

James BASKIND

## “The Matter of the Zen School”

Fukansai Habian’s *Myōtei mondō*  
and His Christian Polemic on Buddhism

Japan’s Christian Century (1549–1650) was not only marked by ascending and waning political fortunes, but also by polemical ones. Both the polemical apogee and nadir came from the hand of one man, Fukansai Habian, a former Zen monk who, as an enthusiastic Christian convert, authored *Myōtei mondō* (The *Myōtei* dialogue), and post apostasy wrote *Hadaiusu* (Deus destroyed). Within his refutation of Buddhism in *Myōtei mondō*, Habian individually takes up the Zen school, asserting that it is not a valid path to salvation since it takes emptiness/nothingness as its central doctrine and does not advance the possibility of an afterlife. Habian calls on an assortment of Zen texts and teachings in his refutation, making full use of the tradition’s accommodating nature. While tracing Habian’s arguments, this article will demonstrate that even as a Christian zealot he was working within the Zen tradition, having not divested himself of his Buddhist pedagogy and polemic.

KEYWORDS: Zen—Christianity—Fukansai Habian—*Myōtei mondō*—Edo—refutation—emptiness—afterlife—koan

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THE ADVENT OF Christianity to Japan in the mid-sixteenth century posed a momentous challenge to contemporaneous belief systems. While Confucianism and Buddhism were originally transmitted from the continent, by the time of Christianity's arrival, both systems of thought were already thoroughly assimilated into the Japanese cultural landscape. Christianity, however, being the more recent foreign arrival and lacking common geographical or philosophical roots, became an object of concerted criticism and attack from Buddhist, Confucian, and Shinto sources. It has been observed that the extreme response that Christianity provoked was due to the two factors of its exclusivity in a non-exclusive culture, and its politicized nature in the contemporaneous unstable political environment of Japan (BREEN and WILLIAMS 1996, 1). Yet even in persecution Christianity managed to exert a lasting influence on Japanese intellectual systems. Kiri Paramore has persuasively demonstrated that the anti-Christian discourse during the Edo and Meiji periods was a formative factor in the establishment of certain ideologies, most significantly the nationalist Kokutai discourse (PARAMORE 2009). Christianity at this early period expressly refers to the Catholicism introduced by the Jesuits. For most Japanese of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Christian ideas such as a single omnipotent God as well as the doctrine of original sin seemed fundamentally incongruent with normative Buddhist modes of religious practice and belief.<sup>1</sup> This was perceived to be particularly the case with the Zen school. In this article we will examine one episode of the Buddhist-Christian discourse in Japan by looking at the Japanese Christian convert Fukansai Habian's 不干齋巴鼻庵

1. This is in spite of the fact that Christianity enjoyed great initial success, acquiring nearly 100,000 followers by 1579. As Sueki Fumihiko argues, this cannot only be explained by pointing to coincidence, societal conditions, nor the efforts of the missionaries; rather, the road to embracing Christianity was partly paved by Pure Land Buddhism, where the faith surrounding the single Buddha Amida is not so distant in nature from monotheism (SUEKI 2011a, 258). Fujiyoshi Jikai also asserts that Christianity encountered a unique situation in Japan due to the Japanese Pure Land faith, which did not have an exact analogue in either China or India. He points out that through the Pure Land teaching as found in Japan, ideas such as redemption through faith were already familiar to the Japanese (FUJIYOSHI 1979, 136). As for doctrines such as original sin being difficult for Japanese sensibilities, Paramore notes that this doctrine was completely bypassed by Habian in *Myōtei mondō*, while it occupied a central place in *Dochirina Kirishitan* ドチリナ・キリシタン, a text produced under the supervision of Alexandro Valignano (1539–1606); see PARAMORE 2008, 245–46. This observation says much about the divergent emphases between Japanese (as represented by Habian) and European approaches to Christianity.

(1565–1620?) attempted refutation of the Zen school. Habian is significant in that he is the first Japanese Christian thinker, and his writings aid in our understanding of exactly how Christianity was understood by Japanese during the middle of the “Christian Century” (SUEKI 2011b, 286). As Paramore has effectively shown, the historical fallacy of treating Habian and his work within the assumed mutually exclusive categories of “Eastern thought” and “Western thought,” this article will not examine Habian within the paradigm of East versus West (PARAMORE 2008, in particular 232–34, and 2009). Rather, our investigation into his writings will reveal salient features of his own Christian criticisms of Buddhism as a whole and Zen in particular, showcasing how his Christian anti-Zen discourse was indebted to and still retained elements from the Buddhist pedagogy and polemic he acquired before converting to his adopted faith. As Habian’s text *Myōtei mondō* 妙貞問答 (The Myōtei dialogue) was the first systematic refutation of each contemporaneous Buddhist school, within this discussion we will also see how Zen was critically understood within the political and intellectual tumult of the early seventeenth century.

*Fukansai Habian: From Zen Monk to Christian Zealot*

It is well known that when St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552) arrived in Japan his initial impressions were overwhelmingly positive. He described the Japanese as the “best” prospects yet discovered, and that among the heathens “no other will be found to surpass the Japanese” (ELISON 1973, 14).<sup>2</sup> This exceedingly sanguine outlook was short-lived. The lack of an adequate understanding of the native culture and Japanese language led to an ineffectual early mission. Padre Francisco Cabral (1529–1609) blamed this on the Japanese national character, which he described as “conceited, covetous, inconstant, and insincere” (ELISON 1973, 16). His misgivings about the virtue of the Japanese led to his refusal to admit Japanese into the priesthood, a humiliating measure that kept Japanese *irmãos*<sup>3</sup> in a subordinate position without the rights accorded to Europeans. Such treatment is believed to be one of the direct causes of Habian’s disillusionment with the Jesuits and his later departure from the church. There are a number of competing theories as to why Habian left the Christian faith, although none are definitive and as they are tangential to this article, they will not be delved into here.<sup>4</sup>

2. These favorable impressions were perhaps bolstered by the information he received before arriving in Japan. In 1547, one of his informants assured him that in Japan there were no Muslims or Jews, the Japanese were possessed of a strong intellectual curiosity, respected reason, had a common language, and were possessed of a central authority (KISHINO 1996, 19).

3. The Spanish word *irmão*, written 伊留滿 or 入滿 in Japanese, means “brother” and refers to a Jesuit novice (ŌNUKI Takashi et al. 2002, 103).

