Poetry and Chan 'Gong'an':

From Xuedou Chongxian (980–1052)

to Wumen Huikai (1183–1260)

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Introduction

Although writing poems had long been a common activity among Buddhist clerics, it was in the Chan Buddhism of the Song dynasty (960–1279) that religious doctrine and poetic writing were well integrated into a distinctive literary genre. Poetic texts, often called *song* 頌 (poems or verses of praise) by Chan authors themselves, became an indispensable component of Chan *gong'an* 公案 (public case) texts, and Chan monks were a prominent group among the Song cultured elite. This paper explores the role of poetry in the development of the Chan *gong'an* tradition. It focuses on two of the *gong'an* anthologies produced during this period: *Xuedou songgu ji* 雪竇頌古集 (*Collection of Xuedou's Verses of Praise on [One Hundred] Old [Cases]*; also known as *Baize songgu* 百則頌古)[1] by Xuedou Chongxian 雪竇重顯 (980–1052) of the Yunmen 雲門 Chan school, and *Chanzong wumen guan* 禪宗無門

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1. Its complete title is *Xuedou Xian heshang Mingjue dashi songgu ji* 雪竇顯和尚明覺大師頌古集 (hereafter cited as *SGJ*), in *Sibu Congkan* 四部叢刊 (hereafter *SBCK*) *Xubian jibu* 續編集部 ser. 2 (Shanghai: Hanfen Lou, 1935), v. 370. There is no independent version of this text in Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds., *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (hereafter *T*), 85 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932), or *Xuzang jing* 續藏經 (hereafter *XZJ*), 150 vols. (Copied by Xianggang yingyin *Xuzang jing* weiyuan hui, 1967).

關 (*Gateless Barrier of the Chan Lineage*)[2] by Wumen Huikai 無門慧開 (1183–1260) of the Linji 臨濟 Chan school.

Xuedou's *Songgu ji* formed the textual basis for the Linji master Yuanwu Keqin's 圓悟克勤 (1063–1135) lectures on *gong'an*, which further led to the compilation of one of the largest *gong'an* anthologies, the *Biyan lu* 碧巖錄 (*Blue Cliff Record*).[3] As to Wumen's *Wumen guan*, it epitomized the development of *gong'an* in the Linji Chan tradition and is now one of the widely translated Chan texts in the West.[4] An examination of the poetry on *gong'an* in these two Chan masters' works may bring into focus the importance of poetry in Chan discourse while also shedding some light on the seemingly enigmatic *gong'an* cases produced in the Chan Buddhism of the Song.

During the last two decades Western studies of Chan *gong'an* have begun to emerge from the shadow of early Japanese Zen scholarship and to examine the use of *gong'an* beyond internal sectarian debates. Scholars have pointed out that the notion that *gong'an* were used for meditation to induce a sudden awakening is derived mainly from the Linji Chan tradition.[5] Most recently Robert H. Sharf has further argued that the often nonsensical, riddle-like Chan cases were by no means "designed to forestall intellection"; rather, like the records of criminal cases set on a magistrate's desk (*an* 案), they were "authoritative precedents and rhetorical models of how a Chan trainee was to respond to doctrinal quandaries and challenges."[6] Chan *gong'an*, as Sharf

2. *Wumen guan* (hereafter *WMG*), *T* 2005, 48.292a–299a.

3. *Biyan lu* (hereafter *BYL*), *T* 2003, 48.139a–224b. For textual information, see Isshū Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *Zen Dust: The History of the Koan and Koan Study in Rinzai (Lin-chi) Zen* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966), 356–358. For translation, see Thomas Cleary and Christopher Cleary, trans., *The Blue Cliff Record*, 3 vols. (Boulder: Shambala, 1977); also Katsuki Sekida, *Two Zen Classics: Mumonkan and Hekiganroku* [3rd ed.] (New York: Weatherhill, 1996). Both works were useful for my translation of Xuedou's *SGJ*.

4. In addition to Katsuki Sekida's *Two Zen Classics*, see also Kōun Yamada, trans., *Gateless Gate* [2nd ed.] (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990) and Thomas Cleary, trans., *No Barrier: Unlocking the Zen Koan: A New Translation of the Zen Classic Wumenguan* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1993); these translations were helpful as I produced my rendition for this paper. For more information about the translations of this Chan text, see the introduction by Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, "Kōan Tradition: Self-Narrative and Contemporary Perspectives," in Heine and Wright, eds., *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14 n. 3.

5. See the essays included in *The Kōan*, edited by Heine and Wright, one of the most current, groundbreaking Western works on Chan/Zen *gong'an/kōan*.

6. Robert H. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan *Gong'an*," in Charlotte Furth, Judith T. Zeitlin,

compellingly shows, were not devoid of doctrinal purport; they were cases intended to teach practitioners how to "think" and even "act" in accord with Chan ideals.

To be clear, most, if not all, of the academic studies on Chinese Chan Buddhism recognize the fact that there is nothing arcane or esoteric about *gong'an*, and that the so-called "sudden enlightenment" in Chan is probably not a mystical vision attained miraculously through a divine revelation, but a calm contemplative state of mind cultivated through a critical self-understanding. Even scholars who study how *gong'an* should be approached as meditative objects from the Linji viewpoint are quick to point out that the Chan *gong'an* was by no means intended to quell thoughts, but rather to help students engage in a Chan way of thinking, cultivate a Chan mind, and foster a Chan worldview.[7] On the other hand, if there is more that we can know about how students were taught to read and think about *gong'an* by Chan masters of the Song, poetry as an integral part of the *gong'an* texts deserves some attention.

First, though hymns or verses (*gāthā*, called *ji* 偈 or *jisong* 偈頌 in Chinese) played an important role in Buddhist discourse,[8] it may be no accident that

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and Ping-chen Hsiung, eds., *Thinking With Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 229.

7. As Robert E. Buswell has said in his article on Chan meditation, "for Chan, thought (or "mentation") is not the issue but rather the attachment to thought—the mistaken belief that the concept of a thing is the thing itself. Conceptualization (*hsilun* [*xilun* 戲論], *prapañca*) is a form of projection, of imputing one's own vision of the world to the world itself, and assuming that to be the sole reality . . ." (331). In discussing the Linji *kanhua* Chan, he further points out that the explosion of the feeling of doubt, resulting from meditation on the key word of the *gong'an*, "destroys the bifurcating tendencies of thought as well . . . [T]hrough *k'an-hua* practice the mind opens into a new, all-inclusive perspective from which the limiting 'point of view' that is the ego (*ātmavāda*) is eliminated" (355); Robert E. Buswell, "The 'Short-cut' Approach of *K'an-hua* Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," in Peter N. Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 321–377.

8. The *Dhammapada* (*Words of the Doctrine*), a collection of sayings attributed to the Buddha, the *Theragāthā* (*Verses of the Elder Monks*), and the *Therīgāthā* (*Verses of the Elder Nuns*) are the early Buddhist works composed entirely in verse; see Robert E. Buswell, ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), vol. 1, 216–217, 303, and vol. 2, 625–626. Many Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures mix prose and verse; usually, after a narration in prose, a verse is composed to repeat and summarize the teaching or to praise a Buddha or Bodhisattva; see Damien Keown, ed., *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 100.

the term *song* 頌 was adopted in Song Chan circles to refer to the verses on *gong'an*. Given their literary backgrounds and social connections with lay literati,[9] it is reasonable to assume that the eminent Chan masters of this period were not only familiar with, but also conscious of, the long Chinese poetic tradition traced back to the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Odes* or *Classic of Poetry*), an anthology of 305 poems circulated around the 12th–7th centuries B.C.E. Listed as one of the Confucian classics, the *Shijing* is traditionally divided into four sections; poems (no. 266–305) in the "*song* 頌" section, as the title suggests, are mostly temple hymns recited in the rites of worship to celebrate ancestors and eulogize former rulers.[10] In a similar way, the *gong'an* verses were composed to commemorate the accomplishments of earlier Chan masters and patriarchs alluded to in earlier *gong'an*.

Secondly, the view that poetry is not only a vehicle for expressing one's intent or will, but also a stimulant for inspiring emotion, is deeply rooted in Chinese literary tradition.[11] Liu Xie 劉勰 (465?–520?) in his *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*), the first comprehensive work of Chinese literary theory and criticism, reiterates the ancient statement that "poetry expresses one's intent in word" (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志),[12] and points

9. The point that the leading Chan masters of the Song had close contacts with lay literati and tried hard to direct their teachings to this group has been made persuasively by some of the Western scholars of Song Chan Buddhism; see Robert M. Gimello, "Mārga and Culture: Learning, Letters, and Liberation in Northern Sung Ch'an," in Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Gimello, eds., *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 371–437; also Miriam Levering, "Dahui Zonggao and Zhang Shangying: The Importance of a Scholar in the Education of a Song Chan Master," in *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 30 (2000): 115–139.

10. Fu Lipu 傅隸樸, *Shijing Maozhuan yijie* 詩經毛傳譯解, 2 vols. (Taibei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1985); the section of "頌" is in vol. 2: 1053–1170. For discussion, see Burton Watson, *Early Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 228–229; Charles Hartman, "Poetry," in William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al., eds., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 2 vols. (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), vol. 1, 59–61; also Jeffrey Riegel, "*Shih-Ching* Poetry and Didacticism in Ancient Chinese Literature," in Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 102–103.

