

## Chapter 4

# Identity in a Diagram: Authenticity, Transmission, and Lineage in the Chan/Zen Tradition

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*Vis-à-vis* any precise standard of identity, all ‘inner’ modes of remembering must fail and all socially initiated reconstructions of memory appear as deceptive fictions of the past.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This chapter addresses the problem of lineage.<sup>2</sup> In Chan/Zen Buddhism, the authentic transmission of the Dharma is everything: it connects any practitioner as directly as possible to the Buddha himself, and therefore is the very basis for the tradition’s claim to superiority over and against other Buddhist schools. It is an integral part of Chan/Zen Buddhist identity, and the way in which the tradition’s community is imagined and its story remembered.

The idea of an invariable lineage through which the Buddha’s insight is passed down through the ages and across continents is commonly symbolized by a diagram that reminds one of a family tree. The act of transmission from a master to a disciple finds expression in a single, unambiguous line that

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<sup>1</sup> Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität*, p. 353. All translations from Chinese, German, and Japanese sources are my own, unless noted otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> Work on this chapter was made possible by generous funding from the Young Academy of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, for which I would like to express my gratitude. I am also greatly indebted to the comments and questions I received during the “Communities of Memory” conference, held in Hamburg, May 2014. Humble thanks go to the convener and the participants.

connects the two persons. Several of these dyads combine into an idealized representation of the tradition itself: a linear transmission from elder to younger generations that goes back all the way to the Buddha himself. In a way, it tells us all we need to know about the tradition. The lineage diagram thus is a concise representation of how the Chan/Zen tradition remembers, or rather reimagines, its own history.

The late John McRae astutely described this ideological feature as a “lineage paradigm.” But what if we were to go deeper with his characterization? Tamamura Takeji 玉村竹二 (1911–2003), a leading scholar of early Zen Buddhism, in one of his early studies addressed the same problem as follows:

In the study of Buddhist history, the assessment of the so-called Dharma lineage is a difficult thing. The Dharma lineage is literally the family tree of the Dharma; it shows the successive relation of one and the same idea (the Dharma) or, in other words, the relation between master and disciple. That means it visualizes the situation of a school of learning by rendering it concrete. Originally, it was meant to show a pre-existent reality just as it is, but things seem to be neither as simple nor as realistic as that. Actually, it becomes a rather troublesome issue.

When the Dharma lineage expresses only the two generations of a master and a disciple, one may assume that it illustrates reality reasonably well. However, examples of Dharma lineage diagrams limited to two generations are rare, and for the most part those that write down the succession extending over several or even several tens of generations are much more numerous ...

But if seen with the eyes of somebody who studies history, could the idea of the school’s patriarchs actually have been transmitted without any additions or subtractions whatsoever, over the course of several hundred years and unnumbered generations? ...

For this reason, is it not necessary for the scholar of the history of Buddhism, after he has rejected the Dharma lineage wholesale, to face it once more from a new angle?<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, with regards to both the concept of lineage and its substantive representations, there still is a wealth of issues to be explored, some of which are taken up in the following pages. First, I discuss Chan/Zen’s truth claims, along with its doctrinal assumptions as to authenticity and transmission. I argue for rearticulating McRae’s “lineage paradigm,” for while the slogan has proven a useful condensation of what makes lineage so immensely problematic, it is more accurate to understand lineage as a model. Accordingly, special attention is given to the dangers any model runs into in its encounter with reality. The reductionism inherent in the lineage abstraction in question had very real repercussions, and the tradition actively

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<sup>3</sup> Tamamura Takeji, “Nihon Bukkyō no mondai-ten,” pp. 725-28.

tried to make itself correspond to its model. A look at the linguistic and material evidence of lineage diagrams corroborates the diagnosis that Chan/Zen's interest in lineage is bound to the issues of transmission and authentication, rather than to questions of history and historiography.

Nonetheless, locating lineage diagrams in their respective sociopolitical situations, historical settings, and within the contexts of their ideological underpinning serves to highlight a key topic in the Chan/Zen Buddhist discourse on identity. Such contexts are detailed by way of several examples from Song dynasty China (960–1279) and Japan in the Kamakura/early Muromachi era (1185–1392), when Chan/Zen made use of the idea of lineage in a manner very different from what we would expect today. I will try to show below that while the diagrammatic representation of lineage serves manifold functions, its most basic role is one of a centering device by which the Chan/Zen tradition creates, stabilizes, and symbolically perpetuates an identity that is something else altogether than its actual historical manifestations.

## Chan/Zen Above All Things

In what has become a classic debate between traditionalist theology and academic scholarship, Suzuki Daisetsu Teitarō 鈴木大拙貞太郎 (1870–1966), a major figure in making Zen popular in the US and Europe, and the famous Chinese historian Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), a student of the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952), exchanged essays in the 1953 issue of the journal *Philosophy East and West*. In presenting their respective views, they articulated an epistemological framework for the study of Chan/Zen that, with only minor modification, still holds true today.

Hu firmly situated Tang dynasty Chan Buddhism in its socio-historical context:

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>4</sup>

To him, the appearance of Chan at a specific point in Chinese intellectual history means that it is but one among a multitude of historical phenomena. While Hu's implication that Chan was primarily a philosophical tradition

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<sup>4</sup> Hu, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method," p. 3.

might seem strange from today's perspective, and indeed has been supplemented in recent years with aspects from the study of, for example, ritual and material culture, the import of Hu's conviction is undeniable. Just as Christianity has long since ceased to be solely the object of theological studies and can—indeed must—be submitted to critical historical study and ideological deconstruction, the same holds true for Buddhism and the many forms it took in the course of its development. Naturally, Chan/Zen is no exception.

Suzuki, on the other hand, was of a different opinion. To him, scholarly analysis would never be able to unearth what Chan/Zen is actually all about. It was too dismissive of the poetics and soteriologies at work, too distanced from Chan/Zen's essence, to realize that history—and the reconstructions of historiography—had no say whatsoever when it came to the truth of Zen.

Zen has its own way of pointing to the nature of one's own being, and that when this is done one attains Buddhahood, in which all the contradictions and disturbances caused by the intellect are entirely harmonized in a unity of higher order... Logically considered, Zen may be full of contradictions and repetitions. But as it stands above all things, it goes serenely on its own way...<sup>5</sup>

This makes for an unassailable argument of exclusion. Focusing on history, to Suzuki, means observing from a distance—and from the outside—while the real import of Buddhism continues to elude one's grasp. Looking at Chan/Zen from within, as it pointed to one's own nature and made one attain Buddhahood—that was the core of the matter. Suzuki was thus not concerned with extrinsic and nonessential elements, but with what he considered to be the very essence of Buddhism. Accordingly, he reacted in highly provocative terms.

[T]here are at least two types of mentality: the one which can understand Zen and, therefore, has the right to say something about it, and another which is utterly unable to grasp what Zen is. The difference between the two types is one of quality and is beyond the possibility of mutual reconciliation.<sup>6</sup>

The investigation of Chan/Zen neither relies on a set of skills acquired in academic training nor on the ability to trace causal connections, abstract, or theorize. Instead, it becomes a question of identity, of whether the investigator belongs to the tradition or not. It is effectively restricted to a clearly defined in-group of initiates, which is different from any out-group.

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<sup>5</sup> Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, pp. 20–21.

<sup>6</sup> Suzuki, "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih," p. 25. Suzuki's view of Zen has obvious romantic overtones; cf. "On the Essence of Religion," in Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, pp. 18–54.

Those that may speak about the tradition are those that actually belong to it. Consequently, they speak for the tradition rather than about it. Those who do not belong to this privileged group would do well to mind their own business.

This exchange took place sixty years ago, and Buddhist studies have progressed significantly since then. Suzuki has been labeled repeatedly as a Buddhist apologist, and has been criticized accordingly. All this may seem like so much water under the bridge. However, it is not. The rhetoric at work in Suzuki's writings is still very much evident in contemporary Buddhist self-representations. Take this quote from Genpo Döring (born 1955), a contemporary Zen master formerly presiding over Bodaisan Shoboji 菩提山正宝寺 (Monastery of the Jewel of Orthodoxy at Bodhi Mountain), a Zen monastery in the south of Germany:

Buddha found his Great Awakening in seated meditation. Out of this experience, he taught the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path.... In the course of history, many Buddhist schools, traditions, and denominations developed. Some schools in their theory and practice have grown distant from the original teachings and now largely champion their own instructions.... In order to experience intuition into one's own nature and gain insight into the relations of the universe, the Buddha gave up everything, sat down underneath the Bodhi tree and practiced zazen [seated meditation]. That is how Buddhism began. Accordingly, it is not necessary to make difficult one's access to the Buddha's teaching with the rarefied and non-Buddhist accessories of other people and cultures.<sup>7</sup>

The denigration of non-Buddhist religions and philosophies (and academic scholarship, for that matter), might be something to be expected, but the dismissive attitude towards other Buddhist traditions seems noteworthy. According to Döring, they have alienated themselves from their true origin and hardly merit serious attention, at least as far as real practice is concerned. Chan/Zen, however, has managed to remain true to Buddhism precisely by conserving the Buddha's original meditation practice—along with the experience of awakening it supposedly produces—throughout the vicissitudes of history. While the Buddhist teachings remain tied up in their respective situations and, in consequence, deteriorate into denominational plurality, it is only Chan/Zen that remains aloof from time and place.

