

## THE SPREAD OF CHAN (ZEN) BUDDHISM

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the development and spread of the so-called Chan School of Buddhism in China, Japan, and the West. In its East Asian setting, at least, the spread of Chan must be viewed rather differently than the spread of Buddhism as a whole, for by all accounts (both traditional and modern) Chan was a movement that initially flourished within, or (as some would have it) in reaction against, a Buddhist monastic order that had already been active in China for a number of centuries. By the same token, at the times when the Chan movement spread to Korea and Japan, it did not appear as the harbinger of Buddhism itself, which was already well established in those countries, but rather as the most recent in a series of importations of Buddhism from China. The situation in the West, of course, is much different. Here, Chan—usually referred to (using the Japanese pronunciation) as Zen—has indeed been at the vanguard of the spread of Buddhism as a whole.

I begin this chapter by reflecting on what we (modern scholars) mean when we speak of the spread of Buddhism, contrasting that with a few of the traditional ways in which Asian Buddhists themselves, from an insider's or normative point of view, have conceived the transmission of the Buddha's teachings (Skt. *buddhadharma*, Chin. *fōfǎ* 佛法). I then turn to the main topic: the spread of Chan. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to explaining how medieval Chinese Buddhists themselves conceived of the transmission of *dharma* (*chuan fa* 傳法) within the Chan lineage (*chanzong* 禪宗), and the tropes they used to talk about that process. In closing, I briefly review modern theories of the rise and spread of Chan and present my own revisionist account of the development of Chan in China and its spread (as Zen) to Japan and the West.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND METAPHORS FOR THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

What do we have in mind when we speak of the spread of Buddhism? Do we imagine something like butter being spread on a slice of bread? Water spreading over the land when a river floods its banks? The spread of fire through a forest, or the spread of a contagious disease through a population? What I wish to call attention to is our habitual, often unconscious use of metaphorical language. My point is not that we should try to avoid such language, for after all, that is impossible. But it is well to stop and think about the implications of the figures of speech we use.

If, for example, we conceive of Buddhism being spread like butter on bread or fertiliser on a field, some sort of purposive human agency is implied. Perhaps King Aśoka, with his rock-carved edicts and monuments, or missionary monks who set out from India into Central Asia, could be said to have spread Buddhism in this manner. The spread of flood waters or forest fires, on the other hand, are basically natural phenomena. Such metaphors could be appropriate in historical or social scientific studies where the spread of Buddhism is measured by numbers of monks ordained, monasteries built, or other observable, quantifiable data. The metaphor of contagious disease is a suggestive one, quite appropriate to the cross-cultural transmission of religious beliefs and practices. If Buddhism is conceived as arising in India and subsequently spreading all over Asia like some strain of flu that starts in Hong Kong and eventually infects people all over the world, the implications are that it will infect some individuals and not others; that certain populations will be more susceptible than others; and that it can coexist in a population with other religious pathogens.

There are a number of conceptual models that have been applied specifically to the spread of Buddhism from India and Central Asia to China. The title of Erik Zürcher's excellent book, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, suggests a military motif: Buddhism as a great foreign, Indian and Central Asian army which invades and succeeds in subjugating the vast Chinese empire. Kenneth Chen, on the other hand, has a book entitled *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*, which also seems to assume that Buddhism was an intrusive force, but one that was substantially changed by Chinese culture. The operative metaphor for Chen, perhaps, is one of the civilising or domestication of a barbarian intruder. The notions of the exportation and importation of Buddhism,

meanwhile, suggest a mercantile model: the transportation of a product from one place to another for profit. Buddhism is thus viewed as one of the many valuable commodities traded along the Silk Road that linked India and China in ancient times.

Whatever metaphors we choose to employ in speaking about the transmission of Buddhism around the world, there will be certain pros and cons to their use. To the extent that “spread” implies the distribution of a homogeneous substance (e.g., butter or water) over a widening area, it is not a very apt figure of speech, for the various forms of Buddhism that we recognise as existing in different parts of the world (and in different historical periods) are not homogeneous, but rather diverse in character and content. The spread of a fire may be a more fitting metaphor in this respect, for the process of combustion varies greatly depending on the fuel being consumed and other environmental factors. The biological disease model suggests that all Buddhists everywhere should display the same recognizable symptoms of religious practices and beliefs, which is hardly the case, but it does have the advantage of allowing for evolution on the part of the pathogen over time as it spreads to new hosts and adapts to new ecological niches.

The key issue in any discussion of the spread of Buddhism is: how do we want to conceive of “Buddhism” itself, and what signs or marks do we want to take as evidence of its existence at any given place and time? In the other chapters that appear in this volume, there is much written about various types of linguistic, textual, art historical, and archeological evidence for the presence of Buddhism in Gandhāra, Bactria, Greece, and early China at various periods. There is nothing wrong with this kind of reasoning, but the basic question still remains: what criteria do we employ when we attach the label “Buddhism” to particular ideas, texts, images, institutions, and behaviors, or any combination of those? In point of fact, there is no single, uniform set of criteria that everyone agrees on, so it is up to individual scholars to question their own assumptions, establish a consistent pattern of usage, and make that usage as transparent as possible to their readership.

It should also be cautioned that the appearance in a given place of texts or icons that we conventionally call “Buddhist” does not necessarily mean we would want to say that “Buddhism” also exists or existed there. For example, the British Museum in London is filled with hundreds of artifacts identified as Buddhist, none of which we would take as evidence for the spread of Buddhism to England. Their presence in that alien land is, rather, a vestige of the age of colonial domination,

when the collecting of such trophies and curiosities bespoke an attitude of cultural superiority and “scientific” interest in the strange beliefs and practices of “less civilised races.”

“Buddhism,” actually, is a term coined by Europeans in the eighteenth century. It took quite a while for the Western explorers, military men, missionaries, traders, and diplomats who set out to explore and colonise the “Orient” to realise that the god Fo they encountered in China had any connection to the Buddha of Ceylon or the tantric deities of Nepal. The very idea of “Buddha-ism” as one world religion among others, chiefly Christianity, Judaism, “Hinduism” and “Mohammedism” (the last two are also eighteenth century Western-language neologisms), was the product of a cross-cultural, comparative, “scientific” approach that arose out of the Enlightenment in Western Europe and the colonial experience.