11. See James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963; reprinted 1983), 65–76; Jeffrey Riegel, "*Shih-Ching* Poetry," 108–109; and Dore J. Levy, "Literary Theory and Criticism," in *Columbia History of Chinese Literature*, 916–930.

12. This statement, attributed to the legendary sage-king Shun 舜, appears in the *Yushu* 虞書, "Shun dian 舜典"; Kong Anguo 孔安國 (130–90 B.C.E.), comp., *Shangshu* 尚書 (Taibei; National Central Library, 1991), 2: 42. The "Great Preface" ("*daxu* 大序") to the Mao-edition of

out that "*xing* means to 'arouse' (*xing zhe qi ye* 興者, 起也). . . . To arouse emotions (*qing* 情) one should initiate a proposition based on [the principle of] subtlety (*wei* 微). And once emotions are evoked, the essence of *xing* is established."[13] Zhong Hong 鍾嶸 (469?–518; alternatively Zhong Rong) in his *Shipin* 詩品 (*An Evaluation of Poetry*), the earliest Chinese work of literary criticism that focused exclusively on poetry, further defines the principle of *xing* as a mode of poetic expression that "yields a meaning beyond the words" (*wenyijin er yiyouyu xingye* 文已盡而義有餘, 興也).[14] Thus, if *gong'an* were produced to suggest that Chan be understood as "a special transmission outside the [scriptural] doctrines" (*jiaowai biechuan* 教外別傳),[15] then poetry surely had a crucial role in transmitting the "intents/meanings" (*yi* 意) beyond the "words" (*ju* 句) of the earlier patriarchs and masters.

Last but never the least, the Song was a period when there seemed to be a trend toward equating literary achievement to spiritual insight; poetic exercise complemented the experience of enlightenment, and enlightenment was manifested through the composition of poetry.[16] Poetry on *gong'an*, on the

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the *Shijing* further says: "Poetry is where one's intent goes; what is in the mind is intent, which, as emitted in words, becomes poetry" (詩者志之所之也, 在心爲志, 發言爲詩); *Shijing Maozhuan yijie*, vol. 1, 65. For Liu's citation and discussion, see "Illuminating Poetry" (*ming shi* 明詩), in *Wenxin diaolong jiaozhu* 文心雕龍校注 (Taibei: Shijie shuju, 1974), 2: 34.

13. In the *Lunyu* 論語 Confucius told his disciples to study the *Shijing* because "the poems [there] may be used to stimulate [emotions] (*shi keyi xing* 詩可以興). . . ." (17.9). Then, according to the "Great Preface" to the *Shijing*, there are six principles (*yi* 義) of poetry, and one of them is *xing*, metaphor or allusion; see *Shijing Maozhuan yijie*, vol. 1, 65. For Liu's definition of the *xing* principle, see the section of "*bi xing* 比興" in *Wenxin diaolong jiaozhu*, 8: 240.

14. See the preface by Zhong Hong to his *Shipin* (Taibei: Jinfeng chuban she, 1986), 32. For discussion, see Chia-Ying Yeh and Jan W. Walls, "Theory, Standards, and Practice of Criticizing Poetry in Chung Hung's *Shih-p'in*," in Ronald C. Miao, ed., *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, Inc., 1978), 43–80.

15. This phrase, together with "not depending upon words and letters" (*buli wenzi* 不立文字), became part of the Chan identity and appeared in many of the Chan works in the Song; see, for example, the preface to *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (hereafter *JDL*), *T* 2076, 51. 196b (though it is "教外別行"); and later the *Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事宛, *XZJ* 113.132a. For more information, see Robert M. Gimello, "Mārga and Culture," 412 n. 2.

16. Robert M. Gimello has noted that the Chan culture of the Song was "a sophisticated literati culture" and that "in this period poetic talent was widely regarded as a sign of spiritual attainment"; see Gimello, "Poetry and the *Kung-an* in Ch'an Practice," *Ten Directions* 7, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1986), 9–11. Many Song literati likewise shared the concept that poetic composition reflected the level of one's spiritual insight; see J. D. Schmidt, "Ch'an, Illusion, and Sudden Enlightenment in the Poetry of Yang Wan-li," *T'oung Pao* 60 (1974): 230–281; Schmidt, "The

one hand, served to express what the master had in mind and demonstrate his religious insight, and on the other hand, helped to stimulate thinking and evoke an experience of enlightenment like that believed to have been attained by former masters. A comparison of Xuedou's *Songgu ji* in the early Northern Song to Wumen's *Wumen guan* in the late Southern Song, moreover, indicates a shift of emphasis on the role of poetry in Chan *gong'an* texts. While poetry for Xuedou of the Yunmen Chan school was more a device to lead his general readers to appreciate and understand Chan enlightenment experience, it was used by Wumen of the Linji school as a means to direct his Chan students toward "contemplating" (*can* 參) *gong'an* or, more precisely, practicing the Linji *kanhua* Chan 看話禪 (Chan of investigating the critical phrase, *huatou* 話頭, of *gong'an*), as advocated by his former contemporary Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163). Thus as limited as the present paper is meant to be, it may explain at least in part how the *gong'an* as a literary piece would evolve into a "meditative object" assumed to "evoke" a spiritual experience in the Linji Chan tradition.

Poetic Activity among Buddhist Monks Prior to the Song

Early in the Tang, there were already monks renowned for their poetic talents and endeavors. Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842) might have been the first one to adopt the term "poet-monk" (*shiseng* 詩僧) to label Buddhist clergy—in particular, those who came from the Lower Yangtze Region—engaging themselves in poetic composition.[17] Several anecdotes recorded in the *Tangshi jishi* 唐詩紀事 (*Anecdotes about Tang Poetry*), compiled by Ji Yougong 計有功 of the Song, further tell us how friendship between monks and scholar-officials was established through poem exchanges, discussion of the fine points of certain couplets, or debate over the choice of key words.[18] Perhaps even more

'Live Method' of Yang Wan-li," in *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, 287–319; also Richard John Lynn, "The Sudden and the Gradual in Chinese Poetry Criticism: An Examination of the Ch'an-Poetry Analogy," in *Sudden and Gradual*, 381–427.

17. Liu's comment on the "poet-monks" from the southeastern region can be found in *Tangshi jishi* (hereafter *TSJS*), in *Yingyin wenyuange siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (hereafter *SKQS*) *jibu* 集部 (Taibei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1983–1986), 72: 3a–b, in v. 1479: 979. Also see the section on the poet-monks in Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry—The High T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 282–295.

18. *TSJS*, 72–77, in *SKQS*, v. 1479: 978–1016. In particular, see the poems written to scholar-

interesting is that, as Stephen Owen has noted, the genuinely religious poems only formed a tiny part of these poet-monks' writings; most of their poems were not about Buddhist messages but about secular themes.[19]

Poetic activity among Buddhist clergy continued through the Tang to the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (906–960). Composing poetry was a way to make social connections, and poetic talent was highly appreciated among the secular elite. Guanxiu 貫休 (832–912), a native of Zhejiang who later moved to Sichuan, was a prolific poet.[20] His reputation as a poet-monk made him a frequent guest not only within the circles of the literati but also at the court of the Former Shu (907–925). His poetry was praised by his contemporaries for being "satirical and yet subtle, able to educate and transform [people], and not inferior to [that of] the two Lis—[Li] Bo 李白 (701–762) and [Li] He 李賀 (790–816)—in terms of style and tone."[21]

As mentioned already, although these Buddhist monks were well known for their poetic writings, most of their poems tended to shun Buddhist teachings and instead focused more on non-religious themes. Therefore, in terms of using poetry as a means to express religious insight and doctrinal understanding, monks of the Chan school—that is, those who were recognized as Dharma-heirs in Chan tradition—played a pivotal role in perpetuating this tradition.[22] Needless to say, the best-known Chan poems are the two "mind-verses" (*xinji* 心偈) recorded in the *Liuzu tanjing* 六祖壇經 (*Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*), attributed respectively to Shenxiu 神秀 (606?–706) and Huineng 慧能 (638–713), the two contenders for the status of Sixth Patriarch of the Chan school.[23] It is said that the poem by Huineng received high praise from the Fifth Patriarch Hongren 弘忍 (601–674) for its spontaneous insight

officials by Monk Lingche 靈澈, 979–981; by Monk Jiaoran 皎然, 987–990; by Monk Wenxiu 文秀, 991–992; and by Monk Qiji 齊己, 999–1002.

19. Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, 282–283.

20. Guanxiu's biography can be found in Zanning's 贊寧 (919–1001) *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (hereafter SGSZ) 30, in *T* 2061, 50.897a10-b18. His poetic collection, entitled *Chanyue ji* 禪月集, is included in *SKQS*, v. 1084: 423–530. In addition, some of his poems are included in the *Quan wudai shi* 全五代詩, 2 cases, compiled by Li Diaoyuan 李調元 of the Qing (reprint, Shanghai: Huangshan shushe, 1991), 47–55.

21. *SGSZ* 30, *T* 50.897b6–7.

22. Du Songbo 杜松柏, *Chanxue he Tangsong shixue* 禪學和唐宋詩學 (Taibei: Liming wenhua chuban she, 1976), 197–204; also see Jan Yün-hua, "Buddhist Literature," in *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, vol. 1, 7–8.

