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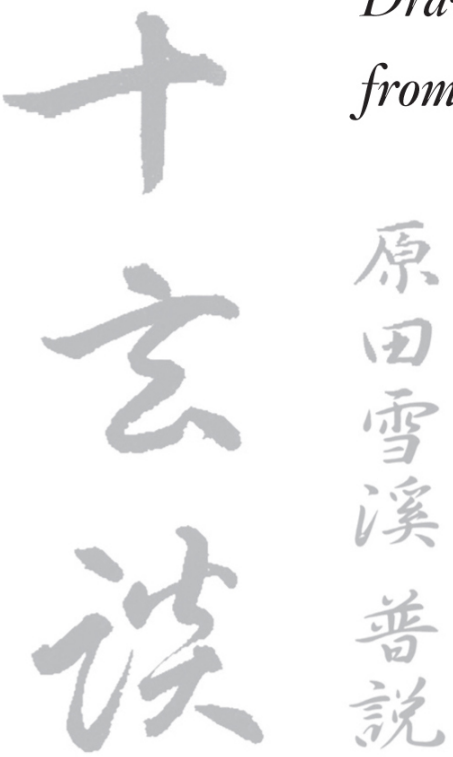

Sekkei Harada

TRANSLATED BY
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C ONTENTS

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

FOR THE FIRST TIME in English, this book presents—in tandem with a modern-day exposition offered by the Japanese Zen master Sekkei Harada—the *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth*, a tenth-century Chinese poem composed by the Zen master Tong'an Changcha. Readers seeking background information on the poem itself and its relationship to the modern Dharma talks will find these matters discussed in detail in the accompanying commentary. The remainder of this preface, however, will focus on Sekkei Harada's exposition and its significance for contemporary Zen practitioners worldwide.

Master Harada's Dharma talks (*teishō*) were offered during *sesshin* (periods of intensive sitting practice) between 1998 and 1999 at the temple Hosshinji, an official training monastery of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism in Obama, Japan. They were transcribed from tape recordings and edited by Keiko Kando for publication in Japanese in 2002. This English edition is translated from the Japanese book written by Daigaku Rummé and Heiko Narrog. Hongliang Gu of East China Normal University helped greatly when it came to translating the original Chinese poems as well as the Chinese source materials cited in the commentary.

Dharma talks, such as those from which this book is drawn, are usually based on a classic text and serve to illuminate matters of practice and teaching related to the present circumstances of the listeners. Although they involve preparation, they represent essentially spontaneous speech and are attuned to the audience present at the occasion. In this case, the addressees were chiefly monks and nuns practicing at the monastery where Master Harada is abbot. The lectures were conducted either in the Zen hall (*zendō*) with the audience in zazen position facing the wall and continuing their zazen during the talk or in the main hall of the monastery where sesshin participants had assembled with the express purpose of listening to the lecture. The Dharma talks were not followed by

a public question-and-answer period, but listeners were instead encouraged to visit the master and to ask about the Dharma in one-on-one encounters (*dokusan*).

Despite the intimate setting of these talks, there has been a long tradition in Zen of recording and publicizing a master's lectures and sayings in order to make teachings available beyond the immediate setting of the monastery or temple and to preserve those teachings for posterity. Massive amounts of such records (Chin. *yulu* ; Jap. *goroku*) have been produced in China and Japan, exceeding the textual output of any other denomination of Mahāyāna Buddhism. To date, only a tiny fraction of this output has been translated into English or into other Western languages.

Although on the one hand "transmission outside of the teaching" and "independence from anything written" [1] are important tenets of Zen, both the written and the spoken word have been amply used as tools for propagating the teaching and stimulating and guiding students. A metaphor frequently cited in connection with this phenomenon is the "finger pointing at the moon." Sekkei Harada himself puts the ambiguous relationship between verbal communication and Zen as follows: "All of the 84,000 Dharma teachings, as well as the words of the ancestors, are fingers pointing at the moon. If we do not act in accord with them, it will not be possible to see the moon. However, when you have seen the moon, then they are no longer necessary, and this is to have returned to your original, essential Self." [2]

Besides trying to convey timeless truth, every new record also appeals to, and thus reflects, the sensitivities of the time and the social and religious landscape within which it is situated. In Zen Buddhism, doctrines are essentially viewed as an expedient, or "skillful means," to be used flexibly and to be constantly transformed in ways that correspond to the needs of one's audience. Thus, every new record is also a window to the circumstances under which it originated. This metaphor also applies to the talks preserved in this book.

Sekkei Harada is one of the best-known and most widely acknowledged masters of contemporary Sōtō Zen in Japan. He was born in 1926 in Aichi prefecture and ordained in 1951 at Hosshinji in Obama, Fukui prefecture, by the abbot Harada Sessui. From 1953, he practiced with Master Inoue Gien at the temple Ryūsenji in Hamamatsu, and he

received Dharma transmission (*inka shōmei*) in 1957. In 1974, he was selected as abbot of Hosshinji, one of twenty-five current training monasteries of the Sōtō sect. He became vice chairman of the Sōtō Sect Conference of Zen Teachers in 1996, acted as senior teacher (*seidō*) at the sect's main monastery Sōjiji from 1998 to 2002, and he then served as Director of the Sōtō sect in Europe from 2002 to 2004. Seven records of his talks have been published in Japanese. One of them, *The Essence of Zen*, has appeared in English, French, German, Indonesian, and Italian translation.

Hosshinji, Sekkei Harada's monastery, has a unique history. It was founded in the sixteenth century by the local feudal lord Takeda Motomitsu (1494–1551), a figure who used the temple as a residence from where he would conduct political affairs as a monk. Undergoing several cycles of decline and restoration, Hosshinji gained religious importance especially in the twentieth century under the guidance of its twenty-seventh abbot, Harada Sogaku (1871–1961). Harada Sogaku was one of the most influential and prolific Japanese Sōtō Zen masters of the twentieth century, a fact borne out by the vast number of prominent disciples to whom he laid claim and by the steady production of books based on his lectures. In addition to a revival of kōan practices in Sōtō Zen, he opened monastery doors to lay men and women alike, allowing foreigners as well as locals to participate in monastery training. Hosshinji is therefore renowned as a place where pioneering Westerners went to study Zen Buddhism throughout the post-war era.

When Sekkei Harada became the thirtieth abbot, he likewise encouraged the attendance of laymen and laywomen, foreign and local alike—a phenomenon that remains even now an exception in training monasteries in Japan. Since the 1980s he has regularly traveled abroad to lead sesshin in India and throughout the West, particularly in Europe, but also in the U.S. He speaks with a critical voice on the current state of Zen Buddhism in Japan, particularly epitomized by the rote formalization of Dharma transmission. He expresses this concern about the current state of Zen Buddhism in Japan, combined with strong appeals to his audience to preserve what he understands to be genuine Dharma transmission, throughout his talks.

In addition to Harada Roshi's commentary, Heiko Narrog has created a series of tables that provide information about the people, texts, places, and quotations to which he refers throughout the book. We are fully

aware that alternative translations of various terms and, in some cases, entire verses are possible. We have aimed, however, to be consistent and to make the most appropriate choices in light of the particular contexts of these poems and talks.

Finally, but most importantly, we wish to express our deep gratitude to Sekkei Harada Roshi and to the editor of the Japanese edition, Keiko Kando, who enabled us to work with these wonderful texts. We also wish to thank Josh Bartok for generously giving this book a place within Wisdom Publications and Andy Francis for his marvelous work editing this book.

Acknowledgments by Daigaku Rummé

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Acknowledgments by Heiko Narrog and Hongliang Gu

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TEN VERSES OF UNFATHOMABLE DEPTH

1. *The Mind Seal*

   I ask you, "What does the Mind Seal look like?"
   And "What sort of person dares to transmit it?"
   Throughout the ages, it has remained firm and unshaken.
   As soon as you call something the Mind Seal, it is already meaningless.
   You must know that in essence all things originate from infinite emptiness.
   You can compare it to a lotus flower in a red-hot kiln.
   Don't say that a free and empty mind is the Way;
   A free and empty mind is still separated from it by a great barrier.

