



Pamela D. Winfield and Steven Heine, eds.,
Zen and Material Culture

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 352 pages. Paperback,
£22.99. ISBN 9780190469306.

Zen and Material Culture is a collaboration between scholars of Zen art, thought, doctrine, and practice. As the newest addition to Pamela Winfield's publications on visual culture and Steven Heine's numerous titles on Zen history, thought, and doctrine, *Zen and Material Culture* explores Zen from its visual and material side, while at the same time offering views on the background of its art history

and teaching, often freely and deliberately interconnecting the various academic fields and approaches of its contributors.

In the introduction, the editors unite these diverse contributions to the volume through an approach toward material culture in the Zen schools that brings to life several texts and traditions to a broader audience that may otherwise only find a limited number of readers. The editors explore the dichotomy between ideas and objects and challenge the notion that Zen Buddhism is “purely meditative, minimalistic, or iconoclastic tradition” (xiv), arguing that Zen not only employs but often relies on material objects and, at times, even defines itself through its materiality.

Steven Heine’s opening study on Zen staffs, “Thy Rod, Thy Staff, They Discomfort Me: Zen Staffs as Implements of Instruction,” highlights the abstract and symbolic via the concrete and material. Through examples from notable Zen anthologies and koan collections, Heine introduces several instances when a master’s staff was used as a didactic instrument and discusses its metaphorical significance. Supported by illustrations of different types of staffs, rods, sticks, scepters, and whisks, he describes how these were used for different purposes. Reiterating the objective of the volume to distinguish between material and idealistic concepts of Zen, Heine demonstrates how the materiality of the staff as a physical item stood in contrast to the literary traditions of the Song and Kamakura periods.

Pamela D. Winfield’s chapter, “Materializing the Zen Monastery,” moves away from the spiritual aspects of Zen and toward the material. However, after a thorough exploration of texts and their concepts, the focus shifts back to the spirituality of Zen. Winfield presents Dōgen the philosopher, for whom objects generate language, speaking the words of the universe. For Dōgen the materialist, Winfield claims, “language can also generate objects” (39). For instance, Dōgen deliberately employed the words of the *Bendōwa* 弁道話 to generate income intended for the construction for his first monastery, Kōshōji. Winfield also elaborates on Dōgen’s application of *shichidō garan* 七堂伽藍, which was a widely propagated seven-hall layout of Zen temples. The origin of this structure of Zen temples, as Winfield’s chapter shows, was connected to the five-phases theory of Chinese cosmology, which Dōgen became familiar with during his stay in China.

Morgan Pitelka’s “Form and Function: Tea Bowls and the Problem of Zen in *Chanoyu*” offers a brief overview of the history of tea in China and Japan, while focusing in particular on the connections between Rinzaï Zen and tea culture. Pitelka challenges the long-presumed correlation between Zen and tea, arguing that such presumptions relied more on later interpretations than on analysis of historical sources. Throughout the chapter, Pitelka refers to notable figures of Zen and *chanoyu*—Myōan Eisai 明菴栄西, Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純, Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石, and Sen no Rikyū 千利休—and introduces life stories of some lesser-known figures who were active proselytizers of Zen and tea culture.

In “Prayer Beads in Japanese Sōtō Zen,” Michaela Mross surveys the history of rosaries in Buddhism and the role prayer beads played in Pure Land traditions as well as the Sōtō, Rinzai, and Ōbaku schools. More than just sources of sectarian identification, Mross shows that rosaries were also employed as mandalas and hanging scrolls, exemplifying the richness in usage and symbolism of prayer beads. Elaborating on her previous fieldwork at Sōjiji in Yokohama, Mross discusses the highly figurative use of rosaries as *kirigami* 切紙, documents of secret initiation used in the Sōtō school that reflect the historical assimilation of magical practices and beliefs in transmission rituals. In portraying the prayer beads as material for esoteric transmission documents, the study is a skilled illustration of the religious realities of Japan, their non-exclusivity, and the generally combinatorial nature of religion in Japan.