This argument, if taken to extremes, results in a strange juxtaposition. If it is only Chan/Zen that maintains and perpetuates original Buddhism, and thereby effectively possesses and embodies the Buddha's legacy, the plurality of the Buddhist tradition then dissolves into a duality. Chan/Zen has remained authentic and true to its origins, while all other schools have at

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<sup>7</sup> Dorin Genpo Zenji, "Die Bedeutung von Zazen", pp. 8–9.

some point strayed from the true path. Similarly, in the words of the Taiwanese master Sheng Yen 聖嚴 (1930–2009), founding figure of the popular *Fagu shan* 法鼓山 (Dharma Drum Mountain) tradition:

In other words, this particular tradition within Chinese Buddhism [i. e. Chan] can serve as a rubric to understand the whole of *buddhadharma* [i. e. all of the Buddhist teachings]. If we do not limit Chan merely to seated meditation, then we must recognize that all the eminent masters of the Tiantai and Huayan schools in the past were Chan masters.<sup>8</sup>

True Buddhism, by definition, equals Chan/Zen. Accordingly, one can claim that the Chan/Zen tradition is not so much a form of Buddhism, but rather that every other school of Buddhism is a deficient form of Chan/Zen. With this polemical *salto mortale*, two main strategies become visible, which the tradition typically pursues in order to deal with various alterities. One is a strategy of exclusion, by which potential or alleged dangers to the tradition's stability (such as critical scholarship) may be contained and disposed of. The other is the strategy of integration, by which alternative claims to authenticity (such as other schools of Buddhism) can be hierarchically managed and reproduced within a system of self-representation. Both strategies serve to immunize Chan/Zen against outward influences that would contaminate, challenge, blur, or distort its self-image.

The demarcation of in- vs. out-groups, along with the maintenance of a group identity through the processes of centering and immunization, are key features of communal memory. Of course, communities of memory are never something given or naturalistic. Chan/Zen, I argue, illustrates vividly how memories are constructed, represented, and maintained rhetorically as well as praxeologically. It also shows how memories eventually move on to develop a life of their own. Assmann calls attention to the social dimension of remembrance and the importance of mythologies as collective imaginations of the distant past in the construction of identity.<sup>9</sup> Identity, then, is never an individual matter but a communal one. In order to achieve coherence, symbols—texts, pictures, or artifacts—that serve as central points of reference are required. In the case of Chan/Zen, the lineage diagram is one such symbolic representation, in which the concepts of authenticity and transmission are eternally reproduced. Lineage is not only an abstract paradigm, but also a visual representation in the form of a diagram, as well as a model that allows for the projection of future developments. It is, above all, the centering commemorative element that keeps together the

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<sup>8</sup> Sheng Yen, *The Dharma Drum Lineage of Chan Buddhism*, p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> See Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, esp. pp. 48-86.

community, which otherwise would either dissolve in the course of time or explode into incidental fragments of individual authentication.

## The Myth of Origin: Authenticity and Transmission in Chan/Zen

The identities of most schools of Buddhism center around a doctrinal tenet (such as the system of consciousnesses in Yogācāra Buddhism), specific forms of belief (like in Pure Land Buddhism), the text of a scripture (as is the case with Huayan/Kegon Buddhism and its reverence for the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*), or a commentarial tradition (as we encounter in the Tiantai/Tendai traditions of canonical exegeses). In contrast, Chan/Zen adopts a radically different approach. It relies on the tropes of authenticity and transmission for its self-description and self-representation.

Chan/Zen attributes to every Buddhist tradition other than itself an indirect soteriological approach: reliance on scripture, interpretation, ritual, prayer, or logic. Yet, these do not serve the ultimate end of turning the practitioner into a Buddha. These inauthentic modes of cultivation are to be distinguished from Chan/Zen's own direct access to the Buddha's awakening by way of seated meditation, imitation of the enlightened masters of the past, and abandonment of everyday cognitive functions such as logic or goal-oriented rationality. As is pointed out by Suzuki, Chan/Zen condenses its superior pragmatics into "four axioms" (*shiku* 四句):

A special transmission outside the scriptures; No dependence upon words and letters; Direct pointing to the soul of man; Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood.<sup>10</sup>

The four-character lines that constitute this well-known statement can be traced throughout Chan/Zen literature, back to the Tang dynasty (618–907).<sup>11</sup> Their combination, however, is much less original than the tradition would have us believe. The *shiku* as a whole are first documented during the Song dynasty, and turn out to be a skillful amalgamation of several discursive strands that were initially unrelated.<sup>12</sup> As such, they have less to do with the

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<sup>10</sup> Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> The original Chinese reads: 教外別傳, 不立文字, 直指人心, 見性成佛.

<sup>12</sup> The exact wording from which Suzuki seems to translate can be traced back to *Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事苑 (1108); see X 64.379a. Kirchner, *Record of Linji*, pp. 129, 432, translates the title as "Chrestomathy from the Ancestral Garden." For a detailed discussion see Welter,

earliest Chan communities of the Chinese Middle Ages than with later attempts at consolidation and reconstruction.

It is noteworthy that Suzuki, who produced the above translation, puts these statements into a rather surprising context: “Almost corresponding to the ‘Four Maxims’ of the Nichiren Sect, Zen has its own four statements.”<sup>13</sup> The “Four Guiding Utterances” (*shiko kakugen* 四箇格言) Suzuki refers to are based on the writings of Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282). They serve to define *ex negativo* Nichiren’s own brand of Buddhism and *Lotus Scripture* worship as the one and only orthodox interpretation of Buddhism.

To bear [Amida] Buddha in one’s mind means to plunge into the hell-realm without limits. Zen is of the devil’s making. The true words of Shingon Buddhism will ruin our nation. Those specializing in monastic regulations are like thieves of our nation. That these things are indeed the case is without question and self-explanatory!<sup>14</sup>

Given Suzuki’s wide reading in Buddhist literature from every age and denomination, it hardly seems credible that he was unaware of the context from which he was quoting. Rather we might assume that he borrowed Nichiren Buddhism’s combative stance towards other schools on purpose. Parallel to Nichiren’s denigration of his competitors, Suzuki’s Chan/Zen implies a wholesale negation of the efficacy of those schools that are transmitted “within the scriptures,” including the so-called “teaching schools” (教宗). Only Chan/Zen, insofar as it does not rely on words and writings but provides direct access to our inherent Buddha nature, is special.

Chan/Zen authenticity, it turns out, is constructed in a circumspect and aggressive way, from an anti-textual rhetoric and a rejection of competing interpretations of Buddhist doctrine and practice. The exclusionary aspect outlined here might seem to imply the individual practitioner’s autonomy, and its centrifugal dynamics threaten to negate any coherence of tradition. As it turns out, however, it is transmission first and foremost that serves as the centering element of Chan/Zen as a tradition—and more to the point, as a community of memory.

Tradition has it that the first instance of this transmission occurred between the Buddha and his disciple Mahā Kāśyapa who, in turn, became the patriarchal ancestor of the Chan/Zen tradition. According to a well-known

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“Mahākāśyapa’s Smile,” as well as Welter’s *Linji-lu*, especially the first chapter, “Defining Orthodoxy in the Chan/Zen traditions.”

<sup>13</sup> Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ongi kuden* 御義口傳 (Oral Transmission of the Venerable Teachings; 1278), T 84.305b.



narrative, featured in *Wumenguan* 無門關 (The Gateless Barrier; 1229), the event goes like this:

When the World-Honored One was surrounded by his congregation on the Mystic Mountain, he held up a flower and showed it to all those who were present. At that time, all were silent, and only the venerable Kāśyapa broke into a subtle smile.

