

IS THERE HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN CH'AN?

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INTRODUCTION  
THE SEARCH FOR HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

In the wake of increasing historical awareness boosted by new discoveries, the history of Ch'an<sup>1</sup> is being rewritten in our century. Historical awareness today includes the realization that our understanding of history is itself historically conditioned; what we seek to find in the past is in part a reflection of our own interests, often radically different from those of past scribes. When contemporary historians of Ch'an seek new information regarding its factual history in distinction from traditionally accepted stories, they are challenged in turn to assess the kind of historical awareness evinced by the sources they study. Without some assessment of the relative value of history for those who play a role in the Ch'an tradition, historians often cannot properly evaluate their motives, judge their significance, or place them historically in the development of the Ch'an schools. Ch'an texts also serve many today as sources of inspiration and example. To those who would heed the results of modern scholarship, a challenge is posed, too. Particularly in the light of doubts cast on the historicity of early Dharma transmission (傳法 denpō), Zen practitioners are called upon to reevaluate the meaning of historical transmission for their practice and to reconsider the significance of a historical development which seems to include fabrication and animosity as well as harmony and truth. These challenges come to a head in the problem of historical factuality and historical consciousness within

Ch'an. What awareness of historicity, of historical factuality and historical conditioning, is evident in the multifarious texts of the Ch'an tradition? What might be the meaning of history for the authors of these diverse texts? What would we today take as evidence that Ch'an texts reveal a sense of history?

These questions entail a host of difficulties. For one, we must clarify what we are looking for when we seek an awareness of history in Ch'an, or in any other tradition for that matter. If a particular tradition has its own notion of history, and if what we seek is in fact defined by what we have come to expect from a certain style of scholarship, then a search might turn up only what we are prepared to see. Indeed it might turn up nothing. In the case of Ch'an or Zen Buddhism, D.T. Suzuki has told us that we miss the point when we look for history in Zen; the essential matter of Zen is timeless truth based upon an experience outside the vicissitudes of history (Suzuki 1953, pp. 25-46). By contrast, Hu Shih claimed that history is all we will find, but a history which must be painstakingly reconstructed by the modern historian because it was virtually unknown to those who figure in it (Hu Shih 1953, pp. 3-4). Whether Ch'an texts are read as revelations of timeless truth or records of historical circumstance, then, may depend in part upon the predisposition of the reader and may well leave the question of an indigenous sense of history untouched.

Then again, as soon as we use the expression "Ch'an tradition" we beg the question by assuming that there is an identifiable historical unity, a "tradition" which we can differentiate or, insofar as it is self-conscious, a tradition that differentiates itself from other traditions and claims certain texts as its own.

Finally, the modern historian will present evidence that many texts gathered today under the name of "Ch'an" were not in fact universally acclaimed as authentic, that a variety of traditions existed, that their texts were often products of generations of redactors, were compilations of sources, additions and erasures, of celebration and censure. The historicity of the very sources we would use to find and define a Ch'an sense of history must be established by modern historical methods.

In the light of these difficulties, I believe we must take a seemingly indirect approach to the question of historical consciousness within Ch'an. We must identify the interests of the contemporary historian before seeking a direct answer in the sources being studied. The following prolegomenon will first examine some interpretations of the sources by prominent historians of Ch'an today. Details cited from Ch'an history will serve more as examples of historians' concerns than as a summary of their findings. Locating the interests of various historians will in turn provide a basis for exploring the question of historical consciousness in the sources, although this falls beyond the scope of this paper. Finally, my appeal for further investigation of the question will suggest other viable avenues into the history of Ch'an not yet given sufficient attention.

#### THE CH'AN OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORIANS

##### *History and Historiography*

Before proceeding, we would do well to make a preliminary distinction between two levels of history in the modern sense of the term: history as story, that is, as a narrative, temporally successive account of persons and events; and history as historiography, the academic discipline that establishes and examines such accounts. Now Ch'an tradition since the ninth century, or at least since the major *Transmission of the Lamp* (景德傳錄 *Ching te ch'uan teng lu*) became an authoritative source printed in the Sung Buddhist canon, has repeated a certain story line that came to be accepted as the true story of the development of Ch'an. The well-known "official" version is simpler still: Ch'an was transmitted to China when an Indian called Bodhidharma came from the West, sat nine years facing a wall, and trained several disciples. Bodhidharma's robe, signifying the direct transmission of mind from Shākyamuni Buddha through the generations, was passed on successively to the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Patriarchs, that is, to Hui-k'o 慧可, Seng-ts'an 僧璨, Tao-hsin 道信, Hung-jen 弘忍, and Hui-neng 慧能. Hui-neng recognized several

successors, two of whose lineages eventually split into the "five houses" (五家 *wu-chia*) of Ch'an in the T'ang era and then into the "seven schools" (七宗 *ch'i-tsung*) in the Sung, two of which survive to this day: the Lin-chi or Rinzai school 臨濟, and the Ts'ao-tung or Sōtō school 曹洞.

Many popular histories of Zen today continue to repeat this simple story line, even though they may mention that the historicity of Bodhidharma and of early textual ascriptions is questionable; and that after Hung-jen, Ch'an split into a Southern and a Northern faction which contested the identity of the true Sixth Patriarch and fought over whether enlightenment was sudden or gradual. The basic story line, however, continues to receive sanction today every time the lineage charts are reprinted or the names of patriarchs and their successors are chanted.

Meanwhile, recent historiography has shown the beginnings of this story to be little more than a convenient legitimization of interests. Working primarily from texts discovered at Tun-huang 敦煌 and from stone inscriptions and other written sources, historians such as Yanagida Seizan, or Hu Shih and Ui Hakuju before him, have suggested a much more divergent and dynamic picture. Bodhidharma was most likely only one of several Central Asian meditation masters, but as the author of "Two Entrances and Four Practices" (二入四行論 *Erh ju ssu hsing lun*) he was the figure chosen by Buddhists on the East Mountain (東山 *Tung-shan*) in the early T'ang when they began to recognize themselves as a separate school and sought a historical link to the Buddha, supported by scriptures—understood as the Buddha's words—to justify the claimed lineage. The so-called Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs were of this East Mountain school; their own historical link to Seng-ts'an, the Third Patriarch, not to mention Hui-k'o and Bodhidharma, remains highly dubious.<sup>2</sup> Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen had numerous disciples who established schools of their own and left records discovered among the Tun-huang documents (see Yampolsky 1983, pp. 4-6). These documents show that the controversies between schools were much more complex than the accounts in popular histories of a Southern vs. a Northern School (南宗 *Nan-tsung* vs. 北宗 *Pei-tsung*), or of sudden vs. gradual enlightenment (頓悟