23. *Tanjing*, *T* 2007, 48.337c1–2 and 338a7–8.

and non-dualistic thinking. As a result, Hongren appointed Huineng, not Shenxiu, as his legitimate successor in the Chan lineage of mind-to-mind transmission.[24]

What is most worthy of note here is that this incident recorded in Chan history, regardless of its dubious origin, has an unequivocal message: that is, the capacity to demonstrate one's understanding of Chan through poetic creation became a functional equivalent to the level of one's spiritual progress. As an indication of this recognition, the Chan "lamp histories" (*denglu* 燈錄) compiled during the tenth and eleventh centuries are filled with poems written by early renowned Chan masters. The *Xinxin ming* 信心銘 ("Inscription of the Mind of Faith"), attributed to the Third Patriarch Shencan 神璨 (d. 606), is an influential, and often cited, verse about the Way of Chan.[25] Yongjia Xuanjue 永嘉玄覺 (665–713) is said to have composed the *Zhengdao ge* 證道歌 ("Song of Realizing the Dao") to demonstrate his understanding of the Mahāyāna doctrine of Buddha-nature (*Tathāgatagarbha*; Chi. *rulai zang* 如來藏) and sudden teaching (*dunjiao* 頓教) expounded by the Sixth Patriarch Huineng.[26] Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700–790) is said to have composed the *Cantong qi* 參同契 ("Verse on Investigating Equality") to instruct people how to practice Chan.[27] Their poems are often classified by modern Chinese scholars as the "doctrinal poems" (*shifa shi* 示法詩)—that is, poems that reveal the Dharma.[28] In addition, many Chan masters wrote

24. According to John R. McRae, it was mainly owing to Zongmi's 宗密 (780–841) interpretation of these two "mind-verses" that the distinction between the Northern School and the Southern School as "gradual" vs. "sudden" became widely known. See John R. McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 4–6.

25. It is included in the *JDC*, 30, *T* 51.457a–b; for the independent text, see *T* 2010, 48.376b–377a. Its opening line—"The ultimate Dao is not difficult; it only shuns those who like to pick and choose (*zhidao wunan weixian jianze* 至道無難, 唯嫌揀擇)"—later even became a popular *gong'an*; see case 2 in *BYL* 1, *T* 48.141b27–28; also cases 57–59 in *BYL* 6, 191a–c.

26. It is included in *JDL* 30, 460a–461b; see also *T* 2014, 48.395c-396c for the independent text. The text is filled with references to the *Tathāgatagarbha* and sudden awakening to one's original mind; as one of the lines reads, "A sudden awakening and realization of the *Tathāgatagarbha* (*dunjueliao rulaizang* 頓覺了如來藏)," *T* 51.460a20.

27. Monks Jing 靜 and Yun 筠, comp., *Zutang ji* 祖堂集 (hereafter *ZTJ*) [952], re-edited by Yanagida Seizan, in *Zengaku sōsho* 禪學叢書, no. 4 (copied by Kyoto: Chūbun shuppan sha, 1984), 4: 77b–78a; included also in *JDL* 30, *T* 51.459b7–21.

28. Du Songbo, for example, uses the term "示法詩" to refer to all the poems uttered by Chan masters during their public sermons, in private instruction, and on their deathbed, though he also

poems at the moment when they reached enlightenment. To give just one example, Lingyun Zhiqin 靈雲志勤 (fl. mid-8th c.) is noted for writing a poem celebrating his enlightenment upon seeing the peach blossoms.[29] His poem, then, can be classified in the category of "poems on awakening" (*kaiwu shi* 開悟詩). Besides, it seems to have been a customary practice for Chan masters to write so-called "deathbed poems" (*shiji shi* 示寂詩) just before their death.[30] As we shall see, in the Song the use of poetry to illuminate the main gist of Chan *gong'an* became a unique aspect of Chan literature.[31]

Chan's Response to the Song Civil Order: The Trend toward "Songgu" (Eulogizing the Old Cases in Verse) and Literary Pursuits

A notable trend in Chan Buddhism of the Song was its prolific production of writings, also known as the rise of *wenzi* Chan 文字禪 (lettered Chan).[32] What may perhaps be further suggested here is that such a trend toward literary pursuits was mainly a result of Chan monks' response to the early Song court's civil (*wen* 文) policy. Soon after bringing an end to a century-long period of disunity and chaos, Song government was determined to establish a unified civil order by "valuing literary learning and deemphasizing military force" (*zhongwen qingwu* 重文輕武). Accordingly, the first three Song emperors—Taizu (r. 960–975), Taizong (r. 976–997), and Zhenzong (r. 998–1022)—took steps to expand the civil service examination system as a major means of recruiting their governmental officials while also sponsoring many large-scale printing projects.[33] The printing of the entire Buddhist

labels the poems composed by monks just before death with the term "示寂詩"; Du Songbo, *Chanxue he Tangsong shixue*, 248; for more examples of Chan "doctrinal poems," see 205–227.

29. *ZTJ* 19, 361a; also see *JDL* 11, *T* 51.285a25–26. For more examples of the poems on awakening, see Du, *Chanxue he Tangsong shixue*, 227–248.

30. For more examples of "deathbed poems," see Du, *Chanxue he Tangsong shixue*, 224–227.

31. Du has a section on "頌古詩"; see his *Chanxue he Tangsong shixue*, 248–281.

32. According to Robert M. Gimello, the term *wenzi* Chan might have been coined first by the Linji monk Juefan Huihong 覺範惠洪 (1071–1128); see his "Mārga and Culture," 380–383, and 415 n. 17. Also mentioned in Robert E. Buswell, "'Short-cut' Approach of *K'an-hua* Meditation," 345.

33. See the discussion by Peter K. Bol, *"This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transition in T'ang and Sung China* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992), 148–155; also Albert Welter, "A Buddhist Response to Confucian Revival: Tsan-ning and the Debate over *Wen* in the Early

canon may have been part of this Song civil policy. In 972, orders were given by Emperor Taizu that the task of cutting woodblocks of Buddhist scriptures be started in Chengdu, Sichuan. In 983, the printing of the first edition of the Chinese *Tripitaka* was completed.[34]

The early Song was also a period witnessing the emulation and continuation of Tang learning and literary styles. Song scholar-officials looked back to their Tang predecessors as their main models and sources of inspiration, though they held divergent views toward how or whom they should hold as exemplary. Among the members of the literati, Yang Yi 楊億 (974–1020) was well known for his advocacy of literary refinement; as far as poetry is concerned, Yang particularly admired the elegant and richly allusive style embodied in the poems of the late Tang poet Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–858). The poems composed by Yang and his like-minded colleagues are often referred to as the "Xikun style" (*xikun ti* 西崑體), named after the title of an anthology in which their poems are preserved.[35] As a leading literary figure of his time, Yang Yi had a great sense of mission to bring Song literature out of the allegedly crude qualities of Five Dynasties writings and into a more polished and sophisticated level. For Yang, therefore, refinement and embellishment were the primary standards for judging literary works.[36]

In echoing the literary and intellectual trends of their time, early Song Chan monks likewise looked back to the Tang as a golden age and regarded the words and deeds of the former masters as an inexhaustible reservoir of Chan teachings. As a sign of such a sentiment, Chan monks began to focus their attention on the lives and experiences of their Tang predecessors. For them, stories that contain the unique Chan style of "encounter dialogues" (*jiyuan wenda* 機緣問答) between Chan Buddhists, called *guze* 古則 or *gong'an*,

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Sung," in Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., eds., *Buddhism in the Sung* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 21–61.

34. Zhipan 志磐, *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 [1269] 43, *T* 2035, 49.398c20; also 53, in 463b12. For the project of scriptural translation sponsored by the Song court, see *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿, 8 vols. (Reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957), "Daoshi 道釋" 2: 4a–9b, v. 8: 7890c. Also see Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 374–375.

35. See Kōjirō Yoshikawa, translated by Burton Watson, *An Introduction to Song Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 51. The title of the anthology is *Xikun chouchang ji* 西崑酬唱集, in *SBCK*, v. 94.

36. Peter K. Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 161–162.

held the greatest interest.[37] It was under such circumstances that the Yunmen Chan master Xuedou Chongxian rose to prominence and significance. He was one of the two Chan masters in the early Song period who began to collect the "old cases" in large numbers and wrote a verse on each case; the other was the Linji Chan master Fenyang Shanzhao 汾陽善昭 (947–1024), whose *Songgu*, though, seems to have received less attention than Xuedou's.[38]

The creation of Chan *gong'an* texts may thus be viewed as Chan monks' efforts to appeal to the interests of Song ruling elite, who now viewed literary learning and activity as crucial to the stability and prosperity of their newly founded dynasty. Moreover, although it was the emperor who ordered the huge task of printing the Buddhist canon, scholar-officials may have played a decisive role in the selection of individual Buddhists works. Yang Yi, for example, not only participated in editing, but also wrote the preface to the first Song Chan genealogical history, the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (*Jingde [1004–1007] Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*), compiled by the monk Daoyuan 道原 (d. u.).[39] Many Chan monks, Xuedou included, might have assumed that producing refined, sophisticated writings would lead to a wide circulation of Chan texts among the literati and hence to the prominent growth of their religion. All this may account for Xuedou's assiduous literary engagement.[40]

Xuedou Chongxian and His Songgu ji

Honored as an outstanding patriarch who "revived the Yunmen sect" (*yunmen zhongxing* 雲門中興), Xuedou was a Dharma-successor of the Chan master Zhimen Guangzuo 智門光祚 (d. 1031). A native of Suizhou 遂州,

37. For the discussion of Chan "encounter dialogues," see John McRae, "Antecedents of Encounter Dialogues in Ch'an Buddhism," in *The Kōan*, 46–74.