The World-Honored One said: "I am in possession of the primary storehouse of the orthodox teaching, the wondrous heart of Nirvana, that which has reliable characteristics as well as that which is without characteristics altogether, and the gate of the law which is subtle and wondrous. All these do not rely on written characters but are transmitted separately, apart from the doctrines. I entrust them to Mahā Kāśyapa."<sup>15</sup>

In Mahā Kāśyapa's encounter with the Buddha, a silent transmission of the Dharma from master to disciple takes place. This is the *Urszene* that is repeated time and again, generation after generation, or the germ cell from which the family tree of Chan/Zen sprouts. While the content of what actually is transmitted in this setting typically remains unaddressed, its form is preserved without any variation whatsoever. An action of the master (the Buddha raises a flower)—unintelligible to the general audience, but of paramount significance to the successor—serves as a catalyst to the adept's own awakening (Mahā Kāśyapa's smile), who in turn is acknowledged as a Dharma heir to the master (the Buddha's public acknowledgment of his successor). The successor then perpetuates the chain of transmission by another generational link (Mahā Kāśyapa allegedly transmitted the Dharma to Ānanda). The trope of *ishin denshin* 以心傳心, "to transmit heart-mind by way of heart-mind,"<sup>16</sup> means precisely that: to employ modes of communication based on unmediated intuition about reality, which serve to transmit precisely this kind of intuition.

Once the transmission from a master to a disciple has taken place, the disciple in turn becomes a master and is qualified to transmit the Dharma to a disciple of his own. What results is a linear genealogy in which any Dharma generation is vertically linked to the whole of the preceding as well as the succeeding generations, by a series of transgenerational transmission events. Horizontal relations, i.e. intra-generational links between, say, the two disciples of a single master, are not represented. In fact, it is a structural

<sup>15</sup> Case six of the *Wumenguan*, T 48.293c.

<sup>16</sup> The phrase seems to have been well-established by the early ninth century, as can be seen in *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序 (Preface to the Various Collections of Chan Sources), attributed to Zongmi 宗密 (780–841), T 48.400b. Cf. also the English translation in Jeffrey Lyle Broughton, *Zongmi on Chan*, pp. 101–79.

impossibility for the genealogy to represent relations such as these. If the genealogy were to include such cross connections, it would cease to be a genealogy, and would instead become a rhizomatic network of relations.

## Lineage as a Paradigm

The Chan/Zen discourses that derive from the notion of genealogy sketched above are neatly summarized by the catchphrase “lineage paradigm,” coined by John McRae.<sup>17</sup> His *Seeing Through Zen* (2003) presents a detailed explanation of the genealogy’s most prominent characteristics:

1. It combines Indian and Chinese concepts of ancestor worship and family relations.
2. It employs these family relations in order to identify those that are excluded, namely the other schools of Buddhism.
3. It reduces the biographies of its members to mythical tropes; depositories of anecdotes that most certainly did not happen in the way they are told, if indeed they happened at all.
4. Nothing is actually transmitted; rather, transmission becomes a device for authentication. This also implies that what is most telling about a specific diagram is not the patriarchal figures themselves but the lines that link them together.
5. Becoming a member of the lineage is tantamount to having had the same intuitional experience as past patriarchs, as well as the Buddha. There is, experientially and soteriologically speaking, no difference between the original generation and succeeding ones anywhere down the line.
6. The individual experience of a practitioner of meditation is all very well, but it is nothing if it is not based on an encounter with a legitimate master who functions as a representative of the tradition. By extension, it is only by gaining *inka shōmei* 印可證明 (clear realization, approved by the master’s seal)—an acknowledgment from someone within the lineage—that one becomes the latest link in the chain of transmission.
7. Master and disciple are, with only very few exceptions, male.<sup>18</sup>

McRae’s observations, insightful as they are, are not exhaustive. Three additions are in order:

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<sup>17</sup> McRae, *Seeing Through Zen*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> See McRae, *Seeing Through Zen*, pp. 4–9.

1. The origin of Chan/Zen Buddhism is a singularity, the repetition of which forms the chain of transmission. As any story cannot help but start at its beginning, that beginning invariably remains a constant point of reference. As Hegel has it, every beginning “is the foundation that is present and maintained throughout all subsequent developments; it is that which remains immanent throughout its further determinations.”<sup>19</sup> Every beginning is present in what happens thereafter. This concept of an original and ever-present beginning informs the manner in which the Chan/Zen tradition remembers its own history. The Buddha’s awakening happened only once, yet it must be reproduced over and over again without any variation. All the same, what enables an origin or a beginning is more than the simple retelling of factual happenings: The concept “beginning” is associated in each case with an idea of precedence and/or priority ...

[A] beginning is designated in order to indicate, clarify, or define a later time, place, or action. In short, the designation of a beginning generally involves also the designation of a consequent intention.... [W]e see that the beginning is the first point (in time, space, or action) of an accomplishment or process that has duration and meaning. The beginning, then, is the first step in the intentional production of meaning.<sup>20</sup>

The traditionalist quest for a beginning and the ensuing myth of origin then serve as a central axis for the construction of a remembered common past and an imagined communal identity. Chan/Zen genealogy gains its cohesion by maintaining rhetorically and mimetically the integrity of the original singularity through time and space. The Buddha’s awakening is an eternal origin.

2. While the Dharma lineage, as the family metaphor suggests, is one-directional, there is a definite recursive aspect to this model. As Alan Cole has suggested, authentication of awakening runs from Dharma father to Dharma heir; authentication of lineage, however, takes the opposite direction.<sup>21</sup> It is not without reason that almost every patriarch and master of the Chan/Zen tradition at some point admonishes his students not to let the Dharma lineage go to waste. Only by its ongoing continuation does the genealogy prove its efficacy and adequacy. The rhetoric of the master as a “living Buddha” is justified through his primary mission of transmitting

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<sup>19</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, p. 71.

<sup>20</sup> Said, *Beginnings*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>21</sup> See the argument made in Cole, *Fathering Your Father*, presented in a condensed form in the first chapter, “Healthy Skepticism, and a Field Theory for the Emergence of Chan Literature,” especially pp. 26–27.

the Dharma i.e. to keep the tradition alive. Every transmission from one generation to the next authenticates the disciple, and at that same moment it authenticates itself. The unilinearity of the lineage paradigm goes both ways. Moreover, it serves to hermetically seal the Chan/Zen tradition from the inside and render it independent from any need for lateral confirmation or legitimation.

3. From these two additions to McRae's observations regarding the lineage paradigm, a third one follows: Chan/Zen genealogy is not descriptive in nature, but normative–teleological, to be more precise. Its purpose is to guise methods of authentication and provide them with a sense of facticity. It achieves immediate plausibility by relying on the model of family relations and the flow of time, from past to present to future. However, it does not do so with an intention like that of an annalist, reporter, or commentator. Rather, it is motivated by the need to construct linear coherence and lateral autonomy, thereby dissociating any link in the chain from everything except its predecessors. Chan/Zen's Dharma lineage is authenticated by none other than itself.

The term “lineage paradigm” comes in handy in describing the connotations of lineage diagrams and the ideological discourses forming in their vicinity. One might question, however, whether “paradigmatic” exhaustively describes their function. Indeed, they are paradigms, roughly speaking, along the same lines that, for example, William LaFleur speaks about the “Buddhist paradigm” or “Buddhist episteme” of medieval Japan: “certain assumptions are commonly held and certain epistemic possibilities widely entertained.”<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, a closer look at what the lineage diagram actually does, and how it became ubiquitous as a favored metaphor for the whole Chan/Zen tradition, shows that it shares certain properties—possibilities as well as dangers—with a model.

## Lineage as a Model

Models, generally speaking, come in different types.<sup>23</sup> Scale models might be one type that immediately comes to mind. A toy train scales down a real train. The train's appearance remains largely the same, but its function changes completely. Even if a whole landscape of tracks and stations is reproduced on the same scale, a toy train does not have the same facilities of

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<sup>22</sup> LaFleur, *Karma of Words*, p. xii.

<sup>23</sup> The following overview is based on Hartmann, “Modelle.”

movement as the original train—it has, for instance, no internal combustion engine—and it no longer serves to transport things and people. While the geometry and size relations of the original train are preserved in its scaled model, the parameters of its existence and its practicability are of another order altogether. Needless to say, the Chan/Zen lineage is not a scale model.

The other type of model, mostly employed in the sciences, is the structural model. Examples would be a model that explains the structure of the atom in terms of the solar system, likening the sun to its core and the planets to the orbiting electrons; or an illustration of the workings of the human brain with reference to the algorithms of a computer program. The necessary relation between an original and a model is that of homomorphism (or isomorphism), i.e. a similarity in structure, especially in the relations among functional parts. In many cases, the model's object (or target) is not readily observable; the model thus serves as an aid for visualization of its architecture and mechanics. The kinetics of gas molecules, for example, are unobservable but can easily be rendered intelligible when likened to the transmission of impulses between billiard balls. Most scientific and scholarly models—even in the humanities—are variations of structural models.

