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Separate Teaching and Separate Transmission

Kokan Shiren's Zen Polemics

This article investigates the thought of Kokan Shiren (1248–1346), a representative of the Five Mountains Zen institution. It argues that Kokan's understanding of Zen developed in the context of a polemic against and consequently under the influence of the classical schools of Japanese Buddhism, especially Tendai. It focuses on Kokan's interpretation of Zen's claim to represent a "separate transmission outside the teachings," his exposition of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, and finally his initiatory characterization of the Zen lineage, and shows that Kokan developed an exclusivistic vision of Zen that significantly differs from the universalist tendencies of his predecessors such as Eisai (1141–1215) or Enni (1202–1280). The article concludes that the development of early medieval Zen ideology needs to be positioned in the context of contemporary Japanese Buddhist doctrinal debates and cannot be seen as a simple continuation of Chinese precedents.

KEYWORDS: Kokan Shiren—Zen—separate transmission—Tendai—*Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*—Buddhist polemics

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TODAY THE medieval scholar-monk Kokan Shiren 虎関師鍊 (1248–1346), a member of the government-sponsored Five Mountains (*gosan* 五山) Zen institution, is known chiefly for compiling the first comprehensive collection of Japanese Buddhist hagiographies, the *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書. In recent years, scholars have rediscovered some of Kokan’s more buddhological efforts, especially his views on Zen and tantric Buddhism.¹ However, one major aspect of his work remains obscure despite its central importance for understanding not only Kokan’s thought but the nature of early medieval Zen Buddhism as a whole. Kokan was perhaps the most sophisticated and radical polemicist the medieval Zen school produced, focusing on an issue of central importance to the tradition’s self-understanding: What relationship does Zen, which claims to be a “separate transmission outside the teachings” (*kyōge betsuden* 教外別伝) have with the intricate formulations of Buddhist doctrine proposed by schools such as Tendai 天台, Kegon 華嚴, or Hossō 法相? This article shows that Kokan’s stance was as radical as it was uncompromising. He argued that Zen as the transmission of the Buddha’s inner self-realization stands entirely apart from all other forms of Buddhism.

What prompted Kokan to take such an extreme position was the necessity of responding to anti-Zen polemics that developed especially within the Tendai school. In confronting the newly arrived Song period Chan teachings, Tendai scholiasts fell back on a well-rehearsed strategy. The Tendai tradition contains sophisticated models for the classification of Buddhist teachings (*kyōhan* 教判).² Although often presented as part of the school’s doctrinal make-up, these systems are more appropriately considered meta-doctrinal in nature. They establish hermeneutical principles according to which different doctrinal positions can be

1. See MISAKI (1992, 319–52), YAMAGUCHI (1995), and CHIBA (1996; 2008) for a comprehensive discussion and critique of Kokan’s view on tantric Buddhism.

2. For a general overview of systems of doctrinal classification in Chinese Buddhism, see MUN (2006, especially xvi–xxv and Part 2, 103–219 for the relevant historical and doctrinal context of the basic Tiantai and Tendai classifications discussed below). Mun asserts that “prior to this [Mun’s] book, there is no comprehensive research on doctrinal classifications in Chinese Buddhism in a doctoral book or monograph in East Asia or the West” (xxv). There is, however, Bruno PETZOLD’s somewhat dated yet still insightful *The Classification of Buddhism* (1995). For one example of the traditional interpretation of the Tendai *kyōhan* system, see FUKUDA (1954, 96–124). Although systems of doctrinal classification reached their apex in East Asia, precursors can be found in Indian sources, for example the *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra* (KEENAN 2000, 2) and the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (BLUM 2013, xxi).

ranked and integrated within a common framework. The success of such a system depends on whether it is able to comprehensively “transcribe” a given position into its own terms and consequently subsume it.³ Some factions of medieval Japanese Tendai attempted to apply this approach to Zen. They argued that the separate transmission of Zen corresponds to the Tendai meta-doctrinal category of the “separate teachings” (*bekkyō* 別教), the third of the four types of teachings for teaching the Dharma (*kehō shikyō* 化法四教) into which the Tendai school classifies Buddhist doctrines.⁴ If this effort were successful, Zen would be but an inferior branch of Tendai.

In order to counteract Tendai attempts to absorb Zen and thus deny its status as an independent Buddhist lineage, Kokan argued that the term “separate” did not imply the separation of provisional from final Buddhist truths as in the interpretation of the Tendai meta-doctrinal Separate teaching, but rather Zen’s separation from limited, relativistic discourse.⁵ In order to support his position, Kokan attacked the theoretical and historiographical foundations of Tendai classificatory systems by claiming that they confuse the historical process of the formation of teachings with their doctrinal profundity. He further argued that the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, a text long associated with the Zen tradition, was taught by the unconditioned aspect of the Buddha (*dharmakāya*; *hosshin* 法身). To make this point Kokan, who was deeply interested in tantric Buddhism, seems to have adopted the tantric concept of esoteric (*mitsu* 密) versus exoteric (*ken* 顯) teachings.⁶ According to the most basic variant of this model, esoteric or tantric teachings are seen as representing the unadulterated meaning of Buddhism taught by the unconditioned aspect of the Buddha. Exoteric teachings, on the other hand, are characterized as a more superficial and abbreviated form taught

3. MUN postulates two different modes of doctrinal classification in Chinese Buddhism, namely the ecumenical and the sectarian (2006, xxi). Both modes seek to comprehensively classify the various Buddhist teachings, but whereas the former stresses their fundamental equality, the latter seeks to order them hierarchically for sectarian purposes (173). Mun characterizes the Tiantai system of doctrinal classification as a sectarian one, even calling its purported author, Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597), a “Lotus [*sutra*] sectarianist” (124). KAN’NO Hiroshi (2000) disputes this characterization by drawing attention to the different perspectives Zhiyi employs in discussing Mahāyāna teachings. Be this as it may, in their confrontation with the Zen teachings, medieval Japanese Tendai masters definitely did use systems of doctrinal classification in what Mun refers to as a sectarian manner, and I consequently stress this aspect in the present article.

4. On the “separate teachings,” see FUKUDA (1954, 187–98). The other three are the Tripitaka (*sanzō* 三藏), shared (*tsūkyō* 通教), and perfect (*engyō* 円教) teachings.

5. As will become clear below, for Kokan *all* forms of discourse, *qua* discourse among deluded beings, are relative and limited.

6. On the vexing question of the relationship between “esoteric” Buddhism and “tantra,” see ORZECZ, PAYNE, and SØRENSEN (2011). For the purposes of this article I am using the two terms interchangeably.

by lesser aspects of the Buddha according to beings' capacities.⁷ Kokan claimed that the only two valid Buddhist traditions are Zen and the tantric teachings, since only these two have a direct connection with the unconditioned Buddha.

This alignment of Zen with the tantric teachings appears to position Kokan in continuity with the practice of combining the new Zen teachings with the study of Shingon and Tendai tantra. The precedent for this was set by early Japanese Zen pioneers such as Eisai 栄西 (alt. Yōsai, 1141–1215) or Enni 円爾 (1202–1280). This similarity, however, is deceptive and revolves around the exact understanding of the term “Zen.” Kokan was Enni's second generation successor in the Shōichi 正一 lineage of Rinzai Zen, and a comparison of their respective stances on this issue is instructive. Enni's thought had been interpreted as representing the “unity of Zen and the teachings” (*zenkyō icchi* 禪教一致) paradigm until recent scholarship revealed that Enni had a decidedly more complex understanding of the relationship between Zen and the doctrinal schools.⁸ In his *Jisshū yōdō ki* 十宗要道記, Enni presents his own version of a classification of teachings. He surveys the “ten schools” of Japanese Buddhism and ranks them according to their soteriological efficacy and doctrinal profundity.⁹ In the section on Zen, which he calls the “Buddha mind school” (*busshin shū* 仏心宗), Enni states that Zen is the essence (*tai* 体) and support (*shoe* 所依) of both exoteric and esoteric teachings and has neither gate (*mon* 門) nor teaching (*hō* 法) of its own (MURAKAMI 1912,

7. The exact relationship between esoteric and exoteric teachings is one of the perennial problems of Japanese tantric dogmatics, and one the present article cannot enter into. The skeletal definition offered here is based on the introductory section of Kūkai's *Ben kenmitsu nikyō ron* 弁顯密二教論, which provides the most salient context for understanding Kokan's position (see below). On the construction of the “esoteric” in Kūkai, see ABE (1999, 204–19).

8. For a representative example of the traditional depiction of Enni, see DUMOULIN (2005, 24–29). For a more nuanced discussion of Enni's views, see KATŌ (2006) and SHIMADA (2006). Katō focuses on Enni's understanding of “Zen,” whereas Shimada concentrates on the relationship of esoteric teachings and “Zen.”

9. The *Jisshū yōdō ki* has been published in MURAKAMI (1912). For recent scholarship on this text, see SUEKI (1998, 80–84) and BIELEFELDT (1993). The ten schools are the Ritsu 律, Kusha 俱舍, Jōjitsu 成実, Hossō, Sanron 三論, Kegon, Tendai, Shingon, Pure Land, and Zen schools. Enni groups them into the three “gates” of precepts (*ritsumon* 律門), teachings (*kyōmon* 教門), and meditation (*zenmon* 禪門). The precept gate is comprised of the Ritsu school. The teaching gate has five subdivisions, the small vehicle (*shōjō* 小乘), containing Kusha and Jōjitsu, the provisional great vehicle (*gon daijō* 權大乘), containing Hossō and Sanron, the true great vehicle (*jitsu daijō* 實大乘), containing Tendai and Kegon, and the Tantric and Pure Land teachings representing their own categories. Finally, the meditation gate refers to the Zen school, which can be further divided into the schools of “sudden realization and gradual practice” (*tongo zenshu* 頓悟漸修) and “sudden realization and sudden practice” (*tongo tonshu* 頓悟頓修). Only a single fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Jisshū yōdō ki* is known. As the text is not mentioned in Enni's hagiographies, there remains some doubt as to whether it is an authentic work. However, the majority of scholars accept it as such, and I follow their opinion here.

17).¹⁰ This implies that for Enni “Zen” was not a separate tradition or teaching but rather the essence of all Buddhism. As will be shown in detail below, this is no longer the case in Kokan’s thought. For Kokan, Zen is a historically and physically discrete lineage that exclusively transmits the Buddha’s awakening in an initiatory manner. Even in the case of tantric Buddhism, which Kokan considered the only other authentic form of Buddhism, its relationship with Zen is characterized not by unity but rather separation. Kokan maintained that the tantric teachings are inferior to Zen in that they rely on the continued spiritual activity of the Buddhas rather than the “body-to-body transmission” provided by the Zen lineage.

