has been given to the study of Norinaga in Western academic circles. For many years, none of Norinaga’s writings were available in translation, except for some tantalizing fragments in the *Sources of Japanese Tradition* series (Tsunoda, 1958: 15–35).<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, the situation has started to change, if only slightly, in recent years, and studies and translations of some of Norinaga’s important work has begun to appear (e.g., Brownlee; Harootunian; Nishimura; and Wehmeyer). I begin with a brief sketch of the *Kokugaku* movement.

Following the pioneering work of Edo period intellectual historian Maruyama Masao (Maruyama, 1974), Norinaga’s Neo-Shinto movement may be viewed as a reaction to the official adoption of Neo-Confucianism (*Sōgaku* 宋学; literally “Song Learning”) in the early Edo period. Norinaga’s Shinto theology may be viewed as both a reaction to and an adaptation of themes that characterized Japanese Neo-Confucianism. In its early phase, *Sōgaku* was an attempt to absorb the general principles of Neo-Confucianism based on Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 thought, which assumed the role of state sanctioned orthodoxy in the Yuan and Ming dynasties. The impact in Japan was such that Neo-Confucianism represented a thorough reassessment of Japanese society, culture, education, morality and the economy based on current Chinese principles.

- Rationalism: belief in reason of principle (*ri*, C. *li* 理) as the underlying objective basis for the laws of nature and human conduct.
- Positivist approach to learning: “the investigation of things” (*kakubutsu*, C. *gewu* 格物), to discover the constant laws of nature and human society.
- Humanistic emphasis: the five cardinal relationships (father-son, ruler-subject, husband-wife, older-younger brother, friend-friend).
- Historicism: model of humane government derived from the study of history and its moral precedents/lessons; history as source for knowing moral implications of past (and by implication, present) events.
- Ethnocentrism: legitimacy of Chinese civilization as opposed to the illegitimacy of foreign civilizations; cultural superiority and seclusion against outside influences.
- Agrarian-based economy: moral authority of communal values sanctioned by the state esteemed over profit motive and utilitarian values espoused by commerce.

The early *Sōgaku* movement in Japan, as reflected in such thinkers as Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657), was committed to establishing Neo-Confucian principles as state ideology and to free it from the strictures of Buddhist clerical dominance. In the wake of its success, the *Sōgaku* movement did not remain static but began to evolve in ways that accentuated Japanese adaptations of Neo-Confucian principles. This process of domestication is reflected in the thought of Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622–1685), who was driven to a reassessment of Neo-Confucian teaching by issues arising from the Japanese context. The main issue was that of the samurai in Japan (specifically, what to do with their increasing idleness during a time of peace), a ruling class quite different in character than the literati of Confucian China. The attempt to adapt Neo-Confucian teachings to specifically Japanese situations led Yamaga Sokō to native sources and teachings: (a) the study and interpretation of Japanese history (a return to classical sources of Japan rather than China); (b) a codification of Japanese feudal ethics (based on samurai rather than literati values); and (c) a reexamination of Shinto (as a valid native tradition, not a form of Buddhism). In addition, Yamaga Sokō was driven to move beyond Neo-Confucian models. The essence of Confucianism was no longer sought in the interpretations of Neo-Confucians, but in the teachings of Confucius himself. The Confucian heroes were not later scholars like the Neo-Confucians, but the sages of antiquity (Confucius and the sage-kings of China).

Through his discovery of native sources as legitimate bases for the interpretation of Confucianism, Yamaga Sokō was led to contest some hitherto prominent *Sōgaku* assumptions. Having “ignored what is near at hand in our search for the distant,” he asserted Japan’s superiority over China, as a country with the true imperial line of succession from Amaterasu, and concluded that “Japan...merits the name of Middle Kingdom far more than does China” (Tsunoda, 1958: 395–397).

Yamaga Sokō’s reexamination of Shinto paved the way for the Shinto revival during the Tokugawa period. Not only did it validate Japan’s ancient heritage, it did so in a way that marked the achievements of Japan’s ancient sage-kings as heroic.

In the Sōgaku of Hayashi Razan, the sage-kings of antiquity were rather passive in nature: the virtue they possessed was inherent in their heavenly endowment. They were, somewhat inexplicably, recipients of Heaven's virtue, and on the basis of this went on to major accomplishment. Heaven is the major player, as it were, while the sage-kings function as instruments of Heaven's design. For Yamaga Sokō, on the other hand, China's sage-kings emerge in an active role, full initiators of what would become known as Confucian civilization. In Yamaga Sokō's interpretation, the Chinese sage-kings actually create Chinese civilization on the basis of the Confucian virtues that they initiate. Without their efforts, civilization would not exist (following Maruyama, 1974). In effect, Yamaga Sokō's proposals shifted the focus of Confucian studies in Japan from Neo-Confucian interpreters like Zhu Xi, to ancient sage-kings who were believed to be the actual creators of true (i.e., Confucian) culture and civilization.

While Yamaga Sokō believed Japan's Shinto was implicitly superior to the foreign traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism, he conceded that records concerning Shinto were fragmentary and incomplete, and was forced to retreat instead to the sources of Chinese antiquity, "going directly to the writings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, and taking them as my model,..." (Tsunoda, 1958: 398–399). Yamaga Sokō's admission of defeat regarding native sources became the rallying point of the Shinto revival. From the outset, the Kokugaku movement was rooted in a philological method, an attempt to clarify native sources as repositories of the ancient tradition that Yamaga Sokō despaired over. The Kokugaku movement traces its origins to the reclusive Buddhist monk Keichū 契沖 (1640–1701), who pioneered the philological study of Japanese classics, devoting himself to the interpretive study of the classical language and of the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), the oldest extant collection of Japanese poetry. Keichū's efforts were followed by his disciple, Kada no Azumamaro 荷田春満 (1669–1736), who focused on the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (Chronicles of Japan), in addition to the *Man'yōshū*. Kada no Azumamaro was followed by his student and Motoori Norinaga's teacher, Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769). In addition to his study of the *Man'yōshū*, a work for which he is still famous, Mabuchi also devoted himself to the study of such classics as *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 (Tale of Ise) and *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (Tale of Genji). Mabuchi is also noteworthy for his efforts to embody the past through the writing of *waka* 和歌 poetry. His best-known work, *Kokui Kō* 国意考 (Ideas on the Meaning of the Realm; Harootunian, *Readings*: 129–148), employs poetry to oppose the imported teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism, and advocates ideas based on Shinto and native literature (Miner et al. 1985: 178).

While motivated by rationalism and positivism, one must not forget the ideological assumptions that drove Kokugaku scholarship: the clarification and interpretation of ancient sources as a function of the quest to recover Japan's superior ancient tradition. Others have noted the juxtaposition of the objective and rationalistic principles of aesthetic criticism and the ethnocentric ideology reflected in spiritual studies of Shinto as religious faith, and how this juxtaposition defined

the character of Kokugaku (Uchino, 1983). Motoori Norinaga's consolidation of the Kokugaku movement continued to reflect this juxtaposition between philology and theology. And while a distinction is often drawn between Norinaga's (theologically determined) positivist historiography and philology, in the end no such divergence is possible since Norinaga's theology represents the culmination of his annotation and translation activities (Isomae, 2000: 18).

Absorbing the message of his Kokugaku forebears, Motoori Norinaga's Nativism can be seen as a direct response to the challenge proposed by Yamaga Sokō. According to Norinaga, Japan's own ancient culture and sage-kings of antiquity (i.e., emperors), rather than China's, are the progenitors of true culture and civilization. In the process, Norinaga emphasized Japan's Shinto heritage as recorded in ancient chronicles and literature as evidence of the words and deeds of the *kami* 神 and emperors, Japan's original Shinto heritage as a harmonious civilization predating the development of Confucian moral virtues, and Japan's Shinto aesthetic as a reflection of Japan's unique, spontaneous character. This line of thinking is not new, but was anticipated in Daoist critiques of Confucian morality recorded in the *Daode jing* 道德經 (Classic of the Way and Its Virtue): "When the great Dao declines, virtues of humaneness and righteousness arise" (*Daode jing* 18). Norinaga's critique of Edo 江戸 Japan's imported Confucian teaching follows Daoist inspirations, focusing on the debilitating effects of: (1) rationalism (as opposed to aestheticism), (2) moralism (as opposed to spontaneous virtue), and (3) artificialism (as opposed to naturalism). Each of these themes is prominent in Suzuki's interpretation of Zen, as reviewed above. Below I argue that Suzuki, in effect, appropriated Norinaga's strategy and reapplied it to modern, post-Meiji Japanese culture, substituting Zen for Shinto as Japan's true spiritual heritage and Western rationalism and moralism for Edo period Confucianism as the object of criticism. Prior to this, I delve into Norinaga's thought, with a view toward explaining more thoroughly his position on each of these three themes.

According to Isomae Jun'ichi 磯前順一, Norinaga's writings can be classified according to three genres: annotated translations, epitomized by the *Kojikiden* 古事記伝; Shinto theological writings like *Tamakushige* 玉くしげ (Precious Comb-Box) or *Naobi no Mitama* 玉くしげ (The Spirit of Rectification); and his compiled text, *Kamiyo no masagoto* 神代正語 (Correct Phrases from the Age of the Gods) (Isomae, 2000: 18). My analysis here is drawn largely from Norinaga's Shinto theological writings: *Naobi no Mitama*, *Tamakushige*, and also *Uiyamabumi* うい山ふみ (First Steps Into the Mountains) and *Kuzubana* くずばな (葛花) (Arrowroot). I also refer to Norinaga's *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi* 源氏物語玉の小櫛 (Little Jeweled Comb of the Tale of Genji) and *Isonokami Sasamegoto* (a.k.a. *Sekijō shishukugen*) 石上私淑言 (Murmurings of Things Long Past) for their explication of Norinaga's central aesthetic principle, *mono no aware* 物の哀 (the pathos of things; "the deep feelings inherent in, or felt from, the world and experience of it" [Miner et al. 1985: 290]). I begin with a brief characterization of some of these works.

Perhaps none of Norinaga's works is as important as *Naobi no Mitama*, which represents the culmination of Norinaga's life long interest in the *Kojiki*.<sup>2</sup> Prior to



Norinaga, the *Nihon Shoki* was much preferred and far better known, partly for its more comprehensive treatment and partly for its more highly esteemed *kambun* 漢文 (Classical Chinese) style. With Kamo no Mabuchi's encouragement (Nishimura, 1987: 450), Norinaga embarked on a close philological reading and interpretation of the *Kojiki*, which was written in the *man'yōgana* 万葉仮名 (*Man'yōshu*) style.<sup>3</sup> As with his Kokugaku predecessors, Norinaga sought to recapture Japan's ancient tradition through a reconstruction of the Japanese language prior to contact (i.e., contamination) from China. Norinaga believed that the *Kojiki* was historically authentic, and all records in it valid (Nishimura, 1991: 21). Moreover, Norinaga contended because of the authentic Japanese language encoded in the *Kojiki*, meaning (*kokoro* 心), event (*koto* 事) and word (*kotoba* 語) remained harmoniously intact and in accord with one another, unlike the *Nihon Shoki*, where events were recorded in the alien language of classical Chinese with the accompanying estrangement of meaning (Wehmeyer, 1997: 7).<sup>4</sup> From a contemporary perspective, it is completely disingenuous to suppose that any language, foreign or otherwise, affords direct and unmediated access to reality. Reading "word" (*koto* 言) as "fact" (*koto* 事) was a powerful philological tool for Norinaga, who believed that facts could be gleaned from accurate readings (Wehmeyer, 1997: 9; citing Ōno, "Kaidai": 26–27), and this connection between "word" and "fact" was crucial to Norinaga and Kokugaku scholars. It provided the mechanism for conceptualizing Japan's ancient Way by clarifying the events described in ancient texts. Without this mechanism and the legitimizing function it conferred, the content of Japan's ancient way threatened to dissolve into Yamaga Sokō's incomplete picture of disjointed fragments.

What emerged from Norinaga's "scholarship" was a theological construct of the age of the gods (*kamiyō* 神代), the creation of the world and especially of Japan, and a description of the activities of the *kami* (or "way of the gods," *kami no michi* 神の道 or *kamunagara* 神ながら). This construct is well-known to the point of needing no further narration here, not owing to an emphasis in the *Kojiki* or *Nihon Shoki* texts themselves, but because of the authoritative interpretation provided by Norinaga in *Naobi no Mitama*. Nishimura Sey aptly summarizes the impact of Norinaga's interpretation.

With the surge of nationalism after the Meiji Restoration, *Naobi no Mitama* quickly rose in importance. In the 1889 Constitution the sovereignty of the emperor was based upon his succession in an unbroken line, thus implying his descent from the Sun Goddess as narrated in *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. In this way the historical veracity of the myths contained in the ancient works was confirmed by constitutional law; as a result, texts such as *Naobi no Mitama* that provided interpretation and elucidation of those difficult works came to be highly valued. In the twentieth century up to 1945, every history course in school started with an account of the Age of the Gods as recorded in the *Kojiki*, stating that the remote ancestor of the reigning emperor was the Sun Goddess. Although Jōmon 縄文 and Yayoi 弥生 sites were being excavated throughout the century and the scientific discoveries ran counter to the myths, the new information remained within a specialized circle of archaeologists. (Nishimura, 1991: 25)



In this atmosphere *Naobi no Mitama* was read out of context and “treated as an independent and authoritative summation of the principles underlying the national essence of Japan” (Nishimura, 1991: 25). The theology of *Naobi no Mitama*, in other words, rose to become not simply the authoritative interpretation of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, but the theology of modern Japan. The theological presuppositions of *Naobi no Mitama* are implicit in the title of the work itself, which may be rendered as “A Treatise on the Way of the Gods brought forth by the Spirit of the Gods of Naobi.” As Nishimura explains, Norinaga believed that the existence of his treatise was the result of the grace of the gods of Naobi 直毘, who, according to the *Kojiki*, came to heal and do good following the havoc of the evil gods of Magatsubi 禍津日, created from the filth of the Land of Yomi 黄泉 (Hell) after Izanagi 伊邪那岐 returned to earth and cleansed himself (Nishimura, 1991: 22). The key theological assumption in *Naobi no Mitama* may be outlined as follows (Nishimura, 1991: 27–41; Wehmeyer, 1997: 213–247; Harootunian, *Readings*:111–127):

- Japan is where the Amaterasu, the ancestor of all the gods, appeared.
- Amaterasu decreed Japan as the land her descendants would reign over forever.
- The emperor is the descendant of Amaterasu, acting and governing not according to his own will, but in accordance with the precedents of the age of the gods.
- The Way of the Sages promulgated in China (and adopted in Japan) is nothing but an artificial human construct. The true principles of heaven and earth are the design of the gods, thoroughly divine and mysterious; they cannot be understood through human speculation (as in China). The True Way (in Japan) was unspoken, *no word or concept existed for it* (emphasis mine).
- The True (i.e., Japanese) Way (*kamunagara*) is neither man-made (i.e., Confucian) or something that arises spontaneously in nature (i.e., Daoist). The Way came about by the awesome spirit of the god Takami Musubi 高御産巢日神; it was begun by the ancestral gods Izanagi and Izanami; it was inherited and maintained by Amaterasu, who transmitted it to the emperors.
- The phrase *kamunagara* means “to follow the Way of the Gods,” or “to possess in oneself the Way of the Gods” (citing *Nihon Shoki*). “This is precisely the Way of Japan in the broad sense.”
- Thanks to the spirit of Takami Musubi, people are born with innate knowledge and instinctively know how they should act.
- The true meaning of the Way can be known by studying the *Kojiki* and other ancient texts.

Norinaga’s proposals were not without controversy, and after Norinaga’s death, *Naobi no Mitama* was attacked and defended intermittently over the next one-hundred fifty years. Confucians, in particular, were understandably disturbed over Norinaga’s campaign against their teaching. When Ichikawa Tazumaro 市川匡麻呂, a Confucian of the Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 school, read a draft copy, he was prompted to publish an essay, *Maga no Hiren* 未賀能比連, in defense of Confucianism, and harshly criticized Norinaga’s affirmation of Japan’s “lawless,

disorderly ancient period” (Nishimura, 1991: 23–24). In response, Norinaga wrote *Kuzubana*, in an attempt to “awaken” Tazumaro “from the intoxication of Confucianism” with *kuzu*, the arrowroot herb (Ibid.: 24). In it, Norinaga reiterates his contention that Confucianism is but a misguided attempt to reduce the divine, mysterious activities of the gods to the limitations of human reasoning. “Human intelligence is limited and puny while the acts of the gods are illimitable and wondrous” (Tsunoda, 1958: 22). Although Norinaga clearly distinguishes his ancient Way from Daoism, his own critique echoes Daoist critiques of Confucianism.<sup>5</sup>

It is worth noting that prior to the rise of Kokugaku, Japanese Confucians were also uncomfortable with some Chinese aspects of Confucianism (Brownlee, 1997: 38). The key point of distinction between Daoism and Shintō for Norinaga is that Daoism understands creation as arising spontaneously in nature. The true ancient Way came about through the spirit of Takami Musubi, was begun by the ancestral gods Izanagi and Izanami, and inherited and maintained by Amaterasu. It was the product of a mysterious and divine creative spirit and did not arise spontaneously.<sup>6</sup>

The people of antiquity never attempted to reason out the acts of the gods with their own intelligence, but the people of a later age, influenced by the Chinese,

have become addicts of rationalism. Such people appear wise, but in reality are quite foolish in their suspicion and skepticism about the strange happenings of the Divine Age which are different from the happenings of the human age. (*Kuzubana*)

As mentioned above, Norinaga’s teacher Mabuchi was also highly critical of Chinese learning, and Norinaga closely followed Mabuchi in this respect.

Chinese learning was originally created according to human design. Hence it is artificial and easily intelligible. The Way of the Ancients of our illustrious Imperial Land, however, is in harmony with heaven and earth; it is harmonious and plain. (*Kokui Kō*, Harootunian: 139)

With Mabuchi, Norinaga seeks Japan’s redemption through a “spirit of rectification” (*naobi no mitama* 直毘靈), a return to the ancient Way, before the contamination of sentiments perpetrated by Chinese learning (*karagokoro* 唐心) infiltrated Japan. According to Mabuchi, a golden age prevailed in an ancient Japan “ruled in conformity with the heart of heaven and earth,” without avail to trivial theories. But after the theories of the *Ru* (Jpn. *Ju* 儒, i.e., Confucians) penetrated Japan, “everything was splendid in outer appearance but perversity of the heart gained the upper hand,” and people became crafty and cunning. (*Kokui Kō*, Harootunian: 131–132). But as John Brownlee points out, the Kokugaku presumption of the existence of an independent Japanese civilization prior to the advent of Chinese writing is based on a historical fallacy. In actuality, Japanese civilization during prehistoric periods developed under continuous contact with Chinese civilization, often mediated through Korea (Brownlee, 1997: 63; on this point, see also Kuroda, 1999).

Norinaga wrote two other works devoted to introducing his teachings: *Tamakushige* and *Uiyamabumi*. *Tamakushige* (The Jeweled Comb-Box) was

written in response to a general request by Tokugawa Harusada 徳川治貞, Daimyō of Kii 紀伊, for advice on problems plaguing his domain. It was the first Kokugaku work to base government on the Ancient Way of Japan, rather than Chinese classics (Brownlee, 1988: 35). As such, it replaces Chinese ideas about government based on Chinese rationality—a conceptual framework generated from human conceit regarding the power of intellect—with government derived from the true ancient way of Japan. The point for Norinaga is not only that human intellect is limited, but it is fundamentally uncreative; it cannot reach the great principles of life and the universe, mysteries that remain forever unfathomable (Ibid.: 38–39). True creativity comes not from the activity of the human intellect but derives from the generative spirit (*musubi* 産霊) of the gods.<sup>7</sup>

The basis of Heaven and Earth, the gods, and everything without exception derives from the spirit, known as generative, of the two deities Takami-musubi and Kami-musubi. As creatures that come into being, generation after generation of humans are born, and countless things and events arise, but there is none that is not derived from this spirit. Accordingly, in the beginning of the Age of the Gods when the two great deities Izanami and Izanagi gave life to our land, to the various deities, and to all things, the basis was the generative spirit of Takami-musubi and Kami-musubi. Since the generative spirit is the mysterious and profound work of the gods, human wisdom cannot reason it out, despite the best efforts to define it according to various principles. (*Tamakushige*, Brownlee, 1988: 45–46)<sup>8</sup>

Of all countries in the world, Japan is especially blessed according to Norinaga. It is there that the “true tradition of the Age of the Gods has been fully transmitted” (*Tamakushige*, Brownlee, 1988: 47). It is there that Amaterasu was born, and where rice of unsurpassed excellence grows (Ibid.: 48). No other country can match Japan’s fertility, wealth, bravery, and vigor (Ibid.: 50). And while customs in other countries change as a result of government insurrections and transformations brought about by human ideas and actions, “...in our Imperial Land, we have honest, upright, and serious customs and rites, and *everything is preserved in accordance with the ancient past.... Our serious and grave customs continue even to the present day* (Ibid.: 50, emphasis mine).

*Tamakushige* begins with a verse by Norinaga from which the title is taken.<sup>9</sup> *Uiyamabumi* (First Steps Into the Mountains) closes with a similarly intentioned verse.<sup>10</sup> *Uiyamabumi* was written as a guide for students, after the manner of Mabuchi’s guidebook, *Niimanabi* 迹飛麻那微 (Primary Learning) (Nishimura, 1987: 452). As an active *waka* poet, the aesthetical dimension of reality assumed special significance for Norinaga. While agreeing that artistic sensibility lie at the core of what it meant to be truly human and that to compose poetry was to partake in the ancient way itself, Norinaga’s views on what constituted this sensibility differed from those of his teacher, Mabuchi. The *Man’yōshū* scholar Mabuchi preferred compositions after the style of the *Man’yōshū* and reprimanded Norinaga for his preference for later poetic forms styled after the Heian era *waka* collection, the *Kokinshū* 古今集 (Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems). The difference in preference was not inconsequential, but exposed deep divisions between the aesthetic understanding of the two men. Mabuchi felt the poetry that truly embodied

the ancient way was contained in the *Man'yōshū*, which he believed represented poetry's highest expression, "the feelings of the ancient past". He believed this poetry to be "lofty" (*takaki* 高き) and "upright" (*naoki* 直き), reflective of the ancient spirit of "manliness" (*masurao buri* 丈夫振). Mabuchi felt that later compositions like the *Kokinshū* represented deterioration into showy artifice, reflecting a degeneration of spirit and a descent into "femininity" (*taoyame buri* 手弱女振). This descent, moreover, was blamed on the effects of introducing Confucianism and Buddhism into Japan, after which the land became absorbed in superficial, effeminate intrigues. This view was the opposite of Norinaga's. Norinaga thought femininity, not masculinity, to be the essence of human nature; manliness was a superficial pose, reflecting a deterioration of the original feminine spirit (Matsumoto, 1970: 73–74).

Even though there were deep divisions regarding the nature of the aesthetic sensibility that lie at the core of the ancient way, there was general agreement among Kokugaku scholars that the ancient way was embodied through poetic utterance, and to facilitate this embodiment it was incumbent upon students of the ancient way to compose poems themselves. While Mabuchi held rigidly to the *Man'yōshū* style as the sacred utterance of the ancient way and saw later developments as a deterioration, Norinaga held a more accommodating view: "the poetry of later years has precisely the same nature as remote antiquity" (*Uiyamabumi*, Nishimura, 1987: 482). While Norinaga prefers later style *waka* himself, he clearly recognizes the value of the *Man'yōshū*, which he exhorts students to read carefully. Once the style of ancient times has been learned, students may proceed to compose poems on their own: "All human beings should compose poetry, and for scholars this is absolutely essential" (*Uiyamabumi*, Ibid.: 475).

In all things, how deeply you feel depends on whether it is someone else's experience or your own. No matter how deep your interest, another person's experience will never move your heart so deeply as your own. This applies also to poetry. No matter how deeply you may study poetry, there is a limit to your understanding if you are dealing with verses written by someone else. But when it comes to composing your own, you pay special attention since it is yours, and come to learn its profound meaning.... Poetry is a way of expressing your heart.... The words must be elegant and the syllables beautifully controlled. This has been so since the beginning of the Age of the Gods. (*Uiyamabumi*, Ibid.: 477–478)

For Norinaga, the point is not elevating a particular style. Among *Man'yōshū* poems, some are admirable and worthy of emulation, others are deficient—"Since this is already evident in the poetry of the *Man'yōshū*, how can we denounce the attitude of later years and of the present day, when people strive to compose well?" (*Uiyamabumi*, Ibid.: 479). The point is that students should learn how to distinguish between good and bad poetry and select the former as their model. The issue is not the time period when a particular verse was composed, but the quality of style. What constitutes good poetry? Norinaga's definition is derived from a line in the preface to the *Kokinshū*: "That which moves people and stirs the hearts of the Gods is found in good poetry" (*Uiyamabumi*, Ibid.: 478). The example given is from a famous episode from the age of the gods, when Ame no Koyane no Mikoto 天児屋

根命 recited prayers (recorded in the *Nihon Shoki*) and played music to entice Amaterasu from the Heavenly Rock Cave to which she had retreated following Susano-o's 須佐之男 insults. Style and form are valued only to the extent that they facilitate the capacity "to move people and stir the hearts of the gods." The point is to express one's heart, and in doing so, to partake of the aesthetic sensibility bequeathed to the Japanese people since the age of the gods.

What constitutes this aesthetic sensibility for Norinaga? From the dispute with Mabuchi, we know that Norinaga esteemed the receptive, feminine quality of human nature, which he believed represented the true spirit of the ancient way. According to Isomae Jun'ichi's reading of *Tamakushige*, the ancient way or "way of sincerity" was "supported from within by the aesthetic of *mono no aware*," even though the concept itself does not appear there (Isomae, 2000: 21; Sagara 1978: 155–208). In a manner similar to Isomae, I argue that while the term *mono no aware* does not itself appear in *Naobi no Mitama*, it is implicitly connected to the spirit (*mitama*) of the gods of Naobi and should not be understood otherwise. In other words, Norinaga's theology (as contained in such works as *Naobi no Mitama* and *Tamakushige*), and his theory of aesthetics (as in such works as *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi* and *Isonokami Sasamegoto*) are intricately linked, and the latter should not be dismissed as reflective of some minor concern on his part (see Nishimura, 1991: 25).

The concept that brings us most closely to the ancient way in *Naobi no Mitama* is *kamunagara*, meaning "to follow the Way of the Gods," or "to possess in oneself in the Way of the Gods." As Norinaga explains:

To follow the Way of the gods means that the Emperor rules in accordance with the manner in which matters have been conducted since the Age of the Gods. ... Thus when the Emperor governs graciously, the Way of the Gods spontaneously manifests itself and nothing more needs to be done; this is what 'to possess in oneself the Way of the Gods' means. (*Naobi no Mitama*, Nishimura, 1991: 28)

In ancient times, claims Norinaga, there was no need to discuss the Way, because the term "Way" (*michi* 道) did not refer to some abstract set of principles, but merely a path that led to some place, written in *Kojiki* as *umashi michi* 味御路, or "good way" (*Naobi no Mitama*, Ibid.: 28–29). In this Eden-like golden age, "Everything in Heaven and Earth is in complete accordance with the will of the Gods" (Ibid.: 31), and "Thanks to spirit of the God of Mususbi, people are born with innate knowledge and have capacity to perform what they ought to perform in this world" (Ibid.: 37). "When you worship the Gods," Norinaga insists, "you should please them with the things they are fond of," including koto and flute music, and song and dance (Ibid.: 39).

The point of *Naobi no Mitama* and Norinaga's other theological writings is to chart a course back to this original "good way." Infected by Chinese learning, Japanese people have lost the art of *kamunagara*. While the traces of its existence are retrievable through philological investigations to recover the true words of the age of the gods, it can only be embodied through poetic composition. This is why Norinaga claims, as in *Uiyamabumi*, that scholarship is not enough, and that it is

absolutely essential for scholars to compose poetry (Nakamura, 1987: 475). The key to retrieving the lost art of *kamunagara*, the spirit of renovation, for Norinaga is the cultivation of *mono no aware*, an aesthetic sensibility that evokes the way of the gods themselves.

In place of the rationalistic explanations allegedly inspired by China's sage-kings and promulgated by Confucian scholars, Norinaga promoted the sacred mysteries and awe-inspiring feats of Japan's great founding *kami*. Against the moralizing doctrines of the Confucians, Norinaga championed an aesthetic experience allegedly woven into the fabric of Japan's culture, the living legacy of Japan's ancient tradition embodied in the emotional nature of the country and its people. Central to Norinaga's aesthetic experience was the notion of *mono no aware*. Essentially, *mono no aware* suggests a deep emotional capacity that resonates sympathy and harmony with human sentiments, especially regarding the sorrow of human experience. Speaking about good and evil in the *Tale of Genji*, Norinaga writes:

...those who know the meaning of the sorrow of human existence, i.e., those who are in sympathy and in harmony with human sentiments, are regarded as good; and those who are not aware of the poignancy of human existence, i.e., those who are not in sympathy and not in harmony with human sentiments, are regarded as bad. (*Genji Monogatari Tama no ogushi*)

For Norinaga, the aesthetic experience of *mono no aware* allows one to feel as the *kami* themselves do, to share the mysterious and awe-inspiring sensation of the divine. In addition to the deep emotion felt in regard to things and events, Norinaga also accentuates the spontaneous and compelling quality of a *mono no aware* aesthetic. Poetry was, for Norinaga, the most appropriate means to express the spontaneous feelings of one's deepest emotions. Distinguishing between emotion and passion, Norinaga stresses that emotion is more sensitive to things than passion, which aims only at the control or acquisition of things. For Norinaga, emotion represents the aesthetic intrinsic to Japan's ancient way, as opposed to the passion aroused by Chinese rationalism. Emotion, moreover, is expressed through poetry.

...poetry follows the principle of the sorrow of existence and attempts to express without adornment the bad as well as the good. Its aim is not to select and arrange for the heart that which is good or bad.... it [poetry] aims to give expression to an awareness of the poignancy of human life and should not be judged on any other basis. (*Sekijō shishukugen*)

The effect of this emphasis on poetry was momentous. As Maruyama asserts, Norinaga "elevated the sense of *mono no aware*, which was 'the essence of Japanese poetry,' to the level of the essence of Shinto itself" (Maruyama, 1974: 170).

It is important to acknowledge the hypothetical nature of Norinaga's characterization of the ancient way, and its implications. Norinaga's assumption of *mono no aware* as the aesthetic essence of *kamunagara* is based on slim evidence and has little to do with the activities of the gods depicted in ancient records. For Norinaga the prototype of *mono no aware* like sadness is the mortal parting of Izanagi and Izanami in the *Kojiki*, a fate that all inevitably share. If one were to seek the actual

source for Norinaga's aesthetic, one could look to the *jōruri* 浄瑠璃 plays and other elements of popular culture exhibited in the aesthetic consciousness of his day (Isomae, 2000: 22).<sup>11</sup> Hino Tatsuo, based on an examination of the background of Norinaga's theory regarding *mono no aware*, concluded that "the precursor of Norinaga's argument about 'knowing *mono no aware*' can be found in this aspect of the contemporary popular culture to which Norinaga was closely attached," stipulating that "the reception of the classics of *jōruri*, *haikai*, and vernacular works (*zokugebon* 俗解本) as reaffirmations that even adultery is love has its roots...in this...popular culture" (Hino, 1984: 205; cited from Isomae, 2000: 23).

This brings us to another important aspect of Norinaga's promotion of a *mono no aware* aesthetic as a true representation of Japan's ancient way: its implications for morality. Norinaga viewed Chinese moralism, whether Confucian or Buddhist, as a superficial reduction of life's emotional experience to a set of artificial rules imposed by a rationalist mental regime. As such, morality represents the passion to control, the will to power, perpetrated by rationalistic concepts. Norinaga chastised the Chinese for "subject[ing] all things to long, tedious moralistic judgments" (*Sekijō shishukugen*). In fact, Norinaga asserts, "good and evil are not constant—they change according to time and circumstance" (*Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi*). The point is not to circumscribe emotional experience through a superimposed set of criteria which impoverishes life, but to compassionately embrace the natural vicissitudes of human existence. It is not a matter of judging things as good or bad, but about "being or not being in harmony with human sentiment" (*Tama no ogushi*). "Generally speaking," observes Norinaga,

those who know the meaning of the sorrow of human existence, i.e., those who are in sympathy and in harmony with human sentiments, are regarded as good; and those who are not aware of the poignancy of human existence [*mono no aware*]; i.e., those who are not in sympathy and not in harmony with human sentiments, are regarded as bad. (*Sekijō shishukugen*)

It is only poetry, Norinaga insists, that "follows the principle of the sorrow of human existence and attempts to express without adornment the bad as well as the good;" the aim of poetry is "to give expression to an awareness of the poignancy of human life [*mono no aware*]..." (*Isonokami Sasamegoto*). As a result, poetry is seen as most fitting for expressing, naturally and spontaneously, the emotional content of *mono no aware*, in the hope of liberating human emotions from the stifling restraint of moral norms (Hino, 1984: 205).

The notion of Japan's "pure" Shinto heritage, as expounded by Norinaga, emphasizes the special role of Shinto as Japan's true spiritual heritage. This presupposition did not remain the idle fancy of a group of theologically inclined intellectuals—with the advent of Meiji reforms it became the theology of modern Japan. The irony of Japan's modernization, one part rational and scientific, the other part spiritual and theological—encapsulated in such Meiji era slogans as Sakuma Shōzan's 佐久間象山 "eastern morality, western technology" (*tōyō dōtoku* 東洋道德, *seiyō geijutsu* 西洋芸術), where "eastern morality" means, in effect, "Japanese spirit"—is not Japan's irony alone, but remains at the core of many formulations of



modern nation-states. It is no surprise that this irony existed within Norinaga's own thought as well. To combat Confucian intellectual artifice, Norinaga emphasized completely objective analysis of classical texts, relying on the method known as *kōshōgaku* 考證学 (evidential learning), developed by Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 and Ogyū Sorai, as well as Mabuchi (McNally, 2002: 360–361). Norinaga coupled this strict adherence to philological methodology with an equally avid devotion to theological certitude. This coupling of rationalism and spiritualism is a common characteristic of Japan's modern cultural nationalists, a legacy of the foundations provided by Norinaga.

Suzuki Daisetsu also exhibits the pattern exhibited in Norinaga. A similar bifurcation is evident in Suzuki's work, with his more strictly academic studies (mostly in Japanese, *Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū*, but see also Suzuki, 1930), on the one hand, and his advocacy of the superiority of Japan's Zen culture, on the other. This is not to say that Suzuki is in agreement, per se, with Norinaga, the obvious difference between them being Norinaga's assessment of the special role of Shinto. In this regard it would be correct to say that the special role Norinaga claimed for Shinto, Suzuki reserved for Zen.

#### 4 Suzuki on Japan's Unique Spiritual Nature (*Nihonteki Reisei* 日本の靈性)

As suggested above, Norinaga and the Shinto revival established parameters that Suzuki and the Zen revival later followed. These are evident through commonalities between Norinaga and Suzuki's thought, starting with a disdain for rationalism as a mode for understanding and interpreting human experience. While Norinaga's critique was aimed against a Chinese inspired, Neo-Confucian rationalism, the cultural assault for Suzuki came not from China, which had ceased to be a threat to Japan's cultural autonomy, but the West and its species of scientific rationalism. While the threat came from a new direction, the basis for Japan's unique cultural integrity remained the same. Through Zen, Suzuki insisted, one "can escape the tyranny of logic," and "acquire an entirely new (i.e., superior) point of view whereby to look into the mysteries of life and the secrets of nature" (Suzuki, 1964: 58, 59). The emphasis on emotion and experience over passion and logic remained, but the source of this for Suzuki was no longer a deep emotional experience tied exclusively to Japan's "ancient tradition," which Suzuki dismissed as shallow, but was rooted in the Japanese spiritual awakening of the Kamakura 鎌倉 period.

According to Suzuki, "it was not until long after its importation that Buddhism finally became Japanese," by which he means that Buddhism "was transformed into Japanese spirituality" (Suzuki 1972: 67). This spirituality has a unique character, in Suzuki's view. Animated by Japanese spirituality, Buddhism acquires a special universal quality that it is otherwise lacking. Japanese Buddhism is said to have a wholly Asian nature, endowed with the positive characteristics derived from other



Asian cultures, but without the enhancement of Japanese spirituality, Buddhism does not suffice.

... the thought that binds greater Asia into one, that is, the motive force behind it, exists within Japanese Buddhism.... Buddhism as it is probably would not be helpful even were it introduced universally in the world. But the Japanese spirituality that flows along intrinsically within it must be found and promulgated by means of modern thought. Japanese spirituality connotes something which is able to subsist on a world scale. (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 68)

It is not difficult to read in this the belief in Japan's spiritual preeminence, not just over Asia, but when translated into the idiom of modern thought, a species of spirituality for the entire world. No doubt, given Suzuki's legacy, he was committed to this particular calling. My point here is not to question this enterprise or its fallacious assumptions, a task that others have engaged, but to draw attention to the similarity between Suzuki and Norinaga on this point. Admittedly, Norinaga comes across as a strident fundamentalist when compared to Suzuki's liberal appeal, but both believed in the preeminence of a spiritual legacy uniquely preserved in Japan that had a message of enduring value for the rest of the world.

While Suzuki is careful to distance himself and Zen from Norinaga and Shinto, there are consistencies in the use of terminology, even extending to the terms employed for their discussion of the true nature of Japanese spirituality itself. For Suzuki, the central term is *reisei* 靈性, composed of two Sino-Japanese logographs pronounced according to their Chinese inspired *on* reading, *rei* 靈 (spirit) and *sei* 性 (nature). A central term for Norinaga is *mitama*, also composed of two Sino-Japanese logographs, but naturally pronounced in Japanese style *kun* reading as *mi* 御 (honorific) *tama* 靈 (spirit), as in the title of Norinaga's influential work, reviewed above, *Naobi no mitama* 直毘靈 (The Spirit of Rectification). The point obscured by the different *on* and *kun* readings, but obvious in print, is that Suzuki's *rei* is the same character as Norinaga's *tama*. While Suzuki takes great pains to distinguish his discussion of Japan's *reisei* from identification with Shinto, it is also clear that Suzuki's understanding of spirituality derives from conceptual distinctions not unlike Norinaga's. To understand Japanese spirituality, according to Suzuki, a distinction must first be drawn between *reisei* and another term, *seishin* 精神, which Suzuki characterizes as "psyche," "mind," or "spirit." While the terms *reisei* and *seishin* are often confused, for Suzuki there is a cardinal distinction between them. *Seishin* refers to the power of the will, and in it we conjure up an opposition between it and material form; when *seishin* is not in rivalry against material form, claims Suzuki, it holds a position of superiority over it. In short, dualistic thought is the defining character of *seishin*, and always accompanies it (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 11–14). With the realization of *reisei*, on the other hand, rivalries cease and the dualistic world becomes conciliatory; mutual interpenetration and self-identity prevail. Herein lies the essential distinction between spirituality and religion for Suzuki. Religion is a conventional framework born of *seishin*, founded in discriminatory consciousness. It is an attempt to habituate religious consciousness through ethical norms, standardized teachings and

routinized practices. *Reisei*, in contrast, is non-discriminatory wisdom, the spring from which true spirituality issues (Ibid.: 14–16).

Suzuki's distinction between *reisei* and *seishin* is reminiscent of Norinaga's distinction between emotion and passion, reviewed above. Norinaga stressed that emotion was more sensitive to things than passion, which aims only at the control or acquisition of things. Emotion for Norinaga represented the aesthetic sensibility, *mono no aware*, intrinsic to Japan's ancient way, as opposed to the passion, the will to power and control, aroused by Chinese rationalism.

Where Suzuki parted company with Norinaga was over the primacy accorded *mono no aware* and its inherent lack (in Suzuki's view) of spiritual depth. According to Suzuki,

Although the sects of Shinto might be regarded as transmitters of Japanese spirituality, Japanese spirituality does not appear there in a pure form. Those traditions labelled Shrine Shinto, or Ancient Shinto, being fixations of the Japanese people's primitive consciousness, did not touch spirituality. (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 18)

Suzuki concurs that Shinto is the essence of Japaneseness, but this essence, in his view, did not produce Japan's unique spirituality until it was refined through the influence of Zen (*zenka* 禅化) (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell: 19). Or, as he states elsewhere, "From the beginning there has been something in Japanese spirituality that could be regarded as "Zen-like," but it was not fully awakened until it encountered Zen (Ibid.: 23). Through this peculiar line of reasoning, which makes sense only in terms of Norinaga's successful vindication of Shinto, Suzuki hopes to convince his readers that Zen, far from being a foreign import, is the essential ingredient in Japan's unique spiritual cultural.

According to Suzuki, the crucible of Japanese spirituality was not bequeathed from its ancient past but forged in the somber realities of Kamakura Japan. The Heian 平安 period, for Suzuki, was likewise mere preparation for the blossoming of Japanese spirituality during the Kamakura period.

Thanks to the existence of this kind of root and stem, the springtime of the Kamakura period unfolded, in which the flowers and plants of a beautiful thought began to blossom forth. Today, seven hundred years after, this has come in substance to be the basis for the Japanese character, thought, religious faith and esthetic taste. With it, I believe in the future there can be constructed something new of world-wide significance. Such is the mission of today's Japan. (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 46)

According to Suzuki, true Japanese spirituality was inspired by the specter of Mongol invasions that gripped the Kamakura era, which "had a remarkable influence upon the growth of Japanese introspective life." Suzuki argues that during *Manyō* times (i.e., Norinaga's ancient period of the true way of the gods), "the Japanese *seishin* (note the usage of this term) was still primitive, manifesting a merely child-like simplicity and artlessness." And Heian times did not provide an opportunity "to discover the spirituality lying hidden at the end of deep self-introspection." But because of the grave political situation during the Kamakura period, "the psyche or spirituality of the Japanese... experienced a crisis at its roots." Out of this crisis was born the true spirituality of Japan, manifested in

the development of the Zen and Pure Land traditions (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 47ff.).<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note, in passing, that Suzuki equated the crises that Japan faced in the Kamakura period, the specter of the Mongol invasion, with the crises facing Japan with the fall of Allied bombs in WW II. Suzuki believed that the Japanese spirit, forged under the threat of invasion during the Kamakura period, had real lessons for contemporary Japan.

A key area of disagreement between Suzuki and Norinaga was over the value of the *Man'yōshū* and the spiritual character of Japan's ancient heritage. Suzuki does not doubt the existence of primitive Shinto, unlike modern scholars (Kuroda, 1999), but questions its association with a true religious consciousness. He characterizes the *Man'yōshū* poems as simple and child-like, rather naive in nature, reflecting inherent emotion that has not yet been subject to any great ordeal—the life of a soul that has not yet experienced rebirth (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 28). The great religious questions that inspire true spirituality—the mysterious nature of death, eternal life, transcendent existence, the attempt to grasp the unknown, etc.—are nowhere asked. “In short,” proclaims Suzuki,

religion had not yet entered into their spiritual world, and the opportunity for contemplative introspection had not yet penetrated what Shinto calls the “pure and clear” heart of the Japanese people. The naturalization of foreign thought into the climate of Japan was still in the future. Japanese spirituality had not yet awakened. (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 36)

This is a far cry from the way Norinaga and his fellow Kokugaku scholars read works like the *Man'yōshū* as windows into the ways of the gods (*kamunagara*). Likewise, Suzuki saw little merit in works like the *Genji monogatari*, which for Norinaga epitomized the aesthetic experience of *mono no aware* and allowed one to feel as the *kami* themselves do. To read such works as representative of the Japanese spirit is a gross error, in Suzuki's estimation. They simply record the amorous pursuits, sensual pleasures, and the poetic and aesthetic aspirations of aristocratic life, and seriously lack a truly spiritual dimension.