It is obvious that the powers of explanation inherent in structural models are counterbalanced by their shortcomings in other respects. Unlike the planets of the solar system and their hugely different material composition, one electron is very much like any other; the brain does not have an on/off switch; and gas molecules are neither round nor do they possess colors. Structural models, accordingly, have positive analogies—aspects in which factual similarities between an original and a model lead to accurate description and prognostic value. However, they also have negative analogies—discrepancies which have to be ignored in order to keep the model useful. Structural models inevitably have to be reductionist in nature in order to be able to operate at all.

However, the relation between a model and its original is neither a binary one nor is it without disconcerting implications for scholarship. The development of a hypothesis or theory based on a set of data is motivated by a quest for an answer to a problem formulated beforehand. A theory is goal-oriented: it never explains in general, but always something particular. This is true also of models. The abstraction of an object into a structural model by necessity targets certain problems. The intentional nature of the model has implications not only for its ontological status (what is the nature of a model?), but also for its epistemological status (what does a model do to its object?).

Object and model isomorphically share structural aspects, but at the same time a model also potentially distorts and alienates our image of its object. There are necessarily negative analogies between reality and model, i.e. the relation of heteromorphism. Observations made on the basis of a model influence how we expect the original object to behave. If put to prognostic use, the morphological relation between an object and a model makes it easy to transfer knowledge gained from the model—possibly even from aspects that are heteromorphic to the original—to what we intend to say about reality. At the very least, a model has an impact on how we perceive reality. At worst, we mistake model-based predictions for statements on how reality is supposed to function.

(The model) identifies ideas, references, and concepts from two initially unrelated areas A and B with one another ( $A = B$ ), resulting in a shift in the meaning [*Bedeutungsverschiebung*] of concepts from the areas now interacting with one another. The metaphor “the brain is a computer” illustrates this fact, and from it there follows that our perceptions [*Auffassungen*] of the brain as well as of the computer have reciprocally influenced one another.<sup>24</sup>

The lineage diagram, we might say, is a structural model inasmuch as it symbolizes a series of putative transmission acts. The main characteristics identified with isomorphism are present—its power to explicate as well as the danger of misdirection. The idealized moment of Dharma transmission, from the Buddha to Mahā Kāśyapa, and (by extension) from every master to every disciple included in the lineage, is what the diagram aims at visualizing. The Dharma transmission is the target of the model, and its objective lies in the process of building, testing, and application. While the nodes of the lineage diagram are marked with the names of the individuals involved, it is the vertical line in between two of these names that holds the model’s main body of information: the direct transmission of the undiluted Buddha-Dharma. The lineage diagram is constructed in order to achieve a certain goal. It is targeted: it visualizes the lineage’s claim to authenticity and the bestowal of spiritual legitimacy. It thus serves to document how certain persons are incorporated into the lineage, as well as into the ongoing continuation and unbroken succession of the Buddha’s awakening.

Undoubtedly, all this works because of the positive analogies and homomorphisms between the model and its object. The unambiguity of the single line is immediately plausible as a visualization of the mind-to-mind transmission, while the vertical structure of the genealogy drives home the point

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<sup>24</sup> Hartmann, “Modelle,” p. 6. See also Geertz’s distinction between “model of” and “model for” in his “Religion as a Cultural System,” pp. 93–94.

of a succession of generations and the irreversible flow of time. As is the general case with genealogies, the diagram serves to retrace, i.e. read backwards, the chronological (or rather the biographical/hagiographical) development of the tradition. The lineage diagram is important for the tradition because it locates any given member in relation to his predecessors, and ultimately to the Buddha. Read forward, the diagram becomes a testament to the notion that the Buddhadharma is still among us. It is preserved even in modern times, with good prospects for continuing its journey down the future path of history, under the care and responsibility of authoritative masters.

Finally, if we take into account the danger inherent in any model of having its explanatory, especially its prognostic faculties, mistaken as norms that the object must submit to, the lineage diagram crosses the borders of descriptivity and ventures into the realm of normativity. It becomes—along with the narrative of a singular, unvaried mind-to-mind transmission and the rhetoric of authenticity—a powerful weapon in Chan/Zen’s arsenal that serves to immunize it from external attempts at analysis and critique. Those that can speak about Chan/Zen are only those who can be located in the diagram, to adapt Suzuki’s phrase quoted above.

A typical problem with the model is the reduction of the object to certain features. Its operationalization for a predefined target has two main implications: (1) that heterologies become part of the normative effects of the model, and (2) that alternative possibilities at visualization and explanation are ignored or even negated outright. In what follows, I will argue that the misidentification of the model as a truthful representation of reality in the case of Chan/Zen leads to important and telling oversights. Such analysis can help us to clearly set apart critical historiography from the idealizations of communal memory.

## The Terminology of Lineage

So far, we have discussed the problem of lineage in terms of paradigm and model. Indeed, Chan/Zen lineages exist in a variety of forms and functions, in premodern times as well as nowadays. Linguistically speaking, however, the precise scope or connotation of the term “lineage” is far from self-evident. *Zengaku dai-jiten* 禪學大辭典, for one, labels its fifty pages of relentless linearization of master-disciple relationships as *Zenshū hōkeifu* 禪宗法系譜 (Dharma genealogy of the Zen school).<sup>25</sup> The title merges *hōkei*,

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Zengaku daijiten*, vol. 3, p. 1.

“Dharma succession,” and *keifu*, “genealogy.” Both terms are common in the Buddhist canon, and while a thorough metric analysis of terms and their occurrence in the corpora of Buddhist texts is not the main topic of the present discussion, a cursory search in the SAT and CBETA databases gives a strong impression of distinct patterns.<sup>26</sup> Although lineage diagrams—even if somewhat fragmented—also came to play parts in other Buddhist schools, it is in the context of Chan/Zen that terms describing such diagrams are found most frequently, and appear at the earliest points in time.<sup>27</sup>

Statistically, terms that denote simple acts of transmission are most common. They are also dispersed through the greatest breadth of textual traditions. For instance, 嗣法 (*si fa/shihō*; “succeeding (in) the Dharma”), occurs 321 times in the SAT database, in a wide range of texts, from commentaries on the *Sutra of Benevolent Kings* to the *Pure Regulations* of the Ōbaku school. A search for 付法 (*fu fa/fuhō*; “entrusting the Dharma”) results in 1,119 hits, from T vol. 45 (mainly Zongmi and the Huayan tradition) onward, while 傳法 (*chuan fa/denpō*; “transmitting the Dharma”) produces 2,518 hits, appearing in a range of texts, from the *prajñāpāramitā* literature to the last volume of the Taishō text collection. This is not surprising, given that every interpretation of Buddhism in some way relies on the notion that the Buddha was, first and foremost, a teacher who passed on his insights to his disciples. The words uttered by the World-Honored One are nothing if not a transmission of the Dharma, articulated in the act of teaching the truth.

Compared with these numbers and their breadth of dispersion, terms associated with lineage construction, which also convey explicit factionalism, tend to be much rarer and narrower in application. Among those, 宗門 (*zong men/shūmon*; “tradition”) has 555 hits (from T no. 152 onward), for the most part ranging from the Perfection of Wisdom corpus to Pure Land literature, but with a definite preponderance in Zen writings. The same holds true for the term 宗派 (*zongpai/shūha*; “faction;” 74 hits, from T no. 927 onward). There are fewer hits with terms such as 系譜 (*xi pu/keifu*, “genealogy;” 14 hits, from T no. 2051 onward), 法脈 (*fa mai/hōmyaku*, “Dharma descent;” 8 hits, from T no. 1521 onward), its variants 法系 (*fa xi/hōkei*, “Dharma lineage;” 5 hits, T 2017 onward) and 法係 (same

<sup>26</sup> See <[http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index\\_en.html](http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html)> (accessed 08-08-2015) and <<http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/>> (accessed 08-08-2015).

<sup>27</sup> The above is not to imply any direct relation between the location of single texts in the Taishō collection and their actual historical context but merely to suggest certain terminological tendencies within groups of texts more or less loosely associated with one another.



pronunciation and meaning; 4 hits, from T no. 656 onward;), and 系脈 (*xi mai/keimyaku*, “descent by lineage;” only 1 hit, in T no. 2604).