2. *The Mind of the Enlightened Ones*

   This mind is like emptiness, but it isn't empty.
   How could the unfathomable function ever degenerate to being the result of achievement?
   The bodhisattvas at the three stages of wisdom have still not clarified this.
   And how can the higher ranks of bodhisattvas ever reach it?
   The golden carp that has passed through the net remains trapped in the water.
   But the stone horse still on the way leaves its sand cage suddenly.
   Why have the meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West explained in every detail?
   Don't ask about the coming from the West, nor about the East.

3. *The Unfathomable Function*

You cannot rely on looking far ahead to the end of the universe.
And why would you tie yourself down to tainted worldliness?
Essentially, the miraculous body is not bound anywhere.
It is already throughout the whole body, so what other traces could there be?
A single efficacious word transcends the multitudes.
It is far beyond the Three Vehicles and does not require cultivation.
Shake off your hands and get away from the sages of all ages.
Then your path of return will resemble an ox in the midst of fire.

4. *The Transcendent within Dust and Dirt*

That which is impure is impure by itself; that which is pure is pure by itself.
Highest wisdom and delusion are likewise empty and even.
Who could say that nobody can appreciate Bianhe's jade?
I say that the jewel of the black dragon shines everywhere.
Only when the myriad dharmas disappear does the whole thing appear.
The Three Vehicles split up and assumed only provisional names.
Truly outstanding people have determination that knows no bounds.
Do not try to go where the buddhas have already gone.

5. *The Buddhist Teaching*

The Three Vehicles spoke golden words one after another.
But the buddhas of the past, present, and future only declared the same thing.
In the beginning, when they expounded the reality of skandhas and then complete emptiness, everyone grew attached to it.
Later, when they negated both reality and emptiness, everyone discarded it again.
The complete treasury of sutras in the Dragon Palace is meant to be prescriptions.
Even the Buddha's last teaching does not reach the unfathomable.
If even one deluded thought arises in the world of true purity,

This already means spending eight thousand years in the world of human beings.

6. *The Song of Returning Home*

Don't be distracted by the King of Emptiness when you are still on the Way.
You must drive your staff forward, moving on until you reach home.
If you travel for a long time like clouds and water, don't get attached to it.
Even in the deep recesses of snowy mountains, don't forget your mission.
Ah! I regretted that in past days my face was like jade.
And I lamented that at the time of my return my hair had turned white.
Returning to my old home with dangling arms, there was no one who recognized me.
Also, I had nothing to offer my parents.

7. *The Song of Not Returning Home*

Having the intention of going to the source, of returning to the origin, is already a mistake.
Essentially, there is nowhere to settle down, no place to call one's home.
The ancient path through the pines is covered with deep snow.
The long range of mountain peaks is furthermore blocked by clouds.
When host and guest are tranquil and serene, everything is incongruous.
When lord and vassal are united, there is wrong in the midst of right.
How will you sing the song of returning home?
In bright moonlight, the dead tree is blooming in front of the hall.

8. *The Revolving Function*

It is still dangerous even inside the castle of nirvana.
Strangers come across each other without appointment.
People call someone who provisionally puts on a dirty robe "a buddha."
But if someone wears precious clothes, what should you call him?
In the middle of the night, the wooden man puts on shoes and leaves.
At dawn, the stone woman puts on a hat and goes home.
An ancient emerald pool, the moon in the empty sky.
Screening and filtering over and over to catch the moon, for the first time you will really know.

9. *Changing Ranks*

Growing hair and horns, you enter town,
Resembling a blue lotus flower blooming in the midst of fire.
All afflictions become like rain and dew in the vast sea.
All ignorance becomes like clouds and thunder on a mountain.
You completely blow out the furnace below the cauldron of hell,
Smashing to pieces a forest of swords and a mountain of daggers with a single shout.
Even golden chains cannot hold you back at the entrance.
Going into the realm of other beings, you transmigrate for a while.

10. *Before the Rank of the Absolute*

In front of many dead trees and steep boulders, there are many wrong tracks heading off course.
Those travelers who have reached this place all trip and stumble.
A crane stands in the snow but does not have the same color.
The bright moon and the flower of reeds do not really resemble each other.
"I'm finished, I'm finished, I'm finished!" When you think so, you cannot really be finished.
If you say, "This is it! This is the ultimate source!" you also need a good shout.

From the bottom of your heart, you play a melody on the harp with no strings.
How would it be possible to grasp the moonlight shining in the empty sky?

I. Introduction

HEIKO NARROG & HONGLIANG GU

THE TEXT

THE *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* were a highly regarded text in premodern China, Korea, and Japan, but they are not part of the small canon of poems still regularly employed in Zen teaching and practice in Japan and abroad. They are therefore unfamiliar to all but specialists. This introduction will, therefore, serve to provide basic information on the poem for those curious about its historical, religious, and philosophical background and its relationship to the following commentary given by the modern Japanese master Sekkei Harada.

The Ten Verses are themselves undated. But if the attribution of their authorship to Tong'an Changcha is correct, they must have been written in the first half of the tenth century, no later than about 960. They were first published posthumously in the twenty-ninth volume of the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, which is a collection of texts foundational for the self-understanding and history of Chan/Zen Buddhism.

Although the earliest Chan records stem from the sixth century, the tradition of composing texts with the purpose of establishing Dharma transmission lineages and a history of schools only began in the ninth century with the text called *Transmission of the Treasure Grove*. Such records were not based on a concept of precise historiography as modern Western scholarship imagines it but were rather tools created to establish legitimacy and orthodoxy in an age where these became increasingly precious commodities. As Buddhism flourished, numerous Buddhist sects and groups within sects across China competed for authority, followers, and official recognition. The Dharma lineages of prominent Zen masters were often the subject of serious controversy. Consequently, the lineages claimed in the *Jingde Era Record* sometimes differ from those claimed in earlier records.

While the *Transmission of the Treasure Grove* was only temporarily canonized, and the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*, an important successor dated 952, failed to be included in the Chinese Buddhist canon, the *Jingde Era Record*, completed in 1004, was admitted to the imperial Buddhist canon in 1011 and has been included in the Buddhist canons ever since. Despite the canonization of numerous other transmission records compiled at the same time or later than it, the *Jingde Era Record* gained the status of authority and orthodoxy due to its historical position and has since been regarded as the most representative transmission record. The *Jingde Era Record* is the ultimate source known to us for many of the stories contained in more popular Chan records, such as the *Blue Cliff Record*. Yet the Record has never been fully translated into a modern language. The volume containing the Ten Verses has not been translated, to our knowledge, either.

Transmission records also served to collect extant material for the purpose of preserving them against being scattered and lost. Of course, these texts were also important tools for teaching. This is especially true of the twenty-ninth volume of the *Jingde Era Record*, which contains the Ten Verses. Unlike the preceding twenty-eight volumes, it is not concerned with establishing lineage history but contains a collection of writings that the editors found worthy of preservation as teachings for students of Chan.

We do not know the original form of the *Jingde Era Record*. In fact, the textual history of this work stands out for its complexity even among ancient Chinese Buddhist texts. The original edition is lost, and the earliest extant version of the text is an abridgment edited under a different title: *Precious Flowers of the Lamp Transmission*. At least twenty major editions of the work itself are known, but the content of many of these vary. According to Nishiguchi, the editions can be roughly divided into two lineages, the Sibu-Yanyou text lineage and the Dongchansi-Ming text lineage. [3] Although the Dongchansi-Ming text lineage claims the oldest known extant complete edition, being dated to 1080, the Sibu-Yanyou lineage may actually represent an older and more reliable stage of the text. However, even the older extant editions of the *Jingde Era Record* lack some material and seem considerably sloppy in their execution. This is especially true of the Ten Verses, which appear in the early Song edition in an abridged form of only eight verses and are represented in

the *Precious Flowers of the Lamp Transmission* in only one verse. It is furthermore not clear whether the original edition of the *Jingde Era Record* even contained a faithful rendering of the poems. We know for example that the text of the *Jingde Era Record* as a whole was subject to censorship and interfered with for various purposes even prior to its first publication. [4] Therefore, we may never know the original version of either the poems or of the record as a whole, and it is difficult to even establish an earliest or most accurate version of the work.

