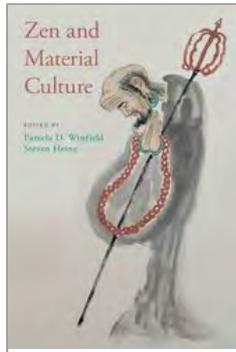


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Pamela Winfield and Steven Heine

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Zen Sells Zen Things

Meditation Supply, Right Livelihood, and Buddhist Retail*

Gregory P. A. Levine

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores Japanese Zen material culture and materialism in a contemporary American monastic context. It examines the adaptation of mainstream business operations by The Monastery Store at Zen Mountain Monastery, established by John Daido Looi near Woodstock, New York, in 1980. It provides a visual and critical analysis of The Monastery Store's mail-order catalogue, website, and brick-and-mortar facility on the monastery grounds, and it contrasts "retail Zen" (i.e., the mass marketing of vaguely Zen-like articles by multinational distribution chains for maximum profit) and "Zen retail" (i.e., the selective sale of sustainably sourced Zen items by nonprofit Zen monasteries to support adherents' practice). In so doing, this analysis contributes to our understanding of Buddhist economics, practice, ethics, and other Zen matters.

Keywords: Zen in America, Zen Mountain Monastery, e-commerce, Zen retail, right consumption

SELLING THINGS FOR or with Zen is not strictly a modern phenomenon, but the late capitalist flood of Zen (or, perhaps, Zenny) products—Zen primarily in name, design, and aura rather than practice—is overwhelmingly a phenomenon of corporate advertising, neo-orientalist fantasy, and materialistic and aspirational self-fashioning, especially, though not exclusively, in the Global North.¹ The twentieth-century growth of global Zen religious lineages and networks of Zen practice communities is also a factor in the expansion of commerce in Zen things, but Zen-styled products that have no direct relationship to Zen religious practice have become so visible in our media-saturated world and commonplace in retail spaces that practitioner-centered websites such as *The Worst Horse* track and trounce them for absurd appropriations, disrespect, and jarring contradiction with basic Buddhist teachings.² This is not terribly surprising—capitalism sinks its claws into just about everything, religion included—and such concerns are hardly new. In 1966, Mary Farkas (1911–1992), director of the First Zen Institute of America in Manhattan, took issue with the Japanese Shiseidō cosmetics company’s “use of the name Zen for its perfume that **(p.258)** sends you to Nirvana.”³ Farkas is deploying her sardonic wit here but also voicing real concern over consumerism’s distraction from serious Zen practice. Even so, the bottom line since the 1960s has been that Zen has helped sell a range of products that have no relationship to, and may even disrupt, Zen practice (for their part, practice communities prohibit the use of fragrances in meditation spaces).

Regrettable as this may be, there is no getting around the presence of Zen-branded consumer products, and there is no way to go back to a market-free Zen (if there was ever such a thing). Like “postural yoga,” in contradistinction to the “complex yoga system” found within monastic practice, Zen has become a “transnational cultural product.”⁴ Moreover, consumer culture Zen is probably the form in which most people today encounter Zen. Zenny products, rather than contact with Zen teachers and communities, meditation cushions, and even books on Zen, have given Zen its widest recognition and appeal, albeit often as a perceived means to instant lifestyle enlightenment.⁵ Arguably there is more than one sort of price to be paid for mass consumer Zen—submerging as it does Buddhist ritual, ethics, soteriology, and even radical creative possibilities beneath corporate branding, trend and spend, sweatshop labor, and planet-harming materialism—and Buddhist teachers have issued stern criticism of mindless consumption and offered compassionate means to leave behind the “religion of the market.”⁶

The fact of the matter, however, is that the retail landscape of Zen is less uniform and bordered than a simple, if justified, critique of corporate appropriation might suggest. No matter how often we encounter consumer Zen products, the sale of Zen-related material things is not limited to global corporations and mass markets. In their own right, and for their particular purposes, Zen temples and Zen centers sell items for zazen (seated meditation) and Buddhist or spiritual practice using contemporary merchandizing methods and platforms but guided by religious teachings merged with principles of corporate responsibility. Some offer a limited range of meditation supplies, first and foremost, cushions; others have remarkably diverse inventories. Some ironically engage materialist and image-driven consumption. The Rochester Zen Center sells “shirts and swag for the well-dressed meditator.”⁷ We should therefore consider not just corporate “retail Zen” but also Zen community-based “Zen retail,” the latter presenting a matrix of business, consumption, practice, and group identification surrounding products that mediate serious meditation and affiliation with Zen lineages and teachings (and are less focused **(p.259)** on personal comfort, lifestyle, and fashion). Perhaps one might map the retail landscape of Zen into four adjoining territories with somewhat porous borders, beginning with (1) corporate retail of Zen-branded and auratic mass-market consumer products but including as well (2) the retail of meditation and spiritual practice goods by mass-market vendors, (3) the application of Zen Buddhist teachings to for-profit corporate business, and (4) the appropriation and adaptation of mainstream business operations by Zen communities to support practice and outreach, in which market share, profit, and investor return are irrelevant.⁸

This chapter is chiefly concerned with this last space, as exemplified by The Monastery Store run by the Mountains and Rivers Order of Zen Buddhism, as well as the entanglements of “retail Zen” and “Zen retail.” Indeed, given the use of ecommerce platforms by Zen communities, one might ask whether Zen practice has appropriated retail for Zen ends. If so, how does this square with our understanding of Buddhism and Zen practice? Are products sold by Zen communities more authentic and safe from criticism than those available from, say, Amazon or Walmart?⁹ How does the consumption of Zen products for religious or spiritual ends negotiate the system of capitalist consumption?

Zen Mountain Monastery’s “Monastery Store”

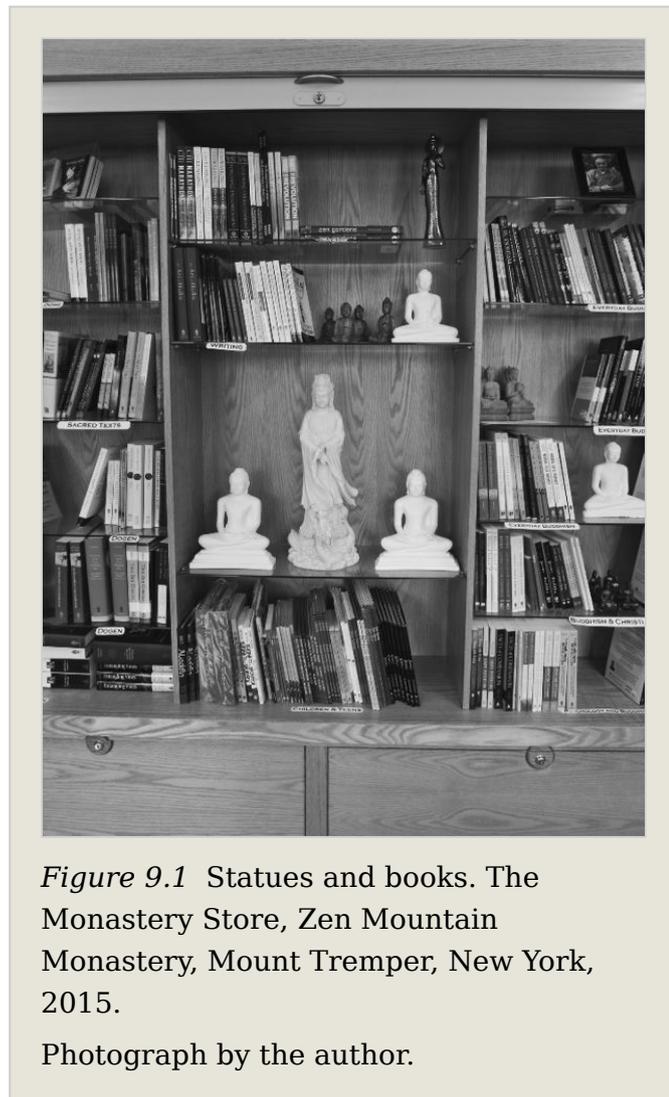
One afternoon, the catalog of The Monastery Store slid through my mail slot along with bills, charitable donation requests, and supermarket flyers. Its cover design combined a photograph of hand-carved wood statues of a Buddha against a sky-blue background with a logo accompanied by the vendor’s name, “The Monastery Store,” and the phrase “Support for Your Spiritual Practice at Home.” Hesitating at the recycle bin long enough to flip through the catalog, I realized that this was a case of Zen sells Zen.