For 宗派圖 (*zong pai tu/shūha-zu*, “lineage diagram”), a term that signifies not lineage in general, but lineage represented as a diagram, there are only two hits. The first appears in *Kaishin-shō* 開心抄 (*Excerpts on Disclosing the Heart*; T no. 2450) by the Shingon monk Gōhō 杲寶 (1306–1362), which contains a discussion of Chan/Zen tropes from the perspective of esoteric Buddhism. The second is found in *Chikaku Fumyō kokushi goroku* 知覺普明國師語錄 (T no. 2560), the *Recorded Sayings* of Zen monk Shun’oka Myōha 春屋妙葩 (1312–1388). His poem is titled *Busso shūha-zu* 佛祖宗派圖 (Diagram of the Factions of the Buddha and Patriarchs), and its verses epitomize the tradition’s take on the relation between authenticity and transmission:

The red thread beneath your feet links you to the iron oxen [i.e. the ancient masters]. Like one turn of rope follows the other or a broken thread is reknit, it abhors any tracks that deviate. But this robed monk goes about his business and dissociates from their succession. Although they are not the enemy, I will not go sticking my head together with the likes of them!<sup>28</sup>

Leaving the poem’s ambivalent rhetoric—typical for Chan/Zen—aside, the above synopsis suggests a distinct (even if not quite consistent) pattern. Terms related to the basic notion of lineage, used in an exclusive sense, tend to be most common in Chan/Zen writings. Arguably, historically these terms played more important roles in specific Chan/Zen discourses and traditionalist polemics than in the textual records of any other Buddhist school.

## Lineage in Diagram

This cursory analysis hints at an identifiable but somewhat fuzzy statistical distribution of terms associated with an exclusivist understanding of the Dharma lineage as a model (in the above sense), dispersed within a significant part of Buddhist literature. This finding is further corroborated by the evidence found in visual materials.

One gets an idea of how powerful a device for visualizing Chan/Zen identity the lineage diagram is when looking at Komazawa University’s authoritative *Zengaku dai-jiten*. At the beginning of vol. 3, running over 50 pages, the whole tradition is minutely depicted in terms of monovalent

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<sup>28</sup> T 80.716c.

relations of masters and disciples.<sup>29</sup> Complete with an index, once one has found the name one is looking for, one can easily identify its intra-denominational school, its faction, and its sub-faction. By retracing a lineage from one node to its immediate predecessor, step by step, one finally arrives at the original, unilinear lineage of the patriarchs, and (eventually) at the Buddha himself.

Notwithstanding the immensity of the genealogical corpus, which claims to integrate hundreds of years of tradition, it is certainly the case that it does not comprise every single member of the Chan/Zen Buddhist tradition. Chan/Zen practitioners not included in the diagram, we may presume, play no role in the diagrammatical formation of Chan/Zen Buddhist identity. They are ultimately deemed irrelevant to the tradition. By having no part in the lineage diagram, they are not even “real” Chan/Zen Buddhists, after all. As Tamamura critically assesses such facile judgments:

When we look at bloodlines or lineages, i.e. the images of the transmission of the lamp in the Chan/Zen school, their genealogies illustrate the belief in the authentic transfer of a fixed and unchanging idea. However, from the standpoint of historiography one cannot but deny that this was in fact the case.<sup>30</sup>

As such reflections illustrate, the lineage diagram is supremely unsuited to a diachronic presentation of the Chan/Zen tradition’s development. On the other hand, as I argue below, it was not meant to accomplish that in the first place. Lineage diagrams are, at least initially, documents of transmission and authentication, before becoming accepted as “factual” representations of the tradition as a whole.

There seems to be a consensus that the oldest lineage diagram still in existence is the so-called *Fo zu zong pai zong tu* 佛祖宗派總圖 (Comprehensive Diagram of the Factions of Buddhas and Patriarchs).<sup>31</sup> It is preserved in several editions, the best known of which is a Song dynasty print at Tōfuku 東福 monastery in Kyoto. According to one of its postscripts, it was written by a certain Ruda 如達. One postscript appears to be an autograph and

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<sup>29</sup> *Zengaku daijiten*, vol. 3, pp. 1–50.

<sup>30</sup> Tamamura Takeji, “Nihon Zensō no torai sangaku,” p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> Zongmi’s famous *Zhong hua chuan xin di chan men shi zi cheng xi tu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖 (Chart of Master-Disciple Successions in the Chan Tradition by which the Basis of the Mind is Transmitted in China) gives an impression of referring to diagrams in its (admittedly apocryphal) title. It does not, however, and Kamata Shigeo 鎌田茂雄 (1927–2001) characterizes it as a “written letter” 書狀 (*shojō*), in response to Pei Xiu’s 裴休 (791–864) request for an overview of the main Chan traditions; see Kamata, *Chan yuan zhu quan ji du xu* 禪源諸詮集都序, p. 374.

emphasizes the Chan Buddhist nature of the sources from which the diagram was constructed:

Ruda, during his days of leisure and after consulting the five records of the lamp 燈錄 and the utterances of the different [Chan] families 家語, with the help of stele inscriptions 碑刻 and biographical writings 傳記, pondered their commonalities and discrepancies before putting them together in this diagram.<sup>32</sup>

The other postscript is signed by Chan master Wuzhun Shifan 無準師範 (1177–1249) during the first year of the Tanping 端平 era, making for a *terminus ante quem* of 1234. He refers to Ruda by the honorific title of *shang ren* 上人 (worthy one) and provides a detailed account of Ruda's request to write an afterword:

“I have put together this Diagram of the Schools and Faction of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, and there are only a few differences with other books [of its kind]. Now I wish to publish it in order to introduce it to our world and times, and request to receive a single word to attest its correctness...” I asked him: “Who should these Buddhas be? Moreover, who should these patriarchs be? The purpose of what school and faction would [my composing a postscript] serve?” [Ru]da unfolded the diagram, pointed with his finger, and said: “From [ancient] Vipaśyin to golden-faced Gautama [of our times]—these are the Buddhas. From Kāśyapa to the different families of Chan Buddhism, along with the individuals whose names are not known 不識字漢—these are the patriarchs... In the East, as in the West, one followed the other without fail, and we have no way of knowing how many [masters there were in total]. Only those of whom we have obtained their personal and family names we were able to collect and put in this diagram, which I therefore call Diagram of the Schools and Factions of the Buddhas and Patriarchs... What do you, master, think about this?” When I had heard his words, there was not even as much as a hair that I would have added or taken away. All that was left for me to do was to write quickly [the postscript he had asked for] to the left hand of where he had set his brush.<sup>33</sup>

Two things merit attention. One is that the project was obviously meant to facilitate the self-representation of Chan Buddhism. The precise meaning of the phrase “in order to introduce it to our world and times” is difficult to determine. It might simply mean “to make the diagram accessible to the wider public,” as Song dynasty printing technology made possible a wider distribution of books. However, it might also mean “to circulate it among the monastics and lay people that belong to our tradition.” In that case, the diagram would be akin to a mnemotechnical device that makes the traditional

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Tamamura, “Rinzai-shū no shūha-zu kakusetsu,” p. 397. See also the series of articles by Suyama Chōji cited in the bibliography.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Tamamura, “Rinzai-shū no shūha-zu kakusetsu,” pp. 397-98.

succession of the Chan school comprehensible and easier to remember. Either way, the diagram was meant to serve as a model for the whole tradition, from the proto-historic Buddhas to the masters of the current age.

Secondly, Wuzhun is consulted as a representative member of the patriarchal lineage, who has the authority to attest to the diagram's orthodoxy. In a way, he is integrated into the Chan lineage as the last—and arguably second most important—link in the chain of transmission. But more to the point, his judgment is authoritative by virtue of him being a living representative of the transmission, and only through his legitimation does the diagram gain full validity.

From a text titled *Busso shūha-zu jo* 佛籙宗派圖序 (Preface to the Diagram of the Factions of the Buddhas and Patriarchs), written in 1291 by Mushō Jōshō 無象靜照 (1234–1306),<sup>34</sup> we can deduce the existence of Japanese lineage diagrams by the end of the thirteenth century. This presumably earliest example of Japanese *shūha-zu* unfortunately does not survive, and the current edition of the *Kokushi dai-jiten* 国史大辭典 points to the *Busso shōden shūha-zu* 佛籙正傳宗派圖 (Diagram of the Factions According to the Orthodox Transmission of the Buddhas and Patriarchs), compiled in 1382, as the earliest extant example of a diagrammatical genealogy of Zen Buddhism.<sup>35</sup>

Tamamura Takeji's research in the archives of Tōfuku monastery, however, has unearthed material that is older and more illustrative than the two remarks in Wuzhun's postscript to Ruda's diagram. The manuscript is called *Great Diagram of Schools and Factions* 大宗派圖,<sup>36</sup> and consists of a one-leaf scroll, marked with the inscription “second year of the Xixi 喜熙 era of the Great Song dynasty” (1238), hand-written in red ink. The diagram does not claim to cover the Chan tradition *in toto*, but limits itself to the representation of certain lineage pathways. It comes to an end with Enni Ben'en 圓爾辯圓 (1202–1280), who at the time was visiting Wuzhun's congregation at Jingshan 徑山. While the genealogy up to Enni's master

<sup>34</sup> Mushō had gone to China in 1252, where he received the Dharma transmission of Shiqi Xinyue 石溪心月 (died 1255). Upon his return to Japan, he was installed as abbot at Jōchi monastery 淨智寺 in Kamakura by the regent, Hōjō Sadatoki 北条貞時 (1272–1311, in office 1284–1301).

