

Guanyin/Avalokitesvara in Encounter Dialogues: Creating a Place for Guanyin in
Chinese Chan Buddhism

Preamble

At the gift shop of the White Cloud Daoist temple in Beijing today, one can buy a lovely small gold-washed Guanyin 觀音 to wear on a chain necklace, reminiscent of the image of Guanyin in the temple itself. The presence of Guanyin at the headquarters of Chinese Daoism is a sign of a widespread phenomenon: the presence of Guanyin in almost every place of worship at every level of Chinese religion, whether it is Daoist, Buddhist, the temple of the City God, or a shrine for prayer to local deities who protect fishermen on the sea.

One branch of Chinese religion, the Chan 禪 Buddhist school, seemed at first as if it would have no place for Guanyin. But by the late Five Dynasties period, Guanyin appears, not only in monasteries and temples famous for their Chan masters, which after all were probably not exclusively Chan establishments, but also in Chan's most sacred texts, its genealogical histories and "records of sayings (*yulu* 語錄)" of Chan masters. What follows is an account of the domestication of Guanyin even in the Chan school, as it was accomplished in part through the increasing presence of Guanyin in Chan's encounter dialogues and "public cases" (*gongan* 公案, J. *koan*).

Others have noted the evidence that during the Song dynasty and afterward, both in China and Japan, participants in the Chan and Zen schools loved Guanyin, particularly

the White-robed Guanyin who was often the subject of so-called Chan paintings.¹ But Chan (and Zen) are primarily systems of training. Beyond loving Guanyin lies the question, could Guanyin be made a part of Chan and Zen training. In this essay, the focus is on how and to what extent Guanyin became a part of Chan (and Zen) training.

Introduction

The emergence of the Chan school was portrayed by early scholars such as Hu Shih 胡適 (1891-1962) and D.T. Suzuki as a radical departure from past Buddhist traditions; it was seen as the creation of a distinctly Chinese form of Buddhism. According to Hu Shih, Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709-788) and his disciples did away with “the medieval ghosts, the gods, the bodhisattvas and the Buddhas.”² The Chan of the eighth century was “no Chan at all, but a Chinese reformation or revolution within Buddhism.”³

Yanagida Seizan, a leading Japanese scholar of early Chan, likewise has suggested that in the eighth century Chan rejected traditional models of religious practice, formed its identity by wholesale repudiation of established beliefs, and created a new soteriological paradigm that featured using unconventional pedagogical devices such as

¹ Chun-fang Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 251. Jan Fontein and Money L. Hickman, *Zen: Painting and Calligraphy*, xxvi and catalogue entries 19, 33 and 35.

² Hu Shih, “Ch’an/Zen Buddhism in China: Its History and Method,” 17. See also D.T. Suzuki’s rejoinder to Hu’s article, “Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih,” 25-46.

and Bernard Faure’s critique of Suzuki’s and Hu’s views in his *Chan Insights and Oversights*, 53-67, 94-99.

³ Hu, 17.

shouting, beating, and engagement in oral “dialogues (*wenda* 問答).” In Yanagida’s view, four closely related developments brought about this invention of a different kind of Buddhism: (1) constructing lineages back to the Buddha to give legitimacy to the Chan movement and establish a sectarian tradition; (2) establishing independent Chan monasteries; (3) rejecting all traditional forms of Buddhist practice, including formal meditation, and creating a new style of religious praxis centered on the “encounter dialogue (*jiyuan wenda* 機緣 問答)” model; and (4) creating a new type of literature, principally represented by the Chan “records of sayings” genre, written in vernacular Chinese.⁴ Yanagida is wrong in thinking that all of this occurred in the eighth century,

⁴ Yanagida Seizan, “The ‘Recorded Sayings’ Texts of Chinese Chan Buddhism,” 185-205. Also Yanagida, “Basozen no sho mondai,” 33-41. Later in this essay when I write of “early Chan” and “middle Chan,” I am using John McRae’s widely-known periodization of Chan history, which is summarized in a simplified form in his *Seeing Through Zen*, pp. 11-15. In McRae’s periodization, “early Chan” refers to the Chan of the “fifth patriarch” Hongren (601-74), Shenxiu (606?-706), Huineng (638-713), and Shenhui (684-758), and the Northern, Southern and Oxhead factions. The *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (c. 780) is one of its characteristic documents. The emergence of “lineage theory” and the absence of “encounter dialogue” characterize this period. “Middle Chan” begins with Mazu (709-88), and continues through the publication of the *Anthology of the Patriarch’s Hall (Zutangji)* in 952. In this period encounter dialogues emerge and at the end of the period become prolific, and lineage theories become very important. “Song dynasty Chan” begins with the Song dynasty in 960, and continues till

and that the second and third items among these four can be traced to the Hongzhou 洪州 school of that time. And I believe that early Chan communities of teachers and students both rejected some traditional models of religious practice outright, and reinterpreted some. For up until the time of the Hongzhou Chan school, early schools practiced what Bernard Faure called “symbolic exegesis.” That is, early schools rejected an externalized version of traditional practices, but built a bridge between traditional, canonical ideas of practice and Chan understandings of practice by advocating “formless” versions, as with “formless precepts” and “formless repentance” as taught, for example, in *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*.⁵ Nonetheless, if one accepts that making practices “formless” and internalizing them involved a rejection of the way that others practiced them, we can say that early Chan did form religious identity by rejecting traditional practices and creating new ones.

To come to the somewhat later Hongzhou school of “middle Chan” that dominated Chinese Chan during the ninth century, Mario Poceski points out that among the characteristics of the extant Hongzhou school literature (prior to 952) is that “there is very little reference to popular religious beliefs and practices that were integral to Tang

1300. But in describing Prof. Yanagida here, I am using “early Chan” more loosely to refer to what McRae would call “proto-Chan,” “early Chan,” and “middle Chan.”

⁵ See Bernard Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy*, 41. John McRae uses the term “contemplative analysis” for this same phenomenon; see McRae, *The Northern School*, 201-02.

Buddhism. For instance, there is scarcely a mention of the salvific powers of the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas....”⁶

With the exception of the establishment of independent Chan monasteries, the other three developments Yanagida emphasizes did come to characterize the Chan tradition after the ninth century. In the new Chan practice of encounter dialogue between master and student, there was no room for the traditional emphasis on the efficacy of the vows and powers of bodhisattvas. The invocation of bodhisattvas and the cultivation of spiritual connections with them seem to have been set aside along with other “external” forms of Chinese Buddhist practice. There is a sense in which Hu Shih is right to say that Chan did away with “the medieval ghosts, the gods, the bodhisattvas and the Buddhas.”

On this account, one would not expect to find in Chan texts from before 952, that is, Chan texts that do not incorporate “encounter dialogues” in significant numbers, as those in late “middle Chan” did, any figures in authority who advocate the recitation of Guanyin’s name or allude to his powers.⁷ With a single important exception, that is true.

⁶ Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism*, 226-27. This and the preceding paragraph are indebted to Poceski’s summary of these matters. For “middle Chan,” see fn. 4 above.

⁷ In the view of many scholars, encounter dialogues are not attested before the completion of the *Anthology of the Ancestral Hall (Zutangji)* in 952. See John McRae, “The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue.” As noted in fn. 4, in this essay I am using John McRae’s periodization of Chan history. He finds four periods: proto-Chan, early Chan, middle Chan, and Song dynasty Chan. See *inter alia* his *Seeing Through Zen*, 13 and 18-19, and description in fn. 4 above.

In fact, what we find in the early texts when Guanyin is mentioned is advice to turn away from thinking about Guanyin at all as a bodhisattva external to oneself in order to find the real Guanyin within one's mind.

What is more unexpected is that beginning in 952 with the first Chan text substantially to include encounter dialogues, the *Anthology of the Hall of the Patriarchs* (*Zutangji* 祖堂集), Guanyin and her powers enter Chan texts through the medium of encounter dialogues. These encounter dialogues that feature Guanyin gain some of their power from the common Chinese Buddhist faith in the supramundane powers of the celestial Bodhisattva Guanyin. They eventually culminate in an important “public case” (*gongan*) in the collection of one hundred “public cases” and “eulogies of the ancients” (*songgu* 頌古) written and compiled by Xuedou Chongxian 雪竇重顯 (aka Xuedou Mingjue 明覺, 980-1052) in the Tianxi 天禧 era (1017-1021) of the Song 宋 dynasty, and published in 1026.⁸ This public case becomes even more central to the school as one

⁸ The format of Xuedou's *gongan* and *songgu* collection is one followed by later similar collections, all called *songgu*. It consists of a retelling of the *gongan*, followed by a short and enigmatic poem in the free-form *ci* 詞 style that comments on the *gongan*. Monks and literati in the Song both prized *songgu* collections. There is one extant Song dynasty published edition (*banben*) and many Yuan dynasty editions of Xuedou's *songgu* circulating separately from the *Blue Cliff Record*, as well as a listing of Xuedou's *songgu* as a separate work in an extant Song dynasty book catalogue. On these, see Shiina Koyu, *Sogen han zenseki no kenkyu*, 424 and 573. Writers on *songgu* in the Song dynasty all named Xuedou's *songgu* as the first and the model, and described it as widely circulated

of the one hundred cases (*gongan*) in Yuanwu Keqin 圓悟克勤 (1063-1135)'s *Blue Cliff Record* (*Biyānlù* 碧巖錄), which incorporates Xuedou's collection of *gongan* and *songgu*. In this "public case" Guanyin achieves a permanent place in the literature of the Chan and Zen school, and the imagining of Guanyin is shaped by a new hermeneutic, that of the indigenous Huayan 華嚴 school, the school in which the *Huayan* (or *Avatamsaka*) *Sutra* and its teachings form the basis of cosmology and buddhology. Eihei Dogen 永平道元 (1200-1253), a Japanese Zen monk who studied Chan in China, opens his chapter entitled "*Kannon* (觀音)," written in 1243 after his return from China and collected in his work of extended *gongan* commentary, the *Shobogenzo* 正法眼藏, by quoting the "public case" found in the *Biyānlù* case 89, an exchange between the Tang dynasty Chan figures Daowu 道悟 (769-835) and Yunyan 雲巖 (782-841) (see below).⁹ Dogen then comments, "There are many stories [in Chan] about this Guanyin who attained the Way, but none can be compared to this one."¹⁰ That Dogen should know of many stories in Chan about Guanyin and should devote a chapter to one of them shows that some kind of change had taken place in the Chan school in its stance toward celestial bodhisattvas. In what follows we will attempt to describe and evaluate that change.

from the 1020's. The *Blue Cliff Record* was published in the early Southern Song. See Morten Schlutter, "The *Record of Hongzhi*," 190-91, and Foulk, "The Form and Function of Koan Literature," 28-33.

⁹ Dogen Kigen, *Shobogenzo* (Terada), fascicle 18, "Kannon," 231-236.

¹⁰ Dogen (Terada), 237.

I. Guanyin in Texts from Early and Early Middle Chan

Most texts from early and early middle Chan do not mention Guanyin at all. Two early texts of the Southern school of Chan that scholars agree come from these periods, the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* from the early Chan period, and the *Chuanxin fayao* 傳心法要 by Huangbo Xiyun 黃辟希運 from the Hongzhou school of the early middle Chan period (ninth century), do refer to Guanyin. But in line with the tendency of the authors of these early texts to make practices formless and internalize important Buddhist symbols, they mention Guanyin only to point out forcefully that the internal (i.e., formless and mental) Guanyin is the “real” Guanyin. In effect, they mention Guanyin only to discourage Chan adherents from worshipping the bodhisattva in the manner of many adherents of his/her cult. From the references to Guanyin in these two texts, we might conclude that the various early Chan lineages were not only not interested in the cult of Guanyin as a supramundane being, they were rather interested in discouraging people from making a connection with a bodhisattva understood to be external to the practitioner.

Thus, in its only reference to Guanyin, *The Platform Sutra* puts in Huineng 慧能’s mouth the following statement:

The Buddha is the product of one’s own nature. Do not seek it outside of your body. If the self-nature is deluded, even a Buddha becomes an ordinary human being. If their self-nature is enlightened, all living beings are Buddhas.

Compassion is the same as Avalokitesvara [Guanyin.]. Happiness in almsgiving is the same as Mahasthama. The ability to be pure is the same as Sakyamuni.

And not to make differentiation but to be straightforward is the same as Maitreya.¹¹

Huangpo similarly is represented as saying:

[The bodhisattva] Manjusri represents fundamental law [principle] and Samantabhadra, activity. By the former is meant the law [principle] that is empty and unobstructed, and by the latter the activity that is inexhaustible and beyond the sphere of form. Avalokitesvara represents boundless compassion, Mahasthama, great wisdom, and Vimalakirti, spotless name. ... All the qualities represented by the great Bodhisattvas are inherent in persons and are not separated from the One Mind. Awake to it, and it is there. Students of the Way today do not awake to this in their own minds, and are attached to appearances and seek for something objective outside their own minds; they have all turned their backs on the Way.¹²

Another text which very likely comes from the Hongzhou school in its early period, perhaps authored by Mazu's immediate disciples, the "Song of Enlightenment" (*Zhengdao ge* 證道歌) attributed, probably wrongly, to Yongjia Xuanjue 永嘉玄覺 (665-713). The *Zhengdao ge* mentions "Guanzizai 觀自在," another translation of the name

¹¹ *Liuzu tanjing* 六祖壇經 (Philip Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra*) 95; *Liuzu tanjing* (*Rokuso dangyo*, translated by Taka Nakagawa) 128.

¹² Huangbo and Pei Xiu, *Huangbo Duanji chanshi chuanxin fayao*, T.2012a.48.380a22-27. Huangbo and Pei Xiu, *The Zen Teachings of Huang Po*, translated by John Blofeld, 32-33. I have modified Blofeld's translation.

“Avalokitesvara.”¹³ Again, the message is not that there is a compassionate bodhisattva out there to help the practitioner. It is that the awakened practitioner who sees not a single dharma is worthy to be called “Guanzizai,” i.e., “Avalokitesvara,” or “the Lord who Observes.”¹⁴

The single important exception mentioned above is found in the “Transmission of the Treasure Grove [Temple] (*Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳) of 801 C.E.. This work contains a conversation featuring the thaumaturge and alleged incarnation of Guanyin, Baozhi 寶誌

¹³ Or Avalokitasvara.

¹⁴ Jia Jinhua notes the frequent occurrence of Hongzhou school language in the *Yongjia zhengdao ge*, and suggests that it was a creation of the Hongzhou school in the time of Mazu’s immediate disciples. It was already popular by 830 C.E.. See Jia Jinhua, *The Hongzhou School*, 89-95. Of the translations of the *Zhengdao ge* into English, only those by D.T. Suzuki in *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, and Nyogen Senzaki and Ruth Strout McCandless in *Buddhism and Zen*, preserve what many Chinese readers doubtless read as a reference to Avalokitesvara, since “Guanzizai” was one of the ways of translating the name of this Bodhisattva into Chinese, one that the famous translator Xuanzang (ca. 596-664) had employed. Suzuki’s otherwise somewhat problematic translation of the two relevant lines reads: “The Tathagata is interviewed when one enters upon a realm of no-forms, Such is to be really called a Kwanjizai (Avalokitesvara).” D.T. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, 101. Other recent translations by Lu K’uan-yu (Charles Luk) in his *Ch’an and Zen Teachings*, vol. 3 and Master Sheng-yen in his *The Sword of Wisdom* translate the term as “Sovereign Regarder” and “Supreme Observer.”