*tun-wu* vs. 漸悟 *chien-wu*). These controversies were fought out not only in the monasteries and courts of China but in Tibet as well (Yanagida 1983a, pp. 13-14). Furthermore, the sole link between the acclaimed victor, Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng, and Ma-tsu 馬祖 two generations later, was probably fabricated in the person of Nan-yüeh Huai-jang 南嶽懷讓, a supposed Dharma-heir of Hui-neng.<sup>3</sup> This virtual break in the lineage would seem to be of considerable consequence because Ma-tsu was a patriarch of the later Lin-chi and Kuei-yang 漚仰 houses as well as an originator of action Ch'an and the inspiration for a new genre of Ch'an literature, the recorded sayings (語錄 *yü-lu*) of a master from which we draw much of our picture of Ch'an life in the T'ang, a picture not represented in the Tun-huang documents (Yanagida 1983b, p. 186; 1983a, pp. 14-15). Does this gap in the line of transmission indicate merely a lack of historical information, or the existence of yet another school, not actually linked to the Sixth Patriarch, with its own style and teachings, indeed of another "Ch'an" not based on meditation?<sup>4</sup>

#### *Historiography and Effective History*

The findings of modern historians suggest then that early Ch'an was neither a monolithic school nor exclusively a product of indigenous Chinese ideas and practices. But around the beginning of the eighth century in China some Buddhist practitioners came to be conscious of themselves as constituting a school with its own tradition (Yanagida 1976, p. 9) and sought to provide themselves with "a viable history of their origins" (Yampolsky 1983, p. 4).

Ch'an's own history of its origins and development, as it came to define past tradition, constitutes an instance of what Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975, pp. 284-290) has called *Wirkungsgeschichte*, history shaped by the effects of well-entrenched interpretations of the sources of a tradition. In Gadamerian hermeneutics, the impact of effective history upon our reading of ancient sources needs fully to be recognized; any attempt to evade it and stand in immediate temporal relation with the sources is no more than an uncritical pretense. In the case of modern Ch'an scholarship, effective history adds the dimension of recently established

Western historical methods to a story line operative within a culturally, as well as temporally, distant tradition. As we shall see, how the historian of Ch'an today judges the historicity of the traditional stories depends in part on the degree of his *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*, his awareness of the hermeneutical situation in which he stands, as a modern critic, vis-à-vis the effective history of Ch'an.

*Dumoulin's Balanced Approach to a Comprehensive History*

In the first volume of his new *Geschichte des Zen-Buddhismus*, Heinrich Dumoulin presents not only detailed summaries of the recent historiography of Ch'an but also a balanced, comprehensive view of the entire Ch'an movement from its roots in Indian practices and sutras to its expressions in Chinese art and culture. Dumoulin recognizes the bounds of study set forth by both D.T. Suzuki and Hu Shih: the enlightenment experience essential to Zen undoubtedly reaches beyond space and time, language and rational categories, and as such remains inaccessible to historical research; but history still has a task to fulfill with regard to Zen, for the phenomenon of Zen as a whole is historically conditioned; the Zen Way is situated in history as even D.T. Suzuki's quotations of the old masters show (Dumoulin 1985, pp. 4, 65). If experience is essential to Zen, historical study is no less essential to the understanding of all the linguistic and artistic expressions of Zen experience. Dumoulin's undertaking is balanced on premises of universality and of particularity: there is a common human ground to all spiritual experience and hence the study of Zen also belongs to the history of religions which seeks to understand universal human aspirations and activities in their depths; at the same time the universality of human experience is relative, leaving room for historical particularities and hence for historical explanation (Dumoulin 1985, pp. 5-7, 32).

Similarly, Dumoulin differentiates clearly between history and legend, and consistently seeks historically reliable material and evidence to separate probable fact from mere fabrication. But he also insists that the history of Ch'an cannot be properly understood when it is shorn of its traditional self-understanding (that is,

its effective history). For example, the historian must regard the Ch'an claim of direct lineage from the historical Buddha onward, or the legendary events in the lives of Bodhidharma and Hui-neng, as constitutive of Ch'an tradition, however unhistorical they may be (Dumoulin 1985, pp. 11, 89, 145).

Bodhidharma and Hui-neng serve as "ideal figures," symbols of the Ch'an Way, and their legends are absolutely necessary to grasp the actual history of the Ch'an school. For these reasons, Dumoulin aims at a critical account of the historical development of Ch'an, but organizes it according to the chronology that was to become decisive for the tradition. His account of the Ch'an school as such thus begins with an appraisal of the Bodhidharma legends and goes on to discuss in order the other Ch'an patriarchs, the two main lines of Ch'an after Hui-neng—of Ma-tsu and Shih-t'ou 石頭 ; the Ch'an of Lin-chi and of the other "five houses," and finally the two primary Sung Period streams, the Ch'an of "introspecting the koan" ( 看話禪 *k'an-hua ch'an*) and of "silent illumination" ( 默照禪 *mo-chao ch'an*) along with later Sung developments. This chronological order is broken (and then with apologies) only in order to account for the separation of the Northern and Southern Schools, and for the formation of the Hui-neng legends before summarizing the biography and teachings ascribed to the Sixth Patriarch himself. To be sure, deviations in this linear development and discrepancies in historical records are given due account, but the chronology of Ch'an effective history remains the organizing principle of Dumoulin's history throughout.

Within the framework of a chronology basically established by Sung Period chronicles, Dumoulin gives dimension to the linear development of Ch'an by describing the teachings as well as the figures (Hui-neng's "no-mind" for example, or Lin-chi's "true man of no rank") and sketching the social and cultural influences upon them as well as their imprint on the culture. While maintaining empathy with the spiritual dimension of Ch'an, Dumoulin keeps a critical historical distance by explicitly considering the diversity and historical merit of primary sources as well as the variety and strength of conclusions reached by modern historians. In order to examine more closely the interests common to most historians of

Ch'an, we now turn to the historiography of Yanagida Seizan, whom Dumoulin credits for teaching him the critical use of abundant Ch'an literature (1985, p. x), and on whose studies of sources he often relies.

*Yanagida's Historiography of Sources*

Although he has also written comprehensive essays in the intellectual history (思想史 *shisōshi*) of Ch'an and studies of particular figures, Yanagida Seizan's detailed studies of source texts will best serve our purpose of further identifying the interests of the critical historian. We may limit our example to his study of the "Record of the Historically [Transmitted] Dharma-Treasure" (歷代法寶記 *Li tai fa pao chi*), an important source of the Sixth Patriarch's "Platform Sutra" (壇經 *T'an ching*) which supplements the picture of Ch'an presented by its effective history, and gives us a better idea of the complexity of the early Ch'an movement and the concomitant difficulties of the historian's task. Yanagida (1976) has reconstructed a text from various Tun-huang documents, written an extensive introduction to it, and provided the Japanese reading of the characters as well as an annotated translation into modern Japanese.