<sup>35</sup> Tanaka, “Shūha-zu.”

<sup>36</sup> The manuscript was designated Important Cultural Property (重要文化財) no. 807 as early as 1949. Tamamura failed to give a reproduction—as he did with other sources—in his *Nihon Zenshū-shi ronshū*. An edited version is available, however, in *Tōfuku-ji monjo*, edited by Tōkyō daigaku shiryō hensan-jo, pp. 8–16. Comparable, although later, diagrams are included as well.

Wuzhun, Tamamura reports, is written in one hand, Enni's name (given as Jōten Ni zenji 承天爾禪師) is added in a different handwriting consistent with other examples of Wuzhun's brushwork.

The Tōfuku monastery's *Great Diagram* is a convoluted and highly informative source. For one, there are obvious discrepancies with the story told in *Shōichi kokushi nenpu* 聖一國師年譜 (Chronology of National Master Shōichi), according to which Enni was accepted as Wuzhun's Dharma heir in 1241, but then presented with two diagrams—one written by the Chinese master himself, the other by Enni but counter-signed by Wuzhun. Enni's name in the *Great Diagram* might then be a later addition, as his incorporation in the patriarchal lineage might have made it necessary to emend pre-existing diagrams. While this is possible, the use of the honorific "Jōten" is problematic. Enni founded a monastery with that name in the area of Dazaifu in Northern Kyushu, but only in 1249. That event is reported in his *Chronology*:

When Master [Enni] opened the hall and preached the Dharma... Fojian 佛鑑 [i.e. Wuzhun] had newly written "Jōten Zen Monastery" 承天禪寺 [on a gate plaque], as well as signposts for the different halls and different inscriptions in large characters that people wondered at.<sup>37</sup>

Tamamura speculates that the *Great Diagram* might have been sent back to Wuzhun after Enni had succeeded in building a Zen monastery in the tradition of Wuzhun's *Yangqi* 楊岐 faction. This would explain the addition of the Jōten honorific, which is otherwise not associated with Enni in the *Great Diagram*. On the other hand, in the same year of 1238, Enni seems to have sketched a portrait of Wuzhun and presented it to the master himself, asking for an appreciative autograph. This request was apparently granted immediately, following a convention that implied a recognition of the painter's spiritual maturation by the commenting poet. This would put the *Great Diagram* in line with other documents related to Enni's legitimacy as Dharma heir, and might indicate that it was agreed upon, between the Chinese master and his Japanese disciple, in as early as 1238, that the project to build a monastery on Japanese soil was to go by the name Jōten.

By now it has become clear that lineage diagrams were introduced into Japan as early as the middle of the thirteenth century, and from that point onwards were increasingly disseminated. By the late Middle Ages and throughout the Edo period, lineage diagrams seem to have been produced *en masse*—apparently in order to distance one's own tradition from competing

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<sup>37</sup> As quoted in Tamamura, "Rinzai-shū no shūha-zu kakusetsu," p. 395.

factions.<sup>38</sup> Representations of the Chan/Zen tradition as a whole seem to appear rarely, until modern variations of the diagrams, such as those in *Zengaku dai-jiten*, start to appear in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

From the above, we can surmise that historical lineage diagrams in general can be understood either as representations and standardizations of collective memories, or as acknowledgments of lineage successions. In both cases, the lineage diagram fulfills the role of centering the tradition on an unbroken series of transmission events and authentications. By the same token, that implies excluding other parts of the Buddhist tradition as irrelevant to the construction and preservation of a specific religious identity.

## Lineage in Relation to Religious Institutions

The institutional context of Enni's *Shōichi* 聖一 faction over the course of close to one and a half centuries was atypical of the Chan/Zen tradition. Being recognized as a successor in an orthodox lineage of patriarchs reflected not only the continuation of the tradition and its immense spiritual prestige, but also had practical implications. It meant that the disciple was in a position to instruct practitioners—offering support and correcting them on their way to the realization of the Buddha-nature, testing the depths of their insights, and at a future point in time granting them *inka shōmei*. In spite of Chan/Zen's ongoing antinomian rhetoric and its alleged preference for escapism and otherworldliness, such clerical duties were in fact dispensed in highly regulated communities, namely the monastic centers of the tradition (*chansi/zenji* 禪寺). In contrast to the rural congregations of the Ox Head 牛頭 and East Mountain 東山 schools of the early Tang era, by the early Northern Song, Chan's so-called Five Mountains (*wushan/gozan* 五山) consisted of sprawling monastery complexes that sometimes housed hundreds of monks and acolytes.<sup>39</sup>

These monastic institutions regularly relied on external financing, either by affluent patrons from the social elites or the court itself. Many of them were state-sponsored, and the title of *chansi* 禪寺 (Chan monastery) was

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<sup>38</sup> See Tamamura's massive collection *Gozan zenrin shūhazu* 五山禪林宗派圖, as well as more recent studies on the importance of lineage diagrams in the Sōtō school, such as Komagamine Noriko, "Sōtō-shū ni okeru Shūha-zu."

<sup>39</sup> The following outline is indebted to Tamamura, *Gozan bungaku*, and Collcutt, *Five Mountains*. For more details, see also my *Im Osten des Meeres*.

awarded only under specific conditions. Their political backing and social prestige made these monasteries the tradition's main source of capable masters who came to serve as heads of smaller temples all over the Chinese mainland (and in some cases even Japan). They even presented highly educated candidates for office in the central administration with a fallback plan, namely an alternative career should they flunk the official examinations (*keju* 科舉) or, having passed, fail to obtain a post. In the course of the Song dynasty, the Five Mountains accordingly became centers of learning and culture. The scope of their activities went well beyond Chan studies in the narrow sense, as it came to include discussions of the relation between Buddhism and other religio-philosophical traditions, matters of statecraft and administration, and general explorations of the human condition.

One of the main conditions the Five Mountains (and the system's subordinate hierarchies of the *shicha* 十刹, "ten monasteries", and *zhushan* 諸山, "various mountains") were required to uphold was an intricate procedure by which succession of the abbot's office was determined in a case of vacancy. Regulations stipulated that from the pool of suitable candidates three names were to be chosen through a ballot, by a congregation of abbots and other high-ranking monks. These names were then passed on to the supervising Monks' Registry (*senglu* 僧錄), an office within the central government that functioned as a link between the political power structure and the monastic institution, where the new successor to the position of abbot was determined by lottery. With the purpose of preventing the kind of nepotism that was certain to arise from factionalism, it was forbidden to bequeath the abbot's office to anyone within the same faction.<sup>40</sup> This system was called "installing into office from all ten directions" (*shi fang zhu chi / jippō jūji* 十方住持). If a monastery adhered to the practice of in-faction transmission of office, it ran the risk of losing its privileged status and state sponsorship. For the leading offices in the highest-ranking establishments associated with the Five Mountains, for all intents and purposes, factionalism became a taboo.

Things were very different in Japan. While Eisai is nowadays commonly referred to as the earliest proponent of Zen on Japanese soil, his project was revivalist, not revolutionary, inasmuch as it moved within the boundaries of traditional Tendai discourses and practices. The overt move to present a

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<sup>40</sup> Whether that also meant that regulations provided for one and the same abbacy not to be occupied by two monks from the same faction in direct succession is unclear. There are examples to the contrary but, then again, the regulations do not always seem to have been observed to the letter.

viable alternative to the conventional forms of Buddhism, in the guise of a newly established Zen school, was undertaken by Dōgen Kigen 道元希玄 (1200–1253) and Enni Ben'en, who in the 1230s established monasteries that were dedicated first and foremost to the teachings and practices of Chan/Zen. With Kōshō 興聖 monastery (established in 1233), Dōgen was factually the first one to do that. However, in terms of contemporaneous perception in the centers of political and cultural power, Enni's importance outweighed Dōgen's by far.<sup>41</sup> It is thus small wonder that his Tōfuku monastery was generally seen as the first establishment of its kind. The monastery's full name is E'nichi-zan Tōfuku zenji 慧日山東福禪寺. The adoption of the Chinese *chansi* (or *zenji* in Japanese) designation illustrates that just like the *wushan* monasteries in Song China, Enni's monastery from the start enjoyed imperial protection and occupied a distinguished position within the Buddhist landscape of medieval Japan.

