

Article

“For the First Time in Japan”: The Main Elements of Hangzhou-Based Zen That Dōgen Transmitted

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Abstract: The transplantation of Zen from China to Japan during the Kamakura period (1185–1333) depended on a series of intrepid seekers, who journeyed beyond conventional geographical and societal boundaries to discover and appropriate religious customs and beliefs while staying on the mainland that spread and eventually thrived on the islands. The only way to learn the intricate ways of Zen theory was to experience first-hand the relevant people, practices, places, and ritual performances in the Hangzhou/Ningbo region of the northern Zhejiang province. This article first provides a brief synopsis of travelers to and from Hangzhou, including Japanese pilgrims and Chinese émigré monks in addition to some prominent teachers and learners who did not journey but nevertheless exerted a tremendous impact on the transmission process. Then, it analyzes elements of Chinese Chan that were brought across the waters by Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), who ventured to gain enlightenment in the 1220s. He later claimed that he implemented “for the first time in Japan” 日本国最始 practical and conceptual religious techniques, including diverse personal, material, ritual, textual, rhetorical, and societal components. Although a major transmitter of Chan, Dōgen made significant innovations based on his vision of the ideal Zen community, recast for the structures of medieval Japanese society.

Keywords: Dōgen; émigré monks; face-to-face transmission; Hangzhou; Kamakura period; kōan; monastic rules; Song dynasty; temples; transplantation



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1. Introduction to the Process of Chan/Zen Transplantation

According to a Song-dynasty verse, “I only acknowledge that old Mr. Hu knows,/but do not admit that he really understands./White clouds reach their destination above green mountains,/but true travelers keep trekking beyond these peaks” 只許老胡知/不許老胡會/白雲盡處是青山/行人更在青山外.¹ By combining two short sayings sometimes evoked independently, this poem sums up some of the main thirteenth-century trends involving the transportation and transplantation of Chinese Chan 禪, then based in the Hangzhou/Ningbo region of what is today called Zhejiang province, to rapidly become the new tradition of Japanese Zen. Once the transition was underway, the movement gained a foothold in the capital cities of Kyoto, where its new monasteries competed with both established and other fledgling Buddhist schools, and Kamakura, the temporary eastern headquarters of the Hōjō 北条 clan shogunate that constructed several major Zen temples.² (Note: I use Chinese transliteration of terms for Chan contexts and Japanese transliterations for Zen contexts.)

The main message of this verse is that, in order to gain a genuine understanding that may seem lacking for the typical sincere but unenlightened practitioner referred to by the moniker “old Mr. Hu,” it is necessary to make an unremitting effort in pursuit of religious goals by venturing beyond conventional geographical and societal boundaries to explore novel approaches to Buddhist theory and practice. Unlike drifting clouds that move passively and acquiesce too easily to current circumstances, authentic wayfarers refuse to rest on their laurels or take anything at face value. Instead, they keep journeying along physical roads as well as spiritual pathways until a full realization of immediate spiritual insight

is attained that could be transferred across the waters and transmitted to eager groups of disciples.

The only way for pilgrims to discern Chan properly was to experience it first-hand and in unmediated fashion through engaging directly with the people or teachers, practices or contemplative techniques, places or monastic compounds, and performances or ritual procedures that proved crucial for completing the transplantation process. In this way, a small but highly influential series of intrepid Japanese travelers were able to discover and appropriate religious customs and beliefs that were popular on the mainland, especially in northern Zhejiang province, with the backing of the literati class. These approaches were then relocated to the islands, where they quickly spread and eventually thrived through appropriate adaptations and modifications reflecting the needs of the new sociocultural environment that was increasingly dominated by samurai warriors, who were enthusiastic about upgrading their intellectual status through embracing continental religious ideals and practices.

The watchword for Zen transmission is that it requires a *menju* 面授 or face-to-face encounter. This refers to a profound personal interaction between a savvy mentor and an aspiring student in a suitable cloistral setting. The experience occurs regardless of whatever spatial distances and difficulties, including language gaps and behavioral disconnections, need to be overcome to bring the parties together to reach a flash of mutual understanding. These encounters, whereby a pilgrim directly beheld and basked in the presence of the forthright personality, mental alertness, broad yet shrewd intellect, physical vigor, and commitment to integrity of his transnational teacher, as depicted in traditional records, usually involved a private one to one meeting held in the abbot's quarters situated behind the main temple buildings including the dharma hall and monks' hall. (Collcutt 1981, p. 26). There, an intensive question-and-answer session conducive to the master probing, testing, and confirming the disciple's level of comprehension would take place on a regular schedule, although a true breakthrough experience usually transpired in a spontaneous moment or serendipitous fashion.

One of the most important early pilgrims, Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), who traveled abroad from 1223 to 1227, provides a fascinating account of how he endured a complicated trip by first crossing, in a small boat, the Sea of Japan, which was plagued by storms and piracy. Arriving in China several weeks later, he had his credentials questioned by authorities and also underwent a bout of illness that delayed his entry. Once registered he suffered other obstacles to being accepted into a training routine at Tiantong 天童 monastery located near the port city of Ningbo, adjusting to his lowly status as a foreign seeker, and navigating steep mountain trails to visit various other leading temples in the Hangzhou region. Additionally, Dōgen felt disappointed and dispirited by several teachers he considered inauthentic. He further withstood the sorrow caused by the untimely passing of his Japanese teacher Myōzen 明全 (1184–1225), who had accompanied him on the journey. Myōzen apparently died from exhaustion before attaining a realization, despite having faced fewer barriers after arriving in China. This combination of unfortunate conditions almost led Dōgen to make an early departure, but he was guided by divine inspiration through visions and dreams to find a resolution of his quest when in 1225 he revisited the original destination, the temple of Tiantong, which had a newly installed abbot, Rujing 如淨 (1163–1227). Rujing was particularly known, according to Dōgen's account, for his supreme integrity and perspicacity as a teacher, although most other records do not indicate this.

According to the following brief passage recorded in the “Menju” 面授 fascicle of his magnum opus, the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏, Dōgen's doubts about the ultimate purpose of his journey suddenly dissolved when he first met his mentor. Soon after this, he gained enlightenment before studying for two more years in China and then returning home to transplant the Caodong school and establish it in Japan as the Sōtō sect 曹洞宗:

On the initial day of the fifth month of 1225 in the initial year of Baoqing (J. Hōkyō) in the Song dynasty, I paid homage and had a face-to-face meeting for the first time with my late master [Rujing], the ancient buddha of Tiantong. I was granted limited access to his inner chamber and, after attaining *shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落 (or casting off body-mind) and respectfully being authorized to teach based on our personal encounters, I came back to Japan.³

As soon as Dōgen discovered the right instructor in the Hangzhou region, all his previous adversities were suddenly overturned and thereafter he enjoyed a string of remarkable spiritual accomplishments buttressed by material benefits gained for his new Zen movement, although he would continue to face challenges throughout his career. These began with the trip home when a typhoon almost capsized his boat, but he and his possessions were salvaged by a manifestation of the beneficent bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音 (J. Kannon). Another difficulty occurred about 15 years later when Dōgen's first temple in Kyoto, Kōshōji 興聖寺, was damaged by rival monks protecting their own interests in the capital, yet he was able to build the magnificent monastic compound at Eihei-ji 永平寺 after he received a plot of land in a remote mountainous province offered by his powerful *daimyō* patron, Hatano 波多野 (d. 1258).

What Dōgen and other pilgrims gained in Song China, however, was not only the formal study of teachings that triggered an awakening of insight but rather a thoroughgoing immersion in the Chan lifestyle with its Buddhist roots and broader Sinitic influences. This level of engagement encompassed many types of daily and seasonal activities, rites, symbols, writings, and other methods of expressing enlightenment that were quite different from, and often represented a conflict with, the customary religious fare in Japan. Comprehending Zen meant embracing new ways to clean, cook, dress, read, recite, repent, retreat, sit, sleep, and walk as well as how to hear, see, and speak, in addition to sharing commitments, resources, and responsibilities as part of constructing a holistic clerical community. Dōgen and other returning pilgrims learned ways of greeting monastic and lay visitors to their temple, celebrating the full moon, new year, or other festivals, and performing funerals and memorial services for esteemed members of the sangha. Moreover, the returnees customarily brought back calligraphy samples, paintings, poems, portraits, robes, scrolls, staffs, tea, and other artifacts, implements, or examples of artistic, ceremonial, and literary production.