4. For a detailed treatment of these theories, see SHAKU 2009, 161–74.

Habian is best known for the two tracts he authored, *Myōtei mondō*, written in 1605 during the height of his Christian enthusiasm, and *Hadaiusu* 破提宇子 (Deus destroyed) written in 1620, which vehemently refutes Christian doctrine. Habian also appears in the *Kirishitan monogatari* 切支丹物語 (Tales of Christians), a chapbook dated from 1639 that was prominent in the anti-Christian discourse. He never escaped from his Christian shadow as even after his apostasy and impassioned attack against his erstwhile religion, he was still cast in the *Kirishitan monogatari* in the guise of a Christian apologist and evil magician.<sup>5</sup>

Any discussion of Habian should take into account his two-pronged career as Christian zealot and impassioned apostate as these dual phases of his life neatly correspond to the character of his two polemical works. Little is known of the pre-Christian Habian. He was from the Hokuriku area of Japan and spent some of his early years in a Zen monastery where he received the name Eshun 惠俊 (also 惠春). Although it is not entirely clear with which Zen school and temple he was affiliated, considering that he almost wholly draws on texts associated with Rinzai, one can almost certainly conclude that he was a Rinzai monk. His knowledge of the secret koan manuals from Daitokuji 大徳寺 strongly suggests that he was affiliated with a temple from that lineage, and Ide Katsumi, a renowned scholar of Christianity in Japan, concludes that this was indeed the case (IDE 1978, 61).<sup>6</sup> Habian was converted to Christianity in 1583 and entered the Jesuits as a lay brother, or *irmão*, in 1586. The Jesuits found a strong ally in Habian as he was learned and linguistically competent in addition to being an enthusiastic convert. He learned Latin, taught Japanese in Amakusa, and produced a romanized version of the *Heike monogatari* 平家物語 (Tale of the Heike) as part of his teaching materials (EBISAWA 1964, 114–15). It was after his move to Kyoto in 1603 that his career as a disputatious Christian apologist was made. His debate with Hayashi Razan 林 羅山 (1583–1657), the then-young champion of Confucianism, is immortalized in Hayashi's anti-Christian tract, *Hai Yaso* 排耶蘇 (Anti-Christian). Perhaps the most significant event during Habian's years in Kyoto, however, was his writing of *Myōtei mondō*.

*Myōtei mondō: A Catechistic Refutation of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto*

*Myōtei mondō* consists of three fascicles. The first is a refutation of the schools of Buddhism, the middle fascicle attempts to debunk the claims of Confucianism and Shinto, and the final fascicle asserts the truth of Christianity and why it

5. A more detailed presentation of Habian's background can be found in ANESAKI 1986, 465–87. For a treatment in English, see PARAMORE 2008, 232–33.

6. There is some debate as to the extent of Habian's Buddhist affiliation. While Paramore notes that there is no explicit documentary evidence attesting to his training before joining the Jesuits, considering his intimate knowledge of the secret koan manuals of Daitokuji, it is highly likely that he did in fact receive training as a Rinzai monk (PARAMORE 2008, 257, footnote 30).

is the only valid path to salvation. Ebisawa Arimichi (1910–1992), the renowned historian of Japanese Christianity, regards the work as a monumental example of early-modern Japanese thought. He attributes its literary and intellectual merit to it being a forerunner of a rational and critical approach to argumentation, being previous and far superior to contemporaneous works by Hayashi Razan and Suzuki Shōsan 鈴木正三 (1579–1655) (EBISAWA 1964, 117–18). Paramore comments that it deserves to be regarded as the best example of indigenous Japanese-Christian thought extant from the period (PARAMORE 2008, 236). There can be little doubt indeed that the text is unique since it is unquestionably the first and only systematic refutation of all the schools of Japanese Buddhism from the hand of a Japanese during the so-called “Christian era.” Not only does *Myōtei mondō* showcase to what level a Japanese had mastered Christian doctrine so shortly after Christianity’s arrival, but it also offers insights into how the native traditions were understood. Although the text was composed in 1605, the first fascicle was only discovered in its entirety in 1973.<sup>7</sup> This was the same year that George Elison published his groundbreaking *Deus Destroyed*, although at its time of writing the first fascicle had not yet come to light. Until this find, all that was known of the first fascicle’s contents is what was included in bare sets of notes that were discovered in a copy of *Yaso kyō sōsho* 耶蘇教叢書 (Library of Christian writings) in the University of Tokyo library by Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949) and published under the title *Buppō no shidai ryaku nukigaki* 仏法之次第略抜書 (An account of Buddhism: Abbreviated extract) (IDE 1995, 228). The first fascicle is comprised of the following eleven subsections:

1. Preface 序文;
2. On the Question of the Establishment of the Three Worlds According to the Buddha 仏説三界建立ノ沙汰之事;
3. On the Pre-enlightenment Period and Birth of Śākyamuni 釈迦之因位誕生之事;
4. On the Matter of the Eight Schools 八宗之事;
5. On the Matter of the Hossō School 法相宗之事;
6. On the Matter of the Sanron School 三論宗之事;
7. On the Matter of the Kegon School 華嚴宗之事;
8. On the Matter of the Tendai School (and the Nichiren School) 天台宗之事 付日蓮宗;
9. On the Matter of the Shingon School 真言宗之事;
10. On the Matter of the Zen School 禪宗之事;
11. On the Matter of the Pure Land School (and the Ikkō School) 淨土宗之事 付一向宗.

7. The complete text of the first fascicle was discovered in the library of Tenri University by Nishida Nagao 西田長男.

It has been pointed out that the layout of the fascicles which take up each school individually is reminiscent of the great primer of Japanese Buddhism *Hasshū kōyō* 八宗綱要 (1268), written by the Buddhist encyclopedist Gyōnen 凝然 (1240–1320) (IDE 1995, 229).<sup>8</sup> Considering Habian's broad Buddhist learning, it is highly likely that he was familiar with this text and may even have used it as a model for his own work.

As its title indicates, *Myōtei mondō* is in the form of a dialogue between the two ladies Myōshū 妙秀 and Yūtei 幽貞. This pedagogic format was also employed by Matteo Ricci (Ch. Li Madou 利瑪竇; 1552–1610) a number of years earlier when he wrote his own catechistic work, *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (The true meaning of the Lord of Heaven, 1603), which takes the form of a dialogue between a Chinese intellectual and a missionary.<sup>9</sup> In *Myōtei mondō* both figures are nuns, with Myōshū a Pure Land adherent and Yūtei a Catholic. It is thought that these two characters are not wholly fictional, but rather portray figures Habian encountered during his missionary activities (IDE 1978, 56).<sup>10</sup> Within the text's dialogic format, Myōshū presents her understanding of Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism, which Yūtei counters with the Christian perspective, in effect refuting the native systems on Christian terms. The text ends with Christianity prevailing; Myōshū resolves to receive baptism. In the first fascicle's "The Matter of the Zen School" the central points that Yūtei employs to refute the validity of Zen are its lack of a creator god, its inability to provide meaningful salvation, and its teaching of emptiness and nothingness. Salvation in this sense refers only to the afterlife—Buddhist religious aspirations and practices that aim at a psychological transcendence are perceived as ineffectual or immaterial to this central goal. In addition, Habian did not accept that the Buddhist void could serve as a vehicle for creation. As mentioned by Paramore, for Habian sentience and knowledge were prerequisites for the act of creation (PARAMORE 2008, 239). For Buddhism as a whole, *Myōtei mondō* bases its criticism on three main points: 1. Śākyamuni was a human being; 2. the essence of Buddhism is based on emptiness/nothingness and that which is nonexistent; and 3. the Buddhist assertion that all things issue from the mind (IDE 1995, 266). As we will see below, Habian's vehemence is

8. As Mark BLUM writes, Gyōnen was "the most prominent religious historian of his day, and arguably the most influential Buddhist historian in premodern Japan" (2002, vii). While *Hasshū kōyō* may be Gyōnen's most well-known work, he also authored the *Jōdo hōmon genrusho* 淨土法門源流書 (Essay on the origins and flow of the Dharma Gate of Pure Land Buddhism), one of the foundational source texts of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan (BLUM 2002, vii).