38. Fenyang's *gong'an* collection is included in his *yulu* 語錄 2, in *T* 1992, 47.595b–629c. It is interesting to note that Yuanwu of the Linji school would use the Yunmen master Xuedou's anthology, not his Linji predecessor Fengyang's, to teach *gong'an*. My speculation is that this is perhaps because Yuanwu and Xuedou were both from the Sichuan region; see the discussion in Ding-hwa E. Hsieh, "Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in's (1063–1135) Teaching of Ch'an *Kung-an* Practice: A Transition from the Literary Study of Ch'an *Kung-an* to the Practical *K'an-hua* Ch'an," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17.1 (1994), 75–76.

39. *JDL*, *T* 51.196b15–197a19.

40. Aside from the *SGJ*, Xuedou's poetic works include: *Niangu* 拈古, *Puquan ji* 瀑泉集, and *Zuying ji* 祖英集; all are included in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vols. 370–371. The *Zuying ji* is also collected in *SKQS*, v. 1091: 641–675.

Sichuan, Xuedou came from an obscure family named Li 李. He joined the monastery around the age of twenty after both his parents passed away. He studied with many teachers and eventually achieved enlightenment under Zhimen's instruction. He then traveled to southeast China and settled in the Zisheng Monastery 資聖寺 at Mount Xuedou in Zhejiang, where he was the abbot for thirty-one years until he died in 1052. Xuedou apparently enjoyed eminence among the secular elite, and mainly because of their recommendation, Emperor Renzong (r. 1022–1062) bestowed upon him a purple robe and the honorable title "Illuminating Enlightenment" (*mingjue* 明覺).[41]

The *Songgu ji* was compiled by Xuedou's disciple Yuanchen 遠塵, with a preface written by another disciple, Tanyu 曇玉. It is a collection of one hundred "old cases" of the earlier Chan masters, to which Xuedou also added his own explanatory verses; approximately eighty-two were taken from the 1700 cases in Daoyuan's *Jingde chuandeng lu* and eighteen were drawn from the set of *gong'an* originating with Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文演 (864–949), the founder of the Yunmen sect of the Chan school. It is unclear when this work was published, but the Japanese scholar Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 suggests that Xuedou might have begun to work on the *Songgu ji* during the Tianxi period (1017–1021) and that the work was probably finished around 1038.[42]

The preface written by Tanyu to his master's *Songgu* offers a glimpse at Xuedou's motive for producing this *gong'an* anthology:

> . . . In responding to this great age, Xuedou stands out in the hope of advocating the essential teaching of his school. As an heir of Zhimen, he strives to restore his lineage. Although his delicate language and subtle words have already been widely circulated throughout the world, he now furthermore selects the most sublime [cases] about the ancient sages' "encountering" [dialogues]. Altogether he has [gathered] one hundred cases. He then introduces words (*yan* 言) to eulogize [these cases] in verse (*song* 頌). Through verse he manifests the essential messages [of these cases], and from the essential messages he passes down instruction [from early Chan patriarchs and masters]. He hopes that those who are ignorant can be enlightened, that those who have difficulty [in getting the meaning] can penetrate [the cases], and that

41. Xuedou's "tomb epitaph" (*taming* 塔銘), written thirteen years after his death by Lü Xiaqing 呂夏卿 (d. u.), a court official, is attached to the end of his *yulu*, in *T* 1996, 47.712a–713b. Also see *Zen Dust*, 159–160, for biographical information.

42. Yanagida Seizan, "Kaisetsu 解説," *Zen no goroku* 禪の語録, no. 15 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1981), 295–296; and *Zen Dust*, 12–13 and 362–363, for textual information. See also my n. 58.

those who are entrapped [in the web of words] and hence unable to reach beyond, can all be saved. . . .[43]

Through writing poems, Xuedou thus not only expresses his appreciation for the "words" of earlier Chan masters, but also demonstrates his understanding of the "intentions" behind their words.

To convey the ineffable quality of Chan enlightenment experience, Xuedou often uses images drawn from nature for such an evocation.

Citing (*ju* 舉) [an old case]:

盤山[寶積]垂語云："三界無法，何處求心？"

Panshan [Baoji (d. u.)] instructed students with these words: "There is no dharma in the triple world (the worlds of desire, form, and formlessness). Where do you seek the Mind?"

Verse of praise:

三界無法	"There is no dharma in the triple world;
何處求心	Where do you seek the Mind?"
白雲爲蓋	With white clouds as a canopy,
流泉作琴	Flowing streams as a zither:
一曲兩曲無人會	One song, two songs . . . though no one seems to understand,
雨過夜塘秋水深	When the night rain falls, water is deep in the autumn pond.[44]

Citing [an old case]:

陸亘[御史]大夫與南泉[普願]語話次。夫云："[僧]肇法師道，'天地同根，萬物一體也。'甚奇怪。"南泉指庭前花，召大夫云："時人見此一株花如夢相似。"

The Censor-in-chief Lu Xuan (764–834) had a discussion with Nanquan [Puyuan (748–835)].

The Censor-in-chief said: "The Dharma Master [Seng]zhao (374–414) once said, 'Heaven and Earth are from one root. The myriad things are of one essence.' This is so strange." Nanquan, pointing to a flower in front of the courtyard, called out to the Censor-in-chief and said: "People nowadays see such a flower as in a dream."

43. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, 370: 1a–b.

44. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 11a; also see case 37 in *BYL* 4, *T* 48.175a13–14.

Verse of praise:

聞見覺知非一一	Hearing, seeing, perceiving, and knowing are indivisible from one another;
山河不在鏡中觀	Mountains and rivers are not viewed in the mirror.
霜天月落夜將半	The moon sets in the frosty sky, and the night is nearly half done;
誰共澄潭照影寒	With whom does it cast a cold reflection in the clear lake?[45]

Citing [an old case]:

雲門垂語云："乾坤之內，宇宙之間，中有一寶，祕在形山。拈燈籠向佛殿裡，將三門來燈籠上。"

Yunmen instructed students, saying: "Between Heaven and Earth, within the universe, there is a treasure hidden inside the mountain of form. Pick up a lantern and face toward the Buddha Hall, take the triple gate [i.e., the main gate of the monastery] and put it on the lamp."

Verse of praise:

看看	Look! Look!
古岸何人把釣竿	On the ancient bank who is holding the fishing pole?
雲冉冉，水漫漫	Clouds are moving gradually, and waters are flowing endlessly.
明月蘆花君自看	The bright moon, the reed flowers, you must see for yourself.[46]

According to the doctrine of Buddha-nature, everyone is endowed with a mind that is originally as pure and enlightened as the Buddha's. Enlightenment means to see into one's inherent Buddha-nature and to actualize this realization in one's daily activities. All the above three cases seem to convey the point that to attain enlightenment one should search within through self-realization, rather than from outside through scriptural studies and verbal discussion. Faith in one's innate Buddhahood, moreover, is not an arrogant sense of superiority, but a humble awareness of one's identity and connection

45. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 11b–12a; also see case 40 in *BYL* 4, *T* 48.178a3–9.
46. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 18a; also see case 62 in *BYL* 7, *T* 48.193c23–26.

with all other beings in the universe. This experience of enlightenment in Chan is supposed to be inexpressible in words and letters. By turning to Nature, Xuedou perceives a reality that is both ephemeral and eternal. He seems to have experienced a profound inspiration from Nature, the embodiment of the absolute truth. While accepting that change is part of the natural process—an inevitable phenomenon that is subsumed into the larger picture of existence, he goes further to search for a harmonious coexistence with all things within the context of impermanence. Instead of a total withdrawal from the sensory world, Xuedou is at ease, allowing himself to enjoy the existing moment, yet with a sense of detachment. Revealed in his poems is thus a state of mind that echoes the earlier Chan masters' enlightened vision—a mind that transcends all the dualities and is filled with tranquility.

Occasionally Xuedou would adopt everyday language in composing poems. The following is but one of the many examples in which he writes poetry in a colloquial style:

> Citing [an old case]:
>
> 僧問雲門："如何是塵塵三昧？" 門云："缽裡飯，桶裡水。"
>
> A monk asked Yunmen: "What is '*samadhi* in the dusty realm'?" [Yun]men said: "Meal in the bowl, water in the bucket."
>
> Verse of praise:
>
> 缽裡飯，桶裡水　"Meal in the bowl, water in the bucket."
> 多口阿師難下嘴　This talkative master is just hard to shut up.
> 北斗南星位不殊　The Northern Dipper and the Southern Star are no different in position;
> 白浪滔天平地起　White waves sweep across the sky from the level ground.
> 擬不擬，止不止　If you begin to conceptualize, if you stop to hesitate,
> 箇箇無褲長者子　Each and every one of you, though the son of a [rich] elder, [will be so impoverished that you] will not even have trousers [to wear].[47]

The last line refers to a parable told in the famous Mahāyāna *Lotus sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經) about a rich man's son who ran away

47. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 14b; also see case 50 in *BYL*, *T* 48.185b7–8.

from home for years. He became so impoverished that he did not even have trousers to wear. Wandering around from one place to another he came by chance to his father's house. Engrossed in shame and humiliation, the son could not recognize his own father. Through the father's deliberate help and guidance, however, he began to build his self-confidence. When the father was about to die, he announced to the public that this poor young man was his lost son, who would inherit all his properties. Filled with great joy, the son came to realize that he was this rich, powerful man's son, and that he had already and always possessed abundant wealth.[48] Apparently, Xuedou ends his poem with this line to emphasize what he believes Yunmen would have in mind—that one is innately pure and enlightened all the time, and to think otherwise is but a false perception.