Nineteenth century scholarly notions of the origins and spread of Buddhism were based on the Christian model of a single extraordinary man who founded the religion, and the subsequent conversion of people through exposure to his gospel. The modern search for the historical Jesus, the “real” man behind the embroidered and contradictory accounts of his life given in the Bible, found a counterpart in Western scholarship that sought to find the “historical Buddha” and his “original” teachings. As Philip C. Almond shows in his book *The British Discovery of Buddhism*,<sup>1</sup> a number of nineteenth century English and German intellectuals took the Pāli Canon as representative of “original Buddhism” and professed to find in it a rational, humanistic ethic that was free from the superstitious elements of other religions and thus ideally suited for the modern, scientific age. But the forms of Buddhism that could actually be observed in practice in Theravāda countries where the Pāli Canon was held sacred appeared to them to have been corrupted by an admixture of popular, irrational beliefs in magic, spirits, and the like. From their point of view, Mahāyāna and tantric forms of the religion were entirely beyond the pale, being too hopelessly syncretic and degenerate to even be regarded as true Buddhism. According to this model, the spread of Buddhism from its source in the person of the ancient Indian Buddha was basically a process of devolution or dilution, like water which gushes from a pure spring and

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<sup>1</sup> Philip C. Almond. 1988. *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

then becomes more and more muddied and polluted as time passes and it flows further from its origin.

Few Western scholars today, of course, would want to posit any sort of “original” or “pure” Buddhism as a standard for tracking the spread of the religion from India to other lands. Nevertheless, to the extent that we study Buddhism as a world religion that has a point of origin in ancient India and a history of subsequent transmission to other geographical areas and cultures, we are still following the paths mapped out by our eighteenth and nineteenth century predecessors. I do not advocate abandoning the term Buddhism, but I do think we should use it advisedly. For me, Buddhism is not a single phenomenon with an identifiable essence, but rather just a conventional designation for a wide range of texts, doctrines, rituals, art objects, architectural forms, and social and institutional arrangements that display certain similarities and can be shown to have certain historical connections. Viewed collectively, moreover, those diverse phenomena do not necessarily exhibit any single trait that might be taken as a common denominator.

Long before the coining of the word Buddhism in French, German, and English, of course, various branches of the Buddhist tradition had come up with their own indigenous terms for the teachings of the Buddha (*buddhadharma*) and metaphors for its spread. One early expression, “turning the wheel of the dharma (*dharmacakra*)” invoked an image of military conquest by a king’s chariots to refer to the promotion of Buddhist ideas, practices, and institutions. Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, on the other hand, is filled with tropes such as “*dharma* body” (*dharmakāya*) and “matrix of the *buddha*” (*tathāgatagarbha*) which suggest that the true teachings of the Buddha are universal and eternal: they do not need to be spread in any concrete sense, only discovered or tapped into by living beings in whatever realms of existence they find themselves.

The Mahāyāna stress on the “skillful means” (*upāya*) employed by *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* to lead beings to liberation represents yet another model for the spread of Buddhism, one that differs radically from those employed by Western scholars. In this view, *any* teachings or practices can serve as a device to awaken beings to the truth discovered by the Buddha, provided they are appropriate to the audience and situation. The display of beautiful Buddhist artifacts at the British Museum, for example, could be construed as a device, skillfully arranged by Avalokiteśvara (himself appearing there in various Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese guises) to attract beings in a remote barbarian land, who would otherwise have no contact with the *dharma*. A few of

the barbarians may even have been moved to travel east in search of Buddhist teachers, and eventually become monks or nuns.

Such insiders' views of the spread of Buddhism, of course, are not constrained by modern "scientific" notions of space, time, or the evolution of species: the spread of the *dharma* is often viewed as something that takes place over an infinite number of lifetimes and realms of rebirth and is subject to karmic conditioning. Thus, if a person wanders into the British Museum, is impressed by the Buddhist art on display there and decides to learn more about the religion, that would be interpreted not as a mere accident, but a result of their good karmic roots established sometime in a past life.

### 3. TRADITIONAL CONCEPTIONS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF CHAN

Chinese Buddhist histories trace the "original propagation of the teachings of Buddha from the west" (*fojiao xilai xuanhua* 佛教西來玄化) to a dream experienced by Emperor Ming of the Later Han Dynasty (Han Mingdi 漢明帝) in the seventh year of the Yongping 永平 era (64 AD), in which he reportedly saw a "tall golden man with a brilliant halo." According to the traditional account, courtiers interpreted the dream as a vision of the Buddha, a sage of the western lands, whereupon the emperor dispatched a delegation to the west in search of the *buddhadharma* (*fofa* 佛法). The mission returned three years later to Luoyang 洛陽, the capital, with two Indian monks (or *bodhisattvas*), a painted image of Śākyamuni, and a copy of the *Sūtra in Forty-two Chapters* (*Sishier zhang jing* 四十二章經) carried by a white horse. The emperor then had the White Horse Monastery (*Baima si* 白馬寺) built to house the monks and translate the *sūtra*.<sup>2</sup> Although modern scholarship regards this account as legend, the story does accurately reflect the medieval Chinese understanding of what the spread of Buddhism to their country involved: foreign monks coming from India and Central Asia; Chinese missions to those western regions in search of the *dharma*; the importation, reproduction, and worship of *buddha* images; the translation of Buddhist scriptures from Indic languages; the creation

<sup>2</sup> T.1494.39.516b.26–516c.10. See also: T.2035.49.29d.8ff; T.2035.49.470a.10ff; T.2037.49.766b.3ff; T.2103.52.147c.20ff; T.2113.52.582a.17ff; T.2118.52.814b.3ff; T.2122.53.1029b.19ff; T.2126.54.236b.20ff; T.2149.55.220b.5ff; T.2154.55.478a.16ff; T.2157.55.775a.2ff.

of monastic institutions based on Indian *vinaya* (*lǜ* 律) texts (or Chinese adaptations of same); and the patronage (or at least toleration) of all those activities by the imperial court and bureaucracy.

The story of Emperor Ming's dream and the ensuing importation of Buddhism provides an interesting backdrop and contrast to the set of legends we are concerned with here: those which tell of the transmission to and subsequent spread in China of the Chan lineage (*chanzong* 禪宗). The central figure in the latter account is an Indian monk named Bodhidharma (*Putidamo* 菩提達摩 or 菩提達磨), who is said to have been the twenty-eighth in a series of Indian Chan patriarchs and the founding patriarch (*chuzu* 初祖) of the Chan lineage in China. Some early records have Bodhidharma coming overland from the "western regions" (*xiyu* 西域) of India and Central Asia and arriving in Luoyang, the capital, during the latter half of the Northern Wei 魏 dynasty (r. 386–535).<sup>3</sup> Most later accounts have Bodhidharma arriving in China by sea in first year (520) or the eighth year (527) of the Putong 普通 era of the Liang 梁 dynasty.<sup>4</sup> All accounts agree, however, that Buddhist monastic institutions were already well established and flourishing in China when the Indian monk arrived. The role he is depicted as playing in the transmission of Buddhism is thus very different from that played by the two Indian monks reportedly sponsored by Emperor Ming during the Han.