The Monastery Store is part of the Zen Mountain Monastery (Doshinji), located a dozen or so miles northwest of the famous village of Woodstock in New York State's Catskill Mountains. The monastery is the epicenter of the Mountains and Rivers Order of Zen Buddhism (hereafter MRO), the Buddhist organization established by the American Zen master John Daido Looi (1931–2009).¹⁰ The Store—visited online, in hard-copy catalogue, or on site—is a retail space unlike that occupied by a Zen-styled product found on a store shelf, in a magazine, or on the sites of ecommerce behemoths. Here, instead, is what we might call a Zen department store, operated by a nonprofit Zen monastic and lay Buddhist order, selling **(p.260)** things for Zen practice as well as items representative of other Buddhist traditions that also respond to broader Asia-associated spirituality and holistic lifestyle markets. It is not the oldest Zen monastery in America, but it is one of the earliest and most extensive institutional Zen retailers.¹¹ What sort of business, then, is The Monastery Store, and what might its sale of items such as meditation cushions suggest about Zen retail?

To begin with, there is good reason, David M. Padgett argues, to take seriously the production, marketing, and sale of meditation goods. “Buddhist Americans’ consumption practices,” he argues, have a “profound impact on the various ways that Buddhism in America is developing, how it is being perceived, imagined, and, finally, contested.”¹² Padgett acknowledges that the character of “Buddhist America” is debated, but he makes a case for understanding American Buddhism and meditation as more than merely “rarified and immaterial” and for countering the perception that “true ‘spirituality’ (and true Buddhism) is unrelated to the human traffic in *things*.”¹³

As a site for the study of Zen retail in the shadow of corporate capitalism and ecommerce click consumption, meanwhile, The Monastery Store is operated not in terms of profit but Buddhist right livelihood and eco-awareness practices. Many of its products are tools for Zen meditation and compilations of Zen teachings from credentialed masters. No perfumes or running shoes à la Zen sold here. Even if the Store employs some of the technology, business practices, and vernacular of mega-corporate-driven consumerism, its retail items are framed by narratives and values that are enduringly (though not fixedly) Zen and, not surprisingly, indicative of the histories and social constitution of American Zen.

When I visited the monastery and Store on a weekday afternoon in June, residents were busy with daily work and preparations for upcoming fee-based retreats and visitor programs. The brick-and-mortar Store is located in the monastery's Sangha House, not far from the main building housing the meditation hall and adjacent to the community's large vegetable garden. The Store occupies a rectangular room that is decidedly not "boutiqued out." Wood shelves with books and Buddhist statues line one wall, tables run down the center, and meditations cushions and benches sit on the floor along the opposing wall (Figs. 9.1 and 9.2). Clothing items are hung on the rear wall above a table with sale items. Simple cards provide information and pricing, such as "Handcrafted Buddhas from Nepal. Price: \$25 \$20 Code: SHK-NEPAL." **(p.261)**



Somewhat akin to a traditional country store, or in more recent vernacular “one-stop shopping,” the Store offers essential items for home practice and study, beginners’ sets, specialized instruments, and MRO logo-printed goods—ranging in price from three dollars (a roll of incense (p.262) sticks) to twelve hundred (a calligraphy by Kazuaki Tanahashi). There are meditation cushions, statues, altars and supplies, *mālā* (prayer beads), monastic eating bowls (*ōryōki*), and utensils for Japanese tea ceremony. The Store offers numerous books on Zen and

other topics; audio disks of dharma lectures; and DVDs and audio books on Zen, other Buddhist traditions, religion, and spirituality. You can also purchase for eleven dollars the MRO Flash Drive: “2 gigabytes of storage to take your favorite dharma talks with you wherever you go. With MRO logo printed on both sides.”¹⁴ Zen work clothing (*samu-e*) hangs alongside T-shirts and hoodies, some with graphics of Bodhidharma and the phrases “Just Sit” or “Think Not Thinking,” as well as monks’ shoulder bags and bags for carrying meditation cushions. There is additional MRO “swag” (mugs, notecards, and the like), but more often than not, the display returns to items and texts related to traditional practice. At the front of the store, for instance, beside the credit card reader (the primary ritual implement of commerce), sits a stack of parchment cards printed with the text of the “Evening Gāthā”: “Let me respectfully remind you: Life and death are of supreme importance. Time swiftly passes by, and opportunity is lost. (p.263) Each of us should strive to awaken ... awaken. Take heed. Do not squander your life” (five dollars each).¹⁵



Figure 9.2 Meditation cushions. The Monastery Store, Zen Mountain Monastery, Mount Tremper, New York, 2015.

Photograph by the author.

On its website and in its catalog, but less so on site, the Store is organized into specific departments. New items are highlighted, sales and specials are announced, and goods are presented with practical descriptions and, occasionally, the sort of chirpy, promotional pitch one encounters in mainstream retail: “a cushion so soft and comfortable, you’ll forget you’re sitting on the ground;” “If you think that pain during meditation is just plain unnecessary, this is the cushion for you.”¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the primary retail category is that of meditation cushions and mats (*zabuton*) available in a range of styles, materials, and sizes—“From our classic kapok zafu to the newest member of our cushion family, the Cloud.”¹⁷ The website provides links to instructions for zazen and the Store’s “Zafu Meditation Cushion Donation Program.”¹⁸ The Store assembles its cushions on site, and the catalogue adds: “All of our cushion shells and inserts are made in the US within 250 mile radius of our Monastery, which keeps our transport related energy use low.”¹⁹ Being mindful about one’s cushion’s carbon footprint accords with the Store’s environmental ethic, which reflects Daido Roshi’s engagement with deep ecology.²⁰ We also learn that each cushion type has been “developed, tested, and improved by monastics, Monastery residents and other Buddhist practitioners with thousands of combined hours of meditation experience.”²¹ This is not a verification of true relics, but as far as meditation cushions are concerned, this may be the height of quality control and authentication. The Store’s attestation also embeds its cushions into the lineage, teachings, and authority of the Mountains and Rivers Order, something not found when shopping at a mass-market retailer. The latter retail experience also lacks the Store’s request for tax-deductible donations of used cushions, mats, and other items that are given to practitioners of limited means, including students, former inmates, members of the military, and various practice groups. The monastery therefore links its retail store to a sharing or collaborative economy.²² This helps connect the principle of right livelihood, discussed in greater detail later, to its fraternal twin, as it were, “right consumption.”

As illustrated in Figure 9.3, the Store also retails statues of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in several “transformation bodies” (*keshin*), the Buddha Śākyamuni, Mahāprajāpatī (the Buddha’s aunt and first ordained Buddhist nun), the Chan patriarch Bodhidharma, and other Buddhist figures. Produced in Nepal, Bali, the United States, and elsewhere, the **(p.264)** statues vary in size, material (bonded stone coated with a hand-painted bronze or white-marble-like finish; cast bronze or ceramic; mahogany), style (Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan, Nepalese), and price.²³ Catalog copy for these items offers guidance indicative of a mode of lay Zen that combines icons and individualized space and practice:



Figure 9.3 Altar. The Monastery Store, Zen Mountain Monastery, Mount Tremper, New York, 2015.

Photograph by the author.

To create a sacred space is to bring awareness and intention to your place of practice. In setting up a home altar, we encourage you to use elements that are meaningful to you. That’s why it’s important you **(p.265)** have a connection with the central image on your altar—whether it’s the seated Buddha in the classic meditation posture, a fierce Manjushri wielding the sword of wisdom, or a standing Kuanyin Bodhisattva expressing the boundless compassion of an enlightened being.²⁴

One may also purchase an altar, incense bowl, altar cloth, vase, water-offering cup, and so forth. The retail concept here aligns with Buddhist practice that incorporates visual images and adornment of their spaces with traditional offering utensils (*mitsugusoku*). The physical Store, meanwhile, includes a functioning altar placed along one wall (incense ash indicating use), with an icon of Avalokiteśvara, incense bowl, candle, and flowers (it serves simultaneously as a retail display for how to equip a home altar) (Fig. 9.3). For those wishing to purchase a more comprehensive ritual setup, there are also liturgical instruments for use in chanting and marking time during meditation: handheld bells (*inkin*), gongs (*keisu*), fish drum (*mokugyo*), and wooden clapping blocks (*hyōshigi*). These sorts of ritual implements and instruments are not sold by mainstream retailers, and in this respect the Store resembles businesses more strictly found in Asia and diaspora communities that specialize in Buddhist altars and implements for home use (*butsugu shō*).²⁵