9. It may be of interest to note that this work arrived in Japan the same year (1605) that Habian wrote *Myōtei mondō* (PARAMORE 2009, 25). Paramore also notes that it quickly spread throughout the country, by 1640 becoming the most referenced Jesuit work in Japan (PARAMORE 2008, 251).

10. For additional background on Habian and the text, see CIESLIK 1972.

markedly reserved for what he sees as the nihilistic teaching of emptiness, a doctrine that he particularly associates with the Zen school—his former affiliation.

*“The Matter of the Zen School”*

In both China and Japan, Christianity and the Zen school (in China with its looser sectarian divides it would be more appropriate to say “Zen (Chan)-practicing monks” rather than “Zen school”) came into conflict over their respective religious worldviews. In China, Ricci raised the ire of the Buddhist community when he characterized Buddhism’s teaching on emptiness as life-denying and false, as well as when he asserted that the concept of transmigration was stolen from Pythagoras. In response, illustrious Ming monks including Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲株宏 (1535–1615) and Feiyin Tongrong 費隱通容 (1593–1661) took up the mantle against Christianity (天主教), countering that Christians worship a crucified criminal, are ignorant of karma and rebirth, and also unhesitatingly slaughter livestock (OKAMOTO 2008, 62–63). Zhuhong’s work, *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窓隨筆 (Jp. *Chikusō zuihitsu*), was written contemporaneously to Habian’s *Myōtei mondō* and represents Chinese Buddhism’s first systematic criticism of Christianity (NISHIMURA 2010, 31). Feiyin, one of the progenitors of what would eventually become the Japanese Ōbaku school 黄檗宗, wrote the work *Yuandao pixie ji* 原道闢邪集 which is in large part a refutation of Ricci’s *Tianzhu shiyi*. In Japan, Xavier held the Zen school in particular contempt. He observed that among the schools of Japanese Buddhism only the Zen school held to the heretical view that the human soul is like that of the animals which disappear into nothingness upon death (SUEKI 2010, 62).<sup>11</sup> This perception of the Zen school’s insistence on “emptiness” 空 or “nothingness” 無 was insurmountable for the early Christian missionaries whose entire worldview was founded on the concept of an eternally existent soul and creator deity. Zen and its teachings may have been a central target of Christian polemic, but it should also be noted that the most sustained attacks against Christianity were launched by Zen monks. During the seventeenth century, some of Christianity’s most vociferous opponents, such as Suzuki Shōsan and Sessō Sōsai 雪窓宗崔 (1589–1649), just to name a few, were from the Zen school. Suzuki’s anti-Christian campaign was a major part of his own missionary activities, situating him squarely within the Bakufu’s anti-Christian apparatus (AOMORI 1976, 13). His *Hakirishitan* 破吉利支丹 (Smash the Christians), written in Japa-

11. It would appear that Xavier was overlooking a similar viewpoint found in the Hebrew Bible, Ecclesiastes 3.19–21, where it says “For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other, and both have the same lifebreath; man has no superiority over beast, since both amount to nothing. Both go to the same place; both came from dust and both return to dust. Who knows if a man’s lifebreath does rise upward and if a beast’s does sink down into the earth?” (JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY 1985, 1445).

nese, aggressively refutes Christianity while asserting that Buddhism helps instill the social order which reflects the cosmic one.<sup>12</sup> Sessō's work *Jakyō Taii* 邪教大意 (The general meaning of the heretical teaching), also known as *Taiijijashūron* 対治邪執論, written in classical Chinese, achieved a wide distribution. Both of these texts and others of the genre were not based on doctrinal issues, but rather on the social and political evils they perceived Christianity as representing, most notably the threat of invasion (PARAMORE 2009, 64).

No doubt the Zen school posed unique doctrinal challenges for Christianity. If missionaries were indeed able to understand the finer points of its teachings, it must have seemed inconceivable that a system could base itself on “no reliance on the written word” (*furyū moji* 不立文字) and a “direct pointing to the mind of man” (*jikishi ninshin* 直指人心) based on a “separate transmission outside the scriptures” (*kyōge betsuden* 教外別伝) that is to eventuate in “seeing one's nature and becoming a Buddha” (*kenshō jōbutsu* 見性成佛). While Zen authors often highlighted the unattached, seemingly almost antinomian aspects of the school, it has been historically characterized by an elaborate and highly formal scriptural, ceremonial, and institutional tradition. In certain instances this was used to the Christians' advantage. Seeing the prominence that the Zen monks enjoyed, the Jesuit *Visitator* Alexandro Valignano (1539–1606), who adopted a policy of accommodation to Japanese culture, borrowed the classification of ecclesiastical ranks from the Zen school, which he observed to be the “principal school of Japanese Buddhism” (ELISON 1973, 62). Below we will see how a Japanese Zen-monk-turned-Christian appropriates elements of his former tradition in his attempt to refute it.

The section “The Matter of the Zen School” starts out with Myōshū relating to Yūtei that she had heard that the Zen school is different from the other Buddhist schools in that it posits a “separate transmission outside the scriptures,” the nature of which she questions. Roughly a fifth of the entire section is taken up with Yūtei's response to and explication of this, which consists of a summary of Zen lore, including the story of transmission to Mahākāśyapa from Śākyamuni at Mt. Ārdrakūṭaparvata, Bodhidharma's bestowing the mind seal on the Second Patriarch, Huike, as well as the Fifth Patriarch Hongren's transmission of dharma to Huineng. Habian utilizes the Zen school's foundational myths as his point of departure for establishing the nihilistic tenets of Zen. If these foundational aspects could be demonstrated to be untenable, they would corrode the edifice upon which Zen itself is built. This is in part attempted through Yūtei's criticism of the Zen claim to a separate transmission outside the scriptures. Within the discussion she asserts that the “Treasury Eye of the True Dharma”

12. The work also devotes space to debunking the idea of miracles and supernatural claims as they are presented in the Bible. For more on this discussion, see FUJIIYOSHI 1978, 138–39.