(425-514) in which he says that Bodhidharma is Guanyin's transformation body (*huashen* 化身).¹⁵

In the Chan school, Baozhi, who comes to be understood by the eighth century to be a transformation body of the eleven-headed Guanyin and is worshipped as such,¹⁶ first appears in a story added to the account of Bodhidharma's interview with Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (hereafter Liang Wudi 梁武帝) (464-549). Liang Wudi, who established the Liang kingdom in 502, was a devout Buddhist who called himself "Buddha Mind Son of Heaven."¹⁷

In this story, sometime after Bodhidharma leaves the Liang court after his fruitless interview with Liang Wudi, the famous wonder-working monk Baozhi, who was greatly admired and trusted by the emperor, asks Liang Wudi whether he recognized the Indian monk he just interviewed. When Liang Wudi says no, Baozhi says: "That was the transformation body of the bodhisattva Guanyin come to transmit the Buddha's mind seal." This story appears for the first time in Chan texts in the *Baolin zhuan* of 801.

Baozhi's testimony to Liang Wudi associates Bodhidharma with the supernatural Guanyin, thus giving him and the lineages that spring from him added authority. As

¹⁵ *Baolin zhuan. Horinden (Baolin zhuan) yaku chu*, translated by Tanaka Ryosho), *juan* 8, 493. Yanagida Seizan, *Shoki Zenshushisho no kenkyu*, 408 and 416, note 4.

¹⁶ Makita Tairyō, *Chugoku Bukkyoshi kenkyu*, 2, 56-84.

¹⁷ For recent articles on the Buddhist activities of Liang Wudi, see Andreas Janousch, "The Emperor as Bodhisattva: The Bodhisattva Ordination and Ritual Assemblies of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty," and Jinhua Chen, "Pancavarsika Assemblies in Liang Wudi's Buddhist Palace Chapel."

Baozhi himself came to be widely seen as a transformation body, and thus a manifestation, of Guanyin, the authority Bodhidharma and the Chan lineages derived from this reported conversation could only have doubled in the eyes of those for whom the supernatural powers of the celestial bodhisattva were attractive.

II. Guanyin in Late Middle Chan and Song Chan: Context

In early and early middle Chan texts the story of Baozhi and his reference to Bodhidharma as an incarnation of Guanyin is an isolated instance. But beginning with the *Anthology of the Hall of the Patriarchs* from late middle Chan, the picture changes. And in the important early Song Chan compilation of encounter dialogues, *The Transmission of the Lamp from the Jingde Era* (*Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄, 1004) we find an even greater number of encounter dialogues in which Guanyin is the focus of attention. We find two important groups of these encounter dialogues, those derived from the *Surangama Sutra* (*Shou lengyan jing* 首楞嚴經), believed to have been translated by Paramiti in 705, but now thought to have been composed in China, and those concerning the Tantric images of Avalokitesvara with eleven heads, and a thousand hands and eyes. As we shall see, the records containing encounter dialogues from late middle Chan and Song Chan preserve the attitude of not encouraging the worship of Guanyin or looking to Guanyin for external aid. But they give Guanyin a place in their discourse.

In this essay I will briefly introduce the anecdotes that reflect the Avalokitesvara of the *Surangama Sutra*. I will particularly focus on the line of encounter dialogues that concern the Tantric images and imaginings of Guanyin that are found in the *Zutangji* and the *Jingde chuandenglu*. This line of stories culminates in the encounter dialogue made

into a *gongan* or “case” in Case 89 of the *Blue Cliff Record*, the story to which Dogen refers.

A. Scriptures

Before we look at the Chan encounter dialogues and *gongan* that feature the esoteric forms of Guanyin, we need to recall the context in which Chan teachers and practitioners lived. Their monasteries were not isolated from other Buddhist schools or the larger culture, where intense interest in Guanyin was found. Signs of this interest are found, *inter alia*, in the availability of scriptures and the widespread creation of visual images of Guanyin. All of the Buddhist schools created in the Tang dynasty chose as their central or highest scripture sutras in which Avalokitesvara figured prominently.

Who was Guanyin in India and Central Asia, before he came to China?¹⁸ He was a bodhisattva who promised to rescue anyone who called on his name, or thought about him with faith, from a variety of perils, as taught in the “Universal Gate” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. He was a bodhisattva who promised to appear in any form from which a being needed to hear the Dharma in order to take it in and be transformed by it, as also taught in the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Surangama Sutra*. He was a helper to Amitabha Buddha, his teacher, in the Pure Land texts. In the texts of the esoteric “Tantric” school, he was a universal savior who on his own authority promised to rescue beings from all sorts of dangers, including a bad death and a bad rebirth.

¹⁸ Throughout this essay, until I reach the discussion of the Guanyin *gongan* in the *Blue Cliff Record*, I will refer to Guanyin as “he,” since the appearance of feminine forms of Guanyin does not begin until the Song dynasty.

We know something about the importation and spread of scriptures from India and Central Asia in which a bodhisattva called Avalokitesvara (and sometimes Avalokatesvara) figures.¹⁹ By the middle of the Tang dynasty the following scriptures important to the Chinese cult of Guanyin had been translated and were widely circulated:

a) The *Lotus Sutra* (translated several times; the most popular translation is called the *Miaofa lianhuajing* 妙法蓮華經), with its “Universal Gate” chapter devoted to Guanyin, was the final and most complete teaching of the Buddha according to the Tiantai 天台 school.

b) The *Sutra of Visualization of Amitayus Buddha* was one of the three sutras canonized in the Pure Land school.

c) The 60-fascicle *Huayan Sutra* (*Flower Adornment Sutra*, *Avatamsaka Sutra*) was translated in 420. The 80-fascicle *Huayan Sutra* was translated in 695-699. This sutra was the Buddha’s highest teaching according to the Huayan school.²⁰

d) The *Surangama Sutra* (*Sutra of the Heroic March Concentration*), later associated with the Chan school, was traditionally believed to have been translated by Paramiti in 705. This has been called into question; many believe the sutra was composed in China around the same time.²¹

¹⁹ For a summary of the varying proposals for the origin and meaning of the puzzling variant names “Avalokitesvara” and “Avalokatesvara” and their various Chinese translations, see Yu, *Kuan-in*, 14, 37-42.

²⁰ Yu summarizes these well-known facts in *Kuan-yin*, 18.

²¹ Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 40. A more extensive description of the contents and appeal of this sutra to Tang and Song readers is found in Beata Grant, *Mount Lu Revisited*, 26-30.

e) Most important to our topic here is that various esoteric sutras that glorify Avalokitesvara as the bodhisattva who teaches saving *dharanis* had been translated.

B. Esoteric Teachings

The distinguishing marks of esoteric teaching are the emphasis on everyone's attaining Buddhahood in one lifetime, and the use of *mandala*, *mudra*, *mantra*, *dharani* and visualization to obtain both spiritual and worldly benefits. The deities worshipped in these practices are supramundane saviors. This is emphasized in the way they are to be visualized, with many eyes, arms and heads.²²

Sutras emphasizing the keeping of *dharanis* taught by Avalokitesvara were translated before the Tang dynasty (618-907), the first of them as early as the late 4th or early 5th centuries. More were introduced during the Northern Zhou dynasty (556-681).

Sutras of the Eleven-headed Guanyin were translated in China in the sixth century, the seventh century, and the eighth century. Sutras of the Thousand-handed and Thousand-eyed Avalokitesvara were translated during the Tang dynasty, beginning in the 7th century. In 650 C.E., Bhagavadharma translated what became the most widely known and popular Avalokitesvara *dharani* sutra, the *Qianshou qianyan Guanshiyin pusa guangda yuanman wuai dabeixin dolonijing* 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲陀羅尼經, known as the *Qianshou jing* for

²² Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 48.

short. There were thirteen translations in all in the Tang, a sign of the popularity of this form of Guanyin.²³ (We will discuss the *Qianshou jing* further below.)

Common characteristics of these sutras include their emphasis on the chanting of *dharanis* and their promises of both unfailing deliverance from all worldly disasters, and the gaining of worldly benefits and transcendent wisdom. The sutras emphasize minute, detailed and correct procedures: how to make a two- or three-dimensional image of the deity, how many times one should chant the *dharani*, what ritual ingredients one should use in performing the fire offering (*homa*) to the deity, what *mudra* and visualizations to carry out. When the practices (*sadhanas*) are performed correctly, Avalokitesvara will appear to the devotee in a vision either as a monk or in a form as imagined by the practitioner.

C. Images

The spread of the two esoteric images of Guanyin that are important in Chan materials began rather late both in India and China. In India, the eleven-headed Avalokitesvara in Cave 41 at Kanheri, near Mumbai, which dates to the late fifth or early

²³ Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 59. Maria Dorothea Reis-Habito points out that Bhagavadharma's version is the only version that contains the sections on the ten great vows and the blessing of the fifteen kinds of good deaths, as well as protection from fifteen kinds of bad deaths. Maria Dorothea Reis-Habito, *Die Dharani des grossen Erbarmens*, 97-117. Yu also suggests that "the dharani's concrete power over death and the comprehensiveness of the bodhisattva's vows could be the reason for this particular sutra's greater attraction." Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 69.

sixth century, was possibly the first Tantric image of Guanyin to appear in India.²⁴ In China, the eleven-headed Guanyin was also the first esoteric form of Guanyin to appear in images. Two early Tang representations were found at Dunhuang, and a number of bas-relief sculptures from the early eighth century were found in Changan.²⁵ According to Henrik Sorensen, there are more than a hundred images of the eleven-headed Guanyin in banner-paintings and murals found at Dunhuang.²⁶

The appearance of the thousand-armed and thousand-eyed image in China is the result of a later phase of influence from post-Gupta (from the 7th to the 12th centuries) India that traveled the southern sea-routes through Southeast Asia to China. No images are found in India, though scholars believe there must have been such images. Images of the thousand-armed Guanyin in China are found in caves along the tributaries of the Yangtze River in Sichuan. In Cave 45 at Anyue, ascribed to the late eighth or early ninth century, is an image that shows the lower arms dispensing objects to two tiny figures near the base. One of those is a hungry ghost receiving nectar, showing an association of Guanyin with those suffering in other non-human realms of rebirth.²⁷

In the Northern Song dynasty, Tang dynasty types such as the esoteric forms of the eleven-headed and thousand-armed Guanyin continued to be popular in art, especially with the upper levels of society. But in the Song dynasty esoteric images of Guanyin are most often of the thousand-armed type, such as the unique colossal bronze that the Song

²⁴ Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky, *Guanyin*, 11.

²⁵ Karetzky, *Guanyin*, 24-25.

²⁶ Henrik Sorensen, "Typology and Iconography," 2: 285-349; 302-305.

²⁷ Karetzky, *Guanyin*, 26-27.

emperor Taizu ordered to be cast at Longxingsi near Shijiazhuang in Hebei province. It was finished in 971, and is 21.3 meters high.²⁸ In 1075 Su Dongpo 蘇東坡, a famous poet of the Northern Song dynasty, wrote a wonderful poem on the occasion of the construction in Chengdu of the Pavilion of the Compassionate One (the thousand armed, thousand eyed esoteric Guanyin); the pavilion contained an image of the thousand-armed Guanyin made of red sandalwood.²⁹ The National Palace Museum in Taipei has a large and beautiful Song dynasty painting of the Great Compassion Guanyin with a thousand hands and eyes.³⁰ There is an eleven-headed Guanyin in the Dule Temple in Tianjing municipality, made in 984 under the Liao. It is polychrome, made of clay, and over 16 meters tall.³¹

Thus in the period in which Guanyin encounter dialogues and *gongan* appear with some regularity, the larger Chinese Buddhist world, and probably the monasteries at which Chan monks practiced, were very familiar with and interested in all forms of teachings about Guanyin, but perhaps especially the Tantric forms and teachings.

D. Chan monastic ceremonial

In its own practices the cult of esoteric forms of Guanyin entered into Chan

²⁸ Karetzky, *Guanyin*, 33; 35-36.

²⁹ Tay, "Kuan-yin," 100-101. Su's poem is translated in full in Beata Grant, *Mount Lu Revisited*, 88-89, where important parts of the preface to the poem are also translated. Su and his brother also wrote poems about another statue of the thousand-armed Guanyin in Bianliang, the Northern Song capital, that was made of iron.

³⁰ Yu-min Lee, *Visions of Compassion*, plate 8, 58-59.

³¹ Karetzky, *Guanyin*, 38-40.

monastic life itself at least by the very late Song dynasty and the early Yuan dynasty. As indicated in rule books and daily office recitation handbooks, it was a widespread Chan practice to recite communally the *Dabei zhou* 大悲咒, the *dharani* of the Tantric Great Compassion Guanyin, particularly as part of elaborate funeral ceremonies for abbesses and abbots, and simpler ones for monks and nuns. In 1274 a ceremonial and procedural rulebook was circulated called the *Conglin jiaoding qinggui zongyao* 叢林較定清規總要. In this text, reciting the *Dabei zhou* is part of the prescribed funeral ceremonies for the death of the abbot, and of a monk, of receiving the news of the death of an abbot of another monastery, as well as part of a ceremony to remember all the Patriarchs. The *Chanlin beiyong qinggui* 禪林備用清規, completed in 1317, prescribes reciting the *Dabei zhou* in the memorial ceremony for Bodhidharma, as well as in a ceremony for all the patriarchs and for the lineage of Dharma heirs. In addition, it prescribes reciting the *Dabei zhou* in seven different contexts that are all parts of funeral ceremonies for abbots and abbesses or monks and nuns. The *Qixiu baizhang qinggui* 敕修百丈清規 (compiled between 1336 and 1343) prescribes reciting the *Dabei zhou* for the well-being of the dynasty and the emperor, as well as for the death of a master, the death of an abbot, and for a sick monk.³² In these texts we can see reflected what appears to be a growing use of, indeed a fundamental importance given to, the Great Compassion

³² References to the *Dabei zhou* in this text include T.2025.48.1114b; 11115a; 1116a; 1118c; 1127c; 1128c; 1129a; 1148a; 1148b; 1148c; 1149a.

