

Introduction: Canon and Canonicity in the History of the Zen Literary Tradition

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This volume is a sequel or companion volume to *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*.¹ It examines a rich variety of texts in various genres that are crucial to an understanding of the history and thought of the Zen (C. Chan) Buddhist tradition in East Asia. These texts form a major part of the Zen canon, the acknowledged core of Zen Buddhist sacred literature.

One theme that reappears throughout this literature is the Zen tendency to reject the Buddhist canon, showing disdain for sacred literature of any kind. Zen is well known for the slogan claim, attributed to its founding patriarch, Bodhidharma, that it represents “a special transmission outside the teachings, that does not rely on words and letters.” The image of Zen as rejecting all forms of ordinary language is reinforced by a wide variety of legendary anecdotes about Zen masters who teach in bizarre nonlinguistic ways, such as silence, “shouting and hitting,” or other unusual behaviors. And when the masters do resort to language, they almost never use ordinary referential discourse. Instead they are thought to “point directly” to Zen awakening by paradoxical speech, non sequiturs, or single words seemingly out of context. Moreover, a few Zen texts recount sacrilegious acts against the sacred canon itself, outrageous acts in which the Buddhist sutras are burned or ripped to shreds. All of these examples demonstrate the extraordinary Zen Buddhist effort to evoke an “awakening” by transcending ordinary language through powerfully direct means.

In spite of these exemplary stories however, it is clear that Zen represents one of the high points in Chinese and Buddhist literary

culture, producing by far the most voluminous and important canon of sacred texts in East Asia. Beginning in the late Tang dynasty and continuing for centuries in China, as well as in Kamakura through Tokugawa Japan, Zen writers have produced an unparalleled volume of texts in a wide variety of genres. These sacred texts define the tradition of Zen in such a way that understanding them is fundamental to any acquaintance with this form of Buddhism. The variety of these texts is also extraordinary. Zen genres include the “recorded sayings” of an individual Zen master’s life and teachings, collections of “recorded sayings” texts organized into the larger genealogical framework of Zen history called “transmission of the lamp” records, *kōan* collections containing prose and verse commentaries by famous Zen masters on earlier prototypical Zen sayings or stories, and monastic codes covering the rules of conduct for the life of Zen monks. Other forms of Zen interpretive literature go beyond these fundamental genres, for example, capping verses on *kōan* cases that come to be compiled into Zen phrase books, or esoteric commentaries known in Japan as *kirigami*.

Literary imagination and creativity have long been basic to the Zen tradition, and provide one key to the historical success of Zen throughout East Asia. Zen came to prominence in China during the politically troubled era of the late Tang and Song dynasties as well as the tumultuous Kamakura era in Japan. These were periods of intense religious and philosophical competition, and although Zen emerged on occasion as the dominant force, in all periods it was forced to compete with other Buddhist rivals as well as with Confucian, Daoist, and Shinto alternatives. In each of these arenas, literature was the key to the vitality and dynamism of the Zen tradition, and the dimension of its cultural creativity that enabled it to face these historical challenges. Indeed, today nothing is more emblematic of the Zen tradition than its impressive canon of texts.

Canon and Canonicity

One of the main goals of this volume is to clarify and amplify the significance of canonicity in Zen Buddhism. Zen does not have a canon in the formal sense of the term, although many of its classic texts are included in the modern East Asian Buddhist canonical collections, the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* and its supplement, the *Hsü tsang ching* (J. *Zoku zōkyō*). On the other hand, Zen tradition recognizes a core of writings in the various genres as seminal resources for the expression of doctrine. As Harold Bloom shows in *The Western Canon*, the term canonicity does not necessarily refer to a fixed body of writings that exert a dogmatic sense of authority, but rather indicates the role of texts that express a compellingly creative and powerful message.² Robert Alter points out in *Canon and Creativity*, “A canon is above all a trans-historical textual community. Knowledge of the received texts and recourse to them constitute the commu-

nity, but the texts do not have a single authoritative meaning, however many the established spokesmen for the canon at any give moment may claim that it is the case.”³ Alter goes on to show that although univocal meaning may be claimed, in the various traditions of canonical interpreters we find a tremendous diversity and range of viewpoints that are supported by the canon. A key issue is whether and to what extent interpreters consider the plurality of voices legitimate or in need of being silenced. For the most part, diversity has been a hallmark of the Buddhist tradition.