Kokan’s example raises important questions regarding the way in which the development of Japanese Zen is understood. The “standard model” for interpreting early medieval Zen assumes the combinatory practice of Zen and the tantric teachings (*zenmitsu kenshū* 禪密兼修) espoused by Eisai or Enni to be a more or less conscious ruse. These pioneers are depicted as offering their syncretistic approach as a compromise in order to prepare the ground for the eventual establishment of an exclusivistic “pure Zen” (*junsuizen* 純粹禪 or *junzen* 純禪), a process in which Chinese émigré masters are supposed to have played an important role.¹¹ This line of thought not only implies that early proponents of Zen already understood it as an exclusive tradition or lineage but also that this understanding was native to Zen itself. However, the brief discussion of the *Jisshū yōdō ki* above shows that Enni positioned Zen in the context of the totality of the Buddhist tradition, and a similar point can be made regarding Eisai (DÖLL 2012, 70). Furthermore, as Steffen DÖLL (2010) has argued, the contribution of Chinese Chan masters to the formation of a so-called “pure” Zen, and even their interest in making such a contribution, has been vastly overstated.¹² Finally, Song period Chan itself was far from a homogenous movement but rather a forest containing “an array of species, phenotypes, and niche configurations that were to be transplanted and evolve across East Asia” (McRAE 2003, 122). It is thus unlikely that an exclusivistic understanding of the Zen lineage emerged solely from internal developments.¹³ Rather, Kokan’s formulation of such an understanding in the

10. I here use the term “school” as in “school of thought.”

11. See for example IMAEDA (1970, 73–74), and TAKEUCHI (1976, 129–40), and for a more recent example IBUKI (2001, 190–91).

12. The *Recorded Sayings* (*goroku* 語録) of Chinese émigré monks contain passages that suggest that these masters understood the difference between Zen and the teachings to revolve around matters of teaching methodology rather than substance. See for example *Jikusen oshō goroku* 竺僊和尚語錄 (T 80.393c).

13. The problem of an exclusivistic understanding of the Zen lineage should not be confused with the question of whether Zen monks ever exclusively practiced “Zen.” After all, even Kokan himself continued to perform tantric rituals throughout his life.

context of a polemics against Tendai suggests that it arose from inter-sectarian strife.¹⁴ We consequently need to consider the influence the classical schools of Japanese Buddhism have exerted on how medieval Zen monks' conceptions of their own tradition changed. In other words, Zen did not evolve merely because of supposed inner *desiderata* such as the imperative to reestablish an original but lost purity, but in creative response to its concrete historical circumstances.

The present article attempts to extend the approach to Chan historiography proposed by John McRAE in *Seeing Through Zen* (2003) to early medieval Japanese Zen. McRae observes that the notion of Chan and Zen as lineages embodied in a family-tree style genealogy represents a powerful ideological tool to assert the unity of these traditions and to affect their homogenization, both internally and with reference to each other.¹⁵ Instead, he offers an account of Chan history based on a model of different phases, with each phase taken to be characterized by "a style or configuration of religious activity known through a variety of sources." Such a model, McRAE emphasizes, brings into focus the "qualitative differences" between phases along a "chronological axis," thus generating "meaningful distinctions" rather than "asserting unbroken continuity" (2003, 12). In order to demonstrate that Kokan's thought demarcates a point at which such a "meaningful distinction" emerged in the history of Japanese Zen, this article will proceed in three steps. First, it will introduce the background of Kokan's polemics, specifically in relation to Tendai dogmatics. Second, it will present an outline of the major characteristics of these polemics. And finally, it will discuss Kokan's own understanding of the nature of the Zen tradition as expressed in his commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and his characterization of lineage.

14. This is not to say that Kokan's position constituted a complete break with previous conceptions of the relationship between Zen and other forms of Buddhism. For example, the notion that Zen represents the simple verification of the Buddha's own awakening beyond all teachings can also be found in Qisong's 契嵩 (1007–1072) *Chuanfa zhengzong lun* 伝法正宗論 (T 51, 780b), which has been quoted in Mushō Jōshō's 無象靜照 (1234–1306) *Kōzen ki* 興禪記 (TAMAMURA 1972, vol. 6, 625). What is novel in Kokan is his redefinition of this concept to defend Zen against specific Tendai criticisms and how this undertaking transformed it in ways no longer compatible with its original intent. Thus Qisong and Jōshō's understanding of inner verification and how it relates to doctrinal discourse could still be accommodated within paradigms that invoke the *topos* of "essence/functioning" (*taiyū* 体用) or the metaphor of "the finger pointing at the moon." Kokan's interpretation, on the other hand, resists any such attempt. IMAEDA Aishin has suggested that the *Kōzen ki* (as well as Eisai's *Kōzen gokoku ron* 興禪護国論 and *Nihon Buppō chūkō ganmon* 日本仏法中興願文) are early modern forgeries (1985). While Imaeda does rightly point out several textual incongruities in the *Kōzen ki*, these do not appear to provide sufficient grounds for denying its medieval origins outright.

15. As the coinage of phrases such as "Chan/Zen" or "Kōan Chan" demonstrates, this observation holds true not only of traditional accounts but also of much scholarship, even if conducted in a critical vein. See for example FAURE (1991, 17, 26).

Tendai Criticisms of Early Zen

Kokan developed his notion of the superiority of the Zen tradition in answer to criticisms leveled at the new movement by Tendai scholiasts. Taking aim at early Zen representatives such as Eisan and Enni, these Tendai thinkers argued that Zen's claim to directly transmit the inner awakening of the Buddha without reliance on clearly formulated doctrines makes it an inferior teaching unable to integrate theory and practice. In support of this position, they cited the Zen school's association with the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, a text that in Song-period Tiantai had come to be understood as having a special affinity with the separate teaching. The following sections will explore the ways in which Kokan sought to counter these attacks by undermining the Tendai classification of both the Zen tradition and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. The present section will discuss the technicalities of the Tendai criticisms of early Zen in order to introduce the broader context within which Kokan deployed his arguments.

The following question opening Kokan's *Gebetsu ron* 外別論 (alt. *Gaibetsu ron*), a short text containing the substance of his polemical strategy, clearly spells out the Tendai criticism of Zen as a separate teaching:

The gate of [your Zen] school is a "separate transmission outside the teachings." Clearly this is not the perfect teaching (*engyō* 円教). Simply speaking, the perfect teaching, containing the ten thousand *dharma*s, fuses the differentiating marks (*shosō* 諸相). [There is not] one color or one smell that is not the Middle Way (*chūdō* 中道). If there is deviation (*kyakui* 隔異), [one] falls into the separate teaching. Thus how could this [Zen school] be called the highest vehicle (*saijō jō* 最上乘)? (GBZ 1: 286)

Kokan does not identify the questioner apart from referring to him as a "lecturer" (*kōsha* 講者; GBZ 1: 286). However, the question's terminology suggests that this anonymous inquiry comes from the quarters of the Tendai school. Kokan's interlocutor takes umbrage at the idea that Zen should be considered the most exalted form of Buddhism while depicting itself as "separate transmission outside the teachings." This very self-understanding, he suggests, relegates the Zen tradition to the status of a separate, rather than a perfect teaching. This claim needs to be explored in more detail.

ZEN AND THE TENDAI CLASSIFICATIONS OF TEACHINGS

The separate and perfect teachings referred to in the opening of the *Gebetsu ron* are part of the Tendai school's conceptual network for the classification of Buddhist teachings, and modern scholars have debated and disagreed on the

significance of these classifications.¹⁶ The “five periods and eight teachings” classification analyzes Buddhist doctrines in a threefold manner, that is, chronologically, pedagogically, and doctrinally. The five periods chronologically divide the Buddha’s teaching career into five phases. These are: 1. the *Avatamsaka* period (*kegon ji* 華嚴時), during which the Buddha preached the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* immediately following his enlightenment; 2. the Deer Park period (*rokuon ji* 鹿苑時), during which the sutras of the so-called “lesser vehicle” (*shōjō* 小乘) were preached; 3. the *Vaipulya* period (*hōdō ji* 方等時), which saw the preaching of the basic Mahāyāna sutras; 4. the *Prajñāpāramitā* period (*hannya ji* 般若時) during which the Mahāyāna sutras on emptiness were preached; and finally 5. the Lotus period (*hokke ji* 法華時), during which the Buddha’s teaching culminated in the exposition of the *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa Sūtras*.

The eight teachings can further be subdivided into two sets of four teachings each. The first set classifies Buddhist teachings according to how they are taught and affect people (*kegi* 化儀). These are: 1. the sudden (*ton* 頓), in which the totality of Buddhist truth is revealed at once; 2. the gradual (*zen* 漸), where Buddhist truth is revealed progressively; 3. the secretive (*himitsu* 秘密), in which different audience members benefit from the same sermon according to their respective proclivities while being unaware of each other; and finally 4. the indeterminate (*fujō* 不定), in which different audience members benefit from the same sermon according to their respective proclivities while being aware of each other.¹⁷

16. The classificatory system of Tiantai and Tendai is nowadays most commonly discussed under the rubric of the “five periods and eight teachings” (*goji hakkyō* 五時八教), a custom Sekiguchi Shindai has severely criticized. Noting that the phrase “five periods and eight teachings” is used nowhere in the oeuvre of either Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597), the founder of Chinese Tiantai or, with a single, doubtful exception, Saichō 最澄 (767–822), the founder of Japanese Tendai, Sekiguchi calls into question the orthodoxy of this classification system. He draws attention to the reliance on Chegwan’s 諦觀 (fl. tenth century) *Cheontae sago ui* 天台四教儀 for use as an introductory text in order to account for the prominence of what he considers a misleading and even harmful presentation of Tiantai and Tendai thought (SEKIGUCHI 1972). Sekiguchi’s position in turn was attacked by Satō Tetsuei and others. Both sides agree that the phrase “five periods and eight teachings” cannot be found in Zhiyi’s works. The controversy revolves around, first, the question of whether this is a systematization faithful to Zhiyi’s own understanding or a distortion of it and, second, sectarian versus academic approaches in the study of Tiantai and Tendai. Both these problems seem to hinge on which, if any, of Zhiyi’s works are accepted as normative. See SEKIGUCHI (1978) for most major contributions to this debate. For a discussion of the *Cheontae sago ui* in the light of Sekiguchi’s argument, see CHAPPELL (1976; 2013b). Given Sekiguchi’s reservations and the present article’s focus on the interpretation of the “separate” in Kokan’s polemics, the following outline should not be understood as taking a stance on questions concerning its orthodoxy or inner coherence. It is intended as but a convenient way of introducing a number of terms and categories important to the further investigation of Kokan’s polemics.

17. These latter two categories can also be understood as modes of the former two. See for example Zhiyi’s *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義 (T 33. 683c–684a).