Dharani of Guanyin of the thousand hands and thousand eyes.³³

Although the earliest detailed Chan Code text we have, the *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 [Rules of Purity for Chan Monasteries] of 1103, contains no reference to the recitation of the *dharani* of the thousand-handed ‘Great Compassion’ Guanyin in any ceremony, it does include among the 120 questions with which a monk or a nun should test her or his spiritual progress the following question: “Do you have a thousand hands and arms or not?”³⁴

In daily lesson books, like the *Chanmen risong* 禪門日誦 or the *Chanmen kesong* 禪門課誦, that give the order and content of *gatha*, *sutra*, *mantra* and *dharani* recitations that took place daily in Chan and other Buddhist monasteries at least as early as the 17th century, the Great Compassion *Dharani* was to be recited twice a day in the morning and evening assemblies of all the monks and/or nuns in the monastery. As these books were ephemera, we do not have daily lesson books going back to earlier periods. So we do not know when this practice began.

Why was the *Dabei zhou* so popular in funeral or memorial contexts in Chan monasteries? In the *Dabei zhou jing* (or *Qianshou jing*), Avalokitesvara promises that he will not achieve complete, perfect enlightenment if anyone who recites the *dharani* should fall into an evil realm of rebirth, or not be born into one of the buddha lands.

³³ Reis-Habito, *Die Dharani des grossen Erbarmens*, discusses these texts. I have verified her findings.

³⁴ *Chanyuan qinggui*, HTC 111.438a-471c. Edited and translated by Kagamishima et al. in *Yaku chu Zen'en Shingi* (Tokyo: Sotoshu Shumicho, 1972), 286.

Avalokitesvara specifies that the keeping of the *dharani* will result in fifteen kinds of good rebirth. These include (1) always being ruled by a virtuous king wherever one is born; (2) always to be born in a good country; (3) always living in a peaceful time; (4) always meeting with good friends; (5) always born without any physical defects; (6) always born with a pure and ripe heart for truth; (7) not breaking any precepts; (8) having harmonious and virtuous family members; (9) fully endowed with money and food; (10) always being respected and taken care of by others; (11) never getting robbed; (12) always having one's desire fulfilled; (13) always being protected by *nagas*, *devas* and virtuous gods; (14) can see the Buddha and listen to the Dharma in the place of rebirth; (15) can understand and penetrate the correct Dharma.³⁵ Clearly, one would be wise to ask dharma brothers and sisters to recite it after one's death.

III. Encounter dialogues and "public cases" featuring Guanyin

As mentioned above, there are two broad streams of Guanyin-related encounter dialogues and *gongan* in Chan texts from the Tang through the Yuan dynasties. The two are those derived from or alluding to the Avalokitesvara of the *Surangama Sutra*, and those concerning the esoteric images of Avalokitesvara with eleven heads and a thousand hands and eyes. Guanyin-related encounter dialogues alluding to the Avalokitesvara of the *Lotus Sutra* make up a much smaller number. In this essay I will introduce both of the major streams, but give more attention to the stream that features the esoteric images of Avalokitesvara. These encounter dialogues and *gongan* are found in the *Anthology of the Hall of the Patriarchs* and the *Record of the Transmission of the Lamp from the Jingde Era*.

³⁵ Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 61.

A. Encounter dialogues featuring the Guanyin of the Surangama Sutra

Quite a number of expository answers and puzzling dialogues in Chan texts connect Guanyin and hearing in the way that the *Surangama Sutra* does. One of the most important masters depicted as making this connection is Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (749-814). Two masters whose records allude to the *Surangama Sutra* frequently and make the connection between Guanyin and hearing more than once are Guizong Zhichang 歸宗知常 (active 806-810), a dharma-heir of Mazu Daoyi, and Changsha Jingcen 長沙景岑 (--868), who was a disciple of Nanquan Puyuan 南泉普願 (748-834), one of Mazu Daoyi's great dharma-heirs.

For example, in Changsha's chapter of the *Jingde chuandenglu* of 1004, Avalokitesvara is identified as the bodhisattva who attains liberation through hearing, as he is in the *Surangama Sutra*. Again, as in the *Platform Sutra* and the *Chuanxin fayao* passages quoted above, the question to which the master gives an answer is how to understand the celestial, mythical bodhisattvas from within the Chan perspective:

The monk said, "The Buddhas are as many as the sands of the [Ganges] river.

Why do they all have various names although their essence is the same?"

The Master [Changsha] said, "One who returns to the origin by means of the organ of the eye is called Manjusri; one who returns to the origin by means of the ear is called Avalokitesvara; and one who returns to the origin by means of mind is called Samantabhadra. Manjusri is the wonderful observation wisdom of the

Buddha, Avalokitesvara is the uncaused great compassion of the Buddha,³⁶ and Samantabhadra is the wonderful conduct of non-doing of the Buddha. The three holy ones are but the names given to the wonderful functions of the Buddha, and the Buddha is the essence of the three holy ones.”³⁷

The locus classicus in Chinese Buddhism for the connection between Guanyin and hearing in the sense of examining (*guan* 觀) with penetrating insight both sounds and the sense organ and sense faculty of hearing until the void is perceived is the *Surangama Sutra*. Because of its emphasis on the inner practice of meditation, among other reasons, this sutra was very well known in the Chan school. The sutra was allegedly first translated in the early eighth century; scholars now believe it was in fact written in China at that time. In the *Surangama Sutra* the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara describes how he attained awakening and universal compassion by meditating on the organ of hearing:

“At first by directing the organ of hearing into the stream of meditation, this organ was detached from its object, and by wiping out (the concept of) both sound and

³⁶ This term is found in the *Guanwuliangshoujing* 觀無量壽經, T. 12, 343c. The Keitoku dentoroku Kenkyukai interprets it as referring to compassion that is equal, without distinction; see Keitokudentoroku Kenkyukai, under the supervision of Iriya Yoshitaka, *Keitokudentoroku* vol. 4, 34. Hereafter “*Keitoku dentoroku*.”

³⁷ *Jingde chuandenglu*, fascicle 10, Changsha entry. T.51.275.18-23. *Jingde chuandenglu* (Sohaku Ogata, *The Transmission of the Lamp: Early Masters*), 339-40. *Keitoku dentoroku*, IV, 33. I have modified Ogata’s translation. I have translated “*san sheng* 三聖” as “the three holy ones.” It could also be translated as the “three sages.”

stream-entry, both disturbance and stillness became clearly non-existent. Thus advancing step by step, both hearing and its object ceased completely, but I did not stop where they ended. When the awareness of this state and this state itself were realized as non-existent, both subject and object merged into the void, the awareness of which became all embracing. With further elimination of the void and its object, both creation and annihilation vanished, giving way to the state of Nirvana which then manifested.”³⁸

In the *Surangama Sutra* Guanyin also says: “Since I myself do not meditate on sound but on the meditator, I cause all suffering beings to look into the sound of their own voices to attain liberation.”³⁹ In the sutra, this is one of fourteen kinds of fearless merit.⁴⁰ Luk comments:

“This is a very profound meditation which readers should not let pass without careful study if they wish to know why Avalokitesvara is so popular in Far Eastern countries where he is the merciful patron saint. By discarding the sound

³⁸ *Shou lengyanjing, juan 6*, T.19.945.19.128b. *The Surangama Sutra*, translated by Charles Luk 135. This is Charles Luk’s translation.

³⁹ T.945.19.129a.27-29, Luk, *Surangama*, 139. *Guan-yin*, or more fully, *Guan-shi-yin*, is usually interpreted as meaning “the Perceiver (*guan*) of the Sounds (*yin*) of the World (*shi*). Here Guanyin explains his name differently: I do not meditate on the sounds of the suffering beings of the world to rescue them; I meditate on sound (*guanyin*), and cause suffering beings to look into (*guan, avalokita*) the sound (*yin*) of their own voices to attain liberation.

⁴⁰ Yu, *Kuan-yin*, 517, fn. 13.

to look into the meditator himself, that is, into the nature of hearing, he disengages himself from both organs and sense data and thereby realizes his all-embracing Buddha nature which contains all living beings.”⁴¹

This practice method of turning the hearing inward is known as “the Gate through which Avalokitesvara enters the Principle.”⁴² Various masters refer to this Dharma-gate. For example, in the *Ancestral Hall Collection* and the *Transmission of the Lamp compiled in the Jingde Era (Jingde chuandenglu)*, the following story is told about the master Baizhang Huaihai and a monk who appears to have awakened through hearing:

On one occasion the monks had all been asked to dig the ground. When they heard the mealtime drum, one monk came back carrying his mattock and laughing heartily. The Master remarked, “This is the gate whereby Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara enters into the Principle.” When they returned to the temple, the Master sent for the monk and asked him, “Why did you behave like that just now?” The monk answered, “On hearing the sound of the drum I came back to have dinner.” Then the Master laughed.⁴³

Insights into the sense organs and sense faculties and what lies behind them and unifies them all that are found in the *Surangama Sutra* are important in Chan, and are at

⁴¹ Luk, *Surangama*, 139, fn. 1.

⁴² See *Keitoku dentoroku*, IV, 498.

⁴³ *Jingde chuandenglu*, fascicle 6; T.2076.51.250a.4-8; Ogata, *The Transmission of the Lamp*, 212-213. Also in Baizhang’s entry in the *Zutangji*. See Yanagida, *Zengoroku*, 522.

the heart of a number of other encounter dialogues. Guanyin states in the *Surangama Sutra*:

“When I first realized the hearing mind which was most profound, the Essence of Mind (i.e., the Tathagata Store) disengaged itself from hearing and could no longer be divided by seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing, and so became one pure and clean all pervading Bodhi.”⁴⁴

The Chan encounter dialogue that associates Guanyin and hearing that challenges a student most profoundly to understand Guanyin’s teachings in the *Surangama Sutra* is the following account of a conversation between a monk and the master Guizong Zhichang:

A monk asked: “What is the profound message?”

[a dialogue follows in which he fails to understand the exchange and is dismissed....]

The monk pleaded, “Why, is there not some skillful means I might follow?”

The Master [Guizong] answered [quoting the Universal Gate chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*]: “The wonderful wisdom of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara can help the sufferings of the world.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴T.945.19.129c.5-7; Luk, *Surangama*, 141. In the *Surangama Sutra* the Buddha demonstrates to his disciple Ananda how false are his ordinary perceptions of reality, and how true seeing has nothing to do with the eyes at all (Grant, *Mount Lu*, 28).

⁴⁵ This is a quotation from the verse at the end of Chapter 25, the Universal Gate chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, Kumarajiva’s translation of 406 C.E.. See *Sutra of the Lotus Flower*

The monk asked, “What is the wonderful wisdom of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara?”

The master tapped the lid of the tripod [kettle] three times and said, “Did you hear the sound or not?” The monk replied, “Yes, I did.” The master asked, “Why do I not hear it?” The monk could make no reply.⁴⁶

This encounter dialogue could be read as simply about whether “I” exist or not; in that reading, it has perhaps no connection with the *Surangama Sutra* other than the association of Avalokitesvara and hearing. But one can also read it as asking the monk to understand the statement by Avalokitesvara in the *Surangama Sutra* that by turning hearing inward he ceased to hear external sounds in the mind.

In the *Zutangji* and the *Jingde chuandenglu* there are other encounter dialogues that associate Guanyin and hearing along the same lines. The ones given above are, however, a representative sample of the significant stream of encounter dialogues that feature the relevance of Guanyin’s practice regarding hearing to that of the student.

B. Encounter dialogues and “public cases” featuring esoteric forms of Guanyin (especially the Great Compassion [Dabei] Guanyin)

of the Wonderful Law (Miaofa lianhuajing), T.262.9. In the translation of Kumarajiva’s version

by Bunno Kato, revised by W. E. Soothill, Wilhelm Schiffer and Yoshiro Tamura, in *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, 325, the line is translated: “The Cry Regarder with his mystic wisdom Can save [such] a suffering world.”

⁴⁶*Jingde chuandenglu*, fascicle 7, T51.255c28-256a6.

In Chan texts a number of masters raise the puzzling phenomenon of Dabei Guanyin's thousand hands and eyes with their students. Perhaps the earliest teacher to whom such an encounter dialogue is attributed is National Teacher [Nanyang] Huizhong 南陽慧忠 (?-775), allegedly a direct disciple of the Sixth Chinese Chan patriarch Huineng. In his record in the *Zutangji* we find:

A monk asked: "What is the great meaning of the Buddha's Dharma?"

The Master said: "In Manjusri's Hall, ten thousand bodhisattvas."

The monk said: "I do not understand."

The Master said: "Great Compassion [Bodhisattva] thousand hands thousand eyes."⁴⁷

In another brief reference in the *Zutangji*, Jiufeng Heshang 九峰和尚 replies to a monk's question:

"If you don't fall into 'ordinary person' or 'sage (*sheng* 聖),' what is that like?"

"A thousand eyes don't reach it."⁴⁸

Broadly, encounter dialogues that focus on the esoteric forms of Guanyin are of three kinds. The first kind asks, "Is the eleven-headed or thousand armed Guanyin ordinary or holy?" Here are two examples:

a) In Mi 米 Heshang's entry in the *Zutangji* the following story appears:

⁴⁷ *Zutangji* (Zenbunka kenkyujo), *juan* 9, 113-114. Also in *Jingde chuandenglu*, T.51.244c29-245a1.

⁴⁸ *Zutangji* (Zenbunka kenkyujo), 360.1. This story is not found in the *Jingde chuandenglu*.

Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 asked Mi Heshang, “As for the 12-faced Guanyin, is it holy or not?” Mi answered: “It is. What is its original face?”⁴⁹

b) In the *Jingde chuandenglu*, Danyuan Zhenying (or Yingzhen) 耽源真應 asked Magu Baoche 麻谷寶徹, “Is the 12-faced Guanyin ordinary or holy?” [Magu] answered: “Holy.” Danyuan then hit [Magu] one blow. (Because he hasn't let go of the notion of "Holy"?) [Magu] said: “I know that you have not arrived at the stage [of comprehension] (perhaps, the stage of transcending holy and ordinary).”⁵⁰

A second kind of dialogue concerning the esoteric forms of Guanyin focuses on the fact that, as a Bodhisattva, Guanyin stands for the universal compassionate activity of

⁴⁹ *Zutangji* (Zenbunka kenkyujo), 755.14-756.1. This story is not in this form in the *Jingde chuandenglu*.

⁵⁰ *Jingde chuandenglu*, *juan* 7, Magu chapter, T.2076.51.254a.1-2. *Keitoku dentoroku*, III, 48. Ogata, 235. Ogata translates the word ‘*sheng*’ as ‘sage.’ Magu Baoche had his career on Mt. Mayu or Magu in present-day Shanxi province. The name of the mountain is written both as *Ma gu* (hemp valley) and as *Ma yu* (hemp, bath, to bathe). The Japanese tradition reads the name of the mountain, and thus Magu’s name, as Mayu (J. *mayoku*). Danyuan Zhenying was a dharma heir of Nanyang Huizhong (? - 775). He also studied with Ancestor Ma. See *Jingde chuandenglu* entry in *juan* 13. The substantially identical story with the roles reversed occurs in Danyuan’s entry in the *Jingde chuandenglu*, *juan* 13. T.51.305b.14-15. Danyuan’s entry is 305b.1-17.