The earliest mention of Bodhidharma in any Chinese historical record occurs in the *Record of Monasteries in Luoyang* (*Luoyang qielan jì* 洛陽伽藍記), written by Yang Xuanzhi 楊銜之, with a preface dated 547. Bodhidharma appears in a section of the text dedicated to the Yongning Monastery (*Yongning si* 永寧寺), a major Buddhist monument located in the walled city near the imperial compound. Its most prominent feature was a towering nine-storied *stūpa*, an architectural

<sup>3</sup> This account first appears in the *Record of Monasteries in Luoyang* (*Luoyang qielan jì* 洛陽伽藍記); (T.2092.51.1000b.19–23). Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) elaborates on it in his *Additional Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳), stating that Bodhidharma "initially came into the Song 宋 kingdom [r. 420–479] in the region of Nanyue 南越, and later went north and crossed into the kingdom of [Northern] Wei 魏 [r. 386–535]" (T.2060.50.551b.27–29).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the *Record of the True Lineage of Dharma Transmission* (*Chuan fa zhengzong jì* 傳法正宗記), completed in 1061, which gives the date as 520 but notes that *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame* (*Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄), compiled in 1004, gives 527 (T.2076.51.742b.21–23). For a detailed account of the many and sundry versions of Bodhidharma's hagiography in medieval Chinese literature, see Sekiguchi Shindai 1967.

prodigy that was topped with thirty tiers of golden plates on a mast and festooned with golden bells. In the course of his description of this *stūpa*, Yang remarks:

At the time there was a monk (*shamen* 沙門) of the western regions (*xiyu* 西域) named Bodhidharma (*Putidamo* 菩提達磨), a foreigner from Persia (*Bosiguo huren* 波斯國胡人). Starting from the wild frontier, he came wandering into this central land [China]. When he beheld the golden plates reflecting the sunlight and illuminating the undersides of clouds, and the precious bells that chimed in the wind and reverberated beyond the heavens, he chanted a eulogy and sang its praises [saying], “This is truly a divine work.” He said that in his one hundred and fifty years he had traveled to many countries, and there was nowhere he had not been, but he had never encountered so splendid a monastery as this in Jambudvīpa (*yanfou* 閻浮) [i.e., India, or, the entire world].<sup>5</sup>

Bodhidharma was so impressed, Yang informs us, he stayed for several days chanting “Adorations” (*namo* 南無) with palms together (*he zhang* 合掌).<sup>6</sup> The *Record of Monasteries in Luoyang* says nothing about Bodhidharma transmitting a particular teaching from India or establishing a lineage in China. The chief function of the Indian monk in the text is to lend credibility to the author’s assertion that, although Buddhism had begun to make inroads in China from the time of Emperor Ming’s dream, it attained an unprecedented level of prosperity during the Wei dynasty due to imperial patronage.<sup>7</sup>

In later sources, of course, we do find Bodhidharma portrayed as the founder of the Chan lineage in China, the transmitter of a special *dharma* that had been handed down directly from Śākyamuni Buddha through a line of Indian patriarchs. Those sources, too, depict the Indian monk confronting a prosperous Buddhist monastic institution that is already well-established in China at the time of his arrival. However, in keeping with their sectarian agenda, they show Bodhidharma belittling, rather than praising, the outward signs of Buddhist religiosity. In the full-blown Bodhidharma legends that appear in Song dynasty

<sup>5</sup> T.2092.51.1000b.19–23.

<sup>6</sup> T.2092.51.1000b.24. Bodhidharma appears in one other place in the text, as a visitor to the Xiufan Monastery (*Xiufan si* 修梵寺), which he also praises (T.2092.51.1004a09–11).

<sup>7</sup> Yang states that by the Yongjia 永嘉 era (307–313) of the Jin 晉 dynasty, only forty-two monasteries had been built in the area of Songluo 嵩洛, meaning the capital, Luoyang, and its environs, which included Mt. Song and the Luo river valley. However, “after our imperial Wei received the [heavenly] design and housed itself in splendor in Songluo, devotion and faith increasingly flourished, and *dharma* teachings (*fajiao* 法教) prospered all the more” (T.2092.51.999a.9–12).

(960–1279) Chan literature, for example, there is a famous dialogue that purportedly took place between him and Emperor Wu of the Liang (Liang Wudi 梁武帝) shortly after his arrival:

The emperor asked: “I have constructed monasteries, had *sūtras* copied, and allowed the ordination of a great many monks and nuns; surely there is a good deal of merit (*gongde* 功德) in this?” The Venerable One (*zunzhe* 尊者) [Bodhidharma] said, “There is no merit (*wu gongde* 無功德).” The emperor asked, “How can there be no merit?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “This [merit you seek] is only the petty reward that humans and *devas* obtain as the result of [good] deeds that are tainted [by greed, anger, and delusion]. It is like the reflection of a thing which conforms to it in shape but is not the real thing.” The emperor asked, “What, then, is true merit?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “Pure wisdom is marvelous and complete; in its essence it is empty and quiescent. Merit of this sort cannot be sought in this world.” The emperor then asked, “What is the first principle of sacred truth?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “Wide open and bare; there is nothing sacred.” The emperor asked, “Who is it that is facing me?” [Bodhidharma] replied, “I do not know.” The emperor did not understand, and things ended there. The Venerable One knew that this encounter (*jiyuan* 機緣) had not tallied (*bu qi* 不契) [i.e., the emperor’s deluded state of mind did not match Bodhidharma’s awakened one].<sup>8</sup>

The point of this story is that although Buddhism was flourishing in China with imperial patronage at the time Bodhidharma arrived, the Chinese were engaged with the religion at a relatively superficial level, that of acquiring spiritual capital or “merit” (*gongde* 功德) through the performance of good deeds. Bodhidharma, in contrast, is depicted as the advocate of a new and deeper understanding of Buddhism, in which the only truly meritorious action is the attainment of awakening. It is interesting to note that the activities engaged in by Emperor Wu to promote Buddhism in this story are virtually identical to those attributed to Emperor Ming of the Han in the earlier historical records: supporting a monastic community, making *sūtras* available, and entertaining foreign monks. In the Chan literature, however, Emperor Wu is used as a foil to stress the originality and superiority of Bodhidharma’s transmission of the *dharma* vis-à-vis the established Buddhist institution.