The second set classifies Buddhist teachings according to their doctrinal content (*kehō* 化法), and it is here that we find the separate and perfect teachings. These four types of teachings can be divided into the mundane (*kainai* 界内) and the supra-mundane (*kaige* 界外). The mundane teachings focus on emptiness. They are the Tripiṭaka teaching of the small vehicle, which teaches the emptiness or insubstantiality of the person (*ninkū* 人空), and the shared teaching of both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna, which teaches the emptiness of both persons and dharmas (*hōkū* 法空). The two classes of supra-mundane teachings, the separate and the perfect teachings, both focus on the Middle Way. What differentiates them from each other is their understanding of how the Middle Way, or true aspect, of things relates to their insubstantial and transitory aspects. The separate teaching establishes a distinction (*kyakuryaku* 隔歷) between them, so that insubstantiality and transience serve as stepping-stones to be abandoned once the true aspect is realized.¹⁸ According to the perfect teaching, however, each and every thing in its very insubstantiality and transience represents the totality of the Middle Way.¹⁹

The rise of Zen forced upon Tendai scholiasts the necessity of finding ways in which to integrate the new tradition into the above classificatory system, preferably on a level well beneath their own perfect teachings. In order to do so, Tendai thinkers such as Kokan's interlocutor seized upon classic Zen slogans such as "separate transmission" and interpreted them as indicators of Zen's inferior status. Eisai's *Kōzen gokoku ron*, for example, offers the following account of what "separate transmission" implied.

That is to say, the Zen school is "not establishing words and letters (*furyū monji* 不立文字), a separate transmission apart from the teachings." It does not languish in the words of the teachings but merely transmits the heart/mind. It separates from words and letters and forgets language. It directly points at the heart/mind's source (*shingen* 心源) and by this means attains Buddhahood. (T 80.10c)

In other words, by its own admission the Zen tradition does not establish intricate systems of doctrine, but bypasses them in order to directly realize the nature of mind. In the eyes of Tendai scholastics, this abolishment of language

18. Guanding 灌頂 (561–632; also known as Zhang'an 章安), the chronicler of many of Zhiyi's works, in his commentary on Zhiyi's exposition included in the latter's *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi*, uses the following metaphor to characterize the separate teaching: "Leaving the two extremes [of one-sided being and one-sided emptiness] far behind, it is like the moon apart from the clouds" (T 1716, 33.682c). This resonates rather well with the image of "the finger pointing at the moon" as a simile for Zen's approach to language.

19. In more technically correct terminology, the separate teaching establishes the "middle" (*chū* 中) over and above the "provisional" (*ke* 仮) and "emptiness" (*kū* 空) truths, whereas the perfect teaching sees these three as completely integrated (*ennyū* 円融) with each other. This outline is based on FUKUDA (1954, 95–207) and ŌKUBO (2001, 59–64). See also SWANSON (1989, 1–18).

resembles the separate teaching's abolishment of the transitory and insubstantial aspects of things in order to gain access to their true aspect. Both Zen and the separate teaching thus seek truth beyond the veil of the word/world. In this sense, the separate transmission can be seen as a separate teaching.

THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF THE
SEPARATE TRANSMISSION/TEACHING CONTROVERSY

This criticism of the Zen tradition as a separate teaching was not a straw man of Kokan's own fashioning, but can be traced to the reception of Enni's Zen teachings in Tendai circles. The *Keiran jūyō shū* 溪嵐拾葉集 by Kōshū 光宗 (1276–1350), an eclectic assemblage of early fourteenth-century Tendai lore, makes a case in point. Its tenth fascicle contains the following teaching attributed to Enni:

Furthermore, in the gate [of the Zen] school (*shūmon* 宗門) there are the two tenets of the school's principle (*shūshi* 宗旨) and the school's manner (*shūfū* 宗風). In the school's principle, it is the principle that not even the thousand sages transmit the one road of going beyond (*kōjō* 向上; that is, facing upwards toward Buddhahood?), that the ancestral master [Bodhidharma] has not yet come from the west. There cannot be the tenet of comparing the various teachings (*shokyō taiben no gi* 諸教对弁'義). When it comes to the school's manner, there is talk of "transcending the various teachings," of "the buddhas and patriarchs not transmitting." All these are the Dharma gate of stooping low (*kōge* 向下; that is, to help others). The indicated principle of the school (*shosen shūshi* 所詮宗旨) is "going beyond," the manner of the school is "stooping low."

(T 76.542b)

Whether this passage accurately reports Enni's words or not of course is open to doubt, but also beside the point for our present purpose which concerns the reception of Enni's teachings in Tendai scholastic circles. The passage introduces the two categories of the Zen school's "principle" and "manner." The school's "principle" is what "not even the thousand sages transmit," in other words what is directly realized beyond words and concepts and transcends doctrinal discourses. The school's "manner," on the other hand, is talk such as "what not even the thousand sages transmit" or "transcending the various doctrinal discourses." In short, "principle" and "manner" relate to each other like signified and signifier, with the former associated with one's own awakening and the latter with instructing others.

The *Keiran jūyō shū* presents the following criticism of Enni, homing in on the question of Zen "transcending" (*chōka* 超過) the teachings.

Jōmyō Hōin says: "To speak like this of 'going beyond' and such, and to say that it transcends the various teachings is the Dharma gate of the separate teaching. It should be understood that in this there is merely principle (*ri* 理) and no

entailment of the words of the various teachings. Again, the *Daruma shaku* 達摩釈 says: "Taking up the essentials, the passage [concerning] the penetration of principle (*shūtsū* 宗通) and the penetration of articulation (*settsū* 說通) from the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* is the gate of the teaching (*kyōmon* 教門)."²⁰ A certain interpretation (*ichigi* 一義) says: "It [that is, the *Vaipulya* class of sutras] begins after the *Avataṃsaka* and ends with the *Prajñāpāramitā*."²¹ Because the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* belongs to the separate teaching and is a sutra of the *Vaipulya* class." (T 76.542bc)

The author's strategy in this passage is twofold. First, he points out that the notion of Zen "transcending" the teachings is similar to the separate teaching's understanding of the true aspect of things as separate from their insubstantiality and transience. On this point he is in accord with the position taken by Kokan's questioner in the *Gebetsu ron*. And second, the four fascicle *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* translated by Guṇabhadra (394–468) is adduced as scriptural support for this interpretation.

The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* has long been associated with the Zen school and specifically its legendary founder, Bodhidharma (ISHII 2001). The *Keiran jūyō shū* cites a commentary on this text to the effect that the "penetration of principle" and the "penetration of articulation," which are mentioned only in the four fascicle edition of the sutra, are the most important teachings of this text. To summarize this passage, the Buddha instructs the Bodhisattva Mahāmāti that there are two ways of penetrating the Dharma (*hōtsū* 法通). The first is the "penetration of articulation." This is to preach the various sutras according to the faculties of sentient beings. The second is "penetration of principle." This means to purify one's mind and awaken for oneself. The Buddha further explains that the "penetration of articulation" is to be given to "children and fools" (*dōmō* 童蒙), while the "penetration of principle" is for "practitioners" (*shūgyōsha* 修行者; T 16.503a). In short, the two penetrations refer to a Bodhisattva's own practice and the discourses employed to guide others, with the former given precedence.

In the *Keiran jūyō shū* passage, this separation of practice from discourse is taken to indicate that the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* belongs to the separate teaching. In support of this position, Zhanran's *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* is cited as "a certain interpretation." The quote merely gives a definition of the *Vaipulya* class of sutra, which according to the five periods scheme were preached after the Kegon and before the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and to which the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* belongs (FUKUDA 1954, 104). Sutras of this class are not determined in content and can

20. It is unclear to which text *Daruma shaku* refers. Perhaps this is the lost *Lengqie jing shu* 楞伽經疏 attributed to Bodhidharma. See IBUKI (1998; 1999).

21. This is a quote from Zhanran's 湛然 (711–782) *Fahua xuanyi shiqian* 法華玄義積籤 (T 33.819b).

contain elements from more than one or even each of the four types of teaching the Dharma (ŌKUBO 2001, 59). According to Zhanran's *Zhiguan fuxing zhuan hongjue* 止觀輔行伝弘決, the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* has a special affinity with the shared and separate teachings (T 46.424b), but later Tiantai commentators such as the Song period scholastic Siming Zhili 四明知礼 (960–1028) saw it as belonging mainly to the separate teaching (*Siming zunzhe jiaoxing lu* 四明尊者教行録, T 46.897a). This shift seems to be reflected in the *Keiran jūyō shū*, which invokes the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* as proof for classifying Zen as a separate teaching.

The ninth fascicle of the *Keiran jūyō shū* contains a similar criticism of the Zen tradition. Here, too, Zen is considered a separate teaching, if for slightly different reasons. Zen, this section argues, uses *kōan* 公案 in order to interrupt thought. This is likened to the Tendai practice of contemplating the four movements and four natures (*shiun shishō kan* 四運四性觀) of thought in order to subdue it.²² As scriptural proof for this position, the *Greater Prajñāparāmitā Sūtra*, among others, is adduced to the effect that “in the contemplation of true Thusness (*shinnyo* 真如) of the separate teaching, [there is] only principle (*ri* 理), the tenet of all dharmas (*shohō no gi* 諸法義) is not established” (T 76.531a). This strongly recalls the tenth fascicle's criticism of Enni discussed above.

What differentiates the appraisal of the Zen school found in the ninth fascicle from the one given in the tenth is that, whereas the latter is aimed directly at Enni, the former explicitly exempts Enni from its criticism. In the ninth fascicle, it is said that the highest teaching of the Zen school does not employ *kōan* but directly realizes awakening. Doing so, however, the Zen school lacks the means to guide sentient beings because it locks itself into the “perceptual realm of merely Buddha and Buddha [perceiving each other].” In contrast to his Zen peers, Enni is lauded for establishing the principle of responding to sentient beings' inclinations (*ki* 機) even on the highest level of Zen teachings, which puts him on par with the Tendai and Shingon traditions (T 76.531).²³

The ninth and tenth fascicles of the *Keiran jūyō shū* make it clear that the interpretation of Zen's separate transmission as a separate teaching was not uncommon in early fourteenth-century Tendai circles. In fact, both passages are attributed to the important Tendai scholiast Jōmyō 靜明 (d. 1286). Kokan's *Genkō shakusho* depicts Jōmyō as almost a convert to the Zen cause and as having had

22. The four movements of thought are the not-yet-arisen, the about-to-arise, the arisen, and the after- (or “ended”) thought. The four natures are the tetralemma of the nature of arising from oneself, from another, from both, and from neither. Contemplating these two sets, one is to realize that thought fundamentally is uncaused and does not arise. For details on these four phases of thought, see Zhiyi's *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀, T 46.15b20–16b9; SWANSON (2018, vol. 1, 344–53).