All the melancholy, transience, *mono no aware*, and so on that we find in the numerous *monogatari* and poetry collections of the Heian period are without depth. The cry that comes from the ground of the human soul is nowhere heard. (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 39)

Elsewhere, Suzuki contends:

The people of the Heian age were by nature too primitive and sensual. They entered in some measure the world of emotion but could not touch spirituality. *Mono no aware* still lingers in the realm of emotion, wherein spirituality's stirrings are not discernible. They had yet to penetrate to the basic ground of self. ... It is here that religious consciousness first begins to breathe. ... As long as he leads an artless and primitive existence man does not leave his infancy. The word *kannagara*, the Way of the Gods, must once be reflected upon. Once life has transited this reflection and illness, denial and experience, it cannot be included in the category of a primitive or infant nature. Here *mono no aware* is experienced more thoroughly than it was by the Heian poets. The fundamental reality of things themselves is touched. (Suzuki, 1944; Waddell, 1972: 75–76)

If Norinaga's emotional aesthetic of *mono no aware* is insufficient as a representation of Japan's unique spirituality, what does Suzuki recommend in its stead? Moreover, how does Suzuki's Zen aesthetic differ from Norinaga's aesthetic of *mono no aware*? The capacity for true spirituality, according to Suzuki, is cultivated through *zazen* 坐禅, the Zen discipline for attaining *satori* 悟り, or awakening. As Suzuki maintains, "*Satori* finds a meaning hitherto hidden in our daily concrete particular experiences, such as eating, drinking, or business of all kinds." It is a meaning revealed "in being itself, becoming itself, in living itself." It is the mind abiding in thusness, which Suzuki terms as an "isness...which is not isness—and thus free from intellectual complexities and moralistic attachments...." (Suzuki, 1959: 16–17).

Just as Zen awakening was promoted as the core, ground breaking experience that opened a new world of spontaneity and mystery, infusing mundane reality with an inherent sacredness, so was Zen tied explicitly to various aspects of Japan's traditional culture, from tea ceremony, flower arrangement, pottery, painting, and poetry, to archery, swordsmanship, and the martial arts.<sup>13</sup> As a result, Zen offered a way to experience Japan's sacred inheritance, not only through its traditional disciplines of *zazen* and *kōan* 公案 investigation, but also through the aesthetic appreciation cultivated through cultural pursuits common to ordinary people in everyday life, the kinds of folk activities promoted by Yanagita Kunio as emblematic of Japan's enduring cultural values. As Suzuki states: "... the artistic genius of the Japanese people has been inspired by the Zen way of looking at individual things as perfect in themselves and at the same time as embodying the nature of totality which belongs to the One" (Suzuki, 1959: 27). Suzuki's Zen aestheticism is distinguished by the terms *wabi* and *sabi*, "an innate longing for primitive simplicity," and "rustic unpretentiousness and archaic imperfection, apparent simplicity or effortlessness in execution, and richness in historical associations" (Suzuki, 1959: 23, 24), and represents the ultimate expression of Japanese-ness,

In this way, Zen escaped its foreign origins to become the very essence of Japanese culture. It did so by borrowing tactics from Norinaga's strategy book—a critique of rationalism, promotion of an emotional aesthetic as the underlying essence of Japanese-ness, an amoral or trans-moral understanding of human existence, an appreciation of primitiveness and the sacredness of nature, etc.—and applying them to current circumstances. D.T. Suzuki was not the only member of the Japanese literati to recommend Zen in this manner. Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 and Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎, philosophers of the Kyoto school, also promoted Zen as an unequivocally unique feature of Japanese culture.<sup>14</sup>

Secular members of the cultural establishment played leading roles in establishing Zen as a principle component of Japan's cultural autonomy in modern Japan. Through the efforts of people like Suzuki, Watsuji, and Nishida, Zen was elevated to a new status as a unique cultural treasure. Suzuki exported Japan's Zen heritage as a gem of world culture emanating from Japan's rich spiritual soil. The important thing for Suzuki was its utter uniqueness—it was not of the same category of any of the rest of the world's (especially Western) religions or philosophies.

It transcended the inadequacies of logical thinking upon which the Western scientific tradition was based. It offered a new opportunity for the world to understand the errors of its ways by accepting a “made in Japan” solution to the ills of modernity.

## 5 Zen and Japanese Culture: Concluding Reflections

Even granting Suzuki’s assumptions about the nature of Zen spirituality, I question Suzuki’s attribution of this spirituality to Kamakura Japan. Kamakura Zen, in reality, had more to do with the adoption of Chan institutions newly introduced from the Chinese continent than with the supposed awakening to a true Zen spirituality (Foulk, 1987 and 1993). The Kamakura Zen institution was immersed in the syncretic style practices—scripture recitation and study, worship services, Buddha invocation ceremonies, memorial for the deceased, etc.—that typified mainland Chan. Above all, Kamakura Zen institutions prided themselves on their rigor and moral strictness. Purity was for them a moral state resulting from following the “pure rules” (*shingi* 清規) for practitioners at Zen monasteries, a recipe for saving Japan from the lax discipline of contemporary monastic practice, not an epistemological category denoting the immediacy of one’s personal psychological experience, as in “pure Zen” (*junsui zen* 純粹禪). Although Suzuki invokes the Kamakura period for the authority of his position, the Zen spirituality he advocates is more characteristic of a later period, to Tokugawa era Rinzai masters like Bankei 盤珪 (1622–1693) and Hakuin 白隠 (1685–1768) and the era that produced the Zen haiku poet Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 (1644–1694). Anyone familiar with Suzuki’s writings knows of his fondness for these figures and his association of the spirit of true Zen to them. Of Kamakura Zen figures and their teachings, Suzuki is decidedly less forthcoming, and it would seem, less enamored. Bankei and Hakuin, moreover, framed their interpretation of Zen in the same climate as Norinaga’s Kokugaku teaching. While this is a subject that awaits future research, it is easy to imagine connections between Kokugaku and Zen teaching of this period.

The focus of this paper, however, is not about Suzuki the historian. All will concede that when it comes to Zen history, Suzuki is hardly a trustworthy guide. This study focuses on the influence that Motoori Norinaga over Suzuki’s interpretation of Zen. Suzuki’s indebtedness to Norinaga and the Kokugaku movement is indisputable. Even where Suzuki disagrees with Norinaga’s position on the primacy of Shinto and *mono no aware* as the essence of Japan’s cultural identity and spirituality, Suzuki clearly follows an agenda established by Norinaga’s Kokugaku thought. Suzuki’s notions of Zen spirituality and the primacy of Zen in Japan’s cultural identity are inconceivable apart from Norinaga and the Kokugaku legacy. In short, Suzuki’s arguments in favor of Zen either borrow directly from Norinaga or are a direct rebuttal to him. In either case, it is Norinaga’s outline that Suzuki is conforming to. This raises some concerns about the nature of Suzuki’s interpretation of Zen.

The first concern regards cultural influences over Zen, or to put it more directly: How much Zen actually is there in Suzuki's interpretation? How much does it have to do with aspects of Japanese culture that are unconnected, or only marginally connected, to Zen? Admittedly, no interpretation escapes the influences of the society and culture that shape it. Any attempt at such an interpretation should be viewed with suspicion. Rather than inducement to ignore cultural influences, Suzuki's Zen is an invitation to understand and clarify them. According to Suzuki, Zen is timeless and transcendent, and cannot be reduced to historical or societal forces. Like all good orthodoxies, Suzuki's Zen reconfigures the entire tradition in its own image and likeness—every aspect of Zen history becomes recast in a revelatory progression in the unfolding of timeless Zen truth conceived, and this is the important point, through the lens of a Japanese modernism fashioned in the wake of Norinaga and the Kokugaku movement. All orthodoxies, including Norinaga's Kokugaku and Suzuki's Zen, are teleological by nature, culminating at the precise point where authority is assumed. They are suppositions of power translated into standard practices and conventional understanding.

The circumstances of modernity and westernization, the role of Zen presumed by Suzuki to counter these forces and preserve Japan's cultural autonomy—these are circumstances unique to the contemporary Japanese context and adapted to form a Zen orthodoxy that provide its unique flavor. But aside from this unique set of conditions, aren't all presumptions of orthodoxy in the Chan and Zen traditions the product of their own set of circumstances and thus "unique?" What is unique about Suzuki's interpretation is, in the end, about the cultural climate of modern Japan and the principles that it was built on.

Of the many aspects of Suzuki Zen that are derived from Norinaga's Kokugaku agenda, I would like to isolate one in particular that I think is problematic. When Norinaga set the terms of Shinto's revival as an emotional aestheticism that triumphed over other recourses to cultural validation, he established the basis for the reign of the irrational over the rational, the trans-moral as opposed to the moral. Even though Suzuki disputed the specific terms of Norinaga's emotional aestheticism, he did not question the primacy of emotional aestheticism for understanding and experiencing the world, but simply recast it in Zen terms. Momokawa Takahito 百川敬仁 has written of Norinaga's influence over the premises upon which Japanese culture are built and the negative effects of Norinaga's emotionally charged culture of irrationalism as a basis for validation of immoral, even violent acts (Momokawa, 1987, 2000).<sup>15</sup> To the extent that Suzuki absorbed these influences, he compromised Zen to Norinaga's species of irrationalism along with its trans-ethical overtones with immoral, even violent implications. The species of Japanese nationalism that led to the tragic events of the 1930s and 40s was in many ways predicated on these assumptions.

## Notes

1. There is also a book length treatment by Matsumoto Shigeru, *Motoorin Norinaga, 1730–1801*.
2. Norinaga's *Kojikiden* covers 44 books, 26 of which were published posthumously. *Naobi no Mitama* was first issued as an independent text, but in its final form was included in the final section of Book 1, the book which served as an introduction to the work as a whole (Wehmeyer, 1997: 2).
3. *Man'yōgana* represents the first system of Japanese writing, in which characters are used, variously, to either represent words (i.e., logographically), to represent Japanese syllables phonetically, or to represent Japanese in a combination of these two (Miner et al. 1985: 288).
4. Norinaga's explanation of his preference for the *Kojiki* over the *Nihon Shoki* is given in the first two chapters of Book 1 of the *Kojikiden* (see Wehmeyer, 1997: 15–59). This is not meant to suggest, however, that the *Nihon Shoki* is without value. Indeed, Norinaga uses it as supplementary material and relies on it for key aspects of his argument (for example, the crucial meaning of the term *kamunagara*, considered below, is drawn from the *Nihon Shoki*, not the *Kojiki*). The point for Norinaga is that one should reverse the priority given the two texts, and use the *Nihon Shoki* with caution, knowing the problematic nature of its contents.
5. See, for example, the analogy in the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, “Free and Easy Wandering,” comparing the awesomeness of the Peng bird and the attempts to reduce its flight to dimensions understood by the cicada, dove, or quail (Watson: 29–31).
6. This transformation from naturalism to divine creation is discussed in Maruyama (1974: 135–185), and contrasted to the Confucian, Ogyū Sorai. Maruyama claims: “In Sorai's philosophy, man's inner sentiments were granted a negative freedom as what may be called the private sphere, but they became the keystone of the philosophy of National Learning.... Thus it is clear that the Norinaga school is linked to the Sorai school through the latter's private sphere. *However, although the Sorai school's private domain was, so to speak, a by-product of its politicization of Confucianism, National Learning, by contrast, gave inner sentiments purged of all normativity a positive role by identifying them with the Way itself.* Thus National Learning, unlike the Sorai school, linked something that was nonpolitical for the latter with politics itself.” (Maruyama, 1974:171–172; italics in original). For translations of Sorai's works, see Lidin (1970), Yamashita (1994), and Najita (1998: 1–140).
7. Norinaga's association of Takami-musubi with “generative spirit” is based on his reading of *musubi* 産巢日 (as in Takami-musubi 高御産巢日) as *musubi* 産霊 (“generative spirit”) in the *Kojikiden*; Wehmeyer, 1997: 245n. 24.
8. While Brownlee translates *musubi* as the “Spirit of Binding,” I prefer the meaning given by Wehmeyer as “divine generative force” (1997: 14n37), and have amended the translation accordingly, rendering *musubi* as “generative spirit.”



9. Even though it is the work.  
Of a lowly man,  
If at least you open.  
The jeweled comb-box (*tamakushige*) and look,  
A sincere heart lies within. (Brownlee, 1988: 45).
10. Like the linen garment,  
for the first steps into the mountains (*uiyamabumi*).  
I meant this.  
to be a humble guide for the foothills.  
May it be of some use (Nishimura, 1987: 493).
11. *Jōruri* refers to a wide variety of performances, having common musical accompaniment of related plots, dominated by three types: (1) performance with puppets (*ningyō*), (2) stage performance by actors (*kabuki*), and (3) casual performances in a hall or street (Miner et al. 1985: 280).
12. While my current focus is on Suzuki's interpretation of Zen, it is noteworthy that much of Suzuki's discussion about Japanese spirituality pertains to Shinran and Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. A comprehensive account of Suzuki's view of Japanese spirituality needs to take this incorporation of Shinran and Pure Land teaching into consideration.
13. A view made explicit in Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*, which includes discussions on Zen and swordsmanship, Haiku, the art of tea, and the love of nature in general.
14. Watsuji, for example, adopted the notion of the non-duality of self and other, specifically connecting it to the Zen kōan which asks what one's face looked like before the birth of one's parents (Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter's trans., *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, p. 187). He also used the term *satori ningen* 悟り人間 for a realized human being, with obvious Zen implications (see Carter's "Interpretive Essay: Strands of Influence," p. 338). Nishida is famous for his employment of concepts like *junsui taiken* 純粹体験 (pure experience), where the word *junsui* 純粹 ("pure") is taken to signify a condition of true experience itself without any overlay of thought or reflection. "Pure experience is synonymous with "direct experience" 直接経験 (*chokusetsu keiken*), where there is neither subject nor object, and knowledge and its object are completely united (*Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究, p. 13).
15. I am grateful to Professor Kei Sasaki of Hokkaidō University for bringing Momokawa's works to my attention. On the impact of this tendency in modern Zen, see Victoria (1997).

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# Zen and the Art of Resistance: Some Preliminary Notes



James Mark Shields

## 1 Introduction

In the modern Western and oftentimes Asian imagination, Buddhism generally—and Zen more specifically—is understood as being resolutely *disengaged*, promoting a form of awakening that is not only, as the classical phrase has it, not only “beyond words and letters,” but ultimately “supramundane” in focus and affects. Of course, even setting aside the Mahāyāna and particularly East Asian Buddhist philosophical and doctrinal critique of dualism, as numerous scholars have shown over the past few decades, on the level of historical actuality, Buddhist and Zen teachers and institutions have long participated in (usually hegemonic) economic and political structures. The scholarship on Buddhist and Zen “social history” is large and growing. And yet, much less attention has been paid to the philosophical and doctrinal sources for political activism and, in particular, *resistance* to prevailing economic and political structures. With the possible exception of Buddhist-inspired peasant revolts of medieval and early modern periods China and Japan, the first sustained efforts to develop an “alternative” form of Buddhist engagement arose in early twentieth century Japan, with a number of groups associated with New Buddhism. While most of the New Buddhist were doctrinally influenced by Shin (Pure Land) and Nichiren teachings, several currents of New Buddhism correlate with classical Zen teachings, and thus provide possible foundations for a theory of “Zen resistance”—one that, I argue, complements the more recent Zen-inspired movement known as Critical Buddhism.

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## 2 D. T. Suzuki and Zen Adaptability/Collaboration

Let us begin with D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966), who, for all the criticism he has faced in the past several decades was undoubtedly the single most influential voice for Buddhism (and Zen) in the postwar West. Despite having been personally involved with the “socially engaged” New Buddhist Fellowship (Jp. Shin Bukkyō Dōshikai, 1899–1916) as a young scholar, in *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (1938) Suzuki makes the infamous claim that Buddhism—or, at any rate, Zen, which he believed was the “essence” of Buddhism—is a tradition of thought and practice that can fit seamlessly with *any* modern economic or political system or ideology.<sup>1</sup> Suzuki meant this, of course, as a tribute to the “tolerance” and “adaptability” of Buddhism/Zen, as well as to highlight its supramundane, “intuitive teaching.”

Historically-speaking, Suzuki is no doubt correct, but one does not have to be a radical Buddhist to wonder whether this purported adaptability, even if true, is a strength or weakness. As examples of ideologies (or, as he puts it, “dogmatisms”) that might be wedded with Buddhism/Zen, Suzuki cites “anarchism, fascism, communism... democracy, atheism... [and] idealism,” before going on to note, paradoxically, that Buddhism/Zen is also animated with a “revolutionary spirit” that confounds all such “isms” (more on this below). Setting aside the revolutionary aspect, Suzuki does not seem to recognize that each of these respective ‘isms’ is rooted in a set of fundamental values, assumptions, and “logics”—each or all of which may *not* be compatible with incontrovertible Dharmic principles (such as, e.g., the goal of ameliorating suffering of sentient beings). Assuming that we now disagree with Suzuki that Buddhism/Zen *can, in good faith*, be “wedded to” fascism—on the basis of the indisputable fact that fascism, in theory as well as practice, promotes forms of power, hierarchy, and dehumanization that cannot possibly be reconciled with Dharmic principles—how might contemporary Buddhists deal with the other “isms” on this list, including, for the purposes of this essay, the one that is by far the most powerful in the twenty-first century: *capitalism*? I have explored this question in more detail, elsewhere, but pose it here as a starting point towards thinking about what Buddhist “resistance” might mean in the twenty-first century.

Before going further, a few words need to be said about “Buddhism”—a word that, perhaps even more than “capitalism,” is fraught with definitional ambiguities. First and foremost, there is not, and has never been, a single “thing”—whether we want to call it a “religion,” “philosophy,” “ritual tradition,” or “institution”—called Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> Even setting aside the fact that “Buddhism” is a Western term of relatively recent coinage, the significant cultural, linguistic and sectarian variations among those who have followed some version of the Dharma render it foolhardy to suggest an “essence” (at any rate, many of the classical texts push strongly *against* the search for “essence” in anything). I see this definitional fluidity less as a limiting factor than as an opportunity, though one we must approach with the cautionary tales of a century or more of Western orientalism (both negative and more recently, partly due to the work of Suzuki, romantic and idealizing). At any rate, while there

can be no single definition of a set of rituals, practices, values and ideas as diverse as those which are labelled “Buddhist,” I hold it uncontroversial to claim that, whatever else may be involved, the various Dharmic traditions provide *methods for the amelioration if not elimination of “suffering” among and between sentient beings*.<sup>3</sup> In short, while “Buddhism” shows significant variation in doctrine and practice across time, space, languages and cultures, it is difficult to make the case that its “adaptability” extends to ideologies or modes of thought and practice that work against the aim of amelioration of suffering for sentient beings. Fascist Buddhism is simply fascism in saffron robes.

### 3 What is (Buddhist) “Engagement”?

The question of Buddhist resistance brings us to a discussion of Socially Engaged Buddhism (often shortened to Engaged Buddhism), a loose movement of Buddhist monks, scholars, and lay activists that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s via the work of Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926), A. T. Ariyaratne (b. 1931), Sulak Sivaraksa (b. 1933), and the XIVth Dalai Lama (b. 1935). Queen and King locate the roots of Engaged Buddhism in earlier south Asian figures, including especially Sri Lankan lay Buddhist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), one of the founding figures of modern India.<sup>4</sup> My work on the East Asian context suggests that, in fact, there were Chinese, Korean and Japanese precedents dating back to roughly the same period as Dharmapala, including Taixu (1890–1947) and the New Buddhist Fellowship (1899–1916) as well as even more radical groups like Seno'o Giro's Buddhist Marxist Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism (Jp. Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei, 1931–1936)—though these East Asian precedents are usually missed by scholars on Engaged Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> As with the New Buddhists before them, the work of Engaged Buddhists has been controversial, and not simply with more “conservative” Asian Buddhist leaders. Even some scholars of Buddhism question the “authenticity” of the movement.

A recent article by Amod Lele calls the question on Engaged Buddhism by challenging Engaged Buddhists to address the fact that most of classical Buddhism was *not* socially engaged—and indeed, in Lele's view, Buddhists texts and practices were largely *opposed* to involvement in social or political concerns.<sup>6</sup> Lele is quite right that contemporary Engaged Buddhism fails to adequately address the ways that their movement breaks with past precedent. That said, I believe there is a (possibly orientalist) risk in assuming that categories such as the “religious,” “spiritual,” “social,” “economic,” or “political” have tried and true resonance in premodern, non-Western cultures and traditions. Second, while assuredly most classical Buddhists were focused on concerns that today we might classify as “mental” or “internal,” it is also true that, as Bernard Faure has noted, the assumption that these concerns were purely individual and (thereby) disconnected from the community belies the centrality of the *sangha* in traditional Buddhist ideas

and practice.<sup>7</sup> Third, while it may be too much to suggest that the Buddhist Dharma is an ethics or politics, the central role of ethics in Buddhist thought and practice renders it “social” (and, as I have argued elsewhere, “economic” and “political”) almost by definition. And finally, given the interplay between the *sangha* and political leaders in various regions of Asia, to suggest that Buddhism has ever really been apolitical is to ignore history in favor of some idealized version of Buddhist teaching.<sup>8</sup>

## 4 From Engagement to Resistance

By “resistance,” I refer to a mode of being and doing that in some fashion “resists” commonplace (or “common sense”) expectations, assumptions and behaviors. More specifically, I understand resistance as a modality theorized (until the 1970s, under-theorized) by progressive thinkers working in the tradition of Marx and Engels and the nineteenth century anarchists, and carried on in the twentieth century by John Dewey (1859–1952), the Frankfurt School, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), Henri Lefebvre (1900–1991), and more recently by various streams of post-colonial, queer, and gender theory. Generally, resistance theorists attempt to explain why the opposition of some groups against others is necessary under social, economic and political structures of domination that serve to discipline and construct specific (and often harmful) forms of subjectivity.<sup>9</sup> Here resistance is differentiated both from the more specific category or *revolution*, but also from mere *opposition* to authority, since resistance is generally understood “to contribute, in some way, to progressive transformation of the environment by attempting to undermine ‘the reproduction of social structures and social relations’.”<sup>10</sup> In short, unlike mere opposition, resistance is directed to individual and social transformation—it has a *political* intent.<sup>11</sup>

Another way of framing this is to consider Erik Olin Wright’s distinction between *passive* and *active* forms of social reproduction, both of which play a significant role in sustaining and perpetuating our current global capitalist society. Whereas active social reproduction comes about by institutions and structures such as the police, courts, education, media, religion and so on, passive reproduction refers to “those aspects of social reproduction that are anchored in the mundane routines and activities of everyday life... [it] is simply a by-product of the ways in which the daily activities of people mesh in a kind of self-sustaining equilibrium in which the dispositions and choices of actors generate a set of interactions that reinforces those dispositions and choices.”<sup>12</sup> While Buddhism can have a role in a critique of political institutions and social structures, the sharper edge of Dharmic critique would seem to lie with the everyday “habits of mind and body” that are less obviously supportive of structures of suffering and alienation. In this sense, truly, the *personal is political*.<sup>13</sup>

Many if not most Engaged Buddhists are dedicated to an ameliorative, reformist agenda, rather than one that might be called *ruptural* or revolutionary. In part this is



due to a general commitment to non-violence (Sk. *ahimsa*), as well as to the classically-approved mental state of *equanimity*, neither of which seem to work well with revolutionary transformation. But perhaps this is making the issue too stark. I suggest that resistance—especially at the level of social reproduction—may in fact be most effective when aligned with an *interstitial* modality.<sup>14</sup>

## 5 Buddhist Criticism

In order to flesh out these issues further, in the section we will explore the concepts of Buddhist *criticism* and Buddhist *power*. For the first term I invoke the Critical Buddhist (*hihan bukkō*) movement that arose in the 1980s and 1990s in Japan—the subject of my 2011 monograph: *Critical Buddhism: Engaging with Modern Japanese Buddhist Thought*. Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, the two Japanese Buddhist scholars who founded the movement, recognized serious problems with the way Buddhism has been both understood and practiced in the modern period, if not before. They argued that: (1) the early Buddhist tradition was established on premises that can be considered rational, skeptical, and broadly humanistic in their ethical force; (2) over time, due to various factors, these “critical” aspects had withered if not disappeared in most branches of the Asian Buddhist tradition, but particularly the Chan and Zen traditions of East Asia; (3) as a result, contemporary Asian Buddhism—and particularly Japanese Buddhism—was in need of a reformation, which might be brought about through a combination of textual scholarship and comparative analysis, utilizing resources from Western thought traditions such as the work of René Descartes (1596–1650)—that most unlikely of Buddhists. More specifically, the Critical Buddhists founded their arguments on a clear distinction between ways of thinking and valuing they called *critical* and those they referred to as *topical*, contrasting terms associated with the methodological analysis of Descartes on the one hand and his presumed foil and foe, the Italian thinker Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), on the other.<sup>15</sup>

So, if Buddhism must be critical, then what, exactly, does it mean to be critical, or to practice—and embody—*criticism*? For Hakamaya, to be critical implies, first and foremost, the ability and willingness (perhaps, to invoke Kant, *courage*) to make clear distinctions. He argues that it is in fact only critical thinking that can combat worldly discrimination (in the socio-political sense), which results precisely from a lack of logical/ethical discrimination, often in the name of some greater unity or harmony (e.g., racism, ethno-chauvinism, religious exclusivism, nationalism). Topicalism, a Latinate term back-translated by Matsumoto into Sanskrit as *dhātu-vāda*—implying something like the “way of locus,” or simply, essentialism—stands as the primary foil or antithesis for Critical Buddhism. Defined by Matsumoto as “a substantialist monism in which the Buddha-nature is the sole foundational reality out of which apparent reality is produced”<sup>16</sup> and by Jamie Hubbard as “an aesthetic mysticism unconcerned with critical differentiation between truth and falsity and not in need of rational demonstration,”<sup>17</sup> topicalism is

a way of thinking about Buddhism, scholarship, religion, and, one might add, life more generally which is based on the notion of “a singular, real locus (*dhātu*) that gives rise to a plurality of phenomena [...] a ‘generative monism’ or a ‘transcendental realism’.”<sup>18</sup>

It is important to note here that Critical Buddhism is not understood by Hakamaya and Matsumoto as merely Cartesian rationalism or Enlightenment humanism in Buddhist guise, but is rather as being ostensibly founded on certain inviolable Buddhist doctrines or principles against which everything else—even other doctrines and forms of belief held sacrosanct in some Buddhist quarters—must be judged. Thus, while heavily indebted to rationalist (and, to some extent, pragmatist) philosophical methods, criticalism is founded on (Buddhist) *faith*, where faith is not to be understood as “the unity of the object of belief and believer,” but rather as believing in—*holding true and abiding by*—certain key doctrines such as *pratītya-samutpāda* (dependent origination), while using one’s intellect and language to judge and elaborate the meaning and practical application of these principles in relation to nature and contemporary social forms. Thus, as with Descartes, there is a limited form of skepticism at work, but one that is always secondary to the primary, ethical *telos* of Buddhist practice.

Along these lines, the proper question to ask from the perspective of Critical Buddhism is not “What is Buddhism?” but rather “What is the *purpose* of Buddhism?” Hakamaya, in his attack on so-called topical thinking, criticizes the notion that *satori* or awakening is the goal of Buddhism; rather, he argues, the goal is *dharma-pravicaya*—“the clear discrimination of phenomena.”<sup>19</sup> But even this is not really the end or *telos* of Critical Buddhism; it is rather its mode or method. The *goal* of Critical Buddhism is instead “the realization of ‘wisdom’ (*bodhi*) for the practice of ‘great compassion’ (*mahākaruṇā*)”<sup>20</sup>—in short, the aspiration and subsequent work to ameliorate the suffering of sentient beings. Although they do not invoke Aristotle, the Critical Buddhist argument suggests that the Dharma is really a form of *phronesis* or practical, embodied and “engaged” wisdom—what moderns following Marx would call *praxis*.<sup>21</sup>

## 6 Buddhist Power

For the Critical Buddhists, then, at the very root of Buddhism is *criticism*, which might be understood as a form of *resistance* to the everpresent temptations of greed, hatred and delusion—temptations which they suggest have occluded many of East Asian Buddhism’s own teachings. That said, as with the Engaged Buddhists, the “politics” of Critical Buddhism tend towards the liberal and reformist rather than the progressive or revolutionary. This is where we might benefit from a brief analysis of *power* in a (modern) Buddhist context. While “power” is often understood, at least in its popular usage, in Machiavellian, “zero-sum” terms—what we might call *power-over*—I suggest that a Buddhist understanding of *power* benefits

from being put into conversation not with Descartes or Vico but rather Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677)—that arch-heretic of the radical European Enlightenment.

Above all, the aim of Spinoza's work is *joy* (L. *gaudium*), understood as an active affect that marks the increase of our power to act and think.<sup>22</sup> Here, joy" is not a static state, like contentment (or equanimity?), but "rather a dynamic process that continues only so long as our powers continue to increase."<sup>23</sup> The manifestation of joy, however, relies on an increase in power—these two are intrinsically, we might say causally, related. But we need to be careful here, lest we fall into Machiavellian or Nietzschean traps. Power in Spinoza includes a strong measure of "sensitivity," or the capacity to be affected, and thus is intrinsically connected with *others* and *community*:

The greater our mind's ability to think, the greater its capacity to be affected by the ideas of others; the greater our body's ability to act, the greater its capacity to be affected by other bodies. And we have greater power to think and to act, Spinoza explains, the more we interact and create common relations with others. Joy, in other words, is really the result of joyful encounters with others, encounters that increase our powers, and the institution of these encounters such that they last and repeat.<sup>24</sup>

Joy, again, is intrinsically connected to *power*, understood in this relational, expansive rather than restrictive sense. Spinoza's understanding of power is, in turn, rooted in his *pantheism*—or, as I would prefer to call it, his *dynamic naturalism*, according to which "everything—and especially every living thing—is a dynamic process, an organization of matter rather than an inert lump of matter."<sup>25</sup> "Power is therefore not a fixed attribute of any particular material thing, but an attribute of the relationships through which a complex body is continually regenerated and persists in being."<sup>26</sup> Power, then, is the capacity to subsist, or, to add a normative spin that moves us away from Social Darwinian ideologies towards Spinozan *joy*, to flourish.<sup>27</sup> Thus the principle Spinozan virtue of *fortitude*, or constancy, defined by Stewart in quasi-Buddhist terms as "the 'mindfulness' that we possess insofar as we exercise genuine understanding of ourselves and our world."<sup>28</sup>

In their progressive reinvigoration of Spinoza, Hardt and Negri argue that instituting "happiness" is not only "a political but also an ontological project." At the same time, it is also an existential one, since happiness in Spinozan thought is intrinsically connected to "power," understood as an expanded subjectivity: "With each increase of our power we become different, adding to what we are, expanding our social being. Being is not fixed once and for all in some otherworldly realm but constantly subject to a process of becoming. Human nature is similarly not immutable but rather open to a process of training and education."<sup>29</sup> A similar conclusion is reached by Gilles Deleuze, who describes Spinozan sagehood in the following terms: "Humility, poverty, and chastity become the effects of an especially rich and superabundant life, sufficiently powerful to have conquered thought and subordinated every other instinct to itself. This is what Spinoza calls Nature: a life no longer lived on the basis of need, in terms of means and ends, but according to a production, a potency, in terms of causes and effects."<sup>30</sup>

A recognition of boundless human possibility is of course, foundational to European Enlightenment thought, and particularly to humanism. It is also, *mutatis mutandae*, foundational to classical Buddhist doctrine. And yet it may well be that classical Buddhism has a leg up on the Enlightenment when it comes to recognition of the limits of this “freedom,” which is better understood as a shaping of conditions than a breaking away from them. After all,

This does not mean that there are no limits to what we can do or that we can break absolutely from the past to create a clean slate: there are no leaps in nature, as the evolutionary biologists like to say. What it does mean, though, is that change is possible at the most basic level of our world and ourselves and that we can intervene in this process to orient it along the lines of our desires, towards happiness.<sup>31</sup>

Hardt and Negri argue that, over time, the Spinozan “joy” in community was forgotten (or suppressed?) as eighteenth-century happiness “is turned inward in the nineteenth century and made sentimental.” They blame Thomas Jefferson, in particular, for introducing the claim to happiness as a political right, which “cedes to narratives of individual contentedness.” As such:

Happiness is separated from reason, to which it was so strongly tied in the eighteenth century, and becomes and remains today merely a passion, something we feel, not something we do—an individual sentiment stripped of political meaning. Sympathy and pity present mechanisms of association and social constitution, but ones that are powerless and even block our power.<sup>32</sup>

Although this may unfair to Jefferson, who, as Stewart has shown, was for much of his life a dedicated Epicurean (and possibly Spinozan), the point stands that “happiness” or “joy” has lost much its philosophical and political resonance—it’s Spinozan *oomph*—as least as it is normally understood in locutions such as the “pursuit of happiness.”<sup>33</sup> I will return to this below in a discussion of happiness-within-community.

## 7 Boundless Abodes

Above I made the claim that the Buddhist tradition(s), for all their variation, are rooted in a fundamental—however quixotic/bodhisattvic—commitment to reducing if not eliminating *suffering* as a condition of sentience. The *goal* of Buddhadharma is most often understood in terms of the universal achievement of this condition, originally called *nirvāṇa/nibbana*; in English, usually translated as enlightenment or awakening. Although this is often understood classically in purely negative terms—i.e., the *end of suffering*—it is important to emphasize that there are also positive components to this condition, best exemplified in the Four Boundless Qualities (or Abodes; Sk. *brahmavihārā*): *loving-kindness* (*maitrī/metta*); *compassion* (*karuṇa*); *empathetic joy* (*mudita*); and *equanimity* (*upekṣā/upekkha*), all of which are assumed to not only *cohere with*, but I suggest, *instantiate*, awakening.

The first point to note about these “abodes” is that the first three are clearly “ethical”—in the sense that they make little sense out of a context of social relations (or, at the very least, relations with non-human sentient beings). However else they may be understood, loving-kindness, compassion and empathetic joy *require* a “move” towards the “other”—and one that implies an opening (or erasure) of “self” rather than a closure, as might be the case in an agonistic move. The fourth abode, *equanimity*, seems distinct—and indeed, some scholars (e.g., Bhikku Bodhi) have suggested that it must be understood as the pinnacle or crowning abode. And yet, I want to make the case here that equanimity is also a condition that implies a dynamic “expansion” of being, one rooted in something like “resistance.” Here goes.

Although often defined as a “pure mental state” that is cultivated on the “path to *nirvana*,” I argue that such an understanding severely limits the potential value of equanimity within a Buddhist or Dharmic framework. Again, this is *not* to suggest that classical Buddhist texts and interpreters did not privilege the mind over the body—it would be foolish to argue that they did not. And yet, the point I want to push is that, according to fundamental Buddhist logic, there can be no “pure” mental state; mental states are themselves conditioned by and imbricated in material states, including but not limited to one’s physical body. It may be instructive to compare *upekṣā/upekkha* to the classical Greek *ataraxia*, which is often also translated as equanimity or tranquility. Etymologically, the term derives from a direct negation (*a-*) of *tarachê*, disturbance or trouble. First employed by Pyrrho the Skeptic to refer to the goal of complete freedom from distress, the term was picked up by Stoics and Epicureans. For Pyrrho, *ataraxia* emerges from the ability to suspend judgment regarding all matters of “non-evident belief.” For the Epicureans, *ataraxia* was understood more specifically as the complete absence of *mental* suffering, and contrasted with *aponia*, which indicated the absence of *physical* suffering. While both are Epicurean goals, the former state is considered higher (and more difficult to achieve), since physical pleasure is transient compared with mental pleasure. For the Stoics, *ataraxia* plays a less central role; while still important, it is considered a byproduct of living a life of virtue according to nature.

There are certainly resonances here: *upekkha* is, like the Pyrrhonist *ataraxia*, a manifestation of fortitude against the vicissitudes of everyday life (sometimes numerated as eight: loss and gain, good- and ill-repute, praise and censure, sorrow and happiness). More than simply a state of calm, it is thus a form of *resistance*—though I hesitate to invoke the loaded term “will.”<sup>34</sup> One distinction here is that the Buddhist “abode” is clearly broader in scope than the Pyrrhonian state; if anything, it seems closest to the Epicurean understanding, though only if *ataraxia* and *aponia* are combined. But then, in line with the Stoic insistence on virtue, *upekkha* must/ will extend outwards towards fellow sufferers. It is a *foundation* for loving-kindness, compassion and empathetic joy, not an *alternative*.

According to Buddhaghosa, the “far enemy” of *upekkha* is greed and resentment, while the “near” (and thus, one assumes, more dangerous) enemy is indifference or apathy.<sup>35</sup> This point is elaborated by Bhikku Bodhi, who writes:

The real meaning of *upekkha* is equanimity, not indifference in the sense of unconcern for others. As a spiritual virtue, *upekkha* means stability in the face of the fluctuations of worldly fortune. It is evenness of mind, unshakeable freedom of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. *Upekkha* is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifference only to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position, not to the well-being of one's fellow human beings.<sup>36</sup>

## 8 Buddhist Freedom/Buddhist Agency

I am intrigued by the invocation of the term “freedom” in both the Greek understanding of *ataraxia* and at least Bhikkhu Bodhi’s interpretation of *upekkha*. It is not uncommon for Buddhist awakening to be framed in terms of “freedom”—albeit this is usually understood more specifically as *liberation from suffering*. Rather than get bogged down here in the philosophical question of “free will” in Buddhist tradition, I will follow this thread in a direction that is somewhat more ethical or political.

Let us begin with *agency*, which is the aspect of individualism and “freedom” that, I argue, resonates most strongly with classical Buddhist understandings.<sup>37</sup> Agency is best understood as the capacity of people to act as “conscious[ly] reflecting initiators of acts in a structured, meaningful world”—in other words, as a manifestation of *power*.<sup>38</sup> Here agency is intrinsically connected to creativity and improvisation, but does not deny the reality of various constraints, “both those generated by social structures within which people act and the internalized constraints embodied in beliefs and habits.”<sup>39</sup> Rather than see these constraints as negatives, working against “freedom,” a Dharmic view of agency would recognize the value of at least certain forms of constraint, particularly those imposed upon oneself as part of a commitment to ameliorating suffering (i.e., “entering the stream”). Of course, Buddhist tradition also clearly recognizes and warns against the forces of habits that stem from addiction or from unreflective passivity. This is precisely why agency is foundational: Buddhist awakening *requires* a recognition of the capacity for the free determination and active realization of “better” forms of living as an individual and in community. And yet, to shift to the term *autonomy*, the Dharmic path, like that of Aristotle, highlights the inextricable interdependence of self and other beings, such that agency does not imply a complete separation of the individual, but rather a balance of sorts between personal responsibility (and liberation) and the movement towards others (via the virtues of loving-kindness, compassion and the bodhisattva ideal).<sup>40</sup> Once again, this tracks back to a Buddhist sense of “agency” as well as an evocation of “power” in Spinoza’s sense: “the *capacity* of actors to accomplish things [or ‘produce effects’] in the world.”<sup>41</sup>

When formulated thus, I see a strong parallel here with the mode of discourse or *habitus* that Sallie King has called the “prophetic voice”—which she associates with some though perhaps not all contemporary Engaged Buddhists.<sup>42</sup>

By definition, a “prophet” is one who calls out the problems of the status quo, whether religious, ideological, political, economic, or most often, a combination of all of these. One of the great strengths, arguably, of the biblical traditions is precisely this strain of “prophecy,” which has played a not insignificant role in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim “resistance” (i.e., to kings, caliphs, priests, and mullahs) over the centuries. I believe it is fair to say that the prophetic voice is relatively weaker within Asian Buddhist traditions, though there are certainly exceptions, such as Japan’s Nichiren. But we also have to consider that “prophecy” need not entail aggression or persecution: one could make the case that certain Mahāyāna texts (e.g., the *Heart Sutra*) and thinkers (e.g., Nagārjuna, Dōgen), who clearly break with many if not most of established Buddhist “norms” are manifesting the prophetic voice—a voice of resistance, a counter-power.

King is concerned with Engaged Buddhist leaders—modern day bodhisattvas. Here I want to focus on ordinary “stream enterers.” Bronwyn Finnigan’s 2017 essay on “The Nature of a Buddhist Path” provides some useful material for the sort of claims I am making; i.e., to understand the practice of Buddhism along lines that are critical, naturalistic, and “political.” Finnigan, echoing certain Mahāyāna thinkers, including Dōgen, suggests that: “the goal of the Buddhist path is not a separate and distinct event that is caused by acquiring and engaging various modes of wisdom, living, and mental discipline. Rather it marks their point of perfection or completion (the *telos*) and thus is actualized in their very engagement.”<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Finnigan links this “constitutive” understanding of the path to the Four Abodes: “The perfection of these distinct modes of living is analyzed in relation to the cultivation of the four immeasurable attitudes (loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity).” Rejecting a simple understanding of the abodes as “emotions” (the nature of which is under dispute among scholars), Finnigan argues that each abode is better understood as “an intentional attitude that is (1) about or directed towards certain kinds of objects construed in certain kinds of ways, and (2) made manifest in certain kinds of bodily and behavioral responses, where (1) and (2) are constitutive of the relevant attitude rather than related to it either as cause of effect.”<sup>44</sup> This constitutive, holistic understanding of the four abodes brings them into line with a reading of Buddhist ethics as a sort of “virtue ethics”—a claim made some decades ago by Damien Keown and criticized or nuanced since by other scholars. I concur with Finnigan that those who dismiss this connection because of the Aristotelian presupposition of a “self” miss the diversity of contemporary elaborations of virtue ethics, which do not always rely on such.<sup>45</sup>

Despite not being a scholar of East Asian Buddhism, it comes as no surprise to see Finnigan look to Zen and Dōgen—hero of the Critical Buddhists—in support of her claims, citing the “awakening” of the Japanese Sōtō Zen master to a conception of enlightenment that locates it very much in the mundane—in the midst of this-worldly or “secular” activity. In Dōgen’s words: “When you find your place where you are, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point. When you find your way at this moment, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point.”<sup>46</sup> This prioritization of the “immediate”—not in the sense here of some mystical experience but simply of what Heidegger might call the “ready to hand,” was



picked up in the early twentieth century by the Japanese New Buddhists, who I have argued are perhaps—along with Dharmapala—the first truly Engaged Buddhists of modernity.

## 9 New Buddhism: Secular and Social

The Japanese New Buddhist Fellowship (Shin Bukkyō Dōshikai) which lasted from 1899 to 1915, was an attempt by several dozen young lay Buddhists to reinvent Buddhism as pan-sectarian, non-institutional, and—as I have argued—palpably *secular* (in the sense of this-worldly and even “materialistic”). In constructing their “new” or “revitalized” Buddhism, the New Buddhists borrowed freely from Russian, European and American thought traditions, especially liberal and progressive social and political theories of the mid-late nineteenth century (distinguishing them from the Critical Buddhists more limited adoptions). In July 1900, a magazine called *Shin Bukkyō* (New Buddhism), was launched as the new movement’s mouthpiece. The first edition of the first volume begins with the groups “manifesto” or *sengen*. “Humanity,” it begins, “is in a state of decline. Society has been corrupted to its roots, and the rushing water of a great springtide threatens to drown us all, as at the time of the Great Flood. Moreover, religions, which are supposed to give light to darkness and provide solace, have been losing strength year by year.” This is quickly followed by a scathing attack on “old Buddhism” (*kyū bukkō*) as being little more than a rotting corpse, its adherents weeping “tears of joy” over their palatial buildings and fine brocades.<sup>47</sup>

Here I want to highlight two particular characteristic features of the work of the New Buddhists: *secularism* and *social(ism)*. First and foremost is an unabashed affirmation of “this world”—and concomitant assertion that Buddhism is *all* about worldly suffering and release (Jp. *genseishugi*).<sup>48</sup> Whereas other Buddhist reformers such as Nakanishi Ushirō had contrasted the “materialism” of the “old” Buddhism with the “spiritualism” of the new, and, in similar fashion, the “scholarship” of traditional monastic Buddhism with the “faith”-orientation of the new, lay Buddhism, the New Buddhists to some extent reverse these, so that it is the “old” Buddhism that focuses on “spiritual” matters, while New Buddhism is content with addressing “real,” “practical” issues of this life—poverty, hunger, and so on.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, while they began the movement as self-identified “puritans,” some, including Sugimura Jūō, were hesitant to push this idea too far, lest it begin to sound overly “renunciative,” “severe,” or “pessimistic.” Here, again, their “puritanism” was of a different sort than the “passive” and “world-denying” asceticism (Jp. *kinyokushugi*) of the monks and priests. Rather, it denoted a sincere, focused and “pro-active engagement” with the world (Jp. *sekkyakuteki na katsudō*)—one that was also not averse to seeking “pleasure”. Indeed, in one of the most striking characterizations of Buddhism I have ever encountered, at one point the New Buddhists assert that Buddhist awakening is entirely about “joy”:



They [that is, “old Buddhists”] cannot eat meat or have wives, cannot sleep at night or rest in the day. In addition, they cannot enjoy themselves, laugh, get angry or sad—this, they say, is what makes them different from everyone else. But New Buddhists have no interest in this. Our New Buddhism is simply about having faith in the power to experience the ordinary joys of life (*tada heibon naru yorokobi o nasan to suru chikara o shinkō ni uru nomi*). And what is faith but the passion that comes from being struck by the actuality of the cosmos. In bringing back enjoyment and lightheartedness, we gain the strength to advance our mind and spirit. Our New Buddhism is a religion rooted in the ordinary, whose faith is in the actual, and whose fruits are of this world (*kekka wa genseshugi nari*).<sup>50</sup>

Second, and related, is the New Buddhist insistence on “social” (Jp. *shakaiteki*) and even “socialist” (Jp. *shakaishugi*) Buddhism. While the political leanings of the core members varied from moderately liberal to radical, the New Buddhists had generally positive relationships with secular leftists activists and thinkers—including several of the most prominent anarchists and socialists of the period. It was, they asserted, a natural move from a modern, “this worldly” Buddhism to one that is directly engaged in proposing Buddhist solutions to major social problems such as poverty, inequality, and imperialism.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, since I invoked the spirit of Spinoza above, let me add that the New Buddhists also claimed that the most appropriate metaphysical foundation for Buddhism—should it need one—was *pantheism* (Jp. *hanshinron*). Though they failed to explore this connection in much detail, I suspect that there is a nod to Spinoza and the “alternative” tradition of Western philosophy that he represents—one in which the interdependence of being and the lack of clear boundaries between “matter” and “spirit” provide a basis for cultivating a form of “practical wisdom” or *prajña* that can “resist” the illusions to which we, as social creatures living in ideological structures, are so prone.