The creation of a home altar with a statue, offering utensils, and liturgical instruments may seem conservative or perhaps even “heretical” to forms of Zen that focus exclusively on meditation—a “Protestant Zen” free of devotional objects and ornamentation, if not a secular Zen devoid of all expressions and trappings of institutional religion. But Zen teachers in the United States have long recommended the incorporation of such items into domestic practice, reflecting what some might call a “traditionalist” Zen, wherein meditation, scripture, ritual, precepts, and lineage are inseparable.²⁶ In 1958, Ruth Fuller Sasaki (1892–1967) wrote:

I wish every western Buddhist could have a shrine in his home, no matter how small or how simple. Perhaps just a corner of a shelf in a bookcase. He need not even have an image in it, only a place and a small incense burner will do. I wish that every morning before he sits down to breakfast he would stand before that shrine, palms together. With his mind quiet and collected, let gratitude fill his heart, gratitude to his parents past and present, to his teachers past and present, and to all sentient beings past and present who have **(p.266)** contributed and are contributing to sustain his existence. Let him bow to all these to whom he owes a debt of gratitude impossible to repay. Then let him light an incense stick and still standing with palms together, recite in his heart or with his lips the Four Great Vows [of a Bodhisattva (*shigu zeigan*)].²⁷

The Monastery Store does not go quite so far in recommending a home altar, and Sasaki, whose text is not associated with retail, allows for the absence of an image. That said, Sasaki's guidance speaks to the creation of personal sacred space, which the Store emphasizes and extends through its suggestion that one select a statue that suits one's spiritual, ritual, or aesthetic preferences or place in the altar an object of personal importance. Given our present "trend toward secular mindfulness," as the MRO senior monastic and Director of Dharma Communications, Vanessa Zusei Goddard, put it, the monastery's more traditional approaches to the dharma are not intended to exclude the choices of individual practitioners. The point, she emphasized, is to create a space that helps integrate meditation into daily life and which structures practice and extends it beyond the cushion. One might note that the Store does not offer certain items commonly found in Buddhist home altars in Asia and in diaspora communities, notably those related to mortuary Buddhism such as "spirit tablets" (*ihai*) for deceased family members.²⁸ This suggests the modern refocusing of Zen toward individualized meditation and its deemphasis of funerary and ancestral practices.

To augment one's meditation space, one can purchase recordings of Dharma Discourses given by Daido Roshi, Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Sensei (MRO's present head), and other teachers. There are also instruction manuals for zazen and other forms of practice, translations of medieval and early modern Chan/Zen texts, books written by Daido Roshi and other modern teachers including the Tibetan master Chögyam Trungpa (1939–1987) and Thomas Merton (1915–1968), and titles on writing and holistic living. On site, one of the Store's display tables presented copies of *Zen Mountain Monastery Liturgy Manual*, edited by Daido Roshi, stacked next to DVDs of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, narrated by Leonard Cohen, Jon Kabat-Zinn's "Mindfulness Meditation for Pain Relief," as well as "Bedtime Meditation for Kids" and "Holding Still to Free the Butterfly: Meditations for Squirmy Kids." Perhaps one might raise an eyebrow: is the Store padding its inventory beyond items essential for meditation in order to tap into a broader market for Buddhist, Asian, and spiritual products—and sell to **(p.267)** the entire family? Is this a matter of spreading the dharma, by all means or products necessary? That said, contemporary Zen is often an "ecumenical" concoction of diverse denominational, ritual, cultural, and material traditions. This is evident in the monastery's programming, which includes rigorous monastic retreats and residencies as well as retreats on Yoga and other traditions not native to premodern Zen but part of modern Asia-associated spiritual and body practice cultures. One might also note the monastery's retreats designed for families. Practicing Zen today is often omnivorous and not strictly individual; so too contemporary Zen retailing and consuming.²⁹

As a business, The Monastery Store is run by Dharma Communications, Inc., the “Not-for-profit outreach and education arm of the Mountains and Rivers Order ... and a right-livelihood enterprise.”³⁰ Staffed with ten to fifteen senior monastics, full-time monastery residents, and volunteers, Dharma Communications is a multitasking Zen media business and retail company. The nonprofit corporation, set up in 1991, manages the Store; designs the MRO’s websites, brochures, and flyers; and runs a press that publishes the writings of Daido Roshi and other teachers as well as the *Mountain Record: The Zen Practitioner’s Journal* and *Fire Lotus Temple*. It also operates WZEN.org; produces Zen instructional materials that bring “teachings to home practitioners”; and manages a large audio, video, and print archive.³¹ Daido Roshi “loved media,” Zusei recalled, and he “was proud that the monastery was the first [among US Zen communities] to be on the web.”³²

As a nonprofit religious organization, Dharma Communications is not required to report financial information, but its annual gross revenue, I am told, runs to around \$1 million. Store profits do not go to salaries or investors but fund Dharma Communications’ operations, including the radio station and publication of the *Mountain Record*. Its revenue has also supported construction of the Sangha House and, during a recent boom period, helped cover the health insurance of monastic residents. Staff work in a red clapboard-sided building a short distance northwest of the main compound. Just as I arrived at the building with my guide, the Creative Director, Shoan Ankele, a FedEx truck was backing up to the garage that serves as a shipping bay, which happened to hold 700-pound sacks of buckwheat hulls shipped from North Dakota that are used in meditation cushions. Next door is the packing and shipping department, with shelves of inventory, boxes and other materials, and an online shipping system. The floor above includes comfortable offices, with small Buddhist statues (**p. 268**) placed on the desks of the customer service staff member and others, and a meditation room.

Long before express delivery, The Monastery Store began by mailing out humble mimeographed newsletters and an audiocassette recording of a practice session led by Daido Roshi. The tape offered an aural context for home practice, including a twenty-minute period of silent meditation. Some customers returned the tape, Zusei recalled, having concluded that the extended silence meant it was defective. After gradually expanding its mail-order inventory, the Store moved, not surprisingly, to ecommerce.³³

These days Zusei selects the majority of the Store's products, working with national and international distributors as well as local or regional artisans and sculptors in Thailand and Bali. Meditation cushions are assembled in the monastery using covers produced by a company in Massachusetts and materials such as memory foam, buckwheat, and cotton batting.³⁴ A longtime practitioner makes the meditation benches and travel altars, a monastery resident threads some of the *mālā*, and a local seamstress produces the altar cloths. Although the Store has worked with carefully selected makers for years, building strong small-business-to-business relationships, there are occasional supply-chain hiccups. Producers sometimes fail to meet orders or raise prices too high. Pricing, Zusei added, is transparent, reflecting the wholesale cost of the item, the cost of shipping to the Store, and a small markup without the inflation that creates the fiction of "free shipping."

As a corporation, the Store's business health can be tracked in reports sold by business data companies; sales in 2015 were improving.³⁵ That said, the Store sticks to a small business retail capacity, eschewing an outright growth model. It holds its inventory on site and, save for books it distributes through Shambhala Publications, does not use fulfillment companies. Although there is nothing in the monastery's teachings that rejects wider distribution, the additional volume that might come with selling through Amazon, for instance, would overwhelm the staff. Without a marketing department at her disposal, meanwhile, Zusei does not have "big data" or precise demographic information on the Store's customer base and occasional shoppers. That said, the Store makes use of the MRO's mailing lists, developed partly with registration information from retreats and programs, and it may acquire lists from affinity organizations. The Store's customer base—or "community of consumption," using Padgett's term—comprises a mixture of practitioners who attend sessions and retreats at the Catskill and New York City centers or with affiliate sitting groups as **(p.269)** well as those whose practice is strictly at home or in local settings (campus, community center, prison, and so forth) and without direct teaching and training contact. Tracking with broader demographics of American Zen, many but not all are what Jan Nattier terms "elite Buddhists," with income that covers the costs of retreats and practice-related consumption. For some, Padgett notes, meditation cushions are "the options for those who have options."³⁶

Mail-order catalogues and ecommerce sites routinely, if not necessarily, create storylines for their products, situate them in exotic or envious locations with attractive and market-targeted models, articulate mission statements and values, and create fantasy worlds that promote consumption. If this is part of what David R. Loy and Jonathan Watts refer to as the “religion of consumption,” with its disastrous impacts on communities, cultures, and the biosphere, how does Dharma Communications present The Monastery Store?³⁷ The Store’s catalog and website present a comfortably familiar retail space: attractive design, lively product explanation, item numbers and unit pricing, and crisp product photography. There are the requisite phone, fax, and ecommerce tools, including “customers also viewed” data, reviews, shopping carts, secure payment, and customer support. The Store also has a blog with articles on practice and related retail items. Explicit in the Store’s paper and online retail platforms is a running narrative that links customers and spaces of home practice with the monastery—represented in elegant photographs of meditation, community assemblies, and so forth—networked into a larger virtual community through the MRO’s websites. There is even a “Cyber Monk” feature, with a form through which to send questions to a senior monastic.³⁸