The abridgment of the Ten Verses in the Song edition of the *Jingde Era Record* was criticized. The monk Mu'an Shanqing, editor of the Buddhist encyclopedia called *Chrestomathy from the Ancestors' Hall* (1108), may have played the decisive role in the eventual restoration of the full version. In the Chrestomathy he reports that he visited Tong'an temple, the monastery where Master Changcha had resided, where he retrieved from the memorial hall of the temple the previously ignored preface and a version of the text itself, to which he added comments. Shanqing's account has been widely accepted as truthful. [5] The preface retrieved, as well as the title of the poems, are generally ascribed to Fayan Wenyi, the Dharma lineage grandfather of Ying'an Daoyuan, the primary editor of the *Jingde Era Record*. The preface reads as follows:

> These Verses of Unfathomable Depth are marvelous. They far surpass the three vehicles. No longer are they entangled in origination through circumstance, nor are they independent.
>
> When put into practice they resemble the bright moon and illuminate the sky. But if times change and the opportunity is lost, they resemble a bright jewel hidden in the depths of the sea.
>
> Moreover, while students of the Way have different levels of ability, the wondrous truth is infinite. Very few have reached it and many are confused about its source.
>
> These verses are an exceptionally bright light on all phenomena and things. This means that both principles and phenomena recede with them, and names and words are defeated. Thus, they kindheartedly point at the moon, without missing the tiniest things.

> If you don't get lost searching for the needle in the water, the treasure already held in your fist waiting to be opened will be bestowed on you.
>
> I have given these small words, in brief, as a preface to demonstrate the gist of the poems.

Since this preface, cited in the *Chrestomathy from the Ancestors' Hall*, is found practically unaltered in later editions of the *Jingde Era Record*, we may assume that the manuscript as found by Shanqing influenced these later editions as well. Nevertheless, we do not know which edition would most faithfully reflect possible amendments to the verses, so we also do not know the shape of the poems in which Shanqing found them.

These problems with the text are somewhat mitigated by the fact that the differences in wording in the various editions do not significantly alter the meaning of the text but remain variations of expression. The most salient variations can be found in the titles given to the individual poems, which are believed to have been given by the author himself but later revised by the editors of the various editions of the *Jingde Era Record*. These variations were of considerable concern to contemporary monks and scholars of the Chan tradition, but from a modern perspective few of them lead to significantly different interpretations of the poems. Among all premodern editions of the Ten Verses which we have access to, the edition in the Korean canon version has clearly been the most carefully edited. It contains no apparent inconsistencies or misspellings, and no abridgments, which is quite remarkable for an ancient manuscript. The Ming edition seems to contain the most errors of any edition.

After the *Jingde Era Record*, the second major classical record containing the Ten Verses was the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School* (*Zongmen liandeng huiyao*), produced about 180 years later. The inclusion of the Ten Verses in this compilation demonstrates the status of the text during the Song period, since the fourteen poems published therein were chosen by the editors as a selection of the most important poems of the Chan tradition going back to its beginning. The collection also includes most of the few poems from that era that are still part of Zen teaching and practice nowadays.

THE AUTHOR

THE TEN POEMS are attributed to a Chan master active in the first half of the tenth century with the Dharma name "Changcha of Tong'an Temple." The dates of his birth and death are unknown. We are not aware of any writing within the Buddhist tradition or any research that contests the attribution of the Ten Verses to Master Changcha. As will be seen below, sectarians would gain little by attributing the poems to Changcha as opposed to somebody else. If the editors of the *Jingde Era Record* had intended to further aggrandize the figure of Changcha's contemporary, Fayan Wenyi, whose Dharma heir, Daoyuan, was the central editor of the Record, they could have done so. But they did not. In any case, it is safe to assume that Tong'an Changcha was the actual author of the poems.

Not much is known about the life of Tong'an Changcha, as the biographical information available on him in extant Chan records is sparse. The minimum that such records preserve is a master's Dharma name, lineage, and the temple where he resided. Beyond this, they may provide his birthplace, secular name, and those dialogues and sayings attributed to him that demonstrate his spiritual achievement. Many of such dialogues may also be taken up as kōans. The number and degree of detail exhibited in dialogues will vary greatly depending on the master and the importance assigned to him. Finally, records may also preserve further biographical or hagiographical elements, which show such things as the master's devotion to Buddhist practice from an early age or his first encounter with Buddhist teaching, for example. Modern scholarship unaffiliated with the Buddhist sects generally disputes the historicity of the records because of the presence of sometimes quite egregious inconsistencies between various records, and because records may contain what are clearly nonhistorical elements, such as descriptions of supernatural phenomena or the appearance of bodhisattvas as actors in a

master's life, alongside elements that are likely historical, such as verifiable personal and place names.

We have found mention of Tong'an Changcha in at least twenty-two records of the Buddhist canon, in addition to the records that exist in the historically important but noncanonical *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*. Not all of these twenty-two incidences are equally relevant. First of all, earlier sources contain more original material, whereas subsequent sources largely repeat material that exists in the earlier ones. Secondly, there are some records that are simply considered more authoritative and influential within the Chan/Zen tradition than others. Given that the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall* and the *Jingde Era Record* have historically been the most significant records, and that the *Record of Equanimity*, the *Assembled Essentials of the Five [Records of the] Lamp*, and the *Empty Hall Anthology* have been records of particular importance and authority within the tradition, we thus choose to focus our examination of the person of Tong'an Changcha on the entries preserved in these texts. We will mention other records only where relevant.

We present below translations of the relevant portions of each of these records in chronological order. It is not always clear in the dialogues if one person is asking the master on one occasion or if different people are asking on different occasions. The same question-and-answer sequence that appears to indicate a single questioning monk on a single occasion in one record sometimes seems to indicate multiple questioners on multiple occasions in another. We have chosen to end our translations where there seems to be a natural break in the flow of represented conversation.

Collection from the Ancestors' Hall, *vol. 12 (952)*

The *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall* was composed during the time of Tong'an Changcha and is therefore most likely to contain historically accurate information. The editors of the *Jingde Era Record* either did not know of its existence or intentionally ignored it. [6] Subsequent Chinese and Japanese Chan records, beginning with the *Jingde Era Record*, have basically been composed independent from the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall* since the latter was eventually lost in China and only survived in Korea.

The passage regarding Master Changcha in the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall* runs as follows:

> The priest of Tong'an inherited the Dharma from Jiufeng. He lived in the Jianchang county in the Hong region. His master title was Changcha. He was a person from Changxi county in the Fuzhou region. His family name was Peng. He took the precepts when he came of age, then left Fujian province to study with Jiufeng. He received transmission, reaching the final gate, and then settled at the Phoenix mountain range.
>
> A monk asked: "How is the condition at the Phoenix mountain range?"
>
> The master replied, "In what place are you right now?"
>
> The monk asked, "How is what has been passed down from above?"
>
> The master answered, "What has been passed down does not work."
>
> The monk said, "So what should I do from now?"
>
> The master replied, "Even ten thousand people won't be able to tell you." (1)

Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp, *vol. 17 (1004)*

The *Jingde Era Record*, written fifty years later, preserves an account similar to but more lengthy than the one from the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall:*

> Master Changcha of Tong'an temple at the Phoenix mountain of Hong region.
>
> A monk asked, "Although this is the home of the phoenix, why is there no house style?" [7]
>
> The master replied, "We don't welcome visitors, and we don't treat anyone as a guest."