Buddhahood. Here the question usually is, “Why does he need so many hands and eyes?”⁵¹

This question becomes a popular formula in Chan encounter dialogues. If a student asks it, it enables the master easily to point back to the student. For example, allegedly the famous minister and thinker Li Ao 李翱 once asked master Shinzhou Ehu Dayi 信州鵝湖大義 (746-818), a direct student of Mazu Daoyi, “What does Great Compassion [Bodhisattva] need a thousand hands and eyes for?” Ehu Dayi replied, “What does the Emperor need you for?”⁵²

A similar story is told of the important master Nanquan Puyuan. Governor Lu 陸 asked, “What is the purpose of the many hands and eyes of the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, Guanyin?” Nanquan answered: “Just as our nation employs you.”⁵³

The third kind of dialogue that focuses on the esoteric forms of Guanyin asks, “Which is Dabei Guanyin’s true face or true eye?” A good example of this question and the response to it by a master is found in the *Record of Linji*. It goes as follows:

One day Linji [i.e., Linji Yixuan (?-866)] went to Hefu. Counselor Wang the Prefectural Governor requested the Master to take the high seat [from which masters lectured]. At that time Magu came forward and asked,

⁵¹ Huizhong’s answer in the dialogue above also points to the marvelous activity of the enlightened person as the “great meaning of the Buddha’s Dharma.”

⁵² *Jingde chuandenglu*, juan 7. T.2076.51.253a2-3. Ogata, p. 228-29. *Keitoku dentoroku*, III, 28.

⁵³ *Jingde chuandenglu*, juan 8; T.51.258c29-259a1. Chang Chung-yuan, *Original Teachings*, 161; See also Ogata, 266, and *Keitoku dentoroku*, 3, 143.

“The Great Compassionate One has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Which is the true eye?”

The Master said, “The Great Compassionate One has a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Which is the true eye? Speak, speak!” Magu pulled the Master down off the high seat and sat upon it himself. The Master went up close to him and said, “How do you do?” Magu hesitated. The Master, in his turn, pulled Magu off the high seat and sat upon it himself. Magu went out. The Master stepped down.⁵⁴

As a contemporary Chan teacher, Master Sheng-yen, comments, this dialogue is about the “treasure of the correct Dharma eye” transmitted, according to Chan legend, from the Buddha Sakyamuni to his disciple Mahakasyapa at an assembly at Vulture Peak. The question in this and all similar dialogues then becomes, “What is the true Dharma-eye?”⁵⁵

Master Sheng-yen comments: “There are two kinds of meaning in the Dharma: the Dharma of secondary meaning, and the Dharma of ultimate meaning. Whatever can be spoken, heard, understood, or learned refers to the Dharma of secondary meaning. The Dharma of ultimate meaning is beyond words and language, phrases and names. To directly understand the Dharma of ultimate meaning is to be enlightened.”⁵⁶ Thus the

⁵⁴ T.1985.47.496c4-9. I have taken this translation from that by Ruth Fuller Sasaki et al. in *The Record of Lin-chi*, 2. See similar story in *Jingde chuandenglu*, T. 51.291a.2-5.

⁵⁵ Sheng-yen, “The Recorded Sayings of Master Linji with commentary by Master Sheng-yen,” 24-28.

⁵⁶ Sheng-yen, “The Recorded Sayings,” 27.

answer to the question about Great Compassion Bodhisattva's thousand eyes that asks "Which is the true eye," cannot be expressed in words. But the Dharma of ultimate meaning is expressed in the story—a prepared listener could realize it from hearing the story.

We come now to the story of Daowu and Yunyan's exchange as presented in the *Blue Cliff Record*. Of all the encounter dialogues that present the Tantric Guanyin of eleven heads or a thousand hands and eyes, this is the one whose transformation into a "public case" during the Song dynasty made sure that Guanyin had a lasting place in Chan discourse.

The story goes (in the *Biyantu* version):

Yunyan asked Daowu, 'What does the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion use so many hands and eyes for?'

Daowu said, 'It's like someone reaching back groping for a pillow in the middle of the night.'

Yunyan said, 'I understand.'

Daowu said, 'How do you understand?'

Yunyan said, 'All over the body (*bianshen* 遍身) are hands and eyes.'

Daowu said, 'You have said quite a bit there, but you've only said eighty per cent of it.'

Yunyan said, 'What do you say, Elder Brother?'

Daowu said, ‘Throughout the body (*tongshen* 通身) are hands and eyes.’⁵⁷

The story comes from “middle Chan,” the period from the mid-eighth to mid-tenth centuries, in which the Hongzhou school doctrine of “ordinary mind is enlightenment” came to dominate the Chan movement, and the practice and construction of encounter dialogues formally emerged and matured.⁵⁸ The kind of story it is, one involving an invented “encounter dialogue” between two persons, could not have originated prior to the late Tang dynasty. A version of the story appeared in the *Anthology of the Hall of the Patriarchs*, and yet another version in the *Transmission of the Lamp compiled in the Jingde Era (Jingde chuandenglu)*.

The *Zutangji*’s version is closer in content to the *Blue Cliff Record* version than that of the *Jingde chuandenglu*, but introduces a third speaker. The *Jingde chuandenglu* version in fascicle 14 goes as follows:

Daowu asked: the Great Compassion [Bodhisattva’s] thousand hands and eyes—which is the true eye?

Yunyan replied: it is like grasping your pillow when there is no lamp—what is that like?

⁵⁷Yuanwu Keqin, *Biyuanlu*, T.48.2003.213c19-26. Cleary and Cleary, *Blue Cliff*, 571. The story that Yunyan and Daowu were brothers that appears in the *Zutangji* is not factual; it has been disproved by Ui Hakuju. See Ui Hakuju, *Daisan zenshushi kenkyu* 2, 23-26. See also Jia Jinhua, *The Hongzhou School*, 110.

⁵⁸ John McRae, *Seeing Through Zen*, 13, 18-19. Jia Jinhua, *The Hongzhou School*, 47-52.

Daowu said: I understand! I understand!

Yunyan said: How do you understand?

Daowu said: Every inch of the body (*tongshen*) is eyes.⁵⁹

Here, compared to the *Blue Cliff Record* version, the speakers are reversed, and we find missing the challenge to the hearer to determine whether *bianshen* and *tongshen* have different meanings. Not only that, the initial question is different!

These differences in earlier versions raise the question of where Xuedou obtained his version, or whether he himself crafted it out of earlier versions. At the very least we can say that by the eleventh century in the early Song dynasty the story had not reached a settled form.

This *gongan* relies on bringing together the idea of the celestial bodhisattva Guanyin in his thousand-hand and thousand-eyed form with the idea that an ordinary human being reaching out to grasp a pillow in the middle of the night is also Guanyin. It relies therefore on the point made in the *Platform Sutra* and *Essentials of the Transmission of Mind Dharma* that one should look for Guanyin within, not without. As with most good *gongan*, a question asked about Guanyin and not oneself becomes pointed at oneself. At the same time, the *gongan* would lose its force if the idea of the celestial Avalokitesvara, who unlike the questioner has realized the essence and functioning of awakened being, had been completely forgotten in the Chan school and the Buddhist culture surrounding it. For the *gongan* to work, there must be a tension between the lofty ideal represented by the celestial Bodhisattva and the recognition that

⁵⁹ T.2076.51.281.

the person who reaches out for his pillow and is challenged by the master's question is a person of ordinary, not ideal, functioning.⁶⁰

Further, the *gongan* draws on Guanyin's popularity. As we saw above, the available *gongan* and the references in other Chan sources suggest that the Tantric Great Compassion (Dabei) Guanyin of a thousand hands and eyes, with all his/her explicitly enumerated powers and activities, was popular in the Chan school, so much so that reciting the Great Compassion Dharani became an important ritual activity in Chan monasteries.

This *gongan* sums up the whole line of encounter dialogues concerning the Tantric Guanyin, while providing a twist that makes it even more challenging than the others. The other types of dialogues featuring Guanyin with a thousand hands and eyes mentioned above are different from the *gongan* in Case 89, but not irrelevant to it. The beginning of the encounter dialogue featuring Nanyang Huizhong points to the identity of the one and the many, the universal and the particular, in Dabei Guanyin:

“A monk asked: ‘What is the Great meaning of the Buddha’s Dharma?’

The Master said: ‘In Manjusri’s Hall, ten thousand bodhisattvas.’

And it also points to the marvelous inconceivable activity of awakened mind. Both of these points are relevant to the *gongan* in case 89. As for all of the encounter dialogues in which the question is, “Which is Guanyin’s true eye?”, they seem to be asking a different question. They seem to have substituted a question about Guanyin’s essence for one about Guanyin’s functioning. Not, “What is it that great compassion does? How does it

⁶⁰ I am indebted to Luis O. Gomez for clarifying this point. See his “From the Extraordinary to the Ordinary, 141-191, 159, 164.

function in the this world and in the *Dharmadhatu*,” but rather, “What is Avalokitesvara’s essence, what is her/his core truth. But in fact, as Huayan thought reminds us, Guanyin’s essence, his/her reality, is precisely her functioning, her regarding with many eyes or one eye the suffering of beings and her responding with one hand or many hands. The answer given by masters Shinzhou Ehu Dayi and Nanquan, is “How does the Emperor employ you? Why does the Emperor need you?” This brings together again the mythical, supramundane activity of Guanyin on behalf of wisdom and compassion with the realm of the ordinary person in the mundane world, just as the *gongan* of Case 89 does with an even more intimate, concrete, mundane image.

Xuedou’s poetic commentary in his eulogy (*song*), and Yuanwu’s prose commentary on Case 89, both bring up categories and teachings of the indigenous Huayan school to hint at the meaning of the exchange between Yunyan and Daowu. Xuedou brings up the metaphor of the Jewel Net of Indra put forward by the Huayan school patriarch Fazang 法藏 (643-720). Yuanwu brings up and expounds the fourfold *Dharmadhatu* of another Huayan school patriarch, Chengguan 澄觀 (738-839). So apparently we are to understand the thousand-armed Guanyin and our own arm reaching for a pillow with the aid of insights expressed in the Huayan school’s depiction of harmoniously interpenetrating reality.

The strong interest in the *Huayan Sutra* and the ideas of the Huayan school displayed by many Chan masters from the Tang through the Song is an extraordinary phenomenon. Jia Jinhua argues that Mazu Daoyi’s teaching that the ordinary mind is the Buddha, and that essence and function are totally identified, was inspired by the Huayan theory of nature origination from the Tathagata, which was an interpretation of the

essence/function paradigm of the two aspects of one mind in the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith* (*Dasheng qixinlun* 大乘起信論).⁶¹ On this basis, Mazu proposed that the ultimate reality of enlightenment was manifested in function, and consequently affirmed that the entirety of daily life was of ultimate truth and value.⁶²

Both the “Five Ranks of Particularity and Universality” of Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (807-869) and the “Four Processes of Liberation from Subjectivity and Objectivity” of Linji Yixuan (d. 867) are closely related to Fazang’s doctrine of the identification of ultimate reality (*li* 理 Principle) and phenomenal appearance (*shi* 事 events or happenings), and to the idea of the fourfold Dharma realm (*Dharmadhatu*) offered by Chengguan.

Huayan concepts are reflected throughout the *Biyantu* or *BiyANJI* (*Blue Cliff Record*), the Linji school text by Yuanwu Keqin (1063-1135), but are brought to the fore particularly in Case 89. They are also reflected in the writings of the rival Caodong 曹洞 school’s eminent teacher Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 (1091-1157), and in the Caodong school’s answer to the *Biyantu*, the collection of *gongan*, *songgu* (eulogies of the

⁶¹This text is usually called “The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana.” The outline of ontology, anthropology, psychology and soteriology presented in this text, attributed to Asvaghosa but now believed to have been composed in China, is fundamental to the thinking of the Huayan school and the Chan school. The classic English translation is by Hakeda. On the fundamental intellectual structure of this text, see Peter N. Gregory, “The Problem of Theodicy.”

⁶² Jia Jinhua, *The Hongzhou School*, 78.

ancients) and commentary by Wansong Xingxiu 萬松行秀 called the *Congrong lu* 從容錄. To date this important emphasis within the Song and Yuan Chan school has not been systematically studied.⁶³

Let us look briefly at some key concepts of the *Huayan Sutra* and the Huayan school that come to the fore in Chan discourse. Luis Gomez points to the message of the *Huayan Sutra*:

“[T]his world embodies enlightenment. It is the sphere in which Buddhas and Bodhisattvas exercise their wisdom and compassion. It is the source for the truth of the Buddha’s Dharma. In every single human being live a thousand Buddhas, all incessantly praising the Bodhisattva’s compassionate career. In every single human being shines a Buddha, and each of these Buddhas reflects clearly the Buddhas in all other beings.”⁶⁴

⁶³ Among those who have helped to open up the topic, Chang Chung-yuan provides a valuable chapter on this topic in his *Original Teachings of Ch’an Buddhism*. Yoshizu Yoshihide in *Kegonzen no shisoshiteki kenkyu* and Peter N. Gregory in *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* have provided important studies of how Guifeng Zongmi (780-841), recognized as a Dharma-heir in the Chan lineage of Shenhui (670-762) and a “patriarch” of the Huayan school, created a form of Huayan philosophy that was compatible with Chan. Zongmi’s version of “Huayan Chan” no doubt influenced many masters after the Tang; the influence is most obvious in the case of Dahui Zonggao (1089-1163). In my Ph.D. dissertation, “Ch’an Enlightenment for Laymen,” I devoted a chapter to Dahui, Huayan teachings, and the Huayan school.

⁶⁴Gomez, “Extraordinary,” 143-44.

The Huayan school found explicitly Chinese ways to explain the nature and import of the vision captured in the *Huayan Sutra*. In the Huayan school doctrines, the sutra's vision was largely reformulated in terms of essence and function. The Huayan school combined an essence/function (*ti/yong* 體/用) metaphysics and hermeneutical principle with the Indian Buddhist notions of emptiness (*kong* 空) and form (*se* 色), as well as emptiness and *pratityasamutpada*, or codependent co-arising. Huayan thinkers gave more positive, more Chinese terms for these fundamental realities. For emptiness, they substituted Principle, *li*, and for form they substituted Phenomena, events or happenings, *shi*.⁶⁵

The fundamental idea of the *Huayan Sutra* and the Huayan school is the unimpeded mutual solution of all particularities; mutual interpenetration.⁶⁶ Each particularity, besides being itself, penetrates all other particularities and is in turn penetrated by them. Huayan scholars pointed out that this is possible because the essence, the fundamental nature, of all particularities is empty. "Empty" here does not connote an unoccupied space. Rather, it is the absolute reality, free from the dichotomy of form and formlessness, being and non-being. To avoid the negative connotation of the word "empty," Huayan school scholars chose to substitute the term "*Li*" or principle. It is

⁶⁵ See A. Charles Muller, "East Asia's Unexplored Pivot of Metaphysics and Hermeneutics: Essence-Function/Interpenetration," <http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/articles/indigenoushermeneutics.htm>.