All these factors enabled the Zen pioneers to enact in their home country what the Tang-dynasty master Baizhang 百丈 (749–814) depicted as an ideal temple lifestyle according to the earliest recorded philosophy of Chan monastic behavior.⁴ This routine was to be led by a charismatic abbot, who inspired a round-the-clock approach to meditation, while also requiring communal labor and equitable treatment among trainees with regard to the distribution of food and additional provisions with newcomers and novices. Such values needed to be learned meticulously and carried out correctly for a traveler to be able to contribute successfully to the process of transplantation. However, the customs were also significantly altered to suit particular situations in Japan, where strong backing as well as strict oversight from the shogunate often determined the rate of success or failure of new religious factions.

As the second major pilgrim following Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215), who traveled on a second journey to China from 1187 to 1191 and returned to establish the Rinzaï sect 臨濟宗 at Kennin-ji temple 建仁寺 in Kyoto, Dōgen sometimes claimed that he carried out certain Zen techniques “for the first time in Japan” 日本国最始. Probably best known for implementing the meditative practice of *shikan taza* 只管打坐 or just sitting, Dōgen also brought various texts including *kōan* 公案 (C. *gong'an*) commentaries and *sūtras*, the precious relics of his deceased teacher Myōzen, guidelines for following the precepts, monastic rules covering the tasks of the chief temple officers, an ability to compose *kanshi* 漢詩 or Chinese-style poetry, and a facility with various other kinds of Chan rituals. He was also accompanied home by several continental craftsmen, who helped import knowledge of assembling temple edifices and performing suitable functions therein. Additionally, Dōgen had formed

eclectic views about how lay observances and the gender roles he witnessed on the mainland could be fitted to the Japanese Buddhist setting.

A prime example of Dōgen's bold claim about innovation is evident when he declares in a dharma hall sermon from the *Eihei kōroku* 永平広録, which was composed shortly after the opening of Eihei-ji (originally named Daibutsuji 大仏寺) in 1244, "Among all Japanese Buddhist temples, it is mine that introduces for the first time the proper methods of the *tenzo* 典座 or chief cook."⁵ This position is responsible for buying, preparing, and serving all meals so that they provide a sufficient amount of food for every monk without leaving any surplus. This shows how Dōgen attached importance to regulations established in Chinese Chan temples and was confident in practicing them authentically in order to operate his own monastery. However, he was by no means a mere imitator as even the basic practice of *shikan taza* was something he more or less invented rather than a Sinitic style he strictly emulated.⁶ Although he was greatly inspired by the behavior of a couple of elderly but exceptionally dedicated cooks he met when he first arrived in China, Dōgen was also at times critical of the laxity of practice he witnessed at mainland temples; that is, those that were not led by his mentor.

The next section of this article provides a brief synopsis of medieval travelers, including prominent Japanese pioneers and Chinese émigré monks, in addition to teachers and learners who never made the trip abroad but nevertheless exerted a tremendous impact on the overall transplantation process. These figures all led major temples, trained enthusiastic followers, and cultivated various sacramental procedures, introspective techniques, literary styles, and philosophies of religion that propagated Zen in the context of Japanese society. Then, the major section categorizes and analyzes some of the key practical and conceptual elements of Chan that were transported by Dōgen, including diverse personal, material, ritual, textual, rhetorical, and societal components of religiosity. Although Dōgen was a major transmitter of the mainland tradition, he generally made significant innovations based on his own unique vision of the ideal Zen community depicted by Baizhang and adapted to Japan.

2. Intrepid Travelers and Monks Who Did Not Journey

The era of the transition from Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen covered the one hundred and fifty years of the Kamakura period (1185–1333), when the new movement enjoyed the backing of the shogunate. This era can be divided into two main phases. The first phase involved the introduction of Zen to Japan by native pioneers who initiated the Rinzai and Sōtō sects through the first half of the thirteenth century, or until around 1250. The second phase involved the further development of Zen customs over the course of the next eight decades, or until around 1330. This development was fostered by émigré teachers, who led major temples built for them by their Hōjō supporters. Moreover, the era of transition engaged four kinds of monks, including intrepid venturers as well as impactful non-travelers from both countries. All the contributors to the process of transplantation, which was based primarily on transformative interpersonal interactions between mentors and disciples, helped transfer the concrete affairs and theoretical advances of the Zen tradition by transporting a multitude of useful items and thought-provoking ideals from the Hangzhou region to Japan.

2.1. Stage One: Early Japanese Pilgrims

Prior to the travels of Eisai and Dōgen, who thirty years apart both spent four years in China, mainly at the prestigious Tiantong temple, the first Zen pilgrimage was that of Kakua 覺阿 (fl. mid-12th c.), who set sail over half a century before Dōgen. Kakua stayed in China for a couple of years while studying with a disciple of Yuanwu 圓悟 (1063–1135), the highly influential author of the *Biyān lu* 碧巖錄 (J. *Hekiganroku*) kōan collection whose lineages had a huge impact on the growth of Chan/Zen branches. After he returned in 1171, it is said that when the emperor asked Kakua about the meaning of this new tradition, he responded wordlessly by playing a flute. Kakua also composed the first Japanese

Zen poem that described enlightenment as a matter of “breaking sandals on an endless pilgrimage”, which leads to “finding water in a clear stream and seeing the moon in the sky”. (Pollack 1985, p. 23).

Another early traveler was Chōgen 重源 (1121–1206), a monk from Tōdaiji 東大寺 temple in Nara, who went to China in the 1180s and returned to help renovate monastery buildings in the former capital according to the Song Chan styles, while also advocating Pure Land chanting. In addition, a Tendai (C. Tiantai) sect 天台宗 monk named Shunjō 俊苒 (1167–1227) came back from a trip to the continent in 1195 and constructed Sen’nyūji 泉涌寺 temple in Kyoto along the lines of various Chan sites he had visited but without identifying himself as a Zen priest or using zazen 坐禪 as the primary form of practice.

Impressed by these early developments, Eisai and Dōgen were highly critical of Dainichi Nōnin 大日能忍 (fl. late-12th c.), a contemporary of Eisai who, as founder of the so-called Daruma school 達磨宗, claimed to practice Zen meditation but without ever traveling to the mainland. Nōnin commissioned a couple of followers to gain his certification from leaders at Ayuwang temple 阿育王寺 located near Tiantong, but this second-hand initiative was widely rejected as inauthentic. Eisai requested that the government proscribe Nōnin’s faction. Also, Dōgen no doubt created his notion of the value of having a face-to-face meeting with a native mentor in order to persuade numerous former Daruma school monks. These monks joined his monastic community in the 1230s following the prohibition of the Daruma school that was implemented in the late 1220s.

The trailblazer Eisai first made a six-month trip to China in 1168 in pursuit of Tiantai school teachings at temples in Zhejiang province that he quickly realized were either in a state of decline or had already been converted to Chan practice techniques. Going to the mainland again in 1187 to try to eventually reach India, a plan that was stymied by several obstacles, Eisai stayed for four years in several Hangzhou-based monasteries and learned Chan meditation directly from the master Xu’an 虛庵 (1125–1195) at Tiantong. He returned from the second journey in 1191 with an *inka shōmei* 印可証明 (C. *yinke zhengming*) or seal of transmission granted by Xu’an, plus scriptures and tea seeds, among other materials. During his stay in Hakata on the island of Kyushu, in 1195 Eisai established Shōfukuji 聖福寺, which claims to be the oldest original Zen cloister, and in 1202 he founded Kenninji temple in Kyoto, where Dōgen studied for nearly a decade under Myōzen before they journeyed together to China.

Even though Eisai is generally considered the founder of the Rinzai sect, he always thought of himself as a Tendai school monk who featured sitting meditation mixed with various other ritual elements. His monastic approach at Kenninji is referred to as *en-mitsu-zen-kai* 圓密禪戒, or an eclectic synthesis of complete (*en*) enlightenment derived from esoteric (*mitsu*) ritualism, as traditionally used in Tendai practices, that was combined with the full set of precepts (*kai*), as preferred by all Chinese Buddhist schools (in contrast to Tendai in Japan), along with meditation (*zen*), that was considered one of four main practice options.

The first major work produced by Eisai in 1198 was the *Kōzen gokokuron* 興禪護国論 on how to make use of Zen for the protection of the Japanese state. To anticipate critics by explicating the effectiveness of meditation, Eisai stresses that Zen practice is not a matter of solitary contemplation accompanied by seemingly arbitrary behavior, as he and other skeptics claimed was the case for Nōnin’s faction that tried to appropriate Chan based on a very limited access to Chinese sources. For Eisai, again, Zen training necessarily involves the communal practice of adhering to the Hinayana set of 250 precepts guiding the etiquette of monastic behavior in combination with the Mahayana or bodhisattva set of 48 more abstract ethical guidelines. This synthesis was invariably practiced in Chinese monasteries, but not in Japan outside of the oldest temples established in Nara in the eighth century. Eisai’s work was therefore an implicit criticism of the laxity in most forms of Japanese Buddhism, since for the Tendai sect only the Mahayana portion of the monastic codes was followed.