He dates the text between 774 and 781, immediately after the death of priest Wu-chu 無住 whose teachings it relates. This is the era of the sudden-gradual controversy and of Chinese-Tibetan interaction. Yanagida has established, as far as possible, the actual chronology and doctrinal affiliation of the masters named in the text, associating Wu-chu with the Pao-t'ang 保唐 school in Szechwan. Although advocating the doctrines of no-thought (無念 *wu-nien*) and sudden enlightenment (頓悟 *tun-wu*), this school was neither "Southern" nor "Northern" according to lineage; indeed historical criticism unmasks the lineage claimed for Wu-chu as a politically motivated fabrication to align him with an imperially sanctioned master.

Yanagida also, if somewhat cautiously, offers some interpretation of the doctrines and their origins. The emphasis on no-thought, for example, is clear evidence of influence from Shen-hui 神會, a Southern School advocate who attacked the



Northern School for its attachment to purity and quietism. The Pao-t'ang school sided with Southern Ch'an in advocating sudden enlightenment, but forgot—at least according to T'ang era Ch'an historian Tsung-mi 宗密 --that the no-thought identical to it is the functioning of natural or original knowledge (自然知 *tzu-jan chih*) or (本知 *pen-chih*); hence, even if it broke new ground historically, it is also akin doctrinally to the Northern and other Ch'an schools (Yanagida 1983a, pp. 18-20).

Yanagida continues in this way to track down earlier literary and scriptural sources of the "Record of the Historically [Transmitted] Dharma-Treasure," as they are cited or presupposed in its reactionary passages. He estimates the scope of influence of the text on the Tibetans, for example, and on later figures such as Tsung-mi, who is highly critical of Wu-chu's doctrines but actually, Yanagida suggests (p. 43), gets the impetus for his synthesis of the doctrinal and meditational traditions from Wu-chu. Yanagida also analyzes the style of the text, pointing out affinities to the later genre of "recorded sayings" in their free use of colloquial expressions.

This brief synopsis, while hardly an account of Yanagida's methodology as an historian, will suffice to identify his interests. As a critical historian, Yanagida is clearly interested in establishing the reliability of information given in the text and the process of the text's composition. He attempts to separate fact from fabrication, calling the tale of transmission of Bodhidharma's robe from the Fifth Patriarch to Empress Wu and finally to Wu-chu "a transparent fiction designed only to benefit the Pao-t'ang school" (Yanagida 1983a, p. 22). Likewise, he directs our attention to the political motives behind the content of the teachings and to the spheres of doctrinal influence. Finally, he attempts to establish accurate chronologies of teachers and texts—in a word, to tell the story of what occurred, when, and why. Even so, it seems that his re-telling is impossible without recourse to the effective history of the Ch'an school, which he respects by continuing to speak of Bodhidharma as its founder and by noting the symbolic significance of the robe-transmission. Yanagida's historio-

graphy, then, for all its critical attitude, is not to be confused with a positivistic approach, which will now be exemplified briefly.

#### *A Recent Positivistic Approach*

In his *Truths and Fabrications in Religion*, Nagashima Takayuki attempts to deconstruct the Hui-neng legends and finally set the story of Ch'an beginnings straight. Although he views Hu Shih's work on Shen-hui as the ideal model of research into Ch'an (Nagashima 1978, pp. x, 16), in fact both his approach and his conclusions diverge from those of Hu Shih, not to mention Ui Hakuju and Yanagida, despite their own significant differences (see Dumoulin 1985, pp. 117-120; Bielefeldt and Lancaster 1975, pp. 201-202). If the title of the book does not already betray its positivistic slant, its structure, proceeding by way of "hypotheses" and "proofs," clearly does. The general thesis is that Hui-neng, the so-called Sixth Patriarch of true Ch'an, is a total fabrication. Nagashima demonstrates how the details of Hui-neng's biography were made up and how the "Platform Sutra" ascribed to him derives entirely from earlier texts, themselves often largely of fictitious nature. Thus much of the "Platform Sutra" is based on the biography of Hui-neng included in the "Recorded Sayings of Shen-hui," itself largely a fabrication of Shen-hui's thoughts by followers who relied on Ta-chu Hui-hai's "Treatise on the Essential Teachings of Sudden Enlightenment" (頓悟入道要門論 *Tun wu ju tao yao men lun*) and on government official Wang Wei's mmm epitaph to Hui-neng, written at Shen-hui's behest and constructed from details in older books and sutras (Nagashima 1978, pp. 220, 107, 105). Other important sources of the "Platform Sutra" include, in Nagashima's view, the "Recorded Sayings of Ma-tsu" (馬祖語錄 *Ma tsu yü lu*), the "Record of the Historically [Transmitted] Dharma-Treasure," and, at a step removed, the Lotus Sutra and other scriptures (Nagashima 1978, p. 245). Often the surmised chronology of texts is far from straightforward; passages of one text may be included in another work which in turn supplies passages for a later version of the first text. But Nagashima's ideal method of "proof" is to trace unacknowledged quotations to their "earlier" sources, and to surmise how newly fabricated

details were constructed or extrapolated from existent textual patterns and phrases. This methodology may not appear to differ from that of other historians, but its positivistic application leads to quite different conclusions.

The question as to the validity of the particular linguistic connections and chronological corrections made by Nagashima must be left to the judgment of competent philologists and historians. Here we may note that the logical unsoundness of many of his inferences<sup>5</sup> is not necessarily the result of a positivistic approach relentlessly seeking to sift out facts from fiction. What is crucial here is the question of just what sort of historical reality remains after a positivistic deconstruction of the "myths." Ultimately Nagashima admits that his facts cannot explain everything when he writes, "I have proved the non-existence of Hui-neng, but I presume that we still have to return to the idea of Hui-neng as the symbol of the Zen sect" (1978, p. 317). Yet it seems that we are left with even less than the symbolic, idealized figure, based on the historical person, of Hui-neng (or of Bodhidharma) which Dumoulin and Yanagida recognize. Not only is the historical figure in Nagashima's history reduced to textual elements, but texts too are dissolved into one another in criss-cross fashion so that only fragmentary linguistic entities remain. "Hui-neng" is a pure construct, a symbol of "seeing into one's own nature" (見性 *chien-hsing*), the doctrine that became increasingly popular among the unlettered because it did not require scriptural study (Nagashima 1978, pp. 296-297). Ironically, a movement later identified as "not relying on words or letters" (不立文字 *pu li wen-tzu*) is reduced to mere ciphers.

#### *Limits of Empirical Historiography*

Given the nature of the scattered evidence, this result may be a natural consequence of a strictly "scientific" approach to early Ch'an history. The approaches considered so far all seem to follow the ideals of modern empirical historiography as they were formulated by Leopold von Ranke a century ago. History cannot judge the past, or instruct the present for the benefit of future ages; "it wants to show only what really happened (*wie es eigentlich*

*gewesen ist*)," Ranke wrote in 1859. "The strict presentation of the facts is . . . the supreme law of historiography" (cited in Meyerhoff 1959, p. 13). In this view, then, the ideal historian is an impartial observer and objective recorder of what actually happened.