This volume represents a correction to the de facto canon that has been created by the limited approach of Western scholarship to Zen writings. Despite the remarkable richness of Zen literature, at this stage in Western studies there are still only a relative handful of texts that are well known or that have been seriously studied and translated. These include Bodhidharma’s “Two Entrances,” the *Platform Sutra* attributed to sixth patriarch Huineng, Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō*, and several kōan collections including the *Pi-yen lu* (Biyānlǔ/Blue cliff record) and the *Wu-men kuan* (or *Wumenkuan*, Gateless gate), as well as several recorded sayings texts such as those of Zhaozhou, Linji, and Dongshan, among others. Some texts have been translated in multiple versions, such as the *Platform Sutra*, the records of Linji, the *Wu-men kuan* and the *Shōbōgenzō*, with varying degrees of reliability. Other texts only appear or are discussed thoroughly in a single translation or study, whereas additional ones are only translated or examined partially or indirectly. In general, the kōan records have received the most attention, while other genres that are crucial for understanding the function of kōan cases and other dimensions of Zen theory and practice, especially the transmission of the lamp records and the monastic codes, have received relatively little attention. This volume expands the range of Zen literature in the West by providing seminal studies of important canonical texts long recognized by the Zen tradition.

Chapter Summary

The Zen Canon makes available learned yet accessible scholarly studies of some of the most important classical Zen texts, especially those that have yet to receive the attention they deserve. The contributors focus on key examples of the many important but as yet lesser known and lesser studied examples of Zen literature; perhaps the only text dealt with here that has already been well studied is the *Wu-men kuan*, but the analysis provided here by Japanese scholar Ishii Shūdō goes into much more analytic detail than do previous works. All the chapters examine in varying degrees of detailed analysis and depth many of the following issues: pre-text or context of sources; most significant predecessor texts; origins of text or reflections on the question of authorship; location of the text in terms of time and place, as well as lineage; internal structure of

the text; literary genre and style; most important concepts or narrative segment; innovations represented by this text; versions, redactions, variations; and uses of the text throughout the history of Zen.

This collection illuminates a variety of interesting and important issues including the origins of Zen texts and the relation between T'ang and Sung Zen Buddhism, the difference between the Southern school and alternative standpoints, the role of (Dunhuang) Tun-huang materials, the function of Ma-tsu style encounter dialogue Zen pedagogy, the relation between Zen and other political ideologies and religious styles and views, the impact of the cultural contexts of China and Japan, the relation of textuality to orality as well as religious practice, and the historical evolution of various Zen textual genres.

Chapter 1, "Tsong-mi's *Zen Prolegomenon*: Introduction to an Exemplary Zen Canon," by Jeff Broughton, analyzes the *Chanyuan chuchuanchi duxu* (Prolegomenon to the collection of expressions of the Zen source; abbreviated as *Zen Prolegomenon*) by Kuei-feng Tsung-mi (or Zongmi) (780–841). The *Zen Prolegomenon* is a descriptive and analytical guide to the teachings and praxes of the numerous Zen lineages of the day. In this chapter, Broughton discusses and examines Tsung-mi's life and the *Zen Prolegomenon*'s assertion that the "ideas" (yi) of eight Zen lineages can be classified into three "theses" (zong). In ascending order, the first Zen thesis is identical to the sutras and treatises of the Yogācāra school; the second is identical to the sutras and treatises of the Madhyāmika school; and the third is identical to a wide range of sutras and treatises, including the *Avatarisaka Sutra*, *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, *Awakening of Faith*, and so on. He further examines editions of the text from Ming-dynasty China and Korea, the latter being particularly valuable. The text also discusses a substantial fragment of a Dunhuang manuscript and the way the text has been extraordinarily important in Korean Son (Zen).