Eisai's other main work written in 1211, the *Kissa yōjōki* 喫茶養生記, is a treatise on the health benefits of drinking tea, a beverage he helped make a staple of life at Zen temples and samurai training studios. Said to have brought tea seeds back to Japan that he planted on Mount Sefuri, a few miles south of Hakata, Eisai was not the first person to promote the drink as an aid to staying awake and alert during meditation because of caffeine and other properties, but his writings proved crucial for the development four centuries later of the intricacies of the highly formalized tea ceremony that became standard practice in Kyoto.

The initial pilgrims, Eisai and Dōgen, were spiritually transformed through face-to-face meetings in Hangzhou temples that legitimated their lineal inheritance so that they returned to found prominent monasteries and lead new branches of Zen in Japan, while writing major works on the topics of meditation and the precepts and also bringing back a variety of material artifacts. This transitional pattern was followed a decade after Dōgen's journey by the third prominent pioneer, Enni 圓爾 (1202–1280), who left Japan in 1236 to undertake more than six grueling years of study under the master Wuzhun 無準 (1148–1249).

In 1232 Wuzhun became abbot of Jingshan si temple 徑山寺, a major monastery located in the outskirts of the city of Hangzhou, and he quickly completed a vigorous revival and expansion of the somewhat deteriorated state of the monastic compound that was harshly criticized by Dōgen when he visited there just a few years before. It is said that Wuzhun regularly struck Enni with a warning stick so that scars on his face became emblematic of the pain and suffering he had to endure before attaining enlightenment. Later given the moniker "Primary Sage" (聖— C. Shengyi, J. Shōichi), Enni's trip is still celebrated at Jingshan si, which has been rebuilt since the Cultural Revolution with the support of funding from the master's modern Japanese followers, especially the former longtime abbot of Tōfukuji 東福寺 temple in Kyoto, Fukushima Keidō 福島慶道 (1933–2011). At Jingshan si today, a sculpture is prominently displayed showing Enni appearing smaller than Wuzhun, even though that was not actually the case.

Returning to Japan in 1241, Enni was invited by a powerful Fujiwara 藤原 aristocrat to become leader of Tōfukuji, although construction was delayed for many years due to objections by the Tendai sect. When the monastery was finally fully opened a decade later, Enni installed a famous portraiture of Wuzhun and used ritual implements imported from the mainland. Located in southeastern Kyoto close to Dōgen's Kōshōji temple, which was also threatened by Tendai school adversaries, the grandeur of the much more expansive Tōfukuji compound may have dwarfed Kōshōji and thereby triggered Dōgen's departure from the capital in 1243 for a countryside location free from strife in the capital.

Enni enjoyed over three decades of abbacy at Tōfukuji and also supervised the rehabilitation of Eisai's Kenninji. It is said that for several years Enni walked from Tōfukuji to Kenninji every day at noon. His main writing, the *Jissshū yōdōki* 十宗要道記, shows in great historical detail how both Pure Land and Zen, which was then sometimes referred to as the Busshin 佛心 or Buddha-mind school, had emerged to surpass the teachings of the previous eight Japanese Buddhist sects because of a shared emphasis on the priority of attaining individual salvation. Also, Enni's recorded sayings and collected dharma talks were published as separate compilations, along with a set of instructions on zazen that resemble Dōgen's first meditation manual, the *Fukanzazengi* 普勸坐禪儀.

The last major Japanese traveler during the introductory stage was Kakushin 覺心 (1207–1298) who, after studying with both Dōgen and Enni, went to China in 1249 with the hope of training under Wuzhun. When he learned that Enni's former master had died, Kakushin instead studied with Wumen 無門 (1183–1260), the reclusive author of the *Wumenguan*, another important compilation of kōan cases. During their initial meeting, the monks traded puns on their names that mean "No Gate" (*wumen*) and "Enlightened Mind" (*kakushin*), respectively. At the time of Kakushin's return to Japan, his Chinese teacher wrote: "The Great Song Empire and the Japanese Empire—/Heaven is without boundaries and earth has no poles/With one sentence he settles a thousand errors./Is there anyone else who can distinguish between right and wrong?" (Paul 2009, 130 (modified)). Kakushin

brought an original manuscript of the kōan text along with other spiritual supplies, including Wumen's portraiture painted by a patron the teacher referred to as an "illusory image".

2.2. Stage Two: Émigré Monks

The second stage of transplantation, which led to the enhanced cultivation of Zen practices and the dominance of the institution in Japanese society, began with the arrival of two prominent émigré monks, Lanqi 蘭溪 (1213–1278) and Wuxue 無學 (1226–1286), who became abbots of new monasteries built by the shogun in Kamakura. Lanqi, who arrived in 1246 in the port city of Hakata, came to Japan of his own volition, unlike later émigrés who were either invited by the shogunate, such as Wuxue, or sent by the Mongols, such as Yishan 一山 (1247–1317). Lanqi soon found his way to the center of power, first in Kyoto and then in Kamakura, at the behest of Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (1227–1263). After opening a monks' hall at a smaller temple in Kamakura for the practice of communal meditation, which was the second main example of this facility in Japan following Dōgen's initiation of the continental custom at Kōshōji, Lanqi was installed by the shogun as the abbot of Kenchōji 建長寺, another fully Song-style *shichidō garan* 七堂伽藍 (C. *qítang qiélan*) or seven-hall Chan/Zen monastery constructed in Kamakura (Wang 2018). Built on the ground plan of Jingshan si, Kenchōji was opened in 1253, the year of the death of Dōgen, who apparently had declined the offer to lead this new site when he visited Tokiyori in 1247–1248 accompanied by his samurai patron Hatano and a handful of disciples. Dōgen and Lanqi, however, are said to have gotten to know each other through an exchange of letters in which they discussed the significance of zazen meditation.

Wuxue was at first suspected of spying, as were numerous foreigners in both countries, but he eventually earned the trust of Hōjō Tokimune 北條時宗 (1251–1284) by teaching him during the Mongol invasions to deal with military affairs through the use of kōan exercises. Wuxue also instructed clerical followers in a practice he learned from his own Chinese mentor, Xutang 虛堂 (1185–1269). This was a profound appreciation for religious realization gained by experiencing what is called verse samādhi, or a sense of genuine playfulness within supreme concentration that empowers a meditation practitioner to compose creative and compelling poetry following intricate Sinitic guidelines for rhyming and syntax.

The notion of verse samādhi became more firmly entrenched in Japan after a third émigré monk, Yishan, arrived in 1299 and enhanced the role of Chinese learning among Zen trainees (Parker 1999, p. 53). To cultivate the appropriate state-of-mind attained through intensive meditative engagement at the most refined spiritual level, Japanese monks were required by this teacher to become sufficiently skilled in Sinitic literary and visual artistic techniques that they could contribute their originality to various styles of artistic expression.

The next impactful monk to arrive from China in 1309 was Dongming 東明 (1272–1340), who further developed the momentum generated by Yishan by fostering a more profound understanding of the intricacies of Chinese prosody and calligraphy often used to inscribe Zen paintings. He became abbot at several monasteries in Kamakura, as Yishan did, but frequently withdrew to a private cloister at Engakuji temple called the Haku'un an 白雲庵 hermitage. In 1351, another key émigré from Dongming's lineage named Dongling 東陵 (d. 1365) came to Japan to teach additional verse composition techniques. After this, mainly for political reasons, clerical travels to and from China became far less common with no additional major arrivals even though some practitioners, including poets and painters, continued to cross the waters.

2.3. The Non-Travelers

Although transplanting Chan to become Zen greatly depended on wayfarers who trekked from Japan to China and back, or from the mainland to the islands, two sets of non-travelers played crucial roles in the overall transitional process. The first group includes Sinitic masters who stayed home to train early pioneers, such as those already men-

tioned, including Xu'an (for Eisai), Rujing (for Dōgen), Wuzhun (for Enni), and Wumen (for Kakushin). Another key exemplar from the second half of the thirteenth century was Xutang, who taught an appreciation for the intimate relation between poetry and meditation to the Rinzaï pilgrim Daiō 大應 (1235–1308, also known as Nampō 南浦). Daiō spent nine years in China beginning in 1259, and in 1265 he attained enlightenment and went back to Japan a few years later.