The discovery of what really happened in early Ch'an, however, is unusually dependent upon establishing the historicity of texts. Textual variants and competing versions of a story often mean lacunae in the fabric of the past that eliminate all hope of establishing historical "facts." Historiography often shows that the events and persons described in the texts cannot be real "historical" persons and events; but this negative knowledge is not always supplemented by positive information. To be sure, many more detailed source studies need to be undertaken and their "results will complement and perhaps even change the picture of Ch'an as a whole" (Dumoulin 1985, p. 153). But "there remain unsolved problems—with today's state of research, unsolvable problems—in investigating the new phase of Ch'an history, its rise in the eighth century from Hui-neng on" (Dumoulin 1985, p. 117). For example, it will probably never be possible to write a factual biography of Bodhidharma or Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng. For these reasons Dumoulin suggests that in order to understand the whole story of Ch'an we need to respect its traditional story line, even while employing modern critical consciousness which distinguishes fact from fiction. In their appreciation of effective history, Dumoulin's and Yanagida's projects of rewriting the history of Ch'an, unlike Nagashima's and Hu Shih's, go beyond the ideals of empirical historiography as formulated by Ranke. But further evaluation of the history that the Ch'an school provided for itself will depend on fuller clarification of the kind of historical consciousness one can find within Ch'an. What sort of awareness of history has been discovered so far?

CH'AN HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS UNCOVERED BY  
MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Whenever we make statements such as "Ch'an traces its origins back to Shākyamuni," or, as Dumoulin often does, refer to its "self-understanding," we in fact assume that Ch'an existed as an historically conscious entity, a self-conscious tradition. Yanagida (1983a, p. 17) traces this awareness to the first half of the eighth century, when the Ch'an movement "first became conscious of its own tradition." "After Shen-hui began to preach the tradition of the Southern School in 714, other Buddhist schools [such as T'ient'ai] became conscious of their own traditions." In the eighth century there was a "general interest in establishing Indian lineages" and patriarchal lists were "composed in order to establish the origin [of certain Ch'an doctrines] in the teachings of the Buddha" (Yanagida 1983a, pp. 28-29).

*Historical Consciousness in the Ch'an Chronicles*

Much of our information about this interest in lineage derives from the early Tun-huang chronicles and later Sung Period "lamp histories" (燈史 *teng-shih*). For all their diversity and range in historical reliability, most historians today recognize that none of them were written with the ideals of modern historiography in mind. Nagashima (1978, p. 1) calls them "historical" Ch'an texts "which do not always state historical facts." Dumoulin (1985, pp. 65-66) sees them as primarily works of literature written without historical intent, born of the spirit of Ch'an and aspiring to convey that spirit. In them the past is transfigured and formed according to the ideals of an author in a later period (one wonders to what extent today's histories do the same); hence the historical picture which they present is in need of correction and complement. For Yanagida (1967, pp. 11-12), all the lamp histories of the Ch'an school contrast with other Buddhist histories and with the biographies of eminent monks—which provide a wealth of non-sectarian historical data—by placing central importance on the bond of master-disciple transmission (師資相承 *shishisōjō*). The lamp histories depict only figures in (accepted) Ch'an lineages

traced from the author's own time back to Shākyamuni Buddha or even to the seven ancient Buddhas. Moreover, Yanagida writes that these Ch'an histories are "an expression of a religious, believing tradition. . . . If we dare to call each and every one of the stories handed down a fabrication, then [we must admit] they include the necessary rationale for being so. Contrary [to calling them fabricated], we can say that even the historical facts themselves related in them have already assumed a narrative meaning. One who knows only how to repudiate and dismiss the stories as factually unhistorical is not qualified to read the lamp histories. For it is an obvious premise that they do not transmit solely historical fact" (Yanagida 1967, pp. 17-18).

Writing on "Buddhist Historiography in Sung China," Jan Yün-hua places the Ch'an histories in the wider context of historical concerns at that time. He notes that they stressed dialogue, sectarianism, and geneology, and directly inspired non-Buddhist historians (Jan 1964, p. 379). But the claimed lineage of Indian patriarchs leading up to Bodhiharma was sharply contested by monks of other sects. Tzu-fang 子昉, a T'ien-t'ai monk, wrote a vehement refutation called "Stop the Lies" (止訛 *Chih ngo*). Another monk, Tsung-yin 宗印, wrote, "As regards the twenty-eight patriarchs claimed by the Ch'an sect, their names are neither mentioned in canons nor appear in commentaries" (1964, p. 369). This controversy would certainly seem to indicate some sort of "critical attitude toward historical events," at least until we see how one typical Ch'an monk defended the lineage. Ch'i-sung 契嵩, who wrote three works on Ch'an geneology, simply retained the order of patriarchs but omitted their dates, since, as he put it, the calendars of India and China were different, and the countries remote from one another, so the dates and translations of names might not be exact. Jan implies that these Sung era works may have been models of literary expression but hardly of historical accuracy (1964, pp. 367-368).

Were we therefore to ignore spiritual content and to abide by the ideals of modern empirical historiography, the "history" cited in the Tun-huang documents and the Sung period "transmission of the lamp" texts would seem to serve the interests not of factual

truth but of the political legitimation of a master, a school, or a doctrine. This legitimation proceeded by such tactics as showing direct descent from the Buddha, claiming possession of Bodhi-dharma's robe, and citing supporting passages from (often fabricated) sutras. Where discrepancies were noticed, an author might relegate a differing opinion to a heretical position (as did Shen-hui with the "Northern School"), or forge a lineage between his own mentor and a politically established master (as Wu-chu was linked to Chin ho-shang 金和尚 in the *Li tai fa pao chi*). These texts muster their historical evidence as if to give their masters ground for saying "I am an authentic teacher; my teaching, as opposed to so and so's, is the right one." Indeed "the very title [of the *Li tai fa pao chi*] expresses such a conviction," Yanagida notes, "for it claims to be a record of the *dharma-ratna*—that is, the true teaching of Buddhism—as transmitted directly from the Buddha himself through the lineage of the patriarchs." Alternative titles of this work suggest the same position: "A Record of the Lineage [of the Correct Transmission] from Master to Disciple;" and "A record [of the Dharma] in which the true and the false are determined, the heterodox is suppressed and the orthodox revealed, and all *cittas* are destroyed" (Yanagida 1983a, pp. 25-26). Similarly, several Sung period Ch'an chronicles, in their very titles or in their content, refer to "the true school," revealing their concern to verify the uninterrupted transmission of true enlightenment (Dumoulin 1985, p. 17).