Buddhist cyber communities are by no means unusual today, but The Monastery Store portal is specifically for the sale of meditation things and other items.³⁹ For the monastery there is nothing inherently contradictory about this, but Daido Roshi and Zusei Goddard have been clear about the challenges of navigating between, on the one hand, “rampant American consumerism” and “simply selling more stuff” and, on the other, the “sincere need for products to support spiritual practice.”⁴⁰ That need is addressed throughout the catalog and website, and interspersed within and between particular product departments are quotations from Zen luminaries—the Chan master Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157), Dōgen Kigen (1200–1253), Hakuin Ekaku (1685–1768), and the Order’s own teachers—that seek to reframe retail and consumption within the religious tradition and in relation to everyday practice. Customers are exhorted by **(p. 270)** Hakuin: “Don’t think the commitments and pressing duties of secular life leave you no time to go about forming a ball of doubt. Don’t think your mind is so crowded with confused thoughts you would be incapable of devoting yourself single-mindedly to Zen practice.”⁴¹ We also read that “The subtle art of chadō [Japanese tea ceremony] offers us an opportunity to extend our zazen into the practice of serving others, as well as to explore the key aspects of the ceremony determined by Sen no Rikyū: rustic simplicity, directness of approach and honesty of self.”⁴² Whatever one might think of their historical or sectarian perspectives, these texts and explanations offer Zen “teaching moments” in the retail space. Off and on we also find the sentence, “Thank you for your practice,” which suggests the interconnection of individual practice at home with the larger turning of the wheel of the dharma but may also imply, “Thank you for your purchase.” Practicing, is purchasing, is practice. Rather than profit per se, then, the mission “is to help maintain and spread the Buddhist teachings of wisdom and compassion.”⁴³ Or, as the Store’s manager, Nathan Lamkin, put it, business revenue is “a conversation but not *the* conversation.”

Zen Business, Support, and Right Livelihood

Traditional and diaspora Buddhist communities routinely support monastic and lay practice and outreach through the performance of religious services in return for donations as well as the sale of grave sites, talismans, worship goods, calligraphies, books, temple-made foods, and other products. Not all of these services and exchanges are evident in predominantly convert-focused Zen communities (notably those related to funerary ritual), but since the postwar decades, American Zen centers have hardly been shy about opening businesses focused often on cushions, garments, and food. To mention only a few, the Rochester Zen Center founded Endless Knot, a meditation cushion and Zen robes business, in 1972. The Tassajara Bakery, run by the San Francisco Zen Center, opened in 1976, and since 1979 the Center has operated the vegetarian restaurant Greens. On Vashon Island, Koshin Christopher Cain and Soshin Lidunn Cain, founders of the Puget Sound Zen Center, run Still Sitting Meditation Supply.

None of this activity is wholly surprising or inconsistent with long-standing practices in premodern and modern Buddhism. Of course, there are teachings that promote understanding of the fundamental emptiness (Skt. *sūnyatā*; Jp. *kū*) of all things, the virtues of nonattachment (Skt. **(p.271)** *alobha*; Jp. *muton*), renunciation (Skt. *naiṣkramya*; Jp. *shutsuri*), life as a monk or nun (literally, mendicant, Skt. *bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*; Jp. *biku*, *bikuni*), and restrictions on property and money. Throughout Buddhism's history, however, monastic communities have not rejected outright the acquisition of property, entrepreneurship, or the promotion of the benefits to business prosperity as well as kingship that accrue to lay patrons from the veneration of and donations (Skt. *dāna*; Jp. *fuse*) made to deities and gurus—producing revenues crucial to temple economies.⁴⁴ Studies of Theravāda monasticism point to a dialectical relationship between the acquisition and renunciation of wealth, and Mahāyāna scriptures such as *The Lotus Sūtra* (Skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*; Jp. *Hokekyō*) present teachings that became fundamental to discourses on “this-worldly benefits” (*genze riyaku*) gained from devotional practice as well as the pious performance of secular occupations, including those related to merchant activity.⁴⁵ Members of Buddhist monastic communities did not spend all their time meditating, therefore, which was far less central to monastic life than we may assume; some were what we would now call financial officers, fundraisers, buyers, and salespeople.⁴⁶

In premodern Chan/Sōn/Zen, in particular, monastic codes regulated monks and nuns responsible for managing temple savings, income, fundraising, estates, and the sale of surplus food.⁴⁷ Until confiscations during the second half of the nineteenth century, Japanese Zen monasteries had conspicuous land holdings, and the most prominent among them also generated revenue through foreign trade, moneylending, and varied commercial activities.⁴⁸ The Sōtō Zen monk Suzuki Shōzan (1579–1655), meanwhile, may have developed a proto-capitalist ethics of work and business compatible with Buddhist devotion and salvation.⁴⁹ These and other activities did not transpire without complaints from rulers, Confucian and nativist critics, and Buddhist leaders themselves regarding temple wealth, commercialization, and corruption—long before recent scandals arising from overzealous Buddhist fundraising, jet-set monks, and the like—but Buddhism and business have a long interwoven history.⁵⁰

Modernity produced new configurations of the Buddhism–business relationship and drew into question, from Buddhist vantage points, the dominance of particular economic systems. Certain Zen monks, for instance, “recognized the basic incompatibility of Zen and capitalism” and worked to develop Buddhist socialism.⁵¹ Lay Buddhists and nonmonastic observers also took up the relationship. In his oft-cited essay, “Buddhist Economics” (1966), meanwhile, E. F. Schumacher (1911–1977) saw in **(p.272)** Buddhist countries, specifically Burma, an economics that—differing fundamentally from that of Europe and North America—was based on principles of interconnectedness, nonviolence, and renewable resources. Buddhist economics were, he argued, local and sufficient rather than limitless in production and growth, and emphasized well-being rather than maximized profit. Schumacher pointed to right livelihood, “one of the requirements of the Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path” as evidence of the compatibility of economic activity and Buddhist ethics and practice.⁵²

Schumacher’s essay—reductive as its portrayal of Buddhism may have been—became a foundational text for later socially engaged Buddhism and dharma economics that draw from or composite Buddhist teachings and blend them with ecological and progressive ethics in order to transcend capitalism and socialism.⁵³ “Five centuries before Christ entered the temple [and threw out the moneylenders],” Derek Wall argues, the Buddha “set up a philosophical system in opposition to the notion of economic (wo)man and the desire for even more consumer goods before the term ‘economics’ had been coined by Aristotle.” Zen, he adds, like “slow food and allied italist practices ... minimizes need and provides an alternative road to affluence.” It is therefore congruent with anarchist, Occupy, and ecosocialist perspectives.⁵⁴ In this sense, and despite simplistic and overly imaginative characterizations of what the Buddha and early Buddhists did, Buddhism and Zen offer, in the view of some, a means to intervene in global consumerism and its destruction and suffering, making use of “analytical tools and practices that can assist in liberation from the environmental and socially oppressive nature of over-consumption.”⁵⁵

To generalize, Buddhist businesses often manifest webs of sacral-economic relations (teachers, makers, sellers, and practitioners) and conceptions of consumption and nonprofit work-retail that are rooted in the interpretation of Buddhist teachings and the interaction of monastic and lay communities. Different relations operate, of course, between the consumer of Buddhist or Zen-branded or designed goods and corporate producers and mass-market retailers. Equally different are twentieth and twenty-first century efforts to integrate Zen and Buddhist concepts of mindfulness into for-profit corporate business models unrelated to monastic and lay Buddhist communities, monastic precepts (Skt. *upasampadā*; Jp. *jukai*), and so forth.⁵⁶ However sincere such corporate efforts may potentially be, they are part of what we might call (perhaps generously) capitalist applied Buddhism. In the technocratic-nirvana of Northern California, for instance, we have “Silicon Valley Zen,” which the blog “ValleyZen” (p.273) describes as a matter of “Simplifying a product—removing features—to make it more useful; Looking for the right solution, not the logical one; Acting today to be wrong, not tomorrow to be right.”⁵⁷ No doubt a CEO, VP, or cubicle warrior may gain a great deal from meditation-ritual-community-based Zen practice, and there is a modern history of corporate Zen retreats at temples and centers. But it strikes me that the aphoristic, trickle-down, or perhaps more extensive corporate “Zen-ification”—often an abstract appropriation of “beginner’s mind” and “mindfulness,” “iconoclastic” innovation, interdependence, and minimalism, separate from Zen teaching contexts and meditation—is its own late capitalist Zenny thing. Nevertheless, there is a booming genre of Zen-infused business management and “business Zen self-help” books and articles, and various business Zen gurus (part of a larger business-spirituality fad).⁵⁸