## 10 Conclusions

When considering the implications and significance of Buddhist politics—especially a politics or ethic of resistance—it is useful to recall that the Dharmic traditions of thought and practice may contribute less to an analysis and evaluation of *social order* than to *social reproduction*. While theories of social order and theories of social reproduction both seek to explain social conditions, including integration and stability, theories of social order tend to assume “Hobbesian” predation as a counterfactual, building up laws, civic structures and states as a bulwark against (“natural”) disorder. Theories of social reproduction, on the other hand, see in many of the structures of “social order” precisely the roots of despair and suffering: “The problem of social reproduction is grounded in the latent potential for people collectively to challenge structures of domination, oppression, and exploitation. The theory attempts to explain the mechanisms that generate sufficiently stable forms of cooperation and system integration to mute such collective tendencies for transformation.”<sup>52</sup> And of course, “social reproduction” can take many forms beyond

capitalism or neoliberalism—religion, as well, is often complicit and thus a legitimate target of critique. It is important to recall, once again, that this may have little to do with the deliberate (i.e., malicious) intentions and actions of powerful actors. Rather, the correspondence of “ideology” and a particular culture is often—and more assiduously—generated by the “micro-processes of the formation of beliefs and dispositions,” which include various institutions of socialization that enable young people to function and (for the fortunate few) “succeed” in that society. While these micro-processes do not always work, of course, they are powerful, and over time function collectively as serious limitations on the horizons of human possibility, both individual and collective.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, *power* is too-often understood by liberals, progressives and perhaps most conservatives as a zero sum phenomenon (“power over”) whereby an increase in one’s power means a decrease of limit in the power or agency of another being. But if power is understood in relation to integrity, agency, and “freedom,” as noted above, it need not imply “domination” (in fact, domination would indicate a *lack* of power or freedom). In particular, Buddhism might contribute to a better understanding of *social power*—i.e., “the capacity to mobilize people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions of various sorts in civil society”—in hopes that this can replace or ameliorate our current reliance under neoliberal capitalism on *economic power*.<sup>54</sup> As such, Buddhism might even be a voice in the construction of “countervailing power” and, eventually a truer democracy rooted in empowered participatory governance.<sup>55</sup> But this will require more work.

## Notes

1. D. T. Suzuki. *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1938), 36–7.
2. While I appreciate Faure’s work on dismantling overgeneralizations about “Buddhism” in order to restore “the complexity and richness of the Buddhist tradition,” such a sentiment can be taken too far, such that it becomes impossible to make any claims at all about “the Buddhist tradition.” See Bernard Faure. *Unmasking Buddhism* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 4.
3. Though there are countless sources in the Buddhist canon for this basic teaching (e.g. the Four Noble Truths), in thinking through what this means for ethics I default to the Buddhist formulation of the “Golden Rule” as found in the *Samyutta-Nikāya*: “For a state that is not pleasant or delightful to me must be so to him also; and a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?” (cited in Peter Harvey. *Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 33). What may be missed but needs to be underscored here is that this logical reflection is derived from a naturalistic, even Epicurean premise—which Schmidt-Leukel calls a “fundamental insight” of classical Buddhism—that all beings “[...] yearn for happiness and recoil from pain” (*Majjhima-Nikāya* 51; Perry Schmidt-Leukel.

- “Buddhism and the Idea of Human Rights: Resonances and Dissonances.” In *Buddhist Approaches to Human Rights: Dissonances and Resonances*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Hans-Bernd Zöllner [Berlin: Verlag, 2010], 54).
4. See Christopher Queen and Sallie King (eds). *Engaged Buddhism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).
  5. See, e.g., Queen and King. *Engaged Buddhism*, where the only East Asian examples noted are postwar Taiwanese Buddhist humanism and Japan’s Sōka Gakkai (and the latter only with some noted ambivalence as to whether it qualifies as “engaged Buddhism”). See also James Mark Shields. *Against Harmony: Progressive and Radical Buddhism in Modern Japan* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
  6. See Amod Lele. “Disengaged Buddhism.” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 26 (2019), 239–90. I have written an extended response to Lele’s excellent and timely provocation, which has yet to be published.
  7. Faure, *Unmasking*, 17, 69; see also Schmidt-Leukel, “Human Rights,” 47–48.
  8. As Faure puts it: “[H]istory reveals that Buddhism has always been engaged and involved in political and social life—perhaps too much at times” (Faure, *Unmasking*, 130).
  9. See Kathleen Knight Abowitz. “A Pragmatist Revisioning of Resistance Theory.” *American Educational Research Journal* 37 (4): 878.
  10. See Abowitz, “Pragmatist Revisioning,” 878, citing J. C. Walker. “Rebels With Our Applause? A Critique of Resistance Theory in Paul Willis’ *Ethnography of Schooling*.” *Journal of Education* 167, 2 (1985), 65.
  11. Space and scope prohibit further investigation here, but I should note that Dewey’s work on *transactional* modes of inquiry is particularly germane to classical Buddhist approaches to knowledge (and skepticism): “Transaction is the condition of seeing things not in isolation, nor in terms of their “true” nature or essence, but in terms of their systemic context, their tentative and preliminary status as points of inquiry, their place in an organic world of expanding space and time” (Abowitz, “Pragmatic Revisioning,” 878–9).
  12. Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London and New York: Verso, 2010): 274–6.
  13. I am reminded of Damien Keown’s recent argument that classical Buddhism lacks a true “moral philosophy” such as one finds in ancient Greece, which echoes Jay Garfield’s claim that premodern Buddhism lacks anything like a social or political theory. See Damien Keown. “It’s Ethics, Jim, but Not as We Know It’: Reflections on the Absence of Moral Philosophy in Buddhism.” In *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Jake H. Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17–32; see also P. Bilimoria et al. (eds). *Indian Ethics* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 280. While I take the point that ethics and politics are largely under-theorized in classical Buddhist texts, I question the rather sharp lines that Keown and Garfield seems to draw between these and related categories. Garfield, in particular, seems to limit “politics” to modern, liberal theories of government and the state.

14. Some leftist scholars, in fact, complain that the recent obsession with “resistance” among progressives in fact is a step back from “revolution”—a complaint that has long precedent in Marxist critiques of non-revolutionary forms of anarchism and socialism, dating back to Marx himself. There is an interesting philosophical question here, and one that is not without political implications: *At what point does “engagement” become “resistance,” and “resistance” become “revolution”?* Or are there qualitative distinctions between these three ‘modes’?
15. See James Mark Shields. *Critical Buddhism: Engaging with Modern Japanese Buddhist Thought* (London: Ashgate, 2011).
16. Matsumoto Shirō. “The Doctrine of *Tathāgata-garbha* Is Not Buddhist.” In *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Paul L. Swanson, and Jamie Hubbard (Honolulu: University of Hawai ‘i Press, 1997), 171.
17. Jamie Hubbard. “Topophobia.” In *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Paul L. Swanson, and Jamie Hubbard (Honolulu: University of Hawai ‘i Press, 1997), vii.
18. Matsumoto, “*Tathāgata-garbha*,” 171.
19. Hakamaya Noriaki. “Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy.” In *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Paul L. Swanson, and Jamie Hubbard (Honolulu: University of Hawai ‘i Press, 1997), 74.
20. Yamaguchi Zuiho, quoted in Hubbard, “Topophobia,” xvi.
21. While Damien Keown (“It’s Ethics”) suggests that the apparent lack of Buddhist “moral philosophy” may have to do with a lack within the classical Indian *imaginaire* of anything like *phronesis*—a strong claim with which I will not currently engage—it is certainly *not* the case that “practical wisdom” is foreign to the East Asian intellectual traditions. If anything, a case could be made that it is *all* practical wisdom, all the time. Keown goes on to suggest (citing Jay Garfield) that classical Buddhism, at least, also lacks a concern with politics, understood as “the philosophy of human affairs” (25). As is obvious from my work over the past decade, I respectfully disagree—unless one limits a definition of politics to “affairs of the state.”
22. “Spinoza’s moral philosophy is a version of eudaimonism. The goal is living well and, through virtue and understanding, achieving happiness and even ‘blessedness (*beatitudo*)’” (Steven Nadler. “On Spinoza’s ‘Free Man’.” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, 1 [2015], 105). The *locus classicus* of eudaimonism is of the *Nichomachean Ethics* (1098a10), where Aristotle defines *eudaemonia*—“happiness” or “human flourishing”—as “activity of the soul in accord with virtue... in a complete life.” While Charles Goodman rightly sees resonances here with classical Buddhism, he points out that Buddhist texts tend to see “virtue” as being the all-in-all, such that it is plausible for someone of advanced meditative practice to feel “happy” while suffering tremendous physical pains (what we might call a Christian or Stoic turn, as opposed to the more moderate Epicurean/Spinozan one). “Unlike

- Aristotle, Mahayana Buddhists such as Santideva held that happiness could exist without any contribution from favorable external circumstances. This claim creates the possibility of holding that only the virtue that makes this special kind of happiness plausible has any value at all.” See Charles Goodman. “Modern and Traditional Understandings of Karma.” In *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Jake H. Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 136.
23. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 379.
  24. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 379.
  25. Matthew Stewart. *Nature’s God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic* (London: Norton, 2014), 294. A character in Bernard Malamud’s novel *The Fixer* on reading Spinoza: “Later on I read through a few pages and kept on going as though there were a whirlwind at my back. ... I didn’t understand every word but when you’re dealing with such ideas you feel as though you were taking a witch’s ride. After that I wasn’t the same man...” Same character describing the meaning of Spinoza’s work: “That’s not easy to say... But what I think it means is that he was out to make a free man of himself—as much as one can according to his philosophy, if you understand my meaning—*by thinking things through and connecting everything up...*” (quoted in Gilles Deleuze. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* [San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988], 1, my emphasis).
  26. Stewart, *Nature’s God*, 294.
  27. Compare the concept of *de* as expressed in the Chinese classic *Daodejing*, especially as interpreted by Roger Ames and David Hall in their *Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation—“Making this Life Significant”* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), especially 59–61, where *de* resonates with Machiavellian *virtù*.
  28. Stewart, *Nature’s God*, 296.
  29. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 378.
  30. Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 3.
  31. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 378; see also Peter Herschok. *Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Perspectives on Realizing a More Equitable Global Future* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), on Buddhist “virtuosity.”
  32. Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 379. Matthew Stewart goes even further, dismissing virtually all philosophy after the eighteenth-century: “When the halcyon days of the philosophy of mind came to an end around the turn of the nineteenth century, a host of professor who called themselves ‘philosophers’ arose in defense of the hallowed prejudices about mind and soul”; this includes “reactionary Scottish sentimentalists” along with Kant (Stewart, *Nature’s God*, 259–60).
  33. Here is Jefferson’s take on Epicurus, from his *Syllabus*: “Happiness the aim of life. Virtue the foundation of happiness. Utility the test of virtue”; and on the four essential Epicurean virtues: “1. Prudence; 2. Temperance; 3. Fortitude; 4. Justice” (cited in Stewart, *Nature’s God*, 285). Stewart shifts blame away from

- Jefferson onto John Locke, whose commitment to Spinozan materialism was mixed, at best.
34. Keown cites Oswald Spengler (!), who contrasts the Western “will” with Eastern... lack?: “In the ethics of the West everything is direction, claim to power, will to affect the distance... You ‘shall’, the State ‘shall’, society ‘shall’—this form of morale is to us self-evident; it represents the only real meaning that we can attach to the word. But it was not so either in the Classical, or in India, or in China. Buddha, for instance, gives a pattern to take or to leave, and Epicurus offers counsel. Both undeniably are forms of high morale, and neither contains the will-element.” (Keown, “It’s Ethics,” 30). Though we shouldn’t take Spengler too seriously, the connection between Buddhism and Epicureanism is astute, reflecting the shared commitment to a form of resistance embedded in passive social reproduction.
  35. Buddhaghosa Bhadāntacarīya. *Vishudimagga: The Path of Purification*. Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. 4th edition. Section 2.101.
  36. Bhikku Bodhi. “Toward a Threshold of Understanding.” *Access to Insight* (Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 1988).
  37. See G. A. Cohen. *History, Labor and Freedom: Themes from Marx* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) on agency and freedom in Marx.
  38. Göran Therborn. *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1980).
  39. Erik Olin Wright. *How to Be an Anti-capitalist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Verso, 2019), 122–3.
  40. Elsewhere I have argued for a correlation between Buddhist understandings of a “social self” and Marx’s “species being” (James Mark Shields. “Liberation as Revolutionary Praxis: Rethinking Buddhist Materialism.” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 20 [2013], 477–82). Here let it suffice that classical Buddhism contributes a sophisticated understanding of selfhood that privileges *agency* while questioning *autonomy* as an ideal. I see a parallel here, once again, in the work of scholars looking at Buddhism and human rights. For instance, Meinert and Zöllner argue for a Buddhist “moderate” approach to human rights, one that balances the need to “protect individuals against powerful institutions threatening or suppression from the outside and from within” with the danger of a reliance on “false claims to universality coded in the form of legal rights... this is, in fact, where Buddhism might be able to offer a great deal and possibly could make a major contribution to the discussion of, and demand for, *multiple foundations* of human rights regulations” (“Introduction” to *Buddhist Approaches to Human Rights: Dissonances and Resonances*, edited by Carmen Meinert and Hans-Bernd Zöllner [Berlin: Verlag, 2010], 11)—or, *mutatis mutandis*, multiple foundations for anticapitalism. This seems a better “balance” than the one presented by proponents of “Buddhist economics” such as E. F. Schumacher and P. Payutto; i.e., between capitalism and socialism/communism.

41. Wright, *Utopias*, 111.
42. Sallie B. King. "Conclusion: Buddhist Social Activism." In *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, edited by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 401–36. B. R. Ambedkar heads King's list of "prophetic voices" among Engaged Buddhists, followed by Sulak Sivaraksa and A. R. Ariyaratne.
43. Bronwyn Finnigan. "The Nature of a Buddhist Path." In *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Jake H. Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 38.
44. Finnigan, "Buddhist Path," 39.
45. "[I]t is open to defenders of, say, a neo-Aristotelian approach to ethics to insist that virtues are character traits that, when perfected or made excellent, mutually constitute and sustain well-being or a good way of living (*eudaimonia*). If plausible, virtue-ethical reconstruction of Buddhist ethics on a constitutive metaphysical foundation need not be inconsistent with Buddhist view on the self" (Finnigan, "Buddhist Path," 41).
46. Cited in Finnigan, "Buddhist Path," 47; see also K. Tanahashi (ed.). *Moon in a Dewdrop* (New York: North Point Press, 1985), 72.
47. At the end of the manifesto we find the New Buddhist Fellowship's *Statement of General Principles (kōryō)*, summarized in the following six points: 1) We regard a sound Buddhist faith as our fundamental principle; 2) We will work hard to foster sound faith, knowledge, and moral principles in order to bring about fundamental improvements to society; 3) We advocate the free investigation of Buddhism in addition to other religions; 4) We resolve to destroy superstition; 5) We do not accept the necessity of preserving traditional religious institutions and rituals; 6) We believe the government should refrain from favoring religious groups or interfering in religious matters.
48. While the modernistic emphasis on free inquiry and a rational, ethical and scientific outlook were also in evidence among the figures representing the earlier Buddhist Enlightenment, the New Buddhists—at least some of them—pushed the envelope much further in this direction, to the point where it could be legitimately asked what was left of "religion" (or "Buddhism") as conventionally understood.
49. While the New Buddhists did attempt to clarify a new Buddhist "faith," in doing so they radically transformed the ordinary sense of the term, so that it became a synonym for "moral commitment" or "sincere engagement" (or perhaps, in traditional Buddhist terms, "right intention").
50. SB 2, 12 (December 1901), p. 393.
51. Though this flirtation with socialism was considerably dampened by the crackdown following the 1911 High Treason Incident (during which twenty-four people, including Buddhist priests Takagi Kenmyō and Uchiyama Gudō were incarcerated for allegedly plotting to assassinate the Meiji Emperor), the spirit of Buddhist political resistance was picked up in the 1930s by Seno'o Girō and his more explicitly Marxist Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism.

52. Wright, *Utopias*, 278. This insight on the part of twentieth-century Buddhist socialists like Seno'o Girō was the inspiration for the title of my 2017 monograph: *Against Harmony*.
53. As Wright puts it, the processes of ideology formation generate "at least a rough correspondence between the kinds of social subjects needed for the social structure to be reproduced and the kinds of social subjects produced within the society" (Wright, *Utopias*, 285). One result is that "[p]eople can have many complaints about the social world and know that it generates significant harms to themselves and others, and yet still believe that such harms are inevitable, that there are no other real possibilities that would make things significantly better, and that thus there is little point in struggling to change things, particularly since such struggles involve significant costs" (286).
54. This is contrasted to *economic power* (associated with capitalism, which uses *bribery* as a method of persuasion, and *state power* (associated with both authoritarian and neoliberal states, which rely on force and ideology as primary methods of persuasion). That is not to suggest, of course, that social power is entirely distinguishable from economics or politics, but that these will be subordinate to a commitment to human social flourishing (thus, a "social economy"). See Wright, *Utopias*, 112–13, 121, 192; see also Steven Lukes. *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd edition (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
55. *Countervailing power* refers to "a wide variety of processes that reduce—and perhaps even neutralize—the power advantages of ordinarily powerful groups and elites in the contexts of these governmental institutions..." (Wright, *Utopias*, 165). Further, "if 'democracy' is the label for the subordination of state power to social power, 'socialism' is the term for the subordination of economic power to social power" (121).

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Ethics (Oxford, 2018), as well as the following two journal special issues: Japanese Religions and the Meiji Restoration: A Reconsideration (Journal of Japanese Religions 7, no. 3, 2018) and Radical and Revolutionary Buddhism(s) in Thought and Practice (Politics, Religion & Ideology 15, no. 2, 2014).

# “Can You Hear the Great Sound of the Holy Footsteps?” The 650th Grand Death Anniversary of Gasan Jōseki



Michaela Mross

A head priest from a local Sōtō temple and his parishioners arrive in the Tsurumi ward of Yokohama. Leaving the busy streets and the gray buildings of the city behind, they enter the driveway to Sōjiji 總持寺, which is lined with green trees, and pass the massive mountain gate. They stop in front of the reception in a traditional-style temple building; after exiting their bus, they are warmly welcomed by monks of Sōjiji. The visitors enter the hall, and a novice monk leads them to a private room. A senior priest enters and greets the visitors. He expounds on the special occasion of their visit, the 650th grand death anniversary of Sōjiji's second abbot, Gasan Jōseki 峨山韶碩 (1276–1366), who was responsible for the spread of Sōtō Zen all across Japan. The senior priest instills a sense of the deep significance of the memorial service in the visitors' minds. The novice guides the visitors to the main hall, the largest of its kind in Japan. Over 100 monks have assembled there, bells resound, and all perform prostrations. A monk instructs the visitors to bow together with the monks. The monks start to recite scriptures, and their voices fill the hall. The sound of the large singing bowl and the wooden fish that accompany the chanting reverberates in the visitors' bodies. The visitors walk to the altar to offer incense. Finally, the cantor recites a prayer transferring the merit produced through the recitation of scriptures to the ancestors of the visitors. The visitors continue with a temple tour, visit the temple shop to buy gifts for family and friends, and then depart, heading to visit a tourist spot on the way home (Fig. 1).

This group was one of over 1000 congregations that visited Sōjiji, one of the two head temples of the Sōtō school, during Gasan's 650th grand death anniversary in 2015. Elaborate memorial services commemorating the death anniversaries of founders or eminent monks of major Buddhist schools are traditionally conducted at 50-year intervals. By performing rituals, clerics and lay devotees remember the founding figures of their school and repay the benevolence they have received.

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**Fig. 1** Monks waving farewell to a group of lay devotees in front of Sōjiji's reception. Photo by the author

These occasions are also times when clerics engage in revitalization activities, such as rebuilding temple halls or publishing texts on the life or teaching of the monk whose death anniversary they commemorate. For example, the major biography of Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), the *Kenzeiki* 建掣記, was produced in 1452, the year of his 200th death anniversary, and it was later copied or emended on the occasion of other grand death anniversaries, such as his 500th death anniversary, when Menzan Zuihō 面山瑞方 (1683–1769) significantly edited and revised it as the *Teihō Kenzeiki* 訂補建掣記.<sup>1</sup>

Grand death anniversaries help form a community of memory—a community of fellow practitioners who remember the same foundational stories. The members of this community are connected by a shared memory about their identities as clerics in a certain lineage.<sup>2</sup> The liturgical performances during the commemorations shape what Derek Krueger calls a “liturgy of memory.”<sup>3</sup> He argues that Byzantine Christian hagiographies and liturgical practices created a liturgical “we,” a group defined through a shared communal memory. This liturgical “we” is not just shaped by sharing a narration of the same stories and ideas but is also lived through bodily expressions of these notions in communal rituals.<sup>4</sup> By retelling the key stories, each generation reconfirms this communal memory, and the grand death anniversaries are important times for affirming the collective memory.

This memory, as well as the liturgical “we,” is tied to a particular place where the commemorated monk was active. By gathering at this temple and connecting the key stories of the group with this place, this site is recentered in the communal

memory. Place is not an abstract idea; instead, it is a space established by engaging with it. As Michael Dickhardt wrote, place is a specific mode of praxis. He uses the example of a house and writes that “building a house is not per se the essential element of making the house a place. Rather, it is the act of making the house a focal point of actors, their practices and their meanings which define it as a place. ... Thus, place is essentially a praxis, or, more precisely, a mode of praxis.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, by gathering at a specific temple, the monks reconfirm it as a center of their community and a place where the teaching of a particular monk is thought to be still alive. In the case of Gasan’s 650th grand death anniversary, the clerics confirmed Sōjiji as the place where Gasan’s teaching is present and reestablished it as one of the central monasteries of Sōtō Zen. The memory and the sacred space reinforce each other.

In this chapter, I examine how the memory of Gasan is reflected in the program that Sōjiji organized for his 650th death anniversary, based on my fieldwork during the memorial service and Sōjiji’s publications. What groups of people were involved? How were Gasan and his role in the Sōtō school remembered? What elements were adopted from previous death anniversaries, and what elements were new? What agenda stood behind the celebration and promotion of this death anniversary? By analyzing these aspects, I show that grand death anniversaries are not only times of remembrance but also provide an opportunity to create a thriving future for a particular Buddhist school, branch, or temple by reestablishing an iconic figure and its temple in the collective memory of the group. I also suggest that by performing rituals and hosting a wide range of events, Sōjiji confirmed itself as a center in the collective memory of the Sōtō school and inscribed itself in the landscape of Yokohama.

## 1 Sōjiji and Memorial Services for Gasan

In contrast to Eiheiji 永平寺 in Fukui prefecture, the other head temple of the Sōtō school, Sōjiji is located in an urban environment in the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area (Fig. 2). Both head temples are flagship monasteries at which 150–200 novices train. Both also serve the needs of Sōtō parishioners all across Japan. In addition, Sōjiji has a very high number of parishioners, and its monks regularly perform many funerals and memorial rites. Sōjiji is further invested in education and has an affiliated kindergarten, a middle and high school, and a university.

Sōjiji was not always in Yokohama. It was originally founded in the remote village of Monzen on the Noto Peninsula in 1321 by Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1264/68–1325), who is now regarded as one of the two great patriarchs of Japanese Sōtō Zen. He entrusted this temple to Gasan, one of his main disciples, in 1324. Although Keizan was the founding abbot, Gasan became Sōjiji’s first full-time Zen abbot because Keizan only spent a few months at Sōjiji and was mainly teaching at nearby Yōkōji 永光寺. Until his death in 1366, Gasan was active at Sōjiji,



**Fig. 2** The Hall of the Great Ancestors (Daisodō 大祖堂) of Sōjiji. Photo by the author

obtaining the support of wealthy patrons and training many successful disciples who helped spread Sōtō Zen all across Japan. His main five disciples and their successors installed an abbot rotation system that secured the support of monks in their lineage and ensured Sōjiji's long-term success. Thanks to their efforts, Sōjiji was able to eclipse Yōkōji by the end of the sixteenth century and became one of the two head temples of the Sōtō school. Over 90 percent of all Sōtō temples historically belong to the Sōjiji lineage.<sup>6</sup>

The annual memorial services for Keizan and Gasan were central observances at Sōjiji, and each lasted three full days.<sup>7</sup> Monks of the Sōjiji faction gathered at these annual services to pay respect to Keizan and Gasan and remember the origins of their lineage. As medieval documents show, they decided important institutional matters at these times, and consequently the memorial services also had an administrative function.

Monks at Sōjiji further conducted grand memorial services at 50-year intervals.<sup>8</sup> These observances were monastic events during which monks affiliated with Sōjiji paid respect to Keizan and Gasan. Very few laypeople attended these major services. On one hand, Sōjiji was in a very remote village on the Noto Peninsula, and access was difficult; on the other hand, Sōjiji had very few parishioners.

The character of the grand memorial services changed after Sōjiji relocated to Tsurumi in 1911 after a great fire destroyed the original temple. Leaders decided to move their temple closer to the capital to reach more people. The temple at the original site was rebuilt on a smaller scale and is now named Sōjiji Soin 總持寺祖院.

Only a few years after its relocation, in 1920, Sōjiji commemorated Gasan’s 550th death anniversary (with a five-year delay), and Sōjiji invited lay devotees from all across Japan. Now Sōjiji was easily accessible because railways had made public transportation widely available. As a result, many parishioners attended the grand memorial service for the first time.<sup>9</sup> Ozaki Shōzen suggests that Dōgen’s 650th grand death anniversary, commemorated in 1902, which was organized as an outreach event and attended by many laypeople, served as a model for Gasan’s memorial service.<sup>10</sup> The grand memorial services for Keizan and Gasan so gained a new, additional function of outreach. At that time, the grand death anniversaries were extended from to original three days to three weeks for Keizan and two weeks for Gasan.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Sōjiji expanded the memorial services in scope in terms of participants and in length.

## 2 The Motto and Aims of Gasan’s 650th Death Anniversary

Gasan’s 650th grand death anniversary was not commemorated as a stand-alone event but as part of the death anniversaries of Keizan and Gasan. While Gasan’s event was conducted in 2015, Keizan’s 700th death anniversary is planned for 2024. Sōjiji’s monks view these two grand death anniversaries as one ceremony spanning 10 years and commemorate them together as the Grand Death Anniversaries of the Two Venerable Ones (*Goryōson daionki* 御両尊大遠忌) (Fig. 3).

Both services are prepared under the motto *Sōjō* 相承, transmission of the teaching from master to disciple. Monks of Sōjiji chose the motto to highlight that Gasan received the true teaching from Keizan, and then the Dharma has been transmitted from generation to generation to the present day and will be transmitted to future generations. The slogan “Can You Hear the Great Sound of the Holy Footsteps?” (*ookii naru ashioto ga kikoemasuka* 大なる足音がきこえますか) expresses the idea that the activities of Gasan and the successive generations of clerics in his lineage have had an influence over centuries and the sound of their footsteps—their influence—can still be heard or felt today. It further implies that the teaching of the present practitioners will continue to be transmitted into the future. A poster exhibited at Sōjiji states: “We wholeheartedly give our attention to the sounds of the holy footsteps and the sound of our *sangha*’s footsteps at the present moment and in the future.”<sup>12</sup> In a pamphlet and on a webpage, Sōjiji’s monks voiced their hope that the great sound of their ancestors’ footsteps may reverberate in the hearts of all people through the karmic connection to the grand death anniversaries.<sup>13</sup> The motto and slogan express the monks’ hope that the transmission of Sōtō Zen will continue well into the future. This suggests that the memorial services were not only a time of remembering but also a time to create a thriving future for Sōjiji.<sup>14</sup>



相承

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~大いなる足音がきこえますか~

二祖峨山韶碩禅師

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御両尊大遠忌法会

二祖峨山韶碩禅師  
650回大遠忌  
平成27年10月7日~20日奉修

太祖瑩山紹瑾禅師  
700回大遠忌  
平成36年奉修

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Fig. 3 Poster of the grand death anniversaries of Keizan and Gasan, stating the slogan and motto.  
Courtesy of Sōjiji

Otogawa Eigen 乙川暎元, the superintendent (*kannin* 監院) of Sōjiji, was vital in developing a vision for Gasan’s grand memorial service. In an interview, he told me that he aimed to include local people (*shimin* 市民) in the commemorations and so introduce Zen to as many people as possible. He remarked that the move to Tsurumi was motivated by the wish to reach more people and teach them about Zen. Otogawa commented that during the celebration of 100 years of Sōjiji in Tsurumi, elaborate rituals were performed with high-ranking monks visiting, but local people were not included. He aimed to change this during Gasan’s grand death anniversary and invited laypeople who are not affiliated with the Sōtō school. He related this aim to the motto of the memorial service, *Sōjō*, and said that this is also the transmission of Zen to many people. Therefore, Sōjiji organized a memorial service that followed traditional liturgical customs and included new events that welcomed laypeople who would otherwise not have visited Sōjiji during this time.

Consequently, diverse groups of people visited Sōjiji during Gasan’s 650th memorial year for one reason or another. Sōtō clerics and representative of other schools were invited to attend the memorial service, and so were parishioners of Sōtō temples and laypeople who had no affiliation with Sōjiji. For the different attendees and participants, the events presumably had a different meaning. But for all who visited Sōjiji, the visit included some form of enjoyment. Most local people who visited might not have had a religious reason to come; for them, it was a means of engaging with culture and leisure. I had a lot of contact with the monks who came to Sōjiji to help during the memorial services in June and October. Participating in this important commemoration was also for them a form of enjoyment, as they had a chance to meet some of their old priest friends with whom they trained as young novices.

The clerics who participated in the memorial service and with whom I spoke expressed a deep gratitude that they had a chance to help during this rare occasion. Some remarked that they would not be alive at Gasan’s next grand death anniversary in 50 years. One senior priest who regularly helps out at Sōjiji mentioned that he was a novice at Sōjiji during Keizan’s last grand memorial service in 1974, and he was grateful to have had a chance to serve at both. He especially recalled that monks shed tears when Maekawa Hakuhō, probably the most acclaimed *shōmyō* specialist of his generation, read the declaration paying respect to Keizan during the main memorial service almost 50 years ago. Many clerics felt grateful for being able to attend this once—or twice—in a lifetime observance.

### 3 Events and Projects During the Memorial Year

Sōjiji organized a wide range of rituals, events, and activities in remembrance of Gasan that all expressed the motto and slogan of the grand death anniversary and helped reestablish Gasan and Sōjiji in the communal memory of Sōtō clerics and parishioners (see Table 1). Additionally, Sōjiji hosted events for laypeople living in Tsurumi and inscribed itself in the landscape of Yokohama. The main



**Table 1** Main events during the grand memorial service. Unless otherwise noted, the events were conducted at Sōjiji. This list is based on the webpage of the memorial service (<http://www.sojo.jp/news/225/>); furthermore, I added the international Zen workshop.

Date	Event
26–28 March	<i>Zazenkai</i> for children
1 April	Sutra chanting of welcoming the commemorations of Gasan's 650th grand death anniversary
10–16 April	Precepts ceremony
17 May	Gasandō trail running (Noto Peninsula)
27–28 May	National Baikaryū meeting (Minato Mirai Hall, Yokohama)
1–8 June	Secondary memorial service
13 June	Symposium on Gasan (Tsurumi University)
18 June	Tea ceremony ( <i>kencha shiki</i> 献茶式) with the headmaster of the Urasenke school
23 June	Concert <i>Inori no shirabe</i> 祈りの調べ featuring Ikebe Shin'ichirō's composition for orchestra and monks' chanting (Minato Mirai Hall, Yokohama)
12 September	Classical music concert with soprano singer Sai Ienguan サイ・イエングアン (Tsurumi University)
7–20 October	Main memorial service
21–22 October	International Zen workshop

commemorations of Gasan's grand death anniversary started with a sutra chanting for welcoming the memorial service on 1 April and ended with the main memorial service on 20 October. Throughout this time, various groups of people visited Sōjiji and engaged in some way with the memory of Gasan and Sōtō Zen.

Two of the events during the commemorations were regular annual observances. First, Sōjiji conducts a precepts meeting for lay devotees each year in April, which is attended by over 100 parishioners, who take the bodhisattva precepts during a seven-day retreat. As a special highlight of the 2015's precepts meeting, the Dalai Lama visited Sōjiji on 11 April to give a lecture, which was open to the local community and students of Sōjiji's affiliated schools.

The second regular observance was the national annual meeting of the Baikaryū 梅花流 (lit., "style of plum blossoms"), a Sōtō Zen organization of choirs singing Buddhist hymns (*eisanka* 詠讃歌). The annual meeting is organized by the Baikaryū department of the Sōtō school headquarters, and its location varies every year. In 2015, it was conducted in the Minato Mirai Hall close to Sōjiji, so the around 9,000 attendees had a chance to visit Sōjiji. The precepts meeting and the annual Baikaryū meeting offered Sōjiji an opportunity to teach parishioners more about Gasan and his role in the school's history. Because all participants were engaged devotees, they were familiar with basic Sōtō Zen ideas, but many of them might not have known much about Gasan. Through these events, Sōjiji was able to teach them about their second abbot, and explorations on Gasan were integrated in

these events. For example, the two-day Baikaryū meeting featured an artist who told Gasan’s life story by drawing with sand. It was a beautiful performance that captured the interest of the audience.

Sōjiji also organized events that reached out to new audiences. One of these was the Gasandō trail run. During this event, participants run 73 km from Yōkōji to Sōjiji Soin. It is based on the legend that when Gasan was abbot of Sōjiji and Yōkōji at the same time, he first observed the morning service at Yōkōji and then ran directly to Sōjiji, a trail of 53 km, to join the monks performing the morning service there. The trail Gasan took is called Gasandō 峨山道, or Way of Gasan. This is an important story in the communal memory of Sōjiji and was a central theme that ran like a thread through all activities during the commemorations. The image of Gasan running from Yōkōji to Sōjiji is reflected in the slogan “Can You Hear the Great Sound of the Holy Footsteps?” It is said that the special style of chanting the *Dharani of the Mind of Great Compassion* (*Daihishin darani* 大悲心陀羅尼) in *shindoku* 真読 (lit., “true reading”) each morning in a slow tempo with melodies was invented because the monks of Sōjiji had to wait for Gasan to join their morning service. When Gasan arrived at Sōjiji the monks doubled the tempo and recited the *dharani* without any melodies. In this way, the liturgical practice connects Sōjiji’s monks with Gasan and their origins. Of course, the Gasandō trail run requires a lot of training (being almost twice as long as a marathon) and therefore only very athletic people participated. However, it was an effective way to gain publicity in a very different social sphere and promote Gasan and Sōjiji to a new audience. Since the first trail run in 2015, it has become a regular annual event.<sup>15</sup>

The memory of Gasan’s run—and indirectly a remembrance of Sōjiji’s origins on the Noto Peninsula—were incorporated into another, unique project: a commissioned piece for orchestra and monks chanting the *Dharani of the Mind of Great Compassion* in *shindoku*, composed by Ikebe Shin’ichirō 池辺晋一郎. This piece, titled *Way of Gasan* (Gasandō 峨山道), was featured in a premiere performance on 23 June in a concert hall and then performed during the main memorial service in October. This composition musically expressed the remembrance of Gasan.<sup>16</sup>

The *Dharani of the Mind of Great Compassion* was also integrated in the art installation “Sarit: Flow of Compassion,” created by Naomi Kasumi. Kasumi visualized the theme of transmission as a river that flows drop by drop. She created this river out of 55,000 small triangles on some of which the *Dharani of the Mind of Great Compassion* was written in Siddham script.<sup>17</sup> This installation captured the main message and the image of Sōjiji as a place of compassion, the compassion of Keizan and Gasan—and it hinted again at Gasan’s run from Yōkōji to Sōjiji, during which the monks at Sōjiji chanted the *dharani*. It was installed in one of the corridors close to the reception and was visible for all those walking through Sōjiji’s temple compound. One of the senior priests who helped out during the memorial service told some visitors that the installation captured the main meaning of the memorial service. On one hand, it remembers Gasan and his runs; on the other hand, it expresses the compassion of Gasan and the monks of Sōjiji.

Other events that aimed to reach a wider audience were the tea meeting in June and the classical music concert in September. Sōjiji also hosted an international *zazenkai* 坐禅会 (meditation retreat) for children from Japan and other Buddhist countries before the official start of the main commemorations. Similarly, Sōjiji organized a Zen workshop for international teachers after the main memorial service. Thus, a *zazenkai* for children, the youngest audience, and a symposium for a global audience framed the commemorations.

Grand death anniversaries are further times when temples produce publications on the life or teaching of a monk and his temple and so shape the communal memory. Some of these publications are written by scholars or scholar-monks, and their scholarship supports the remembrance of iconic figures and their place(s) of activity. Likewise, Sōjiji encouraged scholarship on Gasan. For example, in June, Sōjiji and the Buddhist Culture Research Institute of Tsurumi University organized a symposium that integrated scholars in the commemorations and encouraged more academic engagement with Gasan and Sōjiji's history. During the symposium, Tamamura Fumio, a well-known historian and professor emeritus from Meiji University, gave the keynote speech on the activities of the Gasan branch in the Tokugawa period (1603–1868). Then Ozaki Shōzen (Tsurumi University) spoke about Gasan's relation to parishioners, Matsuda Yōji (Komazawa University) lectured about Gasan's *San'un kaigetsu* 山雲海月, Yamaguchi Seishō (senior priest at Sōjiji) talked about Gasan's disciple Tsugen Jakurei 通幻寂霊, and Miyaji Kiyohiko (Research Institute of the Sōtō school) discussed Sōjiji's former abbot rotation system. All papers highlighted the role of Gasan and his branch in the history of Sōtō Zen.<sup>18</sup> The symposium was well attended by Zen studies scholars, Sōtō priests, and interested laypeople. In commemoration of Gasan's grand death anniversary, Sōjiji also published other scholarly works, such as a temple registration record of the Sōtō school during the Hōei era (1704–1711).<sup>19</sup> Sōjiji further published a reprint of a biography of Gasan written by Tsukuda Kazuo, originally published in 1996, and a book on the direct branch temples of Sōjiji.<sup>20</sup> Research on Gasan, Sōjiji, and the history of the Sōtō school was an integral part of the commemorations—and it played an important role in reinscribing the importance of Gasan into the collective memory of the school.

In commemoration of Gasan's death anniversary, Sōjiji also produced a manga and a film, which both have a clear pedagogical function. The manga, titled *Gasan sama*, was written for a younger audience and narrates how during a visit to Sōjiji Soin, a high school student has a vision about Gasan and the transmission of Sōtō Zen. The manga emphasized the themes of transmission and tradition, reflecting the motto of the memorial service.<sup>21</sup> The film on the life of Gasan, titled *Sōjō*, was distributed to all Sōtō temples and shown to parishioners who visited the head temple. Following the format often used in Japanese TV shows, a narrator visits sites related to Gasan and explores his life. Like the manga, the film emphasizes the motto of transmission but it also highlights the importance of *zazen*, which is not emphasized in the manga. The film narrator explains that *zazen* is the core of the correct transmission and stands at the center of Sōtō Zen as a practice for clerics and

lay devotees. In this way, Sōjiji used the occasion of the grand death anniversary to teach laypeople about Gasan’s role in the history of Sōtō Zen and provide inspiration for an engagement with Zen practice.

## 4 A Pilgrimage to Sōjiji: Parishioners Pay Respect to Gasan

Throughout the year, many Sōtō priests from local temples and their parishioners visited Sōjiji to pay respect to Gasan. The lay devotees had there also a chance to learn more about the history and practice of Sōtō Zen.

Almost every day, several groups came to Sōjiji, and the monks there were very busy hosting them. The number of participants per group varied widely: some groups consisted of only 15–30 people, whereas others were larger than 150. Likewise, the program differed. Some groups stayed as little as two to three hours, whereas others stayed overnight, arriving in the afternoon and leaving after breakfast the next day. Tables 2 and 3 provide examples of the two different programs. The decision about the program was made by the visiting head priest and the organizer of the group in consultation with the head temple.

After arriving, the groups were warmly welcomed, and throughout the visit, the monks conveyed a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. All groups participated in a sutra chanting in the Hall of the Great Ancestors, which often included special prayers for the participant’s ancestors (Fig. 4). They also toured the temple grounds, learning how the different halls and places support Zen practice or express Buddhist concepts. Many groups listened to a sermon by a priest from the outreach department, who talked about Gasan and his role in the history of Sōtō Zen, as well as about general Buddhist ideas (Fig. 5). Some groups stayed for lunch and ate vegetarian temple cuisine (*shōjin ryōri* 精進料理), which is often a highlight for laypeople visiting Buddhist sites. While eating, visitors were instructed in the etiquette of chanting before and after the meal and so experienced one aspect of Sōtō Zen practice.

**Table 2** Program of a group from the Temple Kōshūji in Saitama prefecture

7 July 2015	Activity
12 pm	Arrival
	Tour of halls and temple ground
1 pm	Sutra chanting of respectfully visiting Sōjiji ( <i>haitō fugin</i> 拝登諷経)
	Offerings for the parishioners ( <i>danshintō kuyō</i> 檀信徒供養)
	Group photo
	Continue visiting the halls and temple ground
2 pm	Dharma lecture
3 pm	Departure

**Table 3** Program of a group from the Temple Kaikenji in Niigata prefecture

7 July 2015	Activity
4 pm	Arrival
	Tour of halls and temple ground
5:30 pm	Dinner
6:30 pm	Dharma lecture
	Explanation of the etiquette and rituals next morning
8 pm	Taking a bath
9 pm	Turning off the lights to sleep
<b>8 July 2015</b>	
3:30 am	Wake-up bell
4:15 am	<i>Zazen</i>
5:15 am	Morning service and sutra chanting for respectfully visiting Sōjiji
	Group photo
7 am	Breakfast
8:30 am	Departure

**Fig. 4** A group of lay devotees attends a ritual for Gasan in the Hall of the Great Ancestors. Photo by the author

If a group stayed overnight, the visitors had a chance to experience monastic life and participate in morning *zazen*. They could learn more about Sōjiji and Gasan than visitors who only stayed for a few hours. Some groups asked for special opportunities to express their devotion; for example, one group chanted the *Heart*



Fig. 5 Sermon by a Sōtō priest for a group of lay devotees. Photo by the author

*Sutra* before the actual sutra chanting performed by Sōjiji’s monks; another group sung Buddhist hymns in the style of the Baikaryū in the main hall. Hence, these groups expressed their devotion through religious practices that they regularly do at home. The different programs show the flexibility of Sōjiji in creating an individualized program that served the needs of each group.