While nominally it followed in the footsteps of Chan institutions on the Chinese mainland, when it came to the succession of abbots, Tōfuku-ji practiced the opposite of the anti-factional model of the *wushan* system. Tōfuku-ji was (and still is) a so-called *tsuchien* 度弟院, or “hereditary temple.” From Enni as the founding abbot onwards, it was the prerogative of his Shōichi lineage to fill any vacant abbacy. The position of Tōfuku monastery's abbot was, from the start, hereditary. Still, when a formal Five Mountains system was created in Japan, Tōfuku-ji was accepted into its tiers and remained a constant member of the hierarchy.

In other cases, however, the Ten Directions system was well-established in Japan. After Tōfuku-ji's founding, for about one hundred years, almost all newly established Zen monasteries were officially approved by either the Shogunal authorities or the court, and without exception observed the regulations of *jippō jūji*. Still, the case of Tōfuku monastery had created a precedent, and this earliest exception to the rule served as a point of reference for similar future developments. For instance, both Daitoku 大徳 and Myōshin 妙心 monasteries, as well as the establishments founded by Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275–1351), remained under the leadership of a single faction. For a variety of reasons, most of them political in nature, by the end of the fourteenth century the *tsuchien* model had begun to displace its Ten Directions competitor. When by the sixteenth century medieval Japan fell into civil strife and subsequently transformed into early modern Japan, the

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<sup>41</sup> I will, accordingly, limit my discussion to the Japanese Rinzaï tradition; all the more since until the Edo period, the Sōtō 曹洞 faction of Zen Buddhism hardly played any major role, especially in the sociopolitical arena.



intimate relation between Zen institutions and the centers of political power—the Minamoto shoguns, their Hōjō regents, later their Ashikaga successors, and the imperial court—proved to be their undoing. The Ten Directions system disappeared, and the ancient Five Mountain lineages started to unravel. They fell into insignificance until they were fully incorporated into the Ōtōkan 應燈關 faction,<sup>42</sup> led by its Edo period reformers, above all Hakuin Ekaku 白隱慧鶴 (1686–1769). Nowadays, of the multitude of factions that constituted the Zen tradition during the Japanese Middle Ages—the so-called “24 schools and 46 currents”—nothing remains. Modern Rinzai Zen without exception follows the Hakuin lineage.

## Lineage Personified

It seems that under the *jippō jūji* system, in the theory and practice of early Japanese Zen Buddhism, considerations of lineage did not play the significant role we have come to expect from popular representations of the tradition’s later manifestations. A few examples may serve to illustrate this point.

After the Chinese master Lanxi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (1213–1278) arrived in Japan in 1249, he quickly became one of the most respected Buddhist personalities of the mid-thirteenth century. It was due to the accessibility of his teachings, his prestige as master of Chinese Chan and successor in the lineage of Songyuan Chongyue 松源崇岳 (1132–1202), and his untiring personal efforts,<sup>43</sup> that Eisai’s Kennin 建仁 monastery—originally a Tendai institution—was rededicated as a Zen monastery and included in the Kyoto Five Mountains. He also became the founding abbot of several temple complexes in the Kyoto and Kamakura areas, as well as in their peripheries. His *Yijie wutiao* 遺誡五条 (Bequeathed Admonitions in Five Paragraphs)—a ritually important text that is still chanted in many Rinzai Zen monasteries—concisely formulates rules for the monks’ everyday behavior. The text, originally composed for implementation at Kenchō 建長 monastery in Kamakura, also provides insights into what was deemed inappropriate

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<sup>42</sup> This is the lineage of Nanpo Shōmyō 南浦紹明 (also known as Nanpo Jōmin, 1235–1309; Daiō kokushi 大應國師), Shūhō Myōchō 宗峰妙超 (1282–1338, Daitō kokushi 大燈國師), and Kanzan Egen 關山慧玄 (1277–1360), centered around the Daitoku and Myōshin monasteries.

<sup>43</sup> At times, Lanxi and his disciples met stubborn resistance from certain parts of the political elites. They suffered slanderous attacks and banishment, along with a fall from grace in the mid-1270s.

behavior in a Zen congregation, even if such misdeeds seemed to have happened frequently enough in order to be admonished against. Lanxi calls for the fervent pursuit of seated meditation, and abstinence from onion-like vegetables from the Alliioideae family 葷, alcoholic beverages 酒, meat 肉, and sausages 齷. He also advocates rejection of overly elaborate and belletristic literature, along with an unshakable belief in the correctness of the Mahāyāna teachings. Most relevant for the present discussion, however, is his second admonishment, which strongly discourages discord among factions.

In the cells of this our Mountain of Happiness of the Highest Order [i.e. Kenchō monastery], harmony is to be preserved without regard to [factionalism between the followers of Lin]ji and Dong[shan, respectively]. The authentic school of the Buddhas and patriarchs shall not be eclipsed [by any inter-factional struggle]<sup>44</sup>

Although “Ji and Dong” might be construed, from a modern perspective, to refer to the Rinzaï and Sōtō schools, it is highly unlikely that at that time Lanxi would have been talking about their rivalry. That is a much later phenomenon, as during Lanxi’s lifetime, Dōgen and the Sōtō school, which installed him as its only Japanese patriarch, was limited to the periphery of Echizen 越前. Rather, the quote probably relates to the situation of Chinese Chan, where the factions of Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (died 866) and Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (807–869) represented, in effect, the whole of the Chan tradition. Lanxi takes pains to point out the necessity of inter-factional harmony, lest the Buddhist tradition *in toto* should fall into disarray. Obviously, there were factions in early medieval Zen, but these were to be kept in check and were not to enter into competition with each other.

A second example of an arbitrary elevation of one lineage over others comes in the form of a story about Wuxue Zuyuan 無學祖元 (1226–1286), a Chinese Chan master who came to Japan at the request of the Hōjō regents, in order to fill the vacant abbacy at Kenchō monastery some years after Lanxi’s death. His biography tells how he awakened three times, with three different masters from three different lineages: once under the guidance of Wuzhun Shifan, once with Xutang Zhiyu 虛堂智愚 (1185–1269), and finally under the tutelage of Wuchu Dagan 物初大觀 (1201–1268).<sup>45</sup> It is the third awakening that seems to have left the deepest impression and really opened his eyes (or nostrils, as the tradition would put it) to the truth, but still he claimed to have inherited the Dharma from Wuzhun. Later in Japan, Wuxue

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Nakagawa, *Nihon chūsei Zenrin bungaku ronkō*, pp. 349–350.

<sup>45</sup> Included in the eighth fascicle of Kokan Shiren's *Genkō shakusho*, pp. 227b.

went on to establish his own lineage, the so-called Mugaku 無學 faction, but the records of his teachings about liberation attest to the fluidity of factional boundaries. They also point to their non-competitive coexistence, as well as to a sense of arbitrariness in regard to accepting succession in one lineage over others.

That was not always the case, however, and the concept of lineage seems to have solidified around a century after Chan/Zen arrived on Japanese soil. One of the most prominent anecdotes that illustrates vividly the importance that the later Japanese tradition afforded to lineage loyalty centers on Chūgan Engetsu 中巖圓月 (1300–1375), who presided over the newly built Kichijō 吉祥 monastery. In 1339, a commemorative service for the family of the sponsor was held, and Chūgan presided from the abbot's seat. As was customary, he was asked by one of the gathered monks to state his lineage. His answer—contrary to the audience's expectations—was not Dongming Huiri 東明慧日 (1272–1340), with whom Chūgan had trained for many years. Rather, Chūgan identified his lineage to be that of Dongyang Dehui 東陽德輝,<sup>46</sup> with whom he had studied for less than half a year. This sudden and ostentatious change of affiliation seems to have aggravated the congregation to the point that he was attacked by the enraged crowd. He managed to escape unscathed only because two friends intervened on his behalf. Clearly, the problem of lineage had left the arena of purely personal relations, and become an issue to be safeguarded by force, if necessary.

The diversity of training experiences was made possible by the practice of peregrination, which was well established on the mainland and left many traces in Chan/Zen literature. There, it was fairly common for a disciple to train under different masters. In fact, Chan masters encouraged their disciples to test the depth of their insights with the abbots of other congregations, who might be their friends, well-reputed neutral figures, or even enemies. Such was also the case for the Japanese monk Musō Soseki, who came to dominate the Zen landscape in the second half of the fourteenth century. Initially, he had succeeded in securing for himself one of the much sought-after positions as attendant to the famous Chan master Yishan Yining coming over from China in 1299. The chemistry between the Chinese master and his Japanese student, however, was not good at all. Repeatedly, Musō begged for more detailed instructions about the central tenets of the

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<sup>46</sup> Although Dongyang's dates are unknown, it seems certain that during the 1330s he was abbot of Dazhi Shoufu 大智壽福 Chan monastery, which traced its lineage back to Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (720–814). Under imperial order, he compiled Baizhang's *Regulations for Purity*, under the title *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* 勅修百丈清規.