The introduction of Zen into high tech is often linked to innovation-driving (and profit increasing) corporate work-life-balance rhetoric, and it is quite distinct from the ways in which religious teachers, philosophers, and economists work to rethink or dismantle capitalism, work, and consumption.⁵⁹ With its ultimate aim of profit and share price, corporate Zen takes what it wants and ignores the rest, including sustained meditation in a specific Zen community, ongoing instruction from a teacher in a particular Zen lineage, and Buddhist soteriological goals.⁶⁰ In a general sense, selective transmission and refocusing are hard-wired into modern-contemporary Zen (if not the longer tradition), but we might note that the corporate version is hardly akin (in capital, resource consumption, labor, and global political power) to the countercultural appropriations of the Beats, art avant-gardes of the 1960s and 1970s, and various multitrade spiritual communities, as well as recent Hard Core Zen followers and dharma punks. I might feel less ambivalent were I to hear of a corporation espousing not just the value of Zen thinking to innovation, market share, and stock price but the bodhisattva ideal of relieving the direct suffering of all sentient beings, not just those who can purchase things, receive corporate stock options, or reap capital gains.

In any case, The Monastery Store differs in obvious organizational and financial respects (personnel, tax status, scale, profit, and so forth) from multinational retail corporations that sell meditation supplies and Buddhist-Asian spirituality products but have no Buddhist denominational affiliation or doctrinally based business principles, and from the self-congratulatory “disruptive” notions of Silicon Valley Zen.⁶¹ The Monastery Store also differs in tax category, revenue, and practice-emphasis use from **(p.274)** for-profit meditation supply businesses—the privately held DharmaCrafts, for instance—that, while not affiliated with specific temples, may still self-represent in terms of Buddhist lineage and adopt a Buddhist business model.⁶²

Even a brief review of the Store’s retail catalog and site, not to mention conversations with its staff, reveals a set of active and slightly incantatory keywords that articulate a claim for, and express self-identification with, independence from corporate retail, the most prominent being practice, support, and right livelihood. What the Store sells, in Zusei’s words, are items that embody a “practical, physical way to support practice.” Supporting home practice matters, she added, because, “we believe that the dharma works.” Instead of mass-market commodity and disposable products directed at isolated and data-mined consumers, therefore, the Store emphasizes support—from its logo to checkout—to signify the interrelational, rather than autonomous, nature of Zen practice and community and compassion in the dharma.⁶³ The monastery directs support in particular to those who are homebound, incarcerated, or otherwise unable to visit the monastery or its affiliates for direct participation in retreats, programs, and residencies. Those who purchase support in the form of meditation-related items may participate in this system through the donation of used goods to other practitioners. This “relational practice” culture and its economics are built upon the monastery’s Zen teachings, monastic organization, and engagement with contemporary society.

Dharma Communications puts its overall mission this way: “To help maintain and spread the Buddhist teachings of wisdom and compassion in two ways: I. By providing a training ground for work practice and right livelihood for Zen Mountain Monastery residents and volunteers, II. By offering finely crafted products that support your spiritual practice and have a low negative impact on the environment.”⁶⁴ Some of this language sounds obligatory to IRS nonprofit activity categories, but the phrases “work practice” and “right livelihood” (Skt. *samyagājīva*; Jp. *shōmyō*) link the statement to Buddhist teachings that play a central role in modern-contemporary practice-based Buddhist businesses. Indeed, right livelihood is the go-to principle for various meditation supply makers and retailers who describe their work as Buddhist practice, and it arguably distinguishes Zen community retail of meditation goods and related items from corporate retail of Zen-related products even when the two may blur at the level of technology (ecommerce in particular) and corporate social responsibility statements speak to issues of community and betterment.

(p.275) Zen Mountain Monastery defines right livelihood as “one of the principles of the Eightfold Path of the Buddha, and within the MRO it is expressed as *work practice*—work as sacred labor. In all of our activities and decisions, we strive to be guided by the Buddhist Precepts, or moral and ethical teachings.” Today, the approximately thirty full-time residents at the monastery each have specific work practices, be it in the kitchen, the vegetable garden, the Store, and so on in addition to meditation practice and receiving instruction. As part of the Eightfold Path (Skt. *āryāṣṭāṅgamāga*; Jp. *hasshōdō*), we read, right livelihood “involves abstention from engaging in occupations that are considered to be incompatible with morality because they bring harm to other beings, either directly or indirectly ... Right livelihood also involves abstention from any occupation that may cause oneself, or encourage others, to break precepts associated with right speech ... and right action.”⁶⁵

The concept of right livelihood was introduced to the West early in its modern encounters with Buddhism. Dwight Goddard, in his 1930 *The Buddha's Golden Path*, observed that “In our modern days, when economic competition is so keen and relentless and our whole civilization based on material values, the importance of the Fifth Stage of the Golden Path [Eightfold Path] is often overlooked. Any vocation is considered to be ‘right’ if it provides a fair living and it is very desirable if by it man becomes rich.” In any profession, however, one may become “smug and complacent and egoistic” and be tempted by quick profits. “To keep up with the Joneses will probably be a constant, besetting urge,” Goddard admits, but he points to the deeper benefits of limited consumption, nonattachment to material things, and “concentration on the highest ideals of the spirit.”⁶⁶ To follow David Loy’s more recent comments, right livelihood implies that an alternative to our present religion of market capitalism “would not require eliminating the market ... but restoring market forces to their proper delimited place within community social relations.”⁶⁷

Right livelihood involves work, to be sure, but work, as the Dharma Communications webpage puts it, is “a gate of self-investigation and an opportunity to serve the community at large.”⁶⁸ Zusei explained it with the question, “How do we work and wake up?” and Nathan, the Store’s manager, added that “We don’t change when we walk between the meditation hall to the offices of Dharma Communications.” For the monastery’s founder, Daido Roshi, Zen practice “is not about isolating ourselves on some mountaintop, dwelling in tranquility while rejecting the busy activity of the world, but, rather, it is about manifesting the Buddhadharma in **(p.276)** everything we do, so that the secular is, indeed, the sacred. This is what we need to see in order for the practice of work to function as an aspect of our Zen training.” Zazen, therefore, “is not just sitting cross-legged on a pillow; it is growing a garden, getting to work on time, getting the job done.” “The foundation of work practice,” he adds, “is mindfulness, a state of consciousness in which the body is relaxed, the senses are alert, and the mind is clear and focused on the task at hand.” Work, he writes, “emerges as an active function of zazen,” and “The problems we face in work function as our genjōkōans, the kōans of our everyday life. They can be handled in the same manner as the kōans we work with in zazen.”⁶⁹ Taking a time-honored Zen pedagogical turn, Daido Roshi encapsulates his teaching in a commentary on a statement by his medieval dharma ancestor, the Sōtō Zen patriarch Dōgen: “‘To carry the self forward and realize the secular is delusion; that the secular advances and realizes the self is enlightenment.’ To ‘carry the self forward’ means to separate yourself. That the ‘secular advances’ means to be one with the object of your attention. The secular world itself becomes your life, and its inherent liberation is constantly manifested.”⁷⁰

We might also gloss right livelihood as a matter of “first do no retail harm”—to makers, workers, consumers, sentient beings, and the planetary ecosystem. The Store’s mission statements speak to efforts to reduce the business’s carbon footprint, critically evaluate its sources of materials, and support fair trade and fair labor: “We believe that it’s not enough to offer high-quality products and services at a reasonable price—we strive to do so with full knowledge of how each of these are made, under what conditions, and how they affect our environment.”⁷¹ As social-ecologically responsible practices, these goals are hardly unique to Buddhist communities, but in contemporary conceptions of Buddhist market mindfulness, they are grounded in the ethical principles of the Eightfold Path and other teachings. Often they resonate with the progressive social and political views of many who are drawn to Buddhism.

In practical terms, work practice at the Store includes product selection and purchasing, catalogue and website design, customer service, packing and shipping, and so on. On weekends, retreat participants assist residents in packing and labeling items for shipment as a practice of “caretaking,” a concept explained in a dharma talk given by Geoffrey Shugen Arnold, the head of the MRO: “Although we may think of a spiritual journey as being **(p.277)** exotic or removed from ordinary life, actually, it is all about how we live this ordinary life. At its heart, this journey is quite simple. It’s a journey of deep caring—of cultivating a mind and heart that care deeply for all things and living our life so that it is a manifestation of that caring ... it means having the courage to admit that we care, and being willing to do everything we can to bring our life into alignment with that caring.”⁷²



Figure 9.4 Orders ready for shipment. Dharma Communications, Zen Mountain Monastery, Mount Tremper, New York, 2015.