⁶⁶ Chang Chung-yuan, *Original Teachings*, 42.

Li that is the universal that inheres in, is expressed in, and is coterminous with each particular and all particulars.⁶⁷

For Huayan thinkers, the harmonious interplay among particularities and also among each particularity (*shi*) and universality (*Li*) creates a luminous universe, absolutely free from spatial and temporal limitations, and at the same time itself the world of daily affairs. This universe is called the *Dharmadhatu*, or “Dharma realm.” Chengguan used the idea of four *Dharmadhatu*, Dharma realms, to explain the structure of reality. In the words of Yuanwu Keqin’s commentary on Xuedou’s *gongan* and *songgu* in Case 89 in the *Blue Cliff Record*, the first *Dharmadhatu* is the Dharma realm of principle, to explain one-flavor equality. The second *Dharmadhatu* is the Dharma realm of phenomena, to explain that principle in its entirety becomes phenomena. The third *Dharmadhatu* is the Dharma realm of principle and phenomena unobstructed, to explain how principle and phenomena merge without hindrance. The fourth *Dharmadhatu* is the Dharma realm of no obstruction among phenomena, to explain that every phenomenon everywhere enters all phenomena, that all things everywhere embrace all things, all intermingling simultaneously without obstruction.⁶⁸ These of course are four ways of looking at a single *Dharmadhatu*. The implication of Huayan thought is that complete enlightenment is a full realization of the reality that is described by the third and fourth *Dharmadhatu*. Awakening is characterized not simply as a realization of

⁶⁷ Chang Chung-yuan, *Original Teachings*, 43.

⁶⁸From Yuanwu’s commentary to the verse in case 89. Yuanwu Keqin, *Biyantu*, T.48.2003.213c19-26. Translated in Cleary and Cleary, *Blue Cliff*, 575, translation somewhat modified.

the reality of emptiness, but as a realization of the mutual interpenetration of all particularities.

In the light of the Huayan thought and concepts to which Yuanwu points in his commentary on Case 89, we are not surprised that the fundamental realization about Avalokitesvara and oneself to which this “public case” points lies in the realization that the *li* of Guanyin is fully present in the *shi* of oneself, that the functioning of one’s arm groping for the pillow at night in a dark room is the functioning of Guanyin. No thought is required and the pillow is found, as *shi* and *shi* interpenetrate harmoniously in the marvelous activity of Guanyin.

In sum, case 89 and the preceding encounter dialogues featuring the esoteric Great Compassion Guanyin and the Guanyin of the *Surangama Sutra* are Chan’s contribution to what Chun-fang Yu has called the “domestication” of Guanyin. This is particularly true of case 89, which as interpreted by Xuedou and Yuanwu in the Song dynasty brings Guanyin and his/her activity into the *Dharmadhatu* of all-pervasive, perfectly mutually non-obstructing *li* and *shi* and *shi and shi*, the core vision of one of the main indigenous Chinese schools of Buddhist philosophy, the Huayan school.

Conclusion

Case 89 in the *Blue Cliff Record* is the culmination of a process in which Chan masters admitted Guanyin into Chan discourse, and came to interpret both the mundane individual and the nature and activities of the celestial Bodhisattva through the categories of Huayan Buddhism. Although the *Huayan Sutra* includes Avalokitesvara, and in the *Gandavyuha* section of the sutra the pilgrim Sudhana visits Avalokitesvara to ask for

teachings, the Huayan school in China had focused on the bodhisattvas Manjusri and Samantabhadra, not on Guanyin. Not only did Chan give a place to Guanyin, but also, by expounding a deep understanding of the nature of awakened, compassionate activity through concepts developed in the indigenous Huayan School, the late middle Chan school and the Song Chan school contributed a new appreciation of and relationship to Guanyin to the already existing array of interpretations and imaginings of Guanyin in China. This new appreciation and interpretation of Guanyin is at once “internalized,” “formless,” and cosmological, true to the origins of the Chan school yet expressing a newer vision of universal interrelatedness and universally active compassion at the heart of everything and throughout the universe of particulars. In this way, Chan contributed a profound new dimension to the “transformation” or “domestication” of Guanyin in China. Such an outcome reflects a considerable change from its early period in Chan’s stance toward “the medieval ghosts, the gods, the bodhisattvas and the Buddhas.”

Appendix: A Reflection Inspired by Chapter 10 of Yu Chunfang’s *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*

Miriam Levering

Prologue

Ten years ago I published an essay on whether Chinese Chan could be considered a “goddess tradition,” for an edited volume on *Women and Goddess Traditions*.⁶⁹ Among other Chan stories, I discussed a story about Wu-cho Tao-

⁶⁹ Levering, Miriam, "Stories of Enlightened Women in Ch'an and the Chinese Buddhist Female Bodhisattva/Goddess Tradition." In Karen King, ed., *Women and Goddess Traditions*, with an introduction by Karen Jo Torjeson. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997, pp. 137-176 .

jen Miao-ts'ung, a 12th century Buddhist nun, Dharma-heir of famous Chan teacher Dahui Zonggao (1089-1163) and Chan school author. I read the story about Miaozong as having in the background the story of Vasumitra in the Gandhavyuha section of the Avatamsaka Sutra. (Yu Chunfang also refers to that story in Chapter 10 of her book *Kuan-yin*.) Part I of this appendix is an excerpt from that essay, giving my reading of the story about Miaozong. In rereading Chapter 10 of Yu Chunfang's book, it suddenly occurred to me that another important story in the background of the story about Miaozong is the story of Mr. Ma's wife, or Guanyin with a Fishbasket. In Part II of this appendix I briefly sketch the similarities between the story about Miaozong and the story of Mr. Ma's wife.

Part I: My initial reading of the story of Miaozong/Miaotsung

Introduction

Ch'an Buddhism is still practiced in China and the Chinese diaspora today. But it is best known in the West as the tradition from which Japanese Zen Buddhism, Korean Son Buddhism, and Vietnamese Thien Buddhism took their sacred texts, lineages, teaching techniques, and models for ritual, architecture and practice. Ch'an arguably began in China in the 7th century, emerged as a very distinctive school and produced great masters in the 8th and 9th centuries, according to later historical records, and in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries took

the fully developed shape in which it found new followers throughout East Asia.⁷⁰

This Ch'an tradition is far from a goddess tradition. Founding and continuing authority were vested in teaching lineages that began, mythically at least, with a series of six male "ancestors" (the term is usually translated "patriarch") and continued to be very largely male, at least as far as we can tell from the records of the tradition. Sanctity and the sacred were imaged either in apparently genderless abstract terms ("the unity of intuitive wisdom and concentration"; "the One Mind of Enlightenment"; "true emptiness and marvelous existence"; "clarifying the mind and seeing the Nature") or in the image of the Buddha, the awakened one. A goal of the school was "seeing the Buddha Nature (that is, one's own Buddha Nature) and becoming a Buddha", who was never imagined as female. As in the case of the God of Western theology, sophisticated Buddhists knew that Buddhas were in some sense beyond gender, yet they said repeatedly that a male body presented him best to the human imagination, and many would certainly have been startled by a reference to the Buddha as female.⁷¹

⁷⁰ I follow John McRae here, who locates the beginning of Ch'an in the 7th century communities of Tao-hsin (580-651) and Hung-jen (674-674). (McRae 1988. p. 130-32.) The distinctive teaching style that characterizes the Ch'an that has flourished throughout Asia apparently emerged under Ma-tsu in the eighth century.

⁷¹ See the *Mahaprajnaparamita shastra* (Ch. *Ta-chih-tu-lun*), *chuan* 2, and Chan-jan, *Chih-kuan pu-hsing chuan hung chueh*, *chuan* 2, section 2, T. vol. 46, p. 196a.

Furthermore, Ch'an was predominantly a monastic tradition, and almost all of the training monasteries--including all the great ones--at which its sacred practices were formed and transmitted were male institutions--all the officers were monks. So were the vast majority of the monastics who enrolled for training.⁷² Their windows into the reality and power of the sacred were stories that recounted the circumstances and events of the enlightenment of their own ancestors, the "patriarchs" and their lineage heirs. To say that the ancestors in the story were all men would only be a very slight exaggeration.

Among the figures who were ritually honored or "worshipped" in these monasteries, the most prominent was the male Buddha familiar to most readers,

⁷² Although both the Buddhist tradition and Sung government prescribed safeguards against close contact between monks and nuns, in Sung China some monastic institutions for monks where Ch'an was taught apparently had a dormitory for nuns. See for example the sketch in the *Gozan jissatsu zu* of the groundplan of the monastic compound of the Ching-te temple on Mt. T'ien-t'ung, which was made in the early thirteenth century and preserved in Japan. The Ching-te temple on Mt. T'ien-t'ung had been exclusively headed by abbots of the Ch'an lineage since 1007. (Mochizuki, vol. 4, p. 3812c.) According to this ground plan, the monastery includes a "ni-liao," a dormitory for nuns. The *Gozan jissatsu zu*, in two *chuan*, is preserved in the Daijo Temple in Kanazawa, Japan. A photograph of this plan from this text is found in *Zengaku daijiten* (hereafter ZGD J), vol. 3, p. 12. Another monastery plan with a nuns' dormitory is that of the Wan-nien Monastery on Mt. T'ien-t'ai (ZGDJ, p. 13). (See Foulk, p. 167.) The Wan-nien Monastery was headed by a Ch'an teacher in the 13th century at the time of Dogen's visit there, as reported in his *Hokyoki*. Thus it probably was a "Ch'an Monastery" at the time that the sketch of its ground plan included in the *Gozan jissatsu zu* was made in the 13th century. Thus Foulk's argument that the layout and buildings of T'ien-t'ai monasteries looked just like that of Ch'an monasteries at this time will have to rest on other evidence.) In addition our stories tell us of nuns and laywomen who studied with Ch'an masters at Sung Ch'an monasteries for extended periods of time as personal disciples of the master who could "enter his room" for individual instruction. Where they stayed overnight we cannot tell from the stories, except in the case of the story of Wu-cho given below.

Siddhartha Gotama (known as Sakyamuni Buddha). At many monasteries Sakyamuni was enshrined in the "Buddha Hall," the great altar room in which all residents of the monastery came together to perform rituals of worship including devotion and offerings.⁷³ Accompanying Sakyamuni (or possibly Vairocana) on the main altar in the Buddha Hall were often Amitabha Buddha and Maitreya, the future Buddha of this world--both always represented as male.

An image of the male bodhisattva Manjusri, associated with Wisdom, was often enshrined in the center of the inner section of the Sangha Hall or Monks' Hall, where the monks doing Ch'an training lived and meditated. It is interesting that Manjusri in the Sangha Hall setting "was not depicted in the conventional iconographic mode of a bejewelled bodhisattva holding a sword (symbolizing the wisdom that cuts through all obstructions) and seated on a lion but was portrayed instead in monk's robes, seated in meditation. He was referred to as the Holy Monk, and was treated in every respect as the most senior monk in the hall."⁷⁴ This important male symbol of transcendent wisdom was both a model and an object of rituals of devotion as a tutelary deity for the monks in the hall.

Other Buddhas, bodhisattvas and deities were given offerings at other altars in the monastic compound. Most of these were thought to protect the

⁷³ The main image might also be Vairocana. On the subject of this paragraph, see the important essay by T. Griffith Foulk cited above. On the subject of what Buddhas, bodhisattvas, deities and lineage ancestors were enshrined and/or given offerings in the Sung Ch'an monasteries, see especially pages 169-172.

⁷⁴ T. Griffith Foulk, p. 183.

community and the practice as a whole, or to protect specific activities occurring in specific rooms and buildings. All of these were represented as male, with the possible exception of Kuan-yin (Avalokitesvara), the Bodhisattva who in the best-known Buddhist sutras epitomizes compassion and rescue. An image of the Bodhisattva Mahasattva Kuan-yin (generally a male image) was often found in the "Common Quarters (*chung-liao*)" where monks read, wrote, drank tea and rested when they were not in the Sangha Hall where those activities were forbidden.⁷⁵ The Kuan-yin image in the "Common Quarters" was treated in the same manner as the Holy Monk (i.e., the image of Manjusri) in the Sangha Hall, that is, as the senior monk present. This certainly suggests that the image was not seen as female. There was probably also an image of Kuan-yin elsewhere in the compound, perhaps in combination with a set of Arhats (Ch. Lohan), who were "propitiated as supernatural beings who could use their magical powers to keep a monastery supplied with food and other necessities."⁷⁶ Although artistic representations of Kuan-yin in somewhat feminized or gender ambiguous form had been gaining in popularity since the T'ang dynasty, it is my hunch that in this role of monastic protector to whom offerings were given Kuan-yin was very

⁷⁵ Foulk, p. 186. On the presence of Kuan-yin images in the monasteries: There are three architectural sketches related to "common quarters" in Sung Ch'an monasteries in the thirteenth century preserved in the *Gozan jissatsu zu* (reproduced in *ZGDJ*, pp. 10, 11 and 23). Two contain the words '[Bodhisattva] Mahasattva Kuan-yin (Kuan-yin Ta-shih)' in a location that suggests an image was present. The third, at Gold Mountain, contains a sketch that might be of Kuan-yin in a relaxed pose.

⁷⁶ Foulk, pp. 170. One of the *Gozan jissatsu zu* sketches shows a "Kuan-yin Pavillion" as part of the monastery compound at Ching-te ssu at Mt. T'ien-t'ung. (*ZGDJ*, p. 12.)

likely represented most often in a form that would be read as male, as for example, in the case of the image of the Kuan-yin in the "Common Quarters" at the Japanese Zen monastery Sojiji today.⁷⁷ Masculine images of Kuan-yin by no means disappeared or lost favor in the Sung: a case in point is Su Shih (Tung-p'o)'s account of the circumstances surrounding the construction of the Pavilion of the Great Compassionate [One] in Ch'eng-tu, and the accompanying hymn describing the image, a Thousand-armed Thousand-eyed Kuan-yin. Nothing in this hymn indicates that this image had any feminine associations for him.⁷⁸ Somewhat feminized but gender ambiguous images of the "white-robed Kuan-yin" and "Water and Moon Kuan-yin," might well have appeared in Sung Ch'an monasteries in some other context--perhaps on the walls of the abbot's quarters as splendid pieces of art that would appeal to the monks and their gentry-scholar patrons.⁷⁹ But on the whole the fact that images of Kuan-yin were present and

⁷⁷ Cf. *ZGDJ*, vol. 3, p. 24.

⁷⁸ Beata Grant, pp. 86-90.