The oldest source in which Bodhidharma is clearly identified as the founder of a lineage in China is an epitaph written by followers of a monk named Faru 法如 (638–689), who at the end of his life resided

<sup>8</sup> *Record of the True Lineage of Dharma Transmission* (*Chuan fa zhengzong ji* 傳法正宗記), T.2078.51.742b.27–742c5. See below for an explanation of the trope of “tallies” (*qi* 契).

at the Shaolin Monastery (*Shaolin si* 少林寺) on Mount Song (*Song shan* 嵩山) near Luoyang, the eastern capital of the Tang. The epitaph claims that Faru was the recipient of teachings (*zong* 宗) transmitted from the Buddha through a line of Indian teachers to the Tripiṭaka [master] (*sanzang* 三藏) Bodhidharma. It states that Bodhidharma brought the teachings to China and transmitted them to Huike 慧可, after which they were passed down to Sengcan 僧璨, Daoxin 道信, Hongren 弘忍 (601–674), and finally Faru himself.<sup>9</sup> A key feature of Bodhidharma's *dharma*, according to the epitaph, is that it was “handed down without scriptures” (*xiang cheng wu wenzi* 相承無文字).

During the eighth century, a number of other groups within the Buddhist order seized on the foregoing account of Bodhidharma's line of transmission, appropriating it to bolster their own claims to spiritual authority and gain imperial patronage. In a text entitled *Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasure* (*Chuan fabao ji* 傳法寶紀), disciples of an eminent monk named Shenxiu 神秀 (606?–706) asserted that he too, like Faru, was a *dharma* heir of Hongren in the sixth generation of Bodhidharma's lineage.<sup>10</sup> A subsequent text called the *Record of Masters and Disciples of the Lankāvatāra* (*Lengjia shizi ji* 楞伽師資記), written between 713 and 716, highlighted Shenxiu as Hongren's leading disciple and relegated Faru to obscurity.<sup>11</sup> The followers of Shenxiu, led by a monk named Puji 普寂 (651–739) and others, succeeded in gaining imperial support and eventually became known to posterity as the “northern lineage” (*beizong* 北宗) of Chan.

That name, ironically, was coined by a vociferous opponent, the monk Heze Shenhui 荷澤神會 (684–758). In works such as the *Treatise Determining the Truth About the Southern Lineage of Bodhidharma* (*Putidamo nanzong ding shifei lun* 菩提達摩南宗定是非論),<sup>12</sup> written in 732, Shenhui argued that the rightful heir to the fifth patriarch Hongren was not Shenxiu, whose lineage he dubbed “northern,” but his own teacher Huineng 慧能 (638–713), putative scion of an orthodox “southern lineage” (*nanzong* 南宗) of Bodhidharma. Huineng, who was also championed in

<sup>9</sup> Yanagida Seizan 1967, pp. 487–488. See also John McRae 1986, pp. 85–86.

<sup>10</sup> T.2838.85.1291a–c. For complete editions of the text see Yanagida Seizan 1967, pp. 559–572; for a critical edition and annotated Japanese translation, see Yanagida Seizan 1971a, pp. 328–435.

<sup>11</sup> T.2837.85.1283c–1290c. For a critical edition and annotated Japanese translation, see Yanagida Seizan 1971a.

<sup>12</sup> Hu Shi 1968.

the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu tan jing* 六祖壇經),<sup>13</sup> eventually (by the mid-tenth century) came to be universally regarded as the ancestor of all living branches of the Chan lineage.

From the *Record of the Successive Generations of the Dharma Treasure* (*Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記),<sup>14</sup> composed around 780, we know of two Buddhist movements in Sichuan 四川 that also strived to legitimise themselves by appropriating the myth of Bodhidharma's lineage: (1) the Jingzhong school, made up of followers of Wuxiang 無相 (694–762) based at the Jingzhong monastery (*Jingzhong si* 淨衆寺) in Chengdu 成都; and (2) the Baotang school, consisting of followers of Wuzhu 無住 (714–774) based at the Baotang monastery (*Baotang si* 保唐寺). Those movements were both influenced by Shenhui's polemical writings and imitated his strategy of tracing their lineages back to the fifth patriarch Hongren.

Other claimants to Bodhidharma's lineage accepted Huineng as the sixth patriarch and sought to provide themselves with genealogical credentials by linking their leaders to him as his spiritual descendants, brushing aside Shenhui's claim to the position of seventh patriarch in the process. Followers of the so-called Hongzhou lineage (*Hongzhou zong* 洪州宗) promulgated a genealogy that extended from the sixth patriarch Huineng through an obscure monk named Nanyue Huairang 南嶽懷讓 (677–744) to their own teacher Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788), who was closely associated with the Kaiyuan monastery (*Kaiyuan si* 開元寺) in Hongzhou 洪州. Various followers of Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700–790), meanwhile, traced their lineages back to Huineng through Shitou's teacher Qingyuan Xingsi 青原行思 (d. 740). By the advent of the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279), a period when the Chan movement came to dominate the upper echelons of the Chinese Buddhist monastic institution, all recognised members of the Chan lineage traced their lines of spiritual descent from either Mazu or Shitou.

In the course of these developments, which involved successive appropriations and elaborations of Bodhidharma's lineage by various competing (and otherwise unrelated) groups within the Chinese Buddhist *samgha*, the bare bones of the lineage myth came to be fleshed out in various ways and widely accepted as historical truth. Early versions

<sup>13</sup> For Chinese text and annotated English translation, see Philip B. Yampolsky (tr.). 1967. *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>14</sup> T.2075.51.179a–196b; for a critical edition and annotated Japanese translation, see Yanagida Seizan 1971b.

of the lineage, such as those found in Faru's epitaph, the *Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasure*, and the *Record of Masters and Disciples of the Laṅkāvatāra*, assumed a direct connection between Śākyamuni Buddha and Bodhidharma, but gave no details. Later works, such as Shenhui's writings and the *Platform Sūtra*, constructed genealogies of Indian patriarchs to fill in that gap. The version of the early lineage that gained universal acceptance from the Song dynasty on, which posits twenty-eight Chan patriarchs in India (culminating in Bodhidharma) and six in China (from Bodhidharma to Huineng), appears first in a text called the *Baolin Record* (*Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳),<sup>15</sup> compiled in 801 by a follower of Mazu's Hongzhou school.