Photograph by the author.

Preparing individual orders is also an opportunity to distinguish the Store's shipments from the other padded envelopes and boxes that appear on our doorsteps. Each item is hand wrapped in a manner that manifests caretaking, and the exteriors of shipping materials are adorned with fragments of ink calligraphy saved from the monastery's brush practice programs (Fig. 9.4). Cut from larger sheets of paper into squares and rectangles, and then impressed with the monastery's seal, these handwritten calligraphy fragments (individual characters tend to lose ideographic legibility) are affixed to the sides of each package, giving them unique (and perhaps a bit Zenny) decoration that stands out from conventional mailing labels and packing materials. Needless to say, this is hardly the sort of thing one finds on a box shipped from Amazon. By repurposing snippets of calligraphy into retail exchange, the adornment, I was told, helps build a community of practitioners: monastery residents, those attending retreats on site (practicing calligraphy and assisting the packing and shipping), and off-site customers. As Shoan put it, "We want to be as connected as possible with those who connect with us."

At the end of one of our conversations, Zusei noted that one could purchase a serviceable *zafu* at Walmart, even though cushions sold by the Store are of far higher quality and have greater durability. What she was actually referring to, I sensed, was not simply the matter of differentiating one product's manufacture over another but distinguishing the nature of retail and consumption itself. The Store's retail mission of supporting spiritual practice at home, training at the monastery, and spreading the Buddha's wisdom and compassion relies, therefore, upon normative manufacturing, supply chain, and retail operations, sometimes finding expression in familiar retail vernacular. But Zen business activity in this instance is guided by Buddhist teachings of ethical work, work practice, and ecology as articulated in the teachings of its founder John Daido Looi, his successors, and, it is implied, his lineage ancestors all the way back, in classic **(p.278)** Buddhist manner, to Dōgen and the Buddha. Buying Zen things from The Monastery Store is, in this sense, an act of consumption that brings one into this lineal community and into contact, at one level or another, with its teachings.

(p.279) Conclusion

A Zen curmudgeon or militant atheist might dismiss discussion of support, right livelihood, and such as just so much idealism or worse. Capitalism is capitalism, one might argue, even in monk's robes, and some might even label The Monastery Store as simply another space of privileged hypocrisy. Namely, that its Buddhist messaging and retail operations are, ultimately, akin to those of Starbucks, Whole Foods, and so forth: we consume things reassured by statements of ethical business practices and the notion that we are doing good by buying *these things* from *this* business, while we may end up ignoring the root causes of suffering created by the very system of consumption that we in fact sustain.⁷³ Or, perhaps one is merely disappointed: surely a Zen community would sidestep the snare of late capitalism, avoid familiar (soul-sucking) retail jargon, product styling, clickable consumption, and "this is the cushion for you!" sales exhortations. Indeed, how far into this realm can the monastery go and not get caught?

There is much to suggest in The Monastery Store's defense: its nonprofit status, its distinction from megaretailers and nondenominational Asian- and Buddhist-themed retail stores, and its distance from the sale of excessively Zenny commercial products. At the very least, the Store's consistent framing of its retail vernacular, styling, and mechanisms within Buddhist identity and practice—reference to monastery's rituals, training procedures, Buddhist teachings, and so on—suggest an active process of self-definition and the infusion of specific religious and spiritual principles into its products. If one is inclined to describe the Store as a specialty "boutique" of Zen things, at least its retail theme—of Zen practice and accompanying Buddhist teachings—appears always to be in season.

That said, the name “Monastery Store” may grate a bit. Literal and apposite a Zen space, lineage, and practice, it nevertheless has the ring of commercial branding. To be fair, “The Monastery Store” is not unique to the MRO and is akin to “The Abbey Store,” the ecommerce and mail-order business operated by the Trappist monks of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, in Conyers, Georgia. In both cases, the stores’ distinction from non-religion-based businesses is suggested by a religious architectural metonym. Nevertheless, “The Monastery Store” also brings to mind the direct marketing “Country Store,” a folksy-fictive general store selling homespun simplicity in bedding and casual clothing and other embodiments of country living to customers who are, for the most part, I suspect, urban, suburban, and exurban.⁷⁴ Might a similar imaginary operate for someone who **(p.280)** flips through The Monastery Store catalog or clicks through its website? To what extent does The Monastery Store imbue retail items with a special Zen aura and affiliation, above and beyond practical function—an aura with which a purchaser might self-identify, yearn for and possess through the incorporation of *these* products into a home practice space and lifestyle? I could not help wonder, however hyperbolically, about Zen ecommerce addiction: fervent beginners purchasing meditation cushions and statues while caught in the “awareness trap” of consumerism—the belief that the “solution to our *dukkha* is our next purchase,” and the next, and so on.⁷⁵ Buy Zen stuff to be Zen.

We might wonder where the line is beyond which sincere Buddhist or Zen understandings of commerce become overwhelmed by consumption-driving rhetoric, desire, and credit culture. Will the Store upgrade to the newest, predictive tools for faster speed-to-market and customer gratification? Dharma Communications needs to navigate, then, not only between the shores of rampant American consumerism and support for sincere practice, to paraphrase Daido Roshi, but also the third shore of technology—enhanced “algorithmic marketing,” for instance, that “provides real-time offers targeted to individual customers through a ‘self-learning’ process to optimize those interactions over time.”⁷⁶ I think it is unlikely that the Store would go for this or, for that matter, adopt “fast fashion,” with retail items changing every ten weeks or so in response to (or creating) consumption trends for meditation supplies and related goods. But if the postwar period generated a hunger for instant Zen through psychedelics or “crash courses supposedly leading to enlightenment,”⁷⁷ it is possible that Zen retail may be creating a new dispensation of speed-spirituality through its particular purveyance of Zen things with next-day delivery.

At the end of the shopping day, and no matter where one shops, “purity” of consumption, the absence of impact (human and planetary), is pure fantasy—precisely the sort of delusion that Buddhist teachings about the autonomous self warn us against. Not surprisingly, then, the transformation of consumerism through Buddhist principles of interconnectedness, right livelihood, and so forth appears to be as daunting a task as any nonprofit, anarchist, and human-scale challenge to capitalism and other domination model systems.⁷⁸ At a local level, students at UC Berkeley with whom I have raised these sorts of issues over the past several years offer a variety of responses and suggestions. Some readily adopt Buddhist perspectives and offer defenses of the monastery in distinction from megacorporate retail.⁷⁹ Others have brainstormed new products **(p.281)** for The Monastery Store while honing in on the apparent contradiction or irony of shopping for products that may lead one to nonmaterialistic awakening. If one can do zazen on the ground, the floor, or a tree stump, we nevertheless agreed that purchasing the correct or better “tool” for zazen seems reasonable, provided one is mindful of the relationship between craving and suffering and aware of commodity-fetishism, the commodification of Buddhism, fair labor practices, and the ecological implications of consumption.

Acknowledging that the Internet has altered the way we do consume and how we do Zen, meanwhile, some students felt that it was sufficient that The Monastery Store has altered a tiny space of the ecommerce universe—a small “karmic reversal” of the colossal bad karma of consumer capitalism. We also debated the truism that Zen and Buddhism always adapt—from India, to China, to Korea, to Japan, to the West, and beyond—and the possible slippery slope of cool styling and algorithmic marketing for Zen communities. Not many were ready to accept tout court the idea that The Monastery Store is a “skillful means” (Skt. *upāyakaśālya*; Jp. *hōben zengyō*) fashioned for late capitalism, tailored to spread the dharma to sentient consuming beings.⁸⁰ Our discussion turned as well to methods by which the Store might enhance its operations to further alter the system: a carbon offset option for each purchase, perhaps, or a right livelihood/right consumption label with third-party certification. Perhaps the monastery might make common cause with slow food and biospheric-egalitarian movements embodied in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.

At the very least, The Monastery Store and related Zen retail businesses suggest that there is more to “Zen sells” than simply Zenny products that leverage “borrowed interest” for mass consumption. There are multiple aspects of production, marketing, and consumption to consider: the scale of the retail and business model; the relationship between the sort of thing, the type of advertisement, and the manner of Zen practice, if any; price point and for-profit versus teaching point and for-dharma objectives; what one needs and wants and why; and what one can afford, and what one gives back. To the extent that Zen products enter our lives—through corporate retail, local family businesses, for-profit enterprises guided by right livelihood, monastic nonprofit ventures, or all of them—we should pay attention to how these particular material things and Zen itself get rightly complicated in the encounters of religion, spirituality, commerce, and consumption.