23. However, even while acknowledging Enni's superiority over his fellow Zen masters, the text is careful to portray his teaching as equal to Tendai and Shingon only insofar as it is derivative from them.

a profound enlightenment experience under Enni's guidance (FUJITA 2011, 148). Even if this account likely misrepresents the two men's relationship in Enni's favor, Jōmyō's interest in Zen teachings is evident from the collection of his oral transmissions known as the *Kyōjūichi kuketsu* 門十一口決 (alt. *Awataguchi kuketsu* 粟田口口決). The evaluation of Zen Jōmyō offers in this work under the heading "Concerning the Zen and Tendai schools" (*Zenshū Tendaishū no koto* 禪宗天台宗'事) has great affinities with the two passages from the *Keiran jūyō shū* discussed above. As in the *Keiran jūyō shū*, the "no thought" (*munen* 無念) propagated by the Zen school is likened to the contemplation of the four natures of thought of the Tendai school (ZTZ, *kuketsu* 1: 163a). Furthermore, Jōmyō criticizes Zen for simply pointing at the "originally unproduced" (*honpushō* 本不生) without establishing teachings and consequently lacking the means to guide beings with less than excellent capabilities, a state of affairs for which he uses the very phrase "the perceptual realm of merely Buddha and Buddha [perceiving each other]" also found in the *Keiran jūyō shū* (ZTZ, *kuketsu* 1: 162b).

The *Keiran jūyō shū* is a notoriously unreliable source, and its attribution to Jōmyō of the criticism of Zen discussed above should be treated with caution. However, there are close affinities between the *Keiran jūyō shū*'s understanding of Zen and the one found in Jōmyō's *Kyōjūichi kuketsu*, even if the latter text does not explicitly invoke the separate teaching in its discussion of Zen.²⁴ It is thus likely that the "separate transmission as separate teaching" argument seen in the *Keiran jūyō shū* originated either with Jōmyō himself or with someone closely associated with him.²⁵

Kokan's Zen Polemics I: Against the Separate Teaching

It is the interpretation of Zen as a separate teaching that was the major target of Kokan's polemics in the *Gebetsu ron*. This interpretation is based on the notion that Zen as "separate transmission outside the teachings" separates awakening from discourse and in doing so resembles the Tendai meta-doctrinal category of the separate teaching, which separates the Middle Way from the transient and insubstantial aspect of things.

One of the difficulties Kokan faced in countering the scholastic onslaught against Zen was that his Tendai rivals actually had good reasons for interpreting Zen as a "separate teaching." For example, in his *Shōichi kokushi kana hōgo*

24. Jōmyō does, however, use the notion of separate teaching in criticizing Enni's understanding of Thusness (ZTZ, *kuketsu* 1: 171–72). See the discussion in LICHA (2017).

25. For example, in some streams of Tendai oral transmission materials originating from within the Eshin 恵心 faction to which Jōmyō belonged, as well as in sources discussing Zen associated with the Shingon and Nichiren traditions, Enni's Zen, or at least what was thought of as Enni's Zen, became stereotyped. See LICHA (2015; 2017).

正一國師假名法語, Enni makes the following point regarding the question of how the practice of Zen helps one to prepare for death.²⁶

If a single thought occurs,²⁷ there is life and death. When there is no mind, there is no body being born, when there is no thought, there is no mind to perish, when there is no thought, no mind, there is no birth and perishing at all... Stopping the mind that thinks “my body,” one turns to the realm in which from the beginning there is not a single thing. (LEE 2007, 19)

Freedom from death can be found by abandoning deluded thought and dwelling in the realm of “no mind” (*mushin* 無心), in which not a single phenomenon, and thus no death, can be found. Reading expositions of Zen such as this one from a Tendai meta-doctrinal point of view, it is not difficult to arrive at the conclusion that one is dealing with a separate teaching, just as Jōmyō did when admonishing Zen for its propagation of “no thought.”²⁸ Consequently, Kokan could not claim that Tendai scholiasts simply misrepresented or misunderstood the Zen teachings. Rather, he had to challenge the very applicability of Tendai meta-doctrinal categories to Zen. This strategy is obvious in the answer Kokan offers to the question opening his *Gebetsu ron*.

Kokan’s interlocutor denied that Zen is the highest form of Buddhism because its claim to be a “separate transmission” violated the precept of the Middle way to embrace all *dharmas* and unify all differentiating characteristics. Kokan responds as follows, undermining his interlocutor’s argument by shifting the semantic context.

You only know the small separate (*shōbetsu* 小別) and do not yet know the great separate (*daibetsu* 大別). I shall now explain them in detail. Will you listen? It is the Tathāgata’s responding to the world in order to instruct deluded beings. However, deluded beings are in the darkness of ignorance and cannot directly perceive the nature of the mind. Therefore, the Tathāgata reveals words and instructs them. These are the various sutras. Yet again, with those of superior roots and great capabilities, the Tathāgata does not bother with words and there is only [wordless] verification. This verification is what is called transmission. In the gate of my school, this is transmitting the mind with the mind

26. For a basic discussion of Enni’s *Kana hōgo*, see BIELEFELDT (1992).

27. The text gives *isshin* 一心. However, as Enni elsewhere uses *isshin* as a near-synonym for *busshin* 仏心, I have chosen to read *nen* 念 instead of *shin*.

28. Aversion to the notion that awakening is bound to some realm of “no mind and no-thing” runs deep in Tiantai and Tendai thought. Already Zhiyi in the *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* criticizes as one-sided the following statement attributed to Sengzhao 僧肇 (384–414?): “Names do not have potency in calling out things. Things do not have reality in answering to names. No names, no things, names and things, where could they exist?” (T 33.648; for the original, differently phrased passage in the *Zhaolun* 肇論, see T 45.152c).

(*ishin denshin* 以心伝心).²⁹ For this reason the Tathāgata said to Mahākāśyapa, “I have the treasury of the eye of the true Dharma, the subtle mind of nirvana, and transmit them to Mahākāśyapa.” How could this be compared to the transmission of the various sutras? In the first place, the various sutras are of the “small separate.” The gate of the [Zen] school is of the “great separate.” How could this be within the realm of the “perfect” and “separate” of which you speak? For this reason, the Buddha spoke of “separate transmission outside the teachings.” This “outside separate” (*betsuge* 別外), how could it be the “outside” of “outside” and “inside”? How could it be the “separate” of “shared” and “separate”?... This is the “perfect” I speak of. It is not the “perfect” you speak of. This is the “separate” I speak of. It is not the “separate” you speak of.

(GBZ 1: 286–87)

Kokan claims that the term “separate” refers to Zen being “outside” the framework of Buddhist doctrine. Put differently, Kokan argues that when the lecturer interprets the separate transmission of Zen as a separate teaching, he is committing a category mistake by treating Zen as if it were merely one among the Buddhist teachings. Not so, Kokan insists. Zen is nothing but the verification of awakening itself, and as such has nothing to do with teachings. This is a polemical inversion of the structure of the Tendai critique of Zen as a separate teaching. As we have seen, this criticism is based on the idea that Zen is a separate teaching by virtue of separating awakening from doctrinal discourse. Instead of disputing Zen’s abandonment of “words and letters,” Kokan boldly asserts that it is precisely *because* Zen abandons all relative discourse, including such categories as “separation” and “integration,” that it is the superior “perfect” teaching.

As pointed out in the opening section, this represents a significant departure from Enni, who saw Zen as the essence of Buddhism and the teachings as the gates through which to enter into it. To borrow an image from the *Zong jing lu* 宗鏡錄, a text Enni treasured, Zen is the Buddha’s mind that the teachings convey in words (T 48.418b).³⁰ For Kokan, Zen no longer is this inner living meaning of the teachings. Rather, it differs from them absolutely and categorically, defying the very question of how the two might relate.³¹

29. This phrase is commonly translated as “transmitting from mind to mind.” However, the annotation of the *Gebetsu ron* suggests that the character 以 should be read in the instrumentalive.

30. The passage reads, “The founding ancestor of the various schools is Śākyamuni. The sutras are the Buddha’s words, Zen is the Buddha’s intention. The heart and mouth of the Buddha do not contradict each other.” This is in turn a quote from Guifeng Zongmi’s 圭峰宗密 (780–841) *Chanyuan zhuquan ji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序 (T 48.400b).

31. Here Kokan’s break with Zen apologists such as Qisong and Jōshō becomes apparent. For the former two, Zen’s inner verification is “separate” from the teachings in the same sense as signified is separate from signifier, whereas for Kokan, the very assumption that such a relation could hold is already mistaken.

Kokan's Zen Polemics II: Against the Classification of Teachings

The criticism of Zen found in the tenth fascicle of the *Keiran jūyō shū* can be divided into two parts. The first is the charge of representing a separate teaching, with which we have just dealt. But the second part, namely the classification of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* as a text of the *Vaipulya* class associated with the separate teaching adduced as scriptural proof for this position, still stands.

Kokan treasured the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and as early as 1295 vowed to write a commentary on it. It was not until 1325, however, that he actually composed this work, the *Butsugo shin ron* 仏語心論.³² The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*'s importance for Kokan lay in the fact that it was associated with the mythical founder of the Zen school, Bodhidharma, who in some sources is depicted as transmitting this text to his successor, the second Chinese Chan ancestor Huïke 慧可 (487–593).³³ Kokan wished to use this legendary connection in order to bestow the seal of orthodoxy on the Zen teachings (JORGENSEN 2013, 33–34). This ambition confronted him with a difficulty. If the orthodoxy of Zen by Kokan's own admission rests at least in part on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, then to accept the Tendai view of it as representing the separate teaching would again relegate Zen to second-tier status. Just as Kokan had to extricate the separate transmission from the separate teaching, he now had to disentangle the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* from the Tendai system of the classification of Buddhist teachings, an effort on which he expended considerable ingenuity, not to mention polemic spleen.

In his short essay *Goji ben* 五時弁, Kokan questions the integrity of the Tendai "five periods" chronology (GBZ 1: 200–201). Kokan's argument is simple. The guiding principle of the Buddha's preaching was to adapt his teaching to the capacities of his audience (*ōki* 応機). As these capacities differed with each audience, the content of the Buddha's teaching could not be divided chronologically (GBZ 1: 200). Rather, the Buddha taught on different subjects at different times throughout his mission and only after his death did his disciples collect the master's discourses and group them thematically. For example, the *Prajñāpāramitā* class of sutras (*hannya bu* 般若部) contains discourses devoted to true emptiness (*shinkū* 真空; GBZ 1: 200). According to the Tendai "five periods" scheme, these discourses were preached over a period of twenty-two years between the sutras belonging to the *Vaipulya* class and the *Lotus* and *Nirvana Sūtras* (FUKUDA 1954, 104–105). For Kokan this chronological scheme is a mistake that arose because Chinese Buddhists failed to inquire into the origin of the collections of discourses. Kokan traces this misunderstanding to the fact that the Mahāyāna

32. On the *Butsugo shin ron*, see JORGENSEN (2013).

33. See for example *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (T 50: 552b). By Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667). On the relationship between the early Chan movement and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, see McRAE (1986, 88–91).

sutras, due to their great number, were introduced to China gradually over a considerable period of time so that the nature of their arrangement was not immediately apparent. Kokan concludes on a semi-conciliatory note, suggesting that Zhiyi intended the five periods to be understood metaphorically. It was later scholars who took them for literal truth, a “truly laughable” error (GBZ 1: 201).