The conception of Bodhidharma's lineage as a vast family tree, with a main trunk (*benzong* 本宗) that extends from Bodhidharma to Huineng but also includes a number of legitimate collateral branches (*pangchu* 傍出), is first attested in the following works by historian Guifeng Zongmi 圭峯宗密 (780–841): *Chart of the Master-Disciple Succession of the Chan Gate that Transmits the Mind Ground in China* (*Zhonghua chuan xindi chanmen shizi chengxutu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖);<sup>16</sup> *Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan* (*Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序);<sup>17</sup> and *Subcommentary on the Sūtra of Perfect Awakening* (*Yuanjue jing dashu chao* 圓覺經大疏鈔).<sup>18</sup> The oldest unambiguous use of the name "Chan lineage" (*chanzong* 禪宗) to refer to Bodhidharma's line actually occurs in the last of these works, where Zongmi uses the expression "six generations of the Chan lineage" (*liudai chanzong* 六代禪宗) to refer to the line of patriarchs extending from Bodhidharma to Huineng.<sup>19</sup> Zongmi's version of the main trunk of the lineage in China (which extended from Huineng to Shenhui in the seventh generation and then came down to himself) was rejected by later historians, but his vision of the Chan lineage as a multi-branched family tree did become the norm in the genre of Chan genealogies known as "records of the transmission of the flame" (*chuan deng lu* 傳燈錄). The oldest extant work in that genre is the *Patriarchs Hall Collection* (*Zutang ji* 祖堂集), compiled in 952.<sup>20</sup> The most famous and influential is the *Jingde Era*

<sup>15</sup> Yanagida Seizan 1983.

<sup>16</sup> ZZ 2-15-5.433c-438c.

<sup>17</sup> T.2015.48.399a-413c.

<sup>18</sup> ZZ 1-14-3.204a-4.41b.

<sup>19</sup> T.48.401b2.

<sup>20</sup> Yanagida Seizan 1984.

*Record of the Transmission of the Flame* (*Jingde chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄), completed in 1004.<sup>21</sup>

As the myth of the Chan lineage took shape and developed from the eighth through the eleventh centuries, the nature of the special *dharma* (teaching or insight) purportedly handed down from Śākyamuni to Bodhidharma was also spelled out in greater detail. The notion that the *dharma* transmitted to China by Bodhidharma did not rely on scriptures, we have seen, was there from the start in Faru's epitaph. By the early ninth century, the idea had emerged that what Bodhidharma brought to China was nothing other than the "buddha-mind" (*foxin* 佛心), meaning the very awakening of Śākyamuni Buddha, as opposed to the doctrines (contained in the *sūtras*) in which he expressed that awakening. As Zongmi put it in his *Chart of the Master-Disciple Succession of the Chan Gate that Transmits the Mind Ground in China*,

When Bodhidharma came from the west he only transmitted the "mind-dharma" (*xinfa* 心法). Thus, as he himself said, "My *dharma* uses mind to transmit mind; it does not rely on scriptures" (*wo fa yi xin chuan xin bu li wenzi* 我法以心傳心不立文字)." This mind is the pure original awakening (*benjue* 本覺) possessed by all living beings. It is also called the *buddha*-nature (*foxing* 佛性), or the awakened spirit (*ling jue* 靈覺). [...] If you wish to seek the way of the Buddha you should awaken to this mind. Thus, all the generations of patriarchs in the lineage only transmit this.<sup>22</sup>

The expressions "transmitting [*buddha*-] mind by means of mind" (*yi xin chuan xin* 以心傳心) and "not relying on scriptures" (*bu li wenzi* 不立文字) were apparently shibboleths of the Chan movement in Zongmi's day, but the meaning of the latter was hotly contested.<sup>23</sup>

Zongmi himself took the position that Bodhidharma did not literally reject the use of *sūtras*, but only cautioned against getting hung up on them:

When Bodhidharma received the *dharma* and brought it personally from India to China, he saw that most of the practitioners in this land had not yet obtained the *dharma*, and that they merely took names and numbered lists for understanding and took formal affairs as practice. He wanted to make them understand that the moon does not consist in the pointing

<sup>21</sup> T.2076.51.196b–467a.

<sup>22</sup> ZZ 2–15–5.435c.

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed account, see T. Griffith Foulk. 1999. "Sung Controversies Concerning the 'Separate Transmission' of Ch'an", in: Peter N. Gregory and Daniel Getz (eds.), *Buddhism in the Sung*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 220–294.

finger and that the *dharma* is one's own mind. Thus he simply transmitted mind by means of mind without relying on scriptures, manifested the principle, and destroyed attachments. It is for this reason that he spoke as he did. It was not that he preached liberation entirely apart from scriptures.<sup>24</sup>

Zongmi's point of view was accepted by some later Chan historians, notably Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–976), author of the massive *Records of the Source Mirror* (*Zong jing lu* 宗鏡錄).<sup>25</sup>

Many in the tradition, however, took the position that the Chan lineage transmitted “mind” alone, apart from any scriptures or doctrines. A Hongzhou school text entitled *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind by Chan Master Duanji of Mount Huangbo* (*Huangbo shan duanji chanshi chuan xin fayao* 黃檗山斷際禪師傳心法要), for example, states that:

From the time the great master Bodhidharma arrived in China he only preached the one mind and only transmitted one *dharma*. Using *buddha* to transmit *buddha*, he did not speak of any other *buddhas*. Using *dharma* to transmit *dharma*, he did not speak of any other *dharma*. The *dharma* was the *dharma* that cannot be preached, and the *buddha* was the *buddha* that cannot be grasped, since their wellspring is the pure mind. Only this one thing is truth; all other things are not truth.<sup>26</sup>

This passage makes clear that Huangbo Xiyun 黃檗希运 (–850?) took a position different from Zongmi on the question of Bodhidharma's teaching methods and use of scriptures.

The *Patriarchs Hall Collection*, compiled in 952, agrees with Huangbo and his Hongzhou school that the Chan lineage literally dispensed with scriptures. In its biography of Bodhidharma, we find the following exchange:

Huike proceeded to ask [Bodhidharma], “Master, can this *dharma* [you have just taught] be set down in writing (*wenzi jilu* 文字記錄) or not?” Bodhidharma replied, “My *dharma* is one of transmitting mind by means of mind; it does not rely on scriptures.”<sup>27</sup>

The *Patriarchs Hall Collection* is also the locus classicus of another slogan that came to be used to characterise the Chan lineage: “A separate transmission outside the teachings” (*jiaowai biechuan* 教外別傳).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Chan* (*Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu*), T.2015.48.400b17–26; see also T.2015.48.405b2–4.

<sup>25</sup> T.2016.48.415a–957b.