Chapter 2, "*Mazu yulu* and the Creation of the Chan Records of Sayings," by Mario Poceski, focuses on the *Mazu yulu*, one of the most influential texts of the Chan records of sayings genre. The text, which was compiled around 1085, purports to record the life and teachings of the monk Mazu Daoyi (709–788). The chapter aims to accomplish two objectives. First, on a general level it serves as a survey of the *Mazu yulu* and its place in Chan literature. As such, it provides information about the text's provenance, internal structure, literary style, doctrinal contents, historical importance, and the ways it was used by the Chan/Zen schools throughout East Asia. Second, by using Mazu's record as an example of the recorded sayings genre, the chapter also considers the broader issues of the creation of texts that belong to this genre and their use as historical sources about Chan during the Tang Dynasty (618–907). Poceski argues that the creation of the Chan records of sayings indicate that there is a need to take a fresh look at accepted views about the history of Chan during

the later Tang period, and undertake future studies with a clearer understanding of the provenance of all extant textual sources.

"The *Lidai fabao ji* (Record of the Dharma-Jewel through the Ages)," by Wendi Adamek in the third chapter, deals with the *Lidai fabao ji*, a long-lost Chan Buddhist text, resurrected from among the manuscripts discovered in 1900 in the hidden library at the Mogao caves of Dunhuang. The manuscripts and fragments are not substantially different, which suggested that they may be relatively faithful to the original. The *Lidai fabao ji* thus provides a rare opportunity to shed light on the ways in which historical contingencies shape sectarian identity. In this chapter, Adamek argues that the *Lidai fabao ji* is prototypical of two important Chan genres; the first part is in a format analogous to the later *chuangdeng lu* (transmission of the lamp records), and the second part shares features with the Song dynasty *yulu* (discourse records). Through the *Lidai fabao ji* we may thus gain glimpses of an earlier stage of the hagiographical sensibilities that shaped Song-dynasty Chan's distinctive literary styles and its images of exemplary practice, which were in turn the styles and images adopted by Japanese monks who founded the Zen schools of the Kamakura period.

Then in chapter 4, "The Huang-po Literature," Dale S. Wright carries out a literary, philosophical, and historical analysis of the classic Huang-po texts. Wright reflects on the origins of the text set in the context of what is now known as ninth-century Chan Buddhism. He further explores the relation of the Huang-po texts to significant predecessor literature and the question of authorship and the evolution of the Zen genre of "recorded sayings." His literary analysis includes discussion of genre, rhetorical style, narrative sequence, authorial voice, intended audience, and intertextuality or the extent to which these texts quote or allude to other Chan literature. This is followed by analysis of textual content and an evaluation of the ways in which works attributed to Huang-po constitute innovation in the tradition of Chinese Buddhism.

In chapter 5, "Lineage and Context in the *Patriarch's Hall Collection* and the *Transmission of the Lamp*," Albert Welter discusses the development of transmission records dedicated to the activities of the famous masters and their role as one of the unique contributions of Chan to Chinese literature. These *chuangdeng lu* (transmission of the lamp records) documented the lineal relations among Chan masters and their association with temples and government representatives. They gave rise to multilineal branches and became codified as the "five houses" of classical Chan. Probing beneath the surface of each record's generally harmonious transmission claims, Welter finds that we can discover preferences for particular factions and diverging views of Chan orthodoxy. He discusses the *Patriarch's Hall Collection* (*Zutang ji*) and its response to the "new style" Chan attributed to Mazu Daoyi (709–788). He also examines the connection between the *Zutang ji* and Korean Buddhism, evidenced

through the prominent position accorded Korean Sōn masters in the text, and compares the *Zutangji*'s presentation of Chan lineages with the locus classicus of Chan transmission texts, the *Jingde chuandeng lu* (The Jingde era record of the transmission of the lamp) compiled in 1004.