Interestingly, out of the four categories of the five-period scheme belonging to the Mahāyāna, namely the *Avatamsaka*, *Vaipulya*, *Prajñāpāramitā*, and *Lotus* periods, the *Goji ben* does not mention the *Vaipulya* class at all. The *Vaipulya* class is the one to which the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* belongs, and its elimination is indicative of Kokan's desire to group this sutra differently. In order to achieve this, Kokan proceeded in two steps. First, he empathetically rejected Zhanran's interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* as associated with the *Vaipulya* class. There is no need to recount his arguments in detail and I will restrict myself to a single example to give their polemical flavor. In his discussion of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* in the fifth fascicle of the *Zhiguan fuxing zhuan hongjue*, Zhanran adducts the display of supernatural powers with which the Buddha precedes his preaching as one piece of evidence that this sutra belongs to the *Vaipulya* class. The Buddha manifests innumerable mountains of jewels, each of which reflects the mountain on which the sutra is being preached in perfect detail. At the same time, they reflect all the other jewel mountains in all other, innumerable Buddha lands, again in perfect detail, in which innumerable Buddhas teach the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* to innumerable assemblies of sentient beings.³⁴ According to Zhanran, this miraculous exhibition of the Buddha's powers resembles the opening of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, in which the Buddha accomplishes a similar feat using jeweled umbrellas (T 14: 537b). And as the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* belongs to the *Vaipulya* class, and as the kind of opening display employed by the Buddha indicates the nature of the law he is about to preach, Zhanran concludes that the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* is to be classified in the same way (T 46.242b).

Kokan has only contempt for this way of reasoning. How, he asks in the *Saihoku shū* 濟北集, can a mundane, deluded being like Zhanran willfully judge the miraculous display of the Buddha's supra-mundane powers, which belong solely to the perceptual realm of a buddha (*hotoke no kyōgai* 仏境界) and exceed the comprehension of sentient beings? And when Zhanran unfavorably compares the magical display of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* with what he takes to be superior events preceding the preaching of the sutras of the *Prajñāpāramitā* class, does he not know that the former manifests the Buddha's own-enjoyment (*hotoke no jiyū* 仏自用), whereas the latter displays the Buddha's activities on

34. This scene, which prefaces the actual sutra, is not found in the four fascicle version dearest to Kokan, but can be seen in all other translations of this text. See for example Bodhiruci's *Ru lengjia jing* 入楞伽經 (T 16.516a).

behalf of others (*hotoke no tayū* 仏他用)? How can he talk of superior and inferior regarding different uses of the single supra-mundane power of the Buddha (*ichi jinyū* 一神用)? Alas, Zhanran truly is peeping (at the sky) through the tube of his school's teachings (GBZ 1: 307–308). One ought to take pity on those who expound the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* while being stuck in the bag of the “five periods and four teachings” (GBZ 1: 310).

Kokan's attack on Zhanran is heavily polemical. However, he did not simply intend to heap scorn on the Tiantai master. Rather, for Kokan, refuting or at least ridiculing Zhanran was the first step towards establishing his own classification of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, a goal already implicit in the argumentative strategy of the *Goji ben* and its elimination of the *Vaipulya* class. Kokan sought to align the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* with the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. This revered text, one of the most important Mahāyāna sutras in East Asia, is generally thought of as having been preached by the Buddha immediately after his awakening, perfectly and completely revealing its content. Kokan argued that the two texts are related because their respective discussions of the attainment and development of the concentration of extinction (*metsujō* 滅定) from the sixth to the eighth stages of the bodhisattva path, greatly resemble each other, even down to the exact choice of words. This resemblance, Kokan claims, is rare among Buddhist sutras (GBZ 1: 301–302),³⁵ and the intimate connection between the *Avataṃsaka* and *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtras* due to the fact that both texts bear the “mark of the one vehicle” (*ichijō no sō* 一乘相; GBZ 1: 302). The one vehicle is of course one of the most influential concepts in East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism.³⁶ It rejects the notion that beings of different inclinations or abilities arrive at different degrees or qualities of liberation by following different paths in favor of the view that all ultimately attain Buddhahood by mounting the supreme buddha-vehicle. According to Kokan, the hallmark of this one vehicle is the integration and identity (*yūsoku* 融即) of principle (*ri* 理) and instantiation (*ji* 事; GBZ 1: 301). As we shall see, this concept, especially when applied to the different bodies of a buddha, is of the utmost importance for Kokan's exposition of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*.

However, it can be noted that the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra's* conception of the one vehicle becomes a problem that haunts the entirety of Kokan's interpretation of this text. The one vehicle revealed in the *Laṅkāvatāra* is predicated on the denial of the ultimate existence of any vehicle, as the following verses make clear:

35. See also *Da fangguang fo huayan jing* 大方広仏華嚴經 (T 10.197b) and *Lengjiaabaduoluobao jing* (T 16.509a). In fact, the notion that a bodhisattva develops the concentration of extinction from the sixth to the eighth stages is widespread. See ŌTA (2015). The credibility of Kokan's argument hinges on whether or not one is willing to accept the glosses he uses to establish the supposed resemblance between the two texts.

36. However, the notion of a “straight” or “direct path” (Pāli. *ekāyano maggo*) to liberation via the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is already found in the *sutta* literature. See ANĀLAYO (2006, 26–28).

The various vehicles of gods and bodhisattvas
 The vehicles of hearers and *pratyekabuddha*
 The Tathāgata's vehicle of all Buddhas
 I explain that all these vehicles,
 Until there is transformation of mind,
 [all these] various vehicles are not ultimate.
 If there is cessation of that [discriminating] mind,
 [there is] neither vehicle nor rider.
 Not having the establishment of vehicles,
 That, I declare, is the one vehicle.
 For the sake of guiding beings,
 Discriminating, the various vehicles [I] teach.³⁷

(T 16.497b)

According to the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, all vehicles, including the buddha-vehicle, are taught by the Buddha on the basis of provisional discrimination in order to guide beings. Once the falsely discriminating mind ceases not a single vehicle, nor even the concept of “vehicle” itself, is established.³⁸ This is the true one vehicle.

The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*'s apophatic method of characterizing the one vehicle as the cessation of discriminatory consciousness, which is representative of the text's outlook as a whole, is of course one of the reasons Tiantai and Tendai thinkers came to regard it as affiliated with the separate teaching in the first place. In other words, in his attempts to extricate the sutra from Tiantai and Tendai classificatory schemes, Kokan had to an extent go against the grain of the *Laṅkāvatāra*'s own doctrinal statements, just as he did in the case of the Zen tradition's “separate transmission.” And as we shall see below, in order to solve this difficulty, Kokan would have to abandon dogmatic considerations and take recourse to the polemical strategy he had already used in the *Gebetsu ron*.

Kokan's Interpretation of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra

If, for Kokan, Zen was not a separate teaching and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* not a *Vaipulya* text associated with this teaching, then what were they? In order to answer this question, we need to turn from Kokan's polemics to his most important commentarial and doctrinal work, the *Butsugo shin ron*.

37. On the conception of the one vehicle in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and its reception in the Huayan tradition, see ISHII (2003).

38. The sutra explains the relationship between non-discrimination and the one vehicle as follows: “That is to say, delusion is the grasper and the grasped [that is, falsely discriminating consciousness and its falsely discriminated object]. Dwelling in the truth of suchness, delusion is non-arisen. That is called the awakening of the one vehicle” (T 16.497b). Furthermore, the sutra elsewhere emphasizes that also the notion of “non-vehicle” (*hijō* 非乘) is to be overthrown (T 16.487b).

The eighteen fascicles of the *Butsugo shin ron* record Kokan's exposition of the four-fascicle *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. As JØRGENSEN has noted, Kokan's exact reasons for the composition of this text are unclear (2013, 31). However, if we bear in mind the role the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* played in the Tendai criticism of Zen, Kokan's motivation becomes more comprehensible. The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* has long been associated with the Zen tradition, a fact that Tendai scholiasts exploited to relegate Zen to the separate teaching. Kokan attempted to turn the tables on Zen's critics by using the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* to demonstrate Zen's superiority. It is in this context that his most controversial position on this text has to be seen. Kokan asserted boldly that the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* has been taught directly by the Dharma Buddha.³⁹

To understand Kokan's point concerning the preaching of the Dharma body, Kūkai's taxonomy of the esoteric, or tantric, and the exoteric teachings must be considered. When transmitting the esoteric teachings from China, Kūkai had to differentiate them from—and establish their superiority over—the already existing Buddhist traditions, which he labeled “exoteric.” In clarifying the difference between esoteric and exoteric, Kūkai took recourse to the notion that different teachings are preached by different bodies of the Buddha, an idea well established in Chinese Buddhism.⁴⁰ In his *Ben kenmitsu nikyō ron*, Kūkai elaborates as follows:

Now, the Buddha has three bodies, the teaching two kinds. The teachings of the response and transformation bodies are known by the name “exoteric teachings.” Their language is apparent and brief, it accommodates the capabilities [of the recipient]. The discourse of the Dharma [body of the] Buddha is called the treasury of secrets (*mitsuzō* 密藏). Its language is hidden and deep, and it is the true teaching [that is, it does not accommodate the different capabilities of different recipients].⁴¹ (T 77.374c)

According to Kūkai, the exoteric teachings are preached by the response and transformation bodies of the Buddha in accordance with and limited by beings' abilities to comprehend them while the esoteric teachings are expounded by the Dharma body to reveal the fullness of awakening.⁴² What made this proposal

39. As Kokan clarifies at the very outset of the *Butsugo shin ron*, “The preacher [of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*] is the Dharma body Vairocana” (NDZ 10: 178), the same Buddha thought to have preached the tantric teachings. See below.

40. For example, each of the four teachings for teaching the Dharma established in the Tiantai tradition is understood as being preached by a distinct buddha body. See FUKUDA (1954, 153).

41. For a different translation, which I have consulted, see GIEBEL (2004, 17).

42. The transformation body (*keshin* 化身) is the body of the Buddha perceptible even by deluded beings. The response body (*ōjin* 応身) is the body of the Buddha perceptible by advanced practitioners who have entered the supra-mundane path. The Dharma body is the unconditioned aspect of the Buddha.

innovative and initially controversial was that basic Mahāyāna doctrine holds the Dharma body to be signless and unrelated to the propagation of Buddhist teachings (ABÉ 1999, 204–28). Kūkai disagrees.