⁷⁹ On the feminized or feminine forms of Kuan-yin that appeared in the Sung in elite paintings that might have found a place in the Sung dynasty monasteries, and the popular non-canonical stories and pilgrimages that they probably reflect, see Yu, pp. 151-81, and Stein. Mu-ch'i's famous thirteenth century large painting of Kuan-yin in a white robe in the Daitokuji triptych seems to me to be a feminized, but not completely feminine, image. There is certainly a good chance not only that it played some role in monastic life in Lin-an (Hang-chou) in the thirteenth century, but that it responded to an already established interest in a somewhat feminized Kuan-yin in elite society since the Northern Sung and especially in Lin-an, where we know that stories were told in the Sung about Kuan-yin appearing in female form (see Grant, p. 60, Stein, pp. 22-23; Yu, p. 171) and where at least at the Upper T'ien-chu Monastery Kuan-yin was worshipped in female form. (see Yu, p. 171.). (For a reproduction of the Mu-ch'i painting, see Hisamatsu, plate 60, p. 166. See Jan Fontein and Monty L. Hickman, *Zen*

might occasionally be gender ambiguous or even possibly feminine did not mean that the later Kuan-yin as "Goddess of Mercy" was enshrined or present, that Kuan-yin was worshipped as a female Bodhisattva, or that feminine or somewhat feminized images of the sacred were a very conspicuous part of the imaging of the sacred in the male-dominated monasteries, even in the Sung period.

Masculine imaging continued in the Ancestor Hall, where lineage ancestors and the founder and succeeding generations of abbots of the temple were honored as Buddhas; rituals were performed to them regularly. The *Gozan jissatsu zu* mentioned above gives a sketch plan of the arrangement of images in a

Painting and Calligraphy [Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1970], pp. 28-32 for a good discussion of Mu-ch'i's life.) Likewise, images of the white robed Kuan-yin by the T'ang artist Wu Tao-tzu were popular in the Southern Sung at the time of these stories, and the important Northern Sung painter Li Kung-lin is said to have painted the white-robed Kuan-yin. (Cf. Amy McNair in Weidner, pp. 244 on the existence in the Sung of Wu Tao-tzu Kuan-yins.) Judging by a later copy reproduced in Weidner, p. 243, Wu Tao-tzu's image could have been at least somewhat feminized. Fontein and Hickman also include an unsigned 13th century painting of Water and Moon Kuan-yin looking at least somewhat feminized, or ambiguous, that is thought to be a copy of a twelfth century Chinese original. (Fontein and Hickman, p. 48.) A clearly feminine image to my eye is the Water and Moon Kuan-yin in the Nelson-Atkins Museum, published in Weidner plate 21, which is dated to the Sung or Yuan dynasties. (I would say that the fourteenth century white-robed Kannon by the Japanese artist Ryozen included in Fontein and Hickman, p. 80, unlike the earlier ones discussed above, could not have been read as anything but a feminine image.) This whole subject of when images of Kuan-yin began to be feminine is a vexed one, though many would say the tenth or eleventh centuries. Part of the problem is that the dress, jewels, headdress, and other iconography of the feminine-appearing Kuan-yin images are not exclusively feminine, so that much depends on the eye of the beholder. And there is very little textual evidence on how the Five Dynasties or Sung dynasty beholder read the gender of the images that appear feminine or ambiguously feminine to the modern viewer.

Chinese Ch'an ancestral hall from the Sung or Yuan periods. The legendary Ch'an founder Bodhidharma is the central image, flanked by his Chinese dharma-heir Hui-k'o, and by Pai-chang. The grouping is then filled out with images of nine generations of abbots of the temple, all enlightened Ch'an masters.⁸⁰ The present Ch'an master of each monastery, who was also the abbot, was also ritually treated as a Buddha, an Awakened One, equal to Sakyamuni and the great Buddhas of the past.⁸¹

In this setting quite a number of women studied, meditated, and supported monastery activities as donors and sponsors. A number of them went on to become abbesses and Ch'an teachers. By combing carefully the voluminous lineage records, I have found the names and brief biographies of 35 women who were recognized in Ch'an communities as fully enlightened women and full lineage heirs. By them the Dharma, the truth, was fully realized; through them it was or could have been fully transmitted. And I have found quite a number of stories about these women and about other named and unnamed women whose accomplishments as students of Ch'an shine through the story. I have found sermons by some of these women, and other indications that some of them were active as Ch'an teachers (=Zen Masters). I have found names and locations of monasteries at which some of these women served as

⁸⁰ This is reproduced in *ZGDJ*, vol. 3, p. 28. On this subject see Foulk, pp. 172-76 and Jorgenson, pp. 109-111. Also Foulk, Horton and Sharf.

⁸¹ See Foulk, pp. 176-77.

abbesses. The records of a few women show that their primary teacher, that is, their link to the lineage and to enlightenment, was a woman.

So despite the overwhelming maleness of authority, symbol, text and institution in this tradition, there were women who attained recognition of their enlightenment.⁸²

I have asked myself how it was done. How could women have felt at home in this male-dominated milieu that was full of masculine symbols? All that we can know for sure that they had to sustain them as women were the stories of the few women in the past who had attained recognition in the tradition--stories that some of the men told, and to which I have found that the women themselves alluded in their sermons. Thus a few of the historical "myths," recounted by a few of the masters, told of the enlightenment of a woman.

In working on these stories about women that are found in the historical records of the Chinese Ch'an Buddhist tradition, it became increasingly apparent that a number of these stories resembled each other, and that the later ones might best be understood as intertextually related to the earlier ones. Then I began to notice that the group of stories that was forming in my mind included not only the stories in the Ch'an records, but also stories in Buddhist Mahayana scriptures that a Chinese Buddhist audience, particularly a Ch'an audience, would have been very familiar with. Scriptures like the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Vimalakirti-nirdesa Sutra*, the *Sutra of the Dialogue of the Girl Chandrottara* (*Candrottara darikavyakarana*

⁸²82 These historical findings are summarized in part in Levering 92a; for full details see my forthcoming book entitled "The Zen of Women."

sutram) and the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (particularly the last section entitled the *Gandavyuha*).

I formed the idea that to trace these lineages of stories, these interconnections, back to the sutras might help me to gain a fuller picture of how enlightenment-seeking women and gender itself were understood in the Chinese Ch'an tradition. It would make sense that women who participated in Ch'an and sought enlightenment there would understand themselves in terms of, and live out, narratives that were familiar to them and that made sense out of their quest. And the men who told their stories would also see those stories as conforming to culturally given narratives, or would shape those stories so as conform.⁸³

One thing that soon became obvious is that although the Ch'an tradition was apparently overwhelmingly male, the sutras were not male to the same degree. In them could be found many stories of women who had progressed far toward Buddhahood along the path of the Bodhisattva, or even were themselves Buddhas. If one could show that the stories about the Chinese women of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries were related to the stories of these enlightened women in the sutras, one might gain a better understanding of how the stories of the Chinese women were understood by their audiences, a fuller sense of how in Ch'an a woman could be understood to be enlightened.

I will argue that the sutras, peopled as they are with female as well as male Bodhisattvas and with goddesses, offered a resource in the form of a partial

⁸³ One should not forget, of course, that men and women might hear these stories quite differently.

"goddess tradition" for Chinese Ch'an women and men. Chinese society and culture was overwhelmingly patriarchal. With the exception of the religious renunciant, all of the roles that women played were geared to dependence on men, marriage and reproduction of the patriline. Even elite women had limited recognition, freedom, power or agency outside the domestic sphere. In this context it must have seemed implausible, even radical, to claim that a woman could be fully enlightened and a Ch'an teacher.⁸⁴ I will suggest that this socially radical claim would have been a lot less credible, in a world in which women did not function as teachers or as public persons in any other way, without the "goddess tradition" of the sutras.⁸⁵ I propose to support this suggestion by demonstrating similarities that suggest certain kinds of what we might very loosely call intertextuality between the most typical kinds of Ch'an stories about women and certain sutra stories about enlightened female figures.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ I cannot in the scope of this paper provide the detailed information about women's place in the social world of 10th, 11th and 12th century China that would place the stories that I am about to discuss in their full context. Please see my forthcoming book. It will have to suffice for the moment to say that while Sung dynasty elite women seem to have been somewhat less restricted in their actions than their counterparts in late imperial China, and could even under some circumstances dispose of property, women studying anywhere but in the home, and women acting as teachers or heading institutions, were all unheard of outside the monastic institutions of Buddhism and Taoism. For a book-length study of marriage and the lives of women in the Sung period, see Patricia Ebrey, 1993.

⁸⁵ I am not claiming that any of these female figures in the scriptures were worshipped by the Ch'an women; we do not know whether that happened or not.

⁸⁶ I am using the term "intertextuality" very loosely here, I am afraid. I seem to be using it to mean three different things. In the case of all the stories that challenge women to change their form from female to male, the parallels seem to

Does the imaginative world of the sutras constitute a "goddess tradition"? My answer is, "Not exactly, but more than you would think." The dominant figures in the sutras are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, who are understood to be free of sexuality and to have transcended gender. They are almost invariably portrayed in male form, though sometimes are shown with a lot of gender ambiguity and gender bending. But in some sutras, such as the *Gandavyuha* discussed below, there are a surprising number of Bodhisattvas who are portrayed as female. These female Bodhisattvas are close to at least one definition of "goddesses," that is, beings whose femaleness is recognized and thematized, and whose gnosis and conduct are the central reality--the undifferentiated "absolute" and the manifest differentiated world.⁸⁷

me to be so striking and consistent that one cannot imagine a later author setting down his tale in ignorance of the earlier stories, including the earlier sutra stories. The sutra stories are not simply alluded to, they provide the structure, the tone, even some of the dialogue. In the case of the Ch'an and Zen stories that are similar to that of Wu-cho given below, the same is true of the Ch'an stories--later ones parallel earlier ones in a striking way in structure, tone, dialogue. The parallels between the Ch'an stories and the sutra story of Vasumitra are not so tight--one can imagine the Wu-cho story developing without the Vasumitra story in the background. Here perhaps it would be better to speak of the Vasumitra story as being in the background, forming the hearer of the story rather than the story itself. Yet another kind of similarity obtains in the final case, the poem praising Lady Ch'in-kuo. Here the concept and imagery of this poem is clearly largely taken from that of poems of praise in the sutras. One cannot imagine that Ta-hui could have developed this poem without knowledge of the body of similar sutra poems. What we cannot argue, of course, is that Ta-hui modeled his poem on a specific sutra poem, or that he had a specific sutra praise poem in mind as he composed his poem.

⁸⁷ In her essay included in this volume, Rita Gross writes: "Though *Sambhogakaya* Buddhas and Bodhisattvas look like deities, they are non-theistic or mythic. Inherent existence would never be attributed to them, for they arise out of the emptiness of *Dharmakaya* and return to that emptiness." (see p. ?) I agree

The second point is that there is in the sutras a class of beings called "goddesses," *devi*. It is often said that although goddesses exist in the Buddhist imaginative world, they are not important, since they are lower than Bodhisattvas--any enlightened being is more powerful and outranks any unenlightened being, even a god or goddess. But whether or not they are as important as Bodhisattvas, they are there and are still allowed to tell us something about the world, namely, that important powers in the "world" (*lokadhātu*) are portrayed as female powers.

Thus while the Mahayana Buddhism of the scriptures most available to Chinese Ch'an Buddhist audiences in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries and beyond is not a "goddess tradition," it is also not a tradition without "goddesses," whether they be *devi* or female Bodhisattvas. And the construction of enlightened woman in Ch'an as Bodhisattvas or Buddhas, and thus in a sense

completely with her characterization of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the sutra stories--the degree to which they are identified with *Dharmakaya* or *Dharmadhātu* and thus are ontologically "empty" is very evident in the sutra stories I will narrate below. But to my mind it is that very identification with *Dharmakaya* or *Dharmadhātu* that makes them in an important respect like goddesses, even though they may not be conceived in exactly the same way as theistic deities. A tougher objection for my position to answer would be that though presented as female, these Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are not "essentially" female, though they may have begun their Bodhisattva path as females, have been repeatedly reborn as females and are now choosing to manifest female form. And the message, as we will see below, is that their human counterparts are also not "essentially" female. All are empty of any essentialistic, deterministic gender. I still would argue that their representation as female in the sutras is a powerful representation that might affect Buddhist women in ways that female representations of the divine might do in other traditions. Their lack of "essential" femaleness only improves them as female "deities" from the post-modern point of view!

as manifestations of "goddess"-like power, may have made more sense to the hearers of the stories of enlightened women in Ch'an in the light of their knowledge of the scriptures.⁸⁸

These women in the Ch'an tradition were in a tradition in which stories of female Bodhisattvas and goddesses, as well as a few stories of previous women Ch'an masters, provided the only Buddhist models for how the category "enlightened women" was to be constructed, for how "enlightened women" were to be understood. Thus, in a sense, they stood in that part of their tradition which was a "female Bodhisattva and goddess tradition."

In the stories that are in the background of our Ch'an stories, we find female humans, *devis* (female gods), and *naga* (serpent) princesses. All of them are Bodhisattvas, that is practitioners of great insight and trance (*samadhi*) attainments, who have produced the thought of enlightenment, and are far along the path to Buddhahood. As Bodhisattvas, they also have a certain freedom with respect to mundane forces, which they understand to be illusory, and certain powers to use those forces at will to enlighten other beings.

A.....[skipping the first Chan story discussed]

⁸⁸⁸⁸ In the Ch'an school an enlightened woman who became a teacher may have been, like an enlightened man, ritually treated as a Buddha, and considered at the very least an advanced Bodhisattva, but we do not know for sure. Likewise the texts do not make totally clear whether a woman, when enlightened and a dharma heir, was ever referred to with the term 'Buddha,' as masters who were men were.

B. Stories in which Women Teach or Debate with their Bodies

A second Ch'an story about a woman would remind the listener or reader, I am convinced, of a story to be found in a famous sutra called the *Gandavyuha*, in which a number of goddesses and other female Bodhisattvas appear prominently. It belongs to a class of Ch'an stories, more numerous in Japan, in which a woman presents herself naked, or a woman's female parts become the subject of Ch'an debate.⁸⁹ Here is the Ch'an story:⁹⁰

1. Wu-cho Tao-jen Miao-tsung Lodging in the Abbot's Quarters

⁸⁹ One story that could be included in this group is the story of Mr. Ma's Wife. A Sung work called *Tsung-lin sheng-shih* says, "The Painting called 'Bodhisattva of the Golden Sand Beach' has an Indian monk carrying a staff with a skeleton on his shoulder while looking back at Mr. Ma's Wife behind him. There are many eulogies on this painting. But the best is written by Ssu-ming Tao-ch'uan nicknamed Ta-t'ung. It goes like this: "She looks at everyone equally with compassion. She entices people to her with desire. One uses a wedge to knock out another wedge and fights one type of poison with another type of poison. While the thirty-two [manifestations in] response [to the needs of beings to be ferried to Nirvana by certain types of beings as teachers] [by Kuan-yin] are found in completion in the Universal Gate chapter [of the *Lotus Sutra*], this one steals the eyes of a thousand sages (that is, is the most impressive of all)." (*Zokuzokyo*, vol. 148, p. 45b. I have not identified this monk. There are several monks named Tao-ch'uan, but none in Suzuki's index named Ssu-ming Tao-ch'uan. This passage is also translated by Yu somewhat differently, p. 179 n32, though I think our translations agree on the overall meaning.) On Mr. Ma's wife, see Sawada, p. 37-43; Stein, p. 54-57; and Yu, pp. 166-169. Stein cuts off the verse after "*P'u-men chu tzu*."

