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Introduction

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In 1988 and 1990, when his *Zen Buddhism: A History*, vols. 1 and 2 were published in English translation, Father Heinrich Dumoulin, S. J. was described on the back cover as "one of the world's foremost Zen scholars." The fact that he was a Catholic priest reflected well on both him and his subject matter: here was a man who did not let his own Catholic faith prevent him from seeing the authentic spirituality of another religious tradition; here was a religious tradition whose authentic spirituality was evident even to people who were not its followers. Most of his publications were in the German language, but his publications in English included, *A History of Zen Buddhism* (1963), *Zen Enlightenment* (1979), and, with Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *The Development of Chinese Zen* (1953) as well as the entries for "Dōgen" and "Kamo Mabuchi" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1969), "Zen" in *Encyclopedia of Japan* (1983), and "Ch'an" and "Zen" in the *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987). His extensively revised two-volume, *Zen Buddhism: A History,* was his last, longest and most ambitious work. Yet even as it was being published, the scholarly tide was turning. His several books had helped promote a certain vision of Ch'an/Zen and in the years following the publication of his last book, this vision of Zen Buddhism came under critical attack from many sides. And as those criticisms mounted, Dumoulin came to be seen by some, not as a Catholic priest and religious with a great and liberal spiritual insight, but as a naive historian who let himself be beguiled by Zen into promoting its deceptive self-image.

Dumoulin described the history of Zen, more or less, as Ch'an/Zen monks themselves tell it (a viewpoint later identified as the "insider's" point of view). The Zen version of its own history emphasizes that the first founder of Zen was Śākyamuni Buddha himself who transmitted the awakened mind in India through 28 patriarchs in an unbroken line. The twenty-eighth Indian patriarch was Bodhidharma, who brought that awakened mind to China and became the first Ch'an patriarch by transmitting it through a further unbroken line of disciples, the most famous of whom was Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch. Hui-neng is revered because his story dramatizes so many elements of Ch'an. In this legend, Hung-jen, the Fifth Patriarch in China, seeks to name a worthy disciple as the Sixth Patriarch and asks those who feel qualified to post an enlightenment verse on the wall. Only the head monk, Shen-hsiu, posts a verse:

> *The body is the bodhi tree,*
> *The mind is like a bright mirror's stand.*
> *At all times we must strive to polish it,*
> *And must not let the dust collect.* (McRae 1986, 1–2; infra, 132)

The illiterate Hui-neng, who is working in the back rooms pounding rice, eventually hears this verse and, recognizing that its author has only limited awakening, composes a response:

> *Bodhi originally has no tree.*
> *The mirror also has no stand.*
> *The Buddha Nature is always clear and pure.*
> *Where is there room for dust?* (McRae 1986, 2; infra, 133)

On reading this poem, the Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen immediately recognizes Hui-neng's awakened mind and confers on him Bodhidharma's robe and bowl, the symbols of authentic transmission; but he does this in a secret meeting to avoid the wrath of the monks who would be jealous of an illiterate layman. Thus did the illiterate peasant from the south, Hui-neng, become the Sixth Patriarch over the learned head monk, Shen-hsiu.

This story is highly revered because it dramatizes the Zen principle of "not founded on words and letters," typifying the Zen stance against establishment authority and showing that the Zen school transmits awakened mind itself. After Hui-neng, the years of the T'ang period came to be known as "the golden age of Zen" because so many accomplished Zen masters flourished at that time; their unorthodox words and actions became not only the stuff of legend but also the kernel of the enigmatic Zen kōan. In the lineage chart of transmission, the single unbroken line from Śākyamuni through Bodhidharma to Hui-neng fanned out into the "Five Houses," which further fanned out into numerous sub-branches. The lines of the entire lineage chart extended across space to Japan, Korea, and eventually even to the West, and through time right down to the present, so that theoretically one could identify the place of every authentic Zen monk in history. This is the Zen version of its own history.