The monk asked, “Then, for what purpose do we visit all places between the four seas?”

The master replied, “If there is a plate for sacrifice, there will always be someone who gives.” (2)

A monk asked, “How is the condition at Phoenix mountain range?”

The master replied, “The thousand mountain peaks line up beautifully. The ten thousand cliffs do not know when spring comes.”

The monk asked, “How about the person under these conditions?”

The master replied, “He sits on lonely cliffs and high boulders, his mind being as high as the white clouds.” (3)

The “house style” mentioned in the first dialogue refers to differences in the style of Chan/Zen that depend on particular masters or their lineages. The question of house style in relation to Tong’an temple is raised in a frequently quoted dialogue from the first abbot of the temple, Tong’an Daopi (? –905), recorded in the sixteenth volume of the *Jingde Era Record*. The dialogue runs as follows:

A monk asked, “What is your house style?”

The master said, “The golden hen carries its son and returns to heaven. The pregnant jade rabbit enters the heavenly palace.”

The monk asked, “If I suddenly encounter a guest coming, how should I treat this guest respectfully?”

The master replied, “The golden fruit—early in the morning the ape plucks it and takes it away. The jade flower—after dusk the phoenix comes holding it in its mouth.”

The core biographical information on Master Changcha given in the *Jingde Era Record* is identical to the information given in *Collection from the Ancestors’ Hall*. Given that the *Jingde Era Record* is presumably independent of the Collection, the fact that the two concur would seem to support the information that these records provide. The twenty-third volume of the *Jingde Era Record* and the eighth volume of the *Record of the Correct Lineage*

of the Dharma Transmission both note a single Dharma heir for Changcha by the name Lianggong. No further information is provided on this figure, except that he settled at Mt. Yangshan in what is now Jiangxi province and had no Dharma heir of his own.

Record of Equanimity *(1223)*

The *Record of Equanimity* is about three centuries removed from the time of Master Changcha, yet it has a special status in the Sōtō Zen tradition as its most prominent kōan collection, comparable to the *Blue Cliff Record* or the *Gateless Barrier* in the Rinzai Zen tradition. The key dialogue with Master Changcha found in this collection runs as follows:

> COMMENTARY ON CASE 80
>
> A monk asked Tong'an Changcha, "How is it if there are no weapons?"
> Changcha said, "You cannot hang a sword into an empty space. The jade hare in the moon cannot wear body armor." (4)

Besides this short dialogue, the *Record of Equanimity* also quotes the first line of the tenth verse of Changcha's Ten Verses when commenting on case 35 and quotes the third and fourth lines of the third verse when commenting on case 68.

Assembled Essentials of the Five [Records of the] Lamp, *vol. 6 (1252)*

Lineage histories proliferated after the successful canonization of the *Jingde Era Record*. The composition of lineage histories provided sectarian scholars a welcome opportunity to record their version of religious history, even while the Chinese state retained control and authority over Buddhism through the system of canonization. The proliferation of records led to the need for compendia that would systematize the information contained in the various versions. The *Assembled Essentials of*

the Five [Records of the] Lamp is probably the best recognized and authoritative of these compendia. It mainly brings together material from five preceding canonical lineage histories: namely the *Jingde Era Record* (1004), the *Record of the Extensive [Transmission of] the Lamp* (1036), the *Jianzhong Jingguo Era Continued Record of the [Transmission of the] Lamp* (1101), the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School* (1183), and the *Jiatai Era Comprehensive Record of [the Transmission of] the Lamp* (1204).

The first incident of material on Master Changcha in the Assembled Essentials was faithfully adopted from the *Jingde Era Record* and we will therefore not repeat it here. The remaining material can be traced back to the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School*, while the rest cannot be identified in any other texts available to us. We translate each of the passages here in order of their appearance in the Assembled Essentials and indicate allusion to the Ten Verses in boldface type:

A Dialogue of Unclear Provenance

A monk asked, "What is the difference between **Zen mind**[8] and the general Buddhist teaching?"
The master said, "The iron dog barks at the stone cow. The magician watches the moonlight."
The monk asked, "How about the person who has **grown hair and put on horns**?" [9]
The master replied, "With a woven rush raincoat and a bamboo hat you sell gold. How many don't greet each other when they meet?" (5)

Dialogues preserved from *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School*

A monk asked, "I am not yet clear about the right opportunity for enlightenment. Please give me instruction."
The master replied, "In the uneven pine and bamboo grove, the fog is thin; because of the many layers of mountains, the

moon comes out late."
The monk intended to say something else, but the master said, "Before using your sword and armor, your body has already been exposed."
The monk asked, "What do you mean?"
The master replied, "The good knife does not cut the bamboo before the frost comes. The ink painting can only praise the dragon on the sea."
The monk circled the master's seat and then left.
The master said, "If you close your eyes and eat a snail, it will at once be sour, tart, and bitter." (6)

A Second Dialogue of Unclear Provenance

The monk asked, "**Returning to the origin, returning to the source**, how is it?" [10]
The master replied, "Even if the cicada has broken out of its shell, it still cannot avoid clinging to the cold branch."
The monk asked, "What about a very **strong-willed and powerful person**?" [11]
The master answered, "The **stone ox**[12] step by step goes into the **deep pool.**[13] The paper **horse** shout by shout cries out in the fire." (7)

Five Dialogues Preserved from the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School*

A newly arrived monk held a tin staff and circled the master three times, he shook the staff once and asked, "Master, please tell me the place that neither the ordinary **nor the saints reach**." [14]
The master snapped his fingers three times.
The monk said, "Today you are scared, so you are at a loss for words."
The master replied, "Where is your point of departure?" The monk bowed and walked out.

The master said, “The monk who has already traveled a lot of places; the Zen monk with the staff. If you don’t really reach up to me, you won’t be able to cast off your doubts.”
The monk turned around and said, “Hearing from afar is not as good as seeing with your own eyes.”
The master said, “Because you are eager for one cup of wine, you loose a whole ship full of fish.”
The monk asked, “How is the person who has eliminated all regrets?”
The master answered, “I have already seen this sort of business.” The monk asked, “What is the **meaning of Bodhidharma coming from the West**?” [15]
The master replied, “The rhinoceros grows a horn because it plays with the moon’s arc. The shine enters the elephant’s tusk because it is scared by the thunder.”
The monk asked, “How is the person that always looks into the future?”
The master replied, “The cicada in fall clings to the **barren tree**[16] without leaves and keeps chirping without turning its head.”
The monk asked, “How is the person who has **returned?**” [17] The master replied, “He is outstanding like a **reed flower** in the **fire**.[18] You meet him in spring but it looks like fall.”
The monk asked, “How is the person who has neither come nor gone?”
The master answered, “The **stone** sheep meets the **stone** tiger. They look at each other and sooner or later they stop fighting.” (8)

The head monk asked, “The **three vehicles**[19] and twelve teachings, I know them roughly. But I don’t know which Dharma you are teaching.”
The master replied, “I teach the **one vehicle**.” [20]
He asked, “So how is the one vehicle?”
The master replied, “Several clouds appeared from the top of the mountain; the spring water resounds when it hits the stone.”