Upon leaving China, Daiō received the following quatrain from Xutang, who referred to the “many grandchildren on the eastern shore who have received the dharma from me”: “Wandering all over to the ends of the realm,/You’ve grown used to being like a boat sailing on dry land./But do you know how to find your real home?/As your traveler robes flap in the breeze, do not delay your voyage” (Protass 2016, pp. 161–63). See (Protass 2021). The image of touring the land by ship refers to the many challenges faced during Daiō’s sometimes-arduous journeys on the continent. The flapping of the sleeves of his robe suggests unspoken emotional depths formed by both parties at the time of his return from the mainland that were muted by a sense of detachment along with a firm commitment to spreading Zen teachings. Several decades after reaching home, Daiō became the mentor of Daitō 大燈 (1282–1337, also Shūhō 宗峰), who learned from the teacher’s firsthand knowledge of the foreign language and later, without ever leaving his home country, became one of the most eminent Japanese teachers and commentators on texts written in classical Chinese.

Daitō is representative of the second group of non-travelers, which includes numerous monks who were able to learn enough Sinitic language and religious customs while staying in Japan that a journey was no longer deemed necessary. Among Dōgen’s immediate Sōtō followers, for instance, only Giin 義尹 (1217–1300) and Gikai 義介 (1219–1309) made short trips abroad in the 1250s and 1260s to help coordinate the arrangement of Sōtō school temples and texts in Japan with their continental models. However, the major sectarian leaders of the early fourteenth century did not venture forth, including Giun 義雲 (1253–1333), the fifth abbot of Eihei-ji, and Keizan 瑩山 (1268–1325) and Gasan 峨山 (1275–1366), the first and second abbots of Sōjiji temple 總持寺 constructed in the Noto peninsula. Additional Japanese monks who did not travel include several major Rinzaï figures of the period such as Musō 夢窓 (1275–1351), the founding abbot of Tenryū-ji temple 天龍寺 in Kyoto with its fabulous Zen garden, and Kanzan 関山 (1277–1360), who succeeded Daitō as head of Daitoku-ji temple 大徳寺, also located in the capital.

On the other hand, some Japanese monks such as Betsugen 別源 (1294–1364) and Chūgan 中巖 (1300–1375), who both spent over a decade overseas, traveled to the mainland for far more extensive periods than their predecessors. They were greeted in China by another generation of prominent non-traveling teachers, especially Zhongfeng 中峰 (1263–1323), based in the Mount Tianmu area west of Hangzhou city, and Gulin 古林 (1271–1368), based in Suzhou in Jiangsi province to the north.⁷ Both teachers taught complicated styles of Chinese poetic composition to their quite numerous visiting Japanese disciples.

A key development at the late stage of the transplantation process was the arrival in Japan in 1326 of Gulin’s main disciple, Qingzhuo 清拙 (1274–1339), who was accompanied by several colleagues along with the returning pilgrim, Jakushitsu 寂室 (1290–1367); all these travelers remained in Japan for the rest of their lives. Sometime after he came back to Japan, Jakushitsu wrote the verse, “Living in the Mountain”: “Neither seeking fame/nor grieving my poverty,/I hide deep in the hills/far from worldly dust./Year ending, cold sky,/who will befriend me?/Plum blossoms on a new branch/wrapped in moonlight” (Braverman 2000, p. 3).

3. Dōgen’s Contributions to the Process of Transplantation

Although almost all the well-known traveling and non-traveling monks served as head of at least one major temple, and a few highly motivated Japanese wayfarers in the fourteenth century were able to reach a top post at an institution on the mainland, some pilgrims such as Betsugen and Jakushitsu led reclusive lives. After returning from China,

they shunned invitations from the shogunate to become abbots of monasteries in the capital and instead resided in small provincial temples where they put greater emphasis on dedication to a life of austerity than the pursuit of aesthetic accomplishments that could possibly be tainted by worldly success.

However, this sense of withdrawal was perhaps a luxury not afforded to the early pioneers, who needed to muster the utmost public effort while persevering against many challenges, including powerful Buddhist and secular rivals, to establish and develop the new Zen movement in Kyoto and regions beyond. In the first half of the thirteenth century, making accommodations with the establishment was therefore to be expected. Eisai's Kenninji temple and Enni's Tōfukuji temple both incorporated traditional Japanese rites and prayers associated with the previously hegemonic Tendai sect, and this trend was especially evident when Hōjō Tokimune later demanded the cooperation of all religious movements to help protect the nation through ritual offerings in the face of the Mongol invasions.

Even though in 1248 Dōgen indicated a blatant disregard or disdain for non-Buddhist authority, in spite of possible reprisals, by refusing Hōjō Tokiyori's offer to lead Kenchōji temple, which was offered to him as a powerful new Zen site in Kamakura, his outlook at Eihei-ji relied heavily on donations from Hatano, who provided the temple's land and buildings. Dōgen also promoted some features of practice that adapted Zen techniques to the local environment in that his preaching included native rites, such as honoring indigenous deities and celebrating supernatural events such as proverbial flowers falling from the sky or hearing the ethereal sound of bells never actually rung. Nevertheless, Dōgen's professed primary goal was to transmit authentic Song-dynasty Chan methods previously unknown in Japan. In addition to emphasizing that he introduced the role of the chief cook, as previously mentioned, Dōgen stated:

- "As a disciple of Rujing, for the first time in Japan I now offer *bansan* 晩参 or informal evening sermons."
- "At Eihei-ji, there is a *sōdō* 僧堂 or monks' hall for the first time that Japanese people can hear about, visit, and enter to practice sitting meditation."
- "Japanese people for the first time can learn of the *jōdō* 上堂 or formal dharma hall sermons that I have transmitted."
- In a formal sermon delivered on *rōhatsu* 臘八, or the eighth day of the twelfth month of 1250, Dōgen said, "Our Japanese predecessors have been performing ceremonies to honor the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha and to commemorate his death, but they had not yet received transmission of the annual celebration of *butsu jōdō-e* 仏成道会 or his attainment of enlightenment until I imported this twenty years ago. I have maintained the practice and it will be perpetuated in the future".⁸

This list of four claims, which concern the delivery of informal evening sermons and formal dharma hall sermons in addition to the role of the monks' hall and remembrance of the Buddha's enlightenment day, is incomplete because there are so many other examples of innovations engendered by Dōgen's experiences in China that were introduced to Japan during all phases of his career. For example, the *Hōkyōki* 寶慶記 contains about 50 conversations held with Rujing in the abbot's quarters of Tiantong, where he heard an ode recited by the teacher that was part of a literary genre known as *jisan* 自贊 (C. *zican*), or verses of self-praise, in which a master comments on his own portraiture with a fitting sense of humility.

According to Rujing's poem, "Transcending heaven and earth through sitting meditation,/One's true self is fully revealed, and such a person is called a real teacher./But Chan monks are more laughable than a winter gourd or calabash floating in the water,/Or a diamond hanging upside down from the branches of a plum blossom tree".⁹ This type of poetry was later used by Dōgen, who wrote more than a dozen verses regarding his own ritual portraits, and it became standard practice for Japanese Zen teachers from both the Sōtō and Rinzai schools.¹⁰

To cite a couple of examples of Zen novelties stemming from near the end of his life, Dōgen emulated Rujing's *yuike* 遺偈 (C. *yiji*) or poem written just before the moment of

death by creating his own version, and this style of composition also became a custom commonly practiced by monks in Japan. In addition, in the final fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō*, “Hachi dainin gaku” 八大人覺 from 1253, Dōgen comments on an apocryphal sūtra titled the *Fo yijiao jing* 佛遺教經 (J. *Butsu yuigyō kyō*), a ritual text that was especially popular in Chinese Chan circles because it supposedly contains the Buddha’s final sermon featuring moral instructions bequeathed to followers before he entered *parinirvana*.¹¹

The following represents an analysis of six main categories that delineate an array of religious components pioneered by Dōgen’s teaching mission. This catalog is posited without trying to be exhaustive, since a comprehensive discussion is beyond the scope of this article, or exclusive, in that some factors are at least partially attributable to the contributions of other early Zen pilgrims or émigré monks.

3.1. Personal

Perhaps the first and foremost component of Dōgen’s approach to transplantation is the formation of a deeply personal literary account of his spiritual journey that includes as the centerpiece his travels and experience of attaining enlightenment under the tutelage of Rujing. This component was greatly influenced by what he learned first-hand about the self-expressions of Chan teachers on the continent. It was also somewhat different than Eisai’s syncretic outlook that did not formulate a sustained narrative of his own awakening. Dōgen refers to himself in the colophon to “Bendōwa” 辨道話, one of his earliest works written in 1231, as “someone who has transmitted the dharma from Song China”.¹² In doing this he learned that what made Chan monks so successful in gaining popularity in a society dominated by the scholar-official class of literati was not necessarily their doctrinal teachings or pedagogical acumen. Rather, the key factor was how they depicted in persuasive existential stories the notion that suffering from various hardships heightens a sense of doubt, which is broken through based on a direct encounter with an inspirational teacher that paradoxically magnifies and sustains the learner’s resolve to realize a spontaneous sense of liberation from physical and spiritual fetters.