Groups who stayed only for a few hours usually visited other tourist sites, such as a hot springs resort or Mt. Fuji, before or after visiting Sōjiji. One of the visiting priests mentioned to me that this was important; religious devotion and enjoyment (*asobi* 遊び) have been closely linked since early times, he said. Indeed, even their visit to Sōjiji offered them enjoyment. For example, a young priest or a novice monk led the temple tour and explained the meaning and history of the different temple buildings in an entertaining way. I joined these tours several times; the monks told jokes or interesting stories, and the visitors laughed or showed their interest in other ways. Thus even the temple visit offered both: religious engagement and enjoyment.<sup>22</sup> Through these experiences, the visitors were able to absorb some of the communal memory of Gasan and Sōjiji.

## 5 The Main Memorial Service for Gasan

This section now turns to Gasan’s 650th main memorial service, held from 7 to 20 October. It was a major commemoration during which several thousand people visited Sōjiji to express their gratitude to Gasan.



## 5.1 Liturgical Commemorations

From early morning to late afternoon, the monks' voices resounded in the main hall, and the priests conducted many sutra-chanting services, during which more than 30 priests who came to Sōjiji for this occasion performed as officiants and provided offerings (Fig. 6). Most of them were accompanied by priest friends, family, and their temple community. Through all these services, the clerics paid respect to Gasan. Additionally, the monks conducted rites for Keizan, Gasan's five main disciples, and Emperor Godaigo 後醍醐天皇 (1288–1339), who is said to have declared Sōjiji to be an imperial prayer temple.<sup>23</sup>

The priests who served as officiants arrived in the afternoon before the day of the service. After visiting the Buddha hall, they were guided to their quarters; in the evening, they participated in a rehearsal of their ritual duties. The next day, before the ritual, they dressed in a beautiful colored robe and prepared for their ritual function. The priest was ushered to the center of the hall, where he performed prostrations, offered incense, and took his seat in the middle. He read a statement praising Gasan while offering incense and then provided more offerings on the altar in a highly formulaic way (Fig. 7).<sup>24</sup> Thereafter, all clerics performed prostrations, showing their respect to Gasan or other important monks of the early Sōjiji history, and chanted sutras or *dharani*. Finally, the cantor read a transfer of merit, and the rite concluded with all performing prostrations.



**Fig. 6** Morning service during the memorial service in the Hall of the Great Ancestors. Photo by the author



**Fig. 7** A priest offers tea to Jippō Ryōshū 実峰良秀 (1318–1405), one of Gasan’s five main disciples. Photo by the author

The rituals were all very similar, and only the sutra or *dharani* changed depending on the ritual. Nonetheless, a few rituals differed. One was the *Tōjō dentō kōshiki* 洞上傳灯講式 (*Kōshiki* on the Transmission of Light in the Sōtō school), a highly musical ritual remembering Keizan that the monks of Sōjiji performed in the evening of the first night.<sup>25</sup> Four nights during the memorial service (9, 11, 13, and 15 October), a senior priest gave a lecture for the monks, as well as the visiting priests and their congregation, in the main hall. This lecture was followed by evening *zazen* in the main hall.<sup>26</sup>

The tension slowly built up over the first 13 days of the service, as several of the participants remarked, and cumulated with the last day of the memorial service, 20 October, Gasan’s memorial day. The main memorial service was the largest and most elaborate ritual of commemorations. The day started with a morning service as usual, followed by a sutra chanting for the offering of rice gruel on the memorial day of Gasan and a ritual for the victims of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. Assistants then set up offerings and beautiful flower arrangements in front of the altar and chairs for the participants of the rituals. At around 9 am, the monks first performed a sutra chanting with offerings for Gasan and then for Keizan and Gasan. Not many guests were present during these two rituals. However, during the latter, led by Sōjiji’s former abbot Ishibashi Kōshū, people started to arrive. The seats slowly filled, and in the back of the hall, numerous laypeople (who were not



officially invited) gathered. Among the guests were high-ranking clerics of other schools. The large temple bell was rung, announcing the main memorial service, which started around 10:30 am. The abbot of Eiheiiji officiated over a sutra chanting for Keizan and Gasan and provided offerings to them (Fig. 8). Then Sōjiji's abbot officiated over the main memorial service. When he was solemnly ushered to the hall, the *gagaku* 雅楽 ensemble of the Sōtō school played. This ensemble played again when Sōjiji's abbot provided offerings for the two patriarchs on the altar. This contrasted with other rituals of the two-week memorial service during which a monk sang a hymn while an officiant provided offerings. The *gagaku* music added a special character to the main service. Then the monks offered incense in a highly formularized way coordinated by the cantor and the sound of cymbals. The cantor read a poetic declaration praising Gasan's virtue, a text written especially for this occasion. It was a highlight that expressed the gratitude of Sōjiji monks toward their second abbot, Gasan. After this ritual, most guests and monks who had come to participate in the main service left the hall. The remaining priests performed a concluding sutra-chanting service led by the abbot of Sōjiji Soin. It was a humbler ritual, performed with utmost respect and solemnity. Thus, the highly elaborate service ended. The priests gathered for lunch, and the monks who had helped packed their belongings to return to their home temples.



**Fig. 8** The abbot of Eiheiiji reads Dharma words during the main memorial service of Gasan. Photo by the author

## 5.2 *Beyond Traditional Liturgical Customs*

Sōjiji expanded the scope of the two-week memorial service and hosted several events directed toward laypeople, including those who were not affiliated with the head temple or the Sōtō school. In this way, Sōjiji reminded people in Tsurumi and nearby neighborhoods, some of whom might not have known about Sōjiji, about the existence of a major Sōtō Zen temple in the area. First, Sōjiji organized daily Dharma talks and *zazen* introduction at the café Zagetsu Kazuha 坐月一葉 in a department store next to the Tsurumi train station. Zagetsu is a modern Japanese-style café that serves traditional sweets and green tea. It has a close relation to Sōjiji and hosts monthly Dharma talks. The daily talks and *zazen* during the memorial service were done to offer more people an introduction to Buddhism and *zazen* in a secular setting. I attended many of these talks, and most of the priests who lectured talked briefly about Sōjiji and Gasan’s memorial service before exploring general Buddhist ideas in an entertaining way. For example, one priest narrated a children’s picture book to the attendees and then interpreted the story through a Buddhist lens and provided guidance for their daily lives. If weather permitted, the participants did *zazen* on the roof of the building, close to the rooftop garden. The outdoor *zazen* was a special attraction. Because the talks were done in the morning, mainly housewives or retirees could attend. A few younger people occasionally joined. For example, two artists who practice yoga and had seen a flyer for this event participated one time. They told me that they enjoyed the experience and planned to visit the temple later.

On the first weekend of the memorial service, 10 and 11 October, Sōjiji offered free temple tours and *zazen* instruction from morning to afternoon. The event was well advertised and attracted several hundred people, many more than were expected. Thus, many laypeople had a chance to learn more about Sōtō Zen and had a chance to get acquainted with Sōjiji as a sacred space in Tsurumi.

A much larger event, which felt like a communal festival, was hosted on the following weekend. Due to the advertisement on mass media, such as NHK, FM Yokohama, and *Yokohama shinbun*, several thousand people visited Sōjiji during the two days. The event started on 17 October with the Evening of 10,000 Lights at Tsurumi (*Tsurumi mantō no yube* 鶴見萬灯の夕べ), during which bamboo poles with artful patterns were set up around Sōjiji and lit with candles. Visitors were also invited to write wishes on special lamps that were hung in the trees at Sōjiji. The lights created a quiet, almost solemn atmosphere that set the tone for the events of the next day.

18 October was a day full of events for the larger population of Tsurumi, organized as the Grand Memorial Service of the Town of Tsurumi (*Tsurumi no machi no daionki* 鶴見のまちの大遠忌). It started in the morning with rituals and a concert in the main hall: First, the young monks association performed a ritual paying respect to Keizan and Gasan. The soundscape changed when the Sōtō school’s *gagaku* ensemble performed. Finally, the abbot of Sōjiji officiated over a ritual paying respect to Gasan. Imperial Princess Takamado also visited Sōjiji in the

morning. As she walked through the temple gate, she was warmly welcomed by priests and laypeople who lined up along the way. After visiting the memorial site of Emperor Godaigo, she joined the ceremony.

For the lunch break, the young monks' association hosted a vegetarian feast (*shōjin ryōri fesuta* 精進料理フェスタ). The monks laid out red blankets on which the visitors sat down to eat. It was a beautiful afternoon. Several visitors and participating priests said that it reminded them of Kyoto, where one could sit outside in a temple garden and drink green tea. Japanese temple food has been important for Zen monks, especially since Dōgen emphasized the importance of cooking in his *Instructions for the Cook* (*Tenzō kyōkun* 典座教訓).<sup>27</sup> By sharing vegetarian food, the young monks' associations also taught the religious background. The association related food to the theme of the memorial service, *Sōjō*, and wrote in the pamphlet that Gasan would have received the correct teaching from Keizan and transmitted it to his disciples; then it was transmitted from generation to generation up to today. The life that we receive through food becomes our life and is the transmission (*sōjō* 相承) of life.<sup>28</sup> Based on this idea, they hosted the event and instructed the lay visitors in the etiquette of taking food, such as reciting the five verses before eating and the way of cleaning the dishes afterward (Fig. 9). In this way, they provided delicious vegetarian dishes and conveyed basic Zen ideas.

After lunch, the events continued in the main hall with a concert by Ikebe Shin'ichirō and the orchestra Yokohama Shinfonietta 横浜シンフォニエッタ, performing the new composition by Ikebe commemorating Gasan. Before this new piece, they played four other compositions by Ikebe, followed by the *Hymn on Zen Master Gasan* (*Gasan zenji sankā* 峨山禅師讃歌), arranged by Ikebe for orchestra and sung by baritone Ōyama Daiyu. As a finale, the orchestra and monks of Sōjiji performed *Way of Gasan* (*Gasandō*), Ikebe's new composition for orchestra and monks chanting the *Dharani of the Mind of Great Compassion* in *shindoku* (Fig. 10). Both pieces were first performed on 23 June in the Minato Hall in Yokohama, but at that time, the audience had to purchase tickets, and mostly people who were in some way affiliated with Sōjiji attended the concert. This time, Sōjiji invited people from the local area to attend.

At the end of the day, the lights in the bamboo poles were lit again. In addition, a *tsugaru jamisen* 津軽三味線 ensemble, led by a Sōtō priest, performed in the Buddha hall (Fig. 11). It was an impressive concert that nicely concluded the day with traditional Japanese music; the music of *tsugaru jamisen* is very expressive and differs from the sutra chanting or solemn *gagaku* music in the morning. This performance added another musical style to the commemorations. In an announcement, the Sōtō priest who led the ensemble referred to the theme of *Sōjō* and explained that transmission is also vital for shamisen playing and other traditional art forms. In this way, he related their performance to the occasion of the memorial service.

During these two days, visitors could also see two exhibitions. One was Naomi Kasumi's installation "Sarit: Flow of Compassion" in one of the corridors that features the *Dharani of the Mind of Great Compassion* which expressed the theme

**Fig. 9** Vegetarian feast at Sōjiji on 18 October in front of the Buddha hall. Photo by the author



of the memorial service. The other was an exhibition of works by Uchida Masayasu 内田正泰 in the Sanshōkaku, a hall for lay visitors.

These events attracted laypeople with varied interests: from people interested in *zazen*, to people who might be just interested in enjoying the temple’s atmosphere in the metropolis, to people who like to engage with religious practice. To all of these people, Sōjiji offered an enjoyable engagement with Sōtō Zen, the temple, and religious culture as part of the commemorations of Gasan’s 650th grand death anniversary.

## 6 Conclusion

The 650th grand death anniversary of Gasan was a time when Sōtō monks remembered their heritage and expressed gratitude to Gasan, who laid the foundation for the success of Sōjiji and whose lineage was responsible for the spread of





**Fig. 10** The orchestra Yokohama Shinfonietta and monks of Sōjiji perform the piece *Way of Gasan*, conducted by Ikebe Shin'ichirō, on 18 October 2015. Photo by the author



**Fig. 11** A *tsugaru jamisen* ensemble performs in the Buddha hall of Sōjiji on 18 October 2015. Photo by the author

Sōtō Zen across Japan. Many Sōtō clerics visited Sōjiji at this time and remembered their heritage. Because the service was a communal commemoration and the clerics met Dharma siblings at Sōjiji, the service strengthened bonds among clerics affiliated with Sōjiji and reinforced group identity. For most clerics, attending the grand death anniversary was a once-in-a-lifetime chance, and many monks expressed that they were grateful to be able to participate. The commemorations were conducted with deep gratitude: first and foremost gratitude for Gasan's activities but also for being able to attend this rare observance.

The commemoration of Gasan's grand death anniversary was not only an occasion of remembering the past but also a time of creating a thriving future for Sōjiji as a place where Gasan's and Keizan's teachings are kept alive. By remembering the past, a patriarch's influence is reinscribed in the communal memory and lives on. The grand death anniversaries are heightened times when this communal memory is reconfirmed, and each generation needs to narrate key stories and histories to keep the memory alive. Thus, Gasan's grand death anniversary helped reaffirm that Sōjiji was the temple responsible for the spread of Sōtō Zen all across Japan in the collective memory of the Sōtō school.

Before the twentieth century, the grand death anniversaries for Keizan and Gasan had been monastic observances of Sōjiji-affiliated monks. But after Sōjiji's move to Tsurumi in Yokohama in the early twentieth century, lay devotees from all over Japan started to visit Sōjiji for Keizan's and Gasan's grand death anniversaries. Additionally, Sōjiji actively invited laypeople living in Tsurumi and neighboring communities to participate in the events in 2015. By expanding the audience, Sōjiji raised awareness in the general public of being a major Zen temple in the Yokohama area. Although some families with young children or other people visit Sōjiji to enjoy the green temple compound, unlike other temples, such as nearby Kawasaki Daishi, Sōjiji is not very widely known in the area. By reaching out to more people during the commemorations, Sōjiji inscribed itself into the landscape of Yokohama as a sacred and cultural site in Tsurumi that welcomes everyone. By walking through the temple ground and being instructed in the history and function of the various halls, visitors learned about Zen practice and helped create a sacred space—a space established through engagement and practice.

## Notes

1. On the *Kenzeiki* and the remembrance of Dōgen, see William Bodiford, "Remembering Dōgen: Eihei-ji and Dōgen," in *Dōgen: Textual and Historical Studies*, edited by Steven Heine (New York: Oxford University Press), 207–222.
2. Several scholars have used the concept of communities of memory. Robert Bellah and his collaborators, for example, use the concept to analyze contemporary US society (Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], 152–163), and Mario Poceski uses it to describe the

- Chan school (Mario Poceski, *The Records of Mazu and the Making of Classical Chan Literature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015], 24–28). For studies on memory in East Asian Buddhism, see Mario Poceski (ed.), *Communities of Memory and Interpretation: Reimagining and Reinventing the Past in East Asian Buddhism* (Bochum: Projektverlag, 2018).
3. Derek Krueger, “Writing and the Liturgy of Memory in Gregory of Nyssa’s Life of Macrina,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8, no. 4 (2000): 483–510.
  4. Derek Krueger, *Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), Chap. 3.
  5. Michael Dickhardt, “Religion, Place and Modernity in Southeast and East Asia: Reflections on the Spatial Articulation of Religion with Modernity,” in *Religion, Place and Modernity: Spatial Articulations in Southeast Asia and East Asia*, edited by Michael Dickhardt and Andrea Lauser (Boston: Brill, 2016), 18.
  6. For a detailed history of Sōjiji in English, see William M. Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1993), 81–84, 95–107; Michaela Mross, “A Local History of Buddhist Rituals in Japan: Kōshiki at the Sōtō Zen Temple Sōjiji from the Seventeenth through Nineteenth Centuries” (PhD diss., LMU Munich, 2014), Chap. 3. For an ethnographic account of the religious life at Sōjiji, see Joshua Aaron Irizarry, “A Forest for a Thousand Years: Cultivating Life and Disciplining Death at Daihonzan Sōjiji: A Japanese Sōtō Zen Temple” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2011).
  7. Muromine Baiitsu 室峰梅逸 (ed.), *Sōjiji shi* 總持寺誌 (Yokohama: Daihonzan Sōjiji, 1965), 246.
  8. Matsuyama Sogen 松山祖元, *Tsurumi gaoka rokujūgo nen no ayumi* つるみヶ丘六十五年のあゆみ (Tokyo: Keizan Zenji Hōsan Kankōkai, 1974), 870–872.
  9. For materials related to Gasan’s 550th grand death anniversary, see Matsuyama Sogen, *Tsurumi gaoka rokujūgo nen no ayumi*, 671–754. Ozaki Shōzen further introduced previously unpublished materials of this grand death anniversary stored in the archive of Sōjiji (Ozaki Shōzen 尾崎正善, “Sōjiji shiryō hensanshitsu tayori: Gasan zenji gohaykugojūkai daionki kankei shiryō 總持寺資料編纂室便り—峨山禪師五五〇回大遠忌関係史料,” in *Chōryū* 跳龍 2015/July–December and 2016/January).
  10. Ozaki Shōzen, “Sōjiji shiryō hensanshitsu tayori,” *Chōryū* 2015, September/October, 24.
  11. Muromine, *Sōjiji shi*, 262; Matsuyama Sogen, *Tsurumi gaoka rokujūgo nen no ayumi*, 871, 876–878.
  12. Poster: “Futatsu no daionki: Goryōson no igyō ni manabu 二つの大遠忌: 御両尊の偉業に学ぶ” (Tsurumi: Sōjiji, 2015). English text included in the poster.
  13. Pamphlet: “Sōjō: Goryōson daionki hōe 相承: 御両尊大遠忌法会” (Tsurumi: Sōjiji, 2015). The webpage of the grand death anniversaries of Keizan and Gasan can be found at <http://www.sojo.jp/about/introduction/>.
  14. Webpage of the grand death anniversaries of Keizan and Gasan, <http://www.sojo.jp/about/introduction/>.

15. Since 1986, there has also been an annual event during which devotees conduct a pilgrimage along the Gasandō from Yōkōji to Sōjiji, partly walking, partly taking a bus, in remembrance of Gasan’s “marathon.” For a study on the background and the meaning of this newly invented pilgrimage, see Ichida Masataka 市田雅崇, “Chiiki no bunka shigen to shinkō no michi: Gasan dō o jirei toshite 地域の文化資源と信仰の道: 峨山道を事例として,” *Sangaku shūgen* 49 (2012): 33–45.
16. Such a crossover composition was not new, as other composers had already integrated Buddhist chant in orchestra pieces. The most famous example is probably the *Nirvana Symphony* for male chorus and orchestra composed by Mayuzumi Toshiro 黛敏郎 (1929–1997) in 1958. Mayuzumi did not write this piece to be performed in a Buddhist setting; instead, he aimed to integrate the rich sonic culture of Japan, in this case *shōmyō* 声明 (melismatic Japanese Buddhist chant), in modern avant-garde compositions. Of course, Ikebe was aware of this precedence and mentioned it in interviews.
17. Naomi Kasumi explains her installation in detail at <https://www.seattleu.edu/artsci/departments/art-arthistory/faculty-profile-naomi-kasumi/>.
18. The talks and the panel discussion were published in the journal of the Buddhist Culture Research Institute of Tsurumi University: *Tsurumi daigaku bukkyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 21 鶴見大学仏教文化研究所紀要 21 (2016).
19. Tamamuro Fumio 圭室文雄 (ed.), *Sōtōshū Hōei nenkan sōroku jūinchō* 曹洞宗宝永年間僧録寺院帳 (Yokohama: Daihonzan Sōjiji, 2015). Because major anniversaries are times of remembering the origins and reestablishing the collective memory of a school or branch, it is common that works on the history or the lives of monks are produced on these occasions. For example, for Sōjiji’s celebration of 100 years in Tsurumi, the head temple published a detailed record of their former one-night abbots (*Jūzanki* 住山記, 2 vols., edited by Nodomi Jōten and Ozaki Shōzen [Yokohama: Daihonzan Sōjiji, 2011]) and a book on Sōjiji’s five subtemples (Satō Shunkō 佐藤秀孝, Yamaguchi Seishō 山口正章, Miyaji Seigen 宮地清彦, Hareyama Shun’ei 晴山俊英, and Itō Ryōkyū 伊藤良久, *Sōtōshū daihonzan Sōjiji: Goin monogatari* 曹洞宗大本山總持寺五院ものがたり [Yokohama: Daihonzan Sōjiji, 2011]).
20. Tsukuda Kazuo 佃和雄, *Gasan zenji monogatari* 峨山禪師物語 (Yokohama: Sōtōshū Daihonzan Sōjiji, 2013); Daihonzan Sōjiji, *Sanjūroku mon o tazunete: Sōjiji onjikimatsu* 三十六門をたずねて: 總持寺御直末 (Yokohama: Sōtōshū Daihonzan Sōjiji, 2013).
21. Ozaki Shōzen 尾崎正善 (text) and Takeuchi Nanao 竹内七生 (illustrations), *Sōjiji niso Gasan sama* 總持寺二祖峨山さま (Yokohama: Daihonzan Sōjiji Daionkikyoku). Sōtō clerics have produced other manga on the lives of influential Zen teachers. The website of the Sōtō school, for example, provides six mangas, among them a manga on Dōgen (1958) and Keizan (1967). See <https://www.sotozen-net.or.jp/propagation/book>.
22. The connection between temple visits and entertainment has characterized many forms of Japanese Buddhism. Nam-lin Hur, for example, has highlighted the connection between religious prayer and amusement at the Tendai temple



Asakusa Sensōji during the Tokugawa period. He suggested that it became a popular worship site because it offered opportunities for both religious prayers and recreation (Nam-li Hur, *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensōji and Edo Society* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000]). William Bodiford has provided a more recent example in his study of the public display of an otherwise hidden Kannon image at the Sōtō temple Jingūji (Niigata prefecture) in 1993. At that occasion, revealing the Kannon image was followed by a theater performance and performances of a magician, a folk singer, and *taiko* drumming. This case shows how religious events are often designed to offer entertainment (William Bodiford, “Sōtō Zen in a Japanese Town: Field Notes on a Once-Every-Thirty-Three-Years Kannon Festival,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 1 [1994]: 25–26). This was also the case during Gasan’s 650th grand death anniversary.

23. According to documents owned by Sōjiji, Emperor Godaigo is said to have sent 10 questions to Sōjiji in 1322. After receiving Keizan’s answers, he supposedly declared Sōjiji to be an imperial prayer temple and the highest-ranked Sōtō temple (*Jūshu chokumon* 十種勅問, in *Jōsai daishi zenshū* 常濟大師全集 [JDZ], edited by Kohō Chisan [Yokohama: Daihonzan Sōjiji, 1967; orig. pub. 1937], 381–386; *Godaigo tennō rinji sha* 後醍醐天皇綸旨写, in *Shinshū Monzenchō shi*, *Shiryōhen* 2: *Sōjiji* 新修門前町史 資料編 2 総持寺, edited by Monzenchō Shihensan Senmon Iinkai [Monzenchō: Ishikawaken Monzenchō, 2004], 13). Therefore, monks at Sōjiji conduct rituals paying gratitude to Emperor Godaigo. However, Yōkōji, Keizan’s original main temple, also has documents claiming the same exchange and recognition for itself, written in 1320 (*Jūshu gitai* 十種疑; in JDZ, 376–380; *Godaigo tennō shusse dōjō gorinji* 後醍醐天皇出世道場御綸旨, in *Tōkokusan Yōkōji shi* 洞谷山永光寺誌 [Hakui: Yōkōji, 1924], 10–11). Both sets of documents are later forgeries, but nonetheless they played an important role in the intense rivalry between Sōjiji and Yōkōji as each temple claimed it was the one that had received imperial recognition. Later Sōjiji used the documents to argue that it received imperial protection and support before Eihei did.
24. Besides one nun all officiants during the two-week memorial service were male priest. Therefore, I used the pronoun “he.”
25. *Kōshiki* 講式 is a liturgical genre unique to Japanese Buddhism. These rituals usually feature pieces sung with elaborate melodies. Sōtō monks have performed *kōshiki* since Dōgen’s lifetime. On *kōshiki* in the Sōtō school and the *Tōjō dentō kōshiki* in particular, see Michaela Mross, *Memory, Music, Manuscripts: The Ritual Dynamics of Kōshiki in Japanese Sōtō Zen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2022). For a study of the *kōshiki* performed in remembrance of Dōgen, see Michaela Mross, “Vocalizing the Remembrance of Dōgen: A Study of the *Shinpen hōon kōshiki*,” in *Dōgen and Sōtō Zen*, edited by Steven Heine (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 210–234. On *kōshiki* in general, see the special issue on *Kōshiki in Japanese Buddhism* of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 43, no. 1 (2016); and Niels Gülberg,

*Buddhistische Zeremoniale (kōshiki) und ihre Bedeutung für die Literatur des japanischen Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999).

Monks at Sōjiji also used to perform a *kōshiki* commemorating Gasan. However, this *kōshiki* had been forgotten until my recent discovery of ritual manuals for this *kōshiki* (Michaela Mross. “Sōjiji no nisoki ni kansuru kōsatsu: Jissōji shōzō *Gasan kōshiki saimon to shikimon o chūshin ni* 總持寺の二祖忌に関する考察—実相寺所蔵「峨山講式祭文」と「式文」を中心に—,” *Shūkyōgaku ronshū* 32 (2013): 107–136; Michaela Mross. “Noto Sōjiji to Gasan kōshiki ni tsuite 2: *Gasan kō kada to Ryōson shōki tō sajōchō o chūshin ni* 能登總持寺と峨山講式について (二) —「峨山講伽陀」と『兩尊征忌等差定帳』を中心に—,” *Sōtōshū kenkyūin kenkyū kiyō* 43 (2013): 163–187). Interestingly, monks at Sōjiji discussed performing it during Gasan’s 550th grand death anniversary. Still, in the end, they did not perform it (See “Nidaison goonki junbikai, shichi gatsu nijūshichinichi, kaikai 二代尊御遠忌・準備会、七月廿七日、開会,” Ozaki Shōzen, “Sōjiji shiryō hensanshitsu tayori: Gasan Zenji gohaykugojūkai daionki kankei shiryō 2 總持寺資料編纂室便り—峨山禅師五五〇回大遠忌関係史料 (二),” in *Chōryū* 跳龍 2015/August, 37). Before the 650th grand death anniversary, Maekawa Bokushō and I discussed the possibility of revising this ritual. But unfortunately, Maekawa and his colleagues had not enough time to write a new *kōshiki* or missing sections of the previously performed ritual.

26. Although the ritual did not differ, it is important to mention that the nuns’ organization also performed a rite for Gasan on 14 October. At that time, all monks—besides the cantor and those who played the musical instruments—left the main area of the hall, and the service was performed by the Sōtō nuns exclusively. According to one priest, nuns were first allowed to perform during the memorial service at Sōjiji during Keizan’s grand memorial service in 1974; their inclusion marks their equal status to male monks.
27. T 82: 320a02–323a15. For an English translation, see Theodore Griffith Foulk, “Instructions for the Cook,” in *Nothing Is Hidden: Essays on Zen Master Dogen’s Instructions for the Cook*, edited by Jisho Warner, Shōhaku Okumura, John McRae, and Taigen Dan Leighton (New York: Weatherhill, 2001), 21–40.
28. See <https://www.sotozen-net.or.jp/syumucyo/20151028-2.html>.

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# Sōtō Zen Women's Wisdom in Practice



Paula K. R. Arai

## 1 Dōgen and Women<sup>1</sup>

Buddhist women made generative and perennial contributions to Japanese history. Central agents in cultivating the foundation of Buddhism in Japan in the sixth century, they were active participants during the formative years of the Sōtō Zen sect in the thirteenth century. Monastic women induced major advancement in the twentieth century. They displayed creative vision that navigated them through sometimes foul water—a testimony to their seriousness of intention, commitment, and ingenuity.

Sōtō nuns today maintain that the recognized founder of Sōtō Zen in Japan, Dōgen (1200–1253), was part of the social climate of inclusivism characteristic of the Kamakura Period (1186–1333) Buddhist reformers. They point to texts that they claim support their view that Dōgen took an affirmative stance toward women. This grounded their sense of legitimacy and fueled their fight to reform Sōtō Sect regulations to reflect what they thought was the intent of Dōgen's thoughts and writings.

In an interview with Abbess Aoyama Shundō, I learned that she begins her analysis of Dōgen's attitude toward women with her understanding of his experience with his mother. Aoyama surmises that Dōgen deeply felt his mother's pain at having been married off in a political struggle to raise the waning strength and status of her family, the Fujiwaras.<sup>2</sup> Dōgen resolved to understand the true meaning of impermanence upon watching the smoke rise from the incense at his mother's funeral.<sup>3</sup> Although this might be a hagiographic account, one can imagine the emotions of a young boy (he was seven years old) who has just lost his mother only a few years after losing his father. Her untimely death only made more acute

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Dōgen's sensitivity to the ways in which women were sometimes mistreated in Japanese society. Aoyama suggests that his respect for his mother contributed to his positive stance toward women. Whether or not her analysis can be verified historically, it is worth serious consideration as a way a leading woman today within Dōgen's own tradition articulates his attitudes towards women.

Sōtō nuns have noted the texts in which Dōgen mentions women. In his text *Bendōwa* (1231), Dōgen unambiguously articulates that male and female practitioners are equal.<sup>4</sup> He wrote this text after he returned from China, but he was not yet solidly established. He was beginning to articulate his understanding of Buddhist teachings, and he was determined to teach "true" Buddhism. He had at least one female disciple under his tutelage and laypeople around him during this period.

During the following decade, he wrote a number of texts that are considered the core of his philosophical writings. The philosophical orientation that unfolds in these texts supports the statement that males and females are equal in practice. In 1233, after moving to Kōshō-ji, Dōgen wrote a text that has been proclaimed as his most fundamental philosophical treatise, the *Genjō Kōan*. In the spring of 1240, just three years before he left for Echizen (where he established the monastery Eihei-ji), Dōgen wrote the impassioned text *Raihaitokuzui* in order to extinguish the errors of those he thought harbored incorrect thoughts about women and Buddhist truth. In the same year he wrote *Uji*, the text in which he explains his nondualistic view of the relationship between being and time. *Sansui-kyo*, a text that further develops his nondualistic view of reality, was likewise written in 1240. In 1241, Dōgen displayed his independent thinking through his radically nondualistic interpretation of the *Nirvana Sūtra* passage, "All sentient beings without exception have Buddha-nature." He deliberately violated rules of Chinese grammar to change the meaning of the sentence to be in accord with his understanding of the Buddhist concept of reality: "All existents are Buddha-nature."<sup>5</sup> This nondualistic philosophical orientation precludes questioning whether or not Dōgen held that women did or did not have Buddha-nature. In 1242, Dōgen wrote a number of other texts that further developed his interpretation of Buddhist concepts. In *Daigo* he says that enlightenment (*satori*) is not something that "comes" or that one "has," but by nature is fleeting. In *Zazenshin*, the concept that enlightenment and practice are one (*shushō ittō*) is hinted at when he asserts that the first zazen is the first *zabutsu* (sitting Buddha).

Seeing the *Raihaitokuzui* text—the text in which he unambiguously and forcefully expresses positive views of women—in the context of his most important philosophical texts, implies that Dōgen wrote the *Raihaitokuzui* with clear awareness that his emerging philosophy fully supported understanding males and females on equal terms. In the following *Raihaitokuzui* passage, he clarifies the confusion surrounding female Buddhist teachers. "It is irrelevant whether a guide has male or female characteristics, and the like; what counts is that the guide be a being of virtue, of thusness."<sup>6</sup> He continues with advice on the appropriate way to express respect and gratitude to a teacher of the Dharma regardless of their form: "Valuing the Dharma means that, whether [your guide] is a pillar, a lantern, buddhas, a fox, a

demon, a man, a woman, if it upholds the great Dharma and attains the marrow, then you should offer your body-mind as its seat and serve for immeasurable kalpas.”<sup>7</sup> His point is that women are competent teachers, even qualified to teach men. Dōgen substantiates his counsel with an explanation of the precedents established by those with whom Buddhism flourished in Sung China<sup>8</sup>:

Today in certain temples of great Sung China there are nuns who train. When [a nun's] attainment of the Dharma becomes known, an imperial edict is issued appointing her abbess of a nunnery, and thenceforth she expounds the Dharma at her appointed temple. All the subordinates gather together in the hall and stand to listen to the abbess's words on] the Dharma, and [to exchange] questions and answers of monastics. This has been the rule since olden times.<sup>9</sup>

As with much of Japanese Buddhism and culture, the Japanese turned to the Chinese for inspiration and guidance. Dōgen urges the Japanese to continue the equality accorded women and men in China, especially in regard to recognizing the true Dharma in female form:

In the case of a nun who has received the treasury of the true Dharma eye through transmission, if [the monks of] the four fruitions, pratyeka-buddhas, and even those of the three wise stages and of the ten holy states pay homage to her and seek the Dharma from her, she should receive their obeisance. By what right are only males noble? The empty sky is the empty sky; the four elements are the four elements; the five skandas are the five skandas. To be female is exactly the same: as for the attainment of the Way, both [male and female] can attain the Way. Hence both should have high regard for the attainment of the Dharma, and not argue about differences between male and female. Such is the most marvelous law of the Buddha-way.<sup>10</sup>

Dōgen includes an even more direct criticism of the practices he finds in Japan in a version of the *Raihaitokuzui* found in the twenty-eighth fascicle of the *Himitsu Shōbōgenzō* (The Secret Shobogenzo).<sup>11</sup> It is a poignant example of his frustration with Japanese Buddhist practices that helped increase his sense that he was the first to introduce “true” Buddhism to Japan.

There is a ridiculous custom in Japan: it is the practice that nuns and women are not allowed to enter the places called “restricted territories” or “training halls of the Mahayana.” Such a perverted custom has been practiced for ages, without anyone realizing its wrongness in the least. Those practicing the ancient way do not reform it; and those who are learned and astute do not care about it. While some say that it is the work of the incarnated [buddhas and bodhisattvas], others claim that it is a legacy from ancient worthies. Yet all fail to reason about it. Their egregious absurdity is truly hard to believe .... If such some obsolete practices do not have to be redressed, does it mean that the cycles of birth and death need not be forsaken, either?<sup>12</sup>

This passage is a direct criticism of the prohibition of women (*nyonin kinzei*) practiced by the establishment Buddhist sects of Tendai and Shingon. Based upon this statement, Dōgen might have moved to Echizen in 1243 to actualize his understanding of Buddhism that *includes* inclusive views—not as an indication that he changed his mind about women. The timing of his departure from Kyoto—occurring only three years after his unambiguous articulation (in *Raihaitokuzui*) of

the errors of the ways of the established Buddhist institutions in regards to women—suggests that the prevailing currents in society may have made it difficult for him to freely practice his understanding of the Dharma. This would concur with the experiences of Hōnen, Shinran, and Nichiren, who all practiced inclusivism and who, for various reasons, all had serious complications with the authorities. Dōgen's move to Echizen, then, can be interpreted as (in part) an attempt to actualize his understanding of the Buddhist teachings in an unencumbered environment.

Dōgen never wrote that women had to become men to be enlightened, although this was a common notion during his time. Dōgen also did not criticize the Lotus Sutra. On the contrary, in the *Raihaitokuzui* he takes the story of the Naga princess becoming a Buddha and equates it with a seven-year-old girl being teacher to a 100-year-old monk.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that he interpreted the Naga princess story in the Lotus Sutra in a light that was favorable to females. Nonetheless, the prevailing interpretation among academics is that Dōgen held egalitarian ideals in his early years, but he did not take them with him when he established his “serious” monastery in Echizen.<sup>14</sup> Kasahara Kazuo,<sup>15</sup> Hokoya Noriaki,<sup>16</sup> and Tagami Taishu<sup>17</sup> are some of the Japanese scholars who have published their views that Dōgen changed his mind from seeing women as equal to thinking that females did not have true enlightenment. They conclude that Dōgen returned to a purely monastic-oriented vision of Buddhist practice that did not include females. This view of Dōgen suggests that he was an inconsistent philosopher with little integrity. Some western scholars seem to have uncritically accepted the view of Dōgen as promoted by Kasahara, Hokoya, and Tagami. A passage from *Women, Religion, and Sexuality* succinctly articulates this interpretation:

When Dōgen was young he believed in the equality of men and women and criticized the foolishness of the Mount Hiei and Mount Koya temples, which barred women from entering. However, in later years, by the time Dōgen built Eihei-ji Temple he no longer believed in the equality of men and women and prohibited their entry.<sup>18</sup>

Another scholar reinforces the interpretation that Dōgen had a change of heart toward women; she claims that Dōgen's move to Eihei-ji is a “good example of a case in which Buddhist celibate monasticism functioned in practice to prevent women's access to one of the greatest Zen teachers in history.”<sup>19</sup>

These claims are based upon one sentence found in one of the fascicles included in the twelve-fascicle version of the *Shōbōgenzō*, the *Shukke Kudoku*. At the end of the text it is written that “It is also said that one can attain Buddhahood in a female body, but this is not the Buddhist path of the true tradition of the Buddhist masters.”<sup>20</sup> This text was recorded in 1255, two years after Dōgen passed away. It is commonly agreed, however, that the date for this text is not clearly established.<sup>21</sup> Dōgen scholars agree that this text was revised, but no one knows in what way or to what extent. In numerous other passages in Dōgen's writings (those that are clearly dated before he passed away), there are mentions of women in a positive light that stand in direct contradiction to the one sentence that has triggered so much controversy over whether Dōgen changed his mind about women. The possibility that a

sentence was edited in later best be thoroughly explored.<sup>22</sup> What makes the significance of this one sentence more problematic is that, even within the same text, there are passages that contradict it. The aim of the *Shukke Kudoku* fascicle is to convey the merits of being a renunciant. Citations from the *Daibibasha-ron* (Skt. *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*)<sup>23</sup> are used to invoke the concern for renunciation held by Śākyamuni. One of the passages in the *Shukke Kudoku* quotes from the *Daibibasha-ron* where Śākyamuni is cited as making Vow 138: “After I attain perfect enlightenment in the future, if there is a woman who decides to become a renunciant but is prevented from receiving the great precepts and attaining her purpose, then I will not attain true enlightenment.”<sup>24</sup> Given the contradiction within this one text, it is clear that we must look beyond the *Shukke Kudoku* to understand Dōgen's views of women more thoroughly.

In the face of the sheer number of passages in Dōgen's texts that develop his positive view of women, versus the one sentence to the contrary—especially given that the sentence appears in a text revised after Dōgen's death—the case for Dōgen reversing his views on women is not well supported. To offer the compromise that Dōgen did not change his stance philosophically, but he just decided it was impractical to have women practicing at Eihei-ji, does not resolve the issue. The historical record does not support such an interpretation.

Funaoka Makoto interprets the two facets of Dōgen's texts as nothing more than emphasizing different things at different times in different conditions.<sup>25</sup> He notes that things written at Eihei-ji were written to an exclusive audience of renunciants. Some had a difficult time enduring this life, so emphasis on the high value of renunciation would have encouraged the practitioners. This is in stark contrast to the earlier texts from the Kōshō-ji period when Dōgen was working among laity.<sup>26</sup> Funaoka argues that Dōgen's writings have contradictions that he plays out differently at different times. They cannot be construed to mean that he went from thinking laity can be enlightened to thinking that only renunciants can,<sup>27</sup> nor that he thought women could be enlightened and then later decided that women's enlightenment was not true.

Kawamura Kōdō follows a similar line of analysis. He also argues from the perspective of viewing Dōgen's writings as a whole. He says we must consider the vision of the “World of Shōbōgenzō” as a conceptual world of an intelligent human being who dared to break out of a narrow-minded framework. He concludes that the interpretation that Dōgen went from understanding women as equal to excluding them once he went to Eihei-ji would be rejected by Dōgen as “not the activities of the Buddhist teachers, but a one-faceted narrow view (*Sansuikyo*).”<sup>28</sup>

Even if one could finally prove that Dōgen changed his mind, the historical record proves that he did not change his actions. A number of monastic women were his disciples through to the end of his life.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Dōgen's male disciples continued to take female disciples for generations past the founder's death, a practice that continues to the present day.

Although no women took ordination under Dōgen, a number of monastic women had chosen to transfer into his order from the Daruma-shū or another tradition.<sup>30</sup> His first female monastic disciple was given the Buddhist name



Ryōnen-ni. She is attributed with being the primary influence in Dōgen's most explicit teaching on the equality of male and female practitioners in the *Bendōwa*. Ryōnen-ni became Dōgen's first female monastic disciple one month before he wrote the *Bendōwa* on 15 August 1231, at Annyō-in in Yamashiro.<sup>31</sup> Dōgen bestows rare praise upon her at the time he was writing the *Bendōwa*. In a Dharma talk he says that Ryōnen-ni had peerless aspiration to enlightenment, *bodaishin* (Skt. *bodhicitta*).<sup>32</sup> Also, in the *Eihei Kōroku* (vol. 8), Dōgen wrote that Ryōnen-ni was deeply devoted to the Great Way of the Buddhas.<sup>33</sup> In the tenth chapter of the *Eihei Kōroku* Dōgen wrote a poem upon Ryōnen's death. She probably died in the winter, for the poem makes a reference to snow.<sup>34</sup> Menzan Zenji, in his *Teihokenzeiki Kōroku*, confirms that "Ryōnen Bikuni" was Dōgen's disciple. Although she was an elderly woman when she came under Dōgen's tutelage, she is remembered for having practiced intensely and making great strides in her understanding of the life of the Dharma. She is remembered as one who knew Zen from the marrow of her bones, and is sometimes compared to the prominent nun Dōgen heard about in China, Massan Ryōnen-ni. Both were incontrovertibly highly respected, and they serve as historical proof that women were able to realize ultimate enlightenment. To offer an interpretation that suggests otherwise would, aside from defying historical proof to the contrary, go against the fabric of Dōgen's thoroughgoing nondualistic philosophy.

As recorded in the *Eihei Sansogyōgōki*, Dōgen also received significant patronage from women. The most renowned was Shōgaku Zenni, who donated the funds to construct the Dharma Hall at Dōgen's first monastery, Kōshō-ji.<sup>35</sup> Apparently she was a distant relative of Dōgen's through his mother, a Fujiwara. She was ordained on 3 September 1225,<sup>36</sup> after her husband, Minamoto Sanetomo, died. She chose to devote her life and her riches to Buddhist practice under Dōgen.

Another monastic woman affiliated with Dōgen, Eshin-bikuni, is recorded in the *Eihei Kōroku* (vol. 2).<sup>37</sup> In the section that mentions Eshin-bikuni, Dōgen wrote about life and death in general. In this context it specifically mentions that around 1244–1246 Dōgen gave a service at Daibutsu-ji<sup>38</sup> in memory of her father's death. Although such evidence is disappointingly sparse, it contributes to the picture that Dōgen respected monastic women.

Egi-ni, originally a Daruma-shū nun, was another one of Dōgen's female disciples who is recorded in history. She was originally the disciple of Kakuan, who had been a disciple of the leader of the Daruma-shū, Dainichi Nōnin. She first met Dōgen in the winter of 1234 at Kōshō-ji, and she remained under his tutelage even after he went deep into the mountains of Echizen. The *Eihei Kōroku* (vol. 5) refers to an event where Egi-ni was with Dōgen at Eihei-ji, perhaps on the occasion of a memorial service for Dōgen's mother.<sup>39</sup> Menzan also mentions "Egibikuni" in his *Teihokenzeiki*. On 28 July 1253 (exactly one month before Dōgen passed away), Dōgen wrote that Egi-ni was the Dharma sister of Ekan, Ejō, and Eshō. This makes her the Dharma aunt<sup>40</sup> of Gikai (the head of Eihei-ji after Ejō and just prior to Keizan). Altogether she spent a span of twenty years with Dōgen. Near the end, Egi-ni served at his side and assisted him at his sickbed until he left for Kyoto on 5 August 1253.<sup>41</sup> The fact that Egi-ni served the master when he was vulnerable is a



clear indication that Dōgen trusted her. In a monastery community, serving in a capacity close to the master is keenly sought. He showed her high respect and honor through the end of his life. Egi-ni remained an important figure during the leadership of the next generation headed by Dōgen's devoted disciple, Ejō.<sup>42</sup> Her story confirms the fact that Dōgen was committed to, and even relied upon, monastic women through the end of his life.