The monk said, “I didn’t ask about that. I asked what the one vehicle teaching is.”
The master replied, “You would better be a little smarter.” [21] (9)

The master, after looking at the night sky, said to a monk, “How strange, how strange! The stars and the **moon** are both so **bright**, [22] and they can still both be seen. Why does it deviate from the Way like this?”
The monk said, “How is the Way?”
The master answered, “If you try it out you will see.”
The monk said, “If someone has no wound, don’t injure him!”
The master replied, “If you carry book bags and tackle study, don’t rest your bow and arrows.” (10)

The master asked a monk, “Where did you go recently?”
The monk replied, “To Jiangxi province.”
The master asked, “How does the Dharma of Jiangxi resemble the one here?”
The monk replied, “Luckily you asked me. If you asked somebody else, misfortune would come of it.”
The master said, “I see I was rash right now.”
The monk said, “I’m not an infant, but you only use candy to stop me from crying.”
The master replied, “Hurting the turtle or releasing it, killing it or letting it live, is in my power.” (11)

Changcha asked a monk, “Where have you come from?”
The monk replied, “From Mt. Wutai.”
The master asked, “Did you also see the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī?”
The monk spread out his arms.
The master asked, “You are spreading out your arms so much. So who has really seen the Bodhisattva?”
The monk replied, “If you’re out of breath, it kills you.”
Changcha asked: “If you don’t see the wild goose in the clouds, how can you know the coldness of the desert?”
The monk said, “Please let us go quickly to the master’s room, and tell me there!”

Changcha replied, “The disciples of Sunbin[23] only talked about divinations.” [24]
The monk said, “Yet his reputation was not wasted.”
Changcha replied, “Go away and have some tea!”
The monk bowed goodbye.
The master said, “Even if you have earned victory in one battle, you still get your legs cut off.” (12)

Two Dialogues of Unclear Provenance

As the master read a sutra, there came a monk who asked something.
The master replied, “**The buddhas of the past and present have all taught the same thing**.” [25]
The monk asked, “So how about you?”
The master slapped him.
The monk said, “That’s it! That’s it!”
The master said, “This idiot!”
The monk said, “The present and past buddhas are all like this.”
The master said, “I wanted to slay a dragon, but I met a dead tiger.”
The monk said, “You really radiate.”
The master replied, “Standing by a tree stump and holding your breath waiting for hares to clash against it, who would do this if not you?”
The monk said, “You are deaf!”
The master said, “The barbarian sheep went to Chu. Feeling wronged they returned home.” (13)

The master asked a monk. “When it is all dark around your eyes, how can you see?”
The monk replied, “The Northern star turns to the East, and the Southern Star moves to the West.”
The master said, “Master, you can enter the big ancestor temple.”
The monk said, “Like this, in the school of Tong’an the Way dies out and the disciples get dispersed.”

The master said, “Carrying the baby horizontally,[26] I wanted to show you the Buddhist teaching.” (14)

A Dialogue from the *Essentials of the United [Records of the Transmission of the] Lamps of Our School*

The master heard the sound of a magpie and said to the assembly, “If a magpie [auspicious bird in Ancient China] cries on the cold juniper [auspicious tree],[27] it means that the **Mind Seal** is going to be **transmitted**.” [28]
A monk came forward and asked, “What difference does it make?”
The master said, “Among the monks there is a certain person.”
The monk said, “In the school of Tong’an, the Way will cease to exist and the disciples will be dispersed.”
The master said, “The barbarians of Hu drank the milk but they blamed the good doctor.” [29]
The monk said, “Just take a break!”
The master said, “The old crane entered the dry pond but could not see the traces of fish.” (15)

Empty Hall Anthology, *vol. 4 (1295)*

The last dialogue translated here is furthest removed from Master Changcha’s lifetime, but it became the most popular of the dialogues and was repeatedly quoted in subsequent records. The passage reads as follows:

Case 64

A monk asked Master Tong’an Changcha: “How is the teacher of gods and men?” [30]
Changcha replied, “His head is bald, and his body is hairless.” [31] (16)

We may note a few things about the dialogues presented here. First of all, those that appear in records that are historically closest in proximity to Master Changcha himself are quite terse. These, namely the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*, likely compiled during his own lifetime, and the *Jingde Era Record*, compiled a few decades after his death, we may consider most likely to reflect actual biographical facts. We may also note that the further removed records become from his lifetime, the lengthier and more detailed they become. It is also of interest that the most famous Chan dialogue that involves Master Changcha was recorded more than three hundred years after his death. This pattern is not terribly surprising, as we see very similar patterns surrounding other well-known figures in Chan history as well—most famously with Bodhidharma and the sixth ancestor, Huineng. We know practically nothing for sure regarding the historicity of these two figures, but a vast body of stories and lore has grown up around them over time.

For critically minded scholars, such patterns of increasing elaboration of records in subsequent generations are almost certainly evidence of the nonhistorical nature of such records. However, defenders of the Chan records as historically valuable argue that there are valid reasons that historical material might only have appeared decades or centuries after the fact. First, ancient societies relied on oral transmission much more than have modern societies, where the capacity for printing is cheap and widespread. Second, we know that sects in China and Japan have historically kept important material secret, only choosing to record such material when it becomes threatened with loss or becomes otherwise obscure. Third, records that may have been written down earlier might simply have been lost.

In the end, however, the question of historicity is of little relevance for the tradition itself when compared to the question of whether a story or dialogue truthfully conveys the mind of Chan and effectively transmits its Dharma message. For the Chan tradition, the biographical information preserved in records establishes claims of lineage, and stories and dialogue raise problem consciousness in students and communicate points of practice—that is, they function as kōans. In fact, we do find later masters taking up such dialogues as teaching points in their own lectures.

The twelfth-century master Mi'an Xianjie, for example, comments on two of the above presented dialogues. With regard to the sequence that

begins, “Changcha asked a monk, ‘Where have you come from? ’” Mi’an comments:

> Punch for punch, kick for kick, punching and kicking by turns. Who loses, who wins? Nodding his head and wagging his tail, the monk passes the prison gate. Who would really believe the master’s word of cutting off his legs? But still, if there is just a small error, everyone will pick it up and examine it.

He later takes up the dialogue that begins, “The master heard the sound of a magpie,” commenting:

> They are moving the strings and singing a different tune. One sings and the other responds. The one who sings the tune sings increasingly high, and the one who responds is increasingly harsh. When they perform, they emulate the cacophony of Zhen and Wei. Although it looks chaotic, the five tones, the six rhythms, and their beat are in order.

On the surface these dialogues may seem to indicate that the master defeated the monk, but Mi’an reads them as Dharma battles between equals. Mi’an’s reason for choosing these dialogues was clearly to encourage his audience to have no fear of embarrassment or defeat, but to boldly challenge even their master, without consideration of their own inferior position. In this sense, the enigmatic dialogues became a rich source of Dharma instruction for the teachers who took them up.

It is also of interest to note that only the two oldest records refer to Master Changcha’s monastery and the places associated with the master, whereas many of those recorded subsequent to them do not speak of location but refer instead to the Ten Verses, the work most closely associated with the master. This likely reflects the fact that prior to publication of the Ten Verses in the *Jingde Era Record*, Master Changcha’s most prominent feature as a figure of the Chan pantheon was his association with Tong’an temple. The temple was renowned because of the spectacular natural landscape in which it was situated and because of its first abbot, Daopi.

Two of the above dialogues (numbered 14 and 15) allude to the fact that Changcha’s lineage died out quickly. These dialogues must have been

composed by writers of later generations who knew that Changcha's lineage actually died out quickly. In these and in the dialogue numbered 13, Master Changcha receives a somewhat unkind treatment. Another salient feature of most dialogues in the Assembled Essentials is that even if the questioning monks use ordinary language, Master Changcha speaks only in rich literary metaphors. On the one hand, these metaphors are less likely to have been produced in spontaneous speech than in premeditated writing, which points again to the fact that the dialogues were probably the product of creative writing. (Of course, this observation does not apply only to dialogues involving Tong'an Changcha.) On the other hand, the dialogues stress the master's erudition, and he projects a certain aloofness.

Overall, then, we may say that many of the later dialogues, especially those in the Assembled Essentials, seem to represent a reconstructed image of Master Changcha as he might have been imagined based on the sparse biographical information available in the *Jingde Era Record* and based on what character might be gleaned from the Ten Verses. Namely, he appears to be an eminently erudite and enlightened person but not particularly successful as a teacher. At least part of the dialogues, especially those in the Assembled Essentials, may thus be seen as playful inventions by later writers who were catering to the curiosity and imagination of a community of Chan students who only knew Changcha's famous poems and were eager for further stories about his life.