Although Dumoulin, in both his early *A History of Zen Buddhism* (1963) and his later revised two-volume *Zen Buddhism: A History* (1988, 1990), questioned the historical documentation for almost every step in this version of Zen history, nevertheless he did accept its most fundamental assumptions: that there is a transformative experience of Zen awakening, that it was transmitted through a lineage of awakened masters, that it flowed into and colored both Chinese and especially Japanese culture. His two volume *History* was the last major scholarly work to put forward this vision of a "pure" and "authentic" Zen before Zen lost its innocence.

At the end of the nineteenth century, in a desert cave in Tun-huang in remote central Asia, a great cache of manuscripts from the end of the T'ang period (618–907 CE) was found miraculously preserved. For several decades thereafter, these manuscripts lay mainly unstudied, divided among several museums and academic institutions around the world. Then in the postwar period, Professor Yanagida Seizan in Japan took the lead in researching the Tun-huang manuscripts relating to Ch'an/Zen and under his guidance a new generation of scholars, both in Asia and in the West, compiled a body of scholarship which painted a historical picture sharply at odds with the traditional "history of Zen." In English, this new

scholarship started to appear as early as 1967 when Philip Yampolsky published his landmark study of the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*.

Yampolsky's new translation, based on the texts found at Tun-huang, displaced previously accepted versions of the *Platform Sūtra* which had been based on later texts. But more important, Yampolsky surveyed numerous other documents which caught the Ch'an/Zen school right in the middle of the act of fabricating a lineage going back through Bodhidharma to Śākyamuni. These documents experimented with different numbers of patriarchs and with different names, until one version of the lineage was eventually accepted as orthodox. Even worse, Yampolsky showed that the legendary story of how the illiterate Hui-neng became the Sixth Patriarch in a secret transmission was most likely fabricated by Ho-tse Shen-hui, an ambitious disciple of Hui-neng. Yampolsky, and then later McRae (1986), uncovered documents which showed that Hui-neng was probably a minor monk in the provinces, while Shen-hsiu, the loser in the poetry competition, was one of the most eminent priests in his time. Revisionist forces, led by the eloquent and ambitious Ho-tse Shen-hui, disciple of Hui-neng, managed to convince people that the Fifth Patriarch had actually transmitted his authority to his master Hui-neng, but that it had to be kept secret for fear of offending establishment monks. So persuasive was Ho-tse Shen-hui that his "secret transmission to Hui-neng" version became accepted as history. Not only did the new scholarship explode the legend of Hui-neng as fabrication, it also went on to deny that there ever was a "golden age of Zen" during the T'ang, that there had ever been an institutionally separate Ch'an school at any time in Chinese history (McRae 2003. 122).

Yampolsky's study of the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* was welcomed by specialists in Buddhist Studies but neither the wider scholarly community, which continued to maintain its great admiration for Zen, nor the general public appreciated its impact. But more currents were starting to run in the opposite direction. Dumoulin had accepted the notion of a Zen enlightenment experience. In his *History*, his biographies of individual Zen monks may omit other detail, but they invariably include mention of the moment a monk attained awakened mind. Starting in the 1970's, Steven Katz (1978, 1983, 1992), and then later, William Proudfoot (1985) developed a critique of the idea of mystical experience. In 1993, Robert Sharf brought this critique to bear on the notion of Zen experience. Sharf argued that in response to the crisis of modernism, defenders of Japanese Buddhism responded by creating a new concept, the "Zen enlightenment experience" (called variously *satori, kenshō, taiken, keiken*), and then deployed this concept ideologically. That is, they used the language of Zen experience not primarily to distinguish between two states of consciousness, ordinary and awakened mind, but to distinguish between two groups of people: those who had Zen authority and legitimacy (like the Japanese) and those who did not (like everyone else). One of the most damaging corollaries of Sharf's argument was his claim that D. T. Suzuki's account of Zen, which had so mesmerized its Western audience, was just another version of Japanese uniqueness theory (1995a, 1995b).