Aside from the explicit use of the colloquial term "*ashi* 阿師" (this master), moreover, the entire verse is set in an unadorned, spoken tone. Such a use of everyday language helps to engender a sense of spontaneity and simplicity. Like the *gong'an* of Yunmen, the poem by Xuedou tries to convey the non-conceptual essence of Chan enlightenment experience. The intent of Yunmen is well captured in this colloquial-styled poem: What one does to attain enlightenment is not different from what one did before, and enlightenment simply means to enjoy living one's everyday life with a simple, calm mind. This is also what the Linji Master Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–788) famously said—"The everyday Mind is the Dao" (*pingchang xin shi dao* 平常心是道).[49]

In some poems, however, Xuedou seems eager to display his erudition about Chan history and literature. The following is a good example:

> Citing [a case]:
>
> 僧問洞山[良价]："如何是佛？" 山云："麻三斤。"
>
> A monk asked Dongshan [Liangjie (807–869)]: "What is the Buddha?" [Dong] shan said, "Three pounds of hemp."

48. See Katsuki Sekida's explanation in *Two Zen Classics*, 289. The parable is found in the *Miaofa lianhua jing* T262, 9.16b–17b.

49. This famous saying can be found in *Mazu Daoyi chanshi guanglu* 馬祖道一禪師廣錄, included in *Sijia yulu* 四家語錄 [1607], in *XZJ* 119.406c7. For a study of Mazu's Chan teaching, see Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as The Way: The Hongzhou School and The Growth of Chan Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Verse of praise:

金烏急，玉兔速	The golden raven hurries, the jade rabbit rushes;
善應何曾有輕觸	How can a good response result from a light touch?
展事投機見洞山	"To unfold facts and correspond to situations," one meets Dongshan;
跛鱉盲龜入空谷	A lame tortoise and a blind turtle enter an empty valley.
花簇簇，錦簇簇	"Flowers in full blossom, various splendid colors;"
南地竹兮北地木	Bamboo in the south, and trees in the north.
因思長慶陸大夫	Therefore, I think of Changqing [Da'an] (793–883) and Censor-in-chief Lu;
解道合笑不合哭，咦	The answer was: "He should laugh, not cry"—Yi![50]

Here Xuedou uses a number of allusions drawn from both secular poetic conventions and Chan history. Thanks to the Linji Chan master Yuanwu Keqin's annotation in his *Biyan lu*, this poem by Xuedou can be understood in a more illuminating way.[51]

The opening line is a conventional poetic expression for the swift passage of time; it consists of two allusions drawn from traditional Chinese literature: the "golden raven" (*jinwu* 金烏) alluding to the sun, and the "jade rabbit" (*yutu* 玉兔), referring to the moon.[52] As to the line "A lame tortoise and a blind turtle enter an empty valley," it is not only metaphorical but may further help us appreciate Xuedou's erudition and poetic creativity. The metaphor of "a lame tortoise" is used in the work *Xunzi* 荀子 to emphasize that persistence will lead to success: "Step by step in a stumbling but incessant way, a lame tortoise can go a thousand *li* (*kuibu erbuxiu, bobie qianli* 蹞步而不休, 跛鱉千里)."[53] The metaphor of "a blind turtle," on the other hand, alludes to a popular Buddhist parable in which a blind (or one-eyed) turtle drifting in the sea for a long time eventually found a piece of floating wood with a hole in it and was able to get into the hole to be saved from drowning; as mentioned

50. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 4b–5a; also see case 12 in *BYL* 2, *T* 48.152c19–20.

51. For Yuanwu's annotation of Xuedou's verse, see *T* 48.152c15a-c.

52. *Ciyuan* 辭源, 3rd. ed. (Taiwan: Commercial Press, 1968), 982c and 1510d.

53. In *Xunzi*, chapter two "Self-cultivation" (*xiushen* 修身); see Li Disheng 李滌生, *Xunzi jishi* 荀子集釋 (Taiwan: Xuesheng shuju, 1979), 31. Thanks to one of the readers for pointing out the sources (see also *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *juan* 17 "Shuolin xun" 〈說林訓〉) and giving insight into Xuedou's use of this metaphor.

in the *Lotus sūtra*: "A one-eyed turtle [drifting in the sea] happened to find a piece of driftwood with a hole in it (*yiyan zhigui, zhi fumu kong* 一眼之龜, 值浮木孔)."[54] This metaphor suggests that even with good Buddhist teachings it may still be difficult for ordinary people to reach nirvana, since the turtle, although saved by a piece of driftwood, was carried away by waves and in the end was just unable to reach the shore.

Xuedou here may have deliberately used these two conventional metaphors to highlight his point that if one approaches Chan *gong'an* by conceptual analysis, one will be entrapped in the net of words and can never attain enlightenment. That is, no matter how persistent and hard-working one is (like a lame tortoise that keeps on going without resting), or no matter how fortunate one is to receive a good teaching from an enlightened master (like the blind turtle being saved from drowning by a piece of driftwood), it is impossible to attain any breakthrough so long as one searches for the Way of Chan through intellectual understanding and verbal discussion.

This poem by Xuedou also contains two Chan references. The first one, according to Yuanwu, refers to the following anecdote:

> A monk asked Monk Zhimen: "What is the meaning of Dongshan's 'three pounds of hemp'?" Zhimen said: "Flowers in full blossom, various splendid colors. Do you understand?"
>
> The monk later recounted [Zhimen's words] to Dongshan. Dongshan said, "I will not just explain it to you; I will explain it to the whole assembly." He then went to the Dharma Hall and said: "Words cannot unfold facts, and language cannot correspond to situations. Those who accept words are lost, and those who are entrapped by words are deluded."[55]

The line about "Changqing and Censor-in-chief Lu," again according to Yuanwu's annotation, refers to a story about Lu Xuan, who, as mentioned earlier, was a lay disciple of the Chan master Nanquan Puyuan. When his master died, Lu entered the temple for the funeral. Instead of mourning his teacher's death, however, he laughed loudly. When asked by the abbot of the temple why he did not cry, Lu responded: "If you can say the reason, I will cry

54. See *Miaofa lianhua jing*, *T* 262, 9.60b. As Yuanwu points out in the *BYL*, this metaphor is from the *Lotus sūtra* ("法華經云: '一眼之龜, 值浮木孔.'"); see *BYL* 2, *T*48.160a9–10. Thanks again to the reader's comment for calling my attention to this metaphor. It can be also found in Buddhist scriptures other than the *Lotus sūtra*; for example, see *Za Ahan jing* 雜阿含經 15, in *T* 99, 2.108c.

55. *BYL* 2, *T* 48.153b19–24.

immediately." The abbot had no words to say. Lu, then, cried loudly, saying: "Heaven! Heaven! The late master has really gone forever." Later, when Chan master Changqing heard about this incident, he said: "The Censor-in-chief [indeed] should laugh, not cry."[56]

Through this richly allusive poem, Xuedou demonstrates both his Chan learning and literary talent. As scholars in the field of Chinese poetry have pointed out, the traditional Chinese notion of "immediacy" is a "learned spontaneity," a "self-conscious act of craft," and a gradual cultivation of spirit that transcends the dualistic division between the external object and the inner self.[57] In this, Xuedou seems to be no exception; the effect of immediacy shown in this poem might be a result both of his cultivation of Chan and of his study of classical literature.

Literary engagement helped increase Chan's appeal to lay literati, but it also appeared so contradictory with Chan's rhetorical claim of "not depending upon words and letters" (*buli wenzi* 不立文字). Within Chan circles there thus emerged various kinds of reactions to such an approach to advocating Chan. Monk Xinwen Tanfen 心聞曇賁 (fl. 11th–12th c.) is said to have become deeply enraged by this literary trend starting from Xuedou, who "used his talents of eloquence and erudition, though with a good intention, to change and manipulate [the Chan tradition] and to pursue something new and engage in refinement." Xinwen was even harsher toward the Linji masters such as Fenyang, who "flattered and made connections with contemporary scholars" (*longluo dangshi xuezhe* 籠絡當世學者) through "eulogizing the old [cases in verse]," and Yuanwu, who "furthermore came out with an idea of his own to produce the *Biyan lu*." Xinwen went on,

> As a result, new practitioners and later followers all highly appreciate and value [these masters'] words, memorizing them in the morning and practicing in the evening. They call this 'ultimate learning' (*zhixue* 至學). None of them have come to realize that this is wrong. Alas, it is so painful to see that scholars' minds and thoughts have deteriorated!"[58]

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56. *BYL* 2, in *T* 48.153c6–11.

57. Paula M. Varsano, "Immediacy and Allusion in the Poetry of Li Bo," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (*HJAS*), 52.1 (1992): 225–261; Michael Fuller, "Pursuing the Complete Bamboo in the Breast: Reflections on a Classical Chinese Image for Immediacy," *HJAS*, 53.1 (1993): 5–23; and David Palumbo-Liu, *The Poetics of Appropriation: The Literary Theory and Practice of Huang Tingjian* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993), 47–87.