Chapter 6, Morten Schlütter's "The *Record of Hongzhi* and the Recorded Sayings Literature of Song-Dynasty Chan," delves into our access to an unusual amount of information pertaining to the life history of Hongzhi's recorded sayings and the unique opportunity to observe it closely. Relatively few larger recorded sayings are still extant from the Song era, and Hongzhi's is one of the longest extant collections from that time. Schlütter covers the history of Hongzhi's recorded sayings, from when individual smaller collections were published during his lifetime through the enshrinement of the larger collection in the canon and its eventual loss in China and increasing prominence in Japan. He further examines the new life that Hongzhi's recorded sayings are currently gaining through English translations, as well as their meaning and significance.

In chapter 7, "The *Wu-men kuan* (J. *Mumonkan*): The Formation, Propagation, and Characteristics of a Classic Zen Kōan Text," Ishii Shūdō analyzes the *Wu-men kuan* text, a kōan collection containing forty-eight cases. The *Wu-men kuan* text is one of the most widely read Zen texts and yet it is also often criticized from various sectarian perspectives. Ishii explores the *Tsung-men t'ung-yao chi* as a source for the *Wu-men kuan*'s contents, and asserts that the importance of this background text must no longer be disregarded. He looks at the formation process of the *Wu-men kuan* as well as why there has been so much attention and concern for this text throughout Japanese history, while it has not been read or studied to the same extent in China. Ishii further examines the special features of the *Wu-men kuan* in the context of Song Chan textual history.

Chapter 8, "The *Eihei kōroku*: The Record of Dōgen's Later Period at Eihei-ji Temple" by Steven Heine, examines the textual history and structure of the *Eihei kōroku*, one of the two main texts produced by Dōgen, the founder of Sōtō Zen in thirteenth-century Japan. It is the primary work that represents the later period of Dōgen's career and until recently has received far less attention than the other main Dōgen text, the *Shōbōgenzō*. Both the *Shōbōgenzō* and the *Eihei kōroku* consist mainly of collections of sermons delivered by Dōgen to his assembly of disciples, often based on interpretations of kōans or allusions to other kinds of Buddhist works. However, they reflect two very different styles of sermonizing, with the former, Japanese vernacular text representing an informal style and the latter, Chinese text representing a formal style. In addition to analyzing the structure and the function of the *Eihei kōroku* genres in their historical context, Heine discusses the two main editions of the text from 1598 (Monkaku edition, also known as the Sozan edition) and 1672 (Manzan edition), in addition to an abbreviated version of the text known as

the *Eihei goroku*. He shows the various biographical and literary levels of significance that permeate the *Eihei kōroku*.

In the final chapter, rather than focusing on a single text, T. Griffith Foulk's "*Chanyuan qinggui* and Other 'Rules of Purity' in Chinese Buddhism" covers an entire class of Zen literature: the so-called *qinggui* (J. *shingi*) or "rules of purity." He shows that the *qinggui* genre is actually several genres, some having been written to regulate only one community and others clearly having been intended to serve as schedules for diverse Buddhist communities, including monasteries. Foulk traces the historical origins and development of the *qinggui* class of texts. Much of the material in the texts comes from Chinese translations of various rescensions of the Indian Buddhist *Vinaya* and associated commentaries. From Song China to modern Japan, moreover, later *qinggui* have borrowed from and adapted earlier ones. His goal is to make these intertextual relationships clear, while also elucidating the changing social and political contexts in which successive *qinggui* have been edited and implemented in China and Japan.

NOTES

1. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, eds., *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
2. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995).
3. Robert Alter, *Canon and Canonicity: Modern Writing and the Authority of Scripture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 5.