In summary, historians can point to numerous chronicles which suggest the Ch'an movement's growing awareness of itself as an historical identity. But when such texts are read as factual history—certainly not the only way to read them—then modern critical methods ascertain that the facts are frequently misrepresented, as much from devious motives as from lack of information or from genuine religious intent. The historical awareness of the Ch'an chronicles seems to be limited to a sectarian concern to establish a lineage leading back to the historical Buddha and thus to justify a particular school. A commitment to investigate the stories in an objective manner, as modern historiography would have it, is conspicuously absent. There appears to be at least one

significant exception, however, to this purely sectarian historical awareness within Ch'an.

*Historical Consciousness in Tsung-mi*

Tsung-mi is known as the great synthesizer of Ch'an and the teachings 教禪 (*chiao-ch'an*). Trained in both meditation and the study of scriptures, he regarded himself as a successor to Shen-hui in the Ho-tse 荷澤 school of Ch'an and is recognized as the Fifth Patriarch of Hua-yen 華嚴 Buddhism, one of the "teaching" schools. Particularly important in the search for historical consciousness in T'ang period Buddhism in general are two of his extant works on the Ch'an movement up to his day: the "Chart of Ch'an Lineage Transmission" (禪門師資承襲圖 *Ch'an men shih tzu ch'eng hsi t'u*), composed about 828, and the "Preface to the Collected Writings on the Source of Ch'an" (禪源諸詮集都 *Ch'an yüan chu ch'uan chi tu hsu*) written in 833. The following summary relies upon the studies and translations of these works done by Jan Yün-hua and Jeffrey Broughton.

The occasion for writing the "Ch'an chart," as reported by Tsung-mi himself, indicates a deep appreciation of historical knowledge as well as a confusion arising from the rivalry among differing Ch'an groups. Desiring to make the right choice among them, a government official, Minister P'ei Hsiu 裴休, asked advice of his mentor Tsung-mi: "It is urgently necessary to distinguish the origins and histories [of the various lineages] and to know which are deep and which are shallow. . . . I respectfully hope that you will be able to differentiate the various kinds . . . and generally arrange in order the [various lineages]" (Broughton 1975, p. 54). As an answer, Tsung-mi relates the histories of four major Ch'an schools, provides a chart of their lineages, and gives a summary and critique of their teachings. Although Tsung-mi offers no direct criticism of his own Ho-tse (Southern) school, his metaphorical description of the different lines suggests a more impartial judgment. The schools are like different groups of people who look at a single luminous pearl but disagree about its reality relative to the colors it inevitably reflects. In their differing



views, Tsung-mi concludes that "all these people have not yet seen the real pearl" (Jan 1972, p. 53)

The "Ch'an Preface" indicates the extent of Tsung-mi's further investigations into the history of the Ch'an movement and his concern to classify its various doctrines. The four schools listed in the "Ch'an Chart" have been expanded to ten different lineages, which are then arranged into three levels reflecting the nature of their teachings. The work continues to show "how each of these three levels relates to the Buddha's long preaching career" (Broughton 1975, pp. 74-75). Another analogy suggests the prudent way to regard the conflicts in the doctrines: like the parts of an elephant's body, they must be seen together as expedients to teach the one truth (Jan 1972, pp. 29-30). Jan notes that Tsung-mi's liberal non-sectarian approach is akin to modern scholarship, even if it depicted the vision of his own Ho-tse school as superior. To other Ch'an monks "he was an ex-member who did not share their sectarian enthusiasm nor limit himself within the practice formalized by various Ch'an [schools]" (Jan 1972, pp. 2-3). Dumoulin sees Tsung-mi not as a Ch'an master seeking experience but as a scholar undertaking comparative studies and criticized on that account. He represents the syncretistic-harmonizing tendency of Chinese Mahāyāna and, as Yanagida suggests, stands in a different kind of lineage leading to the tenth-century figure Yen-shou 延寿 who syncretized Ch'an and Pure Land doctrines and practices (Dumoulin 1985, pp. 267-268). Broughton (p. iii) sees him as a learned exegete whose "innovation was to fit the Ch'an lineages into a *p'an-chiao* 判教 [doctrinal classification]—in effect, creating a *p'an-ch'an* 判禪," a Ch'an based upon a classification of teachings.

In summary, Tsung-mi seems to share many interests with modern critical historians. He writes in his own name and frequently lays bare his own assumptions. While he places himself within the Ch'an movement, he attempts an unbiased description of it from a perspective outside if still sympathetic to it. Historians today can glean much reliable information about actual Ch'an practices from his "Ch'an Chart" and "Preface." In the end, however, these "histories" aim at a classification of teachings

based on three sets of metaphysical principles (see Jan 1972, p. 28), which a priori connect the teachings to Mahāyāna thought in general. In this respect, Tsung-mi's method is closer to that of other Chinese Buddhist speculative, synthetic philosophers than to that of modern historians. Fuller clarification of the kind of historical concerns evinced by Tsung-mi remains a task for the historian of Chinese Buddhism. Here we may note that if Tsung-mi possessed historical consciousness in its modern sense, it would seem to be in the few passages where he views the explicit doctrines of a school as a response to historical conditions<sup>6</sup> and not simply as an intended expression of timeless truth, a partial view of an immobile elephant or an eternal pearl.

#### *Remaining Questions of History and Truth*

Tsung-mi's patron, Minister P'ei Hsiu, asked him to straighten out the disputed lineages and teachings within the Ch'an movement—a task shared by contemporary historians. The intent today, however, is not so much to decide which teachings or lineages are authentic as to discover "what actually happened" and where the stories and teachings came from. What difference it would have made to the early Ch'an groups had they been presented with a "correct" version of their history as ascertained today is a moot question. What difference it would make to a living Ch'an or Zen tradition is a question that could be pursued with more profit. This sort of question, moreover, is not entirely modern; we get a hint of it and of an answer, for example, in Yüan-wu's 圓悟 commentary to the first case in the "Blue Cliff Record" ( 碧巖錄 *Pi-yen lu*) kōan collection, published in 1128: "According to tradition, Master Chih died in the year 514, while Bodhidharma came to Liang in 520; since there is a seven year discrepancy, why is it said that the two met? This must be a mistake in the tradition. As to what is recorded in tradition, I will not discuss this matter now. All that's important is to understand the gist of the matter . . . ." (Cleary 1977, p. 5).

If historicity or historical factuality was not of central concern in Ch'an texts of various eras, the question of truth vs. falsity certainly was. The "Record of Lin-chi" ( 臨濟錄 *Lin chi*

lu), for example, has the master proclaim, ". . . my Dharma-eye became clear for the first time and I was able . . . to tell the true from the false" (Yanagida 1972, p. 76). Long before this Northern Sung text, Tun-huang documents made abundant references to this question. Recall the alternative title of the *Li tai fa pao chi*: "Record in which the true and the false are determined, the heterodox is suppressed and the orthodox revealed . . ." The critical reader today might wish to know by what criteria the true and the false were determined, and the orthodox revealed. Were the quarrels over orthodoxy only "questions of correct observances," such as Wu-chu's reduction of *śīla* or right conduct to *wu-nien* or no-thought (Yanagida 1983a, p. 33)? Or were they also questions of who had the "right dharma eye?" This kind of problem calls for philosophical interpretation as well as historical investigation. Its solution requires the investigator to address not only the issue of historicity but also that of hermeneutics, of how the texts are to be read. Reading Ch'an texts in order to glean factual information that would meet today's demand for "objective truth" eventually raises the problem of what truth and factuality came to mean within Ch'an communities. With regard to the "lamp histories," Yanagida has written:

In the process of scrupulously examining these fabricated records one by one, [the historian] can clarify the historically and socially religious nature of the people who fabricated them and can lay bare a historicity (史実 *shijitsu*) of a different dimension than so-called historical fact. It is of the very nature of the lamp histories to be fabricated, not some mere expedient or accident of expression (Yanagida 1967, p. 18).