Dōgen’s narrative of profound self-doubt leading to triumphal self-discovery, as expressed in fragmentary fashion in passages included in more than a few of his writings and also in the fifty-first chapter of the *Denkōroku* 伝光録 by Keizan, begins with his difficulty in finding the right opportunity to undertake the journey to China.¹³ The political landscape had not become favorable for extensive travels to the continent until the end of a civil war in the early 1220s.¹⁴ After nearly a decade of studying at Kenninji, Dōgen felt ready to venture abroad despite his lack of certain credentials, namely the Hinayana precepts that, unlike Myōzen, he had not received, and this lacuna would cause him delays in gaining entry to mainland temples.

While still in Japan he found that his then-current mentor, Myōzen, was somewhat hesitant to begin the trip because one of his former teachers was gravely ill and he was being encouraged by members of the assembly to stay and care for this elder. According to Dōgen’s recollection of the decision-making process as recorded in the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki* 正法眼藏隨聞記, the rank-and-file monks advised Myōzen by saying, “What’s wrong with going to China half a year or a year from now? It would not go against the bond between master and disciple, and you would still be able to carry out your wish”.¹⁵ After various disciples had expressed their opinions, Myōzen replied that he disagreed with that view because the urgent, hair-on-fire pursuit of the dharma takes precedence over the cycle of living-and-dying as well as filial piety:

Even if I put off my trip for the time being, someone certain to die will perish anyway and my staying here will not help prolong his life... To mistakenly allow this to hinder my aspiration to seek the dharma would be a cause of evil deeds. But if I carry out my aspiration to go to China to attain enlightenment, although this may go against one person’s feelings, it will contribute mightily to attaining the Way for many people.¹⁶

Dōgen understood that Myōzen's determination was fully in accord with his own view of the importance of pursuing the quest for enlightenment in light of the pervasiveness of impermanence. Then, after getting separated from Myōzen in China and failing for over two years to find an authentic teacher while traveling to various temples as an itinerant seeker, against all odds Dōgen was led to discover the value of Rujing's pedagogical presence. He reports, "Overall, the great way of buddhas and ancestors occurs fundamentally through a face-to-face meeting or by encountering one another with mutuality, for which the proportionality of interaction is just right (literally, no factor is overly indulgent, but nothing is lacking). We should rejoice and faithfully receive and celebrate our true face as realized in this kind of meeting".¹⁷

The climax of Dōgen's experience at Tiantong took place when, during an intensive session of zazen as part of the summer retreat of 1225 held under Rujing's supervision, Dōgen resolved his deep-seated doubt about the relationship between true reality and authentic practice. He spontaneously experienced the shedding of hindrances and the surpassing of attachments and impediments to attain insight that his mentor proclaimed as casting off body-mind".¹⁸ In a prominent version of the story, Rujing also uses the inversion, *datsuraku shinjin* 脱落身心 or body-mind cast off, and the tautology, *datsuraku datsuraku* 脱落脱落 or cast off casting off (Keizan 2021, see chapter 51). Dogen's interpretation of the experience in terms of *shinjin itchi* 身心一致 or the unity of body-mind and *shushō itto* 修証一等 or the oneness of practice-realization, helped inspire the notion of *gogo no shugyō* 悟後の修行 or post-enlightenment cultivation (also *kōjō* 向上) emphasized by leading Rinzai sect teachers from Daitō to later figures such as Hakuin 白隠 (1686–1769). (Kraft 1992).

3.2. Material

To grasp the significance of the material component in the process of transplantation we must consider that Dōgen famously stated in a formal sermon delivered in 1236 that he "returned home empty-handed" (*kūshū genkyō* 空手還郷).¹⁹ This suggests his only real possession retrieved from China was not a particular item or set of objects, but a supremely contemplative state-of-mind characterized by the ability to discern reality clearly and evaluate what is needed to lead an assembly by teaching followers how to shed their delusions. According to the deceptively simple six-line capping verse for the sermon based on Sinitic poetry styles that associates the awakened mentality with the cycles of nature and the turning of the seasons, "Morning after morning, the sun rises in the east,/Evening after evening the moon sets in the west./Clouds disperse and the valleys are still./When rain passes mountains are thoroughly soaked/Every few years a leap year,/A rooster's crowing marks sunrise".²⁰

Despite Dōgen's disclaimer about coming home with empty hands, a view no doubt embraced by Zen iconoclasts for highlighting the priority of an insightful meditative standpoint, this was by no means literally the case in that he and other early pioneers brought back a variety of material items as prized belongings. These religious artifacts were regarded as emblematic of the path to self-realization as well as lineal inheritance, and they were installed and institutionalized at monasteries and celebrated regularly.

For example, Dōgen carried home what he was given by Rujing at the time of his departure: a ritual portrait of the master and his robe, plus a seal of transmission and samples of calligraphy and numerous scrolls. According to Dōgen, all such objects are to be seen not only as an outward symbol of an inner perspective but as the full embodiment of the meaning of the dharma. An interesting example of how Dōgen views basic Buddhist doctrines in terms of the importance of concrete material, corporeal, or ritual manifestations, instead of recommending only an abstract theoretical perspective, is expressed in a passage in the fascicle, "*Kie buppōsōbō*" 歸依佛法僧寶. This states, "Of the three treasures: the buddha indicates icons, relics, and stupas; the dharma indicates golden scrolls turned by spinning vermillion spindles; and the sangha indicates taking the tonsure, dyeing robes, following precepts, and performing ceremonies".²¹

One of the ironies of Dōgen's approach to the issue of materiality is that the comment about being empty-handed was first mentioned in a formal sermon presented nine years after his return. The main reason for the delay was that he felt he needed to wait until 1236 when Kōshōji temple opened the first dharma hall built in Japan as a place to give formal lectures in addition to the first monks' hall used to be used for communal meditation. Only after his temple emulated the layout of the seven-hall temple construction of Song Chan monasteries did Dōgen consider it appropriate to discuss the spiritual significance of his homecoming. He began delivering homilies in the dharma hall in the fourth month of 1236 and continued this practice throughout his career, except during two intervals of travel when no such hall was available.

The construction of the new buildings came about in part through the fiscal support of a female lay donor who became a nun near the end of her life. The buildings based on Song-dynasty models provided a venue for enacting rites that Dōgen had participated in while staying in China and were considered essential for Zen practice. In addition, the newly imported temple design featured a buddha hall for public gatherings such as vegetarian feasts for donors, a main gate (or mountain gate), a refectory, a bathhouse, and a latrine, as well as additional buildings for administrative and ritual purposes such as housing guest monks or controlling finances. The seven halls were arranged in anthropocentric fashion, with the three main buildings positioned along the central axis symbolizing head, body, and groin as well as two each to the right and left sides representing limbs.²²

Another key material component of the transplantation process is that Dōgen carried back to Kenninji temple, where he stayed for several years before establishing his own cloister, the remains of Myōzen, who died in China in the fifth month of 1225. In the tenth month of 1227 Dogen wrote a short essay, *Myōzen shari sodenki* 明全舍利祖伝記, commemorating the teacher's ashes, which it was said contained the manifestation of 360 crystalline relics. According to the document, this was a spectacular phenomenon that was more or less expected for eminent monks in China, but something new in the six-hundred-year history of Japanese Buddhism.²³ Dogen dedicated a portion of the sacred remnants to a nun who had been a devoted disciple ordained by Myōzen sometime before he left Kyoto and was, therefore, a dharma sister of the Sōtō founder.

3.3. Ritual

Two of the major ritual components of Dōgen's transmission involved incorporating elements of a Hangzhou-style Chan approach to significantly alter in Japan the long-standing Buddhist rites for wearing monastic *kesa* 袈裟 or robes and holding the annual *ango* 安居 or three-month intensive summer retreat. The main innovations introduced by Dōgen are as follows: first, the use of instructions provided in the *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (J. *Zen'en shingi*), the standard Chan monastic code from 1103 that was also cited by Eisai, and second, the view that both practices and, indeed, all comparable religious symbols are to be understood not merely as the outer trappings of donning garments or observing a yearly phase of practice. Rather, they are seen as crucial religious activities coeval with the fundamental identity and spiritual exercises of a genuine Zen trainee.

