

HE Yansheng 何 燕生, *Dōgen to Chūgoku Zen shisō* 道元と中国禅思想 (Dōgen and Chinese Zen thought). Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2000. xxxvii + 345 pp. ¥13,000 cloth, ISBN 4-8318-7634-8.

IN THIS AWARD-WINNING BOOK, He Yansheng attempts to “reexamine the characteristics of Dōgen’s thought in light of Chinese Chan” (15). This approach is very much needed because, according to the author, “the development of one’s religious thought is closely related to one’s past experience; therefore, it is essential to reflect upon the various kinds of influences that have had an impact on a person” (15). By placing Dōgen more firmly within a Chinese historical and intellectual context, the author has made a significant contribution to the ever-widening field of Dōgen studies.

The author is critical of the conventional approach taken by conservative Japanese scholars who contend that Dōgen’s thought is uniquely Japanese, “belittling external intellectual influences on Dōgen, or almost ignoring them” (14). The author also criticizes these scholars for overstating Dōgen’s originality.

In his study of Dōgen’s experience in thirteenth century China, He takes up two major Chinese Chan masters: Tiantong Rujing 天童如淨 (1162–1227) and Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 (1091–1227). The author also introduces the two Chan ideas of “Mind Immortal, Form Mortal” and “Trinity of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism” that were popular at the time.

Though it is well accepted that Rujing should be credited for his instruction and mind-to-mind transmission of the Dharma to Dōgen, the author admits that historical resources are too scarce to reconstruct a detailed life history of the Chan master (111). An added complication is that various people have rewritten and annotated the few existing documents from various perspectives. This has resulted in contradictory versions of Rujin’s life, which the author spends much time scrutinizing (111–69).

What Chinese concepts do Dōgen and Rujin closely share? The author holds that it is the expression, “cast off body and mind” 身心脱落. Needless to say, these words were said to have been exchanged between the two when Dōgen became enlightened. The author’s diligent philological research proves that this term and similar expressions are “often seen in many Chan-related documents written in late Tang and after the era of Five Dynasties. They were fondly used by Chan monks and priests as their regular idioms” (183). To prove this point, the author gives us quite a few citations (183–85). Consequently, it was “not only Dōgen but also many others in his era in China who used the term, ‘cast off body and mind’” (186). The term “cast off body and mind” is always associated with another expression, “merely sit” 只管打坐. This concept was, according to the author, also transmitted to Dōgen by Rujing. In short, both terms “cast off body and mind” and “merely sit” are strongly influenced by the context of Chinese Chan.

In discussing Dōgen’s response to the ideology of Master Hongzhi, the author introduces the view of Ishii Shūdō, a Japanese Buddhist historian at Komazawa University, who points out the fact that “many of Hongzhi’s phrases were altered by Dōgen” (199). For example, Dōgen changed Hongzhi’s words “Flawless jewels should not be reworked further, or they will lose their virtue” 皓玉無瑕、彫文喪德 to the phrase “Flawless jewels should be polished, and they will shine more” 皓玉無瑕、琢磨增輝. According to Ishii, this alteration suggests Dōgen’s negation of Hongzhi’s stance. Indeed, the author admits some dissimilarities between the two, but he rejects the notion that Dōgen was too self-assertive to accept Hongzhi at all. Rather, the author contends that Dōgen’s alteration was merely a rephrasing of Hongzhi’s words. The fact that Dōgen “advocated his pupils to accept and follow Hongzhi by all means” was testimony of his deep respect for Hongzhi’s teachings (204, 209, 216).

Some of Dōgen’s philosophy was formulated as a response to popular Chinese concepts of the day. Among them is the notion, “Mind Immortal and Body Mortal.” Dōgen severely criticized the idea on the basis of his understanding of various Chinese Chan ideas (267–74). Above all, as the author adds, this formula is antithetical to the dictum of “casting off body and mind” (275). Dōgen also criticized champions of the trinity of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism as “careless thinkers.” In Buddhist teaching, there is an idea that every phenomenon is the manifestation of the truth 諸法實相. If this were the case, it could also be true that Confucianism and Daoism are the embodiment of the truth. However, Dōgen opposed these sorts of generalities. Dōgen defines every phenomenon 諸法 as every teaching of enlightened people or buddhas, and the truth 實相 as the Buddhist teachings that were authentically transmitted from generation to generation (294). The author insists that Dōgen’s definition of 諸法實相 is clearly influenced by Rujing. In addition, the author maintains that the teaching of the *Hokekyō* (*Lotus Sutra*) plays an important role in Dōgen’s definition and his strong opposition to the trinity (293). Why then did Dōgen think highly of the sutra and challenge the trinity with it? First of all, it was because the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng 六祖慧能 (638–713), placed the sutra above all others. Secondly,