(*Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏)<sup>13</sup> is nothing other than “thoroughly understanding the teaching of one mind.” This “one mind” (*isshin* 一心) is then asserted to be transmitted without form (*mu* 無), which serves as the foundation upon which Habian builds his argument for Zen’s pessimistic and nihilistic worldview. The passage runs:

As you have mentioned, Zen is said to be a separate transmission outside the scriptures, but it is not any different. It is simply the same old Buddhist teaching. However, [the phrase] “a separate teaching outside the scriptures,” [traces its provenance to when] Śākyamuni was preaching at Mt. Gṛdhrakūṭaparvata, the Buddha held a single flower and showed it to the entire assembly. Everyone was silent as they did not understand [its meaning]. While all were rendered speechless, it is said that only Kāśyapa broke into a subtle smile, at which time Śākyamuni said “[This one] has [grasped] the Treasury Eye of the True Dharma, the wondrous mind of Nirvāṇa. Thus I transmit my dharma to Mahākāśyapa.” From this pronouncement until the present, the Zen school has been based on the idea that there is a separate transmission outside the scriptures. Well, as for inquiring into the nature of this Treasury Eye of the True Dharma that was said to be transmitted, it is none other than thoroughly understanding the teaching of the one mind. When asking whether this mind is transmitted as form or no-form, it is [transmitted] as no-form. Thus, in this “Verse of Transmission” it is said “The dharma’s original nature is no dharma.”

(*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 341)

As Habian was well aware through his tenure as a Zen monk, such absolutist statements about Zen or Buddhism as a whole could be neatly negated by recourse to the accommodating Buddhist doctrines of expedient means (*hōben* 方便) or provisional existence. Habian acknowledges this but it only bolsters his argument by providing ammunition for demonstrating the superficial and insubstantial nature of Buddhism. He concludes on this point, writing “In the final analysis, it means that although things appear to exist, they are all [in fact] empty. The [teaching of] the Twenty-eight [Indian] Patriarchs begins with this [concept], as do [the teachings of] the Six Patriarchs in China, also” (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 342). Habian then relates the episode of Bodhidharma’s 菩提達磨 (ca. sixth century) transmission to the Second Patriarch (Huike 慧可, 487–593) as well as the story of the Fifth Patriarch’s (Hongren 弘忍, 688–761) passing of the robe and bowl to Huineng 慧能 (638–713), after which he enumerates the Five Houses and Seven Schools of Zen. At this point he establishes his central point of criticism regarding Zen—its teaching on the emptiness of mind. Habian

13. In the Zen tradition, “Treasury Eye of the True Dharma” refers to the content of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment, and by extension, the truth of enlightenment (NAKAMURA 1999, 704).

writes, “All of the Five Houses and Seven Schools [of Zen] posit an understanding of the one [principle] of the mind’s emptiness as the fundamental [tenet]. Is not Buddhism a strange doctrine indeed?” (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 342). Habian was not the first Christian critic to make a refutation of the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. A few years earlier in China, Ricci had written his *Tianzhu shiyi* to criticize the Buddhist teachings of emptiness and nothingness on cosmological grounds. He asserted that an existent universe could not possibly have been produced from that which is nonexistent. From a social perspective he asserted that a society that is philosophically based on the teaching of emptiness or nothingness will eventuate in a state of confusion because it lacks clear guiding principles (GOTŌ 1971, 65).<sup>14</sup>

Eschatological doctrine forms a central aspect of Christianity. The death of Jesus upon the cross is presented as an opportunity for vicarious redemption on the day of judgment, but only if one professes faith solely in that redemption, and thus the necessity of the missionary who can spread the word to the uninitiated. Since normative Christian worldviews place primacy on the afterlife, naturally this was the aspect that the Jesuits taught with particular zeal. As seen below, Habian takes up this mantle when he questions what the Buddhists can possibly value if they do not recognize the existence of the afterlife. Certain aspects of East Asian religious discourse posed considerable challenges to the acceptance of the Christian view of the afterlife. One of the most prominent among them was the practice of ancestor worship, where enshrined ancestors not only provided a source of blessings and protection, but were also the celestial family with which one would eventually be reunited. The earthly family makes offerings and prays to the ancestors, which also comprises a part of communal rituals and annual celebrations. Most Japanese or Chinese in the late sixteenth century would have seen the implication that one’s ancestors could be eternally and irrevocably damned as an unthinkable abhorrent proposition. The success of the missionaries would require that this aspect be presented as delicately as possible, if not avoided all together. This very issue came to a head with the Chinese Rites Controversy in which Pope Clement XI (1649–1721) sent a Papal Legate to Emperor Kangxi 康熙帝 (1654–1722; r. 1661–1722) that included, among other things, the injunction to proscribe the worship of ancestors as it was incompatible with being a Catholic. This directly led to the banning of Christian missions in China in 1721 (COHEN 1963, 29). Another point that missionaries throughout

14. For an interesting discussion of Chinese Buddhism’s riposte to these charges, see NISHIMURA 2010, 37–41. Predominantly investigating the writings of Feiyin, Nishimura demonstrates that Feiyin argues that it is not emptiness or the void that he posits as the ultimate teaching of Buddhism, but rather the “Great Way” 大道 (C. *dadao*) which is universal, inheres in all things, and subsumes the Christian God (*tianzhu* 天主).

the ages have commonly asserted has been the absolute need for a god in order to instill moral order. The Buddhist teaching of karma and cause and effect (Sk. *pratītyasamutpāda*; Jp. *innen* 因縁) was too impersonal from the Christian perspective, which is firmly based on the belief in a personal God. Of course it is the afterlife that is the central concept for Habian, and it is for this that Buddhism lacks the means of attainment. The ethical problem is also crucial to his argumentation, which sees the securing of the afterlife as necessitating acquisition of *anima rationalis*, one of the Aristotelian *anima* categories.<sup>15</sup> Not only does this bestow the potential for the afterlife, it is also at the root of our ethical mechanism that allows for distinguishing right from wrong (PARAMORE 2009, 17). For Habian, the Buddhist emphasis on emptiness denies the human heart its natural birthright of *anima rationalis*, and thereby deprives Buddhists not only of the afterlife, but also of a firm moral stance. He writes:

As all of the schools of Buddhism see through [the belief] in the afterlife, what is it that they value? Putting aside the question of an afterlife, since they do not recognize a God in this world or above [in heaven] that should be feared, [Buddhism] is not any kind of [religious] path at all. [According to Buddhism] That which is called the human heart is only moved by its desires which lead it down an evil path. They do not recognize a God or a self, so if people perform evil [acts] there is no God to administer punishments and if one does good [works] there is no reward to be dispensed. Is it not an error that they freely teach that one is born from emptiness and returns to emptiness? Through the eyes of a Christian, this kind of teaching is only perceived as an evil doctrine.