Chan/Zen tradition, but Yishan would say no more than “In our school, there are neither words nor phrases 我宗無語言, and there is not a single Dharma I could give to people 無一法與人.”<sup>47</sup> Finally, he advised Muso to begin training with the Japanese master Kōhō Kennichi. Under the guidance of his new master, Muso flourished and gained recognition as a Dharma heir, eventually becoming one of the most brilliant and culturally productive Zen masters of the later fourteenth century.

This anecdotal evidence is not only important because it paints a cooperative picture, without a trace of depreciation of other factions and lineages. It also tells us how the remembrances of the masters—and, by extension, of their relationships with their disciples—changed over time, and how those memories, once incorporated into the tradition, served different purposes. For instance, let us compare how the persona of Yishan is framed in relation to Kōhō, in a passage from the latter’s *Recorded Sayings* (1326).

When Chan master Yishan was presiding over Kenchō monastery, Master Kōhō Kennichi went to visit him. Yishan asked him: “You, venerable monk, are living in the Eastern mountains [at Ugan monastery]. What is it that you teach your students?” Master Kōhō answered: “The colors in front of my cave are lovely to behold all year round, but above the clouds, the voices from the valley are cold all the same.” Yishan said: “But does that not blind the eyes of present-day people?” Master Kōhō said: “This only serves to heighten the value of the treasure, which is the eye of the true teaching!” Yishan gave a shout. Master Kōhō retorted, and in the end, both of them were shouting. After they had tea, Yishan went on to say: “Are the grasses sweet for the water buffalo?” Master Kōhō said: “He is well-rested, now that the sun has sunk low, but still he cannot make up his mind to leave.” Yishan said: “A painful lash of the whip may be in order!” Master Kōhō roared like a bull, lowered his head, and put Yishan down. Yishan burst out laughing.<sup>48</sup>

There is competition here, true, but of a good-natured, almost sportslike sort. The two masters are presented as equals that go back and forth, and their meeting is remembered as a densely coded exchange between two like-minded individuals, sharing equally Chan/Zen’s claims to authenticity and direct transmission.

That is quite different from Yishan’s later representation—from the early seventeenth century—which is much more aggressive in tone.

When Master Shūhō was thirty-three years old [in 1314], he went to visit Yishan Yining, who was then living at Nanzen monastery... Master Shūhō made known his authority 振威, and gave a single shout. He then flapped his sleeves [in anger] and was about to leave. Yishan came after him, but Master

<sup>47</sup> *Musō kokushi goroku* 夢窓國師語錄, T 80.498c.

<sup>48</sup> *Bukkoku zenji goroku* 佛國禪師語錄, T 80.283a.

Shūhō turned around, grabbed his collar, and pounded his fist against Yishan's chest three times. When Yishan fled back to his quarters, Shūhō ran after him and hit him another three times with the palm of his hand.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike the *Kōhō Recorded Sayings* anecdote, this scene is clearly apocryphal. It appears in *Daitoku kaisan Kōzen Daitō Shōtoku kokushi nenpu* 大徳開山興禪大燈正德國師年譜 (Chronology of National Master Daitō Shōtoku who Founded Daitoku Monastery and Propagated Zen) and has no precedent in earlier Chan/Zen literature. Its intent is clear: it shows how the Chinese emigrant Yishan does not stand a chance against Shūhō Myōchō, one of the patriarchs of the Ōtōkan lineage. His pitiful attempts at regaining at least a partial sense of authority fail miserably, and he is chased from the stage with scoff and scorn. It is remarkable that although both masters nominally belong to the same tradition of Chan/Zen Buddhism, only one can claim authenticity, while the other is exposed as a mere impostor.

Shūhō nowadays is remembered as somebody who in his quest for liberation renounced the comfort and security provided by monastic life. Urged by his Chan master Nanpo Jōmyō 南浦紹明 (1235–1308), he went on to live, for two decades, under the bridges or in the brothels of the capital's red light district. His Zen, it is claimed, is roughly hewn, inartificial, and without affectations, single-mindedly oriented towards awakening.

The persona of Yishan, on the other hand, is presented as overly cultured, artificial, and effete, representing a form of religiosity that has lost the uncompromising motivation to achieve awakening. The Chinese master is, by and large, associated with the mainstream institutions of Zen, which by the sixteenth century were hardly more than mere shells, devoid of their original creativity and widely perceived as mere fossils. The quote speaks about the Dharma lineage as something that not only serves to mark boundaries that separate Chan/Zen from other schools, but that also highlights differences between authentic and inauthentic transmissions of the Dharma within the tradition.

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<sup>49</sup> The text is attributed to Takuan Sōhō 澤庵宗彭 (1573–1645). The passage above is quoted in Takenuki, *Shūhō Myōchō*, pp. 48–49. For Shūhō, see Kenneth Kraft, *Eloquent Zen: Daito and Early Japanese Zen*.

## Concluding Remarks

The above discussion shows that we may redefine McRae's lineage paradigm as something that also—and primarily—manifests as the lineage diagram. Such diagrams are symbolic representations of the Chan/Zen tradition's central ideas regarding authenticity and transmission. They also point to some of the antinomies that come along with them. How is it possible for a supra-historical event like the Buddha's ultimate insight into reality to remain transcendent, and thus beyond historical developments, if it is preserved only by transmission from a master to a disciple, thereby passing from one generation to the next, throughout the ages?

Lineage diagrams are characterized by unidirectionality, insofar as the transmission goes from the Buddhas of the past to Shakyamuni, from the historical Buddha to Kāśyapa, from Bodhidharma to the Chinese patriarchs—namely, from earlier to later representatives of the tradition. It follows the flow of time; as such, it might easily be mistaken for a type of chronology or historiography. In this scheme, splits in lineage occur, as it is possible for a master to have more than one Dharma heir. These splits result in a tree-like diagram that appears to encompass the totality of the Chan/Zen tradition. Effectively, such diagrams become representations of the coherence and superiority of the patriarchal lineage, setting it apart or against other Buddhist denominations or competing religious traditions.

However, lineage diagrams may also be read backwards, and it is here that their second ideological function lies. Then, they serve to retrace the heritage of any given master back to the Buddha, and by extension to lay claim to his authority. When read in the reverse direction, the hereditary lineage is unambiguous: a disciple who has been incorporated into the lineage diagram always has only one master. The same holds true of his master and all other masters before him. From this viewpoint, the Dharma lineage that leads to the figure in question becomes—even in the face of evidence to the contrary—the main transmission line of Chan/Zen. Any offshoots can be deemed irrelevant, if not inferior. This teleological reading of the diagram can be deployed as a polemic device, especially in intra-denominational struggles over orthodoxy within the Chan/Zen tradition.

Lineage diagrams have been around since at least the thirteenth century, when the oldest examples still extant were written. Their uses varied: as documents that verified the achievement of transmission, or as an assertion of the central place Chan/Zen assumed in the overall system of Buddhist

teachings and practices. Contrary to the encyclopedic materials included in the biographies of great masters, featured in the *gaoseng* 高僧 (eminent monks) and *chuandeng* 傳燈 (transmission of the lamp) textual traditions, the diagram has the appeal of visual effectivity. Its immediate plausibility also relies on the anthropological constant of family relations, which makes it even more difficult to dispute. Furthermore, unlike the typical register any given monastery keeps of its abbots, the lineage diagram implies that the tradition has a continued existence that is independent (and beyond) religious institutions and their offices. In fact, this invisible matrix can be visualized as a real thing that preserves the tradition, guarding against the vagaries of time and the fossilizing processes often associated with sociopolitical institutions.

The cost of these rhetorical or metaphorical devices is clear. They obfuscate the complexities of historical reality, and muddy the interconnections among the main protagonists. The only relations a lineage diagram remembers are vertical ones, and the only possible ambiguities it represents are the parallel transmissions from a single master to more than one disciple. It excludes influences from other traditions and denominations. It ignores lateral connections among Dharma brothers, as well as diagonal connections to masters from other factions. It functions as an anchor from which the tradition gains its stability, but the centering function must disallow centrifugal phenomena, such as Chūgan's change of mind, as destabilizing and potentially dangerous elements.

The lineage diagram does a great job of presenting one narrative version of the Buddhist tradition as authoritative, namely that of Chan/Zen. It is a strong instrument for disabling—visually and rhetorically—disruptive factors that may hamper the Dharma transmission. As a structural model it is also designed, so to speak, to act in a recursive way upon a reality which it pretends to represent. However, in order to do so, it reduces individual biographies to mere pinpoints of the main transmission event, and has little to say about the personalities involved or the historical situation in which they acted. As scholars, we would do well to warily separate diagrammatic fiction from historiographic fact.

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