In his *History*, Dumoulin was always concerned to identify "pure" and "authentic" Zen, by which he meant, among other things, Zen which had not been syncretized with esoteric Buddhism or combined with elements of popular superstition or folk religion. In 1991, Bernard Faure published his study, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, bringing the entire apparatus of continental philosophy to bear on the study of Ch'an/Zen. Instead of discussing the usual topics associated with Zen, Faure focused attention on thaumaturges, tricksters, mummies, the ritualization of death, and much else usually thought to belong to the vulgar world outside the purity of Zen. Though Faure did not mention Dumoulin by name, he essentially debunked Dumoulin's conception of a "pure," "authentic" Zen. In addition, Faure argued that what Ch'an/Zen preached in rhetoric, it failed to practice in fact. In rhetoric, Zen espoused nonduality and the identity of opposites, resistance to hierarchy and established authority, rejection of magic, etc. In historical and institutional fact, it practiced differentiation and distinction, supported social hierarchy, employed magic, etc. Indeed, the impression one receives after reading *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* is that all of Zen is engaged in a vast game of deception, violating its own rhetoric at every turn.

Dumoulin's two-volume *History* ended with an account of developments within the Rinzai and Sōtō schools during the Meiji era (1868–1912) and did not attempt to describe Zen in the twentieth century. Brian Victoria's book, *Zen at War*, however, focused on the activities of Japanese Zen monks in the twentieth century and showed that during the Second World War, Japanese Zen monks willingly supported the military government's imperial ambitions. These monks included some of the very Zen masters, such as Shaku Sōen, Harada Sōgaku, and Yasutani Hakuun, whose disciples had established schools of Zen in the West. Victoria's book shocked and dismayed Western practitioners of Zen who learned that their own Zen teacher's teacher had enthusiastically supported Japanese militarism. In both the academy and in the general public, Zen had finally lost its innocence.

These different waves of criticism targeted a certain vision of Zen, but it was usually D. T. Suzuki who was named as the culprit who popularized that vision. Dumoulin himself was not named until the publication of John McRae's *Seeing Through Zen*, which analyzes the very idea of "a history of Zen" and puts Dumoulin at the head of a list of scholars who promoted what McRae terms "the genealogical model" (McRae 2003, 8). McRae's argument is complicated. To begin with, he urges a distinction between an insider's and an outsider's view of Zen history.

> What is both expected and natural for a religious practitioner operating *within* the Chan episteme, what is necessary in order to achieve membership within the patriarchal lineage, becomes intellectually debilitating for those standing, even if temporarily, *outside* the realm of Chan as its observers and analysts. What from the standpoint of Chan religious practice may be absolutely essential becomes, from the standpoint of intellectual analysis, the passive submission to a hegemony, the unwitting construction of an intellectual pathology. (McRae 2003, 10)

In McRae's telling, the ideological point of the Ch'an/Zen genealogical model was to claim that because it transmitted the Buddha's experience of awakening itself, advocates of Ch'an/Zen could thus claim to be superior to other schools of Buddhism, which only transmitted interpretations of that experience (McRae 2003, 5). And because the Zen version of its own history promotes a hegemony, for an observer or analyst on the outside to adopt that particular historical understanding would constitute a pathology, a kind of intellectual disease.

McRae has also created "Rules of Zen Study" which seem to be arguing that, for the Zen school, historical inaccuracy is the very point:

1. It's not true, and therefore it's more important.
2. Lineage assertions are as wrong as they are strong.
3. Precision implies inaccuracy.
4. Romanticism breeds cynicism. (McRae 2003, xix)

To whom does McRae address these rules? To the earlier generation of scholars who accepted at face value "a romanticized image of Ch'an" (2003: 103) and who unwittingly helped promote its ideology-posing-as-history. And an "extreme but representative example," says McRae, was Dumoulin (103, 120).

What are we to make of this analysis that the Ch'an/Zen version of its own history is a fabrication which promotes a self-serving hegemony, in which the Ch'an/Zen school declares itself superior to other schools of Buddhism? Of this depiction of Dumoulin as beguiled by a romantic image unsupported by historical scholarship? And what are we to make of these rules of Zen study?