## 2 Women Living Monastic Zen<sup>43</sup>

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Japanese women were engaged in a deliberate and active attempt to reassert their concerns. Sōtō Zen nuns began the century with a deep commitment to living a monastic Buddhist life, fortified by the conviction that their founder, Dōgen, had teachings that affirmed women's practice. Although academics have become divided over the significance of Dōgen's egalitarian teachings, practicing Zen nuns were not and are not divided. Nuns embrace Dōgen's views of women as positive; empowered by Dōgen's writings, the nuns have affected the course of Sōtō history in the twentieth century. But they began the century encumbered by misogynous regulations in a sect administration that did not acknowledge nuns' abilities, contributions, or commitments. Nuns did not have training facilities supported or authorized by the sect administration, nor were they permitted to enter the Sōtō sect university, Komazawa. Compounding the limited resources available to them, the requirements for a nun were considerably lengthier than those for their male counterparts, sometimes necessitating one, two, or even three years more in training. This extra effort was only formally rewarded with degrees lower than the lowest male degrees.

A significant core of Sōtō nuns were determined to rectify these inequities. Starting in the 1880s, they began to reach their goal by combining monastic discipline and training with secular education. They organized themselves in a concerted effort to compel male sect leaders to what they held were Dōgen's teachings on egalitarianism. They did not act like women who were just discovering liberation. They acted like women who knew that historical precedents made them entitled to fair treatment. Undaunted by a male-dominated institutional hierarchy, they demanded that sect regulations treat male and female monastics equally. They did not wait for the sect institution to support or recognize their efforts. They took action in accordance with their interpretation of Buddhist teachings. The women chose to lead strictly disciplined and refined monastic lives over successful careers and the comparatively unconstrained and unregulated quality of secular lifestyles.

The first monastery school for resident Sōtō nuns was established by a nun in Gifu prefecture on 1 April 1881.<sup>44</sup> Nuns had not yet received recognition from the sect administration for their efforts, but shortly thereafter each region established its own school for nuns. In 1887 the second school was established in Aichi prefecture,

followed by one in Kyoto in 1888, then Tokyo in 1889, and Toyama in 1892.<sup>45</sup> These monastery schools gave the novice women training in Buddhist practice and a general education.

Mizuno Jōrin (1848–1927), Hori Mitsujō (1868–1927), Andō Dōkai (1874–1915), and Yamaguchi Kokan (1875–1933) are the four pioneering nuns who founded Aichi-ken Sōtō-shū Nisō Gakurin on 8 May 1903. They were each well-educated, and in 1902 they decided it was time to advance the education of all nuns and receive recognition from the sect. Mizuno lead the effort.

For many years I have been responsible for cultivating nuns. I have encouraged them to practice The Way while walking, stopping, residing, sitting, and lying down. The current group of nuns has come to be dissatisfied with the education at Yōrin-an. [The monastery school established in 1887.] We are, therefore, resolved to establish a monastic school for nuns (*nigakurin*) with official recognition from the sect. It will support the future education of monastic women. We cannot quit. Together we vow to establish [the nun's school] through a spirit of cooperation.<sup>46</sup>

Their beginning was modest. They used Andō's small resident temple—Yakushi-dō (Kōrin-ji)—as their shelter and school room.<sup>47</sup> Twenty-two women entered in the first year. There were eight teachers. All thirty meditated, studied, ate, and slept in the two six-mat *tatami* rooms (approximately 220 square feet).<sup>48</sup> Their studies included Dōgen's teachings, Sōtō and other sect teachings, Zen practice, rituals, Classical Chinese, history, science, math, calligraphy, sewing, tea ceremony, flower arranging, and language.<sup>49</sup>

On their twentieth anniversary, they began publishing the nunnery's journal, *Jōrin*. Mizuno wrote the following for the celebrations.

Although many people thought it was quite a risky enterprise for those with no economic support or knowledge about the ways of the world to organize such an institution, with unwavering peace of mind, we endured hardships of body and mind and have surmounted the difficulties. We could not imagine welcoming in the twentieth anniversary of the Gakurin at that time, but now upon seeing the grand anniversary ceremony, I have profound gratitude for Buddha's infinite liberation. It is only possible due to the assistance of the followers and Buddha's infinite protection. From start to finish, with unwavering sincerity, from the bottom of our hearts, this is the requirement of being single-minded, not divided in two.<sup>50</sup>

The four founders left a legacy of competent nuns in their wake, so their passing did not interrupt the steady flow of progress. By the nunnery's thirtieth anniversary in 1933, the school had added Buddhist history, religious philosophy, pedagogy, logic, and psychology to their curriculum.<sup>51</sup>

Through the war, 140 novice nuns, like all able-bodied people, were mobilized for labor by the government. They had to carry gas masks on their shoulders in case of an air raid with poison gas. On 14 May 1945, a time when hunger was incessant, an air raid left the nunnery in ashes. On 3 December 1947, they moved into the new buildings they built in the Shiroyama section of Nagoya. (Current location) They passed the intervening two and a half years as *unsui*—clouds and water—the traditional name given to novices to stress their lack of abode and the malleability

needed to accommodate to monastic life. They resumed their diligence in fortifying their educational and practice offerings, and in April of 1970, they successfully established a Tokubetsu Nisōdō. The designation signals that they could train high-ranking teachers, equal to the highest male monastics. The strategy of the early leaders to concentrate on education bore the desired results. They set out to train young nuns to think carefully about what needed to be done, and they produced hundreds of nuns who knew how to dismantle the male power structures that sought to institutionalize the nuns' subordinate status. These nuns of the early and mid-twentieth century had become strong under the hardships of war and the frustrations of unequal sect regulations. They were poised for action.

Having firmly established the educational foundation, the nuns directed their efforts to rectifying the other inequities of the sect administration's regulations. Nuns went from ranks below that of all monks to being permitted to attain the highest levels of their male counterparts. The fight for equality in monastic ranks, teaching ranks, and temple ranks was carried out through the *Sōtō-shū Nisōdan* (Sōtō Sect Nuns' Organization), an official organization established by the nuns in 1944 for addressing the needs of Sōtō nuns. Their battle with the sect administration was led by the invincible efforts of Kojima Kendō (1898–1995).

Kojima's life is a series of first-time opportunities claimed by and granted to a Sōtō nun. It is notable that the strides she made were during a turbulent period of male military dominance. At age 12 she ordained, and she quickly noted the discrimination between monks and nuns. Kojima said she could not endure it. She took her formal education beyond what any nun had before. Along with four other nuns, they matriculated at the Sōtō sect's Komazawa University in 1925. She returned to the nunnery afterwards and continued to work on egalitarian regulations. From 1938 through 1941, she was part of a small number of nuns who served at Sōtō temples in Hawaii: Mampuku-ji Temple on Maui and Eihei-ji Betsuin in Honolulu. After the war she assisted Taniguchi Setsudō-ni (1901–1986) in establishing Lumbini-en, an orphanage in response to the numerous children orphaned by the war.<sup>52</sup> The irony that they committed to being nuns led them to be mothers was not lost on them.

From 15 to 17 December 1945, Kojima joined the nuns who held a retreat (*sesshin*) at Eihei-ji. During the retreat they studied the *Raihaitokuzui* fascicle of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, a text renowned for Dōgen's most explicit articulation on the equality of men and women. Unlike a number of academics who a few decades later would develop an interpretation of Dōgen as a man who changed his mind, these nuns in 1945 did not question whether Dōgen modified his views late in life. In fact, the sect showed their approval of the nuns' interpretation of Dōgen, for they granted the women their requests. With Kojima at the helm of the Nisōdan, the reforms continued to dissolve the bastion of male authority and power over nuns. Beginning in 1949, each year on 14 October a nun served as head celebrant, *shōkōshi*,<sup>53</sup> at Sōji-ji, one of the sect's Main temples.<sup>54</sup> To serve as *shōkōshi* is a position of honor and a symbol of the nuns' triumph over a period of institutional discrimination. On 29 September 1952, Kojima's efforts were acknowledged with an award of excellence at the occasion of the 700<sup>th</sup> Memorial for the Founder of the Sōtō

Sect. From 1951 through 1961 Kojima served as an administrator for the *Zen Nihon Nisō Hōdan* (Pan-Japanese Buddhist Nun Association), and from 1961 to 1965 she served as its director. Their aims were to get official recognition for nuns as Dharma transmitters and heirs, train their successors to be teachers, and participate in Sect Assemblies. In 1980 when Eihei-ji celebrated the 700<sup>th</sup> Memorial for Koun Ejō, Kojima led the ceremony as *shōkōshi*.<sup>55</sup> Having literally pounded her fists on tables in meetings with only men, she was the fitting choice to be the first nun to lead at a ceremony at the temple Dōgen founded, complete with high-ranking yellow robes. She remarked “I never thought nuns would hold a ceremony at Eihei-ji. We nuns accomplished our goals rather quickly. A true testament to the heart and spirit we put into our actions.”<sup>56</sup>

From this solid foundation, Sōtō Zen nuns continued to grow in strength and stature. In 1970, having completed graduate school at Komazawa University, Aoyama Shundō (b. 1933) took the helm of Aichi Senmon Nisōdō nunnery. Authoring over fifty books ranging from scholarly examination of Dōgen’s teachings to inspirational teachings on how monastics and laypeople might live according to the Dharma, Aoyama Rōshi reaches a national audience. Frequently interviewed in print and on TV, she is widely recognized as the most highly respected nun in Japan. As abbess, she has focused on training nuns to maintain monastic traditions.

The tenor of her teaching is captured in two phrases Aoyama Rōshi often invokes. Known for blooming in later winter, the plum blossom is respected for its display of gentle strength. “Instead of succumbing to severe winter weather, they [plum blossoms] exude their fragrance, look noble in their garland of snow, and flourish.”<sup>57</sup> Every February this teaching is articulated when plum blossoms make their annual appearance. Punctuating instruction throughout the year is her reminder: “It is not a matter of *cannot*; it is a matter of whether you *do* or you *do not*.”<sup>58</sup>

Aoyama tutors by example. She demonstrates that Dōgen’s vision of Zen monastic life is a way to embody the ephemeral nature of reality. Monastic life aims to draw out the fundamental Buddha-nature in all by raising a monastic’s awareness to the infinite forms of Buddha-nature. The hierarchical structure pervading monastic life functions as a tool designed to hone a monastic’s sensitivity to the interdependence of all. The seniority system does not merely train juniors in relation to seniors, but, the senior-most member of a division is responsible for her whole divisions’ performance.

The daily schedule of the nunnery is similar to that of any standard Sōtō Zen monastery.<sup>59</sup>

0:00 A.M	Wake-up ( <i>shinrei</i> )
4:15	Zazen
5:00	Morning sutra chanting ( <i>chōka-fūgin</i> )
6:15	Daily morning cleaning of monastery ( <i>seisō</i> )
7:30	Breakfast

(continued)

(continued)

8:00–12:00	Classes, <i>samu</i> (working together—gardening, cleaning, preparation for events), or private study
noon	Lunch
12:30–3:00 P.M	Classes, <i>samu</i> , or private study
3:00	Tea
4:00	Evening sutra chanting ( <i>banka</i> )
4:30	Cleaning of worship hall and monastic hall
5:30	<i>Yakuseki</i> , primarily consisting of the days' leftovers
6:00–8:00	Private study in own room
8:15	Night zazen ( <i>yaza</i> )
9:00	Lights out ( <i>kaichin</i> )

In keeping with Dōgen's emphasis on practice in each aspect of life, the teachers at the monastery train the novices to do sewing, dusting, scrubbing, eating, washing, walking, and sitting (not just zazen, but all sitting—while listening to lectures, eating, talking, etc.)<sup>60</sup> as practice. The abbess, Aoyama Shundō, often reminds people that if you think you are too busy to “practice,” then you do not understand what practice is. With no dichotomy between body and mind, Zen adepts maintain that while polishing the floor, the heart is also being polished.

One day the monastery was hosting a large Dharma Lineage ceremony (*Hōmyaku-e*) for laity. It was a full-day affair that included lunch. Since the day before, everyone was involved in the preparation, the most labor intensive of which was a traditional Japanese vegetarian meal complete with individual serving trays and six separate dishes, each carefully arranged. In Zen cooking, the quantity of each ingredient is carefully calculated so as not to make too much or too little. By 10:00 that morning the number of guests who were staying for lunch was tallied up, and the final preparations were well underway. Lunch for the 145 guests was to be served at exactly noon. At 11:30 someone came in and announced that there were fifteen more guests who needed lunch. The next thirty minutes in the kitchen were a brilliant display of the various levels of discipline in human relationships. The newest nuns started muttering under their breath, “Why didn't anyone tell us earlier?” “This is impossible.” “We can't make that many more meals in this amount of time.” “Who said it was only 145 guests anyway?” The nuns who had been in training for two to three years started moving briskly, barking orders of what should be done, interspersed with inarticulate sounds of frustration, as if to say, “This is not my fault!” The head cook, the most senior of the nuns in training, was completing her fifth year in the monastery. Upon hearing the news, she stopped for about a minute and quietly started running various calculations in her head. Then she swiftly reached into a bin and brought out five more carrots and politely asked a novice to cut them in thin diagonal pieces. She asked another novice if she would please put a medium-sized sauce pan of water on boil. As she was telling a few other novices to get out fifteen more of each of the dishes, she surveyed the already completed trays. Although effort is made to make each serving equal, variance is

inevitable. She found the dishes that had food to spare and indicated to a few other novices to scavenge from them. In this way, she calmly worked until the meal was served to all 160 guests at noon.

This illustration exemplifies the manner in which the structure, regulations, curriculum, practices, and human relations, the monastery serves as a crucible in which discipline melts down the façade of individuated selves to realize the transformative power of the Buddhist teachings.

After graduating from the nunnery, nuns serve in temples, refining their practice of manifesting the teachings in action. In a small, inconspicuous nun's temple in Nagoya, a hardy Zen nun, Nogami Senryō, tried to live according to Dōgen's teachings with her entire being. Though little known beyond the temple compound walls, her daily life was plain testimony to her supreme realization of Buddhist teachings. She dedicated herself to caring for this nun's temple, Seikan-ji, while training a quiet and alert nun, Kuriki Kakujo. Kuriki arrived under Nogami's tutelage at the age of eight. With a sense of awe, respect, and a hint of trepidation, Kuriki remembers how Nogami raised her on the classical Zen dictum: "*Zadatsu Ryūbō*. (Die sitting. Die standing.) This is the way of a monastic."<sup>61</sup>

Interpreted as an indication of the deceased's level of spiritual attainment, since ancient times, various cultures have had a fascination with the posture of a person at the moment of death. In Zen, *Zadatsu Ryūbō* represents death postures considered absolute proof of enlightenment, although no one can verify how many people have succeeded. Dōgen used this classical Zen dictum to stress that practice means to do all activities with steady attention to reality here and now. According to Dōgen, practice is not for the purpose of creating sages out of ordinary people, because the distinction between an ordinary person and a sage is false. All are Buddha-nature. Therefore, he admonishes, "*Zadatsu Ryūbō*."

Nogami practiced this teaching each morning as she sped—palms flattened on the damp, neatly folded rag—down the wooden floor in the hallway collecting each particle of dust, after each meal as she wiped her bowl clean with a piece of pickled radish, and every afternoon as she pulled tiny weeds from the white-stone garden. Her body understood that enlightenment meant tolerating nothing less than perfect completion of each activity. Strictly adhering to Buddhist teachings, she commanded those around her, especially herself, to approach everything in the spirit of "*Zadatsu Ryūbō*." She repeated this like a mantra as she strove to live each moment with pure and relentless concentration. On the seventeenth day of a crisp November afternoon in 1980, Nogami's adamant voice pierced the silence, "It's time for *Zadatsu Ryūbō*!" Not knowing what to expect, Kuriki rushed to the dim hallway where she saw Nogami slowly walking toward the bronze sculpture of Śākyamuni Buddha sitting full-lotus posture on the altar in the Worship Hall. Arriving in time to witness the stout, ninety-seven-year-old nun in simple black robes take a final step to perfect her stance, Kuriki reached out to embrace her and pealed, "Congratulations!" as Nogami died standing.<sup>62</sup>

Whether establishing educational and monastic training facilities for themselves, reforming regulations in the sectarian institution, preparing for meals or for death, Sōtō nuns demonstrate keen insight into the transformative power of Dōgen's teachings.

### 3 Women Living Domestic Zen<sup>63</sup>

Dōgen's teaching that "practice is enlightenment" undergirds domestic Zen. Unlike its monastic counterpart, which thrives on control, discipline, and impeccable cleanliness, domestic Zen is at home with the chaotic, emotional, and messy lives of people struggling with their families, health, and jobs. Women are the hub of domestic Zen modes of tending to daily tasks, crises, healing, and ritual practices. Their influence is imparted through embodying the teachings in daily life, imbuing households with Dharma in action. As in monastic practice, cooking and cleaning are rich opportunities to practice in the home. The rhythms of family life, however, are often unpredictable. They require acute awareness to respond to the vicissitudes of emotions and health needs of a family, which can be painful, demanding, and messy. Giving birth, raising children, caring for the sick, and ushering transitions into death are hallmarks of domestic life.

Women are often the creative generators of healing practices that weave wisdom into the fabric of a home. Healing in this context is a way of acting, seeing, thinking, and holding your heart. It is an art to seek out ways to be grateful in the face of fear-driven and torment-ridden possibilities. This way of living and interpreting the world, self, others, and events involves orienting themselves to act in harmony with the way things are: impermanent and interrelated. Their way of healing targets ten activities.

1. Experiencing Interrelatedness
2. Living Body-Mind
3. Engaging in Rituals
4. Nurturing the Self
5. Enjoying Life.
6. Creating Beauty
7. Cultivating Gratitude
8. Accepting Reality as it is
9. Expanding Perspective
10. Embodying Compassion.

Home altars are central to domestic Buddhist practices. The altar is the physical focus for revering deceased loved ones. Sōtō Zen funerals recognize the deceased as enlightened. In so doing, the teaching of interrelatedness gets stretched across the illusory boundaries of life and death, facilitating intimate interactions between loved ones. The altar is a safe harbor where a person can receive support from a wise and compassionate being, a Personal Buddha who understands you and cares

for you in particular. Whether facing heart-wrenching and intractable situations or engendering awareness that one is loved, such relationships provide quiet, private, and profound healing. Connections are fostered through daily offerings of food, flowers, and incense, chanting scriptures, and conversation, which enlarges their perspective on their experiences, especially in the midst of daily chores and tight schedules.

Through ethnographic research, I discovered how one woman, Honda-san, wove a simple healing practice into her daily life. No one taught her how to do it. Each time she comes back to her studio apartment, I noticed she calls out, "I'm home (*tadaima*)."

She is engaging in a common Japanese family greeting reserved for those coming in and out of their home. Honda-san, however, lives alone. She is addressing the photos of her parents on her homemade bureau-top Buddhist altar. They passed away more than three decades earlier, yet they are still her family. Her heart hears their response, "Your return is welcomed (*okaerinasai*)."

Honda-san transformed a ubiquitous household greeting ritual into a healing ritual. With each greeting into the empty apartment she feels loved. She knows she is not alone.

Another woman created a healing ritual for herself regarding a deeply painful situation that became a wellspring for ongoing gratitude. As she had done for more than three decades, after finishing the breakfast dishes, Nogawa-san went to the talisman-adorned and ornately carved Buddhist altar that had been in her [husband's] family for generations to perform her morning ritual of offerings and chanting. She placed a cup of tea in a mug on the altar for her Personal Buddhas then lit the candle and a stick of incense. The small room had begun to fill with the aroma of incense when she glanced at the small clock placed between the incense burner and the bell. Noting the time, she called out to her husband to take out the garbage, because they were due to collect it at any minute. She then struck the bell and put her hands together in prayer, bowing as she chanted the *Heart Sutra* from memory. Today she would also chant the whole *Kannon Sutra*, because it was the twentieth anniversary of her having decided to adopt her sister's child as hers [since her sister's family already had several children]. Today is a private anniversary, a chance for Nogawa-san once again to give thanks to her Personal Buddhas for assisting her in becoming a mother.

Women in domestic Zen also engage in contemplative artistic practices as a mainstay of their healing activity repertoire, including calligraphy, scripture copying, and poetry writing. Brushed calligraphy is an art that visibly mirrors the heart-mind of the brush holder. Each hair of the brush is a delicate instrument that attunes to the subtlest reverberations of emotion and the slightest turn of thought. If the woman holding the brush is sad and tired or impatient with her pain, it is all laid bare on the page. If the brush is moved by deep gratitude for having one more day to live, or softened by compassion, the flow of the brush reveals a deeper quality of movement. The brush only records what occurs in the present moment. At each moment in this aesthetic practice, the woman receives immediate feedback on the condition of her heart-mind. Hence, she can make decisions and adjustments along the way. The *Heart Sutra*, a ubiquitous and prized Buddhist scripture, is the perfect



length of scripture to brush. Its one page is long enough to help the calligrapher settle into a stable peace.

Brushed calligraphic copying of scripture is a contemplative practice that numerous women do as part of their healing mode of living. It is done both in temple settings and at home. A woman with chronic pain makes a tremendous effort to not miss scripture copying held at Aichi Senmon Nisōdō on every third Saturday of the month. She attributes the aesthetic practice of scripture copying to helping her grow in a range of ways. It has helped her not indulge in self-deprecating thoughts and assuming responsibility for what happens. It has also inspired a profound sense of gratitude. In an effort to understand how this practice is healing for her, I wondered if she prayed for her pain to end in the space for prayers at the end of the scripture copying sheet. I was stunned to learn it never occurred to her to pray for that. Rather, the practice helps her heal by offering the calm space to gain a deep and broad perspective. Listen to how her response applies, not explicates, the meaning of the scripture she copies.

Thinking your problems are caused by other people, or that they are other people's responsibility...it's more difficult and painful to think of yourself as a sacrificer or a victim. If you feel gratitude, you can begin to see many things. I really think gratitude is a miraculous medicine. And then your heart becomes light, and other things begin to feel better, too. I sometimes think that my legs becoming bad is a good thing. I have become able to feel all kinds of different things. It is very interesting to see things from the perspective of having bad legs.<sup>64</sup>

She is not alone in finding the aesthetic practice of scripture copying heals. Others also expressed how engaging in this ritualized activity of body-mind helps them focus on the present moment where they can gain stability and clarity. It draws open their hearts to accept even undesirables as it exposes their heart-mind to themselves.

Poetry writing is also a favored healing activity. An elder woman who had lived a busy life—a full-time job, raising children, and caring for her own home—was surprised by the emotions that surfaced when she moved into a suite in her eldest son's home. Composing a poem helped her face her situation.

Loneliness is not in the mountains  
It is not in the city when a person is by herself  
It is when a person is among many people.

She said it was the sounds from the other side of the wall—everyone actively busy with their own routines—that made her feel like an outsider. Putting it into verse helped her understand the human condition and release some pain. Recognizing that others, too, felt this kind of loneliness helped her not feel alone.

Although flower arranging is done as a common healing activity, one woman shared how just viewing flowers taught her a life lesson that helped her heal from the cracks opened in her heart over the loss of her mother.

When I was riding my bike through the falling snow on a cold day in February, I saw the bud of a plum blossom. I thought of all the energy the bud was exerting to bloom even in

the winter. It is not just the energy of the bud, it is the energy of the universe working to bloom this flower. The world is working so hard to activate this flower, and it is working for me, too! At that instant, I felt embraced by that energy! The *Kannon Sutra* says that there is this power that holds you. This is it: Kannon Riki [compassion power]! There is a *huge* power in the universe that aims to make flowers blossom.<sup>65</sup>

Whether they composed it or just viewed it, these women of Zen know that beauty is an activity of the heart. They understand that beauty making is a choice to perceive something in its wholeness, where its deepest beauty is illuminated. Once they are aware of beauty in their midst, it works as an antidote to bitterness and stops calcification in the heart. Acting as a solvent that loosens debris in the heart, beauty melts self-pity and dissolves divisions. Beauty signals it is safe to open up, enticing all six senses, including mind-consciousness, to perceive connections. Empowered by this awareness, the women recognize themselves as an integral part of a vast interconnected web. They learned how perceiving something as beautiful is an act of not resisting the flow of causes and conditions. To perceive beauty is a profoundly refined mode of acceptance. Through engaging daily activities with concentrated focus and embodied awareness of meaning, they induce the body-mind to be in a beauty-making mode. Harmonizing diverse elements into an integrated whole is the highest and strongest mode of beauty-making activity. These women have learned that making beauty is nourishing, revitalizing in the midst of tragedy, and inspires creative ways to integrate loss into life. One woman succinctly sums it up, “I know I am healed when I am kind.”

Zen laywomen approach healing as an art, an art of seeing everything interrelated in a dance of change. Their aesthetic practices facilitate a direct experience of interrelatedness that cultivates feelings of gratitude, peace, and being intimately connected. They experience connection to family and friends—living and dead—and perceive expansive connections to nature and the cosmos. The wisdom that emerges out of their awareness of their interrelated wholeness engenders ethical action, helping them compassionately respond to the needs of the present moment. For these women, nothing is more healing or beautiful than that.

The activities of Zen women demonstrate the depth and breadth of their understanding of teachings they attribute to Dōgen. In monastic spheres they effectively changed the institutional structures to fully support women living Zen. In the domestic realm they manifest profound insights into bringing Zen home. Their practices are testimony to their creative wisdom.

## Notes

1. Revised excerpts from Paula Arai, *Women Living Zen: Sōtō Buddhist Nuns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36–41.
2. Interview with Aoyama Shundō in Nagoya, Japan, in July 1992.
3. Kawamura, Kōdō, ed. *Shohon taikō Eihei Kaisan Dōgen Zenji Gyōjō Kenzeiki* (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1975), 4.

4. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, ed. Takakusu Junjirō, Watanabu Kaikyoku et al. 85 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934), vol. 82; 2582, 20.
5. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 91.
6. All English translations from the *Raihaitokuzui* are from Hee-Jin Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness: Selections from Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 287–294. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 33.
7. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 33–34.
8. He draws upon stories he heard about prominent and highly respected nuns in China. He refers by name to Myōshi-ni, who had seventeen monks as her disciples and authorized their enlightenment during the ninth century, and Massan Ryōnenni, known for being the teacher of the great Chinese Zen master Kankei Shikan Zenji.
9. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 35. The translation offered by Kim has been modified according to the research of Miriam Levering, a specialist on Zen in Sung China. The original Chinese text does not add qualifications that are found in Kim's translation. The major difference is that Kim's text suggests only subordinate nuns gather to hear the teachings of an abbess, but the original Chinese states that *all* subordinates, male and female alike, gather for the teachings. Miriam Levering, "Women in Sung Ch'an: A Preliminary Report on the Record," paper presented at a conference on Medieval Zen in Cross-Cultural Perspective at Shilai University, Los Angeles, 14–15 June 1992.
10. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 35. Brackets appear in Kim's text.
11. Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness*, 293, note 18 [*Dōgen Zenji Zenshu* 1: 612]. The *Himitsu Shōbōgenzō* is accepted by Dōgen scholars as authentically written by Dōgen. It received this appellation because it was kept secretly at Eihei-ji for many years.
12. Brackets appear in Kim's text.
13. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 35.
14. Ishikawa Rikizan, "Dōgen no 'Nyoshin Fujōbutsu Ron' Nitsuite Juni Makibon *Shōbōgenzō* no Seikaku o Meguru Oboegaki," *Komazawa Daigaku Kenkyūjo Nenpō* vol. 1 (March 1990), 88–123.
15. Kasahara Kazuo, *Nyonin Ōjō Shisō no Keifu* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1975), 196.
16. Hokoya Noriaki, *Hongaku Shisō Hihan* (Tokyo: Daizōshuppan, 1989).
17. Tagami Taishu, *Dōgen no Itakatta Koto* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985).
18. Junko Minamoto, *Women, Religion, and Sexuality*, ed. by Jeanne Becher (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990), 162.
19. Sallie B. King, "Egalitarian Philosophies in Sexist Institutions: The Life of Satomi-san, Shinto Miko and Zen Buddhist Nun." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* vol. 4 no. 1 (Spring 1988), 20–21.
20. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 282.
21. Kawamura Kōdō, *Shōbōgenzō no Seiritsushiteki Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjū-sha, 1986), 379.

22. An important example of this concerns the establishment of the Nuns' Order. Although Śākyamuni did not leave any writings, he is "quoted" in texts written after his demise that the Dharma will decline 500 years earlier if women enter the order, but the concept of Dharma ages of decline did not arise until 200 years after Śākyamuni passed on. Therefore, the misogynist statement was proven to have been added to the tradition at a later time, and it is not an indication of the founder's views of women.
23. This text was compiled by 500 arhats 400 years after Śākyamuni passed on.
24. *Taishō*, vol. 82; 2582, 281.
25. Funaoka Makoto, *Dōgen to Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (Tokyo: Hyōronsha, 1980).
26. Funaoka, *Dōgen to Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, 138.
27. Funaoka, *Dōgen to Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, 134.
28. Kawamura, *Shōbōgenzō*, 337.
29. Ishikawa Rikizan, "Chūsei Bukkyō ni okeru Ni no Isō Nitsuite: Tokuni Shoki Sōtō Shūkyōdan no Jirei o Chūshin toshite," *Komazawa Daigaku Zen Kenkyūjo Nenpō* no. 3 (March 1992), 141–153.
30. Bernard Faure, "The Daruma-shū, Dōgen, and Sōtō Zen," *Monumenta Nipponica* vol. 42 (Spring 1987), 22–55.
31. Tajima Hakudō, *Dōgen Keizan Ryō Zenji no Nisōkan*, (Nagoya: Sōtō-Shū Kōtō Nigakurin Shuppanbu, 1953)16–17.
32. Dōgen, *Eihei Kōroku* vol. 10 in *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū*. 2 vols., ed. (Ōkubo Dōshū. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969), vol. 2, 190.
33. *Eihei Kōroku* vol. 8 in *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū*, vol. 2, 155.
34. *Eihei Kōroku* vol. 10 in *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū*, vol. 2, 191.
35. *Eihei Sansogyōgōki* in *Sōtōshū Zensho Kankōkai*, ed. *Sōtō-shū Zensho*. 1929–1935. Rev. and enl. 18 vols. (Tokyo: Sōtōshū Shūmuchō, 1970–1973), 3.
36. Cited in Tajima, *Zenji*, 30–31.
37. *Eihei Kōroku* vol. 2 in *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū*, vol. 2, 42.
38. Daibutsu-ji was the name of Dōgen's temple in Echizen before he renamed it Eihei-ji.
39. *Eihei Kōroku* vol. 5 in *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū*, vol. 2, 97.
40. Buddhist lineage is explained in terms comparable to family lineages. The teacher is the "parent" and the disciples are the "children." Therefore, a "Dharma aunt" is a female monastic who has the same teacher as the given disciple's teacher.
41. There is no documentation that records why Dōgen would travel to Kyoto when he was ill. The most popular explanation is that he knew he was near death and wanted to return to his home town to die.
42. Tajima, *Zenji*, 21–25.
43. For further information, see Arai, *Women Living Zen*, especially Chaps. 3–5.
44. In 1872 the government officially designated Sōjij-ji and Eihei-ji as the head temples of the Sōtō sect. During this time of change, the male-dominated Sōtō Zen institution did not initiate reforms to bring equality to monastic women.

45. Ueda, *Chōmon Nisō Monogatari*, (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1979), 79–80.
46. Ōgishi Sakichi, *Gyōten Sōrin no Hibiki: Kifun Yakushi-dō to Aichi Senmon Nisōdō no Rekishi* (Nagoya: Kaikoku Kōsoku Insatsu, 1981), 17.
47. During the Sengoku Period (late sixteenth century), the region was known as Owari no Kuni. Later, it was called Higashi Kasugaigun.
48. With one glance at the original building, the harsh reality of the nuns' early years and the height of their zeal was immediately apparent. It was hard to imagine how thirty people could fit into such a tiny space. Guided by Kitō Shunkō and a lay woman, Ōgishi Emiko, I visited the original building and site in August 1990.
49. *Rokujūnen no Ayumi*, 8.
50. Cited in Ōgishi, *Gyōten Sōrin no Hibiki*, 22.
51. *Rokujūnen no Ayumi*, 57. For point of reference, in 1935 there were 2382 nuns and 28,093 monks in the Sōtō Sect.
52. Taniguchi Setsudō-ni Tsuitōshū Henshū Iinkai, *Jikō Mugen: Taniguchi Setsudō-ni Shinonde* (Toyama, Japan: Shakai Fukushi Hōjin Lumbini-en, 1987). This book details the activities and extraordinary life of Taniguchi, an illustration of a nun who made a difference in twentieth-century Japan.
53. A literal translation of *shōkōshi* is “incense ritual celebrant.” It refers to the person who leads the ceremony, offers the incense, sits in the center, and does prostrations on behalf of everyone. This position reflects high honor and respect.
54. In June 1993 the Nisōdan decided that nuns would honor Dōgen's memory at Eihei-ji, holding a ceremony similar to the one they hold at Sōji-ji. The ceremony is held each year on September 27 or 28, to honor Dōgen's death anniversary (29 September 1253).
55. For more detailed information on this event, see Igawa Etsudo, ed. “Kōjun-shin tadahitotsu,” *Otayori* no. 76 (Sept. 1980), 2–13.
56. Kojima Kendō, *Bikuni no Jisei: Fune ni Kazamu* (Tokyo: Meibun Insatsu, 1985), 156.
57. Aoyama Shundō, *Zen Seeds: Reflections of a Female Priest*, trans. Patricia Daien Bennage (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1991), 82.
58. Aoyama's lectures at Aichi Senmon Nisōdō, Fall 1989. Recorded by Paula Arai.
59. The daily schedules of Zen monasteries vary. Some monasteries do a few more rounds of zazen, while others do less. Aichi Senmon Nisōdō stands out in that it holds a *sesshin* with intensive zazen and teachings once a month. Eihei-ji and Sōji-ji, the Head monasteries of the Sōtō sect, only hold a few *sesshin* per year.
60. Most nuns had large callouses on their insteps from maintaining the tradition of long hours sitting in formal posture on the floor without cushions.
61. Records indicate a number of Buddhist adepts passed away in full-lotus posture, indicating enlightenment. Dōgen used the phrase *Zadatsu Ryūbō* in his text *The Way of Zazen Recommended to Everyone* (*J. Fukanzazengi*), which he wrote shortly after returning from China (1227) with the intention of making the true Buddhist teachings available.

62. From an interview with Kuriki Kakujō at Seikan-ji Temple in Nagoya, Japan on July 17, 1990.
63. For more information, see Paula Arai, *Bringing Zen Home: The Healing Heart of Japanese Buddhist Women's Rituals* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011).
64. Honda interview, 3 April 1999. Pseudonyms are used to protect confidentiality.
65. Umemura interview, 3 September 1998.

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# To Tame an Ox or to Catch a Fish: A Zen Reading of *the Old Man* and *the Sea*



Pamela D. Winfield

## 1 Introduction

In March of 2019, Steven Heine hosted a three-day conference in Miami, Florida on *The Roots of Dōgen Studies: A Conference on the Life and Thought of Zen Master Dōgen* (道元禪師 1200–1253). The conference program included a series of public lectures on various aspects of Zen culture, including poetry, imagery, meditation, sutras, and ritual objects. I discussed Zen imagery and the symbolism of the famous ten ox-herding pictures (J. *jūgyūzu* 十牛圖), which visually likens the process of meditative discipline to a young boy taming a wild bull. This illustrated guide to training the unruly beast of the mind in Zen meditation is therefore a fitting topic to expand upon for this *Festschrift* honoring Dr. Heine that celebrates both the theory and practice of Zen.

First, this essay will summarize the significance of the ten ox-herding pictures by the twelfth century Linji Chan master Guoan Shiyuan (J. Kakuan Shien 廓庵師遠 n.d.). It will present the visual parable of ten circular frames in which a young boy symbolizes the unenlightened mind of the novice meditator, and the ox represents the enlightened mind of one's own Buddha nature. Once the boy discovers and disciplines his buddha-bull-mind in meditation, the ox disappears, for the boy realizes that the ox was but a provisional mental projection of his own enlightened being. When he realizes that he and the ox have always been non-distinct from the start and that he was searching for something that was never lost to begin with, this integrated realization of his own original enlightenment shatters his limited identity, and the figure of the boy then completely disappears as well. Out of this emptiness, the natural world begins to reassert itself within his frame of reference, and the boy reappears in the final frame as a grown bodhisattva figure who compassionately transmits his traceless accomplishment to the next boy-novice in the marketplace.

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These ten images therefore sequentially show how the student of Zen gradually brings the unbridled power of the mind under control in meditation (frames 1–6), realizes its fundamental emptiness (frames 7–8), and then re-emerges from the rigors of the experience back into the world, where he is universally recognized as a great Zen master who teaches the next generation of practitioners (frames 9–10). This series thus mirrors Zen's three-fold apophatic experience of assertion, negation, and reaffirmation of the self in and as the world. Just as the *Heart Sūtra* asserts that "form is emptiness; emptiness is form," so too does Zen master Dōgen state in his *Genjōkōan* fascicle that "To study the self is to forget the self; to forget the self is to be confirmed by all *dharma*s (thing-events in the world)."

Secondly, in addition to retreading this well-known dharma path of discipline, deconstruction, and dissemination, the last section of this essay will also offer a new twist on the ten images by using the ox-herding series as an analytical frame for understanding the modern literary classic, *The Old Man and the Sea*. This 1952 Pulitzer prize-winning novella by Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway first came to mind during my Miami talk because it likewise recounts the process of capturing an equally enormous, elusive, and overwhelmingly powerful creature who in many ways symbolizes the self. Hemingway's protagonist is an old man and not a boy, but he too experiences the process of struggle, achievement, loss, and the ensuing redefinition of identity as a result. Coincidentally, the fisherman's tale also happens to take place far out in the deep Gulf Stream waters off the coast of Cuba, not far from our conference site of Miami.

Specifically, as in frames 1–6 of the ten ox-herding pictures where the novice boy trains the ox, here the old man hooks and reels in his prize fish, a massive eighteen-foot marlin. It has a mind of its own initially, but it becomes almost mystically identified with the fisherman during the course of their marathon battle of wills. Hemingway's account lionizes the virtues and dispositions required to (re)capture this primordial force of (buddha-) nature: the hard-won skills of discipline, perseverance and courage, as well as the delicate balancing act of Great Doubt and Great Faith in one's ability to rein in the power of a rival—yet ultimately identical—sentience and harness it to the skiff of the self. Then, as in frames 7–8 where the boy realizes the emptiness of the self, Hemingway here describes the complete negation and emptying out of that accomplishment; in this case, the marlin's utter decimation by a feeding frenzy of sharks. Finally, as in frames 9–10 where the adult boy re-enters the world, the novella concludes with the old man's final return to the (other) shore, where his young devoted disciple Manolin recognizes the old man's unquestioned mastery despite seeing only the skeletal traces of his struggle.

In short, just as the ox-herder searches for the bull, tames it, and realizes its (i.e. his own) emptiness, so too does the old man Santiago seek, gain, and ultimately lose the symbolic animal-projection of his own self-perfection. In both cases, the loss of the prize paradoxically proves their master's status back in the marketplace, and though they have nothing to show for it, their traceless experience authenticates



their teaching and justifies the next generation's devotion to them. Reading Hemingway's work through the lens of Zen's ox-herding pictures provides a fresh perspective on both the book and the buddha way.

## 2 Animal Metaphors for the Awakened Mind

To begin our analysis of the oxherding theme, it is first necessary to survey the literary and visual record of this topic in the Buddhist cultural sphere. The analogy of taming a wild beast and disciplining the untethered mind is a recurring leitmotif in early Pali scriptures and later Mahāyāna texts. It was later adapted by Chinese Daoists as well as esoteric Tibetan Buddhists alike.

In early classical Indian Buddhist scriptural sources preserved in the Pali canon, the simile of taming a wild animal to taming the unsettled mind in meditation appears in the *Greater Cowherd Discourse* (P. *Mahagopālaka Sutta*, Majjhima Nikāya no. 33). This text warns that a cowherd needs eleven qualities to take care of his cattle properly, just as a monk needs to possess those same eleven qualities to flourish in the dharma-vinaya.<sup>1</sup> The shorter *Cowherd Discourse* (P. *Gopālaka Sutta*, Udāna 4.3) associates a cowherd's murder between two villages to the interior battles of the mind, pointing out that "Whatever an enemy might do to an enemy, or a foe to a foe, the ill-directed mind can do to you even worse."<sup>2</sup> In addition, *Foundations for Establishing Mindfulness* (P. *Satipatthana Sutta* Majjhima Nikāya no. 10 and the expanded *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* Digha Nikāya no. 22) provide other frames of reference for mindfulness. In one section on materiality, the body is likened to a cow, and just as the butcher sitting at a crossroads contemplates four aspects of the carcass, so too does the bikkhu contemplate the four modes of materiality.<sup>3</sup> In another section of the *Satipatthana Sutta* on breathing, Soma Thera's 1998 commentary explains the metaphor of the cowherd most clearly,

A cowherd wishing to tame a wild calf nourished entirely on the milk of a wild cow, ties that calf, after leading it away from the cow, to a stout post firmly sunk in the ground, at a spot set apart for it. That calf, having jumped hither and thither, and finding it impossible to run away from here, will crouch down or lie down at that very post. Even so, must the bhikkhu who is desirous of taming the wild mind nourished long on the tasty drink of visible and other objects tie that mind to the post of the object of mindfulness-arousing with the rope of remembrance, after leading the mind from visible and other objects and ushering it into a forest, to the foot of a tree or into an empty place. The mind of the bhikkhu will also jump hither and thither. Not obtaining the objects it had long grown used to, and finding it impossible to break the rope of remembrance and run away, it will finally sit or lie down at that every object by way of partial and full absorption. Therefore, the men of old said:

As one who wants to break a wild young calf  
Would tether it to stout stake firmly, here,  
In the same way the yogi should tie fast  
To meditation's object his own mind.<sup>4</sup>

In early Chinese Buddhist sources, the *Ox-Gathering Metaphor Sūtra* (C. *Qun niu ping jing* J. *Gunnyū hi kyō* 群牛譬經 T215) was translated by Fa Ju 法炬 between 290–307 CE during the Western Jin dynasty (266–420), and bovine metaphors abound in the *Ekattarāgama* (the “increased by one agama” C. *Zeng yi ahan jing* J. *sōichi agonkyō* 增壹阿含經 T125) translated by Sangadeva in the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420 CE). The *Sūtra on the Bequeathed Teachings* (C. *Yi jiao jing* 遺教經 T1529) attributed to Kumārajīva (344–413 CE) also mentions restraining the five senses like the herdboys who stop his ox from running into the fields of grain,<sup>5</sup> and the *Lotus Sūtra*’s famous parable of the burning house and three carts in Chapter Three likens Mahāyāna to a Great White Ox Cart. Numerous Tang dynasty (618–907) Chan masters also deployed this white ox discourse, such as Daochang’s tenth-century encounter dialogue that asks about “the Mind-ox suddenly becoming a White Ox.”<sup>6</sup> A quick survey of the Taishō canon database reveals numerous other Mahāyāna texts that include the characters for cowherd (C. *qun niu* 群牛).<sup>7</sup>

In terms of visual culture, the ox-herding motif enjoyed its heyday in the context of medieval Song dynasty Chan (960–1279). There are two principal versions of the ox-herding pictures from this period. First, Dabai Puming’s (J. Daihaku Fumyō 大白普明 n.d.) series of ten illustrated poems dates from the eleventh century and were most popular on the continent (Fig. 1). By contrast, Guoan Shiyuan’s twelfth century illustrations to be discussed presently were more popular in Japan. Puming’s earlier version appears in the supplement to the Buddhist canon (*Xu zang jing* 續藏經 vol 64 no. 1270) that was first translated by D.T. Suzuki in *Manual of*

**Fig. 1** Puming’s version of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures (detail). Qing edition, 1662

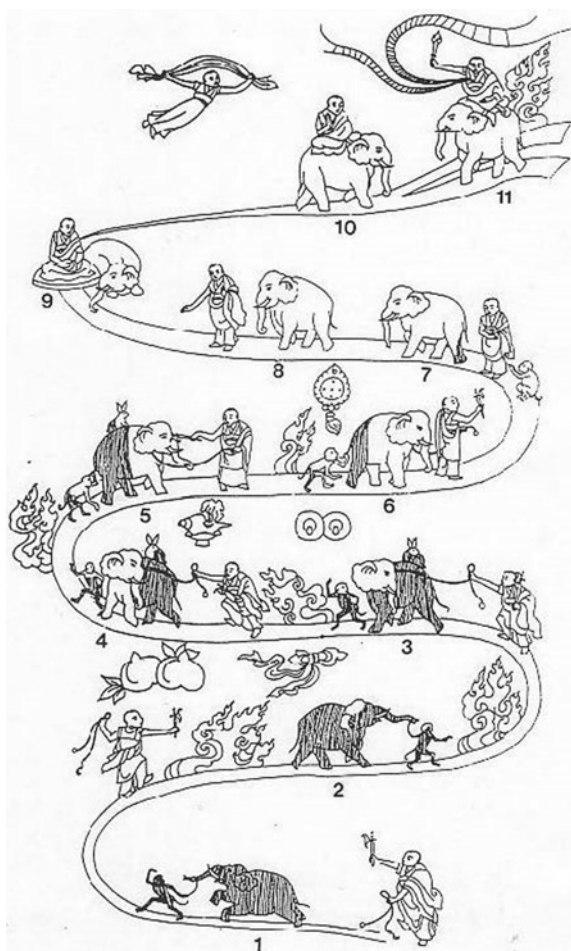


*Zen Buddhism*, 1934. Puming's ten title scenes are: (1) Not yet tending the ox (2) Beginning the tending (3) Brought under control (4) Being turned around (5) Tamed (6) Unobstructed (7) Letting things take their own course (8) Forgetting each other (9) Solitary brightness (10) Both gone. Puming's imagery depicts a black ox gradually growing whiter before he finally disappears in frame nine. Then in the final tenth frame, the boy also disappears ("both gone") and only an empty white circle is shown, culminating the series with the final realization of emptiness. As a result, Puming's version has typically been associated with gradual as opposed to sudden illumination. It recalls the story of Chan's fifth patriarch's poetry contest where his student versifies that one must constantly polish the round mirror of the mind until it gradually appears clear and bright.