From a strictly material aspect, Eisai is credited with introducing, upon his return to Japan in 1191, a new way for monks to dress in robes. The long sleeves on his *jikitotsu* 直綴 or Song-style underrobe were disconcerting to non-clerics near temples, and he also brought back an unusually widened style of *kesa*, sometimes made of gold brocade that dwarfed the five- or seven-panel robe typically worn at the time by Japanese monks. In 1322 the Rinzaï cleric Kokan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1278–1346) commented wryly on these outfits in his historical study, the *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釈書, by pointing out that in the third month of 1204 a typhoon devastated central Kyoto. The townspeople remarked that when Eisai and his followers walked down the street, great winds swirled within their billowing garments, and they were fearful that the Zen devotees would inadvertently cause a fire (Riggs 2015).

Dōgen devoted two fascicles, “Den’e” 傳衣 and “Kesa kudoku” 袈裟功德, to exploring the notion of safekeeping consecrated vestments by receiving and caring for the garment through stitching and sewing it together, and continually wearing, washing, and repairing the robe in a dignified manner. He lamented that people in Japan did not know how to use the proper material, color, or dimensions of the Zen robe, much less how to put it on and comport themselves. Therefore, he emphasized that wearing the robe, which was key to the unbroken transmission from the first patriarch Bodhidharma 菩提達摩 (470–543) to the sixth patriarch Huineng 惠能 (638–713) that had even been celebrated by Chinese emperors as a greater treasure than any worldly object, evokes the same quality as the acts of making a home-departure or taking the precepts.²⁴ It is also superior to any kind of secular clothing or the garb of other kinds of priests, so that seeing someone properly enwrapped in their *kesa* is to behold a buddha in the making.

For Dōgen the robe, in addition to other implements regularly used by monks such as their bowl or staff, is not something passively obtained from a supervisor and stored away for occasional use. It should, instead, be regarded as an eminently worthy element of one’s everyday practice to be worn dutifully and upheld respectfully as the embodiment of liberation. This physical apparel in effect spiritually encloses the trainee, who in turn infuses its true form through their dedicated contemplative efforts. That outlook applies not only to consecrated articles but also to the eighteen objects that are carried by monks during periods of transiency, including the willow twig for brushing teeth that Dōgen found was used in Japan but somehow was missing among the items carried by Chinese monks. At Eihei-ji, he advised disciples after brushing to always recite the following prayer for purification mentioned in the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (J. *Kegon kyō*), “In cleansing my mouth and teeth, I pray that all sentient beings, / Will reach the gate of purity, / And ultimately gain liberation”.²⁵

In addition, the “Ango” 安居 fascicle deals with the summer retreat observed during the three-month period from the middle of the fourth to the middle of the seventh month, during which monastics remain cloistered for an uninterrupted period of intensive training and the confession of transgressions. While the retreat was an ancient and widespread practice in the Buddhist sangha, Dōgen emphasized the version he experienced in the Chan monasteries of Song-dynasty China. The first part of the fascicle opens with a verse by Ru-jing suggesting that the meaning of the retreat is much more than simply 90 days of ascetic practice and that joining this function is by no means a lapse into a period of private silence.²⁶ The lengthy second part of “Ango” guides readers through reciting instructions provided in the *Chanyuan qinggui*. Following that text, Dōgen, like Eisai, advocates drinking tea as an important component of the reclusive routine.

Next, Dōgen reiterates the significance of observing the summer retreat for the Buddhist tradition and assures his disciples that they are full members of the uninterrupted transmission by virtue of their participation in the age-old ritual then being held in 1245 at the new Eihei-ji temple built in the remote mountains. He maintains that the 90-day period of withdrawal from regular activities to focus on meditation is “the crown of the head and the face of buddha after buddha and ancestor after ancestor, who experienced truth in skin, flesh, bones, and marrow”.²⁷

Dōgen concludes the “Ango” fascicle by citing a verse of Chan master Yuanwu that contains two dicta very much influenced by Confucian wisdom about the value of ritual activity: “If a bell isn’t struck it doesn’t ring, and if a drum isn’t beaten it doesn’t resound”, which emphasizes the role of practical repetition in reinforcing theoretical ideas, and “Great elephants don’t follow tracks left by rabbits; how could swallows and sparrows know the ways of geese and swan?”, which highlights how a genuine Zen teacher is able to discern proportionality by distinguishing what is worthwhile from mere appearances.²⁸ Since experiencing the period of reclusion is very much like solving a *kōan* case, or a way of attaining an adept’s fist and nose ring as symbolic of genuine realization, Dōgen concludes this passage by suggesting ironically that once the retreat has ended, “there is not even a

single blade of grass to be seen for ten thousand miles". In the end, this and all ritual activities are external manifestations of truth, which is a matter of lofty subjective awareness.

3.4. Textual

Dōgen brought back from China three main kinds of Hangzhou-based Chan texts that he composed during his career as a Japanese Zen teacher.²⁹ One type involves monastic rules cited extensively in "Ango" and several other fascicles in addition to the *Eihei shingi* 永平清規, a compilation of six essays on clerical regulations. The second type refers to kōan-related collections, often with prose and/or poetic commentaries, that were especially important for the composition of the vernacular sermons contained in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*, which consists of 95 fascicles in some editions, and the 531 formal sermons included in the first 7 volumes of his 10-volume *Eihei kōroku*. The third kind of text involves Chinese Chan-style poetic compositions that are mainly contained in the last two volumes of the *Eihei kōroku* and include verse comments on kōan cases, reflections on meditation, lyrical evocations of nature, moral lessons for clerical and lay followers, and celebrations for various ceremonies.³⁰

Again, it is clear that Eisai was the first Zen pioneer to cull instructions from the *Chanyuan qinggui*, which are mentioned as part of his emphasis on following the full set of Buddhist precepts that Myōzen received in Japan, although Dōgen only took the bodhisattva edicts. In contrast to his Japanese predecessor, what Dōgen accomplished was not only the transmitting of the Chinese rules text as an authoritative source for monastic behavior. Rather, he crafted his own views on various related topics by citing this source yet also freely interpreting and frequently challenging or changing its conceptual focus to reflect his own vision of the new Zen community adapted to Japan that was based largely on Baizhang's philosophy for how to organize an assembly's practice.

For example, the *Shōbōgenzō* contains several fascicles highlighting how the cultivation of the purity of the body necessarily contributes to reaching an aloof mental standpoint. This group includes two sections on sitting meditation, "Zazengi" 坐禪儀 and "Zazenshin" 坐禪箴, two on cleaning and cleansing practices, "Senmen" 洗面 and "Senjō" 洗淨, two on wearing and repairing the robe, cited above, and a couple others on making sustained and diligent spiritual and physical exertion, "Gyōji" 行持 and "Gyōbutsu iigi" 行佛威儀. All these writings provide general guidelines as well as specific rules based on historical and theoretical explanations concerning how bodily actions make possible the actualization of enlightenment.

Dōgen also wrote six essays expressing his thoughts on monastic behavior dealing with the role of the chief cook in "Tenzo kyōkun" 典座教訓, methods of meditation in "Bendōhō" 弁道法, rules for eating food in "Fushuku hanpō" 赴粥飯法, regulations for the study hall in "Shuryō shingi" 衆寮清規, guidelines for meeting senior instructors of five summer practice periods in "Taitaikō gogejarihō" 対大己五夏閣梨法, and pure standards for the main temple administrators in "Chiji shingi" 知事清規, such as the director (監院 *kan'in*), supervisor of monks (維那 *ino*), cook, and work leader (直歲 *shissui*).³¹ These were originally independent works that did not try to cover every aspect of daily monastic life, and Dōgen did not intend to put them together in a single text. However, in 1667 they were gathered into one book by a Sōtō follower under the title *Eihei shingi*.

Dōgen is also well known for introducing to Japan, diverse kōan texts and styles of interpretation. Although it is not clear whether the scrolls were carried back during his return to Japan or memorized while he stayed on the continent, he quoted extensively from their pages. In total, he cites well over 600 kōan cases, including a collection of 300 kōans without commentary in the *Shōbōgenzō sanbyakusoku* 正法眼藏三百則, and a compilation of 90 cases with verse remarks in the ninth volume of the *Eihei kōroku*, along with more than 300 cases mentioned in the *Shōbōgenzō* and nearly 200 in the earlier volumes of the *Eihei kōroku*. In many instances the cases cited overlap.