The own-nature and [self-]enjoyment buddhas, for their own bliss of enjoying [the Dharma], together with their entourage, teach each of the gates of the three mysteries [of body, speech, and mind]. This is called the esoteric teaching. These gates of the three mysteries are said to be the perceptual realm (*kyōgai* 境界) of the inner wisdom of the Tathāgata.⁴³ (T 77.375a)

Kūkai sees the Dharma body as endowed with the three mysteries of body, speech, and mind that manifest its own inner realization. This direct communication of the Dharma body is the hallmark of the esoteric teachings. There can be little doubt that this understanding inspired Kokan's interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. In fact, the *Laṅkāvatāra* is among the texts Kūkai adduced as proof for the preaching of the Dharma body.⁴⁴ Kokan's version of the Dharma body's preaching, however, differs significantly from Kūkai's.

While Kūkai relied on the Dharma body's endowment with the three mysteries to explain its preaching, this option was closed to Kokan. Although Kokan claimed the preacher of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* to be the Dharma body, the sutra itself makes it clear that it was preached by the historical Buddha. Kokan's response to this obvious contradiction in the following passage of the *Saihoku shū* reveals why the alignment of the one vehicle teaching of the *Laṅkāvatāra* with the mutual integration of principle and instantiation epitomized by the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* was of such crucial importance to him.

Now, in the preaching of our Buddha there is [the preaching according to] the one vehicle and [the preaching according to] the three vehicles. In the teaching of the three vehicles, principle and instantiation are not integrated. The three bodies [of the Buddha] are separate and different, for reasons of the Buddha teaching according to the provisional faculties [of his listeners]. In the one vehicle teaching, instantiation and principle are integrated, and the three bodies have a single mark, for reasons of the Buddha preaching according to mature faculties.... In the three vehicles teaching, instantiation and principle are not integrated and the Dharma and Reward bodies are distinct. In the teaching of the one vehicle, instantiation and principle are integrated, and Dharma and Reward body are of a single mark. (GBZ 1: 301)

Kokan here applies the one vehicle principle of integration to the bodies of the Buddha. He explains that whereas in the three vehicle teachings these are seen as

43. See also GIEBEL (2004, 17).

44. However, Kūkai relied on Bodhiruci's (d. 527) translation of the sutra rather than the four fascicle version.

distinct, in the one vehicle they are non-differentiated. Consequently, the historical Buddha preaching the one vehicle *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* is none other than the Dharma body expounding this sermon. The device or even ruse of reading the tantric notion of the Dharma body's preaching through his interpretation of the one vehicle thus allowed Kokan to elevate the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* to the status of a supreme teaching.

Kokan's motive for positioning the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* in this manner is buried deep in the eighth fascicle of the *Butsugo shin ron*, where Kokan comments on the following passage from the sutra.

Mahāmāti! If the own-nature of [substantial] nature (*shō jishō* 性自性) and the marks of difference and sameness (*jigū sō* 自共相) are taught, these are all the teaching of the transformation Buddha (*kebutsu* 化仏). They are not the teaching of the Dharma Buddha (*hōbutsu* 法仏). Again, these various discourses all arise dependent on the wishes, desires, and views of the deluded [to whose capacities they must adopt]. They do not separately establish the realm of the Dharma of own-nature (*jishō hō* 自性法) and indicate it separately for those who dwell in the enjoyment of the concentration of own-awakening which attains the supra-mundane wisdom. (T 16.491b)

In his commentary, Kokan uses this passage to establish to whom, what, and in which perceptual realm the Dharma body preaches. He explains that the preaching of the Dharma Buddha is directed at those who have attained the bliss of the meditative absorption that comes with awakening (NDZ 10: 338b). Next, Kokan defines the content of the Dharma body's preaching as the "Dharma of own nature." This he interprets as the perfected true nature (*enjō jishō* 円成実性) from among the three natures established in mind-only teachings (NDZ 10: 338b).⁴⁵ Finally, Kokan clarifies the sphere of activity of the Dharma Buddha's preaching, namely the "separately established realm." Kokan's elucidation of this last phrase comes in two parts. First, the "realm" in question is the perceptual realm of the supra-mundane wisdom of self-awakening, that is to say, the perceptual realm of a Buddha. This realm is said to be "separately established," which Kokan defines as the "establishment with the mark of the absolute differentiation of the supra-mundane own-awakened [one, the Buddha]" (NDZ 10: 338b).

45. The other two natures are the "fabricated nature" (*henge shoshū shō* 遍計所執性) produced from attachment to false discrimination and the "arising-dependent-on-others nature" (*etaki shō* 依他起性), which refers to the nature of things to arise from causes. In explaining these three natures, often the analogy of a conjurer using spells to cause his audience to see a piece of wood as an illusionary elephant is used. To cling to the false belief that there actually is an elephant is the "fabricated nature." But that the elephant is actually seen by the audience reveals that it arises dependent on other things such as the conjurer's spells and the piece of wood. This is the "arising-dependent-on-others nature." Finally, when the hallucinatory elephant is considered as what it actually is, a mirage, one deals with its "perfected nature."

The phrase “establishment with the mark of the absolute differentiation of the supra-mundane own-awakened” is found elsewhere in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and is used to signify the absolute difference (*kukyō shabetsu* 究竟差別) between the Dharma Buddha’s perceptual realm and the perceptual realm of attachment to a self-mark falsely cognized by deluded beings (T 16.486b). Kokan, in his commentary on this passage, explains that this “absolute difference” applies to the “realm of the establishment of the own-awakening of the Dharma body” (NDZ 10, 291a). In other words, the perceptual realm of the Dharma Buddha is “separately established” in the sense that it is apart from the perceptual realm of sentient beings. Accordingly, Kokan’s doctrine of the preaching of the Dharma Buddha can be summarized as follows. It is the Dharma Buddha’s explication to itself of the absolute and perfected nature of its own perceptual realm separate from discriminating consciousness. And as we will see shortly, “separate” here for Kokan carries a very specific connotation.

We now come to the core of Kokan’s argument. He writes:

Our first ancestor Bodhidharma coming from the west and preaching the separate transmission outside the teachings is now the “separately established realm” of this passage [of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*]. Furthermore, Bodhidharma’s saying “seeing the nature and completing Buddhahood” is now the “perfected own-nature” [in the sutra]. For this reason, Bodhidharma indicated this sutra and considered it the scripture that explains the verification of the Buddha mind. (NDZ 10: 338b)

The “nature” Bodhidharma enjoins us to see is precisely the perfected own nature of the realm of perception of the Dharma Buddha’s wisdom, which is “separately established” outside the teachings, for teachings necessarily are adopted to their audience and consequently incapable of capturing the Dharma Buddha’s own experience of its awakening. Kokan’s implication is clear. The Zen tradition, which does not rely on teachings and directly verifies the mind, transmits nothing but the self-revelation of the Dharma Buddha’s own-awakening. In this manner, the appropriately reinterpreted *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* serves as the foundation and proof of both the Zen tradition’s orthodoxy and its superiority over other forms of Buddhism.

The time has come to confront in more detail the most problematic aspect of Kokan’s interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, already hinted at above in connection with the text’s one vehicle teaching. By defining the Dharma Buddha’s preaching as “separately established” from the realm of sentient beings, it can be asked, is Kokan not playing into the hands of those who seek to portray the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and by extension the Zen tradition as a separate teaching

seeking truth by abolishing delusion?⁴⁶ In answering this charge, Kokan's dogmatics joins his polemics. Kokan attempted to extricate Zen's "separate transmission outside the teachings" from the charge of being a separate teaching by making a distinction between the "small separate" of the teachings and the "great separate" of the Zen tradition. In the *Butsugo shin ron*, we find a functionally similar distinction applied to the "separately established" perceptual realm of the Dharma Buddha.

Kokan's strategy is displayed in the sixth fascicle of the *Butsugo shin ron*, where the question is raised as to which of the four Buddha lands established in the Tiantai and Tendai schools corresponds to the Buddha's perceptual realm of self-awakening (NDZ 10: 289ab).⁴⁷ Kokan replies that all lands are taught according to relative teachings that adopt themselves to their audiences' capacities. The doctrine of own-awakening taught in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, on the other hand, is not relative in this way. As long as Buddha lands are established according to the nature of deluded mind, even the supreme Buddha land is still relative. If one is liberated from deluded mind, even the lower lands are the perceptual realm of the Dharma Buddha.⁴⁸

Next, Kokan addresses the objection that the concept of separation from deluded mind belongs to the separate teaching.

There are two kinds of separation. The first is fundamental separation (*honri* 本離), the second removal separation (*kyori* 去離). The separation now is fundamental separation. The separation you are speaking of is removal separation. In the perceptual realm of supra-mundane self-awakening, there is neither perfect nor separate [teaching]. This is called "separated from the marks of

46. As mentioned above, Kokan's interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* was inspired by Kūkai. And in fact Kūkai's own work gives rise to a similar problem regarding the "separate realm" of the Dharma body's preaching and its relationship to sentient beings. See ŌKUBO (2004, 152–53).

47. The four Pure Lands established in the Tiantai tradition are the land of deluded and supra-mundane dwelling together (*bonshō dōgo do* 凡聖同居土), the land of skillful means with remainder (*hōben uyo do* 方便有余土), the land of true reward without obstruction (*jippō mushōge do* 實報無障礙土), and the land of eternal tranquil illumination (*jō jikkō do* 常寂光土). See FUKUDA (1954, 155–57).

48. Here a second problem in Kokan's interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* becomes apparent, namely the tension between his assertion that the *Laṅkāvatāra* as a one vehicle teaching is characterized by the integration of principle and instantiation and the text's own apophatic conception of both the one vehicle and the "separate realm" of the Buddha's own-awakening. Kokan's insistence that once deluded consciousness is overcome all lands are identical with the perceptual realm of the Dharma Buddha is an affirmation of the integration of principle (realm of own-awakening) and instantiation (Buddha lands). However, following the sutra's own logic, just as the abolishment of any conception of "vehicle" is the true one vehicle, separating from deluded mind would not imply the affirmation of all lands as realms of awakening but rather the abolishment of the notion of "land" (and "non-land").

own-nature.” The two teachings of the perfect and the separate are teachings of names and marks, that is to say they are relative [to listeners’ capacities]. Establishing the nature of [deluded] mind, they are not the establishment of the own-awakening of fundamental separation. (NDZ 10: 289ab)

In this passage, “fundamental” and “removal separation” are used exactly like the polemical categories of “great” and “small separate” in the *Gebetsu ron*. They serve to extricate the teachings of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (and Zen) from the framework of particular Tendai dogmatics. It cannot be denied, however, that Kokan on this point offers a highly forced interpretation of the sutra which owes more to his sectarian interests than to any faithful reading of the text itself.