<sup>26</sup> T.2012A.48.381b17–21.

<sup>27</sup> *Zutang ji*, Yanagida (ed.), *Sodōshū*, 37a.

<sup>28</sup> Yanagida (ed.), *Sodōshū*, 130b.

By the middle of the Song, Bodhidharma's unique approach to teaching Buddhism was summed up in the following four-part slogan:

A separate transmission apart from the teachings;  
 (*jiāowài biéchuan* 教外別傳)  
 Not relying on scriptures;  
 (*bù lì wénzì* 不立文字)  
 Pointing directly at the human mind;  
 (*zhí zhǐ rén xīn* 直指人心)  
 Seeing the nature and attaining buddhahood.  
 (*jiàn xìng chéng fó* 見性成佛).

The oldest extant text in which the four phrases are cited together is the *Chrestomathy from the Patriarchs' Halls* (*Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事苑),<sup>29</sup> a lexicon compiled by Mu'an Shanqing 睦菴善卿 (n.d.) in 1108 and printed in 1154. By this time, the Tiantai 天台 School had clearly identified itself as the "teachings lineage" (*jiāozong* 教宗) in contradistinction to Chan, so the idea of a "separate transmission apart from the teachings" was also understood as an expression of the rivalry between the two schools.

Perhaps the single most famous anecdote in all of Chan lore is the story of how the Buddha Śākyamuni founded the lineage by transmitting the *dharma* to the first Indian patriarch, Mahākāśyapa. The oldest source in which we find this account is the *Baolin Record* (compiled 801), where at the end of his life the Buddha tells Mahākāśyapa:

I entrust to you the pure eye of the *dharma* (*qingjing fayan* 清淨法眼), the wonderful mind of *nirvāṇa* (*niepan miaoxin* 涅槃妙心), the subtle true *dharma* (*weimiao zhengfa* 微妙正法), which in its authentic form is formless (*shixiang wuxiang* 實相無相); you must protect and maintain it.<sup>30</sup>

Precisely the same words are attributed to Śākyamuni in the *Patriarchs Hall Collection* (compiled 952),<sup>31</sup> and the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame* (compiled 1004).<sup>32</sup>

Later in the Song, the story was further elaborated. In the *Tiansheng Era Extensive Record of the Flame* (*Tiansheng guang deng lu* 天聖廣燈錄), compiled in 1029, the Buddha is said to have "secretly entrusted" (*mi fu* 密付) the "collection of the eye of the subtle true *dharma*" (*weimiao zhengfa yanzang* 微妙正法眼藏) to Mahākāśyapa at the *stūpa* of Many Sons (*bahuputraka-caitya*,

<sup>29</sup> ZZ 2-18-1.66c.

<sup>30</sup> Yanagida (ed.), *Hōrinden*, 10b.

<sup>31</sup> Yanagida (ed.), *Sōdōshū*, 12a-b.

<sup>32</sup> T.2076.51.205b.28.

*duozi ta* 多子塔),<sup>33</sup> and to have publicly pronounced on Vulture Peak (*Ling shan* 靈山) that “I have the collection of the eye of the true *dharma* (*zhengfa yanzang* 正法眼藏), the wonderful mind of *nirvāṇa*, which I pass on to Mahākāśyapa.”<sup>34</sup> That public naming of his dharma heir, the text tells us, took place when the World Honoured One (*shizun* 世尊) held up a flower to instruct the assembly (*chihua shizhong* 持華示衆), and Kāśyapa smiled faintly.

This version of the transmission story eventually gained widespread acceptance in Song Chan records. It appears in its full-blown form as the sixth case in the *Gateless Barrier* (*Wumen guan* 無門關), a collection of *koans* (*gong'an* 公案) compiled by Wumen Huikai 無門慧開 (1184–1260) and printed in 1229:

The World Honoured One Holds Up a Flower (*shizun nian hua* 世尊拈花)

When the World Honoured One long ago was at a gathering on Vulture Peak, he held up a flower to instruct the assembly. At that time, everyone in the assembly was silent; only the venerable Mahākāśyapa broke into a faint smile. The World Honoured One said, “I have the collection of the eye of the true *dharma*, the wonderful mind of *nirvāṇa*, the subtle *dharma* gate which in its true form is formless. Not relying on scriptures, as a separate transmission apart from the teachings, I pass it on to Mahākāśyapa.”

Wumen says:

Yellow faced Gautama [i.e., Śākyamuni] is certainly unscrupulous. He forces one of good family to be his maidservant, and displays a sheep’s head while selling dog meat. I was going to say how remarkable it was. But if at the time the entire assembly had smiled, how could the transmission of the collection of the eye of the true *dharma* have occurred? Or again, supposing that Mahākāśyapa had not smiled, how could the transmission of collection of the eye of the true *dharma* have occurred? If you say that the collection of the eye of the true dharma has a transmission that is the old yellow faced one deceitfully hawking his wares at the village gate. If you say that there is no transmission, then why was Mahākāśyapa singled out for approval?

[Wumen’s] verse (song 頌) says:  
Holding up the flower,  
His tail is already exposed;

<sup>33</sup> ZZ 2B-8-4.306a.

<sup>34</sup> ZZ 2B-8-4.3306c.

Kāśyapa cracks a smile,  
Humans and *devas* are nonplussed.<sup>35</sup>

In his commentary and verse on this case, Wumen intentionally problematises the story of the “World Honoured One holding up a flower.” The flower is supposed to represent a wordless mode of teaching, but if one takes it as a symbolic gesture, a representation of the formlessness and ineffability of the true *dharma*, then it suffers from precisely the same defect as a verbal sermon which says out loud, “the true *dharma* is formless and ineffable.” The basic problem is that *all* modes of teaching and pointing, verbal or otherwise, must fail to convey a truth that is beyond teaching or pointing. Wumen’s point is that the spread of the *dharma*, as that is envisioned to have occurred within the Chan lineage, is inconceivable; and yet, he holds as a matter of historical record, it actually took place.

Wumen revels in this paradox, turning it into an intellectual “barrier” (*guan* 關) that a practitioner of Chan must somehow pass through. Through most of its history, however, the Chan movement in medieval China was at pains to explain how a “transmission of [*buddha*-] mind by means of mind” could take place without making use of scriptures or verbal teachings, or at least, how it could be imagined to take place. The answer to that problem, though never stated explicitly as such, was through the use of metaphor and other forms of indirect speech. That is to say, the transmission of *dharma* from master to disciple (patriarch to patriarch) within the Chan lineage was likened to a number of other processes in which some sort of communication or replication took place without the use of words or signs.