This comment would seem to suggest a radically different approach to the history of Ch'an, one which would focus on the literary nature of the genres of Ch'an literature—the lamp histories, *kōan* collections, recorded sayings, and more scriptural Tun-huang documents which provided examples of the problems of truth and history just mentioned.

## THE NEED FOR A LITERARY HISTORY OF CH'AN

It goes without saying that the historian's sources are not facts but texts, be they in the form of written documents, oral interviews, living rituals, or archaeological monuments and artifacts in need of interpretation. It would seem only natural, then, to pursue a history centering not so much on people and events as on textual forms and language. In fact, historians such as Yanagida and Dumoulin must often clarify the literary nature as well as the historical status of the texts they rely on to write a history of people, doctrines, and events. As mentioned before, their histories of Ch'an never attempt exclusively to establish under the sanctions of objective truth and accuracy what actually happened, nor of course do they simply repeat current effective history. Yet discussions of the literary nature of Ch'an works rarely go beyond a clarification of the type of evidence of a factual history or an interesting excursus into one or the other isolated region. In comparison with attempts at factual accounts of Ch'an persons, events and teachings, relatively few historical investigations of literary motifs and genres have been published. Yanagida (1969 & 1978, pp. 5-78) has done more extensive studies of the "recorded sayings" (*yü-lu*) genre. But no one to my knowledge has written a systematic history of Ch'an in which the main characters are literary forms and not reconstructed personae, events, and doctrines. The following is a brief sketch of what such an approach might involve.

*Literary History vs. Factual History*

Like Ranke's factual history of what actually happened, a literary history of Ch'an would be concerned with change and development through time, but in its ideal form it would bracket the question of the factual or fictional character of the accounts. It would focus on the evolution of literary forms but avoid claims about their internal representation or misrepresentation of historical reality. It would not seek, for example, to replace the traditional or "effective" story line about the transmission of mind from Bodhidharma to Hui-neng with the more accurate, if fragmentary,

picture of a melange of schools and teachers. It might in part explore how Bodhidharma or Hui-neng, as literary motifs, have been depicted across the centuries in Ch'an stories, poems and paintings; and how the nature of the genre affected the way in which they were depicted. Or it might trace the development and characteristics of a particular genre and contrast that genre with others within the Ch'an or Buddhist tradition (as Yanagida has done with the recorded sayings), but also compare it with similar literary forms in non-Buddhist traditions.

The difference between factual and literary history may be clarified further by noticing the direction and object of inference. In factual history, texts are the given measure for deciding the facts about the life of some person or school. More specifically, texts composed in different times and contexts are used synchronically to establish a detail in a diachronic factual history not fully represented in any one of them. One text alone provides insufficient evidence for actual historical occurrences. In literary history, on the other hand, language patterns serve as the measure for determining the identity of linguistic forms. That is, language patterns are identified diachronically, across time, to establish the existence of particular if fluid motifs, stories, and genres. Entities such as the *mondō* (問答 *wen-ta*) style of dialogue, the *kōan* (公案 *kung-an*), and the "encounter" (機緣 *chi-yüan*) between master and disciple have been discovered in this manner.

To be sure, factual and literary approaches to Ch'an history cannot in practice be totally separated. Contemporary historians of Ch'an combine the approaches when they establish the factual chronology of versions of a particular text, for example, by examining linguistic variations. To the extent that a literary history would date the texts of an identified genre on the basis of internal evidence, it too has recourse to the factual approach. Still, there are cogent reasons to pursue a more literary approach which brackets the problem of historical factuality as far as possible. In the process of scrupulously examining texts to discover the real people and events behind history, the historical characters have a tendency to disappear in the layers of qualifications that must be made regarding their historicity. This is particularly true

in pre-Sung Ch'an history, where there is a lack of corroborating historical sources, and the characters described are often the creations of virtually unknown writers who enhance personalities, fabricate events, and invent connections. An approach that would consider such characters primarily as literary figures, neither necessarily factual nor fictional, could avoid their fragmentation at the hands of historiography and their fictualization at the feet of a totally uncritical, unhistorical approach. Such characters could be seen to live, grow and be transformed in a world of developing literary forms.

If the historical person frequently eludes the approach of factual history, the so-called enlightenment experience so essential to Ch'an inevitably does, not only for D.T. Suzuki but for historians like Dumoulin and Yanagida as well. We cannot assume that a literary history could capture this "core experience" either; but to the extent that it is demonstrated in the form of sayings, episodes, and stories, it might be more adequately depicted in a history of literary forms.

Further investigation of such forms would in turn directly benefit historians pursuing a factual approach insofar as they must take into account differences in genre in order to determine the reliability of their sources. In reconstructing the historical life of Ma-tsu, for example, Dumoulin (1985, pp. 154-157) assesses information related in documents of widely differing genre as well as time of composition: Tsung-mi's "Ch'an Preface," a collection of biographies, a Ch'an chronicle, the "Transmission of the Lamp" history, a recorded sayings text, and a kōan collection. Further research into the relationship between genres and styles of reporting would therefore lighten the historian's task.

Over and above their contribution to factual history, however, comparative literary investigations would immensely enrich our knowledge of the vehicles of Ch'an expression. Such investigations might explore conventions of story telling and story recording in relevant periods of Chinese history; conventions governing the repetition and transformation of motifs, episodes, and stories; and conventions regarding the textual usage of other texts, i.e., quoting, "plagiarizing," putting words into the mouth of another,

embedding texts within texts, or layering commentary and source. The use of colloquial vs. literary language, and the importance given to metaphor and figurative speech,<sup>7</sup> would need to be examined. More theoretical problems might also be explored, such as the issue of "intertextuality" or interweaving of texts, and its concomitant challenge to our currently accepted ideas about authorship, originality, and influence; or the challenge of the primacy of metaphor to the notion of determinate meaning and the practice of unambiguous translation. Specific investigations along these lines would provide a basis for a more systematic history of the genres of Ch'an literature.