First of all, it is worthwhile looking at the wider context, for not just Zen, but many Buddhist traditions promoted a self-serving version of history. The *p'an-chiao* classification system created by the T'ien-t'ai school in China retold the history of the Buddha's teaching career by placing the *Lotus Sūtra* at its apex; as custodian of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the T'ien-t'ai school could claim to teach the Buddha's message in its ultimate form, and not some version meant as an *upāya* for beings of lesser abilities. The Hua-yen school made similar claims for itself by placing the *Hua-yen Sūtra* at the apex of its version of a *p'an-chiao* classification system. For that matter, the entire Mahāyāna tradition can be seen as making a similar claim, describing earlier stages in the history of the Buddha's teaching as "lesser vehicle" in contrast to which it is "greater vehicle." Teachers of introductory religion courses often point out that religions present their myth as if it were history. Seen in this context, the case of Zen is not some unique exception in religious historical writing but the norm. It is the norm because the point of religious writing is not to write secular history but to express that religion's version of spiritual truth.

Dumoulin, himself a Catholic priest, understood this religious perspective, but he also stayed scrupulously in touch with the latest historical scholarship. Indeed, even in his earlier *A History of Zen Buddhism* (1963), he discussed the manuscripts found at Tun-huang and was quite aware that they showed Shen-hui fabricating a new version of the Ch'an lineage (1963: 85). Indeed, so intent was Dumoulin on staying current with the most recent scholarship that in his later *Zen Buddhism: A History* (1988), Dumoulin wrote a 37-page "Supplement:

The Northern School of Chinese Zen" (303–40) precisely to include the latest research of scholars, such as Faure (1991) and McRae (1986), which affected his account of that period.

Part of McRae's discontent is that Dumoulin accepted the notion that Ch'an/Zen had experienced a "golden age" during the T'ang period and a decline during the following Sung period. The most recent scholarship, however, is deconstructing the notion of the T'ang period as the golden age of Zen and insisting that the Ch'an/Zen school basically developed in the later Sung period. Even then, the Ch'an/Zen school, it seems, was never an institutionally separate school (McRae 2003, 122). Dumoulin did not anticipate this new development since most of this new historical research was published after the release of his last book, *A History*. McRae depicts him—along with an entire previous generation of scholars including Arthur F. Wright, Kenneth Ch'en, Jacques Gernet, Wm. Theodore de Bary, Hu Shih (McRae 2003, 120)—as subscribing to a "romanticized image." One wonders at the fairness of depicting the previous generation of scholars as naïve and romantic simply because they did not share the outlook which more recent historical research makes possible.

Scholarship in Zen studies since the publication of Dumoulin's *A History* has moved in an increasingly critical direction. First, the recent scholarship has constructed an alternate view of the history of early Zen, so that today we can speak of two competing versions of Zen history, an insider's view and an outsider's view. In addition, some scholars have also charged that central Zen concepts, such as non-duality and the experience of awakening, are not so much the focus of spiritual practice as tools used for ideological and even nationalist purpose. The situation today is quite unlike that of Dumoulin's day. At least in his day, Ch'an/Zen was more or less one phenomenon. Today, depending on one's standpoint, either Ch'an/Zen is an authentic spiritual practice whose goal is awakened mind, or it is a cultic practice built around a mythic state of mind called enlightenment, whose followers in the past willingly twisted the principles of Buddhism to serve the militaristic nationalism of the day. How has this happened?

McRae identifies the starting point, but we need to go far beyond McRae to understand the logic of recent scholarship. McRae mentions two standpoints for seeing Zen history: "What from the standpoint of Chan religious practice may be absolutely essential becomes, from the standpoint of intellectual analysis, the passive submission to a hegemony, the unwitting construction of an intellectual pathology" (McRae 2003, 10). McRae himself does not reflect upon what is involved in "intellectual analysis," but the standard claim for its superiority is that it is objective, impartial, and unbiased by religious commitments. In the two standpoints—that of Ch'an religious practice and that of intellectual analysis—we have two epistemologies, two competing methods of knowing the truth: Zen experience vs. intellectual analysis. Notice the parity. If there are scholars who doubt the very existence of a Zen enlightenment experience, so also are there sceptics who doubt the possibility of an unbiased, impartial, and objective intellectual analysis. Just as it is possible to argue that the primary function of the concept of Zen enlighten-

ment is not psychological, to distinguish states of awareness, but ideological, to confer authority on a particular group of people, so also one can argue that the primary function of the concept of "intellectual analysis" is not epistemological, to distinguish a mode of knowledge, but ideological, to confer authority on a particular group of people—scholars. Scholarship, too, can be said to be a world, with its own "inside" and "outside", and it, too, is intent on promoting its own version of a self-serving hegemony. McRae's warning that for would-be scholars to adopt the Zen view is to contract an intellectual pathology, a kind of disease of the mind, is a mirror reflection of the Zen monk's traditional warning that intellectual analysis mistakes the finger for the moon.