(*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 342–43)

As any reader of *Myōtei mondō* would be well aware, Habian is actually engaged in a dialogue with himself through the vehicle of the two fictional nuns, so for the sake of creating a polemic, he has Myōshū defend the Zen school by asserting that one is not simply born from emptiness and returns to emptiness. Myōshū then distinguishes between the emptiness of empty space or the void, described as “nihilistic emptiness” (空ニシテ無也) and contrasted with the “emptiness of truth” (空ニシテ真也) that is said to be equivalent to Buddha Nature 仏性. She clarifies by saying “The emptiness of the void [describes] a nonexistent thing, [but] the emptiness of Buddha Nature [which is] the nature of our minds, truly exists” (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 343). Yūtei counters by removing all distinctions between the different kinds and different levels of emptiness by citing textual passages to support her propositions. She continues her argument by

15. Habian saw *anima rationalis* as that which makes humans different from animals and which allows for the understanding of abstract thought. He also considered it to be that which continues into the afterlife. For a detailed exposition on Habian's understanding and use of the *anima* categories, see PARAMORE 2009, 15–18.

asserting that it is only the mundane view that sees Buddha Nature and emptiness [the void] to be different. She cites the *Chuanxin fayao* 伝心法要 (Jp. *Denshin hōyō*)<sup>16</sup> in support of her contention that all is emptiness, including the mind. The passage from the text runs: “Generally most people are not willing [to see the truth of] the mind’s emptiness as they are frightened of falling into emptiness, [yet] they do not realize that their own minds are originally empty” (*Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德伝灯録, T. 51: 273). It is crucial for his argument that Habian does not acknowledge the subtleties of the Buddhist “emptiness” and relegates it instead to the nihilistic realm of a one-dimensional “nothingness.” This is because it must be negatively contrasted with the essence of the Christian God and human soul which are based upon an eternal substance/existence (有), the first condition for Christian eschatological discourse. A nonexistent or even provisionally existent “soul” has no need of salvation.

We can assume that Habian was aware of his biased presentation concerning emptiness, as his learning and experience as a Zen monk would have familiarized him with the teaching of *shinkū myōu* 真空妙有, which can be literally rendered as “True emptiness [is] wondrous existence.” The meaning of this term points to that which is beyond either existence or nonexistence 無; that is, a non-relativistic state that transcends dualistic polarities. His polemical agenda in *Myōtei mondō* did not allow room for mention of this as it would have undermined his contrastive contention that Buddhism is based on nothingness and thus unable to provide meaningful salvation, while Christianity alone—with its doctrine of absolute existence—can offer postmortem succor to its adherents.

After asserting the emptiness of Buddha Nature, Habian then attempts to demonstrate the absolute emptiness of another central Buddhist concept: the Dharmakāya (Jp. *hosshin* 法身). The Dharmakāya, or Dharma Body, is the cosmic body of the Buddha, said to be without form, yet pervading the entire universe as truth itself. As it is unconditioned and infinite, it seemingly has connotations of permanence and eternity, aspects which may make it sound rather close to the Christian concept of the eternal God who stands above creation. Habian, however, equates the Dharmakāya with the same nihilistic emptiness he assigns to the Buddhist understanding of mind, without making allowances for the Dharmakāya’s dynamic aspect. For this, he again refers to the *Chuanxin fayao*. The passage he quotes runs:

16. The formal name of this text is *Huangboshan duanji chanshi zhuanxin fayao* 黄檗山断际禅师传心法要 (Jp. *Ōbakukan dansai zenji denshin hōyō*). It consists of the discourses of the great Tang-era master Huangbo Xiyun 黄檗希运 (Jp. *Ōbaku Kiun*) as recorded by his disciple Peixiu 裴休 (797–860); see BKD 1: 385b. The passage cited, however, actually appears in the *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T 51, n.2076.

The Dharmakāya is [none other than] emptiness, emptiness is [none other than] the Dharmakāya. The average person says that the Dharmakāya pervades [all] space and that the Dharmakāya is included within emptiness. They do not know that the Dharmakāya is emptiness and that emptiness is the Dharmakāya.” (Huangboshan *duanji chanshi zhuanxin fayao*, 卍 48.381)

Habian goes on to assert that the Dharmakāya is equivalent to the emptiness of Buddha Nature, thereby effectively relegating two central Buddhist concepts to the same nihilistic emptiness. Here, as well, Habian fails to allude to the true scope of the Dharmakāya, which is described as being without attributes of any kind (including that of emptiness) and is equivalent to “thusness” (Sk. *tathatā*; Jp. *shinnyo* 真如), which can be taken as another way of expressing ultimate truth.

Habian himself is conscious of the strictly doctrinal nature of this discussion, which fails to account for the conspicuous aspect of “practice” in Zen. Scholars today remind us that Zen can be considered a specifically embodied practice (WRIGHT 2008, 13).<sup>17</sup> Habian says “However, saying only this much [may] sound rather like doctrine, and one would certainly think that the practitioner does not know anything about training in zazen and the practice of Buddhism” (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 343). As a former Zen monk, Habian must have anticipated the response from the Zen side in reaction to his criticism as his pre-conversion religious life would have been largely occupied with koan practice, zazen, and the elaborate rituals that Zen monks are expected to perform. Among these forms of practice, koan would have posed as a particularly fertile area for Habian’s refutation. Not only is it central to the life of a Rinzai monk, but it also serves as a nexus for the tradition as a whole as it is also connected with numerous rituals and secret teachings that were highly guarded. It is to this aspect that he next turns, precisely because it is his intention to expose and refute the central and innermost teachings of Zen. He assures his reader that “there is nothing to hide” in his discussion, and recommends his readers investigate the secret koan records (*missan* 蜜參) at Daitokuji 大徳寺.

### *Habian on Koan*

Koan (Ch. *gong’an* 公案, literally “public cases”) refer to sometimes pithy, epigrammatic sayings that are used as pedagogic tools in the Zen tradition. These brief sayings or dialogues from the discourse records (*goroku* 語録) are thought to represent “an especially profound expression or encapsulation of the awakened mind of the patriarch to whom the words are attributed” (FOULK 2000, 16). Koan practice constituted a central part of medieval Zen in both the Sōtō and

17. In his discussion of Zen ritual, Wright cautions that to make sense of Zen, its fundamental corporeality must be engaged (WRIGHT 2008, 13).

Rinzai schools. The age following the end of the Kamakura period (1185–1333) witnessed the development of a uniquely Japanese synthesis of popular religion, esoteric Buddhist elements, and highly proprietary and secret practices surrounding the transmission of koan within different lineages, particularly in the Sōtō school. In the Sōtō school, the three primary genres that comprise koan literature are *monsan* 門參 (koan manuals), *kirikami* 切紙 (initiation documents), and *kikigakishō* 聞書抄 (transcription commentaries).<sup>18</sup> The demesne of secret koan manuals is not limited to the medieval Sōtō school. In what are termed *missanroku* 密參録 or *missanchō* 密參帳, the Rinzai school had its own perfect analogue to the *monsan*, thus demonstrating that the secrecy surrounding koan transmission was a commonality shared by both schools. Koan transmission may have been predicated on the ideal of leading the practitioner to enlightenment, but in actual practice, issues of authority, orthodoxy, and the perpetuation of lineal identity were central to koan discourse. A few of the salient features of the *missanroku* are: 1. the recording of the words of the ancestors in order to facilitate the smooth exchange between master and disciple, which later came to be passed on as a kind of textbook for Zen encounters; and 2. content consisting of selected koan from well-known collections with a teacher's *agyo* 下語 or “capping phrase” appended which later was followed by commentary in colloquial Japanese.<sup>19</sup>

A prominent characteristic of medieval Japanese Zen was the relatively high level of exchange between monks of the Rinzai and Sōtō schools. Throughout much of their pre-Edo history these two schools had considerable interaction that worked to blur any apparent distinction regarding their practice. This prompted the two schools to complement and preserve—particularly in regard to koan—the other's practices and defining characteristics (BODIFORD 1993, 150–52).<sup>20</sup> The eventual hardening of the sectarian division would only come in the mid-seventeenth century with the arrival and flourishing of the Ōbaku school, which served as the impetus for a redefinition and reassertion of unique

18. These terms are borrowed from BODIFORD 1993, 152–62.

19. Kenneth Kraft describes a capping phrase as “something of a cross between a koan and a footnote.” He elaborates: “Applied to live situations as well as written texts, a capping phrase is supposed to be able to make a comment, resolve a specific conundrum, convey a Zen insight, transform another's awareness, resonate like a line of poetry, or perform several of these functions simultaneously” (KRAFT 1992, 5).