Kokan’s defense of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and the Zen tradition rests on his concept of “separation.” For Kokan, “separation” is construed in an absolute manner. Consequently, the “separately established [perceptual] realm” of the Dharma Buddha is not “separate from the perceptual realm of sentient beings,” it is “separate from being either separate from or common to the perceptual realm of sentient beings.” And likewise Zen’s “separate transmission outside the teachings” is not “separate from and outside of the teachings” but rather “separate from being either separate from and outside of or common to and inside the teachings.” Any attempt to fit this “absolute separation” with relatively derived conceptual schemes is, from Kokan’s point of view, doomed to fail.

Kokan’s understanding of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and his polemics on behalf of the Zen tradition are intimately connected. Kokan used his doctrine of the preaching of the Dharma body to elevate the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* to the status of an ultimate teaching. He then short-circuited the sutra’s notion of the Dharma Buddha’s separately established realm of own-awakening with the “separate transmission” of Zen in order to furnish the latter with all the trappings of orthodoxy. And finally, he brought his polemically rather than dogmatically grounded notion of “separation” to bear on them both in order to insulate them against meta-doctrinal classification. According to Kokan, neither Zen nor the *Laṅkāvatāra* are “teachings.” They are the awakened nature of the Dharma Buddha itself.

The Question of Lineage

MISAKI (1992, 319–51) has suggested that Kokan established his version of the doctrine that the Dharma body preaches in order to unify Zen and the tantric teachings. In this section, I will reconsider this problem through an examination of Kokan’s understanding of the nature of lineage, which is apparent in his most famous polemical work, the *Shūmon jishō ron* 宗門十勝論. In the fictional dialogue prefacing this text, a “lecturer” wonders why the whole world when thinking about Buddhism thinks of Zen but not the teaching houses. Kokan replies as follows:

These [various teaching houses] are merely differences in the private opinions of worthies.... Tendai and Kegon were established in China, how could they not be private opinions? The *Three Treatises* [of Sanron], their titles, and so on are based on private views.⁴⁹ The Yuishiki tradition, although it received help, is established according to the private opinions of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.⁵⁰ The *vinaya* stems from the Buddha, but it is only the manner of the small vehicle. During the Tang dynasty, Daoxuan aligned the *vinaya* with the great vehicle, but he again fell into establishing private opinions. The esoteric teachings establish Vairocana, but they cannot avoid relying on responding/imparting (*kanju* 感授).⁵¹ Only our Zen gate has a legitimate link to the transmission directly handed down by the Bhagavān.... Our Zen school is separated from the mark of discourse and does not belong to the realm of what is comprehensible. Those of superior roots and great capabilities merely verify and thus know. (GBZ 1: 270)

For Kokan, lineage was the *sine qua non* of any teaching. And as only Zen has a direct link with the Buddha, it is the most authentic form of Buddhism. Kokan here does not seem to depart significantly from the traditional understanding of lineage and its function. Yet a closer inspection reveals a profound difference.

This difference comes to light when considering Kokan's take on the validity of the tantric lineage. In the above quote Kokan first admits that the tantric teachings indeed have a direct link to Vairocana Buddha. However, Kokan refers to this link somewhat dismissively as "responding/imparting." This term is also used for tantric transmission in Kokan's essay *Shōbō ron*. In this text, Kokan considers the problem of whether the tantric or the Zen transmission lineage should be considered the primary one. To the proposition that the tantric teachings have precedence since they were imparted by the Dharma body Vairocana, whereas the Zen lineage stems from the lesser Transformation body, Kokan replies in the following manner.

You do not yet exactly [understand] the two Buddhas, [therefore there] is this confusion. I shall now explain in detail. In the Buddha's Dharma there is the teaching of the three vehicles and the teaching of the one vehicle. In the one vehicle teachings, the three bodies of the Buddha are integrated (*yūsoku*

49. I have departed from the annotation of the text, which suggests that 見 should be read as a verb.

50. The meaning of this sentence is unclear. It could refer to the legend that Asaṅga meditatively ascended to Tuṣita heaven where he was taught Mere Ideation doctrine by the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

51. This term is somewhat obscure. However, in the *Shōbō ron* 正旁論, Kokan glosses it using the concept of *kannō* 感応, which refers to Buddhas and bodhisattvas responding to the mind of sentient beings. This seems to imply that tantric practitioners remain dependent on the actions of the Buddhas, whereas Zen practitioners awaken for themselves. See also below.

融即). In the three vehicle teaching, the three bodies are different. What you are saying is the talk of the three vehicles. What I am now establishing is the explanation of the one vehicle.... Furthermore, in my Dharma there is bodily imparting and there is responding imparting. Responding imparting is the branches, which are secondary. Bodily imparting is the root, which is primary. The twenty-eight bearers of the Dharma are bodily imparting. The esoteric tantric transmission is responding imparting.... The Tathāgata's living body imparting to the living body of the disciple, and again later generations' living bodies imparting and receiving (*juju* 授受) is bodily imparting. The Tathāgata's Transformation body (*keshin* 化身) imparting to the disciples concentration body (*jōshin* 定身) is responding imparting. Again, the various responses (*kannō* 感応) are feeling imparting. (GBZ 1: 287–88)

Kokan first introduces his one vehicle interpretation of the three Buddha bodies to undermine his opponent's claim that the Dharma body is superior to the other two bodies of the Buddha. In a move resembling the strategy he employed to assert that the *Laṅkāvatāra* was preached by the Dharma body, Kokan proclaims his opponent's position to be a mistake characteristic of the three vehicles. Having demolished the lecturer's attempt to demonstrate a difference in profundity between tantric and Zen lineages based on a hierarchy of Buddha bodies, Kokan next establishes positive grounds for the primacy of Zen. He explains that in Buddhism there are two kinds of transmission, bodily imparting and response imparting, with Zen representing the former and the tantric teachings the latter. Of these two, Kokan argues, bodily imparting should be considered superior, as it is given directly from living body to living body, whereas response imparting relies on non-physical bodies. Considering this point, it seems unlikely that the union of tantric teachings and Zen was Kokan's aim. Rather, while considering both legitimate Buddhist traditions he clearly distinguished them according to their respective mode of transmission. However, Misaki's suggestion that Kokan attempted to unify tantra and Zen is suggestive in a different sense. There is in Kokan's thought about lineage an element that indeed "tantrifies" Zen.

To appreciate this point it is necessary to note a crucial difference between Kokan's dispute with the nameless lecturer and earlier Chinese controversies surrounding the Chan lineage.⁵² These controversies focused on the question of the unbroken continuity of the patriarchal line, specifically regarding the succession between the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth Indian ancestors, following Qisong's enumeration. Chan's critics—most of them Tiantai scholar monks—claimed that according to Buddhist histories the twenty-fourth ancestor Āryasiṃha (Shishi Sonja 師子尊者) had been martyred before he found an heir, thus ending the lineage originating with the Buddha. Chan monks replied by authoring their

52. These controversies later reignited in Japan. See LICHA (2015).

own histories in an attempt to establish the twenty-fifth patriarch's legitimacy (FUJIMOTO 1938). In short, the dispute was of a broadly historical nature and only in passing touched upon questions of doctrine.

In Kokan's case, these two concerns are reversed. Although he was aware of the historical problems surrounding the Zen lineage, he appears to have considered them settled with the imperially decreed inclusion in the Buddhist canon of Qisong's seminal *Chuanfa zhengzong ji* 伝法正宗記, which affirmed Āryasiṃha's successor Vāsiasita (Bashashita 婆舍斯多) as the twenty-fifth Indian patriarch (GBZ 1: 271). Thus in the *Shōbō ron* both Kokan and his questioner take the historical legitimacy of Zen for granted.⁵³ For them, the problem was of a different order, namely the nature of transmission itself. Kokan approached this problem under three headings, which are the source of transmission, the mode of transmission, and, finally, the content of transmission. In the *Shōbō ron*, Kokan defines the source of Zen transmission as the one vehicle Buddha, that is Śākyamuni as non-different from the Dharma Buddha. He also specifies the mode of transmission as a physical one. To these two elements we can add Kokan's insistence that Zen transmits the perceptual realm of the Dharma Buddha as set forth in the *Butsugo shin ron* as the content of transmission.

This understanding of the nature of transmission can be thought of as coherently derived from Kokan's hermeneutics of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. As argued above, Kokan developed his one vehicle doctrine of integration in order to present the historical Śākyamuni Buddha preaching this text as the Dharma Buddha revealing its "separate" self-realization. Kokan identified this revelation with Bodhidharma's "separate transmission outside the teachings," that is to say, the succession of Zen ancestors originating with Śākyamuni Buddha. Consequently, by partaking in the "separate" perceptual realm of the Dharma Buddha, every recipient of Zen transmission in his own physicality stands in the same relationship of non-differentiation with the Dharma Buddha as Śākyamuni preaching the *Laṅkāvatāra*. According to Kokan's reasoning, physicality of transmission as the integration of principle and instantiation is the hallmark of superior "one vehicle transmission." By this token, the tantric understanding of lineage, which declares the Dharma Buddha Vairocana's spiritual transmission to be distinct from Śākyamuni's preaching, reveals itself as the flawed thinking of the three vehicles and in consequence as inferior to Zen.

The most obvious difference between the Chinese debate outlined above and

53. It is possible that in Japan the question of the historical validity of the Zen lineage became a pressing one only after Kokan. Two of the earliest references to this dispute can be found in the *Denbō gokoku ron* 伝法護国論, composed either towards the end of or shortly after Kokan's lifetime and in response to his *Shūmon jishō ron* (FUJIMOTO 1938) and the Shingon scholar Gōhō's 杲宝 (1306–1362) *Kaishin shō* 開心抄 (T 77.738a–39a), composed in the mid-fourteenth century. Nichiren's 日蓮 (1222–1282) criticisms of the Zen school, on the other hand, do not mention this dispute.

Kokan's concerns is this shift from the historical to the doctrinal level, which brought with it a more subtle change in the understanding of the nature of lineage and transmission. In Song period Chan, Dharma succession was mainly seen as an act of certification (*yinke* 印可). A student awakens and his teacher then acknowledges the student's insight to match his own, ideally admitting him to the Chan lineage.⁵⁴ This order of events implies that awakening and transmission are at least theoretically distinct.⁵⁵ This is not the case in Kokan's thought. For Kokan, the Zen lineage transmits the inner awakening of the Dharma Buddha physically, living body to living body. This implies that the fullness of the Buddha's inner own-realization resides exclusively in the Zen lineage, or more precisely the physical body of lineage holders. In Kokan's thought, awakening, transmission, and patriarchal body are one and the same.