In contrast, the historically accurate core of information about the master—to the extent that we can say that there is any—is most likely limited to what is found in the *Collection from the Ancestors' Hall*. The dialogue here represents a relatively innocent and straightforward question-and-answer session between a Way-seeking monk and a master, rather than a highly stylized and sophisticated Dharma battle, such as those we find in the Assembled Essentials. The two dialogues from the *Record of Equanimity* and the *Empty Hall Anthology* are, again, quite different in their succinctness.

In conclusion, the biographical information available to us regarding Master Changcha that we might consider reliable is quite sparse. The many dialogues involving the master that emerged in later Chan records are likely of little value in terms of the image of the master that they provide. However, they do indirectly tell us something about the high

esteem afforded to Master Changcha's Ten Verses by subsequent generations in the Chan community. What we may reliably say about Master Changcha is that he was a very modest figure, the head of an apparently minor temple, that his lineage ended in the generation following his own with a practically anonymous Dharma heir, and he thus had very little impact on the history of Chan lineages. Those entries related to the master in contemporary records were brief and rather stiff. Under normal circumstances, he would have ended up as a historical footnote in later records. We have no other plausible explanation for the later proliferation of stories about Master Changcha than the fame afforded him by the Ten Verses, the content of which we will now explore.

THE TITLE AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT

THE TITLE *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* is not attributed to Tong'an Changcha himself. It would hardly have been appropriate for an author to title his work in such a self-congratulatory way. The title was most likely added to the verses by Fayan Wenyi, the presumptive author of their accompanying preface. In some editions of the *Jingde Era Record*, the poems are simply labeled as "Ten poems by Chan master Tong'an [Chang]cha," or in the abridged Song versions as "Eight poems by Chan master Tong'an." It is common for sets of poems by specific masters to be given simple titles like this in the Chinese Chan records.

The title that is of most interest to us here will be the title by which the work is most well known: *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* (*Shixuantan* 十玄談). Despite the fact that this title was a later addition to the work, it provides some interpretation of the contents of the poems. In Chinese the title consists of the three characters: *shi* 十, meaning "ten," *xuan* 玄, meaning "dark" or "deep," and *tan* 談, meaning "talk," "discussion," or "conversation." The sequence of characters that comprise the Chinese title may be analyzed in three ways: namely as *shixuan-tan*, as *shi-xuantan*, or as *shi-xuan-tan*.

When analyzed in the first way, the compound *shixuan*—comprised of the characters for "ten" and "dark; deep; mysterious"—can be read as an abbreviation of *shixuanmen* 十玄門—comprised of the characters for "ten," "dark; deep; mysterious," and the character *men* 門, meaning "gate." A natural English translation of *shixuanmen* would be "ten gates to deep mystery" or "ten mysterious (or profound) gates." If we expand the title of the Ten Verses in this way, it reads *shixuanmen-tan*—"a talk on the ten gates to deep mystery" or "a talk on the ten mysterious (or profound) gates." "The ten gates" are a concept developed in Huayan Buddhism—a philosophically oriented Buddhist sect that flourished in Tang and Song

period China and is generally considered to have been the pinnacle of Chinese intellectual or academic Buddhism.

The Huayan tradition began following the translation of the Flower Garland Sutra into Chinese in the fifth century CE and is associated with a line of original Buddhist philosophers and thinkers that culminates in the early ninth-century figure of Guifeng Zongmi. The tradition originally emphasized theory and doctrine over practice or dhyāna and was thus opposed to Chan. Zongmi, who was also a recognized Chan master, worked to resolve the opposition between Huayan and Chan by establishing a lineage of patriarchs in parallel to Chan practices and by advocating a more equitable balance between theory and practice. Huayan Buddhism is generally perceived to have declined after Zongmi, as it never produced a figure of the same renown again. However, it did survive as an institution, at least in name, throughout the Song period, and it continued to compete with the Chan tradition for the right to administer temples and monasteries. The classical writings of Huayan Buddhism also continued to influence Chan and other schools of Buddhism.

The term "ten gates" is used with both a general and a specific technical sense in Huayan Buddhism. In its technical sense, the term refers to the "ten profound gates" enumerated in Huayan doctrine. The enumeration of these gates, as presented by Yongming Yanshou, a contemporary of Tong'an Changcha, is as follows: [32]

1. The gate of simultaneous completion and response
2. The gate of the mutual inclusion, and yet difference, of the one and many
3. The gate of revelation and concealment in secrecy
4. The gate of Indra's net
5. The gate of the endowment of all qualities
6. The gate of the mastery
7. The gate of the concordance
8. The gate of ten lifetimes
9. The gate of the reliance on phenomena
10. The gate of the excellent creation through the transformation of the mind only

These ten gates are said to analytically represent the interpenetration of all phenomena and their correlation to the mind. When used in a more general sense, however, the term "ten gates" refers simply to the ten entrances to understanding Buddhist teaching and practice. Given that the *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* do not refer at all to anything like the ten gates in their technical sense, we must understand their inclusion in the title of the poem as a more general reference to penetrative understanding of the Buddhadharma.

If we read the Chinese title of the Ten Verses in the second way described above, analyzing *shixuantan* as *shi-xuantan*, that is, as comprised of "ten" and "profound talks," the title then reads "ten profound talks." Reading the title in this way is justified by the fact that the originally Taoist term *xuantan*, or "profound talk," had already been adopted for use in Chinese commentaries on Buddhist sutras by Master Changcha's time. The Profound Discourse on the Flower Garland Sutra (*Huayan Xuantan* or *Huayan Shuchao Xuantan*) by Chengguan, a central figure of Tang period Buddhism, was one such well-known commentary. Whoever titled Master Changcha's poems would almost certainly have been aware of this work. *Xuantan* went on to be used in later Buddhist texts as an independent noun meaning "profound discourse." So if we parse the title in this way, we understand it to be a eulogizing title in praise of the great depth of the poems. This is the most straightforward reading of the Chinese title, which we have chosen to follow in this book. Finally, if we parse the Chinese title as *shi-xuan-tan*, the title then means "ten talks on the profound."

While in Buddhism the numbers three, five, and seven are often treated as particularly auspicious numbers, the number ten was of greater importance in Huayan doctrine. The core text of the Huayan school, the Flower Garland Sutra, is famous for its explanation of the ten bodhisattva stages, and a large number of Huayan texts and doctrines were organized around the number ten. [33] Since the ten poems contain numerous references to Huayan concepts, it is quite likely that Tong'an Changcha purposefully composed ten verses in keeping with the significance of the number, even if he himself did not title the work. Fayan Wenyi, who composed the preface for and probably coined the title for the Ten Verses, also composed a major work called the *Ten Normative Treatises on the Chan School*. Wenyi's book is also arranged in ten parts. Thus, given that the

number ten was of great importance in the Huayan tradition, and that "ten gates" was both a fundamental concept used in Huayan doctrine and a general term used repeatedly throughout the literature that school produced, it is safe to say that the title given to Master Changcha's poem would have immediately invoked associations with Huayan thought, especially among erudite readers.

After all, at the time of Master Changcha, less than a century after Zongmi, the Huayan tradition was still a formidable presence on the Chinese religious landscape. It is only natural to imagine that it would have presented both a challenge to and a stimulating influence on the Chan that existed during Master Changcha's life. We may even speculate, based on the numerous allusions to Huayan concepts in the poems, that there existed some connection between Master Changcha or his students and Huayan tradition that has escaped the scant biographical records that come down to us from his immediate era.