This is an example of what Bernard Faure calls "discursive affinities between the tradition and its scholarly study" (Faure 1991, 3), where the scholarship takes on some of the characteristics of the object of study. In other words, contemporary Zen scholars seem unwittingly to be mimicking the very tradition they study. The Zen tradition, who tell the story of Zen from the viewpoint of an insider to the religion, and the Zen scholars, who recount the history of Zen from the outsider's point of view, are vying for the authority to proclaim their different truths about Zen. They are thus like the two monks in Hui-neng's monastery arguing over the waving flag, one insisting that the flag is moving, the other that the wind is moving. As with the cat in Nan-ch'üan's monastery, their mutual intransigence causes the throbbing life of Zen to be cut into two.

Because historical research is constantly bringing the story of persons and events in history into sharper and sharper focus, Heinrich Dumoulin's two-volume, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, is now starting to look a little blurred and imprecise. Yet a surprising amount of the present volume on Japan still constitutes a good starting point for research. This is partly because Dumoulin expended the major part of his effort not so much in promoting a romantic image of Zen but in summarizing the most recent historical research on Zen in English, German, French and Japanese. Also, unlike the case in the first volume on China, recent research on the history of Zen in Japan has overthrown no large-scale paradigms and instead has filled in details and made gradual incremental adjustments. For example, since Dumoulin wrote, Kenneth Kraft has published *Eloquent Zen*, a major study of Daitō Kokushi and the founding of the Ō-Tō-Kan school of Rinzai Zen in Japan (Kraft 1992). However, because there has been so little other research in this area, Dumoulin's account in his *History* of "The Rinzai School in the Kamakura Period" still is useful in giving an overall account of this complicated period with its Chinese émigré monks, Japanese government sponsorship and interference, and strong personalities all interacting together.

In research on Dōgen, there have been quite a few publications over the past few years which have clarified different aspects of Dōgen's life and the texts he wrote. Nevertheless, Dumoulin's 70-page chapter on Dōgen is still a strong essay which brings together an account of Dōgen's life and career with an analysis of the *Shōbōgenzō* and a critical evaluation of Dōgen as a religious thinker. Much the same can be said for many of the other figures or events Dumoulin treats: Musō

Kokushi, Ikkyū Sōjun, the history of the Sōtō school after Dōgen, the Ōbaku School, even Hakuin: although there have been important studies which now provide much more detail, for an overall contextual picture of that figure or event summarizing recent historical research in both Western languages and Japanese, Dumoulin's *A History* is still essential reading.

When Dumoulin's history books were first published and being read, they had the reputation for being full of historical detail but somewhat dull and boring to read. When Zen was an object of romantic and faddish adulation, Dumoulin's scholarship provided solid historical content and also religious reflection to those people who wanted something more substantial. But now in the earlytwenty-first century, the fashion of the times has veered to the opposite extreme and he is described as subscribing to a romantic and naive vision of Zen and helping Zen promote its self-serving image. Now, Zen scholars warn themselves not to contract the "intellectual pathology" of accepting traditional Zen claims as gospel truth, and some of them even explain away the core religious ideas of Zen as ideological manipulation. In such a climate, it is good to remind ourselves that there is still the study of religion which is neither a disease of the intellect nor an ideological front for self-serving interests. Heinrich Dumoulin, it seems, was one of the last Zen scholars to have realized that. His two-volume *Zen Buddhism: A History* was the last substantial work to attempt the Middle Way, embodying a scholar's respect for historical research and a monk's respect for Zen as a religion.

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