One trope commonly used in the Chan tradition to denote the transmission of *dharma* from master to disciple is the lighting of one lamp with another, which is called “transmitting the flame” (*chuan deng* 傳燈). From Song times on, collections of biographies of patriarchs in the Chan lineage were referred to generically (and in their titles) as “records of the transmission of the flame” (*chuan deng lu* 傳燈錄). The intentional spread of a fire, of course, is an example of a process in which the giver loses nothing of the thing given. That, and the fact that a flame gives light (a symbol of clear vision and comprehension), make “transmitting the flame” an apt metaphor for the communication of knowledge or insight. The image also suggests that the *dharma*

<sup>35</sup> T.2005.48.293c.12–25.

transmitted by the Chan patriarchs—the *buddha*-mind, or “flame” of awakening—has been passed from one generation to the next without ever being allowed to die out.

Another metaphor that appears frequently in Chan literature is that of a seal (*yin* 印)—a carved insignia that leaves a mark (with ink) on paper and is used to validate official documents. The “transmission of mind by means of mind,” in this case, is likened to the kind of perfect replication that occurs when a seal is used, the idea being that the awakened mind of the master directly contacts and “stamps” the mind of the disciple, leaving an identical and indelible impression upon it. There is frequent reference in the tradition to the “seal of the *buddha*-mind” (*foxinyin* 佛心印), or simply the “mind seal” (*xinyin* 心印) or “*buddha*-seal” (*foyin* 佛印). For example, the *Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries* (*Chanyuan qinggui* 禪院清規), compiled in 1103, refers to the entire Chan lineage as “all the generations of patriarchs who transmitted the seal of the *buddha*-mind” (*lidai zushi chuan foxinyin* 歷代祖師傳佛心印).<sup>36</sup> Chan records often describe Mahākāśyapa and Bodhidharma, who are emblematic of the lineage in India and China respectively, as bearers of the “seal of the *buddha*-mind.”<sup>37</sup> The metaphor of the seal works nicely because it operates on two levels simultaneously. On the one hand, it suggests a means of communicating and sharing knowledge that is direct and exact: one mind presses against another and leaves its mark. Words may be present, of course, for seals have things written on them, but the act of stamping itself does not make use of words. On the other hand, the metaphor of the seal implies that the granting of dharma transmission in the Chan lineage, being akin to the stamping of an official document, is an act that is publicly accountable and guaranteed valid.

A third trope, “sympathetic resonance” (*ganying* 感應, literally “stimulus and response”), derives its descriptive force from a phenomenon observable in certain musical instruments (e.g., bells): the sound of one

<sup>36</sup> Kagamishima Genryū 鏡島元隆, Kosaka Kiyū 小坂機融, and Satō Tatsugen 佐藤達玄 (eds.). 1972. *Yakuchū zennen shūgi* 訳注禪苑清規. Tōkyō: Sōtōshū Shūmichō, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> See for example, *Discourse Records of the Four Houses* (*Sijia yulu* 四家語錄), ZZ 2–24.5.842b2; *Tiansheng Era Record of the Spread of the Flame* (*Tiansheng guang deng lu* 天聖廣燈錄), ZZ 2B–8–4.662b5; *Records of the Source Mirror* (*Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄), T.2016.48.521a12; *Jingle Era Record of the Transmission of the Flame* (*Jingle chuan deng lu* 景德傳燈錄), T.2076.51.341c11–12.

can start another of the same pitch resonating on its own, without any visible contact between them. In ancient China that phenomenon was used as a paradigm to explain invisible correspondences and connections that were believed to exist between all kinds of beings and forces in the cosmos, such as humans and spirits: people reach out (*gan* 感) with offerings and prayers, and the spirits respond (*ying* 應) by effecting palpable changes in the realm of natural and social phenomena. When used to describe the transmission of mind in the Chan lineage, the trope of sympathetic resonance has a somewhat different force: it suggests that the lively (albeit inaudible) “vibrating” of a Chan master’s awakened mind stimulates a corresponding vibration in the mind of his disciple. This, of course, is consistent with the notion of a mysterious yet powerful means of communication that does not rely on words or signs. A good example is found in Zongmi’s *Chart of the Master-Disciple Succession of the Chan Gate that Transmits the Mind Ground in China* (*Zhonghua chuan xindi chanmen shizi chengxitu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖):

When Bodhidharma came from the west he only transmitted the “mind-dharma” (*xinfa* 心法)... If you wish to seek the way of the Buddha you should awaken to this mind. Thus all the generations of patriarchs in the lineage only transmit this. If there is a sympathetic resonance and a tallying [of the mind of the disciple with the mind of the teacher] (*ganying xiangqi* 感應相契), then even if a single flame (*deng* 燈) is transmitted (*chuan* 傳) to a thousand lamps (*deng* 燈), the flames will all be the same.<sup>38</sup>

Zongmi here mixes the metaphors of “transmitting the flame” and “sympathetic resonance.” He also makes use of another metaphor, that of “matching tallies” (*xiangqi* 相契).

Originally, tallies (*qi* 契) were pieces of bamboo or wood that were notched or inscribed as a means of keeping records and making contracts. To guarantee the authenticity of the latter, tallies would be split in half, held by separate parties to an agreement, and subsequently honoured only if the two halves matched. When used to refer to the relationship between a Chan master and his disciple, the expression “matching tallies” thus suggests that dharma transmission takes place only when the mind of the latter matches that of the former, which is to say, when the disciple attains the same level of understanding or insight as the master.

<sup>38</sup> ZZ 2–15–5.435c.

As should be clear from all the discussion of Chinese Chan as a “lineage” (*zong* 宗) deriving from Śākyamuni and Bodhidharma, the most powerful metaphor at work in the literature is that of genealogy. The Chan tradition as a whole is compared to an extended clan, the various branches of which can all be mapped out in a single family tree. For members of the Chan clan, legitimacy depends on being able to trace one’s own spiritual “blood lines” (*xuemo* 血脈), or line of *dharma* transmission, back to the founding patriarch Bodhidharma. Carefully maintained and updated genealogical records are essential, and the collections of biographies known as “records of the transmission of the flame” (*chuan deng lu* 傳燈錄) serve that function. Patriarchs (*zushi* 祖師) in the lineage are literally “ancestral” (*zu* 祖) “teachers” (*shi* 師), and are to be worshipped in the same way as clan ancestors in annual memorial services (*ji* 忌). Disciples of Chan masters (*chanshi* 禪師) “inherit the *dharma*” (*si fa* 嗣法) from their teachers, just as the eldest son in a patrilineal clan inherits the property (and status as clan head) from his father. Viewed from the standpoint of this genealogical model, the “spread” of Chan is something akin to the growth of a family over time, with more and more descendants in each succeeding generation.