Apart from Huayan Buddhism, Chinese Chan also drew terms and concepts from Taoist traditions. As Sekkei Harada indicates in his own comments on the title of this work, the term "depth" (*xuan*) can be ultimately traced back to Taoist literature. The Tao Te Ching, for example, ends its first poem with the famous line, "Deep and again deep: the gateway to all mystery." [34] Since both Chan and Huayan Buddhism appropriated Taoist concepts and terminology, the term *xuan* (depth/mystery) could have found its way into the title either via Huayan or as a direct appropriation from Taoist works.

So the title given to Master Changcha's poems resonates with both Huayan and Taoist ideas, although in their contents they resonate more deeply with Huayan alone. The fact that the poem is structured around the number ten further indicates the influence of Huayan Buddhism on the work. Fayan Wenyi's title, therefore, ambiguously evokes associations with both Huayan doctrine and Taoism, a choice that highlights important aspects of the poem and would have attracted the curiosity of contemporary readers. Read in the most straightforward way, the title further elevates the poems and cements their place among Chan literature as "Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth."

A Synopsis of the Verses

All of the ten verses, in turn, have titles of their own. The verses that comprise the work are each composed of eight lines, and each of these lines are comprised of seven Chinese characters. The composition of each verse is subject to rules of tone and rhyme. This style of verse is known as *qi-lü*, or "seven-character, eight-line regulated verse," and was a metrical pattern created in the Tang period. [35] As a rule one or two Classical Chinese characters correspond to one word in English. However, in the translation given in this book we have not made any attempt to render either the symmetry in length nor the rhyme, which would have been a daunting task—nearly impossible if one privileges accuracy of content over formal rendering. Thus it will be difficult for those who do not read Chinese to fully appreciate the ingenuity of the poetic composition, in which everything seems to fall naturally into the tight constraints of the formal structure.

The following paragraphs are intended to give a short summary of the set of poems, breaking it up into its component parts. Issues that are explained in some detail in the main body of this book will not be repeated here. The first five verses are concerned with doctrine and have the following titles:

1. The Mind Seal
2. The Mind of the Enlightened Ones
3. The Unfathomable Function
4. The Transcendent within Dust and Dirt
5. The Buddhist Teaching; variant: Expounding the Teaching

"The Mind Seal" (*xinyin*) presents the central issue of Dharma transmission as a starting point for the work as a whole. The "seal" refers to a master's confirmation of his or her disciple as Dharma heir. The Dharma, however, cannot be grasped by words and Dharma transmission is difficult to accomplish. All things, including the Dharma, originate in emptiness. But this does not mean that one can attain the Dharma by having an empty mind (*wuxin;* sometimes translated as "no-mind"). This verse and Sekkei Harada's comments on it emphasize that in the Chan/Zen tradition the ultimate goal of practice is the transmission of the Dharma from one generation to the next, and the ultimate vocation of

master and disciple is to continue the lineage of transmission rather than to gain realization or achievement purely for oneself.

The title of the second verse, “The Mind of the Enlightened Ones” (*zuyi*), bears a number of allusions. Read literally, it means the “mind of the ancestors.” Sometimes this is interpreted to specifically mean the “mind or spirit of Bodhidharma coming from the West.” Interpreted more broadly, it can mean “Buddhist practices of the Chan tradition as opposed to those of other schools of Buddhism.” It is given as the title of this verse in apparent contrast to the concept of “empty mind” or “no-mind” touched upon in the previous verse. Having denied that an empty mind is the goal of Buddhist practice, the author next denies that the enlightened mind is the result of achievement. The verse specifically denies the validity of step-by-step, gradual progress toward awakening represented by the forty-two ranks from bodhisattva to buddha. Since these intermediate ranks have not yet reached real insight they have no real value. Instead, the Dharma is realized instantaneously in a manner incomprehensible to ordinary human thought. The central contrast in this verse is between the golden carp, a metaphor for a brilliant figure with excessive abilities, and the stone horse, a metaphor for a figure of utmost simplicity who lacks ambition. Counterintuitively, it is the stone horse that manages to make the ultimate leap. The last two lines of the verse criticize teachings that attempt to explain the Dharma in every detail. In summary, “The Mind of the Enlightened Ones” is thus a rejection of approaches to Buddhism that are based on concepts of empty mind, on stepwise achievement, and on detailed textual exegeses.

The concept of numerous bodhisattva stages toward enlightenment, ranging from four to fifty-seven, was popular in Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. [36] The thirty lower bodhisattva stages and the ten higher mentioned in the third and fourth lines of “The Mind of the Enlightened Ones” correspond to the forty-two-stage system laid out in the Flower Garland Sutra, the foundation on which the Huayan tradition based its doctrines. Aside from practices of the Huayan tradition, Master Changcha may also have been referring to contemporary Chan practices. Although the “sudden” approach associated with the Southern School of Chan had prevailed over the allegedly “gradualist” approach of the Northern School and gradualism was discredited long before Master Changcha’s time, the dichotomy between the two approaches was probably much less

pronounced in reality, and practices may in general have been rather gradualist. [37] Prominent figures, such as Yongmin Yangshou, even openly advocated a gradual bodhisattva path to enlightenment. It is not a stretch to imagine the last two lines, if aimed at a specific group, as referring to the Huayan School, given its philosophical orientation and principal concern with detailed discussion and analysis of doctrine. Interestingly, "The Mind of the Enlightened Ones" is one of the two verses that were removed from early Song editions of the *Jingde Era Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*. It may be nothing but coincidence, but considering that this is the verse that most explicitly criticizes other approaches to Buddhism, it is conceivable that editors made a conscious decision to remove it.

The verse entitled "The Unfathomable Function" features the same originally Taoist term "unfathomable" (*xuan*) that appears prominently in the title of the overall work. Its appearance in the title to this verse may have been Fayan Wenyi's inspiration for titling the work. "The Unfathomable Function" begins again with admonitions against end of the world beliefs and secular thought. The first clearly refers to the millenarianism and Maitreya worship that had been historically popular movements in Chinese Buddhism, and the second likely refers to Confucianism or popular religious practices. In contrast to such beliefs and practices, true buddha nature is held to be ubiquitous and to transcend all bounds, even those of the Buddhist teaching. Buddha nature, to recapitulate the previous verse, exists independent of gradual practice and cultivation. As a culmination of this discourse on the unbounded nature of the Dharma, Master Changcha advises us to avoid trying to emulate the example of the ancestors and instead to realize our own Dharma. The independent path to this realization is metaphorically represented by two Buddhist symbols of purity, namely the ox and fire. Combined as they are into a single metaphor, they represent the courage and determination required on such an independent path.

The verse entitled "The Transcendent within Dust and Dirt" begins by stating that defilements and delusion on the one hand and enlightenment or highest wisdom on the other are each simply what they are and share the same empty nature. The following lines draw on traditional Chinese cultural knowledge: the story of Bianhe's jade revolves around a jewel in the guise of an ordinary stone that is recognized by no one but a humble

peasant and comes from Legalist and Confucian literature; and the metaphor of the jewel of the black dragon comes from Taoist lore. Taken together they illustrate the point that buddha nature, the most precious object, is already ubiquitously present and need only be recognized and appreciated for what it is. The verse goes on to suggest that it is in fact the myriad Buddhist teachings that obscure the presence of the buddha nature, and that the buddha nature will clearly appear once the teachings have been discarded. The closing lines of the verse mirror "The Unfathomable Function," urging us not to imitate the paths of past buddhas and ancestors, and praising the determination of those that proceed on paths independent of previous teachings.

The final verse in this opening series of five "doctrinal" verses is entitled "The Buddhist Teaching." It delves in some detail into the status of the three vehicles and of the Buddhist teachings alluded to in the previous two verses. Master Changcha puts forward the view that although Buddha sometimes taught contradictory teachings, they are nevertheless all fundamentally one. This position is known as the doctrine of "one vehicle" and was especially propagated in Huayan and Tiantai Buddhism. The verse goes on to say that all Buddhist scriptures, even the most advanced teachings of the Mahayana schools, are merely temporary expedients. "The treasury of sutras in the Dragon Palace" may refer either to all Buddhist sutras or specifically to the Flower Garland Sutra, which according to legend was retrieved from the Dragon Palace. "Buddha's last teaching" refers specifically to the Nirvana Sutra. Here, the point is that the Buddhist teachings resemble a prescription or medicine—that is, they are only a means to an end. Consequently, even total immersion into the teaching will not lead to true realization. A single dualistic thought is enough to cause a person, who is otherwise living in total purity according to the teachings, to be lost in the cycle of life and death for eternity.