⁹⁰ The story is found in the *Wu-chia cheng-tsung tsan*, the "Poems of Appraisal of the Correct Tradition of the Five [Ch'an] Schools," that dates from 1254 C.E.

The story occurs in a collection of verses about famous Ch'an masters. It is found in the preface to a poem of appraisal about the Ch'an master Wan-an Tao-yen, a Dharma-heir of Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089-1163).

[Wan-an] relied on Ta-hui, and served as his Senior Monk (the head monk of the Sangha Hall in which the monks in Ch'an training lived and studied) at Ta-hui's monastery on Ching-shan.

Before Wu-cho had become a nun [she used to visit Ta-hui at Ching-shan, and] Ta-hui lodged her in the abbot's quarters. The Head Monk Wan-an always made disapproving noises.⁹¹ Ta-hui said to him, "Even though she is a woman, she has strenths." Wan-an still did not approve. Ta-hui then insisted that he should interview her. Wan-an reluctantly sent a message that he would go.

[When Wan-an came,] Wu-cho said, "Will you make it a Dharma interview or a worldly interview?"

The Head Monk replied: "A Dharma interview."

Wu-cho said: "Then let your attendants depart." [She went in first, then called to him] "Please come in." When he came past the curtain he saw Wu-cho lying face upwards on the bed without anything on at all. He pointed at her and said, "What kind of place is this?"

⁹¹ The Head Monk was second in command to Ta-hui with respect to the training of the monks.

Wu-cho replied: "All the Buddhas of the three worlds and the six patriarchs and all the great monks everywhere--they all come out from within this."

Wan-an said: "And would you let me enter, or not?"

Wu-cho replied: "It allows horses to cross; it does not allow asses to cross." ("It ferries [*tu*] [or transports] horses; it does not ferry asses.")

Wan-an said nothing, and Wu-cho declared: "The interview with the Senior Monk is ended." She then turned over and faced the inside. Wan-an became embarrassed and left.

Ta-hui said, "It is certainly not the case that the old beast does not have any insight." Wan-an was ashamed.⁹²

The phrase "old beast" is used to revile or scold people, particularly for lacking all human manners. Here it might refer to Wu-cho, because like an animal she violated etiquette by presenting herself naked to Wan-an. It also might refer to Ta-hui, because in lodging her in his quarters he violated monastic rules. The Japanese commentarial tradition on which Leggett draws read it as referring to Wu-cho.⁹³

⁹² *Wu-chia cheng-tsung tsan, chuan 2, Zokuzokyo 2b,8,475a-b*. This story is given as *koan #51* in a Japanese text of 1545, the *Shonan katto-roku*, which Trevor Leggett has translated as *The Warrior Koans*. This story is on pp. 106-107 of his translation. The text says that this story as taken from the *Wu-chia cheng-tsung tsan*, [which was printed in Japan in 1349], became a koan used by the Japanese nun teacher Shotaku, who became the third teacher at the famous nunnery Tokeiji. I have consulted Leggett's translation in producing my own.

⁹³ Leggett, p. 109.

In the mind of the listener or reader, no doubt, would be the large body of stories in Chinese popular literature of monks who break their vows of celibacy. Certainly at issue is the fact that to Wan-an Ta-hui is at least giving the appearance of belonging in such a story.⁹⁴ But I think that also in the mind of the listener would be the story of the woman Vasumitra found in the scripture called the *Gandavyuha*.

2. Sudhana's Visit to the Woman Vasumitra

It is the nun teacher who sends Sudhana to Vasumitra. A passage that reminds one of the initial exchange between Wan-an and Ta-hui before Wan-an has met Wu-cho describes what happens when Sudhana begins to seek out Vasumitra:

When Sudhana reached the city of Ratnavyuha in the country of Durga, he sought everywhere for Vasumitra. People there who did not know of Vasumitra's virtues and wisdom thought to themselves: "Now this youth--with senses so calm and subdued, so aware, so clear, without confusion or distraction, his gaze focused directly right before him, his mind neither fatigued nor lazy, not clinging to appearances, his eyes gazing steadily without blinking, his mind so unmoved, as deep and broad as the ocean--what does someone like him have to do with Vasumitra? He should not have any lust for Vasumitra, his mind

⁹⁴ With regard to Ta-hui's reputation, we should note that the events that are narrated in the story are not otherwise attested to, and if they did take place, would have occurred in the twelfth century (probably around 1140), a hundred years earlier than the text in which they are found.

should not be turned upside down by thoughts of purity or by thoughts of desire. He should not be under the power of a woman's body. This youth is not bewitched, he does not enter the realm of temptation, he does not sink into the mire of sensuality, he is not bound by the snares of Mara, he does not do what should not be done. With what intention does he seek this woman?"

This passage supports the interpretation that Vasumitra's general reputation was as a sexually enticing and sexually available woman. In what follows, Vasumitra's own words support this picture. The passage continues:

But there were those who knew that this woman had wisdom who said to Sudhana, "Good, Good! You have really made gain if you ask about Vasumitra. You surely seek Buddhahood; you surely want to make yourself a refuge for all sentient beings; you surely want to extract the barbs of passion from all sentient beings; you surely want to destroy their notions of purity. Vasumitra is in her house, north of the town square."

Sudhana then meets Vasumitra, and is delighted. She is transcendently beautiful, has a beautiful voice, is learned in all the arts of communication, and has mastered the expedient means of the Bodhisattvas. Her beautiful body is described in some detail. Her face, the coloring of her skin and hair, the fullness, proportions and modelling of her form--there are none in the realms of desire inhabited by men and gods to equal her. Her body "was decorated with a myriad

of jewelled necklaces, and covered with a mesh made of all kinds of precious substances. On her head was a tiara of wish-fulfilling *mani* gems."⁹⁵ Not exactly "without a stitch on," like Wu-cho, but not exactly covered up either--no cloth is mentioned, although the Chinese versions do not, as the Sanskrit version apparently does, make clear that the mesh with which she was covered was translucent.⁹⁶

When Sudhana asks for instruction, Vasumitra replies:

I have attained an enlightening liberation called "departing from the realm of passion." To all I appear in forms that accord with their desires and inclinations. To gods I appear in the form of a goddess of surpassing splendor and perfection; and to all other types of beings I accordingly appear in the form of a female of their species, of surpassing splendor and perfection. And to all who come to me with minds full of passion, I expound the Dharma. When they hear my teaching, they become free of passion and achieve an enlightening concentration called "realm of non-attachment."

⁹⁵ *Ta-fang-kuang fo-hua-yen-ching, chuan 15*, Prajna trans. in 40 *chuan*, Taisho 293.10.731b.8-9.

⁹⁶ F. Wilson, in Paul, p. 159. It is also interesting that the two Chinese representations of this scene that are published in Fontein, 1966, plates 26a and 26b, following p. 68, a woodcarving on a "Pilgrimage Column" owned by the Honolulu Academy of Arts, which may date from the thirteenth century (end of Sung dynasty or beginning of the Yuan dynasty) and the woodblock illustration in the book *Wu-hsiang chih-shih sung* a work which may be from the 11th century (Northern Sung dynasty) show her robe as opaque.

Some attain dispassion as soon as they see me....Some attain dispassion merely by talking with me....Some attain dispassion just by holding my hand....Some attain dispassion just by gazing at me....Some attain dispassion just by embracing me, and achieve an enlightening concentration called 'uniting all sentient beings constantly without rejection.' Some attain dispassion just by kissing me, and achieve an enlightening concentration called "increasing the treasury of virtue of all beings." All those who become intimate with me become established in dispassion, and enter the enlightening liberation in which all stages of wisdom manifest unimpeded.⁹⁷

She then explains how she became a Bodhisattva, lifetimes ago when she was the wife of a grandee. And sends Sudhana on to the next teacher, without any description of whether or how he attains "ultimate dispassion" under her tutelage.⁹⁸

C. Interpretation

What is the Vasumitra story about? How do we interpret a story about a beautiful, sensual woman who displays her beauty and offers her favors to all comers, who is at the same time above all a Bodhisattva and a teacher? We

⁹⁷ *Ta-fang-kuang fo-hua-yen ching, chuan 68*, Siksanda trans. in *80 chuan, Taisho 10.279.365a-366a*.

⁹⁸ It is a significant point that with only one exception, all of the female teachers whom Sudhana meets were also female when they first became Bodhisattvas, that is, in the "how it all started in my former birth" stories narrated in the sutra.

might suggest that it is about passion and freedom from passion, dualism and non-dualism. Those who go to Vasumitra, who are taught by her, learn freedom from passion--sometimes by embracing her. She challenges them by presenting them with an object of desire. If they respond with passion, then she is in a position to move them to dispassion through their passion. An initial dualistic opposition of passion/dispassion, which would advise avoiding the attractive, is not the method used here to produce dispassion. Vasumitra's actions cause the subscribers to that method to hold her in ill repute. Passion plus non-attachment, or plus all-embracingness, yields dispassion. A non-dualism between passion and dispassion yields dispassion. They learn what she knows--a *samadhi* called "uniting all sentient beings without rejection." And one called "increasing the treasury of virtue of all beings."

What is the logic of the Wu-cho story? Like Vasumitra, Wu-cho too presents Wan-an with an object of desire, her female form, her private parts revealed. But unlike Vasumitra she is not proposing to teach by preaching, nor to teach by physically embracing. She teaches by the methods of the Ch'an and Zen master. Those methods involve a contest in which her interlocutor is challenged not to fall into dualistic thinking. Wan-an can only manage this by not falling into the dualism of passion and dispassion.

Wan-an manages it on the first round. He turns the tables and challenges back: what is that? Can she now show her freedom from dualistic thinking by naming it non-dualistically? She names it on two levels: on one level, the

obvious biological fact that all Buddhas and teachers are born of woman's womb; on the other level, "what is the place from which all the Buddhas come into the world?" is also answered by something like "emptiness," "suchness" or "buddha nature," which her private parts in their essential purity and emptiness of all self-identity also manifest.⁹⁹ So she manages to come back with an answer that presents a non-dualism of ultimate truth and phenomenonal truth, dispassion and passion.¹⁰⁰

Wan-an challenges again: If Buddhas come out, it can only be because something else has gone in. Can she come up with a non-dualistic answer to "Will you let me enter?" Vasumitra, after all, teaches dispassion, nondualism, by letting her visitors in, embracing them. Embracing all, without rejecting any. But a mere "yes" or "no" won't do, as falling into the dualism of passion and dispassion established by his question. (Remember that all Ch'an answers must avoid buying into any dualism suggested by the question--a "yes" or "no" answer to a yes-or-no question merely stays within the dualistic conceptual framework of the question.)

⁹⁹ Wu-cho's "this is the place from which all Buddhas, patriarchs and esteemed monks come" reminds me, as it might other readers of the *Gandavyuha*, of the figure of Maya, mother of Sakyamuni Buddha and all other Buddhas; and of *Prajnaparamita*, the Perfection of Wisdom, who is also called "mother of all the Buddhas" in the *Prajnaparamita* sutras.

¹⁰⁰ Wu-cho is referring here to a famous *kung-an* (J. *koan*) found in the record of Yun-men Wen-yen (864-949): "Someone asked: 'What is the place from which all the Buddhas come?' Master Yun-men said, '[Where] the East Mountains walk on the river.'" Cf. App, p. 94. App comments: "A key to this exchange may lie in a poem by Buddhist layman Fu Dashi: [Where] the East Mountains float on the river and the West Mountains wander on and on, in the realm [of this world?] beneath the Great Dipper: just there is the place of genuine emancipation."

Wu-cho alludes to the "embracing all, without rejecting any" answer that she might have given, by bringing up the crossing of horses and asses. This is a direct allusion to an old story in which Chao-chou, a famous master of an earlier generation, said of the bridge in his town, which stood for himself as a teacher, "it transports asses across, it transports horses across." The dialogue in which this statement is embedded goes as follows:

Another time a monk asked, "For a long time I aspired to see Chao-chou's stone bridge. Now that I am here, all I see is a log bridge."

Chao-chou said, "You only see a log bridge. You do not see Chao-chou's stone bridge."

The monk said, "What is Chao-chou's stone bridge?"

Chao-chou said, "It transports asses across, it transports horses across."¹⁰¹

On one level Chao-chou's reply is based on a simple factual distinction: the stone bridge allows horses and asses to cross, while a log bridge, a single log across the stream, only allows people to cross. But many other dialogues in records of Chao-chou's sayings support the interpretation that "horses" refers to good students and "asses" to foolish students, students who don't understand

¹⁰¹ Omori et al., "Hekiganroku," in *Zenkegoroku II*, p. 263. This version is given in the *Blue_Cliff Record* of 1128, and later in the *Record of Chao-chou (Chao-chou lu)*.

anything yet. So one dominant line of interpretation of this reply is that Chao-chou is saying that he welcomes all who come.¹⁰²

But there is more than that in the answer. The verb *tu*, "to ferry," which I am translating "to transport" since a bridge is the subject, is also the verb used in the Bodhisattva vow, "However innumerable sentient beings are I vow to ferry them all across [from "this shore," or *samsara*, to the "other shore," Nirvana]. Chao-chou says that his bridge "ferries asses, ferries horses." But on another level the verb used can add a shade of meaning: not only does it welcome both kinds, it (that is, the teacher Chao-chou) liberates them from *samsara*.

Wu-cho significantly leaves behind the verb of Wan-an's question, "to permit to enter," and changes to the verb "*tu*," "to ferry," placing herself in line with the Bodhisattva teaching activity of Chao-chou and Vasumitra.

Wu-cho might simply have echoed Chao-chou's statement. Since the reference is her body, her answer would then have been, "I use my body, my sexual parts, to ferry all to the other shore of Nirvana." But to have taken that route would have stayed within the dualistic choice posed by the question. And it would have failed to challenge Wan-an back. Instead she says "Yes and no,

¹⁰² Cf. Hoffmann, p. 106. The story is included in the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* of 1004 and the *Pi-yen-lu (Blue Cliff Record)* of 1128. Both were texts that were well known in Wu-cho's and Wan-an's time. The English translation from the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* of 1004 by Chang Chung-yuan in *Original Teachings of Ch'an Buddhism*, p. 170, reads: "What is the Chao-chou bridge? The Master said, "Horses pass over it, donkeys pass over it." But the *CTCTL*, Chen-shan-mei edition, *chuan* 10, p. 179, and all subsequent texts that include the story have: *Ju-ho shih Chao-chou ch'iao? Shih yun: Tu-lu tu-ma*. Thus: "ferry asses, ferry horses." The unnamed subject and agent is the bridge, which ferries or transports asses and horses.

depending on who you are." "With my body, like Vasumitra, I ferry some to the other shore--providing they are horses, not asses." Thus she avoids the dualistic "yes *or* no" terms established by the question, and puts Wan-an in the dilemma of having to avoid the dualism of having to say whether he is a horse or an ass.