20. Bodiford cites Tamamura Takeji's assertion that by the fifteenth century the distinctions between Rinzai and Sōtō had totally broken down and that only rivalries between different lineages remained, such that two Sōtō lineages would have been as different from each other as if one had been Rinzai and the other Sōtō. Bodiford adds to this by commenting, “Tamamura's characterization is accurate insofar as every lineage had its own secret teachings” (BODIFORD 1993, 150). It is interesting to note that from koan, which literally means “public cases,” there evolved esoteric and secret teachings that were jealously guarded by each lineage.

and proprietary sectarian claims. Traditionally, representative koan of the Rinzai curriculum would include [Zhaozhou's] Cypress Tree 柏樹子 and Nanquan's Cat 南泉斬貓, while a well-known koan of the Sōtō tradition would be the Fivefold Relation of Lord and Vassal 五位君臣. At the time Habian was writing *Myōtei mondō*, it would not have been at all out of the ordinary for a Rinzai or Sōtō monk to have practiced all of the above koan under different masters, which may explain his own familiarity with koan associated with both schools.

Yūtei's response constitutes a dialogue within a dialogue as she recounts the exchanges between a student (whose responses are expressed by the character *ben* 弁, "explains") and the master (who replies as *satsu* 拶, "pressing") regarding a number of well-known koan. The first koan is "The Meaning of the Patriarch's Coming from the West" 祖師西來意. The dialogue that follows is predominantly concerned with asserting the ineffable nature of mind according to Buddhism through the question and answer dialogue between the master and the student. In discussing the mind, the student says "Not only can it not be seen with the eyes, but it cannot be heard with the ears, cannot be smelt by the nose, cannot be tasted by the tongue, cannot be felt by the body, and cannot be sought in words" (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 344). With the mind's ineffable nature thus asserted, it is only a short jump to again land at the conclusion of its nonexistence, which feeds right into Habian's claim that Zen promotes the view of "nothingness." The text continues:

It [mind] seems to be existent, but it is not. Also, another master of old once said "The mind is like the moon [reflected] on water, even more like the reflection in a mirror." It is precisely because of the water that the human form is reflected. In that way, it is precisely because of the body and six sense organs that mind exists. The mind is not separate. It might seem to exist [separately] but it does not.... Ultimately, what is important [to understand] is that the Three Worlds [of past, present, and future and everything in them] are without mind. In the follow up [the master] says "seeing things like this one falls into the view of nothingness." The disciple says: "one falls into the view of nothingness. That is because [such people] say that which does exist is nothing, and assign existence to things that do not exist. This is the view of nothingness..."

*(Myōtei mondō* 1993, 344–45)

Here Habian takes pains to remind his readers that the mind is quite literally a nonentity in Buddhism. To recognize the mind's existence—or anything for that matter—would be to diminish the distinction he posits between Christianity's essence that is based on "existence" and Buddhism's basis in "nothingness." The mind is not the earthly manifestation of a transcendental and nonphysical soul, but rather a sort of illusion that arises in response to the six sense organs.

"Answers" to koan have traditionally varied from master to master, although there are certain stock responses that were, and are, often employed. One such

example is Zhaozhou's well-known response to "The Patriarch's Coming from the West" which is "the cypress tree in the garden" 庭前柏樹子. It is the very seemingly nonsensical and unconnected nature of these two phrases (in the form of a question and a response) that serves as the crux and pedagogic focus of the koan exercise (SHAKU 2009, 122). In the passage below, the metaphor of a tree is employed to show the mind's insubstantial nature.

Now, if one tears open and looks inside the root, stem, branches, and leaves, there is no [seed of] flowers or greenery [within]. This is not having mind. Taking this, when asked "what is the meaning [of the Patriarch coming from] the west?" and the answer is "the cypress tree in the garden," this is direct pointing [to the mind]. . . . The capping phrase "willows are green, flowers are red" is to say that, just like the cypress tree, the green of the willows and the red of the flowers are [just as they are] without mind. In the same way, the grasses and trees, as well as people [all] seem to exist but really do not. Thus, this phrase uses the example of the cypress tree. Ultimately, what is important [to understand] is that the Three Worlds [of past, present, and future and everything in them] are without mind. (Myōtei mondō 1993, 345–46)

As Myōshū and Yūtei finish their discussion of Rinzaï Zen and the content of the secret koan manuals of Daitokuji, Yūtei concludes:

In Buddhism, regardless of school, if one clarifies the one mind then they have attained the ultimate [principle]. That is to say that this one mind is one's true nature; this one mind is the Buddha; this one mind is hell, this one mind is heaven. Ultimately, to say that this one mind is nothingness means that the myriad things cease functioning. (Myōtei mondō 1993, 345–46)

Habian employs a reductionist approach to Zen that narrows its essence and ultimate goal to the attainment of the one mind (*isshin* 一心). This one mind is presented as the source of everything—the Buddha, hell, heaven—ostensibly the entire content of consciousness itself. He asserts that this very mind is at the center of the Zen experience, is equivalent to nothingness, and is then posited as leading to the nonfunctioning, or nonexistence of all [myriad] phenomena. As Habian would have it, just as this koan expresses the teaching of "nothingness," so does Zen, and by extension Buddhism as a whole.

Habian would have been uniquely qualified to treat the finer subtleties of koan as a genre due to his tenure as a Zen monk. It seems highly unlikely that a European Jesuit would have given the same attention to koan: they are highly subjective, nonsensical on the surface, and without discernible analogue in Christianity—traits which do not lend well to a considered and sustained treatment. Habian does not treat koan with wholesale dismissal, but in keeping with his pedagogic and polemical background, tackles them head on, examining the content, and interpreting them in their traditional context, while applying his



“Christian” criticism—namely, that they all point to nothingness and emptiness as their core teaching. Interestingly, it is these very points of doctrine that Habian takes as the highest teachings in *Hadaiusu*, teachings that he asserts Christians can never hope to understand.