Notes:

(*) The author is grateful to Vanessa Zusei Goddard, senior monastic and director of Dharma Communications; Shoan Ankele, creative director of Dharma Communications and editor of *Mountain Record*; and Nathan Lamkin, manager of The Monastery Store, all at Zen Mountain Monastery.

(1.) Merchants located in the “town outside the temple gate” (*monzenmachi*) in Japan, for instance, have long used their location and the temple name to sell goods of various sort (not all related to religious adherence or ritual) and services to pilgrims and tourists, though by no means on the scale of present-day mass-market retail or in relation to the global marketization of “ethnic” and exotic products.

(2.) Sperry, *The Worst Horse*, <http://theworsthorse.com/>, redirects to <http://www.lionsroar.com/author/rod-meade-sperry/> (accessed July 31, 2015). See also Todd Stein, “Zen Sells: How Advertising Co-opted Spirituality,” *Shambhala Sun* 8, no. 2 (1999) <http://www.lionsroar.com/zen-sells-how-advertising-has-co-opted-spirituality/> (accessed January 15, 2015).

(3.) Mary Farkas, “Let’s Not Get Carried Away,” *Zen Notes* 13, no. 9 (1966): n.p. For discussion of postwar Zen and Zen products, see my forthcoming book, *Long Strange Journey: On Modern Zen, Zen Art, and Other Predicaments*.

(4.) Andrea R. Jain, *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), ix.

(5.) The persuasiveness of corporate retail Zen may exceed even that of twentieth-century Japanese nationalist Zen and the multifarious movements of the Zen boom. See my *Long Strange Journey*.

(6.) In response to the “corporate takeover” of “mindfulness,” the Theravadin monk Bhikkhu Bodhi, Zen teacher David Loy, and management scholars Ronald E. Purser and Joseph Milillo, among others, warn against its decontextualization from Buddhist ethics and soteriology. See David Loy, “The Religion of the Market,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religions* 65, no. 2 (1997): 275–290; Ron Purser and David Loy, “Beyond McMindfulness,” *The Huffington Post*, July 1, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ron-purser/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.html (accessed November 22, 2015); Ronald E. Purser and Joseph Milillo, “Mindfulness Revisited: A Buddhist-Based Conceptualization,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 1, no. 22 (2015): 3–24.

(7.) Rochester Zen Center, <http://www.cafepress.com/rochesterzencenter> (accessed July 4, 2014). Other online stores are those of The Zen Center of Los Angeles, Yokoji Zen Mountain Center, and Sonoma Mountain Zen Center.

(8.) Various gift, barter, and sharing economies also employ Zen principles.

(9.) One might keep in mind that retailer and consumer may or may not share values or understanding of the sales transaction or of Zen. A mass-market vendor may offer meditation cushions as one of a million products, but the cushion purchased from Amazon or Walmart might be used for disciplined meditation. A Zen community with a public retail business may sell products to adherents within a shared dispensation of teachings, belief, and practice, but nonadherents may make the same purchases, in some instances using items in ways unrelated to or even contradictory with the Zen community’s dispensation. Buddhist communities benefitting through the sale of such products may see such consumption for other purposes as still seeding the dharma, and who is to say that a nonpracticing owner will not one day return a meditation cushion to its first-order function in zazen.

(10.) Daido Roshi established the monastery in 1980. Its logo depicts the bluestone main building, constructed in the 1930s as the chapel of the Catholic Camp Wapanachki. The MRO includes monastic and lay training centers, the Zen Environmental Studies Institute, the National Buddhist Prison Sangha, The Monastery Store, and an on-demand radio station (WZEN.org).

(11.) The Monastery Store is more extensive in merchandise than the stores of the Los Angeles Zen Center and San Francisco Zen Center. For analysis of DharmaCrafts, another prominent meditation supply business, see Jeff Wilson, *Mindful America: Meditation and the Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 136–139. As far as I am aware, there is no Buddhist equivalent of the Association for Christian Retail.

(12.) David M. Padgett, “‘Americans Need Something to Sit on,’ or Zen Meditation Materials and Buddhist Diversity in America,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 1 (2000): 62, 63.

(13.) *Ibid.*, 63.

(14.) Dharma Communications. *The Monastery Store, Spring-Summer 2014 Catalog* (Mount Tremper, NY: Dharma Communications, 2014), 47.

(15.) The verse, appearing in the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu tanjin*) and *Baizhang’s Pure Rules* (*Baizhang qinggui*), is inscribed on a wood “sounding board” hung in Zen temples.

(16.) Dharma Communications, *The Monastery Store*, 7.

(17.) Dharma Communications, “The Monastery Store,” <http://monasterystore.org/zafu/> (accessed July 29, 2015).

(18.) *Ibid.*

(19.) *Ibid.*

(20.) See John Daido Looi, *Being Born as the Earth: Buddhism and Ecology* (video) (Lewisburg, PA: s.n., 1992); John Daido Looi, “The Precepts and the Environment,” in Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 1997), 177–184; Simon P. James, *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

(21.) Dharma Communications, *The Monastery Store*.

(22.) Dharma Communications, *The Monastery Store*, 8, 9.

(23.) The selection reflects a modern-contemporary pan-Buddhist sensibility.

(24.) Dharma Communications, *The Monastery Store*, 12.

(25.) See John K. Nelson, "Household Altars in Contemporary Japan: Rectifying Buddhist 'Ancestor Worship' with Home Décor and Consumer Choice," *Japanese Journal of Religions Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008): 305–330. Numerous companies in Japan sell images, altars, and altar utensils online to temples and homes.

(26.) Ruth Fuller Sasaki, "Letter from Kyoto," December 26, 1957, in *Zen Notes* 5, no. 2 (1958): n.p.; Shunryū Suzuki, "Zazen, Rituals, and Precepts Cannot Be Separated," in Michael Wenger, ed., *Wind Bell: Teachings from the San Francisco Zen Center, 1968–2001* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2002), 39–46.

(27.) Sasaki, "Letter from Kyoto," December 26, 1957.

(28.) Tablets are engraved with the deceased's Buddhist name and enshrined by clergy.

(29.) Familial practice is not strictly modern-contemporary. Within Chan hagiography, see the encounter dialogues involving the Tang dynasty layman Pang Yun (Layman Pang) and his daughter, Ling Zhao. See Robert E. Buswell, Jr., and Donald Lopez, Jr., eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 620.

(30.) Dharma Communications, "Our Mission," <http://monasterystore.org/our-mission/> (accessed July 27, 2015).

(31.) See Drew Hodo Coffey, "Dharma Communications: A History," *Mountain Record: The Zen Practitioner's Journal* XXI, no. 4 (2003), <http://www.mro.org/mr/archive/21-4/articles/dchistory.html> (accessed July 1, 2014). Zen Mountain Monastery (EIN 14-1622356; Public Charity) is a nonprofit, registered in 1982, category X50 Buddhist (Religion, Spiritual Development). Dharma Communications is a Media, Communications organization (A30) and Religion-Related N.E.C. (X90), EIN 14-1742118 (Supporting Organization, Unspecified Type).

(32.) Quotations from Vanessa Zusei Goddard and details of the operations and philosophy of The Monastery Store and Dharma Communications are from a phone interview conducted on July 16, 2014. I spoke with Shoan Ankele and Nathan Lamkin during a visit to the monastery on June 4, 2015.

(33.) Early recordings include John Daido Looi and Maureen Jisho Ford and Robert Tokushu Senghas, *Zen Practice at Home* (Mount Tremper, NY: Dharma Communications, 1980). Looi's books include *The Eight Gates of Zen: Spiritual Training in an American Zen Monastery* (Mount Tremper, NY: Dharma Communications, 1992) and *Zen Mountain Monastery Liturgy Manual* (Mount Tremper, NY: Mountains and Rivers Order, 1998).

(34.) For cushion makers in the United States, see Padgett, " 'Americans Need Something to Sit on,' " 65–67.

(35.) In June 7, 2015, the business data company Dun & Bradstreet revised its Supplier Evaluation Risk for Dharma Communications, Inc. to 4 down from 6. The following day Dharma Communication's Financial Stress Score improved from 1445 to 1457. Email alerts from Dun & Bradstreet, <http://www.dnb.com/>.