We may see this verse as a final rebuke of philosophically oriented forms of Buddhism, such as Huayan, that place doctrine above practice. Likewise, if the Buddhist teachings are only a temporary expedient, and even the most profound sutras cannot reach the ultimate, then the *Ten Verses of Unfathomable Depth* must only be an expedient as well, and should not be imagined to represent the Dharma itself. No matter how much we study Buddhist teachings and immerse ourselves in them, we will never

actually attain the Mind Seal by doing so. When we have arrived at a good understanding of the teaching as encapsulated in the first five verses, we must then begin to practice. Thus, the second group of five verses principally discusses the practice of Chan. The verses are given the following titles:

6. The Song of Returning Home (Returning to the Root)
7. The Song of Not Returning Home (Returning to the Source)
8. The Revolving Function (Changing Ranks and Returning)
9. Changing Ranks [and Returning] (The Revolving Function)
10. Before the Rank of the Absolute ([After Passing] One Color)[38]

The titles of the second set of five poems vary much more than those of the first set. We have given preference to the titles as recorded in the Chrestomathy and have placed variant titles in parentheses after these. If Mu'an Shanqing actually retrieved the poems from Master Changcha's temple, as he claimed, then the titles given in the Chrestomathy should be the most reliable ones. The greatest variance in titling may be that of the seventh verse. The more provocative Chrestomathy title corresponds better to the contents of that verse than does the variant. The Chrestomathy also presents a clearly more accurate choice of titles for the eighth and ninth verses, where the variants have reversed the titles. Given that verse nine refers directly to changing ranks, the Chrestomathy titling seems more apt there. Concerning the titles given to the tenth verse, both "Before the Rank of the Absolute" and "After Passing One Color" render the poem's purport faithfully, provided that the "before" here actually refers to a stage "transcending absoluteness," as the *Zengaku Daijiten* suggests. [39]

One can divide the five "practical" verses roughly into three parts—namely, verses that deal with practice toward enlightenment (six and seven), verses that deal with post-enlightenment practice (eight and nine), and a verse that deals with the stage beyond post-enlightenment practice (ten).

The verses entitled "The Song of Returning Home" and "The Song of Not Returning Home" form a pair. The first urges us to move constantly toward the metaphorical home, toward our original nature, and not to get stuck along the way. The second reverses the perspective of the first,

exposing the inherent contradiction between the concept of a journey home and the concept of ultimate nonexistence of a Way or a goal in Chan teaching and practice. The "King of Emptiness" is an epithet for the historical Buddha, but it also refers to the buddha of the coming "age of emptiness" and may echo the warning against millenarianism delivered in the fourth verse. The third and the fourth line admonish us to neither to get comfortable in an unbound and carefree life as mendicants nor to get stuck in enlightenment or enlightenment-like experiences, since neither are the ultimate goal. Master Changcha reports from his own experience how he regrets wasting time stuck in various conditions of practice. Though the final lines of the verse seem desolate, they positively indicate that the return home is only possible when one has lost and given up everything. The first two lines of the seventh verse immediately contradict the previous verse by stating that there actually is no "home" to return to. The four middling lines of the seventh verse again warn against getting stuck, this time in meditational practices or in a superficially peaceful state. The final lines of the verse express the insoluble contradiction, the paradox, laid out in the two verses.

The eighth and ninth verses, entitled "The Revolving Function" and "Changing Ranks," also form a pair. This pair picks up where the previous verses left off. While the previous verses warned of the danger of growing attached to the mendicant's life and to certain states of experience, this verse warns of the danger of getting stuck in the comfort of temple life as a monk and being spoiled by the veneration that ordinary people have for one wearing a monk's robes. The "castle of nirvana" may be taken to refer to a physical place, such as a temple or monastery, or to a psychological state, such as the condition of total peace of mind or enlightenment. The third and the fourth lines criticize any gap between appearance and substance in monks. Master Changcha's indignation for monks wearing precious robes is apparently even greater than his indignation toward monks who work to deliberately appear poor. Monks who take on the superficial appearance of buddhas are contrasted with "wooden men" and "stone women," symbols for real freedom and true enlightenment. The eighth verse also ends in paradox, urging the reader to realize the impossible through continuous effort.

Verse nine presents the logical consequence of the dilemma represented in verse eight. Instead of retaining the superficial appearance

of a buddha in monk's clothing and choosing the misleading peace and safety of life as a monk, we are urged to renounce the comfort of the monastery for a certain time and enter secular life, or the world of constant rebirth, as a way to transcend absoluteness or enlightenment. This verse was also deleted from early editions of the poem. If the deletion occurred as an editorial decision, rather than as an accidental scribal omission, we must ask why editors would have chosen to delete this verse. If the editors had to sacrifice a verse in parallel to the controversial second verse, this one may just have been the one most easily removed without seriously impairing the overall work. The theme of constantly moving on and not becoming stuck in comfortable physical or psychological conditions has already been expressed in the previous verses, and so the ninth verse may have been seen as merely elaborating on those. Another possibility may be that the explicit suggestion to renounce monastic life and reenter the secular world may have been perceived as provocative or threatening by those interested in maintaining a strict monastic order and presenting Buddhist practice as moving along a stepwise ascent up a monastic career ladder. It may be that in this case the two most provocative verses were deleted.

While we may expect the last verse to express highest praise of those who have finally proceeded beyond enlightenment and completely transcended both delusion and enlightenment, or the relative and the absolute, in fact, it states almost the opposite. The final verse, entitled "Before the Rank of the Absolute," hands us the strongest warning of all, cautioning of the pitfalls that await us even at this advanced stage. Even those who come this far "trip and stumble." The third and the fourth lines of this verse again warn of deceptive appearances. What may superficially appear to be enlightenment or buddhahood may in fact be something else. The fifth and the sixth lines say those who are convinced of their own buddhahood are inevitably mistaken. The ultimate truth cannot be captured or pinned down with words but is beyond recognition and perception. The overall gist of the tenth verse echoes that of the first: it is difficult to realize the Mind Seal, and Dharma transmission is a rare event to be handled with caution. The tenth verse tells us that even a student who has progressed through practice and enlightenment, as explained in verses six through eight, and who has transcended enlightenment, as

explained in verse nine, does not qualify for transmission if even a trace of self-consciousness or consciousness of those achievements remains.

Overall, the ten verses are mostly a series of cautions and warnings to students of Chan. Instead of setting up some fixed doctrine, Way, method, or end point of practice, the verses constantly deny them. The poems continually pull the rug out from under us, urging us to move ever onward, never to be satisfied with our current condition and achievements, however wonderful they may seem. The first five verses urge us to study. They emphasize teaching (*jiao*) rather than practice (*chan*), not so as to rely solely on the study of scripture, but as the ground for future practice. The second five verses urge us to practice. We must not be satisfied with any condition, however harmonious and gratifying it may be, and must transcend even the comfort of religious status or the condition of enlightenment. In the end we must transcend both the absolute and the relative, and then transcend transcendence itself.

The fame that the Ten Verses earned its author may be due to the beauty of its composition and its formal perfection, which are difficult to capture in English. Moreover, its strict and uncompromising attitude toward teaching, practice, and Dharma transmission must have struck a chord with teachers and students of Chan, a tradition in which the standard for the ultimate goal of transmission has always been elusive and the line between master and imposter has always been subtle. As the following section shows, the Ten Verses also resonated very well with Sekkei Harada's concerns about contemporary Zen practice.