Another essay addressing the material culture of the Sōtō and Rinzai schools, “The Importance of Imports: Ingen’s Chinese Material Culture at Manpukuji,” by Patricia J. Graham, concentrates on the style and architecture of Manpukuji, head temple of the Ōbaku school, and the material legacy of Ingen Ryūki 隱元隆琦 (1592–1684), the temple’s founder. The study is helpful in tracing and illuminating Manpukuji’s Chinese features and origins, as well as in providing instances of Sino-Japanese approaches, techniques, and ideas found in the temple’s architecture. One such example is Ingen’s preference for assembling the Arhats into groups of eighteen and five hundred, mirroring the popular religious trends of Ming China. In due time, “the concept of Rakan (Arhat) had become fused in the Japanese public’s mind with the Ōbaku monks themselves” (147), resulting in modern-day representations such as Murakami Takashi’s monumental paintings of Five Hundred Arhats.

In “Visual Culture in Japan’s Imperial Rinzai Zen Convents: The Making of Objects as Expressions of Religious Devotion and Practice,” Patricia Fister focuses on the personal histories and religious practices of female abbots as Rinzai Zen convents. Through a study of two abbesses with links to the imperial lineage, Daitsū Bunchi 大通文智 (1619–1697) and Tokugon Rihō 徳巖理豊 (1672–1745), Fister exposes the relationship between the imperial household and these religious institutions. In terms of material culture, the two abbesses produced several devotional practices such as scripture copying and creating paintings and statues that incorporated their own hair, skin, blood, or fingernails.

Diane E. Riggs commences her study “Golden Robe or Rubbish Robe? Interpretations of the Transmitted Robe in Tokugawa Period Zen Buddhist Thought” with a recounting of Śākyamuni’s transmission of his robe to Mahākāśyapa and traces the history of this practice up to the Tokugawa period. The issue in this paper is the discrepancy between the golden brocades of Zen monks’ robes on the one hand and the Buddhist ideal of austere simplicity stemming from the *Vinaya* on the other. Riggs explains references to robes in Pāli, Chinese, and

Japanese sources and the various functions of Buddhist monastic robes in the different cultural settings. Although still unclear regarding how such a shift took place in the history of Buddhist thought, Riggs provides an exceptional orientation to the history of monastic robes in Buddhist culture.

Paula Arai's "Zen of Rags" transports the reader to Aichi Senmon Nisōdō, a Sōtō Zen temple in Nagoya, Japan, where Arai spent some years as a practitioner. While at the temple, Arai observed that rags were not only used to clean but also had a healing function. Such a function was born out of the metaphysical context of Sōtō Zen and the notion of non-duality, which "does not separate ultimate, transcendent, and sacred from conventional, mundane, and profane" (232). Arai interweaves her philosophical discussion of rags with Dōgen's writings, ultimately concluding that rags not only have buddha-nature but are themselves expressions of buddha-nature (236).

The final contribution to this volume, "Zen Sells Zen Things: Meditation Supply, Right Livelihood, and Buddhist Retail," by Gregory Levine, concentrates on the consumer culture associated with American Zen centers and monasteries. Levine ponders the dichotomy posed by Zen-themed marketing, an activity that essentially necessitates profit, and right livelihood, one of the steps of the Noble Eightfold Path. Levine suggests that Zen retail and the marketing directed at Zen practitioners has, at times, led to a degradation of objects employed in meditation to mere "Zenny things" (255), or, in the case of "Silicon Valley Zen," a "capitalist applied Buddhism" that is unrelated to traditional Buddhist institutions (272). However, he notes, how these "Zen products enter our lives" (281) is complicated and indicative of the encounter between religion and material consumption.

Zen is often described as paradoxical. For instance, Zen is sometimes defined as a tradition not dependent upon words and letters. And yet, the tradition has produced a vast quantity of texts. This volume elaborates on this Zen paradox by highlighting the abundance of material objects found in various aspects of the Zen traditions. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has reflected on the significance of material culture in Zen; one often finds that in Buddhism objects are regarded as physical embodiments of the three jewels—Buddha, dharma, and sangha. The materiality of Zen, as described in this collection of articles, might be considered as a vehicle, or a physical embodiment, of the Buddha (the robe and the staff), the dharma (rags, temple architecture, calligraphy, tea bowls, and utensils), and the sangha (sculpture, calligraphy, tea bowls and utensils, as well as robes and staffs of the masters). Thus, the objects of Zen material culture embody the three jewels, making abstract concepts and ideals tangible in the things we encounter on a daily basis.

Zuzana Kubovčáková
Masaryk University