In the spirit of adhering to equal-opportunity refutation, after Myōshū and Yūtei have finished their examination of the Rinzai school, Habian has them turn their attention to Sōtō Zen. Myōshū presents her understanding of Sōtō that she characterizes as having been founded on not falling into distinctions of existence nor nonexistence. She goes on to say that the doctrine of Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal 五位君臣<sup>21</sup> takes the middle way as its basis, although she asks Yūtei about how this should be understood. Yūtei affirms that in the Sōtō school the settling of the matter of existence and nonexistence is looked down upon. She then tackles the meaning of the Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal. The exchange runs:

Myōshū: Well, I've heard it's not true that Zen is simply [nothing more than] that. When Fayān<sup>22</sup> of Mt. Wuzu [Fifth Patriarch Mountain] was asked “What is the Sōtō school [like]?” he replied “No records of the ancestors [koan collections] are passed down in that school.”<sup>23</sup> In the daily conduct of the Sōtō school [the] settling [of koan cases] is disliked. Thus the school is based on not falling into the [distinction] of existence or nonexistence. Therefore, why do you only speak of nonexistence? This school's doctrine of the Fivefold Relation of Lord and Vassal is based on the middle [way]. How should one understand this?

Yūtei: Yes, that indeed is [the question]. In the Sōtō school the settling of existence and nonexistence is looked down upon. Anyway, from the point of view of Zen, this is a good thing. As the witty remark of the *zatō* goes, “one speaks of all kinds of different teachings, however, since presently the monks of the assembly are unenlightened to [the truth] that the myriad dharmas are one mind, they worship the moon, pray to the sun, make pilgrimages to Atago and Kiyomizu and are no different from an ignorant nun.

(*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 345–46)

The Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal is a metaphorical expression of the Five Ranks/Positions (*goi* 五位)<sup>24</sup> that was devised by one of the founding

21. See ZDJ 1: 301. For a treatment in English, see POWELL 1986.

22. Zen master Fayān 法演 (?–1104) belonged to the Yanchi 楊岐 line of the Linji school. He was a dharma disciple of Baiyun Daoduan 白雲道端.

23. This passage appears in the *Wuzu Fayān chanshi yulu* 五祖法演禪師語錄, published in 1095; for more on this work, see BKD 3: 265.

24. *I* (位) is also variously rendered as “position,” “group,” “rank,” and “stages.” When applied metaphorically to the lord and vassal, “relation” is perhaps the most felicitous expression for laying bare the intent of the framers of the doctrine.

Sõtō masters, Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (Jp. Tōzan Ryōkai; 807–869). The Five Ranks express the Zen dialectic of the two principles of the absolute *shō* 正 and the relative/apparent *hen* 偏. The other founding Sõtō master, Dongshan's disciple Caoshan Benji 曹山本寂 (Jp. Sōzan Honjaku; 840–901) was the first to formulate the Five Ranks in terms of the relationship between a lord 君 and vassal 臣. He took Dongshan's Five Ranks of 1. absolute *shō*; 2. relative/apparent *hen*; 3. the relative/apparent within the absolute 正中偏; 4 the absolute within the relative/apparent 偏中正; and 5. the unity attained 兼帶, expressed through the analogy of lord and vassal. The correspondences between these two are: the lord is in the absolute position 正位, the vassal is in the relative/apparent position 偏位, the vassal turns toward the lord 臣向君 and corresponds to the absolute in the relative/apparent, the lord sees the vassal 君視臣 and refers to the relative/apparent within the absolute, and the harmony of lord and vassal 君臣道合 is equivalent to unity attained.<sup>25</sup>

In Habian's reading of the Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal it is clear that he associates this central Sõtō teaching with the same nothingness or void that he criticized in the Daitokuji *missan* examined earlier. He writes:

Next, as for the doctrine termed "The Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal," originally it was based on the middle [way] and although it was a single principle that didn't require any elaboration, nobody understood what that middle [way] was. They only [tried] to avoid falling into the [dichotomy] of existence and nonexistence, which was taken as the true meaning of the middle [way]. This is even unworthy of discussion.... Nevertheless, a certain monk asked Caoshan about the inner meaning of the Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal, whereupon Caoshan responded by saying "The real position [relation] belongs to the Void, originally there is not a single thing..."

(*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 346)

While the Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal is a highly nuanced and subtle treatment of the dynamic relationship between the absolute and relative, Habian concludes its inner meaning to be void by means of citing Caoshan's assertion, which itself echoes the verse of the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng 慧能 (Jp. Enō; 638–713).<sup>26</sup> However, to conclude that the real essence of the Fivefold Rela-

25. The author would like to thank the anonymous reader for suggesting the interesting parallels of the lord/vassal analogy as found in the writings of St. Ignatius, particularly his *Exercitia Spiritualia* (The Spiritual Exercises). In the second week of the exercises, St. Ignatius discusses the earthly king who is used as a means to contemplate the Eternal King. He expands the analogy by introducing the knight who serves the king by reverence and obedience. For an English translation of the text, see MOTTOLA 1964, and for the example cited, see MOTTOLA 1964, 67–68.

26. The phrase "originally there is not a single thing" 本来無一物 is a well-known expression in Zen originally attributed to Huineng in his famous enlightenment verse. Maybe Habian is misappropriating Huineng's words to enlist him in his argument for Zen's nihilistic character.

tion between Lord and Vassal is simply void is to not account for the full meaning of “void” or “emptiness” in the Buddhist context. The central concept of the Five Ranks, which is the doctrinal basis of the Fivefold Relation between Lord and Vassal, is the equivalence/relationship between form and emptiness, ultimate and apparent reality, which inhere in each other. In his study on Dongshan, Powell summarizes the meaning of the relationship between the relative and absolute of the Five Ranks as follows: The First Rank suggests an experience of reality in which “form is emptiness”; the Second Rank expresses that the truth of emptiness can be manifested in phenomenal events, or that emptiness is form; the Third Rank focuses on the “real” or “emptiness” where reality results from an absorption in emptiness; the Fourth Rank focuses on phenomena, which are identified with emptiness; the Fifth Rank is a harmonious interaction in which neither form nor emptiness is emphasized, although both are fully present (POWELL 1986, 11–12). There is little doubt that this meaning of the Five Ranks as well as the relationship in Buddhism between form and emptiness/void would have been known to one with Habian’s learning in Buddhism. It is evident throughout the first fascicle of *Myōtei mondō* that Habian’s command of Buddhist ideas and history is anything but narrow, although as seen in the passage above, it appears at times to be partial.

As was mentioned earlier, one of the charges Habian brought against Buddhism was its lack of a belief in a god who rules above and dispenses judgment and punishment upon wrongdoers. Habian sees the doctrine of the Five Relations as showcasing the relativistic nature of Buddhism. He interprets this relativism as eventuating in a nihilistic void where existence and nonexistence, the relative and absolute, and good and bad are not clearly distinguished. Habian’s subtext is that this characteristic of Buddhism is in stark contrast to Christianity, where he sees rigid divisions between God and man, heaven and hell, sin and benediction, clearly spelled out. This last issue becomes the final straw for Habian, as can be seen in Yūtei’s assertion that in the Zen school when “[O]ne’s mind is empty all of itself, transgression and benediction have no host” and her following remark that “Buddhism is [truly] something beyond help” (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 348).