Can he come up with a reply that shows that his thinking is not being defined by that dilemma? His failure to do so suggests that his mind is not only not free, it is perhaps more specifically not free of passion, or of the idea that passion is bad and dispassion is good, or of defining women in terms of passion. One or more of these failures caused him to challenge Ta-hui's lodging of Wu-cho in his own quarters.

For Wu-cho's part, she portrays herself as Vasumitra portrays herself, a sexually active woman, entrance into whose body can ferry a man to dispassion or Nirvana. In what could be a reference to the story of Vasumitra's unusual method of teaching, she makes explicit reference to the idea that sexual embrace with her "saves" beings. Except for one major change--since the whole conversation is a contest in which he is challenging her and she is challenging him, she makes it clear that he cannot gain access to that body without winning the contest by showing that he is such a person already. (Unless of course *she* is not such a person already, in which case he might win even if he were not such a person. But in that case embrace with her would not liberate.) So although she says that her body is a bridge that allows horses to cross, in fact the verbal contest becomes the liberating agent rather than her body. In this regard, though

she is casting herself as similar to Vasumitra, she is also different from Vasumitra.

Whether or not Wan-an learns 'ultimate dispassion' from Wu-cho, who like Vasumitra provides access to her beauty but unlike Vasumitra refuses access to her person, Wan-an does come into the room seeing Wu-cho one way, as a female identified with sex, and leave seeing her in another, as a person more enlightened than he.¹⁰³ Perhaps in his final exchange with Ta-hui, Wan-an is also rebuked, as those who do not know Vasumitra well would be, for his attachment to his monkish moralistic view of the female and her sexuality.¹⁰⁴

Part II: Wu-cho Tao-jen Miaocong and Mr. Ma's Wife

A few points of comparison: Please read Yu Chunfang, *Kuan-yin*, p. 419-426.

1. Unlike Mr. Ma's wife, Wu-cho Tao-jen Miaocong does not seek out men to transform, but takes an opportunity when it presents itself. But like Mr. Ma's wife, she seems to promise sex while in fact refusing it to a man who does not have a comeback when she says "Horses may cross, asses may not."

¹⁰³ Note that she has met an outrage with an outrage, and succeeded in disarming it. It was surely an outrage on Wan-an's part to suggest that Ta-hui and Wu-cho were committing improprieties or transgressions of monastic rules. Wu-cho meets this outrage with another outrage--she presents herself naked to Wan-an.

¹⁰⁴ Another possible reading would be that Ta-hui's defense of his behavior is not that he is not having sex with Wu-cho in violation of the rules, but that since Wu-cho like himself is enlightened the rules have ceased to apply. Either sex is a different matter once one has become enlightened, or it ceases to be an obstacle to religious self-mastery.

2. The story of Wu-cho and Wan-an appears in a chapter devoted to Wan-an in the *Wu-chia cheng-tsung tsan*, the "Poems of Appraisal of the Correct Tradition of the Five [Ch'an] Schools." Thus this story should perhaps be read as a story about Wan-an, rather than about Wu-cho. In that context, the story suggests that the encounter with Wu-cho's sexuality apparently offered and then refused had the effect of spiritual transformation for him.

Bibliography

Abbreviations:

HTC *Xinbian wanzi xuzangjing* 新編卍字續藏經 (Newly Compiled Continuation of the Buddhist Canon). 150 vols. Reprint of *Dai Nihon zokuzokyo* 大日本續藏經. Taipei: Hsin-wen-feng, 1977.

T. *Taisho shinshu daizokyo* 大正新修大藏經 (The Buddhist Canon Newly Compiled during the Taisho Era). Edited by Takakusu Junjiro and Watanabe Kaigyoku. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taisho issaikyo kankokai, 1924-35.

Works Cited:

(Works in Buddhist collections cited by canon and volume number.)

Chang Chung-yuan. *Original Teachings of Chan Buddhism Selected from the Transmission of the Lamp*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969.

Chen, Jinhua. "Pancavarsika Assemblies in Liang Wudi's Buddhist Palace Chapel." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 66.1 (2006): 43-104.

Daoyuan 道原, *Jingde chuandenglu* 景德傳燈錄. T.51.2076.

Daoyuan 道原. *Jingde chuandenglu*. Translated by Ogata Sohaku. *The Transmission of the Lamp: Early Masters*. Wolfeboro, New Hampshire: Longwood Academic, 1990. An

Asian Cultural Studies Project of the University of New Mexico. Includes the first ten fascicles.

Dogen Kigen 道元 希玄. *Shobogenzo* 正法眼藏. In *Dogen*. 2 vols. Translated by Terada Toro and Mizuno Yaoko. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970.

Dogen. *Shobogenzo*. Translated by Nishiyama Kosen and John Stevens, *Shobogenzo: The Eye and Treasury of the True Law*. Tokyo: Daihokkaikaku Publishing, 1975.

Faure, Bernard. *The Will to Orthodoxy: A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Faure, Bernard. *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996. (c1993)

Fontein, Jan and Money L. Hickman. *Zen: Painting and Calligraphy*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1970.

Foulk, T. Griffith. "The Form and Function of Koan Literature: A Historical Overview." In *The Koan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*. Edited by Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: 15-45.

Gomez, Luis O. "From the Extraordinary to the Ordinary: Images of the Bodhisattva in East Asia." In *The Christ and the Bodhisattva*, edited by Donald S. Lopez and Steven C. Rockefeller. Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1987: 141-191.

Grant, Beata. *Mount Lu Revisited: Buddhism in the Life and Writings of Su Shih*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994.

Gregory, Peter N. "The Problem of Theodicy in the *Awakening of Faith*," *Religious Studies* 22:63-78.

Gregory, Peter N.. *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Guanwuliangshoujing 觀無量壽經, *Sutra of Visualization of Amitayus Buddha*. T. 12.365.

Hakeda, Yoshito S. *The Awakening of Faith: Attributed to Asvaghosha*, with a new introduction by Ryuichi Abe. New York: Columbia University Press; New edition 2005.

Horinden (Baolin zhuan) yaku chu 寶林傳譯註. Translated by Tanaka Ryosho 田中良昭. Tokyo: Uchiyama Shoten, 2003.

Hu Shih 胡適. "Ch'an/Zen Buddhism in China: Its History and Method." *Philosophy East and West* 3.1 (1953): 3-24.

Huangbo Xiyun 黃辟 希運, *Huangboshan Duanji chanshi chuanxin fayao*
黃辟山斷際禪師 傳心法要, edited by Pei Xiu 裴休(ca. 787-860). T.48.2012a.

Huangbo Xiyun, *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On the Transmission of Mind*.
Translated by John Blofeld. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Huangbo Xiyun. *Denshin hoyo, Enryoroku* 傳心法要, 宛陵錄. Translated by Iriya
Yoshitaka 入矢 義高. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1969.

Huineng 惠能 (or 慧能). *Liuzu tanjing* 六祖 壇經. Stein 5475. Translated by Philip B.
Yampolsky, in *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. New York: Columbia
University Press, 1967.

Huineng, *Liuzu tanjing*. Translated by Nakagawa Taka 中川 孝, *Rokuso dangyo*. Tokyo:
Chikuma Shobo, 1976.

Janousch, Andreas, “The Emperor as Bodhisattva: The Bodhisattva ordination and ritual
assemblies of Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty,” in Joseph P. McDermott, ed., *State and
Court Ritual in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 112-149.

Jia Jinhua 賈 晉華. *The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- through Tenth-
Century China*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006.

Jingde chuandenglu 景德傳燈錄. T.51.2076. (See “Daoyuan” above.)

Kagamishima Genryu 鏡島 元隆, et al.. *Yaku chu Zen'en Shingi* 譯註 禪苑清規.
Tokyo: Sotoshu Shumuchō, 1972.

Karetzky, Patricia Eichenbaum. *Guanyin*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Keitokudentoroku Kenkyukai 景德傳燈錄 研究會, under the supervision of Iriya
Yoshitaka 入矢 義高, *Keitokudentoroku* 景德傳燈錄 vol. 3. Kyoto: Zenbunka
kenkyujo, 1993.

Keitokudentoroku Kenkyukai 景德傳燈錄 研究會, under the supervision of Iriya
Yoshitaka 入矢 義高, *Keitokudentoroku* 景德傳燈錄 vol. 4. Kyoto: Zenbunka
kenkyujo, 1997.

Lee, Yu-min. *Visions of Compassion: Images of Kuan-yin in Chinese Art*. Taipei:
National Palace Museum, 2000.

Levering, Miriam. Ch'an Enlightenment for Laymen: Ta-hui Tsung-kao and the New
Religious Culture of the Sung. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University,
1978.

Linji Yixuan 臨濟 義玄, *Zhenzhou Linji Huizhao chanshi yulu* 鎮州臨濟慧照 禪師語錄. T.47.1985.

Linji Yixuan 臨濟 義玄. *Rinzai roku* 臨濟錄. Translated by Akizuki Ryomin 秋月 龍. Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1972.

Linji Yixuan 臨濟 義玄. *The Record of Lin-chi*. (Also called *The Recorded Sayings of Ch'an Master Lin-chi Hui-chao of Chen Prefecture*.) Translated by Ruth F. Sasaki, et al. Kyoto: Institute for Zen Studies, Hanazono College, 1975.

Lu K'uan-yu (Charles Luk). *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, vol. 3. London: Rider and Company, 1962.

Makita Tairyō 牧田 諦亮, *Chugoku Bukkyoshi kenkyū* 中國佛教史 研究, vol. 2. Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1981-89.

McRae, John. "The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism." In *The Koan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*. Edited by Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000: 46-74.

McRae, John. *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Studies in East Asian Buddhism, 3). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.

McRae, John. *Seeing Through Zen: Encounter, Transformation and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Miaofa lianhuajing 妙法蓮華經 (*Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law*), translated by Kumarajiva in 406. T.262.9.

Muller, A. Charles. "East Asia's Unexplored Pivot of Metaphysics and Hermeneutics: Essence-Function/Interpenetration." <http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/articles/indigenoushermeneutics.htm>.

Poceski, Mario. *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Reis-Habito, Maria Dorothea. *Die Dharani des grossen Erbarmens des Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara mit tausend Handen und Augen*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1993. Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XXVII.

Schlutter, Morten, "The *Record of Hongzhi* and the Recorded Sayings Literature of Song-Dynasty Chan." In *The Zen Canon: Understanding the Classic Texts*, edited by Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Senzaki, Nyogen and Ruth Strout McCandless. *Buddhism and Zen*. New York: North Point Press, 1953 and 1987.

Sheng-yen, "The Recorded Sayings of Master Linji with commentary by Master Sheng-yen," *Ch'an Magazine*, 17.3 (Summer, 1999): 24-28.

Sheng-yen. *The Sword of Wisdom: Lectures on the Song of Enlightenment*. Elmhurst, NY: Dharma Drum Publications, 1990.

Shou lengyanjing 首楞嚴經 (The Surangama Sutra). T.19.945.

Shiina Koyu 椎名 宏雄. *Sogen han Zenseki no kenkyu* 宋元版禪籍の研究. Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1993,

Shou lengyanjing. The Surangama Sutra. Translated by Charles Luk (Lu K'uan Yu). London: Rider and Company, 1966.

Sorensen, Henrik. "Typology and Iconography in the Esoteric Buddhist Art at Dunhuang." *Journal of Silk Road Studies*, 1991-1992, 2: 285-349.

Suzuki, D.T.. *Manual of Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press, 1960.

Suzuki, D.T.. "Zen: A Reply to Hu Shih." *Philosophy East and West* 3.1 (1953): 25-46.

Tay, C.N.. "'Kuan-yin: The Cult of Half Asia.'" *History of Religions* 16 (1976): 147-77.

The Threefold Lotus Sutra. Translation into English of the *Miaofa lianhuajing* by Bunno Kato, revised by W. E. Soothill, Wilhelm Schiffer and Yoshiro Tamura. New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill, Inc., and Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1975.

Ui Hakuju 宇井 伯壽. *Daisan zenshushi kenkyu* 第三禪宗史研究. 1942. Reprint: Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966.

Wansong Xingxiu 萬松 行秀. *Congronglu* 從容錄. T.48.2004.

Xuedou Chongxian 雪竇 重顯 (aka Xuedou Mingjue 明覺). *Xuedou heshang baize songgu*. 雪竇和尚百則頌古, Translated by Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢 義高, Kajitani Sonin 谷 宗忍, and Yanagida Seizan 柳田 聖山, in *Setcho juko* 雪竇頌古. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1981.

Yanagida Seizan 柳田 聖山, *Shoki Zenshushisho no kenkyu* 初期禪宗史書の研究 (Study of the texts of early Chan school history). Kyoto: Hozokan, 1967.

Yanagida Seizan, “Basozen no sho mondai 馬祖禪の諸問題 (Some Problems Concerning Mazu’s Chan),” *Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyu* 印度學佛教學研究 17.1 (1968): 33-41

Yanagida Seizan, “The ‘Recorded Sayings’ Texts of Chinese Chan Buddhism.” Translated by John McRae, in Whalen Lai and Lewis Lancaster, eds., *Early Ch’an in China and Tibet*. Berkeley, California: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983: 185-205.

Yanagida Seizan. *Zen goroku* 禪語錄. Tokyo: Chuo koronsha, 1978. Sekai no meicho series, 18. Includes partial translation into modern Japanese of *Zutangji*.

Yoshizu Yoshihide 吉津 宜英. *Kegonzen no shisoshiteki kenkyu*. 華嚴禪の思想史的研究 Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1985.

Yu, Chun-fang. *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Yuanwu Keqin 圓悟 克勤. *Biyantu* 碧巖錄. T.48.2003.

Yuanwu Keqin. *BiyANJI* 碧巖集. Translated by Thomas and J.C. Cleary as *The Blue Cliff Record*. Boulder, Colorado: Prajna Press, 1978.

Zhengdao ge 證道歌. HTC vol. 111.

Zhengdao ge 證道歌. In Kajitani Sonin 谷 宗忍, Yanagida Seizan 柳田 聖山 and Tsujimura Koichi 村 公一. *Shinjinmei* 信心銘, *Shodoka* 證道歌, *Jugyuzu* 十牛圖, *Zazengi* 坐禪儀. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1974. The text of the *Zhengdao ge* in this collection is taken from a Song dynasty imprint of the *Jingde chuandenglü*.

Zutangji 祖堂集. *Sodoshu (Zutangji)*. Kyoto: Zen Bunka Kenkyujo, 1994. Photo reprint of the Korean Haeinsa edition.

Zutangji. See Yanagida Seizan, *Zen goroku* above.