58. See Xinwen's letter to Zhang Shangying 張商英 (1043–1122), included in *Chanlin*

Whether Xinwen's accusation was a sincere concern or simply "fake anger" over a popular yet successful trend is hard to tell. But it appears that Chan masters who propagated *gong'an* texts were acutely aware of the potential danger in such a development in Chan Buddhism. Perhaps this is why Yuanwu Keqin would give a series of lectures on Xuedou's *Songgu ji* to provide his audience with clear instructions not only about how to read Xuedou's appended verses, but also about how to approach *gong'an* correctly. The advocacy of *kanhua* Chan by Dahui Zonggao, Yuanwu's most prominent disciple, can be viewed as a further effort to revitalize Chan texts from "dead words" (*siju* 死句) to "live words" (*huoju* 活句).[59] To continue what his Linji predecessors had initiated, Wumen produced his *Wumen guan* to guide Chan practitioners in using *gong'an* to engender an experience of Chan enlightenment.

Wumen Huikai and the Wumen guan

Wumen Huikai was a Dharma-heir of the Linji master Yuelin Shiguan 月林師觀 (1143–1217). The fact that Yuanwu, Dahui, and Wumen were all in the Yangqi 楊岐, not the Huanglong 黃龍, branch of the Linji Chan lineage indicates these three monks' close associations and consistent mission in teaching people how to approach *gong'an*. According to his biography, Wumen was born into the Liang 梁 family at Liangzhu 良渚, Zhejiang, in 1183. He first studied under Monk Gong 肱和尙 of the Tianlong Monastery 天龍寺 near his home, and later went on to study under Yuelin at the Wanshou Monastery 萬壽寺 in Suzhou (Jiangsu). After receiving proof of Dharma transmission, Wumen began his teaching career in 1218 and became a nationally renowned Chan master. Toward the end of his life Wumen resided in a temple near the famous West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang. He was summoned by Emperor Lizong (r. 1224–1264) to the court and was granted the honorary title "Eyes of

baoxun 禪林寶訓, a collection of gossipy anecdotes about Song Chan masters compiled by Monk Jingshan 淨善 during the Chunxi period (1174–1189), 4, *T* 2022, 48.1036b20–27. Xinwen mentions that during the Tianxi period, Xuedou wrote poems of praise on the old cases.

59. Yuanwu's instruction on investigating the "live words" and caution against investigating the "dead words" had a great impact on Dahui's teaching of *huatou* practice; see Ding-hwa E. Hsieh, "Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in's (1063–1135) Teaching of Ch'an *Kung-an* Practice," 81–90. For a discussion of "doubt" in Dahui's teaching of *kanhua* Chan, see Miriam Levering, "Ch'an Enlightenment for Laymen: Ta-hui and the New Religious Culture of the Sung" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1978); also Robert E. Buswell, "'Short-cut' Approach of *K'an-hua* Meditation," 347–354.

the Buddha" (*Foyan* 佛眼) together with a golden Dharma robe. He died in 1260 at the age of seventy-eight.[60]

The *Wumen guan* is a collection of forty-eight old cases that Wumen used to instruct Chan practitioners when he had a retreat at the Longxiang Monastery 龍翔寺 in Dongjia 東嘉 (present-day Zhejiang) in 1228. It was edited by Zongshao 宗紹 and published in 1229.[61] Wumen said in his own preface to the *Wumen guan* the following:

> The Buddha says that the Mind is the foundation and that no-gate is the dharma-gate. Since it is gateless, then how do you pass through it? As far as the Way [of Chan] is concerned, can't you see that what comes in through the gate is not your own treasure, and that what is gained by coincidence will eventually become deteriorated? To say it in this way, however, is already very much like "stirring up waves when there is no wind" (*wufeng qilang* 無風起浪—doing things in vain) or like "cutting a wound from healthy skin" (*haorou wanchuang* 好肉剜創—missing the target), not to mention that people who become entangled in [the web of] words and phrases and thus seek a conceptual understanding [of the *gong'an*] are, as it were, striking at the moon with a bat (*diaobang dayue* 掉棒打月) and scratching the shoe to stop the itching [on the foot] (*gexue saoyang* 隔靴搔癢). What is the connection [with spiritual awakening]?
>
> In the summer of the first year of the Shaoding era [1228], I, Huikai, was in charge of the assembly of the Longxiang Monastery in Dongjia. Because student monks (*nazi* 衲子) came for instruction, I picked up the ancients' *gong'an* and used them as tiles to knock on the gate (*qiaomen wazi* 敲門瓦子), while also guiding scholars (*xuezhe* 學者) [toward enlightenment] according to their capacities. I, then, began to record them, without being aware that the notes I took eventually grew into a collection. From the outset I did not arrange them according in any specific order; I just brought them all into a collection of forty-eight cases and called it the "Gateless Barrier."[62]

To each of the cases, Wumen not only wrote a verse but also inserted a comment in between—under the heading "Wumen said (無門曰)"—to elucidate its essential meaning. The *Wumen guan*, in short, is the work of a

60. The biographical account of Wumen can be found in *Zengji Xuchuandeng lu* 增集續傳燈錄, *XZJ* 142.284b-c. A brief entry is found in Yuanji Juding 圓極居頂 (d. 1404), comp., *Xuchuandeng lu* 續傳燈錄, 35, *T* 2077, 51.708b28–708c5. Here I use the information provided in *Zen Dust*, 203–205. For his discourse record, see *Wumen Huikai chanshi yulu* 無門慧開禪師語錄, in *XZJ* 120.354a–368b.

61. For more textual information, see *Zen Dust*, 342–344.

62. *T* 48.292b.11–18.

single author who collected forty-eight old cases, wrote verses on the cases, and added prose comments.

The *Wumen guan* is arguably the most mature of Song *gong'an* collections, representing the culmination of the development of Chan *gong'an* literature. Instead of adding comments to an already existing *gong'an* text as some Chan authors before him had done,[63] Wumen selected his own cases to produce a new *gong'an* anthology. Several scholars have already noted the unique and significant aspects of the *Wumen guan* in Chan *gong'an* tradition. According to Heinrich Dumoulin,

> This volume has its own independent character, different from every other in the genre. With an evident disregard for literary quality, the cases use short, unembellished sentences to enter directly into what is essential, to what makes the kōan what it is.[64]

Dumoulin is perhaps right to suggest that Wumen deliberately selected *gong'an* and gave specific instructions, but not in his view that Wumen's verse is "less a poem than a simple pair of loosely linked lines."[65] First of all, unlike some of Xuedou's verses consisting of unequal lines or ending without rhymes, each verse by Wumen is made of lines of the same length, of four, five, six, or seven syllables, and most of them are rhymed. Also, Wumen may have composed his verses by modeling them after the *Shijing*; aside from composing a number of verses in four-syllable lines, he employed some folk-song devices like "alliteration," "riming compounds," and "reduplication" to draw people's attention to, and perhaps even to help them memorize, what he intended to emphasize.[66]

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63. Yuanwu's *BYL* is based on Xuedou's *Songgu ji*. Another *gong'an* anthology, entitled *Wansong laoren pingchang Tiantong Jue heshang songgu congrong'an lu* 萬松老人評唱天童覺和尙頌古從容庵錄 (*Old Man Wansong Commenting and Writing Verses on the Record of Monk Tiantong Jue of the Congrong Chapel*), in T2004.48.226b–292a, is based on the *Songgu* of Caodong 曹洞 master Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 (1091–1157) preserved in Hongzhi's *Guanglu* 廣錄 (*Extensive Record*; in T2001.48.18b–35a). For a further analysis of various *gong'an* texts, see T. Griffith Foulk, "The Form and Function of Koan Literature," in Heine and Wright, eds., *The Kōan*, 26–28.

64. Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History—India and China* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 250.

65. Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*, 251.

66. To give each an example, alliteration: *mianmian mimi* 綿綿密密 (seamlessly), *T* 48.296b9; riming compounds: *dingning* 叮嚀 (talking too much), *T* 48.296b17; and reduplication: *nan'nan*

T. Griffith Foulk also notes the significance of the *Wumen guan*. He proposes that the work might have been produced to instruct students how to meditate on *gong'an*, though the exact way of teaching was far from obvious:

> It is not clear from the text exactly how Wumen used kōans to teach his disciples, but there are indications in his preface and prose comments that he expected them to focus their minds on particular old cases in some sort of protracted meditative effort. Perhaps the *Gateless Barrier,* unlike the *Blue Cliff Collection* and *Ts'ung-jung Record,* was conceived from the start as an aid to the practice of contemplating phrases that came into vogue following Ta-hui.[67]

One may, however, suspect that the function of poetry in this text was aimed at evoking attention and pointing to the key word of the *gong'an*. That is, each *gong'an* in the *Wumen guan* was intended for guiding students in the path of *huatou* investigation advocated by Dahui Zonggao. Thus, even though Wumen claimed that he did not arrange the cases in any specific order, it may be no accident that the *wu* 無 case of Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778–897) is the first one listed in the *Wumen guan*:

> "Zhaozhou's Dog" (趙州狗子)
>
> 趙州和尚因僧問："狗子還有佛性也無？" 州云："無。"
>
> Monk Zhaozhou was asked by a monk: "Does even a dog have the Buddha-nature or not?" Zhaozhou replied: "No" (*wu*).[68]

This *gong'an* was often used by Dahui Zonggao in his advocacy of *kanhua* Chan; through looking into the critical word *wu*, the practitioner was expected to foster the feeling of doubt and eventually to attain a direct insight into the originally enlightened mind.[69] The significance of this case can be further seen from the fact that Wumen entitled his anthology precisely because of this *wu* case; as he further said:

喃喃 (murmuring), *T* 48.296a20. For a detailed discussion of these devices, see James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, 34–36.