(36.) Padgett, " 'Americans Need a Place to Sit'," 71-72, 74, 75; Jan Nattier, "Who Is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America," in Charles S. Prebish and Kenneth K. Tanaka, eds., *The Faces of Buddhism in America* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1998), 189.

(37.) David R. Loy and Jonathan Watts. "The Religion of Consumption: A Buddhist Perspective," *Development* 41, no. 1 (1998): 62.

(38.) Zen Mountain Monastery, "Cybermonk," <http://zmm.mro.org/cyber-monk/> (accessed July 9, 2014).

(39.) See, for instance, James L. Taylor, *Buddhism and Postmodern Imaginings in Thailand: The Religiosity of Urban Space* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 89-107; Brett Greider, "Academic Buddhology and the Cyber-Sangha: Researching and Teaching Buddhism on the Web," in Victor Sōgen Hori et al., eds., *Teaching Buddhism in the West: From the Wheel to the Web* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 212-234.

(40.) Daido Roshi paraphrased in Coffey, "Dharma Communications: A History."

(41.) Dharma Communications, *The Monastery Store*, 37.

(42.) Dharma Communications, *The Monastery Store*, 63.

(43.) See Dharma Communications, "Our Mission."

(44.) On "icon unveiling" (*kaichō*), another revenue source, see Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe, Jr. *Practically Religious: Wordly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 212-215.

(45.) See Russell F. Sizemore and Donald K. Swearer, eds., *Ethics, Wealth and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Press, 1990), 1; Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*.

(46.) See Robert H. Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no. 3 (1995): 228–283; Rachele M. Scott, *Nirvana for Sale?: Buddhism, Wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple in Contemporary Thailand* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009); Jørn Borup, *Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism: Myōshinji, a Living Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004); Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Tradition in Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1981).

(47.) See Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan Qinggui* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

(48.) Collcutt, *Five Mountains*, 251–253; Borup, *Japanese Rinzai Zen*.

(49.) According to Nakamura Hajime, "Suzuki Shōzan 1579–1655, and the Spirit of Capitalism in Japanese Buddhism," *Monumenta Nipponica* 22 (1967): 1–14.

(50.) See Stephen G. Covell, *Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005); Scott, *Nirvana for Sale?*, 2–3; The Associated Press, 2013. "Thailand Hunts for Fugitive 'Jet-Setting' Monk, Wanted For Statutory Rape, Money Laundering, Drug Trafficking," *The New York Daily News*. July 18. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/thailand-hunts-fugitive-jet-setting-monk-article-1.1402055>(accessed February 3, 2017).

(51.) Daizen Victoria, "Japanese Corporate Zen," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 12/1 (1984): 67–68. See also James Mark Shields, "Radical Buddhism, Then and Now: Prospects of a Paradox," *Silva Iaponicarum* 23–26 (2010): 15–34; Christopher Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

(52.) E. F. Schumacher, "Buddhist Economics," in Wint Guy, ed., *Asia: A Handbook* (London: Anthony Blond, 1966), 695–701.

(53.) Note too Gary Snyder's writings, including "Buddhist Anarchism," published in *Journal for the Protection of All Beings* (1961) and revised as "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution," in Gary Snyder, *Earth House Hold: Technical Notes & Queries to Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries* (New York: New Directions, 1969), 90–93. See also Sallie B. King, *Socially Engaged Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009). For Buddhist critiques of capitalism and consumer culture, see James, *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics*; Allan H. Badiner, ed., *Mindfulness in the Marketplace: Compassionate Responses to Consumerism* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2002); and Christopher S. Queen, ed., *Engaged Buddhism in the West* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000).

(54.) Derek Wall, *Babylon and Beyond: The Economics of Anti-Capitalist, Anti-Globalist and Radical Green Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 4, 190–191; King, *Socially Engaged Buddhism*, 96–99.

(55.) Stephanie Kaza, “Overcoming the Grip of Consumerism,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 20 (2000): 24.

(56.) Not mentioned here are small, family-owned businesses run with Buddhist principles and often linked to lay communities.

(57.) Drue Kataoka and Bill Fenwick, “7 Principles of Zen Aesthetics,” in *Valley Zen: At the Intersection of Zen, Modern Life and Technology* (blog), <http://www.valleyzen.com/about-valley-zen.htm> (accessed July 1, 2014).

(58.) Williams, *The Buddha in the Machine*, 189–198, 227–228; Gregory Price Grieve, “A Virtual Bodhi Tree: Untangling the Cultural Context and Historical Genealogy of Digital Buddhism,” in Gregory Price Grieve and Daniel Veidlinger, ed., *Buddhism, The Internet, and Digital Media: The Pixel in the Lotus* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 99–103, 104–106; Warren Berger, “What Zen Taught Silicon Valley (and Steve Jobs) about Innovation,” *Co.Design*, April 9, 2012, <http://www.fastcodesign.com/1669387/what-zen-taught-silicon-valley-and-steve-jobs-about-innovation> (accessed July 5, 2014).

(59.) In 2013, Google invited the Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hahn to its headquarters. See Jo Confino, “Google Seeks out Wisdom of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh,” *The Guardian*, September 5, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/global-technology-ceos-wisdom-zen-master-thich-nhat-hanh> (accessed August 6, 2015).

(60.) See Purser and Milillo, “Mindfulness Revisited.”

(61.) There are also lineage-associated and multidenomination, nonprofit Buddhist businesses, such as the Tricycle Foundation, Parallax Press, Wisdom Publications, and Pariyatti Press, that operate with goals of alleviating suffering, providing access to Buddhist teachings, promoting scholarship on Buddhist traditions, and preserving and sharing Buddhist cultures.

(62.) Dyan Eagles, the founder of DharmaCrafts (established in 1979), refers to her study at the Cambridge Zen Center, founded in 1973 by students of the Korean master Seung Sahn. Dyan Eagles, “Dharmacrafts,” <http://www.dharmacrafts.com> (accessed July 30, 2015).

(63.) “Relational practice” is suggested by relational aesthetics in, Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1, 30–35.

(64.) Dharma Communications, “Our Mission.”

(65.) Buswell and Lopez, eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 762–763.

(66.) Dwight Goddard, *The Buddha's Golden Path* (London: Luzac & Co., 1930), 60–61, 62–65. The Zen teacher Philip Kapleau discussed the mutually reinforcing functions of labor and meditation in “Report from a Zen Monastery: ‘All Is One, One Is None, None Is All,’” *The New York Times*, March 6, 1966, 80. See also Martin Baumann, “Work as Dharma Practice: Right Livelihood Cooperatives of the FWBO,” in Christopher S. Queen, ed., *Engaged Buddhism in the West* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 372–393.

(67.) David R. Loy, “The Religion of the Market,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religions* 65, no. 2 (1997): 279n2.

(68.) Dharma Communications, “Dharma Communications.”

(69.) “Actualized case,” or, more colloquially, the “kōan of everyday life.” Buswell and Lopez eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 317.

(70.) Looi, *The Eight Gates of Zen*, chapter eight; John Daido Looi, “The Sacredness of Work,” in Dharma Communications, *Mountain Record of Zen Talks* (1988), reprinted in Claude Whitmyer, ed., *Mindfulness and Meaningful Work: Explorations in Right Livelihood* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1994), 31–35.

(71.) Dharma Communications, “Environmental Policy,” <http://www.dharma.net/monstore/mission.php> (accessed July 3, 2014). See also Coffey, “Dharma Communications.” At present the Store does not use third-party certifiers for fair trade and labor.

(72.) I thank Shoan Ankele for sharing an unpublished transcript of a talk given in Spring 2013 at the Zen Center of New York City.

(73.) See Andrew Price, “Slavoj Zizek on the Hypocrisy of Conscious Consumerism,” <http://magazine.good.is/articles/slavoj-zizek-on-the-hypocrisy-of-conscious-consumerism> (accessed July 4, 2014).

(74.) See Potpourri Group, Inc., *Country Store*.

(75.) David R. Loy, *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008), 98.

(76.) Joshua Goff et al., “Need for Speed: Algorithmic Marketing and Customer Data Overload,” *McKinsey & Company*, May 2012, http://www.mckinsey.com/client_service/marketing_and_sales/latest_thinking/need_for_speed_algorithmic_marketing_and_customer_data_overload (accessed July 11, 2014).

(77.) R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Some Observations on Recent Studies of Zen," in E. E. Urbach et al. eds., *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 335.

(78.) See Badiner, ed., *Mindfulness in the Marketplace*, 41–48, 135.

(79.) I am grateful to students in courses taught at UC Berkeley since 2000.

(80.) See Buswell and Lopez, eds., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 942–943.

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