#### 4. MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF THE SPREAD OF CHAN AND ZEN

Modern scholarship on the history of Chan and Zen is fairly sophisticated in its use of text-critical and historiographical methods. Over the course of the past seven or eight decades, researchers have conclusively demonstrated that all the stories of *dharma* transmission linking the Buddha Śākyamuni with Bodhidharma through a series of Indian patriarchs are figments of the Chinese historical imagination, gradually elaborated from the seventh through the twelfth centuries. The Chan school itself has thus been shown to be a product of the Chinese adaptation and interpretation of Buddhism; there is no longer any question of it having “spread” from India to China. Nevertheless, many of the key features of the medieval Chinese Chan school’s conception of its own identity and character have continued to colour the ways in which modern scholars view the rise and spread of the tradition. The main reason is that the modern fields of Zen studies (Jap. *zengaku* 禅学) and the history of Chan/Zen (Jap. *zenshūshi* 禅宗史) have been dominated from their inception (now more than a century ago) by scholars affili-

ated with one or another of the schools of Japanese Zen Buddhism, which are still deeply rooted in traditions imported from China in the thirteenth century.

Japanese scholars today continue to employ the traditional genealogical metaphor of “lineage” (Chin. *zong*, Jap. *shū* 宗) when speaking of the history of Chan and Zen, without distinguishing sodalities that we would want to call “historical” (e.g., social and institutional arrangements involving real people) from those that are better labeled “mythological” (e.g., groups that have fictional figures and spirits of the dead as active members). Thus, the emergence of Chan as the dominant school of Buddhism in the Song dynasty is still treated in modern histories as a matter of an increasingly widespread “transmission of the flame,” and the importation of Chan into Japan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is still described in terms of “*dharma* transmission” from individual masters to disciples, resulting in the establishment of some fourteen different branch lineages.

The traditional conception of Chan as a “separate transmission apart from the teachings,” moreover, has predisposed modern scholars to view the early Chan lineage as a sectarian movement that rejected mainstream Chinese Buddhist monastic institutions, ritual practices, and *sūtra* exegesis. The story of Bodhidharma’s encounter with Emperor Wu of the Liang, for example, is still regarded as representative of the “rebellious” spirit of early Chan, even by scholars who know full well that it is a fiction dreamt up half a millennium after the purported fact. The iconoclastic rhetoric attributed to the Tang Chan patriarchs in Song genealogical records, as well as that found in Song *kōan* collections (e.g., Wu-men’s colourful description of Śākyamuni as a pimp and a cheat in the *Gateless Barrier*, quoted above), have often been cited as evidence of Chan sectarianism.

If I were to define the Chan/Zen tradition as a single, unambiguous object of historical research, I would present it as a discourse—a set of ideas and tropes. The identifying feature of the discourse would be the notion that the enlightenment of the Buddha Śākyamuni, a formless *dharma* (teaching or insight) called the *buddha*-mind, has been preserved by being handed down through an elite spiritual genealogy of masters and disciples—a lineage of patriarchs founded in China by an Indian monk named Bodhidharma. By this definition, to study the spread of Chan/Zen would be to research of all the circumstances through which that discourse arose, was communicated, and had an influence on people’s thinking and behavior at different times and places. By the

same token, any literature, art, religious practices, doctrines, institutional forms, or social arrangements that promoted or were directly informed by that discourse would be regarded as Chan/Zen phenomena.

As demonstrated in the preceding pages, a discourse about the special transmission of *buddha*-mind through Bodhidharma's lineage first appeared in China in the late seventh century. It gradually spread and was adopted by a series of competing sodalities of Buddhist clergy and lay followers during the Tang dynasty (618–906) and emerged in the Song dynasty (960–1278) as the dominant ideology within the Buddhist monastic institution as a whole. As I have shown elsewhere, neither the Chan slogans pertaining to “separate transmission” and “non-reliance on scriptures,” nor the iconoclastic rhetoric attributed to Chan patriarchs, can be taken as descriptive of any actual state of affairs among the historical promoters of Chan ideology.<sup>39</sup> Generally speaking, the monks who spread and benefited from the Chan discourse throughout the Tang and Song resided in mainstream Buddhist monasteries and engaged in a full range of traditional Buddhist religious practices.

From my point of view, the so-called transmission of Zen from China to Japan in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) was a complex event with many facets, but it is convenient to analyze it as having two distinct dimensions: (1) the communication to Japan of Chan mythology, ideology, and teaching styles; and (2) the establishment in Japan of monastic institutions modeled after the great public monasteries of Southern Song China. The first was accomplished largely through the media of texts (chiefly “records of the transmission of the flame” and *koan* collections) that contained Chan lore, and rituals such as “ascending the hall” (Chin. *shang tang*, Jap. *jōdō* 上堂) and “entering the room” (Chin. *ru shi*, Jap. *nishitsu* 入室) in which the distinctive rhetorical and pedagogical forms of Chan were reenacted. The establishment of Song-style monasteries in Japan, on the other hand, was facilitated by various “rules of purity” (Chin. *qinggui*, Jap. *shingi* 清規) that were brought from China at the same time. Many elements of elite Chinese literati culture, including poetry, calligraphy, ink painting, landscape gardens, and the social etiquette of drinking tea, were introduced to Japan at this time in conjunction with the Song-style monastic institutions. Both the institutions and the genteel arts practiced within them thus came to be labeled as “Zen” in Japan.

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<sup>39</sup> Foulk 1993, pp. 147–208.

Over the course of the centuries in Japan, there have been many changes in the monastic institutions and practices associated with the Zen schools, but the traditional Chan/Zen discourse about “*dharma* transmission” and “lineage” has endured, providing a sense of identity and continuity with the past. In recent years, people in Europe and America have become interested in Zen Buddhism and taken up practices associated with it, such as sitting in meditation (*zazen*) and *kōan* study. A comparison of Zen training centres in the West with the Japanese monasteries on which they are modeled reveals a great many differences, both procedural and cultural, but there is one remarkably consistent unifying thread: practitioners of Zen everywhere are concerned with the lineage of their teachers, and the spiritual authority bestowed by “*dharma* transmission.” That mode of discourse, in my view, is the best marker for gauging the spread of Zen. It is quite remarkable that a set of tropes first conceived in China more than a thousand years ago still resonates so meaningfully today among people from different cultures around the world.

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