67. T. Griffith Foulk, "The Form and Function of Koan Literature," 32–33.

68. *WMG*, *T* 48.293c22–24.

69. See, for example, *Dahui Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄, 22, in *T*1998, 47.903b-c. This *gong'an* is no doubt one of the most noted cases in Chan Buddhism and has been analyzed by many scholars. Most recently, Robert H. Sharf has used this case to discuss Chan's response to polemical doctrinal issues; see Sharf, "How to Think with Chan *Gong'an*," 224–226.

> In studying Chan, you need to penetrate through the barriers [set up] by Chan patriarchs and masters. And to attain sublime enlightenment, you must exhaust your mind [so as] to cut off the way [of conceptual thinking]. If you cannot penetrate the ancient barriers and cannot cut off the way [of conceptual thinking] in your mind, you are nothing but a ghost clinging to the weeds and lingering in the woods.
>
> Now, let me explain what the barrier of the Chan patriarchs and masters is [in this case]. It is just this single word *wu*, which is one of the barriers of the Chan gate. Therefore, it is viewed as the "*wu*- gate barrier of the Chan lineage" (lit. no-gate barrier and hence translated as *Gateless Barrier*). For those who can pass through it, not only do they personally see Zhaozhou, but they can also go hand in hand with successive patriarchs and masters, sharing [with them] the same eyebrows, seeing with the same eyes, and hearing with the same ears. How marvelous and delightful this is!
>
> Wouldn't you like to penetrate the barrier? Then, arouse the joints of your 360 bones and open the pores of your 8,400 hairs, using your entire body to generate the "ball of doubt" (*yituan* 疑團) in investigating this word *wu*. . . . Pick up this word *wu*, and if you can practice without interruption, you will be [immediately enlightened] like the candle in the Dharma Hall: it is lit with only a single spark.[70]

The verse by Wumen to this case thus appears to be aimed at calling the practitioner's attention to this word "*wu*":

狗子佛性	Dog, the Buddha-nature—
全提正令	The perfect pick, the right command.
纔涉有無	When you are just about to get into the discussion of "having" or "not having,"
喪身失命	You [already] lose your body and your life![71]

Two important messages may be drawn from reading the above verse. First, the word *wu* is the barrier that one should confront and overcome through one's engagement with this Chan *gong'an*. Second, one feels a strong sense of urgency to eliminate dualistic thoughts in the quest for Chan enlightenment. Wumen's verse thus tries to lead the practitioner to focus on the critical word: the *wu* of Zhaozhou.

70. *WMG*, *T* 48.293c25–294a11.
71. *WMG*, *T* 48.293a13–14.

From Xuedou to Wumen

Some of the *gong'an* contained in Xuedou's *Songgu ji* are included also by Wumen in his *Wumen guan*. A comparison of these two Chan masters' poems on the same cases can be illuminating. Here I use four cases to discuss how they each used poems to teach Chan *gong'an*.[72]

Xuedou—

Citing [an old case]:

俱胝和尚凡有所問，只豎一指。

Whenever Monk Juzhi (fl. the 8th–9th c.) was asked [about Chan], he simply raised one finger.

Verse of praise:

對揚深愛老俱胝	In response to this case, I deeply appreciate the Old Juzhi—
宇宙空來更有誰	Who else has come [like him] from the empty space of the universe?
曾向滄溟下浮木	He cast a piece of driftwood onto the deep sea—
夜濤相共接盲龜	Which floated together with the night tide to meet a blind turtle.[73]

Wumen—

"Juzhi Raising His Finger" (俱胝豎指)

俱胝和尚凡有詰問，唯舉一指。後有童子因外人問："和尚說何法要？"童子亦豎指頭。胝聞遂以刀斷其指，童子負痛號哭而去。胝復召之，童子回首，胝卻豎其指，童子忽然領悟。胝將順世，謂衆曰，"吾得[杭州]天龍一指頭禪，一生受用不盡。"言訖示滅。

Whenever Monk Juzhi was asked [about Chan], he simply raised one finger. Later, a visitor asked Juzhi's boy attendant, "What important Buddhist teachings does your master talk about?" The boy, too, raised his finger. Having heard of this,

72. Aside from the four cases I discuss here, the case "An Outsider asked the Buddha" (*waidao wenfo* 外道問佛), in *T*48.297a.21–26, is also seen in Xuedou's *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 18b–19a.

73. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 6a; see also case 19 in *BYL* 2, *T*48.159a17–18.

Juzhi cut off the boy's finger with a knife. As the boy screamed in pain and ran away, Juzhi called him back. When the boy turned his head, [Ju]zhi nonetheless raised his finger. The boy was suddenly enlightened.

When Juzhi was about to die, he said to the assembly, "I obtained the 'one-finger Chan' from [Hangzhou] Tianlong (d. u.), and I've used it all my life without exhausting it." Having finished saying this, he entered into nirvana.[74]

Verse of praise:

俱胝鈍置老天龍	Juzhi, clumsily replacing the Old Tianlong,
利刃單提勘小童	Alone took a sharp blade to cut the boy.
巨靈抬手無多子	The Giant [River] Deity, raising his hands without any effort,
分破華山千萬重	Cleaved the Hua Mountain into ten million pieces.[75]

We may note first that although both Xuedou and Wumen include this *gong'an* about Monk Juzhi, the case in the *Songgu ji* consists only of Juzhi's unique way of providing instruction in Chan, without any further mention of the episode in which Juzhi cut off the finger of his boy attendant who imitated the master's gesture. Xuedou's poem is filled with admiration, albeit somewhat ambivalent, for this former Chan master's iconoclastic pedagogy. The metaphor of a blind (or one-eyed) turtle in the last couplet, as mentioned earlier in Xuedou's verse on the case of "Three pounds of hemp," suggests how difficult it is for ordinary people to achieve final enlightenment; even when people have the opportunity to receive the teaching, they may still not be able to use it for attaining the goal. For Xuedou, Juzhi was no doubt a teacher with rare compassion; he knew that it might be futile to instruct the boy attendant toward enlightenment, but he was still trying hard to help him see the truth.[76]

Wumen, on the other hand, tells a very elaborated story, a longer version of this *gong'an*, to show that the boy attendant was able to attain enlightenment under Juzhi's instruction. In both the case and the poem, Wumen tries

74. *WMG*, *T* 48.293b11–16.

75. *WMG*, *T* 48.293a21–22.

76. If Xuedou's verse only suggests the futility of Monk Juzhi's instruction in leading the boy attendant to enlightenment, it is interesting to note the ambivalent tone revealed in Yuanwu's comment. Having agreed with Xuedou's admiration for Juzhi's compassion, Yuanwu nonetheless ended his lecture on this *gong'an* with a rhetorical remark: "What is the use of giving instruction to a blind turtle (接得箇盲龜, 堪作何用)?" (*BYL* 2, *T*48.160a13–14).

to call people's immediate attention to the critical word of this *gong'an*—"cutting" (*duan* 斷 or *kan* 勘), while also reminding them that the object of this verb, the finger, can be easily misused. The word "cutting" appears not only irrational but also shocking. Wumen's poem thus serves as an ultimate command, demanding that the student "cut off" his ordinary, conceptual way of thinking during the course of *gong'an* investigation. The last couplet alludes to an ancient legend in which a powerful river god split Mount Hua (in Shaanxi 陝西) into pieces to let the flooding river flow into the sea without any hindrance.[77] Compared to Xuedou, Wumen seems to use poetry more as a pedagogical tool to help Chan practitioners find the crucial word or phrase of a Chan *gong'an* than as a literary device to display his personal understanding of the *gong'an*'s import. This poem by Wumen thus tries to evoke a sense of appreciation for the former master's compassionate effort, urging the student not to let Juzhi down but to use this *gong'an* to attain an experience of Chan enlightenment.

The following *gong'an* is another example:

> Xuedou—
>
> Citing [an old case]:
>
> 南泉參百丈涅槃和尙。丈問："從上諸聖還有不爲人說底法麼？"泉云"有。"丈云："作麼生是不爲人說底法？"泉云："不是心，不是佛，不是物。"丈云："說了也。"泉云："某甲只與麼，和尙作麼生？"丈云："我又不是善知識，爭知有說不說？"泉云："某甲不會。"丈云："我大煞爲汝說也。"
>
> Nanquan went to see Monk Baizhang Niepan (Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 [749–814]). [Bai]zhang asked: "From all the superior sages of the past, is there any Dharma that has not yet been preached to the people?" [Nan]quan said: "There is."
>
> [Bai]zhang then asked, "Of what nature is the Dharma that has not been preached to the people?" [Nan]quan said: "It is not the Mind, not the Buddha, not a thing." [Bai]zhang said: "You have said it already."
>
> [Nan]quan said: "I am just like this. How about you, Monk?" [Bai]zhang said: "I am not a man of good knowledge. How would I know if there is or is not?" [Nan]quan said: "I do not understand." [Bai]zhang said: "I have already said a great deal to you."