Dōgen implicitly attempted to criticize the Rinzai sect 臨濟宗, for those who supported the trinity mostly belonged to this group. Thus his anti-trinity stance was based upon his social as well as intellectual background (304). The author continues, “it is absurdly too simple to regard the sutra as the property of the Tendai school, and to put Dōgen’s stance into the category of Tentai teachings, because the sutra was also highly revered by influential Chan masters in the Sung Period” (315) and, most noteworthy, by the Sixth Patriarch in the Tang Period. Thus, the influence of Chinese Chan Buddhism was quite obvious in Dōgen’s negative stance to the trinity.

In the remaining section, the reviewer will give his own assessment. All in all, this book is very clear in its statement of thesis and is well-organized and highly readable. It indeed deserved to win the *Nihon Shukyōgakkai-shō* 日本宗教学会賞 for the year 2000.

It is indeed difficult to deny that in Japanese sectarian scholarship there is a tendency to ignore the Chinese language and Chinese intellectual influences, not only in studying Dōgen’s thought but also in interpreting even Chinese historical resources; quite a few sectarian scholars only rely on their *kanbun* 漢文 reading skills. The author commendably challenges the above-mentioned “Japanocentric” or Orientalistic approach toward Dōgen studies as well as Chinese cultural studies. He’s approach, which brings a fresh perspective to Dōgen studies, is very necessary and should be highly valued.

In short, the author adopted a new approach of putting Dōgen in Chinese historical and intellectual context, and hence, attempted to describe the nature of his thought in light of Chinese influences. The author repeatedly stresses the novelty of the new approach he took in his book (14–15, 260, 339), and he even goes further to assert that he is the first to employ the method. However, despite the author’s eagerness to admire his own approach, the reviewer would like to point out a few problems with his method.

First, indeed it is very important to pay attention to Chinese influences in Dōgen’s thought, but we cannot merely reduce all his thought to the strong influences from China. For example, there is a counter thesis that we should not regard Chinese Chan and its influences as monolithic and interchangeable to Japanese Zen due to their social, historical, and cultural dissimilarities, as pointed out by Bernard FAURE (1993).

Second, as already mentioned, it is not such an easy task to explain one’s thought by analyzing the historical context, for the context itself has layers of contexts constituted by various kinds of historical resources. More complicatedly, those resources also have layers of contexts such as those that resulted from various kinds of perspectives and stances taken by a series of writers and editors. These hermeneutical problems require restless philological and analytical efforts.

Third, though the author’s approach may be unprecedented in the field of Dōgen studies, he should not have overstated its novelty. For example, in the field of Sinology, which is closely related to Japanese studies, this type of approach is already well established (see, for example, TILLMAN 1992).

Finally, the reviewer finds no reference to works in Western languages in

the bibliography of this book, which seems rather odd, considering the plethora of texts written on Dōgen by Western scholars. By ignoring Western academia, He inadvertently perpetuates another cultural bias. We must not dismiss Western resources when discussing Dōgen, as we should not ignore his Chinese counterpart.

In closing, the reviewer would like to add an assessment of the book by the aforementioned historian, Ishii Shūdō. He holds that a valuable contribution of this book is its new interpretation of *Nyōjōzokugoroku* 如浄続語録: “It is well accepted that Dr. Kagamishima Genryu at Komazawa University was the first to point out that the recorded saying was a fabrication; however, he never made an in-depth translation of the resource. Dr. He, the author of this book, was the first one to scrutinize the material to prove Kagamishima’s assertion. From now on, every student of this historical document will rely on Dr. He’s interpretation” (quoted from his e-mail on 7 October 2000). I agree with his comment, and would like to stress the importance of this book by calling attention to the fact that any student of Dōgen studies—whether Japanese, Western, or Chinese—can learn much from He’s work.

REFERENCES

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