The Chinese sources for kōans that Dōgen considers include two main types of materials: transmission of the lamp records, especially the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄

(J. *Keitoku dentōroku*, 1004), *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* 天聖廣燈錄 (J. *Tenshō kōtōroku*, 1036), *Zongmen tongyao ji* 宗門統要集 (J. *Shūmon tōyōshū*, 1093), and *Zongmen liandeng huiyao* 宗門聯燈會要 (J. *Shūmon rentō eyō*, 1185); and the discourse records of individual masters, including the *Yuanwu yulu* 圓悟語錄 (J. *Engo goroku*, 1136), *Hongzhi lu* 宏智錄 (J. *Wanshi roku*, 1197), and *Rujing lu* 如淨錄 (J. *Nyōjo gōroku*, 1227). Except for the record of his own teacher Rujing, all the other texts were also frequently cited by Rinzai school teachers.³² However, Dōgen often altered the wording of the cases to highlight his own view of the oneness of practice and realization, and in the *Shōbōgenō* he frequently mixes Chinese and Japanese syntax for the sake of his followers who were, for the first time, gaining access to these obscure writings.

Finally, Dōgen composed over 400 Chinese-style poems (漢詩 *kanshi*), with about a third representing independent verse and the rest used to comment on kōan cases or related materials used in his sermons. An example that reflects the impact of Rujing's approach is found in Dōgen's stanza on one of his own portraits: "If you consider this painting to be real, then who am I, really?/But why put it there if not to give people a chance to know me?/When you look at this painting and think that what hangs in empty space embodies the real me,/Your mind is clearly not one with wall-gazing meditation [of first patriarch Bodhidharma]".³³

3.5. Rhetorical

Several of Dōgen's major writings emulate the style of Song-dynasty Hangzhou-based Chan works that collect various kinds of sermons and poetry. However, there is a distinctive discursive flair of the *Shōbōgenō* that is evident in the lengthy series of erudite essays on diverse topics regarding Buddhist philosophy and clerical behavior. This text is particularly renowned for being composed in vernacular script or *kana*, an innovative accomplishment during Dōgen's stage of Japanese Buddhist textual history when the standard procedure was to write entirely either in *kanbun* 漢文 (classical Chinese) or in a hybrid Sino-Japanese form of *kanbun*.

Nevertheless, Dōgen's work is not strictly composed in the native tongue since it is based primarily on his extensive citations and groundbreaking interpretations of voluminous continental records of enlightenment experiences. This reflects Dōgen's freewheeling facility in crossing effortlessly between the idioms and grammars of Chinese and Japanese. These linguistic alignments and cultural reconstructions are interwoven to create a unique vision and vocabulary for conveying the multiple layers of meaning of the Zen realization of indivisible truth divulged in terms of manifold human perspectives. As Dōgen writes, "The methods for explaining enlightenment are inexhaustible, so that a teacher's efforts are never finished as he may at any time encounter a new disciple in need of a wholly different way of having truth explained".³⁴

Dōgen challenges those standpoints that tend to deemphasize the role of language for seeming to represent a distraction that invariably detracts from the quest to attain awakening. His focus on the utility of various types of expression for spiritual attainment is illustrated by examples of purposely puzzling sayings that reflect a fundamentally paradoxical view of reality. These maxims include: "A pearl rolls in the bowl, but the bowl is rolling the pearl"; "To study the way is to study the self, and to study the self is to forget the self"; "Buddha nature never arrives in the future, as it is always already here"; "A full instance of being-time that is half known is a half instance of being-time that is fully known".³⁵

Another group of sample sayings highlights difficulties and challenges to overcoming delusion and ignorance by showing that nearly anywhere one turns can reveal a sense of being trapped by partial perceptions, misleading assumptions, vicious circular thinking, uncertainty, deception, or blunder: "Life is a continuous mistake, or a series of misunderstandings one after another"; "Only the painting of a rice cake can satisfy one's hunger; no other remedy applies"; "Vision is dependent on dimness, which is the main feature enabling us to see"; "We disentangle entangled vines by using those very intertwined creepers".³⁶ Each of the maxims, if properly understood, also emphasizes a contrary standpoint

in that the Zen approach to realizing enlightenment surpasses illusion by embracing the comprehensive unity of all forms of existence as well as the endless variability or truth perpetually manifested in everyday life.

That enigmatic view can be summed up by paraphrasing some of Dōgen's main ideas in the following way: Reality is one, but as soon as you try to explain a particular thing, any utterance appears at first to be limitlessly misguided. However, from within the midst of such a series of errors and fragmentations, a genuine understanding of the wholeness of true reality can instantaneously emerge, although an expression of this level of insight still needs to be continually clarified and modified depending on particular pedagogical circumstances. However, even when truth is displayed, there likely remain oversights and entanglements to be overcome. As Dōgen says of the innate yet potentially self-surpassing limitations of human perception, "When one side of a phenomenon is illumined, [this means] the other side remains obscure".³⁷ Therefore, all articulations of Zen realization are subject to revision and alteration.

An interesting and important feature of his rhetorical acumen involves the way Dōgen integrates kōan comments into those works that deal primarily with monastic regulations, a stylistic trend previously unknown in Chan circles that expands the horizons of both genres in ways rarely repeated. For instance, in the "Kankin" 看經 fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō*, for much of the essay Dōgen provides quotations from the *Chanyuan qinggui*'s guidelines about how to perform the ceremony of reciting sūtras when this symbolic act is requested by a donor seeking to attain merit. But he also quotes over a dozen kōan cases in which Zen masters mock this very task if it is carried out in an instrumental fashion that falls short of an authentic realization of nonduality transcending the categories of proper etiquette/decorum and creative misbehavior/transgression.

Also, the last and longest essay included in the *Eihei Shingi*, the "Chiji shingi" that was written at Eihei-ji in 1246, gives instructions for the conduct of administrative positions at the temple wherein Dōgen quotes from the *Chanyuan shingi* the rules for each of the officers and adds his own comments including some intriguing stories. (Leighton and Okumura 1995). However, the first half of the essay also provides 21 kōan cases concerning previous Chan monastic managers that make it clear the heroes Dōgen selects often violate normative conduct. He highly praises masters who take liberty with the precepts or, in some cases, are expelled temporarily from the assembly. The true purpose of the Zen monastery is not based on living up to customary moral criteria, he maintains, but solely on unswerving dedication to gaining universal awakening regardless of behavioral implications.

3.6. Societal

One of the most important though frequently overlooked aspects of Dōgen's transmission, concerns his views on forging a complete Zen community that incorporates a carefully regulated Hangzhou-style Chan monastic compound along with productive relationships between monks and non-clerical patrons, supporters, and other followers who were crucial for the social and economic success of the new movement. The transplantation process, Dōgen felt, necessarily involved purifying the attitudes of monks in Japan, who had much to learn from their continental counterparts about the value of determination for achieving realization, although some elements of the Chinese system were by no means entirely free from Dōgen's sometimes scathing criticisms.

On the one hand, Dōgen did not seek to achieve great popularity by gathering many monks for the Eihei-ji assembly; rather, his ideal was "to train even one or a half a monk" (一箇半箇の接得 *ikkō hankō no settoku*), who would become qualified and capable of inheriting the true dharma. One reason for this attitude is that most of his disciples, who previously belonged to the Daruma school, were of the inferior rank of itinerant monk. Unlike Dōgen himself, who was born to the aristocracy in Kyoto, these clerics were not of noble origins and were less well educated. He felt they could learn much from reading in "Tenzo kyōkun" of the humble yet supremely unrelenting efforts of a couple of elderly

chief cooks he met abroad, who made the most of the seemingly menial and undervalued tasks of monastic life that are as essential as high-minded contemplative functions.

In championing the role of the cook, Dōgen ridiculed the utter indifference toward the lack of integrity he observed at Kenninji after his return to Japan in the late 1220s. He found the cook for over a year did not even come close to lifting a pan, stirring rice, or planning a meal.³⁸ To Dōgen, this attitude represented an unacceptable unresponsiveness that stood in sharp contrast to the atmosphere at Tiantong, where the cooks understood how to act in ways that would benefit others, enhance the monastery's preeminence, and respect elders as well as the memory of Chan ancestors. Dōgen celebrated the capacity of genuinely awakened cooks to cultivate a mind that is joyful, kind, and elevated beyond petty concerns or trivial constraints. In another example of praising a member of the assembly for undertaking a humble task with sincerity and enthusiasm, one of Dōgen's dharma talks expresses great appreciation for a repairman. The monk, along with his assistants, mended a leaky roof covering a hallway during a torrential storm that allowed trainees to resume walking from the monks' hall to the washroom without getting soaked.³⁹

Dōgen also understood that he needed to find ways to recruit novices and provide sufficient resources to nurture their practice routine that would be somewhat different from Sinitic models. He points out that in India monks relied on begging but in China prestigious Chan temples received significant backing from the imperium, which enabled them to have fruitful interactions with highly motivated, informed, and often wealthy lay practitioners. In provincial Japan, however, there would need to be an independent outlook that relied on the voluntary participation in religious ceremonies and values by non-elite lay supporters from the provincial area around Eiheiiji who Dōgen sometimes invited, along with maintenance workers, to hear his informal talks.