In terms of visual culture, Puming's illustrations inspired Zhao Zhifeng (趙智風 c. 1160–1240) to commission the monumental rock-cut bas reliefs of cattle scenes that were posthumously completed in 1249 along the Great Buddha Curve (C. *Dafo wan* 大佛灣) of Baodingshan 宝顶山 in Dazu county, Sichuan province.<sup>8</sup> Puming's imagery also inspired Gao Daokuan's (高道寬 1195–1277) twelve horse-training pictures that became popular during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368). Gao, whose religious name was Yuanming Laoren 圓明老人, was a third-generation Daoist monk in the Complete Perfection (Quanzhen 全真) school, and his equine variation likewise depicts the process of "reining in sensory engagement and harnessing chaotic psychological patterns through dedicated and prolonged meditation."<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Puming's images of a gradually whitening ox serve as an important precursor for later esoteric Tibetan Buddhist images of taming a wild elephant (Fig. 2). Importantly, however, the Tibetan version condenses that process into a single frame, and only arrives at the purified and stabilized mental state of calm meditation (S. *śamatha* P. *samatha*). This roughly corresponds to frames 1–6 in the Chan ox-herding pictures. In the Tibetan version, the monk uses the flames of Right Effort to chase after the elephant-mind, but he gradually comes to lead it, extinguish the flames, and even calm it into a peaceful sleep, a somnolent stage that recalls other East Asian images of Chan masters asleep with their domesticated tigers.<sup>10</sup> The monk then sits astride the elephant in perfect meditative equipoise of *śamatha* meditation. The last figure in the Tibetan series indicates the need for continued practice, for the monk holds a sword that cuts through delusions, and the flames reappear because renewed effort is required as the meditator engages in the complementary practice of insight meditation (S. *vipāśyanā*, P. *vipassanā*). The Chan/Zen series of pictures picks up here in order to illustrate the meditator's combined practice of calm and insight meditation (S. *śamatha-vipāśyanā* C. *zhiguan* J. *shikan* 止觀) that leads to realizing the full emptiness of self-and-other.

**Fig. 2** Elephant-Taming  
Pictures of Tibetan  
Buddhism. Unattributed  
Indian line drawing c. 1970s



### 3 The Ten Oxherding Pictures

The second set of Zen ox-herding pictures that informs this article is far more famous in Japan and is credited to Guoan Shiyuan mentioned previously. His twelfth century version also appears in the supplement to the Buddhist canon (*Xu zang jing* vol. 64 no. 1269) that was first translated by D.T. Suzuki in *The Eastern Buddhist* in 1923 and *Essays in Zen Buddhism 1st Series* in 1949.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Puming, Guoan's version rejects emptiness as the final goal of Zen meditation and indicates instead that meditative experience should be applied and transmitted to others in the real world. In Guoan's version, the empty circle appears in frame eight, and the series ends in frame ten with the boy, now pictured as an adult master, entering into the marketplace to teach the next generation of boys. Moreover, Guoan's illustrations do not depict the ox gradually whitening with meditative practice; rather the

bull remains black throughout frames 1–6 until it suddenly drops off in frame seven. This variation on the ox-herding theme is therefore typically associated with sudden illumination, and the ninth and tenth frames of the series address the critique of Buddhist escapism in favor or re-engaging with the world as an awakened master. In addition, instead of Puming's square format, Guoan encircles every scene within an outlined disk, borrowing the round format of Chinese album leaves, or alternately, the shape of a full moon, or Zen's full calligraphic circles (C. *yuanxiang* J. *ensō* 円相). Most suggestively, these meditation circles were historically associated with oxen especially within the Guiyang lineage of Chan that arose during the late Tang dynasty, for the character for "ox" (C. *niu* J. *gyū* 牛) was often placed either inside or outside of the circle to indicate whether the mind of the adept was aligned or not with the Buddha dharma.<sup>12</sup>

To account for Guoan's innovations, his disciple Ciyuan (J. Jion 慈遠 n.d.) writes an introductory preface and commentary that credits several other precursors, though not Puming. The introduction mentions five illustrated poems by the eleventh-century monk Qing ju (J. Seikyō 清居 n.d.) in which the ox grows whiter and ends in emptiness, but he also mentions a twelfth-century version by the Caodong (J. Sōtō) monk Zide Huihui (J. Jitoku Eki 自得慧暉 1090–1159) which adds an extra frame after emptiness. Its six illustrations also include a gradually whitening ox, but Zide was also the disciple of silent illumination Chan master Hongzhi Zhengjue (J. Wanshi Shōgaku 宏智正覺 1091–1157), so his version can be seen as abrogating the gradual vs. sudden debacle.<sup>13</sup> Later manuscripts of Guoan's version include other accompanying verses by Shigu Xiyi (J. Sekiko Kii 石鼓希夷 n.d.) and Huaina Dalian (J. Kaidō Tairin 壞衲大璫 n.d.) who further comment on the meditative experience.<sup>14</sup>

The oxherder theme was undoubtedly first brought to Japan and promulgated in the thirteenth century by Chinese émigré monks fleeing the Mongol invasions that ended the Song dynasty in 1279. For example, at the invitation of the Hōjō regent Tokimune, Wuxue Zuyuan (J. Mugaku Sogen, alt. Bukkō Kokushi 無学祖元 1226–1286) arrived in Japan in 1279 and actively promoted the oxherding metaphor as abbot of both Kenchōji and Engakuji temples in Kamakura. In one verse, Wuxue admonishes, "It's you who are the Buddha, but you just won't see / why go riding on an ox to search for an ox?!"<sup>15</sup> Here Wuxue is undoubtedly referencing the Tang dynasty master Baizheng Huaihai (J. Kyakujō Ekai 百丈懷海 720–814) who said that seeking enlightenment is like "looking for an ox on which on is riding," and that realizing the truth was like "returning home on the back of an ox."<sup>16</sup> Translated into modern cultural terms, their comments can be likened to Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, who needs to walk the Yellow Brick Road of practice in order to realize that she always already possessed the ability to go home all along. Practice is realization and the path *is* the destination, but one must invariably walk it in order to wake up to it.

In terms of visual culture, the oldest extant version of Guoan's illustrated poems in Japan are dated to 1278 and are preserved in the Mary Griggs Burke collection of Japanese art.<sup>17</sup> The Burke handscroll may indicate the start of a popular thirteenth century 'oxherding boom' in Japan that followed the Chinese trend (cf. the Baodingshan bas-reliefs in 1249 and the Daoist horse-taming pictures before Gao's death in 1277). In Japan, an early thirteenth-century image of "Seeing the Ox" inscribed by Shaolin Miaosong is still held in the Yabumoto Kōzō private collection in Amagasaki, Japan.<sup>18</sup> In addition, there is the magnificent hanging scroll of a "Herdboy on Ox" attributed to the great Chan artist-monk Muqi (J. Mokkei 牧溪 c. 1210–1269) who was wildly popular in Japanese Zen circles and who was actively collected by such prominent Zen temples as Daitokuji from the fourteenth century onward. This particular hanging scroll has been reattributed to an anonymous thirteenth to fourteenth century artist, but it nevertheless adopts Muqi's style. Its composition adopts an elevated vantage point to look down upon a diminutive youth who sits astride a water buffalo's broad back; his upturned gaze focused on an overhanging pine branch above.<sup>19</sup> The great Chinese art historian James Cahill (1926–2014) also included several "loosely Chan" scenes of boys and water buffaloes from Japanese collections in his modest Sōgen-ga (Song and Yuan Paintings) exhibition in 1982 at the University Art Museum in Berkeley, CA,<sup>20</sup> and another undated copy of the Song-dynasty series is also held in the Tenri University Library Treasury.<sup>21</sup>

This oxherding boom continued in Japan well into the Muromachi period (1333/6–1573), when Japanese Zen artists began brushing them for themselves. For example, the famous Zen priest-painter Tenshō Shūbun (天章周文 active c. 1414, d. 1444–50) is credited with brushing an oxherding series for Shōkokuji 相国寺 temple in northern Kyoto, and another anonymous sixteenth century handscroll held in the Spencer Collection of the New York Public Library frames each scene not within circles but rather within a heart-shaped fan format.<sup>22</sup> Most notably during the Edo period (1600–1868), the courtier Karasumaru Mitsuhiro (烏丸光広 1579–1638) adopted the fluid calligraphic and pictorial lines of his renowned teacher Kōetsu Hon'ami (光悦本阿弥 1558–1637) as he condensed the series into an eight circle handscroll held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.<sup>23</sup> Other historic examples abound, but in the modern period, a famous series of woodblock prints designed by Tokuriki, Tomikichiro (徳力富吉郎 1902–2000) were first published by Tuttle Press in Nyogen Sensaki and Paul Reps' 1957 classic *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, and have been reproduced widely ever since. It is these images that are reproduced with permission here.<sup>24</sup>



*Śamatha* calm meditation.  
To study the self... (assertion)



(1) Searching for the Ox 尋牛: The first scene depicts a young boy lost in the wilderness of life, desperately looking for his own ox. He is far from his original home, overwhelmed by the path of rivers and mountains before him. This stage represents the novice meditator just setting out on his journey.



(2) Seeing the Traces 見跡: In scene two, the boy discovers the ox's tracks and begins to follow the path of zazen. The traces here represent a very intellectual understanding of the dharma as expressed in doctrines and scriptures.



(3) Seeing the Ox 見牛: In frame three, the boy experiences *kenshō* 見性, or the first glimpse of one's own true nature. This is only a partial realization, however, for the boy only sees the backside of the Ox. Further practice is required.



(4) Catching the Ox 得牛: In frame four, the boy struggles to control the unruly beast of his own mind in meditation. The strength and power of the bull is overwhelming, and it is not clear who is in control.



(5) Herding the Ox 牧牛: The fifth frame is the first time that we see the face of the ox. This recalls the Zen kōan "show me your original face before your parents were born," and indicates a deepening familiarity with one's own interdependent essence-lessness. The boy's rope is relaxed here and there is no more struggle in meditation.



(6) Riding the Ox, Returning Home 騎牛歸家: The title of this scene may sound like Baizheng Huaihai's Tang-dynasty comment about realizing truth, but in fact, this stage only represents the preliminary stage of *śamatha*.

*Vipassanā* insight meditation.  
Is to forget the self...(negation)



(7) Forgetting the Ox, Only Man 忘牛存人: This stage represents the penetrating insight of *vipaśyanā* meditation. The bull disappears from the meditator's frame of reference as he realizes that the bull is nothing other than himself, and that his pursuit of the enlightened mind was always already there to begin with. The boy looks up and contemplates the full moon of enlightenment.



(8) Man and Ox Both Forgotten 人牛俱忘: Once the boy realizes the emptiness of his mental construction, he realizes the emptiness of himself as well. His sense of selfhood completely drops off in meditation, and he no longer contemplates the full moon of enlightenment from afar. He becomes nothing other than the full moon itself, shining clear and bright.

Compassionate return.  
...is to be confirmed by  
all dharmas. (reaffirmation)



(9) Returning to the Origin, Back to the Source 返本還源: Moving beyond the state of selflessness, the forms of the world begin to re-enter into the meditator's awareness, and confirm the self as but one of many interdependent dharmas in the world.



(10) Entering the City with Bliss-Bestowing Hands 入鄺垂手: Out of compassion for the next seeker, the advanced practitioner now re-engages with the conventional world in order to pass along his wisdom.

Guoan's ten stages can be grouped into three main movements or phases of meditative progress that correspond to several well-established Buddhist principles. First must come the general quieting of the mind into the calm stability of mental awareness known as *śamatha* (C. *zhi* J. *shi* 止). This state is represented by frame number six (or number ten in the Tibetan elephant version), where the boy sits comfortably astride the bull. Like the Daoist images of Laozi or male youths astride water buffaloes, the Zen practitioner here is fully at ease in meditation when riding the controlled power of his own mind. He even plays a harmonious tune on his flute, which may indicate a heightened sensory or even aesthetic awareness at this stage. This relaxed and enjoyable state, however, is only achieved through Right Effort (number six in the Eightfold Path), for it takes enormous energy and determination in frames 1–6 to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and domesticate the wild mind into a docile and compliant vehicle for Right Mindfulness (number seven in the Eightfold Path). This calm yet alert, focused yet open mind is a necessary pre-requisite to enlightenment.

The second phase of meditative progress can only occur with *vipāśyanā* (P. *vipassanā* C. *guan* J. *kan* 觀) insight meditation. This state is represented by frames seven and eight. Here, gaining insight means developing a detached yet intimate understanding of the workings of one's own mind. If one can learn to simply observe without judgement or attachment how thoughts arise, abide and pass away, then one can ostensibly avoid following them down emotionally disruptive rabbit holes that inevitably lead to suffering. If one can apply this technique to even the idea of enlightenment itself as symbolized by the bull, and if one can detach from even the desire for spiritual attainment, then the bull itself will disappear of its own accord, as it does in frame seven. That is, one must set the initial intention to achieve enlightenment, but eventually one must let go of even the very *idea* of spiritual perfection in order to paradoxically attain it. That is why Zen admonishes, "If you see the Buddha, kill him. If you see the patriarch, kill him." Once one obtains Mañjuśrī's sword of wisdom through this kind of penetrating insight, then one can cut through one's bull-headed attachment to the bull of enlightenment, which is now retrospectively seen as a helpful but now obsolete invention. This is not unlike Chapter Three of *The Zhuangzi* where Cook Ding swiftly cuts up an ox with his skillful knife so that it utterly collapses into a deconstructed heap.<sup>25</sup>



Consequently, if one can likewise apply this rigorous mental exercise of detached observation to even one's own individual sense of selfhood, then ultimately that will drop off too as it does in frame eight. This roughly corresponds to Zhuangzi's notion of self-forgetting,<sup>26</sup> and to Zen master Dōgen's famous epithet of "dropping off body-mind of self and other completely" (J. *shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落). The combination of calm and insight (J. *shikan* 止觀) meditation that is the hallmark of Tendai and Zen Buddhism thus leads to the state of meditative absorption known as *samādhi* (number eight in the Eightfold Path, often translated as Right Concentration). In this state, the meditator's false sense of "I" that ignores its own shifting interdependence upon all other things in the universe is utterly emptied out or 'absorbed' into the larger shifting, interdependent essence-lessness of the world.

As a reminder of our earlier discussion, Puming's teleological progression from a black bull to a white empty circle had ended here in the liberating realization of the absolute emptiness of self and world, the definition of enlightenment itself. However, Guoan adds two more circles after his empty circle in frame eight, thereby insisting that the ultimate realization of emptiness must be re-integrated back into the real world and compassionately passed on to the next generation of seekers.

The third phase of meditative progress, therefore, represents a 'compassionate return' (my phrase) to re-engaging with conventional reality from an enlightened perspective. In frame nine, all the forms of nature re-enter into the meditator's sphere of awareness. After the rigors of deconstruction leading up to frame eight, the positive value of negative space in frame nine is thrown into high relief, for metaphorically speaking, it is the white paper under, around, and in the black ink that allows the blossoming plum tree by the riverbank to *be* such as it is (in Chan visual culture, the indigenous Chinese plum tree often stood in for the Indian bodhi tree of enlightenment).<sup>27</sup> Philosophically speaking, this black-and-white image of nature's form-and-emptiness can now be seen in the transformed light of Nāgārjuna's Two Truths, which perceives the world in terms of conventional and ultimate reality. Experientially speaking, this stage also aligns with the third movement of Bhāvaviveka's (c. 500–578 CE) tripartite dialectic which toggles between the Two Truths as it asserts, then negates, and then reaffirms the self in and as form.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the *Heart Sūtra*'s famous epithet of "form is emptiness, emptiness is form" can either be read as a reflexive ontological statement of  $A = B$ , or as a more epistemological, experiential description of the enlightenment process itself as the meditator moves from form to emptiness ( $A \rightarrow B$ , frames 1–8), and then from emptiness back to form again ( $B \rightarrow A$ , frames 8–10), though this return to conventional reality ( $\rightarrow A$ ) is now seen in a transformed light that embraces everything in all of its suchness. In frame nine, therefore, the myriad forms of nature that exist in the matrix of emptiness confirm the self as but one of many empty, transient and symbiotic conglomerations of karmically-compelled factors. In this scene, from a post-enlightenment perspective, nature and human nature are ultimately seen as indistinct. This final reaffirmation of the self is why Zen master Dōgen says that "to study the self (frames 1–6) is to forget the self (frames 7–8), to

forget the self (frames 7–8) is the be confirmed by all dharmas (frame 9).” Inversely stated, Dōgen further clarifies that “. . .to be confirmed by all dharmas (frame 9) is to [actualize] the dropping off of body-mind of self and other completely (frame 8).”<sup>29</sup>

The existential calisthenics of assertion, negation and reaffirmation that Shōhaku Okumura has labelled “Is, Is-Not, Is” thinking, thus legitimates and authenticates the Zen master’s teaching.<sup>30</sup> In frame ten, accordingly, the boy appears fully grown as a compassionate bodhisattva figure, most likely the pot-bellied Hotei since he holds a staff, sack, and gourd, the Daoist-Buddhist symbol of emptiness. The accompanying verse says he stands barefoot and dirty with mud and ash in the marketplace, but that his power to enlighten is unquestioned. As Dōgen puts it, “All traces of enlightenment disappear, and this traceless enlightenment is continued on and on endlessly.”<sup>31</sup>

## 4 Fishing for Enlightenment

In addition to wrestling with, conquering, and transcending the ox-mind in meditation as outlined above, there are other animal analogies for the meditating mind in the Zen tradition as well. The prevalence of fish or fishing metaphors is not as pronounced as the bovine metaphors discussed previously, but a brief consideration of alternative ichthyological imagery does provide a useful seque to the final Zen analysis of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Tokuriki’s woodblock print of Guoan’s final tenth frame even hints at this connection, as the next generation’s boy-novice in the marketplace appears to carry a fish over his shoulder.

In Zen poetry, Dōgen inscribed his own master’s portraits (J. *chinzō* 頂相) with poetic verses called *jisan* 自贊 in which he occasionally likened himself or other Zen practitioners to fish. For example, Dōgen’s earliest *jisan* portrait inscription dated 1227 describes himself as a golden-scaled fish—a clear reference to the golden-hued body of the Buddha—who swims silently in the deep dark waters of contemplation. Unperturbed by the snares and lures of fishermen above, his senses are completely stilled in *śamatha* calm awareness. The cold, flat surface of his limitless lake-like mind clearly reflects the bright full moon of enlightenment. He writes,

The cold lake reflecting the clear blue sky for thousands of miles  
 The golden-scaled fish moves along the bottom in the quiet of night  
 Swimming back and forth while the fishing poles snap off  
 On the endless surface of water appears the bright white light of the moon.<sup>32</sup>

Dōgen borrowed this poetic image of a fish swimming slowly in the vast, clear waters of emptiness from the previously-mentioned silent illumination master Hongzhi Zhengjue. In his *Zazenshin* fascicle, Dōgen quotes this ancestor once more and then adds his own capping phrase to express his grasp of the transparent atmosphere that surrounds and suffuses the suchness of the fish and birds, saying,

“The water is clear right down to the ground, fish are swimming like fish; The sky is wide, clear through to the heavens, And birds are flying like birds.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, in the *Genjōkōan* fascicle, Dōgen comments, “When a fish swims, no matter how far he swims, he does not reach the end of the water.”<sup>34</sup> And when sailing far out to sea beyond the mountains, “the ocean appears to only to be round; it does not appear to have any other form at all.”<sup>35</sup> This indicates the vast ubiquity of emptiness, which marks all things, and suggests that there’s no end to swimming it, that is, to fully engaging in, through, and with all the world’s transient and inter-dependent forms.

In 1249 Dōgen created another *jisan* for his self-portrait viewing the autumn moon. Here Dōgen celebrates precisely this kind of engaged and vivacious activity of Zen fish swimming in emptiness. This portrait inscription dates to Dōgen’s later period, when he was the founding abbot of Eihei-ji monastery and responsible for the welfare of his novices, called *unsui* (雲水 lit. cloud-water). Dōgen therefore compares his disciples to frisky well-fed fish, who find liberation in their monastic environment, writing,

...Letting go, vigorous with plenty of gruel and rice  
Flapping with vitality, right from head to tail  
Above and below the heavens, clouds and water are free.”<sup>36</sup>

But fish metaphors are not only the purview of Sōtō Zen masters like Dōgen. The eccentric Rinzai Zen master Ikkyū Sōjun (一休宗純 1384-1481) evoked a more rustic understanding of Zen insight, versifying,

Studying texts and stiff meditation can make you lose your Original Mind,  
A solitary tune by a fisherman, though, can be an invaluable treasure.  
Dusk rain on the river, moon peaking in and out of clouds,  
Elegant beyond words, he chants his songs night after night.”<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, a contemporary of Ikkyū’s, the artist-monk Jōsetsu Taikō (如拙大巧 flourished c. 1405–1423) took up one of Zen’s most puzzling kōans and famously painted “Catching Catfish with a Gourd” (*J. Hyōnenzu* 瓢鮎図). It was brushed c. 1413 at Ashikaga Yoshimochi’s (足利義持 1386-1428) request. It was held for centuries by the Taizō-in 退蔵院 subtemple of Myōshin-ji in Kyoto, but today this designated National Treasure is preserved at the Kyoto National Museum of Art. In the lower register of this hanging scroll, a catfish swims in the waters of a meandering river while a wizened old sage stands by the riverbank holding out a gourd, the Daoist-Buddhist symbol of emptiness. Its title indicates that one cannot obtain any one *thing* (like a catfish) when realizing the absolute emptiness of everything (symbolized by the gourd). How could one hold on to the utter essence-lessness of all compounded transients? It slips through the fingers as soon as one tries to grasp it. Consequently, in the upper register of the scroll thirty-one linked verse commentaries by Zen masters riff off one another, joking that this slippery fish could be caught by greasing the gourd as well, or venturing that it would make a delicious

meal of catfish soup and rice. This latter comment rephrases the now familiar Zen epithet “When you see the Buddha, kill him!” to suggest instead, ‘When you see the catfish, cook it!’.

Finally, in Zen material culture, there is the large wooden fish-drum (J. *gyoban* 魚板 or *gyoku* 魚鼓) that hangs outside of the monks’ hall. Its hollow belly is struck daily with a large mallet to signal the start of the monks’ daily meditation sessions and its perpetually open eye is a metaphor for awakening. Another suspended variant can resemble a *makara*, a mythological aquatic creature whose upturned snout reveals a pearl of wisdom in its mouth. These are in addition to the common wooden fish drum or *mokugyo* 木魚 that is struck rhythmically in the ritual hall to help keep practitioners chanting in unison. As a result, there are numerous literary, visual, and material ‘Zen fish’ that function similarly to ‘Zen oxen’ in that they too are provisional symbols of enlightenment. This suggests that a certain poetic license may be warranted in associating the two.

## 5 The Old Man and the Sea

To be clear, the following Zen reading of *The Old Man and the Sea* is my own interpretation and was never part of Hemingway’s original intent. If anything, Hemingway located *The Old Man and the Sea* in line with his other adventure stories about big game hunting in Africa, bullfighting in Spain, and arguably the great American Romantic tradition of nature writing, for it was “originally planned to be one of a trilogy of stories uniting land, sea and sky.”<sup>38</sup> As a result, there is no evidence to suggest that Hemingway himself ever read or studied Buddhism, or that this proposed Zen reading is intrinsic to the author or to the story itself. He never wanted this work to be read in a Zen light, or in any other light for that matter. In a letter dated September 13, 1952, Hemingway wrote to his friend, the art historian Bernard Berenson in Italy,

Then there is the other secret. There isn’t any symbolysm (misspelled). The sea is the sea, the old man is an old man, the boy is a boy and the fish is a fish. The shark are all sharks no better and no worse. All the symbolism that people say is shit. What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know. A writer should know too much.<sup>39</sup>

Hemingway here promotes the simple suchness (to borrow Zen terminology) of the sea, the man, the boy, fish and sharks, but despite his insistence that his words simply mean what they mean, the last two sentences also hint at what he came to call his iceberg theory. That is, ‘a fish may just swim as a fish’ to paraphrase Dōgen, but at the same time, unplumbed depths are always concealed below the waterline; there is always more than what the narrator allows the reader to see on the surface. For Hemingway, a good writer should know the whole iceberg, but deliberately leave out the bulk of it to the imagination. This unwritten bulk is what provides room for interpretation.

The long-standing hermeneutic tradition of Hemingway's story began immediately upon the novella's release in 1952, when despite his protestations to the contrary, scholars and critics couldn't help but read religious meanings into his suggestively allegorical tale. It has been exegeted primarily in the light of Christianity, but also in the light of existential philosophy, psychology, gender, Daoism, and even the eightfold path.<sup>40</sup>

In terms of Zen, however, this hermeneutic tradition has been relatively limited. The Rinzai Zen priest and translator Sōiku Shigematsu (重松宗育 b. 1943) published "A Hundred Zen Saying from *The Old Man and the Sea*—With Capping Phrases" in the February 1983 issue of Shizuoka University's *Studies in the Humanities* research report.<sup>41</sup> However, his study simply pairs Hemingway quotes with Zen quotes drawn from Shigematsu's earlier 1981 book, *A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters*.<sup>42</sup> It does not provide any explanation or rationale for associating the disparate quotes, though the brief Introduction promises to do so in a later "essay on Santiago, a Zen fisherman" that I have yet been able to locate.<sup>43</sup> Another relatively obscure comparison appears in Katherine Yea-Lan Chang's 2000 Master's thesis at Taiwan's Tamkang University entitled, "A Zen Reading of Santiago in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*," which adopts a Jungian approach to analyzing Santiago's path to individuation. Finally, Dong-lin Liu's 2011 essay on "The Old Man and the Sea's Tendency Toward Primitivism and Zen" sounds promising, but the PRC's Northeast Normal University's download site is password protected.<sup>44</sup> As a result, the present study adds an altogether original take to this work's broad hermeneutic tradition. It is inspired by Steven Heine's own playful spirit that has likewise used the lens of Zen to look at everything from Bob Dylan lyrics to contemporary American corporate culture.<sup>45</sup> This thought experiment in an admittedly anachronistic comparative analysis is therefore offered in the post-modern context of critical theory where 'the author is dead' and reader response to the narrative is encouraged. It is a form of 'serious play' which seeks to bring new lenses to old works in order to find new meanings in the established canon.

The template of the ten ox-herding pictures thus offers a framework for creatively interpreting the major narrative elements of Hemingway's tale. Specifically:

- (1) Searching for the Fish: When the novella opens, the old man is poor, dependent on his former apprentice Manolin, and unlucky (colloq. S. *salao*). He is desperately searching for the big catch of his life, for he has been ostracized by the fishing community and rejected by Manolin's parents who insist that he work on a luckier boat. Like Guoan's verse, Santiago is "Alone in the wilderness... searching, searching! The swelling waters, the far-away mountains, and the unending path; exhausted and in despair, he knows not where to go..."<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the opening dialogue of Hemingway's tale introduces the very Zen themes of Great Faith and Great Doubt. Manolin laments that his father has no faith; but Santiago points out that the two of them do.<sup>47</sup> Manolin asks if he is "strong enough now for a truly big fish," to which he modestly responds, "I think so. And there are many tricks."<sup>48</sup>

Then a curious exchange about baseball ensues, where the boy says he fears for the Cleveland Indians, whereas the old man has faith in the Yankees and the great Joe DiMaggio. Baseball and the great DiMaggio thus become touchstones for the rest of the narrative whenever the old man needs to summon his courage and his confidence to go on in the fight against the great marlin. This pattern of fear, faith, and determination echoes Ciyuan's commentary on this first stage, "Desire for gain and fear of loss burn like fire; ideas of right and wrong shoot up like a phalanx."<sup>49</sup>

- (2) Seeing the Traces: Once the old man sets out on day one, he sets three baits of tuna precisely at 60, 75 and 100 fathoms down. He sees a large seabird working a school of flying fish that are fleeing a pod of dolphin. Then the large black bird circles back again, drawing his attention to another school of large tuna churning the ocean surface as they feed on more baitfish. These readily visible traces cause the old man to think "perhaps my big fish is around them. My big fish must be somewhere."<sup>50</sup> His thoughts and actions mimic the intellectual approach of studying the dharma in the second stage.
- (3) Seeing the Fish: Shortly thereafter, the marlin nibbles at the 100-fathom bait. The old man wills the fish to swallow it whole, praying, "...you down there 600 feet in that cold water in the dark, make another turn in the dark and come back and eat..."<sup>51</sup> This coincidentally recalls Dōgen's *jisan* portrait inscription likening his enlightened mind to a golden-bodied fish swimming slowly back and forth in the cold dark depths of meditation. As the hooked marlin begins its run, the old man exclaims, "What a fish,"<sup>52</sup> for he senses the enormous weight of the creature through his experienced fingers on the unspooling fishing line. This first partial inkling of the enormity of the fish corresponds to the third stage in which the meditator experiences *kenshō* for the first time.
- (4) Catching the Fish: Like the struggling boy in the fourth stage who strains to control the overwhelming power of the ox-mind in meditation, the old man's boat is dragged out to sea by the sheer force of the marlin's run. Alone in his skiff with the line wrapped around his shoulders, Santiago realizes which one of them is really in charge, saying, "I'm being towed by a fish and I'm the towing bitt."<sup>53</sup> His own body is nothing other than a bitt, a nautical post or bulwark against which the true leader of the pair pulls. As Guoan versifies in this fourth stage, "With the energy of his whole being, the boy has at last taken hold of the ox; But how wild his will, how ungovernable his power!"<sup>54</sup>
- (5) Herding the Fish: As in frame 5, the old man and the fish develop a growing intimacy as the battle inextricably bonds them together, until Santiago plainly states, "He is my brother."<sup>55</sup> The two of them are "...joined together and have been since noon [with] no one to help either of us" as they both endure the pain of the struggle together. "You're feeling it now, fish," he said, "and so, God knows, am I."<sup>56</sup> In addition, as in frame 5, the old man finally sees the 'original face' of his own self-nature, symbolized as his own animal-familiar. Guoan's oxherding verse for stage two had stated that "His nose reaches the heavens and none can conceal it,"<sup>57</sup> but the boy actually only sees the bull's 'original face' in stage five. Likewise, after the first four hours of patiently

holding the line, the old man had yearned, “I wish I could see him. I wish I could see him only once to know what I have against me....God let him jump.”<sup>58</sup> Ten pages later, the magnificent iridescent and purple-streaked marlin finally does leap into the air “unendingly,”<sup>59</sup> and the man is astonished at its rapier-like bill and its size, which is two feet bigger than his skiff (i.e. bigger than himself).

- (6) Coming Home on the Back of the Fish: After Santiago conquers the marlin, he lashes its massive body alongside his skiff and heads back home, musing “... we sail like brothers...[but] is he bringing me in or am I bringing him in?”<sup>60</sup> This perfect and effortless alignment of the old man and the fish, like the boy astride the ox, is indicative of the calm, peaceful state of *samathā* meditation. As Ciyuan comments at this sixth stage, “the struggle is over” and “gain and loss” are of no importance.<sup>61</sup>
- (7) The Fish Forgotten, The Boy Alone: At this point, Hemingway’s heretofore linear plotline pivots sharply and the fish is suddenly attacked by sharks. This plot twist mimics the second movement of deconstruction, when the idea of spiritual accomplishment itself is emptied out of substance (the first shark bite takes off about forty pounds of flesh). As the Tibetan elephant-taming pictures indicated, however, the sword of insight must accompany meditative calm, and the old man must rekindle the flames of renewed Right Effort to cut away delusion as he fights off the sharks with his harpoon, knife, and oars. At this point, the old man gives up any thoughts of monetary gain at market or personal redemption among his peers; he detaches from even the idea of accomplishment itself. Knowing that “When the fish had been hit, it was as though he himself had been hit,”<sup>62</sup> the old man addresses his alter-ego as “half-fish.”<sup>63</sup> This corresponds to the seventh stage when the boy realizes that he and the ox were non-distinct all along.
- (8) Man and Fish Both Forgotten: On the third day at sea, the fish is completely consumed and something in Santiago breaks. Previously, Santiago had talked often of their shared demise, softly saying, “‘Fish...I will stay with you until I am dead.’ He’ll stay with me too, I suppose...” and he wonders aloud if “he stays down forever. Then I will stay down with him forever.”<sup>64</sup> He finally laments, “You are killing me fish....But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.”<sup>65</sup> In this moment, the old man realizes that the loss of one inevitably involves the loss of the other, for as Ciyuan’s commentary in frame 3 states, “when the eye is properly directed, he will find that it is no other than himself.”<sup>66</sup> Now the old man struggles to breathe, he spits up something strange and metallic-tasting in his mouth, and he curse-dares the sharks to “dream you’ve killed a man.”<sup>67</sup> Reflecting back on his odyssey, he asks himself what defeated him and he responds simply, “Nothing.” Then as an afterthought he adds, “I went out too far.”<sup>68</sup> This sentiment corresponds to the empty *ensō* circle of frame 8, and Dōgen’s *Genjōkōan* image of sailing far out to sea beyond the mountains, with nothing but ocean all around.



- (9) Return to the Origin, Back to the Source: Out of this utter poverty of the self emerges a renewed awareness of the world around him, which signals the third movement of Santiago's compassionate return to shore. The lights on the beach begin to appear out of the darkness and Santiago appreciates the simple suchness of the wind, the current, and the prospect of his own bed. As in frame 9, these thoughts of nature arise organically and confirm his place 'at home in the world' (Heidegger), or as Dōgen puts it, "to forget the self is to be confirmed by all dharmas." Santiago sails back into the familiar harbor, ties the skiff fast to a rock, and then stumbles home exhausted, symbolically carrying the weight of the wooden mast across his bruised and weary shoulders. He falls several times, and he sleeps "with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up."<sup>69</sup>

At this point one must briefly pause to acknowledge Hemingway's explicit allusions to Christ here, whose self-sacrifice redeems the world and whose Passion was foreshadowed when the old man involuntarily cried out as if "feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood."<sup>70</sup> From a Zen perspective, similarly, the old man's experience of suffering and absolute selflessness leads to a com-passionate re-engagement in, with and as the world around him (the novella ends, for example, with Santiago dreaming of lions in Africa). The final scene with his devoted apprentice Manolin reveals Santiago's bodhisattva-like status, as he voluntarily returns to train the next generation in the art of winning by letting go.

- (10) Entering the City with Boon Bestowing Hands: Back in the marketplace, fellow fishermen no longer ostracize Santiago, but rather admire and empathize with his bittersweet empty victory, saying "What a fish it was. Never has there been such a fish...Tell him how sorry I am."<sup>71</sup> By contrast, outsider tourists have no idea what it truly means. They mistake the 18-foot skeleton for a tiburon (also known as a bull shark, coincidentally enough), and ignore the epic significance and existential import of this massive *memento mori*.<sup>72</sup>

Once the old man awakens in his hut, the relieved Manolin stops crying and eagerly requests, "Now we fish together again...You must get well fast for there is much that I can learn and you can teach me everything."<sup>73</sup> Santiago rejects him three times like an old Zen master ritually refusing an aspiring novice from entering the monastery. But Manolin insists that he doesn't care about bad luck, he doesn't care about his parents (indicating his true renunciation), and he can easily replace his master's knife, lost to the sharks. As an authentic sign sealing his tutelage under him, Manolin requests the relic of the marlin's spear, and he devotedly cares for his master by encouraging rest, preventing visits, and fetching medicine, food, papers, coffee, and more wood. For his part, the old man loves him back; he tells him he missed his company while away at sea and he asks about his recent catches. The scene ends as Ciyuan describes in the tenth and final frame of the series, "His thatched cottage gate is closed, and even the wisest know him not. No glimpses of his inner life are to be caught, for he goes on his own way without following the



steps of the ancient sages. Carrying a gourd he goes out into the market; leaning against a staff he comes home.”<sup>74</sup>

In this way, the *Ten OxHerding Pictures* offers a surprisingly apt template for understanding the formal structure and potential implications of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Although very different in tone, intent, format and subject matter, these two epic narratives nevertheless indicate that taming an ox or catching a fish ultimately means letting go of the prize, including yourself, and gaining everything in the process. Sometimes the one that got away is the one that makes the master.

## Notes

1. The Blessed One said: “Monks, a cowherd endowed with eleven factors is incapable of looking after a herd so that it prospers and grows. Which eleven? There is the case where a cowherd is not well-versed in forms (appearances), unskilled in characteristics, [1] doesn't pick out flies' eggs, doesn't dress wounds, doesn't fumigate [the cattle pen], doesn't know fords, doesn't know what it is [for the cattle] to have drunk, doesn't know the road, is not skilled in pastures, milks dry, and shows no extra respect for the bulls who are fathers & leaders of the herd. A cowherd endowed with these eleven factors is incapable of looking after a herd so that it prospers and grows.  
“A monk endowed with these eleven factors is incapable of attaining growth, increase, & abundance in this Dhamma-Vinaya. Which eleven? There is the case where a monk is not well-versed in forms, unskilled in characteristics, doesn't pick out flies' eggs, doesn't dress wounds, doesn't fumigate, doesn't know fords, doesn't know what it is to have drunk, doesn't know the road, is not skilled in pastures, milks dry, and shows no extra respect for the elder monks with seniority, who have been ordained long, who are fathers & leaders of the Community.” <https://www.accesstoisight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.033.than.html> (accessed 10/30/20).
2. <https://www.accesstoisight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.4.03.than.html> Gopāla Sutta, UD 4.3, PTS Ud 38 trans. Thanissaro Bikkhu (accessed 10/30/20).
3. “O bhikkhus, in whatever manner, a clever cow-butcher or a cow-butcher's apprentice, having slaughtered a cow and divided it by way of portions, should be sitting at the junction of a four-cross-road; in the same manner, a bhikkhu reflects on just this body, according as it is placed or disposed, by way of the modes of materiality, thinking thus: ‘There are in this body the mode of solidity, the mode of cohesion, the mode of caloricity, and the mode of oscillation.’” <https://www.accesstoisight.org/lib/authors/soma/wayof.html#discourse> p. 17 Contemplation on the modes of Materiality (Elements, *Dhatu*). Accessed 12/5/20.
4. <https://www.accesstoisight.org/lib/authors/soma/wayof.html#discourse> (accessed 12/5/20). Satipatthana Sutta, trans. Soma Thera, 47.
5. Louis Komjathy, “Taming the Wild Horse: Religious Practice According to Daoist Horse Taming” Lecture, May 18, 2015, Brown University <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDLWKJMG5cE> 19:00–19:47 (accessed 9/27/20).

6. Daocheng's encounter dialogue is preserved in the *Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, dated to 1004 (T2076 427c, cited in Sørensen, 211).
7. For example, scroll two of the *Hundred Parables Sūtra* (C. 百喻經, S. *Saṅghasena*), scroll 8 of the *Da Ban Niepan Jing Shu* (大般涅槃經疏), scroll 2 of the related *Da Ban Niepan Jing Xuan Yi* (大般涅槃經玄義), and scroll 1 of the *Fa Ju Piyu Jing* (C. 法句譬喻經S. *Dharmapada*).
8. Henrik H. Sørensen, "A Study of the 'Ox-Herding Theme' as Sculptures at Mt. Baoding in Dazu County, Sichuan," *Artibus Asiae* 51 no. 3 / 4 (1991): 207–233 [https://www.jstor.org/stable/3249668?casa\\_token=E9So2FDpiEAAAAA%3AbAeyZqcyVRQmMFbOmdoVlna7RcgYi766SChrmQCO8ihagq1bSwlGOKwnXSboT8K-v0Nw8xBkZuxzfi53bsuzMORGc81nJNwGvwRoPnhW7OkWN8-oywZ&seq=4#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3249668?casa_token=E9So2FDpiEAAAAA%3AbAeyZqcyVRQmMFbOmdoVlna7RcgYi766SChrmQCO8ihagq1bSwlGOKwnXSboT8K-v0Nw8xBkZuxzfi53bsuzMORGc81nJNwGvwRoPnhW7OkWN8-oywZ&seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents) (accessed through JStor 9/27/20).
9. Louis Komjathy, *Taming the Wild Horse: An Annotated Translation and Study on the Daoist Horse-Taming Pictures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 3.
10. The tiger is a longstanding symbol of *yin*, which adds a distinctly Daoist layer of symbolism to this Chan imagery. For example, the Tokyo National Museum holds a hanging scroll of the sleeping second patriarch Dazu Huike (大祖慧可 487–593), who rests his head and elbow across the back of a sleeping tiger. This is one of two hanging scrolls of the "Second Patriarch in Contemplation," painted by Shi ke (J. Seki kaku 石格 active mid-tenth century), who was an eccentric Chan painter-monk from the Five Dynasties period (907–960). Reproduced on the Tokyo National Museum website: [https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r\\_collection/index.php?controller=other\\_img&size=L&colid=TA162&img\\_id=2&t=type\\_s&id=11](https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=other_img&size=L&colid=TA162&img_id=2&t=type_s&id=11) (accessed 12/24/20). Following Shi Ke's *yipin* (J. *ippen* 逸品) 'unconstrained' style, Chan master Muqi (J. Mokkei 牧谿 c. 1210—c. 1269) also painted a seated "Second Patriarch in Contemplation" in his 'boneless' style. His fluid robes indicate an upright left knee below which a tiger's face appears in blissful repose. Reproduced as image no. 16 at <https://terebeess.hu/zen/mesterek/MuqiFachang.html> (accessed 12/24/20). Following in Muqi's style, furthermore, the Japanese pilgrim-monk Moku'an Reien (默庵靈淵 d. 1345) expanded on the theme in "The Four Sleepers." His hanging scroll depicts the Chan figures Hanshan and Shide asleep with their mentor Fenggan and his sleeping pet tiger. Hanging scroll, Maeda Ikutokukai, Tokyo. Reproduced in Yukio Lippit, "Apparition Painting," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55/56 (Spring/Autumn 2009): 84. [https://eaa.fas.harvard.edu/files/eaah/files/apparition\\_painting.pdf](https://eaa.fas.harvard.edu/files/eaah/files/apparition_painting.pdf) (accessed 12/24/20).
11. For a full historiography of oxherding studies, translations, and interpretations, see the excellent summary at <https://terebeess.hu/english/oxindex.html> (accessed 12/17/20).
12. Op cit. Sørensen, 210.
13. "Zide Huihui" entry in Digital Dictionary of Buddhism [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?81.xml+id\(%27b81ea-5f97-6167-6689%27\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?81.xml+id(%27b81ea-5f97-6167-6689%27)) (accessed 9/29/20).