Toward the end of the section on the Zen school, he takes Japanese Buddhists to task for not adhering to a clear worldview and for taking a non-confrontational approach to things that he sees as showcasing the relativistic nature of Buddhist thought that posits the ultimate equality of everything. Habian has Yūtei say:

In Buddhism, one who does not settle the matter of nonexistence is somebody who does not know the Buddha or the Dharma. However, once one understands [that all things] are nonexistent, they think that everything is the same, so they become people with non-confrontational dispositions. These are the kind of people who say “yes yes” to everything: at one turn asserting that the next life exists and at another saying that it does not.

(*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 348)

Indeed, to Habian, Japanese Buddhists lack a clear worldview not only concerning this world, but also about the next one to come. He continues, “As for the next life, they say that something must probably remain, although I think that they sway to the west and the east like a branch of a willow tree all the while blowing with the wind, which is the best the Zen school has to offer” (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 348). Ultimately, it is the lack of belief in the afterlife that excludes Buddhism as a valid path to salvation from Habian’s Christian viewpoint. Salvation is not something that is attained in this life in the form of deliverance from suffering or transcendence of the human condition; rather it is something that only comes in the next life, for which the other power of an omnipotent God is necessary. Whereas the *summum bonum* in Buddhism is an ineffable enlightenment that causes one to break free of worldly fetters while still in this body, in the Christian worldview this body can be discarded for an eternal life of the spirit that resides with God. This basis in nothingness is the crux of Habian’s refutation of the Zen school. He sums up his approbation in the final line of the section which runs: “Nevertheless, seeing that Buddhism can be reduced to nonexistence in this manner, is it not truly an undesirable thing?” (*Myōtei mondō* 1993, 348).

#### *A Zen Response in Brief*

Undoubtedly the most pointed and personal refutation against *Myōtei mondō* comes from Habian himself in the form of *Hadaiusu*, in which he systematically refutes his former arguments advancing Christianity. As Paramore has pointed out, *Myōtei mondō* is a text aimed at conversion, and thus places primary emphasis on the one “carrot” that Christianity claims to offer—the reward of the afterlife (PARAMORE 2009, 18). According to Habian, this is the purpose of *anima rationalis* which yields us the ethical capacity for understanding this, and this is what continues into the afterlife. We witnessed how Habian viewed emptiness (*kū* 空) and nothingness (*mu* 無) as a nihilism contrary to natural law and the basis of a worldview that negates the possibility of an afterlife.<sup>27</sup> Post-apostate Habian, however, reverses his position 180 degrees on these issues. In discussing *mu* in *Hadaiusu*, Faiban states “...the word *mu* is inscrutable.... *Mu* therefore is one word which the likes of the adherents of Deus can never understand.... Let us proceed to *muchi yaku mutoku*. Take the expression literally: no knowledge and no quality. Now *muchi mutoku* is absolute truth” (ELISON 1973, 265). Habian then goes on to debunk the notion that the Deus of the Christians can be assigned positive attributes such as knowledge and qual-

27. For more on the issue of the presentation of the afterlife in *Myōtei mondō*, see PARAMORE 2008, 240–42.

ity, since where knowledge is present it is impossible to avoid the discrimination between love and hate, clearly human feelings. Rather, quoting Laozi 老子, he cites that the “invisible, inaudible, intangible” in their lack of discrimination are indicative of truth, and that the Pure Undisturbed Absolute is something that the Christians can never understand (ELISON 1973, 266).<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to trace the doctrinal dissonances that led to Habian’s rejection of Christianity and the return to his Buddhist roots. In fact, there has been a certain amount of debate regarding the motives and sincerity of his apostasy, with Anesaki and Elison citing contemporaneous political exigencies over personal beliefs (PARAMORE 2009, 44). As Paramore has noted, however, it may be more constructive and insightful to consider Habian, *Myōtei mondō*, *Hadaiusu*, and their relationship, not in terms of an apostasy (*tenkō* 転向) defined in binary terms or a Christian/anti-Christian paradigm, but rather within the context of the heterogeneous nature of contemporaneous Japanese thought (PARAMORE 2009, 45).

### Conclusion

It is true that Habian is only one person—albeit a central one—in the long and varied early history of Christianity in Japan; nonetheless, his life and works highlight the fundamental discrepancies in worldview advanced by Buddhists and Christians in early seventeenth-century Japan. Habian’s example is particularly revealing because he was a Zen monk who later became an active and enthusiastic convert, welcomed into the company of the Jesuits, only later to apostatize and denounce Christian beliefs. From his Christian period we have *Myōtei mondō*, a work unique in its systematic refutation of all the schools of Japanese Buddhism as well as Confucianism and Shinto. On the whole the work is an articulate and impassioned argument for the adoption of Christianity by Japanese because their native systems are unable to provide postmortem salvation. The Buddhists would have to wait fifteen years until Habian’s apostasy and his writing of *Hadaiusu* for their most effective and informed refutation of Christianity.

In reading through the first fascicle of *Myōtei mondō*, it becomes obvious that Habian is well versed in the various schools of Japanese Buddhism, although he is particularly informed on the Zen school. This is not surprising as it was his one-time affiliation, and he actively employs his considerable knowledge of Zen texts and doctrines in his arguments against his former school. The first fascicle takes up each school of Japanese Buddhism and refutes each one based

28. There is an important point worth bearing in mind regarding the relationship between *Myōtei mondō* and *Hadaiusu*. As Paramore points out, *Hadaiusu* was not a simple negation of *Myōtei mondō*, but rather much of the content of the former was unrelated to the latter. One must consider the political issues, and how the tide of power and its relation with Christianity was changing around the time that Habian abandoned his adopted religion (PARAMORE 2009, 50).

on Habian's understanding of normative Christian doctrine. The fundamental arguments against the Buddhist schools are the lack of belief in a creator God and afterlife, and the Buddhist basis in emptiness and nothingness. As these are particularly associated with Zen, in the first fascicle's "The Matter of the Zen School," these are individually taken up and expounded upon.

As a former Zen monk, Habian would naturally be especially informed on this school of Buddhism, and this is borne out by his command of Zen texts and his intimate knowledge of koan practice, in particular the secret koan manuals of Daitokuji. In Myōshū and Yūtei's dialogue, school matters little as the undercurrent of Zen, and Buddhism as a whole is repeatedly reduced to "emptiness" and "nothingness," making no mention of the subtleties of these doctrines. Ultimately, the subtleties of these doctrines matter little as Buddhism as a whole, most felicitously represented by Zen, offers no hope of salvation as it posits no omnipotent God and no immortal soul—prerequisites for Christian eschatological discourse. As Habian was working from the a priori conclusion that all of Buddhism was based on emptiness and nothingness, with no hope of an afterlife, this is what he sought in the Zen texts and concepts he examined, and to which he applied the polemical apparatus he acquired as a Zen monk.

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