#### *A Sketch of Ch'an Genres*

A history of literary genres would tell the story of the formation of the complex Tun-huang documents, witty and lively recorded sayings, "transmission of the lamp" histories, and multi-layered kōan collections. Political and doctrinal motives would need to be explored as well as literary style and motif. Insofar as the various texts were chronologically arranged and the motives were determined from extra-Ch'an sources, this sort of history would rely upon factual corroboration; but otherwise its methods and themes would be quite different. A genre history would not be unpeopled, but its leading characters would figure more as literary than historical personages. Likewise, it would not be without doctrinal interpretation, but the analysis of teachings and sayings would remain closer to the question of how style affects content. It would therefore make ample use of methods in literary criticism. It would also have much to learn from "form-historical" (*form-geschichtliche*) methods and more recent approaches used in biblical scholarship, particularly since genres are often mixed in any single Ch'an work.

Most genres relevant to Ch'an history have been identified if not specifically investigated. They include extra-Ch'an literature such as various "biographies of eminent monks," classifications of teachings (*p'an-chiao*), and commentaries on sutras, as well as genres of sutras themselves. As the earliest genre of Ch'an literature proper, Yanagida (1983b, p. 189) names the lamp histories.

Under this heading he includes the Tun-huang chronicles such as the "Record of the Historically [Transmitted] Dharma Treasure," as well as the so-called "Five Lamp Records" (五燈錄 *wu teng-lu*) of the Northern Sung; but further investigation might well require at least two different genres, the Tun-huang texts being more contentious and doctrinally oriented in view of the disputes over orthodoxy. For Yanagida, in any case, the lamp histories are characterized by their predilection for a concrete and personalized expression of the teachings, in sharp contrast to earlier Buddhist doctrinal systems (1983b, pp. 189-190). His insights that it is of their very nature to be "fabricated" and that their use of "fabrication" implies a different notion of historicity (Yanagida 1967, p. 18) calls for an in-depth examination of the relation between style and content, language forms and truth claims. Dumoulin (1985, p. 16) mentions their claim that the transmission of mind is not itself in any need of a succession of patriarchs; a further theme to explore, then, would be their literary rather than "historical" reasons for organizing stories around patriarchal lines.

The genre in which patriarchal Ch'an (祖師禪 *tsu-shih-ch'an*) comes to the fore is that of the recorded sayings. The "sayings of the four houses" (四家語錄 *ssu-chia yü-lu*) of Ma-tsu, Pai-chang 百丈, Huang-po 黃蘗, and Lin-chi—actually four masters in a single line of transmission—form a major stream in the effective history of Ch'an. Dumoulin (1985, p. 166) notes that such works consist of episodes, talks, and pithy sayings of the masters, but also contain traces of ideas from Indian sutras, especially the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. Yanagida's studies of their formation (1969, 1983b; 1978, pp. 5-78) are exemplary instances of the kind of genre analysis needed on a wider scale. Of particular interest for a literary history is their use of colloquial language; as a genre they contain rare vestiges of the language as it was actually spoken. While recognizing the uniqueness of the Ch'an recorded sayings, Yanagida sees a connection between them and many classics and scriptures whose origins are in the spoken word and whose stories were told, retold, and transformed through willful interpretation. Their non-fiction is the optimum of fiction (1978, pp. 60-61).



Of significance for the distinction between factual and literary historical approaches is the stance of the recorded sayings toward historical transmission. While this question remains a theme that needs closer investigation, it appears that they are concerned more with demonstrating an understanding of the dharma than with demonstrating its historical transmission. Hence their symbol is the "encounter" (機縁 *chi-yüan*) rather than the robe. For Yanagida the central role accorded the encounter requires a shift in the line of the historian's questions; seeking historical data about real persons and events in various versions of the same encounter becomes less important than appreciating the religious vitality and constant reappraisal of the meaning of Buddhism represented by the fluid treatment of encounters (1983b, pp. 193-194). The monk in such encounters often stands not for an historical person but for someone paralyzed by dependence on some fixed religious position (p. 190). Yanagida suggests further that recording an enlightened master's actions and words reflects a very different historical stance from one that quotes the Buddha's words in scriptures, as was the practice in much previous literature. The numerous examples of peculiarities in style and content which Yanagida relates to the new stance of the recorded sayings should encourage fuller, more systematic treatment of this genre from the point of view of literary criticism.

The Ch'an kōan collections are, as Dumoulin states (1985, p. 7), one of the most peculiar specimens of world literature. Their literary merit far outweighs any factual history that can be gleaned from them (see Dumoulin, 1953). Nor does a treatment of their content as "Ch'an teachings" do them justice, for the koan cases they relate function as aids to enlightenment experience, not as doctrines (Dumoulin 1985, pp. 226, 234). A literary analysis of their structure and use of language would have more to tell. Their peculiar layering of prose with verse, and of core cases or "examples of the leaders" (頌古 *sung-ku*) with commentary and notes, indicates much more than an uncritical accretion of texts over time. In pointing out the bounds of language explicitly by direct comment or implicitly by stylistic structure, the writers of this genre perform their own kind of demythologization of effec-

tive history. The explicit separation of commentary and notes from the core case at hand, and the poignant criticism of stagnant interpretation, reveal the compilers' acute hermeneutical awareness of the relation between text and reader. The Sung period systematization of the words and actions of the old masters has been called a decline from the vitality of T'ang period Ch'an; indeed teachers such as Ta-hui deplored their abuse and reportedly burned the printing blocks of the monumental "Blue Cliff Record" compiled by his own teacher, Yüan-wu. Yet from a literary point of view, the kōan collections represent a pinnacle in the history of Ch'an literature, and deserve deep, comparative exploration which is mindful of the ways they are used today as well as of the compilations hardly read any more at all.

*The Ch'an Codes and the Need for an Institutional History of Ch'an*

Lamp histories, recorded sayings, and kōan collections by no means exhaust the list of Ch'an genres; on the other hand, the more one explores, the more tenuous becomes the boundary between "Ch'an" and "extra-Ch'an" literature. Of central importance to the question of the historical identity of Ch'an is the genre of Ch'an monastic codes or "Pure Regulations" (清規 *ch'ing-kuei*). Several Japanese scholars have studied the formation of this genre, and Martin Collcutt has examined several examples of it, particularly as a source of information about early Ch'an community life. Effective history has it that this literature began with the code of Pai-chang, heir to Ma-tsu, who wished to establish regulations proper to a Ch'an monastery as such, in place of the *vinaya* rules used up to then; but the modern historian traces documents of such codes beyond the Northern Sung period (Collcutt 1983, pp. 173-174; 167). In any case, this effective history reveals a growing concern within a rather diverse historical movement to identify and distinguish itself from other Buddhist institutions; and the modern historian is heir to this history of effects insofar as he refers to a "Ch'an" school or sect as far back as Bodhidharma, or to "Ch'an" monasteries as early as Fourth Patriarch Tao-hsin's "East Mountain."