14. <https://terebeess.hu/english/oxherd4.html> accessed 9/24/20.
15. Stephanie Wada, *The Oxherder*, 15.
16. Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanzawa, trans. Andreas Leisinger, *Zen Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings* (Artibus Asiae/Museum Rietburg Zurich, 1997), 170.
17. Stephanie Wada, Gen P. Sakamoto, and Kuo'an, *The Oxherder: A Zen Parable Illustrated* (New York: George Braziller Press, 2002), 10. Accessible online at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53660>.
18. Reproduced in Wada, *The Oxherder*, 21. No dates or kanji provided for Shaolin Miaosong.
19. Reproduced as image no. 10 at <https://terebeess.hu/zen/mesterek/MuqiFachang.html> (accessed 12/24/20).
20. James Cahill, *Sōgenga: 12–14th Century Chinese Painting as Collected and Appreciated in Japan*. Catalogue of an exhibition, Berkeley, University Art Museum, March 31–June 27, 1982. Dr. Cahill's lecture notes reflecting on this exhibition mention a Yuan dynasty hanging scroll of a "Boy on a Water Buffalo," another anonymous "Painting of herd boy sitting on bank, water buffalo wallowing in the water" held in the Kumita Collection in Kyoto, and one interesting variant, "Moonlit Landscape with Traveler Riding a Donkey" currently held in the Kimbell Art Museum, TX. [https://ieas.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/aparv\\_lecture12d.pdf](https://ieas.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/aparv_lecture12d.pdf) (accessed 12/24/20).
21. Reproduced and exegeted at length on the temple website of Hōjūzan-Manpukuji (寶樹山萬福寺), a Myōshinji subtemple in Toyohashi city, Aichi Prefecture, Japan. <http://www.tees.ne.jp/~houjuzan/jugyuzu.html> (accessed 12/27/20).
22. Wada, *The Oxherder*, 22–23.
23. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/44761> (accessed 12/17/20). Interestingly, in Karasumaru's variation, frame five depicts the empty circle, frames six and seven indicate nature and back in the marketplace, and frame eight is an altogether new stage of a solitary hermit.
24. Published by Tuttle Publishing, an imprint of Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd. Copyright © 1957, 1985 Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc.
25. Zhuangzi, trans. Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press), 45–47.
26. Many thanks to Dr. Jeffrey Richey (Berea College, KY) for first pointing this out to me in March of 2015."
27. See for example, Rujing's *chinzō* portrait inscription discussed in Pamela Winfield, *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism: Kūkai and Dōgen on the Art of Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 125–126.
28. For more on this, see Malcolm David Eckel, *To See the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
29. Dōgen, trans. Norman Waddell and Masao Abe, "Genjōkōan," *The Eastern Buddhist* 5, no. 2 (October 1972): 129–130.

30. Shohaku Okumura, *Realizing Genjōkōan: The Key to Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2010), iii.
31. Dōgen, "Genjōkōan," 130.
32. Steven Heine, *Did Dōgen Go to China? What He Wrote and When He Wrote It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123.
33. Dōgen, trans. Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, "Zazenshin" in *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo Book 2* (London: Windbell Publications, 1996), 106 (paraphrased).
34. Dōgen, trans. Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, "Genjōkōan" in *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo Book 1* (London: Windbell Publications, 1998), 35 (paraphrased).
35. Ibid., 35. For the commentarial tradition of this particular sentence, see Steven Heine, "When Mountains Can No Longer Be Seen": A Critical History of Interpretations of an Ambiguous Shōbōgenzō Sentence," *Journal of Chan Buddhism* (forthcoming, 2021).
36. Taigen Dan Leighton and Shōhaku Okumura, *Dōgen's Extended Record (Eihei kōroku)*, vol. 10, jisan no. 3 pp. 602–603.
37. Ikkyū, John Stevens, *Wild Ways: Zen Poems of Ikkyū* (Boston, MA: Shambala Centaur Editions, 1995).
38. Michael Hollister, *Analysis: The Old Man and the Sea (1952)*, Self-published. [http://www.amerlit.com/novels/ANALYSIS%20Hemingway,%20Ernest%20The%20Old%20Man%20and%20the%20Sea%20\(1952\)%20analysis%20in%20detail.pdf](http://www.amerlit.com/novels/ANALYSIS%20Hemingway,%20Ernest%20The%20Old%20Man%20and%20the%20Sea%20(1952)%20analysis%20in%20detail.pdf) p. 4, para 17 (accessed through Google Scholar 9/8/20).
39. Ernest Hemingway, *Ernest Hemingway Selected Letters 1917–1961*, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner Classics, 1981), 780.
40. Bloom's *Modern Critical Interpretations: Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea*, New Edition, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008); Amporn Sa-ngiamwibool, "An Analysis of The Old Man and the Sea in Christian, Universal and Buddhist Perspectives," *Journal of Language and Literature* 16 no. 1 (April 2016): 6–9. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/63a0/90a7a6645c7b002ecee81b1f9e940d4814d.pdf> (accessed 10/13/20).
41. Shigematsu, Sōiku "A Hundred Zen Sayings From *The Old Man and the Sea* – With Capping Phrases," *Studies in the Humanities* 33 (1983): A1-A18 [*Jinbun ronshu dai 33 go hassetsu, Shōwa 58nen nigatsu kan* 人文論集 第33号抜刷 昭和58年2月刊]. Many thanks to Michaela Mross who in 2014 kindly photographed this twenty-page noncirculating document in the Philip Whalen Collection of the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. Interestingly, Shigematsu published other comparative works in this vein, citing the 'Zen sayings' of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*, and the poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson.
42. Shigematsu, Sōiku, *A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Zen Masters* (New York: Weatherhill Press, 1981).
43. Op cit., 1.

44. LIU, Dong-lin, “*The Old Man and the Sea’s* Tendency Toward Primitivism and Zen,” *Journal of Northeast Normal University*, 2011.
45. Steven Heine, *Bargainin’ for Salvation: Bob Dylan, A Zen Master?* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic/Continuum Press, 2009); Steven Heine, *White Collar Zen: Using Zen Principles to Overcome Obstacles and Achieve Your Career Goals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
46. Guoan, trans. D.T. Suzuki. “Searching for the Ox,” *How to Practice Zazen* (Kyoto, Japan: Hanazono College Institute for Zen Studies, n.d.), 26.
47. Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (New York: Scribners and Sons, 1952 hereafter *OMAS*), 11. Original publication accessed online through Duke Library.
48. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 15.
49. Ciyuan, trans. D.T. Suzuki. “Searching for the Ox,” *How to Practice Zazen* (Kyoto, Japan: Hanazono College Institute for Zen Studies, n.d.), 26.
50. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 38.
51. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 46.
52. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 47.
53. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 49.
54. Guoan, trans. D.T. Suzuki. Institute for Zen Studies, *How to Practice Zazen* (Kyoto, Japan: Hanazono College, n.d.), 32.
55. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 65.
56. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 55, 61.
57. Guoan, *How to Practice Zazen*, 28.
58. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 50, 59.
59. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 69.
60. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 109.
61. Ciyuan, *How to Practice Zazen*, 36.
62. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 113.
63. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 127.
64. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 58, 66.
65. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 102.
66. Ciyuan, *How to Practice Zazen*, 30.
67. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 131.
68. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 133.
69. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 134.
70. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 118.
71. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 135–136.
72. In this sense, the tourists embody the final frames of Ikkyū’s poetic meditation on impermanence called *Skeletons* (J. Gaikotsu 骸骨), printed with his own woodblock illustrations in 1692. After 11) Even “I” fades in the end,” 12) “Unknown corpses are viewed without concern.” <https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/IkkyuSkeletons.html> (accessed 1/15/21).

73. Hemingway, *OMAS*, 137–138.
74. Ciyuan, *How to Practice Zazen*, 44.

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# Steven Heine on the Religio-Aesthetic Dimensions of Zen Buddhism



Steve Odin

Steven Heine has long impressed me as one of the most important, most profound, and most versatile Western scholars of Sino-Japanese Zen/Chan Buddhist Studies. His prolific work covers such diverse areas as Rinzai and Sōtō Zen; Dōgen studies; Zen kōan theory and practice; the Kyoto School of modern Japanese philosophy running through Nishida Kitarō, Nishitani Keiji, Ueda Shizuteru, Abe Masao, and others; the Critical Buddhism of Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriyaki; Zen Buddhism and the Japanese religio-aesthetic tradition; Japanese postmodernism; the sacred topography of Tokyo; White Collar Zen bringing meditation and enlightenment into the business world; Bob Dylan as a Zen master; and East–West comparative philosophy. In what follows I cannot discuss his work on all of these topics, and so I will focus on just a few of his works insofar as they have directly informed my own writings.

## 1 Traditional Zen Narrative (TZN) Versus Historical and Cultural Criticism (HCC)

At the time of composing the present essay, I have just completed my sabbatical in Japan writing a book manuscript (tentatively) titled *D. T. Suzuki's Zen Concept of the Unconscious*, wherein I endeavor to clarify Suzuki's modern hybridized psychological reinterpretation of Zen, Zen art, and Zen aesthetics in terms of his key notion of the Unconscious. It was the lectures, classes, and books of D. T. Suzuki that ignited the “Zen boom” in the West as well as in Japan. However, in recent years Suzuki's Zen has been strongly criticized by some of the leading Buddhist

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scholars. In this work I myself conclude with a critique of Suzuki's "Zen aestheticism" based on *mushin* or no-mind, arguing that especially in his apologetic writings on Bushidō and the Zen art of the samurai warrior, he collapses ethics into aesthetics, goodness into beauty, and morality into art.

To navigate between D.T Suzuki's writings and his various critics, I have found it especially useful to consider the strategic framework articulated in *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow* by the eminent Zen scholar Steven Heine.<sup>1</sup> In this important work Heine posits two competing approaches to Zen: Traditional Zen Narrative (TZN) versus Historical and Cultural Criticism (HCC). D. T. Suzuki and his followers are examples of those to be classified as TZN or "traditional Zen narrative," while his various critics are classified as HCC or "historical and cultural criticism." Using Heine's distinction between the TZN or traditional Zen narrative represented by Suzuki, whereas HCC or historical and cultural criticism includes his antagonists. Scholars of HCC or "historical and critical criticism" generally attempt to discredit most all aspects of D. T. Suzuki's writings on Zen/Chan Buddhism, and some of his detractors have adopted an extreme attitude that appears one-sided, excessively hyper-critical, and arrogantly dismissive. In Heine's more judicious approach, however, the goal is to balance "traditional Zen narrative" (TZN) and "historical and cultural criticism" (HCC), with a middle way standpoint that incorporates insights from both traditions.

According to the Chinese philosopher Hu Shih, Suzuki fails to recognize the cultural and historical conditions under which Chan/Zen Buddhism emerged:

The Ch'an (Zen) movement is an integral part of the history of Chinese Buddhism and the history of Chinese Buddhism is an integral part of the general history of Chinese thought. Ch'an can be properly understood only in its historical setting just as any other Chinese philosophical school must be studied and understood in its historical setting.<sup>2</sup>

For Hu Shih, Chan/Zen Buddhism is one religious movement among others that influenced the<sup>3</sup> political history of Tang dynasty China. Hu Shih asserts: "The main trouble with the 'irrational' interpreters of Zen has been that they deliberately ignore this historical approach. 'Zen,' says Suzuki, 'is above space-time relations, and naturally even above historical facts'".<sup>4</sup> According to Hu Shih, then, Suzuki's irrationalist approach is to be criticized because it does not view Zen in its historical setting. By contrast, Suzuki contends that Zen cannot be understood through an analysis of its history, but must be directly experienced from within by realization of satori as prajna-intuition of the Unconscious as absolute nothingness that transcends all relative cultural and historical conditions.<sup>5</sup> In his essay "Zen: A Reply to Dr. Hu Shih," Suzuki bluntly says:

It is my opinion that Hu Shih ... is not properly qualified to discuss Zen as Zen apart from its various historical settings. Zen must be understood from the inside, not from the outside.... Hu Shih, as a historian, knows Zen in its historical setting, but not Zen in itself.<sup>6</sup>

While Hu Shih rigorously opposes Suzuki's view of Zen as ahistorical, Suzuki argues back that Hu's over-intellectualized view has no understanding of Zen as a



lived experience from within based on direct realization of satori or enlightenment. For Suzuki, there is a fundamental distinction between “Zen” as the experience of satori, and “Zen Buddhism” as a culturally and historically conditioned East Asian religion. For Suzuki, the Zen experience of satori is itself ahistorical. Suzuki claims that the historical “knowledge” claimed by Hu Shih is based on the intellectual dualism between subject and object, whereas the nondual wisdom of Zen is prajna-intuition of absolute nothingness in the egoless state of satori as awakening to no-mind or the cosmic Unconscious. In Suzuki’s words: “Here can be no trace of selfhood, only unconscious consciousness of no-self, because we are now beyond the realm of the subject-object relation”.<sup>7</sup>

Steven Heine sums up this debate between the historical approach of Hu Shih and the philosophical psychology D. T. Suzuki as follows:

The debate emerged between positivist historicism, examining the historical development of the school in medieval times, which as undertaken by Chinese scholar Hu Shih, an advocate of historiographical methodology, and the philosophical psychology of D. T. Suzuki, highlighting Zen as a path of interior experience transcending history.<sup>8</sup>

As Heine views this schism, there has developed a sharp conflict regarding what constitutes Zen, and who gets to explicate Zen, whereby different factions unproductively talk past one another. In an effort to arbitrate this dispute, Heine posits two competing approaches to Zen: “traditional Zen narrative” (TZN) versus “historical and cultural criticism” (HCC). On the one side of the argument there are exponents of TZN as exemplified by D. T. Suzuki, which views Zen as a trans-historical pure experience of absolute nothingness, while on the other side are exponents of HCC such as Hu Shih that focus on objective historical research. It is Heine’s extensive knowledge about and deep appreciation of both “traditional Zen narrative” and “historical and cultural criticism” that makes his writings stand out from the more one-sided biased approaches of most other scholars.

What Heine calls TZN or “traditional Zen narrative” is based on the three principles: [1] Ineffability as a process of “special transmission outside the scriptures” (*kyōge betsuden*), undertaken “without relying on words and letters” (*furyū monji*); [2] Nonduality, or the espousing of a philosophy based on direct, immediate or pure experience; and [3] Societal harmony (*wa*), or embracing equality of all beings by virtue of their possessing the common endowment of original enlightenment (*hongaku*) or innate Buddha-nature (*busshō*). By contrast, HCC or “historical and cultural criticism” asserts that Zen is based on three opposing principles: [1] Speech, or the use of language, writing and conversation; [2] Mediation, or the widespread use of rituals and supernaturalism in the spread of Zen throughout East Asia, especially ceremonies for practical this-worldly benefits (*genze riyaku*); and [3] Discrimination, or the unfortunate contributions of Zen to problems of gender and class conflict, militarism, and nationalism. It is Heine’s intention to establish “a creative interaction and dialogue instead of opposition and polarization between the TZN and HCC positions”.<sup>9</sup> Heine’s comprehensive, balanced, and insightful approach thereby opens up a way to develop D. T. Suzuki’s Zen Buddhist

philosophical psychology as TZN or “traditional Zen narrative,” while also critically examining his views in light of HCC or “historical and cultural criticism.”

One of the most popular books ever published on Zen and the traditional Japanese arts, is *Zen in the Art of Archery*<sup>10</sup> by the German philosopher Eugen Herrigel. While teaching philosophy at Tohoku University in Sendai, Herrigel undertook an apprenticeship with Awa Kenzō, a master of *kyūdō* (弓道), or the religio-aesthetic Way of archery. However, along with the teachings of his master, Herrigel also frequently cites the translations and Zen writings of D. T. Suzuki. Moreover, Suzuki wrote the Introduction to Herrigel’s book, giving it his enthusiastic support.<sup>11</sup> To clarify the relation between Zen and the various arts of traditional Japanese culture, including the Zen art of archery and other military arts, Eugen Herrigel cites the view of Suzuki:

In his *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, D. T. Suzuki has succeeded in showing that Japanese culture and Zen are intimately connected and that Japanese art, the spiritual attitude of the Samurai, the Japanese way of life, the moral, aesthetic to a certain extent even the intellectual life of the Japanese owe their peculiarities to this background of Zen.<sup>12</sup>

Herrigel then discusses how among the artforms that developed under the aegis of Zen in traditional Japanese culture, is the religio-aesthetic Way of archery. The most intriguing, but also the most controversial aspect of Herrigel’s book, is Awa’s teaching that the highest level in the Zen art of archery involves realization of the “It.” Herrigel writes:

One day, I asked the Master: “How can the shot be loosed if ‘I’ do not do it?”

“ ‘It’ shoots,” he replied.<sup>13</sup>

Herrigel asks the master: “And who or what is this ‘It’?”.<sup>14</sup> The master gradually teaches Herrigel the unified bodymind process of shooting with the bow and arrow as a sacred ritual, a ceremonial act which includes grasping the bow, nocking the arrow, raising the bow above the head, drawing and remaining at the point of highest tension, and loosing the shot with a resonant “twang” sound, each step with the correct method of deep rhythmic breathing in and out, in a state of total relaxation.<sup>15</sup> For years Herrigel fails to loose the shot in the proper way, and is scolded by his teacher Kenzō Awa: “Stop thinking about the shot!”.<sup>16</sup> The master further admonishes: “The right shot at the right moment does not come because *you do not let go of yourself*”.<sup>17</sup> But at last, Herrigel finally has his breakthrough:

Then, one day, after a shot, the Master made a deep bow and broke off the lesson. “Just then ‘It’ shot!” he cried, as I stared at him bewildered. And when I at last understood what he meant I couldn’t suppress a sudden whoop of delight.<sup>18</sup>

As the dialogue resumes between teacher and student, the narrative continues:

“Do you now understand,” the Master asked me one day after a particularly good shot, “what I mean by ‘It shoots,’ ‘It hits’?”<sup>19</sup>

Thus the main point of Awa's instructions on Zen in the art of archery, is that it is not "I" who shoots, but "'It' aims," "'It' shoots," and "'It' hits." Steven Heine, America's most insightful Zen scholar, attempts to unravel the mystery of "It" in Herrigel's book:

Fascination with Herrigel's account of this training in archery ... revolves around the emphasis he puts on the syllable "It" in the instructive phase used repeatedly by his Japanese mentor Awa Kenzō, "'It' shoots" .... The key to success is to realize that from the standpoint of all-encompassing emptiness, nobody in particular lets loose the arrow, because "It" does the shooting in and of itself.<sup>20</sup>

Heine discusses some of the hypercritical negative reaction to Herrigel's book, as well as to D. T. Suzuki's endorsement of the book, by Arthur Koestler in *The Lotus and the Robot*, along with the criticisms of Yamada Shōji in *Shots in the Dark*.<sup>21</sup> *Shots in the Dark* by Yamada Shoji is a fascinating critique of Herrigel's book *Zen and the Art of Archery* as well as the process by which Zen was mythologized and imported to western readers. It should be added that Yamada is a scholar of both Japanese Buddhism and practitioner of archery. Yamada argues that Herrigel has exaggerated or even fabricated the connection between Zen and the practice of archery, just as he views Suzuki as having overstated the relation between Zen and Japanese culture. Yamada explains the "It" as a linguistic error. As Heine points out:

Yamada speculates that Herrigel simply misheard or mistook the innocuous Japanese phrase *sore deshita*, which means "that's it." Perhaps Awa meant, "That was a good shot," without suggesting that an extraneous force was responsible.<sup>22</sup>

In an effort to mediate between the two competing methods that he terms TZN or "traditional Zen narrative," in this case as represented in this case by Herrigel and Suzuki, and HCC or "historical and cultural criticism" as represented by Koestler and Yamada, Heine proposes his own middle way interpretation of the "It." He points out that it is quite possible that Awa told Herrigel something that was translatable as "'It' shoots." Moreover, "'It' shoots," one can argue, does not reify the subject, but is rather a western way of capturing the dynamic, action-oriented Japanese syntax.<sup>23</sup> Heine suggests that Herrigel's expression "It shoots" is also echoed in Martin Heidegger's existential-phenomenological interpretation of an interactive Event as an activity beyond subject-object dualism, as stated in his dictum, "The Event happens".<sup>24</sup> "It" shoots just as "the Event happens."

## 2 The Religio-Aesthetic Dimension of Zen Buddhism

Heine gives an outstanding philosophical exposition on Dōgen's philosophical concepts of "impermanence" (*mujō*, 無常) and "being-time" (*uji*, 有時) in his book *Existential & Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen*.<sup>25</sup> In this early work he analyzes Dōgen's being-time from the standpoint of Martin

Heidegger's existential phenomenology, arguing that both thinkers underscore the impermanence, nonsubstantiality, and continuity of temporal existence as lived from within. Moreover, he demonstrates how both Dōgen and Heidegger reveal that while inauthenticity is futile evasion of death, authentic human existence is achieved through constant mindfulness of impermanence, finitude, death, and nothingness. I published a review of this book,<sup>26</sup> concluding that while I regarded it as an extremely important new work on East–West comparative philosophy and Japanese Buddhist scholarship, it was my view that Heine had privileged the sheer continuity of *kyōryaku* (経歴) or “continuous passage” over the radical discontinuity, immediacy, and suddenness of *nikon* (而今) or “here-now” in Dōgen's theory of being-time. After that, I became a devoted reader of all Heine's books and articles, and I have always been greatly edified by his works.

In later writings Heine goes on to further explicate the convergence of Dōgen's Zen philosophy of being-time with the religio-aesthetic tradition of Japanese culture.<sup>27</sup> Dōgen's Zen metaphysics of impermanence, especially as expressed by his 31 syllable *waka* (和歌) poetry, fully resonates with the Japanese religio-aesthetic tradition based on emotional attunement to transience, including the Heian period sentiment of *aware* or the sadness and beauty of perishability. As Heine puts it:

Dōgen's works are in accord with Japanese religio-aesthetics because of a common concern with the issue of change symbolized by the revolving seasons ... The frailty of things and the poignancy of the passage of time are essential to an appreciation of existence as a continuing interplay of life and death. The theme of perishability is crucial to Japanese literature from the *Manyōshū* poetry ... through the evocation of *aware* and impermanence in the *Genji* and *Heike monogatari* to the mid-classical aesthetic ideals of *yūgen* and *sabi*.<sup>28</sup>

In my book *Artistic Detachment in Japan and the West*,<sup>29</sup> I discussed Dōgen's religio-aesthetic vision of life and his creation of inspired *waka* poetry as brought to light by Heine's outstanding works, *A Blade of Grass: Japanese Poetry and Aesthetics in Dōgen Zen*,<sup>30</sup> and *A Dream Within A Dream: Studies in Japanese Thought*.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in a section titled “Dōgen and the Religio-Aesthetic Tradition” from my book *Tragic Beauty in Whitehead and Japanese Aesthetics*,<sup>32</sup> I used Heine's *The Zen Poetry of Dōgen*.<sup>33</sup> In this work Heine translates the collection of Dōgen's *waka* poetry, while also clarifying the convergence of Dōgen's Zen philosophy of being-time with the Japanese religio-aesthetic tradition rooted in such poetic ideals as *mono no aware* (ものの哀れ) and *yūgen* (幽玄). Heine clarifies how Dōgen's Zen metaphysics of impermanence is continuous with the religio-aesthetic tradition of Japanese culture based on an aesthetic sensitivity to and sympathy with the evanescent beauty of transience. At the same time Heine analyzes the apparent tension between art and religion in Dōgen's thought, based on Dōgen's criticism of poetry as an “idle pastime,” and as an example of “dramatic phrases and flowery words.” Indeed, in my undergraduate courses and graduate seminars on Zen Buddhism in the Philosophy Department at the University of Hawaii, my students have found that

Heine's *The Zen Poetry of Dōgen* is a profound yet completely accessible introduction to Dōgen's Zen Buddhist philosophy, practice, and aesthetics.

Dōgen's Zen Buddhist metaphysics of impermanence-Buddha-nature in the flux of being-time is depicted in poetic verse by poignant images of evanescence like "dewdrops" (*tsuyu*, 露) falling off blades of grass in the morning sun, thereby to evoke the pathos of *aware* or aesthetic sensitivity to the ephemeral beauty of things. As skillfully translated by Heine, a *waka* poem by Dōgen reads: "Dewdrops on a blade of grass/Having so little time/Before the sun rise/Let not the autumn wind/Blow so quickly on the field".<sup>34</sup>

In the tradition of Japanese aestheticism, the Zen philosophy of Dōgen holds that cognitive and moral experience are based on aesthetic experience of ephemeral beauty. As Heine clarifies in *The Zen Poetry of Dōgen*:

Moral practice and metaphysical insight are based on an aesthetic sensitivity to and sympathy with the precariousness and vulnerability of natural phenomena. ...It is the emotional identification with the plight of evanescent things ...that awakens the need for release from suffering. Enlightenment is attained as empathetic grief is transformed into realization of the non-substantive basis of existence.<sup>35</sup>

For Dōgen it is aesthetic sensitivity to and emotional sympathy with the ephemeral beauty of transitory phenomena that itself awakens moral compassion as empathetic grief, metaphysical insight into the non-substantiality and dynamism of being-time, and the aspiration for religious emancipation from the suffering of impermanence. Thus in continuation with the religio-aesthetic tradition of Japan, Dōgen's Zen philosophy of being-time and impermanence-Buddha-nature is grounded in the aesthetic experience of beauty as perishability expressed in terms of a traditional Japanese poetics of ephemerality.

Elsewhere, Heine returns to his reflections on Heidegger's relation to the modern Japanese aesthetics of Kuki Shūzō as developed in *Iki no kōzō*.<sup>36</sup> In his essay "The Flower Blossoms 'Without Why': Beyond the Heidegger-Kuki Dialogue on Contemplative Language," contained in his book *Dream Within a Dream*,<sup>37</sup> Heine goes on to critically evaluate Heidegger's phenomenological-existential/hermeneutical interpretation of the Edo period aesthetic ideal of *iki* (粋), translated as "chic" or "style," the delight of which is enjoyed by the *suijin* (or *tsujin*), the connoisseur of exquisite polished taste who with nonchalant urban sophistication is completely at home in the red light pleasure districts of old Tokyo (Edo) and Osaka. Moreover, Heine provides a detailed analysis of *iki* in terms of its three constituents, including Buddhist resignation (*akirame*) or detachment from the world of evanescence, the noble spirit (*ikuji*) derived from *bushidō* loyalty and courage, and the coquetry (*bitai*) of the geisha. He further describes Kuki's interpretation of *iki* in terms of its dyadic oppositions, including restraint (*shibumi*) and sentimentality (*amami*), refinement (*jōhin*) and baseness (*gehin*), subdued taste (*jimi*) and dapperness (*hade*), thereby to achieve a middle ground between medieval aesthetic ideals, especially gracefulness (*miyabi*) and purifying solitude and patina (*sabi*).<sup>38</sup>

The stated aim of Heine's analysis, however, is not to evaluate the significance of Kuki's aesthetics, but to determine its relevance for philosophical dialogue with Heidegger. In this context Heine examines Heidegger's "A Dialogue on Language," based on a 1953/54 conversation he held with Tezuka Tomio, noted translator of German literature including Holderlin and Rilke as well as some of Heidegger's works.<sup>39</sup> Heidegger is cited as understanding the Japanese aesthetic ideal of *iki* as the "sensuous radiance through whose lively delight there breaks the radiance of something suprasensuous".<sup>40</sup> The problem for Heidegger, is that language is the "house of Being",<sup>41</sup> adding regretfully that "we Europeans presumably dwell in an entirely different house than Eastasian man....And so, a dialogue from house to house remains nearly impossible".<sup>42</sup> But according to Heine, the basic ambience of Kuki's aesthetic ideal of *iki* is a far cry from Heidegger's, who following the "turn" shifts from the existential concerns of *Being and Time* to the interpretations in his later writings on art, poetry, aesthetics, and mysticism as conducive to a naturalist disclosure of Being.<sup>43</sup> Heine argues that Heidegger's aesthetic sensibility is far closer to the Japanese poetic ideal of conveying and mystery and depth. In this context Heine relates Heidegger's view of language as "Saying" (*die Sage, Sagen*) with the Zen language of *samadhi*, *satori* and *kenshō*, devised to convey the mysterious beauty of *yūgen*. Heidegger's notion of language as primordial Saying seeks to uncover what he calls the Same or belonging-together, the splendor of the simple onefold (*Einfalt*) which unites the fourfold (*Geviert*) of earth, sky, mortals and gods.<sup>44</sup> For Heidegger true language as "Saying" is not exposition, critique, definition, or explanation, but disclosing the "nearness" (*Nanheit*) to Being as the process of gathering and belonging-together in an Event of ontological disclosure. True thinking is akin to poetry as Saying which bespeaks the openness, unhiddenness, and nonconcealment of things in attentive listening to silence and stillness through *Gelassenheit* as the meditative thinking, letting be, or releasement to the mystery of Being as the presencing of that which is present: "True language is a product of meditative thinking that allows beings to come into their unconcealedness or openness while preserving the tendency of Being to remain hidden or concealed as the disclosure takes place".<sup>45</sup> Again, "Saying at once allows for openness and preserves hiddenness".<sup>46</sup> Moreover: "Saying depicts the splendor of the simple without why. This view of language seems to approach closely the ideal of *yūgen* which reflects an overabundance or plentitude of meaning (*yojō*) contained in sparse, suggestive words (*kotoba tarazu*) conveying a mysterious depth expressed in and through yet hovering over and above the actual diction".<sup>47</sup> He continues: "*Yūgen*, in a manner similar to Heidegger's notion of bringing into unconcealment by preserving concealment, represents a paradoxical disclosure that illuminates precisely by seeming to conceal. Both parts of the compound term suggest indistinctness and inscrutability".<sup>48</sup> To illustrate the relation between Japanese *yūgen* and Heidegger's poetic Saying as ontological disclosure of the openness of Being, Heine cites a *waka* poem by Teika, explaining: "*Yūgen* poems contain landscape imagery frequently of a monochrome type, such as bayside huts of autumn dusk, a bird flying into the sunset, a cloudy mist, or a forest of dark pines".<sup>49</sup> This is followed by poetic compositions of

Heidegger, who in addition to interpreting the “origin (*Ursprung*) of the work of art,” creates verses with naturalistic images reminiscent of Japanese *yūgen* poetry, both of which culminate in disclosure of the openness or unconcealedness of phenomena emerging in nature as splendor of the simple without why:

Forests spread/Brooks plunge/Rocks persist/Mist diffuses.

Meadows wait/Springs well/Winds dwell/Blessing muses.<sup>50</sup>

In my current research into D. T. Suzuki’s modern psychological reinterpretation of Zen, Zen art, and Zen aesthetics, I at one point take up the relation between Sino-Japanese poetry and the *kōan* (C. *gongan*, 公案) in the Linji/Rinzai school of Chan/Zen Buddhism. For Suzuki, an advocate of Rinzai Zen theory and practice, the Zen *kōan* method of concentration on a *watō* (話頭) or “keyword” such as *Mu* is the shortcut path to satori or sudden awakening. Zen *kōans* often take the form of brief poetic utterances, along with dialogues, aphorisms, exclamations, jokes, puns, riddles, word play, and stories with a literary narrative structure that evoke an aesthetic response. Moreover, insofar as *kōans* are poetic, artistic, and literary devices, they have both religious and aesthetic content. For Suzuki the function of the *kōan*, like the haiku poem, is induce satori as a sudden flash of insight into the concrete aesthetic immediacy of events manifesting just as they are in their emptiness-suchness. Suzuki thus emphasizes that Zen *kōans* are related to the Sino-Japanese literary tradition of Buddhist poetics, including the Zen-influenced tradition of Japanese haiku poetry:

Another characteristic of Zen literature is its partiality to poetry: the *koans* are poetically appreciated or criticized. ... Zen naturally finds its readiest expression in poetry rather than philosophy because it has more affinity with feeling than with intellect; its poetic predilection is inevitable.<sup>51</sup>

Heine likewise takes up the history of the famous *Mu kōan* in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Chan/Seon/Zen Buddhism, including its popularization in the West by D. T. Suzuki, in his truly illuminating book *Like Cats and Dogs: Contesting the Mu Kōan in Zen Buddhism*.<sup>52</sup> It might seem that Rinzai Zen meditation on *kōans* is a much different activity from the spontaneous aesthetic creation of haiku poetry and the other Zen arts. However, Chan/Zen *kōans* historically developed from out of a long Sino-Japanese literary and poetic tradition, so as to also have a profound religio-aesthetic dimension. As said by Heine:

Beginning in the eleventh century, the aesthetic ideals and forms of creative production of the growing class of literati were infused into *kōan* commentaries through the styles of regulated but abbreviated four-line verse (*jue ju*) requiring tonal and rhyming patterns in addition to other rhetorical rules governing form and content.<sup>53</sup>



Elsewhere, in his book *Zen Kōans*, Heine further explains the relation between kōans and artistic creativity:

Another set of images instilled into koan discourses is that of artistic discipline, which, like practicing Zen meditation, takes much time to master but leads to a spontaneous act of creativity. Koan cases have long been closely associated or merged with a variety of aesthetic endeavors that, like Zen training, were mainly learned through an intensive apprenticeship with a living master. These art forms include the literary (simplicity of haiku poetry), fine (immediacy of brush stroke calligraphy and painting), performing (minimalist expression of Noh theater), practical (austerity of rock gardens and tea ceremony), and martial (concentration required for archery and sword fighting) forms of practice.<sup>54</sup>

Heine thus historically relates Zen kōan practice to the artistic disciplines undertaken through apprenticeship with a living master in the Japanese Buddhist religio-aesthetic tradition, including haiku poetry, brush stroke calligraphy, ink painting, noh theater, and martial arts such as archery and sword fighting.

One of Heine's most fascinating explorations of the Zen religio-aesthetic tradition is to be found in *Bargainin' for Salvation: Bob Dylan, Zen Master?* He refers to Dylan's literary output as "the collected writings of one of history's great spiritual/poetic masters".<sup>55</sup> It is pointed out by Heine that Dylan had been nominated for the Nobel Prize several time,<sup>56</sup> but a few years later, Dylan was finally awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature in recognition of his achievements as a poet and songwriter. Heine traces Dylan's spiritual journey from Minnesota down Highway 61 to the Mississippi Delta as the center for Blues music, and then to Greenwich Village in New York City as the hub for avant-garde art, music, and poetry during the 1960s, where he learns about Zen from Alan Ginsberg and other Beats. In this work Heine brilliantly analyzes the religious influences on Bob Dylan's life, music, and lyrics, including Old Testament/Jewish and New Testament/Christian biblical influences, as well as those of Zen Buddhism and Eastern mysticism.

According to Heine, the influence of both Zen and the Blues permeate Dylan's songs, which cry out the anguish of the nothingness, impermanence, and nonsubstantiality of finite human existence in its absurdity and tragedy as well as its possibility for salvation in everyday life. Furthermore, Heine discusses the Japanese religio-aesthetic ideal of *mono no aware* or the sadness and beauty of perishability, as expressed in one of Dylan's loner blues category of songs "Tangled Up in Blue":

The first two verses evoke the beginning and the end of an intense relationship...with flashpoints of instantaneous insight or Satori appearing in every verse. ... Dylan evokes poignancy and sorrow ... The atmosphere is reminiscent of the traditional Japanese aesthetic ideal featured in the *Tale of Genji* and other sources of *mono no aware*, or sadness at the passing of things (relationships and circumstances).<sup>57</sup>

He makes reference to Dylan's song "Not Dark Yet" from *Time Out of Mind*,<sup>58</sup> which was awarded three Grammys, including Best Album of the Year.<sup>59</sup> In this song the existential anxiety of our ephemeral human condition is shown by the words: "I was born here and I'll die here against my will".<sup>60</sup> Again, from the same



song: “Behind every beautiful thing there’s some kind of pain”.<sup>61</sup> And elsewhere, “I don’t see why I should even care/It’s not dark yet, but it’s getting there.”<sup>62</sup> These words from “Not Dark Yet” are a profound expression of what in Japanese aesthetics is called *mono no aware*, the sad beauty of perishability. Japanese literature, poetry, and art characterized by the bittersweet aesthetic feeling of *mono no aware* and its underlying Buddhist metaphysics of *mujō* or “impermanence” celebrates the flow of life as a perpetually vanishing dream within a dream filled with both incredible beauty and overwhelming pain. Moreover, Dylan’s words “Shadows are falling ... It’s not dark yet, but its getting there,” expresses the Japanese aesthetic ideal of *yūgen* as the sublime beauty of darkness and shadows, which itself contains an aspect of *mono no aware* as evanescent sorrow-tinged evanescent beauty fading into the twilight darkness of emptiness or nothingness.

Adding to the conversation on Dylan and Zen initiated by Heine, I would like to briefly discuss Dylan’s song “The Man in Me” from his 1970 album *New Morning*, which was featured in the soundtrack of the cult movie by the Coen brothers called *The Big Lebowski*.<sup>63</sup> In 2012 a book about this film was published, titled *The Dude and the Zen Master*,<sup>64</sup> the record of a conversation between Jeff Bridges and Bernie Glassman. Academy Award winner Jeff Bridges plays “the Dude” in *The Big Lebowski*, while Brooklyn born Jewish-Zen master Bernie Glassman was appointed as a successor to Maezumi Roshi, founder of the Zen Center of Los Angeles. At the outset of *The Dude and the Zen Master*, Glassman Roshi says to actor Jeff Bridges: “Did you know that the Dude in *The Big Lebowski* is considered by many Buddhists to be a Zen Master?”.<sup>65</sup> Glassman Roshi explains that the Dude is a great Zen Master who effortlessly abides in the ever-flowing Dao, comparing him to a Lamed-Vavnik, or one of the wonderful righteous men in Kabbalistic Jewish mysticism who are simple and unassuming, so good that on account of them God lets the world go on. A version of Dylan’s “The Man in Me” plays at the opening of the film, and again while the Dude is having an ecstatic dreamlike hallucinatory vision of soaring through the night sky over Los Angeles on a magical flying carpet. Dylan’s song “The Man in Me” has since become an anthem for countless devoted fans of *The Big Lebowski* who follow the Zen/Daoist gospel of the Dude.

To conclude, it be said that yet another important contribution of Steven Heine has been to make us aware of how the religio-aesthetic tradition of Zen has influenced Americana as found in the existential Zen/Blues music of Bob Dylan.

## Notes

1. Steven Heine. *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow: Will the Real Zen Buddhism Please Stand Up*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
2. Hu Shih. “Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism in China. Its History and Method,” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 3, No.1 (1953), 3–24, and D. T. Suzuki. *Studies in Zen* (New York: A Delta Book, 1955), 130.
3. Hu Shih. *Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism in China*, 3–24.
4. Suzuki. *Studies in Zen*, 130.

5. D. T. Suzuki. *Studies in Zen*, 129–164, and “Zen: A Reply to Dr. Hu Shih”, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (University of Hawaii Press, 1953), 25–46.
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7. *Ibid.*, 145.
8. Heine. *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow*, 17.
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13. *Ibid.*, 51.
14. *Ibid.*, 52.
15. *Ibid.*, 20–21.
16. *Ibid.*, 47.
17. *Ibid.*, 30. Italics added.
18. *Ibid.*, 52.
19. *Ibid.*, 61.
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22. *Ibid.*, 21.
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# Authentic Time and the Political: Steven Heine on Dōgen, Heidegger, and Bob Dylan



Jin Y. Park

If humans could live forever, would life be more meaningful? Would it make life more enjoyable or painful? The answers to these questions can vary depending on individuals, but, regardless of the individual's response, time is a decisive element in understanding human existence. After all, humans are finite beings, and a key aspect of religion is in offering ways to overcome such a limitation. Eternal life, or liberation from rebirth proposes salvation in terms of time.

A linear understanding of time in human existence, however, cannot necessarily measure the quality of a person's life. Confucius famously said that, if he heard the Dao in the morning, he would not mind dying that evening.<sup>1</sup> In the Confucian vision of time, calculable time is defied by the incalculable quality of awakening and understanding. Zen Buddhism is a tradition that highly values the meaning and impact of this condensed moment when the life becomes alive and the individual goes through a radical transformation.

Steven Heine's scholarship on Eihei Dōgen (永平道元 1200–1253), the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master and founder of Japanese Sōtō Zen, has been well-known. His scholarship also demonstrates the array of diverse topics he explored. One of his early publications offers a comparative study of Dōgen and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), a German philosopher of fundamental ontology. Later, Heine also published a book in which he discusses Bob Dylan (1941–), an iconic figure in American pop music and culture since the 1960s, in connection with Zen Buddhism.

This chapter proposes to think with Heine in his engagements with the three thinkers, Dōgen, Heidegger, and Dylan, and consider the meaning of time, existence, and social engagement through Heine's cross-cultural, interdisciplinary philosophy and unique contribution to Zen Buddhist scholarship.

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## 1 Essentialized Time and Essentialized Being

Martin Heidegger is one of the most frequently studied Western philosophers in Buddhist-Western comparative philosophy. As early as 1970, the article “Martin Heidegger and the East” appeared, discussing the connections between Heidegger and Zen Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> But until today, Heine’s book *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen* (1985) remains the only single-volume work comparing Heidegger and Zen Buddhism in English with a focus on time.

Time has been an essential component in the discussion of Buddhist soteriology. Debates about whether Buddhist practice and awakening should be sudden or gradual have been essential in understanding the nature of Buddhist practice and are even essential today. Does one arrive at awakening after a long period of practice, or should both practice and awakening happen at a certain point or even at each moment of life spontaneously? It is easy to understand the first proposal, as it emphasizes that a religious practitioner practices a religion and will reach an ultimate state such as Buddhist awakening as the practice becomes mature over time. The idea that awakening is possible suddenly and spontaneously sounds counter-intuitive. If an awakening can happen anytime, why would anyone painstakingly spend their time going through rigorous disciplinary training? By definition, practice is a concept that requires a temporal duration. What would it mean to say that practice is sudden?

Our familiarity with a linear and teleological time scheme persuades us, at first reading, that gradual awakening should be the correct understanding of practice, whereas sudden awakening is logically untenable. Both Heidegger and Dōgen tell us that such an understanding of time is problematic. Understanding time as a temporally linear flow is not merely an issue of time for Heidegger and Dōgen, but also related to one’s approaches to the meaning and nature of existence itself. They argue that the linear concept of time is based on an essentialized idea of time, which in turn arises from an essentialized concept of being.

Heine points out that both Heidegger and Dōgen saw time as having been mistreated in their respective traditions, i.e., Western philosophy and Buddhism, and that the mistreatment had a significant impact on each tradition’s understanding of being. However, Heine tells us that the goal of their analytics of time and thus of being is different. Heidegger aims to clarify fundamental ontology, whereas Dōgen’s goal is soteriological.

In order to clarify the meaning of being and its relation to time, Heidegger launches an inquiry in his *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit* 1927) to question the meaning of Being and Being’s relation to beings. Being with a capitalized “B” has a special meaning for Heidegger and is not the same as a being (or an entity) with a small letter “b.” Challenging the metaphysical concept of being, which Heidegger identifies as understanding being with a permanent substance, Heidegger observes, “Being is always the Being of an entity.”<sup>3</sup>

The new approach to the relationship between time and a being plays a central role in Heidegger's challenge to metaphysics. Heidegger claimed that Being has been forgotten in Western philosophy because of the metaphysical essentialization of Being and that Being has been understood as the substance which accompanies the essentialized time, the permanent presence or eternity. If Being is not such an essentialized substance, how should we investigate it? Heidegger proposes that Being cannot exist without entities and that, through the investigation of entities, the nature of Being would emerge.