77. Again, thanks to the reader for calling my attention to the metaphor. See *Ciyuan*, 504a.

Verse of Praise:

祖佛從來不爲人	Buddhas and patriarchs have not been [preaching] for people,
衲僧今古競頭走	But patch-robed monks, past and present, all vie head to head for [their words].
明鏡當臺列象殊	A clear mirror on the stand reflects all kinds of images;
一一面南看北斗	Each and every one faces the South to look at the Northern Dipper.
斗柄垂，無處討	The handle of the Dipper hangs down, but one has nowhere to grasp it.
拈得鼻孔失卻口	You may have got hold of your nostrils, but you have lost your mouth.[78]

Wumen—

"Neither the Mind Nor the Buddha" (不是心佛):

南泉和尚因僧問："還有不與人說底法麼？"泉云："有。"僧云："如何是不與人說底法？"泉云："不是心，不是佛，不是物。"

Monk Nanquan was asked by a monk: "Is there any Dharma that has not yet been preached to the people?" [Nan]quan said: "There is."

The monk then asked, "What is the Dharma that has not been preached to the people?" [Nan]quan said: "It is not the Mind, not the Buddha, not a thing."[79]

Verse of Praise:

叮嚀損君德	Talking too much destroys your virtue;
無言眞有功	Silence truly has its merit.
任從滄海變	Even if mountains would change into the sea,
終不爲君通	I will never elucidate it for you.[80]

We again note that they each tell a different version of the same *gong'an*. This time, the case in the *Wumen guan* is terse, simply focusing on Monk Nanquan and an anonymous monk, whereas the one in Xuedou's *Songgu ji* is a longer verbal exchange between Nanquan and Baizhang, another prominent Tang master known for producing the monastic rules for Chan monks; after Nanquan uttered his answer, they went on to engage in more encounter

78. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 9a; see case 28 in *BYL*, 3, *T*48.168a27-b8.
79. *WMG*, *T* 48.296b10–12.
80. *WMG*, *T* 48.296b16–17.

dialogues. Xuedou seems more concerned with glorifying the Chan tradition, and his poem aims to emphasize that the Chan teaching was unique and that its doctrine is all about a direct insight into one's intrinsic Buddha-mind. Failing to recognize the point that Chan is meant to be a mind-to-mind transmission beyond words and letters, monks have looked in the wrong direction and obtained only the partial message of Chan ("You may have got hold of your nostrils, but you have lost your mouth").

Wumen, on the other hand, gets right to the point about how to approach this *gong'an*. His case is very focused, and his poem is direct, making it explicitly clear that the *gong'an* is not for verbal discussion but for inward contemplation. He is not going to penetrate the case for the student, and one just has to figure it out for oneself.

The following case, which has two parts in Xuedou's *Songgu ji*, is combined into one *gong'an* in Wumen's *Wumen guan*:

> "Nanquan Killed A Cat" (南泉斬貓):
>
> 南泉和尚因東西堂爭貓兒。泉乃提起云："大衆道得，即救；道不得，即斬卻也。" 衆無對，泉遂斬之。晚，趙州外歸，泉舉似州。州乃脫履安頭上而出。泉云："子若在，即救得貓兒。"
>
> Monk Nanquan saw monks of the Eastern and Western Halls quarreling over a cat. [Nan]quan then held up the cat and said: "You monks! If any of you can say a word, I will spare the cat. If none of you can say a word, I will kill it." No one could come out with a response, so [Nan]quan cut the cat in two.
>
> In the evening when Zhaozhou returned from outside, [Nan]quan told him what had happened. [Zhao]zhou then took off his sandals, put them on his head, and left. [Nan]quan said: "If you had been there, the cat would have been saved."[81]

Xuedou's verse for the first part of the case is:

兩堂俱是杜禪和	The monks of both halls were all refusing to harmonize with Chan;
撥動煙塵不耐何	They achieved nothing but stirring smoke and dust.
賴得南泉能舉令	Fortunately, there was Nanquan who could issue the command,
一刀兩斷任偏頗	Cutting the cat in two without pondering how uneven the portions might be.[82]

81. *WMG*, *T* 48.294cb13–16.

82. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 18b; cases 63 in *BYL* 7, *T* 48.194c7–10.

His verse for the second part of the case is:

公案圓來問趙州	The *gong'an* must have been originally designed to ask Zhaozhou,
長安城裡任閑遊	Who was wandering at leisure in the city of Chang'an.
草鞋頭戴無人會	He put his sandals on his head to solve the case that nobody could solve;
歸到家山便即休	Returning to his mountain home, he immediately found rest.[83]

In composing these poems, Xuedou demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the central idea of Chan—that non-conceptualization is the state of an enlightened mind. Aside from expressing his own realization of the fundamental teaching of Chan, he also tries to transmit the ineffable essence of Chan spirit. The spontaneous, creative words and deeds of the former Chan masters Nanquan and Zhaozhou are well captured and transformed eloquently by Xuedou into an eternal scene in the poetic realm.

Wumen's verse, on the other hand, appears primarily as an aid to *gong'an* investigation, prompting the practitioner to focus directly on the key phrase of this case without being entrapped in conceptual inquiry into its literary meaning. As he writes,

Verse of Praise:

趙州若在	Had Zhaozhou been there,
倒行此令	He would have done the opposite of this command [by Nanquan].
奪卻刀子	He would have snatched away the sword,
南泉乞命	And made Nanquan beg for his life.[84]

The student is instructed to contemplate the critical act of killing the cat. Why did Nanquan cut the cat in two, and why could Zhaozhou have done differently to save it? The cat can be seen as a metaphor for the words that convey the Chan teaching. The sword, on the other hand, stands for the various innovative devices employed by Chan masters to eliminate Chan adepts' mistaken equation of theoretical understanding of Chan words with

83. *SGJ*, in *SBCK*, ser. 2, vol. 370, 18b; also see cases 64 in *BYL* 7, *T* 48.195a14–16.
84. *WMG*, *T* 48.294c21–22.

the enlightenment experience itself. While the sword is useful in killing the cat, in reality the cat does not need to be killed, because all the confusion comes merely from one's attachment to teaching. Instead of properly wearing his sandals, Zhaozhou put them on his head; his response to Nanquan, as Wumen bluntly points out in his verse, shows that a teaching should be conceived of as nothing more than an expedient means to foster spiritual growth and that the means to this end lies within; enlightenment in Chan is supposed to be a self-illumination through restoring a state of mind that is inherently tranquil and non-dual.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, Xuedou writes a highly allusive poem on the *gong'an* of "Dongshan's 'three pounds of hemp.'" The verse by Wumen, however, is again straightforward, intended as a guide for practicing *kanhua* Chan:

突出麻三斤	"Three pounds of hemp" comes forth suddenly;
言親意更親	His words are close, and his "intent" is even closer.
來說是非者	Those who come to argue about "right" and "wrong"
便是是非人	Are people [entrapped by] "right" and "wrong."[85]

In contrast to Xuedou's verse, these lines are simple, terse, and uncomplicated. Wumen makes it clear that the focus of one's contemplation of this *gong'an* should be the critical phrase "three pounds of hemp." He then warns against any attempt to analyze or conceptualize the former master Dongshan's response; not only does this kind of approach to Chan *gong'an* make Chan teachings "dead words," but it also nullifies the master's true "intent" for uttering these words.

Conclusion

An examination of the use of poetry in these two Chan masters' *gong'an* anthologies illustrates how poetry has been used as an effective device for keeping Chan discourse from becoming a pile of "dead words." The symbolic, elusive features of traditional Chinese poetry enabled Chan masters to create a dynamic realm where there was enough room to retrieve and reinterpret the main import of Chan *gong'an*. Eulogizing old cases through poetic creation thus allowed both Xuedou and Wumen to form a timeless communication

85. *T* 48.295b11–12.

with the former Chan patriarchs and masters, sharing the Mind handed down from the Buddha while at the same time also passing it on to the next Chan generation.

From Xuedou to Wumen, moreover, there was a notable change in their use of poems in propagating Chan *gong'an* texts. In Xuedou's days, the status of *gong'an* might not yet have been fully established, but during Wumen's time, apparently, Chan *gong'an* were popularly read and discussed within and outside Chan circles. Xuedou wrote poetry to popularize the reading of *gong'an* while also using poems to evoke a sense of appreciation among his readers. Wumen, on the other hand, used poetry to highlight the single key word or critical phrase of Chan *gong'an* and guide people toward practicing *kanhua* Chan as advocated by Dahui. His verses to *gong'an* are blunt and abrupt, intended to convey a sense of urgency and immediacy. In reading his poems, one feels compelled to renounce one's ordinary, conceptual way of thinking and instead contemplates the critical word or phrase of the case as the key to the gate of Chan enlightenment.

If Xuedou Chongxian of the Northern Song aptly conveyed the Chan notion of enlightenment through poetic eloquence, Wumen Huikai of the Southern Song went further to transform poetry into a pedagogical device in *gong'an* meditation. Xuedou's *Songgu* collection exerted a great impact on the subsequent formation of Chan *gong'an* literature, and the *Wumen guan* by Wumen succeeded in making *gong'an* an essential part of Chan enlightenment experience.