A critical examination of the usage of terms like "Ch'an school" or "sect" ( 禪宗 *ch'an-tsung*) and "house" ( 家 *chia*) in various genres of literature, as well as of the linguistic categories peculiar to the Ch'an codes, would serve to clarify further the nature of historical, sectarian consciousness in Ch'an. Studies comparing the Chinese codes not only with their Japanese counterparts such as Dōgen's *Eihei shingi* 永平清規, but also with monastic rules in the Christian and Hindu traditions, could throw light on the role of authority, orthodoxy, and intra-sectarian consciousness of identity in the world's religions. Moreover, since the Ch'an codes are hardly reducible to a set of staid rules or descriptions of monastic duties, an analysis of their use of example and metaphorical precedent (such as Pai-chang's "a day of no work is a day of no eating") would deepen our understanding of the role of literary inspiration in regulating communal life. Finally, the codes as a genre provide invaluable material for a much-needed institutional history of Ch'an.<sup>8</sup> By utilizing both factual and literary approaches and focusing on the development of its social embodiments, an institutional history could also illuminate the social nature of historical consciousness in Ch'an and the aspect of consensus in its discrimination of truth and falsity.

### CONCLUSION

Is there historical consciousness within Ch'an? Clearly, the Ch'an chronicles evince a strong interest in historically connecting their adherents to Shākyamuni Buddha, and to one another. Reliance upon the chronicles has given rise to traditional story lines, depicting certain teachers as authentic, others as not, certain practitioners as gaining insight, others as not. From the viewpoint of this effective history, a true understanding of the teachings and experience of the Buddha put one in a direct line, standing eye to eye, with him; from the standpoint of empirical historiography, teachers were legitimized by placing them in the lineage of the historical Buddha, and an historical measure was applied to the question of authenticity. If we cannot today take the accounts in

the chronicles as factually true descriptions, neither can we assume that they described persons and events under the same criteria, the same notions of fact and fabrication that we now possess. An investigation of the significance of historical fabrication in the Ch'an histories leads to other genres of the literature, and to other ways of reading them. One way of discerning their historical consciousness calls for the reader to suspend judgment about their factual or fictional nature, and to focus instead on the stories themselves. Even then, one will not gain any recognition of their indigenous sense of historicity without allowing accustomed ways of reading to be challenged. Ultimately, an examination of the meaning of history for Ch'an, or for Buddhism in general, requires the questioner to examine in equal depth his own conception and use of history, as they also are historically conditioned. The question that serves as the title of this essay remains a question at its conclusion. Its intent has been to spur the historian on to explore new themes, and to open the way for an investigation of historicity in its philosophical sense, the primordially historical nature of human beings, as it is expressed in Ch'an Buddhism.

#### NOTES

1. I shall use the term "Ch'an" in this paper to refer specifically to the Ch'an tradition in China from its inception through the Sung period; the more general term "Zen," used by some authors I quote, covers the tradition in Japan and other lands as well as China. The problem of history in Ch'an and popular Chinese Buddhism after the Sung deserves its own study. Likewise, I shall for the most part use Chinese, rather than Japanese, transliterations of relevant terms and titles.
2. For this reason some scholars consider the possibility of Tao-hsin as the historical first patriarch of Ch'an; see Chappell 1983, p. 89.
3. Nan-yüeh Huai-jang may have studied under Hui-an, a disciple of Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen, but came to be depicted as a direct heir to Hui-neng as early as 828 in Tsung-mi's "Ch'an Chart" (Broughton 1975, p. 28). Although most historians today conclude that there is no evidence for a historical link between Hui-neng and Huai-jang (see Hu Shih 1953, p. 12; Yanagida

1968, pp. 36-37; Dumoulin 1985, p. 151), many continue to portray Ch'an as if this lineage were intact. The powerful effective history of Ch'an seems to have overridden the question of historicity here.

4. At stake in this question is both the central role given to meditation in Ch'an, and the origins of the kind of Ch'an taken as normative in effective history. Only the lines of Ma-tsu and Shih-t'ou survived in history; hence some historians may wish to consider Ma-tsu a first patriarch of mainstream Ch'an, while others may see this as one more reason to seek connections between Ch'an figures quite different from those given in the lineage charts. The famous story of the (historically dubious) encounter between Huai-jang and Ma-tsu suggests that sitting in meditation is as useless for becoming a buddha as polishing a tile is for making a mirror. Although it may be going too far to interpret this story—as Alan Watts did—as a total rejection of *zazen* 座禪, we should not on the other hand see the practice of meditation as the defining characteristic of Ch'an tradition throughout its history. In Yanagida's interpretation (1983b, p. 187), Ma-tsu questioned the need for "a preconceived course of mental exercises and study."
5. Consider the following argument: "According to [our] references, no information is available regarding Hui-neng's native country, his date of birth and death. Thus it can be established that while Wang Wei wrote the Epitaph [to Hui-neng] on Shen-hui's behest, the latter was not aware of the details of Hui-neng's life, whose disciple he claimed to be. Even if he had been ignorant of his master's date and year of birth, he could have known the day, the year, and also the age at which his master died. Since he was ignorant of details of Hui-neng's life and the day of his death, it must be presumed that he was nowhere near the place of Hui-neng's death. Therefore it goes without saying that Shen-hui had no contact whatsoever with Hui-neng nor did he hear of him" (Nagashima 1978, p. 28; repeated on p. 304).
6. In the "Ch'an Preface," for example, Tsung-mi writes that the Ho-tsu (Shen-hui) Southern School, in which he counted himself, upheld "the fundamental while following the conditions establishing various expediences (or means) [for cultivation]. This they considered the only true view . . . Such was originally the profound intention of Ho-tse; at the time in which he lived,

however, Gradual Enlightenment was in full bloom while the school of Sudden Enlightenment was in a ruinous condition. In order to refute erroneous views, he laid more emphasis on the Absence of Thought 無心 [wu-hsin; no mind] but did not establish means [for cultivation]" (Jan 1972, pp. 49-50).

7. One example which Yanagida points out is the adjective *huo-p'o-p'o-ti* 活潑潑地, describing the leaping of a fish, and by extension, a vigorously alive state and, in Lin-chi, the original freedom of the human person. This colloquial expression reverberates in both Confucian and Ch'an texts (Yanagida 1983a, pp. 39-40). Nagashima gives many fascinating interpretations of figurative terms to show how details in Hui-neng's biography were constructed from them; from the reference to "well and mortar" (井臼 *ching-chiu*) in Wang-Wei's epitaph, for example, later biographers created a Hui-neng who pounded rice in the temple kitchen (Nagashima 1978, p. 306).
8. Martin Collcutt (1981) has written an institutional history of the "five mountains" (*gozan*) of Japanese Zen; and Griff Foulk, in a dissertation on Ch'an institutional history under preparation for the University of Michigan, is investigating the extent to which Ch'an existed as an independent institution with its own monasteries and rules. I would like to thank Griff Foulk and Urs App for many helpful comments they made on an earlier version of this paper.

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