Heidegger finds it necessary to define which entity should be investigated to examine Being, since, in order to reach a proper understanding of Being, a proper being should be selected for the investigation. Heidegger names this exemplary being to be investigated for the understanding of Being "Dasein," literally meaning a "being-there." Dasein is the being that asks about its own Being. This model entity is different from other entities in the sense that Being is its concern; as Heidegger observes, "Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological."<sup>4</sup> Things exist; there is a desk, a chair, a human being, and so on. They are all different entities, but they share something in common: they all exist. Being (with a capital B) is the name of that ontological foundation of beings. Heidegger argues that this is why Being, which is the totality of entities, should be the topic of philosophy in the name of fundamental ontology, since Being is shared by all entities.

Heidegger criticizes the traditional concept of time in which temporality and timeless eternity are understood separately. Heidegger observes, "Being cannot be grasped except by taking time into consideration."<sup>5</sup> That is because, "In its factual Being, any Dasein is as it already was, and it is 'what' it already was. It *is* its past, whether explicitly or not."<sup>6</sup> By emphasizing the temporal dimension of existence, Heidegger defines a being not with "its 'what' (as if it were a table, house, or tree) but its Being."<sup>7</sup> An investigation of unchanging whatness does not inform us about the nature of our existence, Heidegger tells us, since whatness reifies beings that exist in time.

Time is also a critical element for Dōgen in his soteriology for the sentient being to attain awakening. Heine observes that a distinctive feature of the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (Shōbōgenzō 正法眼藏), Dōgen's representative work written during the first half of the thirteenth century, is Dōgen's emphasis that "religious training must be based on an insightful 'contemplation of impermanence; (jūō-kan) in its full, unadulterated significance," and that Dōgen did this by "manifesting the fundamental unity of being-time rather than in a sequential view of temporality."<sup>8</sup>

One well-known fascicle in *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* is titled "Being-Time (Uji 有時)." *Uji*, or *aru toki*, is a Japanese adoption of the Chinese *yǒushí*, which means in everyday usage, "there is a time when," "at some time," "for the time being," "now and then," or "sometimes."<sup>9</sup> But in the context of this fascicle, translating it as "existential time" has also been proposed.<sup>10</sup>

Dōgen begins "Being-Time" with quotations from a Chinese text, as he often does in *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*:

An old Buddha said:

For the time being [being-time], I stand stride the highest mountain peaks.

For the time being [being-time], I move on the deepest depths of the ocean floor.

For the time being [being-time], I'm three heads and eight arms.

For the time being [being-time], I'm a staff or a whisk.

For the time being [being-time], I'm a pillar or a lantern.

For the time being [being-time], I'm Mr. Chang or Mr. Li.

For the time being [being-time], I'm the great earth and heavens above.<sup>11</sup>

As he begins his comments on these passages, Dōgen states "So called being-time (for the time being) means time is already being, and being is all time."<sup>12</sup> Instead of taking the expression as an idiomatic one, as we read above, Dōgen separates the two Chinese characters and uses them to articulate the fundamental nonduality of being and time. It is not that there exists a being that is influenced by time; rather, being is time. Existence cannot be separated from time.

Read without Dōgen's declaration of the identity between time and being, the quoted passages might be understood as a description of certain moments in an individual's life. Such a moment might have happened in the past, might happen in the future, or might be the individual's situation at the present. All the same, in such an understanding, the three periods of time exist in separation, and the time in three tenses also stands outside the existence of the individual.

Following Dōgen's advice that being is time, each event becomes the content of who the person might be. We are reminded of Heidegger's emphasis that a being is already its past, not merely in the sense that the being has memories of its past, but in the sense that the past becomes the present. The idea that being is time is also a prominently Buddhist idea. The past, present, and future are always interconnected through one's actions and the impact of those actions on the shaping of one's present, which is also the future and the past.

Dōgen continues, "The three-headed eight-armed [demon] itself is time, and just because it is time it must be the same as the time right within the twenty-four hours."<sup>13</sup> A being is time, and time is being. There are many types of beings, including oneself and an evil spirited titan with three heads and eight arms.

Once the inseparable intertwining of being and time is established, as Dōgen established it at the beginning of "Being-Time," that stance also informs the nature of a being and of that being's relations to others. The self or "I" is time, and so is the evil spirit; the seemingly normal human body like "mine," with one head and two arms, and the unfamiliar body with three heads and eight arms are both time. The distinction between good and evil, or between normal and abnormal, begins to fade in light of the understanding that being is time. In Buddhist vocabulary, neither has self-essence: they are empty. That is because things exist through interconnection with other beings, and thus are constantly changing and impermanent: being is time.



Every being in the world is like this, be it a human like oneself, an evil spirit like titan, or even an insentient being like a blade of grass. As Dōgen says, “Myriad phenomena and numberless grasses [things] exist over the entire earth, and each grass and each of the forms exists as the entire earth.”<sup>14</sup> Here we see that time and being overlap each other, in Dōgen’s thinking and at the same time each being and the entirety of being are intertwined as well.

Heidegger proposed Being as what is shared by all beings, and Dōgen invited us to see that each being is the totality of beings. The idea that each blade of grass is the entire earth reminds us of a foundational idea of Huayan (J. Kegon 華嚴) Buddhism, in its claim that “a particle of the dust contains the entire universe.” This is the ultimate declaration of the Buddhist teaching of the interconnectedness of things. Because things are all interconnected, they are empty. Is Heidegger’s Being also empty?<sup>15</sup>

For Dōgen, time doesn’t pass chronologically; the present time, right now, is all there is. He observes, “As the time right now is all there ever is, each being-time is without exception entire time.”<sup>16</sup> This “right-now,” however, should not be understood as a reified permanent present, as in the metaphysical sense of eternity. The right-now is the entirety of time, since without the past and future, the right-now cannot exist. As the *Diamond Sūtra*, a major Mahāyāna Buddhist text, teaches, the past is already gone, the future is not yet here, and the moment one articulates “the present,” the present is no longer present.<sup>17</sup> This entirety of one moment, right now, is the entirety of each being, which is impermanent.

Why is understanding being-time, and the ungraspability of the moment which is entirety of time, so important to Dōgen? Heine pointed out that as a Zen master, Dōgen’s discussion is soteriological. Earlier we reflected on the meaning of the suddenness of practice and awakening. For Dōgen, the idea that one’s practice takes place over time and then at some point, one arrives at awakening is a misconception. Such an approach to practice negates the importance of each and every activity one performs in daily life. Heine emphasizes that for Dōgen, practice and awakening are not two separate events but one.

For the unenlightened, enlightenment and nirvāṇa are clearly distinct from the mundane world, whereas Dōgen states that enlightenment and nirvāṇa are also nothing other than being-time and are empty. An evil spirit like Asura is time, a bamboo tree is time, and so is enlightenment or nirvāṇa: they are empty of essence.

Heine pays attention to the meaning of the derivative concept of time in Heidegger and Dōgen:

Derivative time is neither to be disapproved as a logical flaw or contradiction nor negated as mere illusion, but it is exposed by Heidegger and Dōgen as a limited and inauthentic standpoint that is obstructive to genuine understanding if taken as the sole approach to temporality.<sup>18</sup>

There might be inauthentic time, as when one understands time only from its linear temporality, but authentic time does not exist in separation from inauthentic time. As Dōgen says, when people think of time and other beings in a conventional manner, the demon with three heads and eight arms, or the mountain or river,

appears as a being completely separate from oneself, “as far apart as sky and earth.” “Mountains are time, and seas are time. If they were not time, there would be no mountains and seas.”<sup>19</sup> There is no outside in being or in time. All beings, whether sentient beings like humans, insentient beings like mountains and water, or even enlightened being like the Buddha, are all time.

The claim that all beings are time then reveals us at least two important aspects of Dōgen’s teaching in our times: first, beings are not to be understood hierarchically; secondly any being and any moment can be a pathway to one’s awakening.

In “Buddha-nature (仏性),” another fascicle in the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, Dōgen confirms a core Zen Buddhist idea that all sentient beings are buddhas. Commenting on a passage in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, “All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature,” Dōgen observes, “The words ‘entire being’ [*shitsuu*] mean both sentient beings and all beings. In other words, entire being is the Buddha-nature.”<sup>20</sup> As in the case of being-time, Dōgen is again rearranging Chinese characters to produce the meaning he considers important for Buddhist practice.

Heine emphasizes Dōgen’s refusal to accept the implication that the Buddha-nature is something beyond time and some essence that stays inside the sentient being as if “the house is changing but the masters are still the same.”<sup>21</sup> If the Buddha-nature is something outside of time, and which exists inside the house called “the sentient beings who are ever subject to change,” the entire Buddhist thesis collapses. Instead of risking the danger of such an interpretation essentializing the Buddha-nature, Dōgen pins down here that the phrase “all sentient beings are equipped with the Buddha-nature” means that the totality of sentient beings are the Buddha-nature.<sup>22</sup>

Dōgen’s creative interpretation here is not only a declaration of Buddhist teaching; it demonstrates a critical difference between Dōgen’s and Heidegger’s philosophies of time and being. Dōgen’s “Being-Time” contains the same two terms in its title as Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. The seemingly insignificant difference between the two, the “and” and the hyphen in English translation, reveals a significant difference in the outlooks of the two thinkers.

Heine describes the difference as follows: Heidegger “asserts the ontological priority of the future and transcendence constituting the primordial basis of the past and historicity.”<sup>23</sup> Pointing out the limitations of Heidegger’s approach to time, Heine concludes that Heidegger’s philosophy of time is “based on finitude, it reverses the traditional preoccupation with actuality, but is limited because it separates present from past and future, Dasein from beings, theory from practice, and the question of Being as such from temporality itself.”<sup>24</sup> In his challenge to metaphysics, Heidegger risks falling into another form of metaphysics and transcendence.<sup>25</sup>

As the twentieth century French philosopher Jacques Derrida points out in his comments on Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, *ousia* (presence) and *grammé* (language) are closely related. And discrimination of one item in life is rarely an isolated occasion but represents a broader spectrum of discriminatory understanding

of life and existence. We will return to this issue after our discussion of Bob Dylan and Zen Buddhism.

## 2 From Being to Action

*Bargainin' for Salvation: Bob Dylan, a Zen Master?* (2009) is an unconventional book of Zen scholarship. Bob Dylan (1941–) and Zen Buddhism are both seminal topics in different traditions, but when one places them side by side, the risk is rather high that the result will not be up to the level that can be achieved by studying them separately, in the way a recipe with expensive and exquisite ingredients can produce an eyebrow-raising dish. Taking that risk and producing insightful rethinking is the task of a scholar, one Heine has accomplished masterfully in this book.

Heine writes that there are “affinities between the radical relativism and disillusionment manifested in some stages of Dylan’s career and the irreverent, topsy-turvy rhetoric of Zen Buddhist thought that defies all truth claims.”<sup>26</sup> Noting that one source of Dylan’s success lies in his creative use of the blues as a “master of words and spirit,”<sup>27</sup> Heine draws attention to the similar social and cultural environments from which the blues and the Zen tradition emerged. “Perhaps more than other 1960s artists,” Heine observes, “Dylan recognized that blues represented the emerging voice of a newly empowered social class.” That awareness appears in his songs as an “enigmatic sense of social consciousness.”<sup>28</sup> Dylan’s songs sent a keen message to white people who are “seeking personal freedom yet willing to resign themselves to harsh reality”<sup>29</sup> of the plantation lives of black people. In a similar way, Heine tells us, Zen emerged in southern China as a new form of religious and artistic expression that helped Chinese “intellectuals resolve inner turmoil that often mirrored conflict and competition within the imperial bureaucracy.”<sup>30</sup>

Social awareness and Zen kōan-like use of language and thinking are not difficult to find in Dylan’s lyrics. The idea of time discussed earlier in the context of Dōgen and Heidegger also helps us understand Dylan’s songs. One of his best known, “Blowin’ in The Wind” (1963) starts with the question, “How many roads must a man walk down/ Before you call him a man?”<sup>31</sup> What is required to be a human being? The song continues:

Yes ‘n’ how many times must the cannonballs fly  
Before they’re forever banned?/ . . .  
Yes ‘n’ how many years can some people exist/  
Before they’re allowed to be free?/  
Yes ‘n’ how many times can a man turn his head/  
And pretend that he just doesn’t see?/ . . .  
Yes ‘n’ how many ears must one man have/

Before he can hear people cry?  
 Yes 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows  
 That too many people have died?<sup>32</sup>

The seemingly existential question of what it means to be a human being turns into a heavily social and political declaration of the blindness of American society in the 1960s, when it was boiling with the civil rights movement. The question does not ask about actual linear time with the question “when”; the answers to these questions, Dylan says, are “blowin’ in the wind.” The refusal to offer a clear answer is not an evasion, though; we can connect it with the moment of realization we discussed regarding Dōgen. The song refuses to follow a linear scheme of time, but its “when” also does not fall outside of our daily existence. As the saying goes, quantitative accumulation precedes qualitative accumulation. But the moment of qualitative change, which Buddhism calls the transformation of the basis, is not the mechanical conclusion of a series of qualitative dots. Without a radical transformation in the way people think, the quantitative change does not occur.

Dylan continued his critique of the blindness of American society more than half a century later in a song on the assassination of John F. Kennedy: “The day they blew out the brains of the king/ Thousands were watching, no one saw a thing” (“Murder Most Foul,” 2020).<sup>33</sup> This is in many cases how power works and how violence reveals itself. Power and violence can appear in a spectacular way, like a bombing in a war, or in stealthy ways like in the assassination of JFK. We know that he was assassinated, but the answers to who, how, and why are still in darkness. Racism and sexism, which thousands of people have witnessed and turned a blind eye to, work the way Dylan described. We all witness them but behave as if we’ve seen nothing. Zen Buddhism would say that sentient beings’ lives are like this: they seem to see everything, but they see nothing about the coming of their own demise.

Heine describes the consistent theme of Dylan’s life and songs as “an adamant refusal to whitewash the ills of social institutions or to delimit his pursuit of freedom from bondage imposed by the chains and shackles of dungeon-like society or self-imposed by ignorance.”<sup>34</sup> Dylan presents ways of pursuing freedom and revealing ills by facilitating a deconstructive moment that challenges the logic of common sense as a Zen kōan does, through “alchemy of word.”<sup>35</sup> The modern Korean poet Kim Suyōng (1921–68) once declared that freedom of language is equivalent to political freedom. He considered a liberation of language from the conventions of poetic diction to be the same as liberation from the social and political constraints, as we can see it in his poem “Alibi of Diarrhea,” in which the poet deliberately breaks out of traditional poetic diction and compares the physical state of one’s body with the state of a society under dictatorship.

Being a social critic obviously does not mean being a moralist. On the contrary, Heine demonstrates by interpreting Dylan’s lyrics and career path through the Zen tradition what being engaged with social issues means for Dylan. Heine explains Dylan’s career through back-and-forth movements between dualism and nondualism. In the first phase of his career (1962–66), Heine observes, Dylan moves “from

‘protesting’ to ‘detesting.’”<sup>36</sup> This is not simply a change of mind or position, but a movement that is necessary for his protests to be authentic and not bound by their namesake. Heine writes, “Being pigeonholed as a one-dimensional protest singer suddenly becomes a form of bondage that makes Dylan feel boxed in and claustrophobic,”<sup>37</sup> and hence Dylan moves from dualistic protesting against injustice and discrimination to a non-dualistic detesting of the foundations of society’s hypocrisy and corruption,”<sup>38</sup> which might appear to some to be “inner directed” at the expense of social engagement.<sup>39</sup>

From a Buddhist perspective, all sorts of attachment cause suffering, and there is no exception of this even for values generally accepted as positive, such as love and social justice. Social justice and the fight against discrimination are perennial virtues for those who care about a just society. In such a fight, virtue itself is power, since the desire to realize a just society is a driving force behind one’s engagement. As Joseph Chen, a scholar of political philosophy, claims in his discussion of Confucian moral politics, virtue as power needs to be checked as much as any other form of power.<sup>40</sup> If virtue is power, then just like political or military power, it can be corrupted when overused. In this sense, virtue can also become violence, like other elements of our society. The back-and-forth movements Heine describes in Dylan’s position on social issues are a way of creating an antidote to the stagnation of virtue.

Heine defines Dylan’s career as “alternations between accepting and rejecting opposing standpoints.” The idea is similar to Zen Buddhism’s use of language, in which the same proposition is both affirmed and negated in order to destabilize established concepts and ideas.<sup>41</sup> The *Diamond Sūtra* states, “Even though Bodhisattvas save all the sentient beings, there are no sentient beings to be saved.”<sup>42</sup> In this declaration, the dualism of bodhisattva (enlightened beings) and sentient beings (unenlightened beings) is affirmed and immediately negated so that the two concepts do not take root and become reified.

For the same reason, a reified idea of social engagement needs to be constantly deconstructed. When a reporter asked Dylan “How many are protest singers?” like Dylan himself, Dylan responded, “Uh, I think there’s about uh, 136.” Dumbfounded, the reporter asked whether he meant exactly 136, and Dylan responded, “Uh, it’s either 136 or 142.”<sup>43</sup> As a Korean expression goes, it was a wise answer to a silly question.

The desire to gauge one’s action by calculation is directly connected to the assumption that values are calculable. But how does one define “protest singers”? What does a protest involve, and who are counted as singers? Like inauthentic time, which is fragmented and mechanical, calculating the calculable without considering the incalculable leads to defining one’s actions out of their context and further essentializing them. The conversation between the reporter and Dylan is another kōan-like moment in understanding Dylan. A seemingly counterintuitive question-and-answer sequence pervades a Zen kōan dialogue. For instance, a monk asked, “What is the meaning of Bodhidharma’s coming from the west?” “Oak tree in the garden,” the master responded.<sup>44</sup>

Derrida once described justice as incalculable. If justice means balance and fairness, in order to be just and fair, one must consider all the relevant elements, which is impossible. Justice and fairness, then, are incalculable. Law is a calculable aspect of justice, Derrida argues. But the calculability of law is a result of concretizing the incalculable, and therefore there always exist limitations to our efforts to realize justice by executing the law. The calculability of law does not mean that law is not just; but it does tell us that the law is not justice as it is, hence, there always exist a gap between the law and justice. That is because as a set of constructed rules, the law has an author, whether this is a community, country, or even international body, and having an author means that the law was created from the author's perspective.

In "Hurricane" (1975), Dylan talks about the middleweight boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter (1937–2014), who was serving time in prison for a crime he claimed not to have committed. Dylan sings, "If you're black, you might as well not show up on the street." That is because people would "play ball with the law" and because of the color of his skin; and "All of Rubin's cards were marked in advance" of the trial.<sup>45</sup> Almost a half a century after Dylan published the song, Hurricane's story still sounds familiar in American society. The limits of the law and abuse of power are rampant, as shown in the cases of Georgy Floyd (1973–2020), Breonna Taylor (died 2020), Eric Garner (died 2014), Michael Brown (died 2012), and many others who died of police brutality.

Again, however, we should avoid rushing to be moralists. The power of virtue and justice need to be checked as much as the power of violence, because unchecked power of virtue or justice becomes violent as much as accepted violence itself. Here lies a unique way of addressing the political in Dylan's music and Zen Buddhism as informed by the Buddhist position on ethics.

### 3 Authentic Time and the Political

As Heine pointed out, for Heidegger the question of existence cannot be answered except by existence itself.<sup>46</sup> Heidegger wanted to understand the being right in the middle of existence by establishing an exemplary being who is Dasein, a being-there. But Heidegger's Dasein also cannot but be an abstract being that lacks the complexity of real existence. After all, Dasein is not an embodied being. A being has both a body and a mind, and neither can be excluded in our consideration of existence, if the consideration is to represent existence as it is. Likewise, if existence is to be understood in its entirety, such an investigation should include a full spectrum of beings, not just one representative being. Derrida thus asks why this one being, Dasein, has the privilege of being a representative being for the analytic of the fundamental ontology of being. What does this separation and discrimination of Dasein from other beings indicate? Heidegger says that Dasein means everybody, like you and me. But the limitations of the concept of Dasein become clearer as we ask, following Derrida, about the sexuality of this being, for

example. Derrida points out that Heidegger was almost silent on the sexuality of Dasein. Derrida observes, “Being-there, being *there*, the *there* of being as such bears no sexual mark.”<sup>47</sup> What kind of a being can this be: a being without sexuality or gender, and a being that has only ontological reality? A being deprived of anthropological aspects of human existence also lacks the capacity and promise to be engaged with the issues of the real world.

Strange it might sound, the lack of embodied reality of Dasein can be contrasted with the detailed discussion of the institutional life of a Zen monastery by Dōgen, to which Heine pays special attention. Heine points out that the *Shōbōgenzō* deals with the institutional life of sangha as much as with philosophical teachings of Zen Buddhism. Dōgen was not just a philosopher but an institution builder, and these two cannot be completely separate domains of human existence. Philosophy is surely related to reality, but an institution means daily existence, which includes not only sutra chanting and dharma offering but brushing one’s teeth and taking out the garbage. Life is messy and cannot be as clear as philosophical discourse, however much philosophy tries to engage with reality.

As twentieth-century French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty pointed out, there are no specific questions or issues that are philosophical; instead, a question becomes philosophical depending on how we ask it. A simple question like “What time is it?” can be either a routine daily inquiry of checking time, or a philosophical investigation of the situation at hand. This should be the case for Merleau-Ponty because “Philosophy does not raise questions and does not provide answers that would little by little fill in the blanks. The questions are within our life, within our history.”<sup>48</sup> In presenting similarities between Dylan’s lyrics and Zen Buddhism, Heine points out the importance of “materiality” in both Dylan and Zen Buddhism in their ways of “expressing transcendental ideas by referencing animals and spirits, sticks and stones, icons and rites.”<sup>49</sup>

Taking out the garbage can be just a removal of waste, or it can raise a serious philosophical question. Here again we see the meaning of Dōgen’s experience of awakening as Heine describes it. While in China, Dōgen was visited by an old monk, who were to end their encounter quickly because he had to go back to the monastery to do his duty as a cook. Dōgen wanted him to stay longer and told him that someone of his status should be released from such a duty, to which the cook made the point, in Heine’s words, that his monastic duty “was indeed the ‘practice of the way’ (bendō), something to be eagerly pursued but by no means to be avoided.”<sup>50</sup> Heine elaborates Dōgen’s realization in this encounter as follows: “Dōgen realized that enlightenment is not a matter of waiting, anticipation or expectation, but is to be actualized right here-and-now through continuing practice.”<sup>51</sup>

Enlightenment is not a matter of following a linear time scheme with the expectation of finding the goal called awakening at the end of the line. Hegel once defined such a concept as “bad infinity.” Adding up finite time infinitely does not make it infinite. In order for the finite to be infinite, there must be a fundamental transformation, which Yogācāra Buddhism calls the “transformation of the basis.”



There is no specific moment at which enlightenment should take place; instead, each and every moment of daily existence is a moment for awakening.

From the unenlightened perspective, seated meditation and rules on monastic hygiene might look like two completely different discourses, and they can even be hierarchically valued, the former being sacred and the latter secular. But Heine tells us that in Dōgen's *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, these two are not separate issues. Instead, in the text, Dōgen offers guidelines, "such as washing, wiping, brushing and trimming, supplemented by more general daily, seasonal, and annual rituals activities as well as lofty ethical injunctions designed to develop and cultivate a gracious, dignified manner carried out in all activities, secular or sacred, monumental or common play, by applying the truth of Dharma in relation to the effects of karma."<sup>52</sup>

After all, life consists of various mundane events. Getting up in the morning, brushing one's teeth and taking a shower, and then morning coffee, meetings, lunch, dinner, sleep. How does one create meaning out of the cyclic of daily life events? What glues them together to produce meaning for our existence? This "glue" is not just one specific event of gigantic meaning, but rather each and every moment offers us possibilities to reach an awakening.

In his recent publication *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eyes* (2020), Heine points out how Dōgen reworked the everyday Japanese expression *uji* (being-time) to demonstrate the traditional Buddhists concepts of impermanence and no-self. By doing so, Dōgen efficiently revealed that outside "the ever-changing flow of time" and "the absence of any permanent self," there is no individual entity that can be called being or time.<sup>53</sup> Dōgen did so to help Japanese readers "immerse... in the topsy-turvy, through-the-looking glass standpoint of Zen teachings"<sup>54</sup> and realize "the usual distinction of now and then... no longer applies from an awakened outlook that apprehends the truly vibrant, never-stagnant nature of existence as the locus of all experience."<sup>55</sup>

The vibrant and impermanent nature of experience also applies to meditation. As Heine observes, "If meditation becomes mechanical, then it too must spurned."<sup>56</sup> He once again confirms a far-reaching implication of the intertwining of time and being in advocating the emptiness of all things and thus the equality of all things.

The seventh-century Korean monk Wōnhyo (元曉 617–86) took a comparable approach to the meaning of precepts. Wōnhyo teaches that there are three layers of observation of the precepts. The first is shallow, the second is profound, and the third is the ultimate way of observing the precepts. To just follow the precepts literally is a shallow way of observing them. If one understands the precepts by considering the context of the behaviors, one observes them in a profound way. But the final and ultimate way of observing the precepts is to follow them with the awareness that like everything else, "precepts do not have self-nature; they are always created through other conditions."<sup>57</sup> Wōnhyo makes an ultimatum as a warning: If one follows the precepts thinking that they have essence, one will lose the precepts by observing them.

We can adapt Wōnhyo's expression to meditation and say that if someone mediates thinking that meditation has its own essence to lead one to awakening, one



will lose meditation by practicing it, which is the time, as Heine said, when meditation needs to be spurned.

Does Zen Buddhism teach us communal engagement beyond individual practice? Students in my classes often claim that Buddhism is an individualistic religion. After they learn about its fundamental teachings that things are interconnected and nothing in the world has a permanent and independent essence, their evaluation rarely changes. My students' claim is contradictory, since if Buddhism indeed offers the teaching of non-self, individualism cannot be a part of it. The contradiction we face here, however, is not so much people's (including my students') incomplete understanding of Buddhism, as Buddhism's (especially Zen Buddhism's) failure to address the communal dimension of Buddhist practice, particularly in the context of modern times. In this context, juxtaposing Zen Buddhism and Bob Dylan sheds light on the communal dimension that might not be obvious in the study of Zen Buddhism as it is.

Being political is problematic for both a Zen master and a pop singer. By "political," I do not mean "the political," as described by Dylan in the song, "Political World": "Love don't have any place... Wisdom is thrown into jail... Where courage is a thing of the past... In the cities of lonesome fear."<sup>58</sup> Literally, "political" means "related to the *polis*," to the community. Thus, a "political action" is one which addresses problems in the community in order to change and ameliorate them. This process inevitably involves essentialization of an idea and even promotional activities. For an artist, such a move can damage the creative spirit of the aesthetic world in which the artist produces work. For a Buddhist practitioner, the absolute affirmation of a political agenda can generate attachment, a cause for suffering. These problems obviously do not mean that artists or Buddhist practitioners cannot or should not be political when the expression means "relating to the community." In fact, the opposite should be true, since we all live in a community.

Neither Zen Buddhism nor Bob Dylan offer politics, but I propose that both of them are undeniably political. Political topics in Dylan's songs have been well recognized, whereas Zen Buddhism and Buddhist scholarship have been shy about connecting Zen Buddhism with the political. The editors of *The Political World of Bob Dylan* identify the two sides of Dylan's political life as "freedom and justice, power and sin—the idealistic and the realistic, the inspirational and the theological."<sup>59</sup> In reviewing this book, John Gaffney, a professor of politics, states:

Dylan became a compelling expression of the dilemma of the artist's relation to the social, cultural and political (and psychological) springs of commitment to anything (and to everything). The artist, by definition hypersensitive to culture (for better or worse), always has to deal somehow with the ethical framework informing society.<sup>60</sup>

Gaffney's emphasis on the inevitable dilemma of an artist's position toward political issues in society accords with Heine's reflection on the Zen aspect of Dylan:

In Zen fashion, the middle way for Bob Dylan is not a simplistic compromise, as oppositions do not merely vanish into an abstract oneness. Visions of heavenly wheels and

chariots are inseparable from the enduring tensions of the concrete world that is filled with the intermingling of conflict and hope, tragedy and sublimity, and betrayal and trust.<sup>61</sup>

This awareness of the existence of oppositions, and that oppositions won't go away and one should try their best to live through them, is what makes the political dimensions of Zen Buddhism and Bob Dylan unique.

In discussing the political in Heidegger, Richard Beardsworth, a professor of international politics, proposes that Heidegger makes a distinction between authentic and inauthentic time, and, through this distinction, he "repeats a meta-physics of locality which projects disjuncture outside itself."<sup>62</sup> For Heidegger, "polis" is not just related to the city or city-state: "*Polis* means, rather the place, the there, wherein and as which historical being-there is. The polis is the historical place, the there *in* which, *out of* which, and *for* which history happens."<sup>63</sup> The fact that the polis is not just a venue, but a venue in which history takes place, for Heidegger means that those who enter the polis need to create history. Those who enter the polis, then, need to be creators, lone actors who act in a yet-to-be-a-polis, that is, *apolis*. The seemingly creative interpretation of individual's relation to community in Heidegger then turns out to be "the political determination of locality" according to Beardsworth,<sup>64</sup> because for Heidegger there is a specific location and group of people who are capable of being creators for the polis.

Without agreeing with Heidegger's determinism of locality, we can still see the dilemma of members in a polis. A polis, a community, is a space in which diverse people live together. Members of the community have different concerns, and as much as they want to make it better, they also want to be accepted. The evidence of acceptance manifests itself in various ways, which can involve virtue as much as power, material wealth as much as spiritual healing, and conformity and manipulation of opportunities for benefit as much as exercising justice and fairness. The unique potential for the political of Zen Buddhist teachings like Dōgen's, and artistic expressions like Dylan's, is that they emphasize the individual's inner transformation as a major tool to gauge the messiness of the political, without losing the hope of making changes to the state of affairs of the polis. Though the political world might be as callous as Dylan described in his "Political World," if Dylan hadn't hoped to change it, he would not have bothered to write and sing the song.

Does this mean that Zen Buddhism and works of art are immune to falling into the trap of the messy political world? History tells us that is not the case. Zen Buddhism was used to support militarism, enhancing the brutal reality of the political world, and the arts have been used for propaganda. Zen Buddhism itself has become one of the most recognized Buddhist schools, and Dylan a central figure in his field, no longer a voice of revolt. But again, the back-and-forth movements that Heine described as a major paradigm of Dylan's career tell us how the artist's works have constantly resisted the reification of ideas that would lead to stagnation. Dōgen's thought-provoking reworking of existing expressions teaches us that changes occur through what the Russian formalist calls "defamiliarization" of life's events.

Attention to taken-for-granted daily events in both Zen Buddhism and Dylan's lyrics helps us envision new ways of considering the political. Like the feminist slogan, "the personal is political," being political, getting engaged with communal life, does not always mean going out in the streets and protesting. Francis Cook even envisioned a message that could help us overcome the "speciesism" of the human-centered world, as he explored the social dimension of Dōgen's authentic selfhood.<sup>65</sup> Emphasizing the transformative power of meditation in her investigation of existential dimensions of East Asia philosophy, Leah Kalmanson declared that "practice [of meditation] is political."<sup>66</sup>

As Dōgen teaches us, any moment in life can and should be authentic time, and Dōgen encourages us to find the wisdom to live this time authentically, without reifying the moment, as a cook needs to cook for each and every meal. And that moment cannot but be political, if we are faithful to the fundamental Buddhist teaching of the interconnectedness of beings.

A most well-known aspect of the political in Zen Buddhist scholarship in English deals with its negative dimensions and Zen Buddhism has, to date, fallen short of exploring the full spectrum of the communal meaning of Zen practice and teachings. Heine's Zen Buddhist scholarship that connects Dōgen, Heidegger, and Dylan offers us a clue for a different way for Zen Buddhism to get engaged with the polis, the community, through his exploration of being, time, and the world.

## Notes

1. Confucius, *The Analects*, 4–8. Lunyu, Chinese Text Projects, <https://ctext.org/analects/li-ren>.
2. Elizabeth Feist Hirsch, "Martin Heidegger and the East." *Philosophy East & West* 20, no. 3 (July 1920), 247–263. It seems that Hirsch's work was inspired by Heidegger's interest in Asian thoughts in his later years, which came to be known better later in publications like Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East-Asian Influences on His Work* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2005). For a list of comparative works on Heidegger and Asian thoughts, see Jin Y. Park and Leah Kalmanson, "Buddhist Thought and Western Philosophy," Oxford Bibliographies Online.
3. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (HarperSan Francisco, 1962), 29.
4. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32, italics original.
5. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 40.
6. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 41, italics original.
7. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 67.
8. Steven Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 119.
9. Heine translated *uji* as "sometimes" in his translation of "Uji" in the appendix of *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 155.

10. Rein Raud, "The Existential Moment: Rereading Dōgen's Theory of Time," *Philosophy East and West* 62, no. 2 (April 2012), 153–173.
11. Dōgen, "Uji(有時)," *Shōbōgenzō II* (正法眼藏 二) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), 46–47. English translation, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, translated by Norman Waddell and Masao Abe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 48. Translation modified.
12. Dōgen, "Uji (有時)," *Shōbōgenzō II* (正法眼藏 二), my translation. Thomas Clearly translated "being-time" as "time of being," which makes a better connection in English with Dōgen's comments: "At a time of being, standing on the summit of the highest peak; at a time of being, walking on the bottom of the deepest ocean; at a time of being three-headed and eight-armed;... So-called time of being means time is already being; all being is time." *Shōbōgenzō: Zen Essays by Dōgen*, translated by Thomas Clearly (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), 104. Italics original.
13. Dōgen, "Uji(有時)," *Shōbōgenzō II* (正法眼藏 二), 47. English translation, Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 155.
14. Dōgen, "Uji (有時)," *Shōbōgenzō II* (正法眼藏 二), 48. English translation, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 49.
15. We don't have space to discuss Heidegger's Being more in detail in the current article. Heidegger does not use the expression "emptiness" in the sense it is used in Buddhism. But Heidegger's reflection on Nothingness which appears in some of publications after *Being and Time*, especially in his "What is Metaphysics?," an inaugural address in 1929 at Freiberg University, deserves special attention in this context. See Jin Y. Park, *Buddhism and Postmodernity: Zen Huayan and the Possibility of Buddhist Postmodern Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), chapter 3 "Logic of Nothing and A-Metaphysics." It would be worthwhile to consider Heidegger's use of nothing and the Kyoto school thinkers' use of the concept. Whether this understanding of nothing is also related to their political position is another intriguing question that needs to be explored. As Masao Abe pointed out in his essay on Heidegger and Dōgen that appears in the volume edited by Steven Heine, *A Study of Dōgen* (1992), there occurs in later Heidegger, a "turn" or "reversal" in which time is being and being is time. Masao Abe, "The Problem of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen." In *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion*, edited by Steven Heine (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 121–122. As Abe also pointed out, the reversal, however, falls short of overcoming the problem that already exists in *Being and Time*.
16. Dōgen, "Uji (有時)," *Shōbōgenzō II* (正法眼藏 二), 48. English translation, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 50.
17. Thus the *Diamond Sūtra* says, "it is impossible to retain past mind, impossible to hold on to present mind, and impossible to grasp future mind." *Jīngāng borē bōruómìjīng* (金剛般若波羅蜜經), T08.0235, 751b. Translation mine. For an English translation, see *The Diamond Sūtra & the Sūtra of Hui-Neng*, translated by A. F. Price & Wong Mou-lam (Boston: Shambhala, 1990), 39.

18. Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 61.
19. Dōgen, “Uji (有時),” *Shōbōgenzō II* (正法眼藏 二), 55. English translation, *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*, , 56.
20. Dōgen, “Busshō (仏性),” *Shōbōgenzō I* (正法眼藏 一), 73. English translation, *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*, 61.
21. Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 7–8.
22. Just to help the understanding of Dōgen’s rearrangement of Chinese characters, the passage in the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* states: “All the sentient beings really have the Buddha-nature (一切衆生、悉有佛性).” All the sentient beings mean all kinds of sentient beings, therefore entire being (悉有) is the Buddha-nature (仏性). “I call the whole integral entity of entire being “sentient beings.” (すなはち悉有は佛性なり。悉有の一悉を衆生といふ). Regarding Dōgen’s interpretation of time-being, Heine notes that Dōgen’s use of “novel vocabulary” enables him to clarify “the apparent contradictions that characterize authentic temporality,” and the same is the case here in Dōgen’s rearrangements of Chinese characters to clarify the potential misunderstanding of the nature of the Buddha-nature. Heine, *Readings of Dōgen’s Treasure of the True Dharma Eye*, 126.
23. Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 61.
24. Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 145.
25. For that reason, Jacques Derrida evaluates that Heidegger’s philosophy still belongs to metaphysics, “the epoch of onto-theology, within the philosophy of presence.” *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 23–4. *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 12.
26. Steven Heine. *Bargainin’ For Salvation: Bob y Dylan, A Zen Master?* (New York: Continuum, 2009), xii.
27. Heine, *Bargainin’ For Salvation*, 53.
28. Heine, *Bargainin’ For Salvation*, 54.
29. Heine, *Bargainin’ For Salvation*, 54.
30. Heine, *Bargainin’ For Salvation*, 55.
31. Bob Dylan, “Blowin’ in the Wind,” The Official Bob Dylan Site, <http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/blowin-wind/>
32. Bob Dylan, “Blowin’ in the Wind,” The Official Bob Dylan Site, <http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/blowin-wind/>
33. Bob Dylan, “Murder Most Foul,” The Official Bob Dylan Site, <https://www.bobdylan.com/songs/murder-most-foul/>
34. Heine, *Bargainin’ For Salvation*, 80.
35. Heine, *Bargainin’ For Salvation*, 68.
36. Heine, *Bargainin’ for Salvation*, 109.

37. Heine, *Bargainin' for Salvation*, 11.
38. Heine, *Bargainin' for Salvation*, 111.
39. Heine, *Bargainin' for Salvation*, 112. Heine is quoting Irwin Silber's "An Open Letter to Bob Dylan."
40. See Joseph Chen, *Confucian Perfectionism: A Political Philosophy for Modern Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 63. Referencing Hannah Arendt and Montesquieu, Chen observes, "If virtue is a form of power, then virtue should also be a check to virtue." 63.
41. On the Zen Buddhist logic of language to this effect, see Jin Y. Park, "Zen and Zen Philosophy of Language," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (June 2002), 209–228.
42. *Jīngāng borē bōrúomījīng*(金剛般若波羅蜜經), T08.0235, 749a. Translation mine. For an English translation, see *The Diamond Sūtra & the Sūtra of Hui-Neng*, 19. Here the translation of the passage goes: "when vast, uncountable, immeasurable numbers of beings have thus been liberated, verily no being has been liberated."
43. Heine, *Bargainin' For Salvation*, 168. The interview also appears in *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story* by Martin Scorsese (2019).
44. *Wumen guan* (無門關), T48.2005, 297c.
45. Bob Dylan, "Hurricane," Bob Dylan Official Site, <http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/hurricane/>
46. Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 21.
47. Jacques Derrida, "Geschlecht: sexual difference, ontological difference," *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1983), 65–83, 67. Italics original.
48. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964), 140. English translation, *The Visible and the Invisible*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 105.
49. Heine, *Bargainin' for Salvation*, 56.
50. Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 26.
51. Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Dōgen and Heidegger*, 26.
52. Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 201.
53. Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eyes*, 23.
54. Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eyes*, 23.
55. Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eyes*, 24.
56. Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eyes*, 207.
57. Wōnhyo (元曉), *Posal kyebon chibōm yogi* (菩薩戒本持犯要記), *Han'guk Pulgyo Chōnsō* (Complete work of Korean Buddhism) vol. 1.581-a-585c, 585a. English translation, Jin Y. Park, "Essentials on Observing and Violating the Fundamentals of Bodhisattva Precepts: Wōnhyo's Nonsubstantial Mahāyāna Ethics." In *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*, edited by William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield, 409–418 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 417.

58. Bob Dylan, "Political World," Bob Dylan Official Site, <http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/political-world/>
59. Jeff Taylor and Chad Israelson (eds), *The Political World of Bob Dylan* (New York: Palgrave, 2015), ix.
60. John Gaffney, "The political art of Bob Dylan," *Contemporary Political Theory* 11 (2012), e7-e10, e9.
61. Heine, *Bargainin' for Salvation*, 219–220.
62. Richard Beardsworth, *Derrida & the Political* (London: Routledge, 1996), 117.
63. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 152. Italics original.
64. Beardsworth, *Derrida & the Political*, 115. Beardsworth even claims that the repetition of metaphysics of locality, creation of inside and outside, the authentic and inauthentic time, gives "philosophical grounding to National Socialism through 'rooting' the latter on the existential authentic *Unheimlichkeit* [uncanniness]" (115). Beardsworth's book was published in 1996 when Heidegger's relationship with National Socialism was not fully discussed in the U.S. Along with the publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* in 2014 in German and in English in 2016–2017, Heidegger scholarship in the U.S. faced a situation in which scholars could not completely ignore this aspect of Heidegger's philosophy.
65. Francis H. Cook, "Dōgen's View of Authentic Selfhood and Its Socio-Ethical Implications," in *Dōgen Studies*, edited by William R. LaFleur (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 131–149. Cook observes: "Whatever bondage and liberation may mean from Dōgen's perspective, the achievement of authentic selfhood and the commitment to liberate all beings seem clearly to point to transcendence of anthropocentrism, or 'species-ism' as the sole basis for decision-making and altruistic action. Authentic selfhood thus must be a transcendence of both egocentrism and anthropocentrism" (142–3).
66. Leah Kalmanson, *Cross-Cultural Existentialism: On the Meaning of Life in Asian and Western Thought* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 66.

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**Jin Y. Park** is Professor and the Department Chair of Philosophy and Religion at American University. Park's research areas include East Asian Buddhism (especially Zen and Huayan Buddhism), Buddhist ethics, intercultural philosophy, and modern East Asian philosophy. Park's research in Buddhism focuses on the Zen and Huayan schools of East Asian Buddhism on language, violence, and ethics. In her comparative study, Park reads Zen and Huayan Buddhism together with postmodern thought in Continental philosophy, with a special focus on Jacques Derrida's deconstruction. Park's research on modern East Asian philosophy examines the dawn of philosophy in East Asia and the East-West encounter in this context. In her monograph *Buddhism and Postmodernity: Zen, Huayan, and the Possibility of Buddhist-Postmodern Ethics* (2008), Park discusses Buddhism and continental philosophy on the topics of self, language, and violence. In this book, Park offers the "ethics of tension" as a potential ethical paradigm drawn from Buddhism and postmodern philosophy. *Reflections of a Zen Buddhist Nun* (2014) is a translation of a book published in Korean in 1960 by Kim Iryōp (1896–1971), a writer, first-generation Korean feminist, Buddhist nun, and philosopher. In this book, Kim Iryōp offers a creative interpretation of Buddhist philosophy and practice. In *Women and Buddhist Philosophy: Engaging Zen Master Kim Iryop* (2017), Park proposes a new mode of philosophizing based on the discussion of Kim Iryōp's life and philosophy. Park is also the editor of volumes: *Buddhisms and Deconstructions* (2006), *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism* (co-edited, 2009), *Comparative Political Theory and Cross-Cultural Philosophy* (2009), and *Makers of Modern Korean Buddhism* (2010). Park currently serves as the President of the North American Korean Philosophy Association (2016-present) and the Vice President of the American Academy of Religion. Park also served as the President of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy (2018–2019), on the Board of Directors (2013–2015) at the American Academy of Religion. She was also the Founding Director of the International Society for Buddhist Philosophy (2001–2018).

# Correction to: The Theory and Practice of Zen Buddhism



Charles S. Prebish and On-cho Ng

## Correction to:

C. S. Prebish and O. Ng (eds.), *The Theory and Practice of Zen Buddhism*, Chinese Culture 6,  
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This book was inadvertently published with a few errors: This has now been amended in respective chapters.

The section numbers for the chapter “Searching for the Historical Bodhidharma in Goblet Words” has been renumbered.

In chapter 8 the Affiliation for Professor Charles S. Prebish, is updated as Professor Emeritus, Penn State University instead of Department of Asian Studies, Pennsylvania State University

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