Kokan developed his understanding of transmission in the context of refuting the primacy of the tantric lineage. Yet it cannot be denied that despite his efforts to clarify their discrepancies, Kokan's vision of Zen succession greatly resembles the tantric concepts of initiatory unction (*kanjō* 灌頂) and empowerment (*kaji* 加持). In the tantric teachings, only those who have undergone a ritual of initiatory unction can by virtue of the Buddha's empowerment actualize the practice of the three mysteries (*sanmitsu gyō* 三密行) and enter into the Dharma Buddha's perceptual realm. Likewise, in Kokan's thought the Dharma body actively supports those seeking enlightenment. In the *Saihoku shū* this is explained as follows:

The Dharma Buddha... has a body, has preaching. It is merely that the various holies cannot see or hear it. However, although it is like this, those of superior roots and great capabilities receive the Dharma Buddha's support (*ka* 加) and sometimes see it. (GBZ 1: 306)

The notion that a disciple receives a Buddha's support (*adhiṣṭhāna*) is a common one (SUZUKI 1998, 202–205). Kokan's insistence that it is the Dharma Buddha itself that reveals its body and preaching to the practitioner, however, goes beyond this shared concept and clearly carries tantric overtones. These are amplified by his use of the character *ka* 加, which is also the first part of the compound *kaji* signifying esoteric empowerment to describe this support. Furthermore, in Kokan's usage, the characterization "superior roots and great capabilities" is applied almost exclusively to Zen practitioners, who, as he put it in the *Shūmon jissshō ron*, "merely verify and thus know." For Kokan, both the esoteric and the Zen adept receive the Dharma Buddha's crucial support as they

54. On the certificatory nature of "transmission" in Chinese Chan, see SCHLÜTTER (2008, 60–62) and McRAE (2003, 6, 155, n. 6).

55. This is in the sense that it is theoretically possible to awaken on one's own outside of lineage, even if we assume that in practice everybody who achieves awakening is properly certified and a lineage member.

enter into its realm of self-realization.⁵⁶ Kokan might have been led to this conclusion by the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* itself, which in the following passage makes it clear that the attainment of supreme Buddhahood is dependent on receiving the unction of all Buddhas.

The unction of the Buddhas' hands is like the unction of the crown prince of the wheel-turning sagely king. [The bodhisattva] transcends the stage of a child of the Buddha and arriving in the realm of the sagely Dharma of self-awakening attains the sovereign Dharma body of the Tathāgata. (T 16.488a)

According to the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, a bodhisattva enters into full Buddhahood through the unction/initiation of his peers-to-be. Interestingly, in the *Butsugo shin ron*, Kokan glosses the term “attain” with “to directly verify” (*genshō* 現証; NDZ 10: 310). As we have seen, those who verify the realm of the Dharma body Buddha in their own bodies are none other than the members of the Zen lineage.⁵⁷ Consequently, even while strenuously arguing for the superiority of Zen transmission, Kokan seems to have conceptualized it in a highly esoteric manner, emphasizing empowerment and, if not unction outright, then at least the initiatory structure of transmission.

This observation returns the discussion to MISAKI's proposal (1992) that Kokan intended to unify Zen and the tantric teachings. As stated, this conclusion seems untenable given the strict separation of Zen from the tantric transmission Kokan advocated. Nonetheless, Misaki's insight is shrewd when considered in broader terms. Kokan had to defend Zen in an environment dominated by tantric models of transmission. This forced him to confront questions that were unprecedented in both the continental Chan tradition and Japanese Zen before his time, of which the respective roles of Dharma and transformation Buddha as originators of lineage addressed in the *Shōbō ron* are one example. The very intent of such questioning changed the nature of the debate between Zen and the “teaching houses” from a historical to a doctrinal one, a shift that predetermined the kinds of answers Kokan could offer. In confronting his challengers, Kokan had to draw on the common concepts and vocabulary of the Buddhism of his time.⁵⁸ In expressing himself in these terms, he, of necessity, transformed what he was defending. In other words, drawing on tantric notions such as the preaching of the Dharma Buddha, unction, and empowerment in order to proclaim the superiority of Zen, Kokan

56. The difference of course being that the esoteric practitioner, ignorant of the nature of the one vehicle Dharma Buddha, only receives spiritual support whereas Zen adepts receive “bodily imparting”

57. It is possible that Kokan, by glossing “attainment” with “verification,” wished to avoid the tricky question of whether a Zen master actually attains a Buddha body.

58. Or to put it the other way around, Kokan was first and foremost a medieval Japanese monk, and these were the only vocabularies and concepts available to him.

positioned Zen within the tantric sphere of influence. In the case of the Zen lineage, this meant replacing a certificatory mode of transmission with an initiatory one, which, under the sway of Kokan's one vehicle logic, proclaimed the physical line of Zen succession to be the exclusive repository of the Buddha's awakening.

Conclusion

Kokan's polemics on behalf of the Zen tradition opens a window to the debates provoked by the arrival of the new teachings in early medieval Japanese Buddhism. One major concern on the part of the established schools was how to position the Zen tradition in systems of the classification of teachings, for if this were possible it would *ipso facto* prove the inferiority of the Zen school. If Zen were to prove "translatable" into the meta-doctrinal scheme of another school, it could be subsumed by it. The criticism of the separate transmission of the Zen school as a separate teaching is one such attempt, and defending against it was Kokan's polemical life's work.

Kokan's main strategy in countering this attack was twofold. First, and most importantly, he developed a different understanding of what "separate" implied. As we have seen, for Kokan the "separate transmission" was simply not of the same order as the separate teaching, and to understand it as such was a category mistake. Kokan claimed that "separate" meant "separate from sameness and separation," whereas his Tendai opponents understood it as "separation of ultimate from provisional truth." For Kokan, Tendai meta-doctrine simply did not have the ontological depth to deal with Zen.

Second, Kokan sought to undermine the Tendai interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. In order to do so, he attacked the five periods scheme as historically incorrect and used some textual similarities to associate the *Laṅkāvatāra* with the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Both these texts, according to Kokan, belong to the one vehicle and preach the perfect integration of principle and instantiation. This doctrine served as the basis for Kokan's reading of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* as being preached by the Dharma body. Kokan saw the Dharma and transformation bodies as fully integrated and mutually identical, and consequently the historical Śākyamuni Buddha preaching this text as Vairocana Buddha itself. However, in attempting to reconcile his reading of the text with the sutra's own proclamation of an absolute difference between the perceptual realm of the Dharma Buddha and that of sentient beings, Kokan had once more to take recourse to his polemically posited understanding of "separation." When the sutra speaks of "separation" what it actually means, according to Kokan, is not separation as such but "separation from sameness and separation." In this sense, Kokan's reading is audacious, but doctrinally untenable. His argument remains a polemic.

Finally, we have seen that Kokan's understanding of the Zen lineage differs

from traditional interpretations. For Kokan, the separate transmission of Zen is nothing but the true nature of the perceptual realm of the inner own-awakening of the Buddha. This inner awakening is transmitted physically, body to body, from one Zen ancestor to the next. Kokan's understanding of the Zen lineage, I have argued, is of an initiatory rather than a certificatory nature. It consequently bestows on Zen transmission a highly exclusive and absolute status in which awakening and historical lineage are virtually identified.

Kokan's Zen differs significantly from that of his Dharma ancestor Enni, who saw Zen as the inner essence of all Buddhism, and in this sense his Zen indeed could be considered less "pure" than Kokan's. Yet, what is important about this shift is that it does not represent the reaffirmation of an originally "pure" tradition that Enni could or would not found and later generations had to recover. Rather, Kokan's understanding of Zen arose from his confrontation with other traditions of Japanese Buddhism. In all of the three cases taken up in this article, "separate" transmission, the interpretation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, and the nature of lineage, Kokan developed his positions in the context of a polemic and a defense, especially against Tendai critics. This discursive configuration forced Kokan to formulate his arguments within the governing doctrinal paradigms of his time.

In conclusion, Kokan's Zen thought is a prime example of the influence the established schools of early medieval Japanese Buddhism had on the evolution of Zen. This point gives rise to a broader question. The main context within which the initial rise of Zen hitherto has been discussed is one that assumes a high degree of continuity between continental Chan and early Japanese Zen. There are of course strong arguments to be marshaled for this understanding, chief among them the presence of Chinese émigré monks, the adoption especially by the Gosan lineages of the language, learning, and literature of the Chan tradition, and the large-scale efforts to imitate the monastic and institutional structures of Song-period continental Buddhism. However, an appreciation of this gargantuan effort of cultural appropriation should not blind us to the fact that all these endeavors occurred in a religious landscape dominated by the Shingon and Tendai traditions as well as the institutions of Nara Buddhism. Concerning the other movements of the so called "New Kamakura Buddhism," this point has already forcefully been made by the research of scholars such as Kuroda Toshio and Taira Masayuki, yet curiously it seems, so far, to have had little influence on research into Japanese Zen.⁵⁹ A discussion of the reasons for this lack of impact

59. See for example TAIRA (1992, 98–100). For a detailed discussion and criticism of Kuroda and Taira's work, see SUEKI (1998, 27–103). Also the special volume of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23 (1996), especially RAMBELLI (1996) and SUEKI (1996). FUNAOKA (1987) has offered a compelling study of how the pre-Kamakura activities of "meditation masters" (*zenji* 禪師) associated with the established schools contributed to the formation of Japanese Zen. However, he largely ignores the question of influences the established schools might have had

is beyond this article's remit, but I would like to suggest that they at least in part represent a remnant on the level of scholarly inquiry of Zen's own claim to be "separate from the teachings." Be this as it may, Kokan's case makes it clear that in trying to understand the nature and development of early medieval Zen we need to take into consideration the sometimes volatile relationships between the emerging Zen institution and the established schools. This encounter marks the beginning of a new "configuration of religious activity" in the history of Zen, and it is an ironic consequence of Kokan's efforts that he should serve as a stark reminder that the "separate transmission" could only have emerged from within the teachings themselves.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- GBZ *Gosan bungaku zenshū* 五山文学全集. 5 vols. Ed. Kamimura Kankō 上村観光. Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 1973.
- NDZ *Nihon daizōkyō* 日本大藏經. 51 vols. Ed. Nihon Daizōkyō Hensankai 日本大藏經編纂会. Tokyo: Nihon Daizōkyō Hensankai, 1914–1921.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 85 vols. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 et al., eds. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.
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on Zen orthodoxy in and after the Kamakura period. Furthermore, there is a growing body of research investigating the reception of Zen in the classical, especially the tantric, schools. Yet the question of a reverse influence again is mostly ignored.

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- Kyōjūichi kuketsu* 門十一口決. By Jōmyō 靜明. ZTZ, vol. *kuketsu* 1, 157–79.
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