Dōgen's societal approach features two main elements. The first, is the notion of open access for newcomers, whereby novice recruits would be allowed to join the assembly and enjoy equal status with senior clerics in terms of receiving from the main temple office an ample supply of rice and ritual implements. The novices were to receive assurances that, once accepted into the assembly at Eiheiiji, they could receive care without interruption or hardship.⁴⁰

The second aspect is to allow lay believers to attain spiritual benefits as a result of their behavior. Although Dōgen clearly emphasizes a doctrine primarily intended for clergy, he frequently held repentance meetings and recommended that non-clerics use this as an occasion to make offerings either spontaneously or on a regular basis. He states that, through the virtue of gifts and contributions offered during ceremonies, laypersons could achieve the same religious status for the time being as monks who practiced continually, even as clergy were not necessarily guaranteed the unending enlightened state often described in Chan/Zen writings. Dōgen does not reject the notion of lay people attaining Buddhahood, and he never tries to suppress the role of these adherents because he relies heavily on their modest financial as well as enthusiastic spiritual support. In this way, he attempts to merge the Chinese Chan monastic system, which was a self-sufficient institution that fostered productive interactions with literati seeking an experience of awakening, with a new Japanese-style of building an independent Zen community that nevertheless depended on the engagement of lay followers recruited from the local area.

4. Conclusions

Whether or not Dōgen is considered the initial transmitter of a particular practice, text, or philosophical view imported from China, as is sometimes claimed, it seems clear that many items and ideas central to the transplantation of Zen in Japan can be traced to the Sōtō founder's role in introducing their importance for creating the new religious institution. His view of Zen transmission builds upon preceding models but also eschews the ordinary trappings of Buddhist ritualism he experienced on the continent. This does not mean Dōgen prefers the subjective and spiritual without regard to the objective or physical dimension of religiosity. Rather, it highlights that he possesses a vast storehouse of infor-

mation about the procedures and styles of Chan/Zen practice as well as the movement's relationships with the broader aspects of society.

Dōgen and other early Japanese pilgrims were neither simply emissaries for carrying particular objects or concepts nor ambassadors for a specific worldview that was intended to replace an outdated paradigm of religious practice. We must consider the fact that Dōgen's writings continually pick and choose, sometimes systematically and in other instances in irregular fashion, specific continental techniques and attitudes that he seeks to integrate into the native setting. In some instances he selects longstanding Buddhist values stemming from India or key aspects of Chinese social customs while criticizing some of the approaches of Chan, a term he occasionally shuns for sounding exclusivist and therefore dividing the sangha into competing factions.⁴¹ In the case of teeth-cleaning, for instance, he prefers the Japanese custom that is truer to traditional Buddhist practice.

The bottom line for understanding what elements of Hangzhou-based Zen Dōgen brought to Japan is to see how he demands strict adherence to monastic codes demonstrating a commitment to uprightness that undermines and overcomes corrupted approaches to Buddhist training he observed in both countries. Yet—or, perhaps, because of this—he also leaves the door open to flexible approaches repeatedly adjusted to shifting interpersonal circumstances that reflect the pedagogical needs of Japanese clerical and lay followers.

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Notes

- ¹ The first couplet with five characters in each line is known in Chan literature because it is included in the prose comment on case 9 in the *Wumen guan* 無門關 (J. *Mumonkan*) kōan collection, and the last two lines with seven characters each is found in Buddhist-influenced poetry, such as by Wuming Huixing 無明慧性 (1162–1237).
- ² Other areas of Japan greatly impacted by the early formation of Zen were Hakata in Kyushu, where some of the earliest temples of both the Rinzai and Sōtō sects were established beginning in the 1190s, and the northwest (Hokuriku) corridor of Japan, where Sōtō Zen spread rapidly after the death of Dōgen in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.
- ³ (Dōgen 1988–1993, vol. 2, p. 60); hereafter, DZZ.
- ⁴ Cited in 51.2076.250c27-b4, in (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 1924–1932).
- ⁵ DZZ 3:85.
- ⁶ Although Rujing apparently stressed the value of unremitting seated meditation, the term *shikan taza* (C. *zhiguan dazuo*) does not appear in his recorded sayings.
- ⁷ After the Mongols started to rule China in 1279, the practice of Chan dissipated in the cities of Hangzhou and Ningbo and took hold in areas still close but away from those urban centers.
- ⁸ Sources for these four items include: DZZ, 3:72, 3:206–208, 3:230, 3:274. See also (Ishii 2000).
- ⁹ This artifact, including a portrait of Rujing with his poetry inscribed, was seen by the author in the archives at Tiantong temple on 28 June 2015.
- ¹⁰ DZZ 4:248–254.
- ¹¹ This scripture was by no means unknown in Japan before Dōgen, as it was a ritual text in the Tendai sect, but it was used in an innovative way by Dōgen and it continues to be recited in the Sōtō sect during the two weeks leading to annual memorials of the Buddha's death anniversary (*nehan-e*) on February 15.
- ¹² DZZ 2:481.
- ¹³ See (Keizan 2021), especially chapter 51 on the life of Dōgen.
- ¹⁴ Nevertheless, when he arrived at Tiantong temple Dōgen found at least a couple of Japanese monks already practicing there, in addition to numerous Koreans along with irregular trainees such as Daoists, shamans, and women of various spiritual backgrounds.
- ¹⁵ DZZ 7:140.
- ¹⁶ DZZ 7:139.

- 17 DZZ 2:59.
- 18 It is unlikely that Ruji spoke this way, given the wording patterns included in his recorded sayings, so leading scholars assume the dialogue was fabricated by medieval Sōtō enthusiasts.
- 19 DZZ 3:34.
- 20 DZZ 3:35.
- 21 DZZ 2:374.
- 22 Modern scholars have pointed out that the anthropocentric notion was probably not evident in Dōgen's day but was later suggested by the Edo-period Rinzaï Zen scholiast, Mujaku Dōchū 無著 道忠 (1653–1745).
- 23 DZZ 7:216–218.
- 24 DZZ 2:354.
- 25 DZZ 2:43.
- 26 DZZ 2:217–219.
- 27 DZZ 2:217.
- 28 DZZ 2:240.
- 29 Because records of the rapidly emerging Chan corpus of writings from the period are incomplete in relation to the mainstream Buddhist canon from the Song dynasty (a major collection was published in 983, before the rise of Chan writings, and it was continually being updated), it is difficult to determine which texts were already available in Japan before Dōgen's trip to China, and which were probably transported by him or other pioneers. There are no specific accounts in his traditional biographical materials or in related records.
- 30 The eighth volume includes two kinds of informal sermons, *shōsan* 小参 and *hōgo* 法語, which are different from the styles included in the *Shōbōgenzō* and the *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki*.
- 31 The first was written while Dōgen led Kōshōji, and the other five were written at Eihei-ji.
- 32 Not on this list is the *Biyan lu* collection published in 1128, which was apparently out of circulation at the time.
- 33 DZZ 4:250.
- 34 DZZ 1:419.
- 35 These sayings are from the following *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles: “Tenbōrin” 轉法輪, “Genjōkōan” 現成公案, “Busshō” 佛性, and “Uji” 有時.
- 36 These sayings are from the following *Shōbōgenzō* fascicles: “Sokushin zebutsu” 即心是佛, “Gabyō” 畫餅, “Kūge” 空華, and “Kattō” 葛藤.
- 37 DZZ 1:3.
- 38 DZZ 7:136–138.
- 39 DZZ 4:252.
- 40 Suguwara Shōei, “Dōgen zenshi shōgai no kiseki”, <http://kousin242.sakura.ne.jp/wordpress014/%E5%AE%97%E6%95%99%E3%83%BB%E7%A4%BE%E5%AF%BA%E3%83%BB%E5%AF%BA%E9%99%A2/%E7%A6%85%E3%81%AE%E7%BE%8E%E8%A1%93/%E5%A4%A7%E6%B0%B8%E5%B9%B3%E5%AF%BA%E5%B1%95/>; accessed on 12 February 2023.
- 41 See especially the *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle “Bukkyō” 佛教 (Buddhist Teachings), in DZZ 1:380–391.

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