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# The Dragon Girl and the Abbess of Mo-Shan: Gender and Status in the Ch'an Buddhist Tradition

*by Miriam L. Levering*

Women students of Buddhism, like those of other religious traditions, have in the last decade brought "new" questions to their teachers. Has the tradition thought differences between men and women significant for attainment of enlightenment? Where has the tradition stood on the question of equal access for men and women to teaching and practice? Has the tradition reflected, or been a model for, society's conceptions of the relative capabilities of the sexes? Or has it enabled adherents to transcend or to change prevailing social norms?

In the case of the Chinese Ch'an Buddhist tradition, the historical record relevant to these questions suggests that it is quite possible that Ch'an teaching contributed to the ease with which Chinese women in the twentieth century have been able to accept their essential equality with men, viewing centuries of constraint more as a product of an inequitable social structure than as reflecting unequal endowments of intelligence or of moral and spiritual capacities. Rejecting or more often quietly ignoring much in the Buddhist heritage that suggested that birth as a woman indicated that one was less prepared to attain enlightenment than men, or indeed faced severe, perhaps insuperable, obstacles to rapid enlightenment, Ch'an teachers urged upon their students the point of view that enlightenment, the source of wisdom, compassion, serenity and moral energy, was available to everyone at all times; any other view was seen as a hindrance to practice.

One of the foundation doctrines of the Ch'an/Zen school is that the One Mind of enlightenment, possessed by all sentient

beings, is without *lakṣana* (C. *hsiang*), distinguishing characteristics, including maleness or femaleness. As the Chinese teacher Hung-pien is said to have told the emperor Hsüan-tsung (846-863):

If a person has enlightened and radiant wisdom, that is "Buddha-mind." "Mind" is another name for "Buddha." [Buddha-mind] has hundreds and thousands of other names, but the essence is one. Fundamentally it has no form. And it has no characteristics (*hsiang*), such as blue, yellow, red, white, masculine or feminine, and so forth. It is inherent in Heaven and yet is not Heaven, it is in persons but is not persons. It is what causes Heaven and mankind to appear, it enables men (to be men) and women (to be women). It neither begins nor ends, is produced nor extinguished.<sup>1</sup>

Chinese social structure clearly marked distinctions among old and young, male and female, noble and base. The rhetoric of Ch'an denied such distinctions not only any ultimate importance in themselves, but also any relevance to enlightenment. No characteristic could ultimately be a prerequisite, or a barrier, to attaining enlightenment. As the Sung Ch'an teacher Ta-hui Tsung-kao (1089-1163) said concerning Lady T'ang, one of his most successful lay students:

Can you say that she is a woman, and women have no share [in enlightenment]? You must believe that this Matter has nothing to do with [whether one is] male or female, old or young. Ours is an egalitarian *Dharma*-gate that has only one flavor.<sup>2</sup>

And again:

For mastering the truth, it does not matter whether one is male or female, noble or base. One moment of insight and one is shoulder to shoulder with the Buddha.<sup>3</sup>

The debate within the Mahāyāna literature around the question of whether one can reach full enlightenment in the body of a woman is drawn, if one may be allowed to simplify, along the following lines. Those who say that women cannot be enlightened in their current birth do not dispute that women have the One Mind, or the Buddha-nature, or whatever term one wishes to use

to point to their share in ultimate reality and their potential for enlightenment. The point at issue is whether all sentient beings are equally prepared to awaken to a realization of it. On the provisional level of reality, distinctions among the capacities of sentient beings exist: for example, sentient beings born in the human realm have clearer and more capacious powers of reasoning than do those in the animal realm. These capacities, which are reflected in differences of *hsiang*, are the fruition of previously planted karmic seeds. The key question is, what relevance do these capacities have for the objective of attaining enlightenment? Those within the Mahāyāna who held that women could not be enlightened in the current birth believed those capacities to be of critical importance. To reach enlightenment, one must develop good capacities through aeons of disciplined study and practice. Monastic renunciation and the adherence to precepts were crucial, as were practice of the six *pāramitās*. Male human birth and the opportunity to join the Buddha's *saṅgha* were signs that one's capacities for enlightenment were well on their way toward full development; birth as a woman was a sign that they were not so far advanced. Those who subscribed to the belief in the so-called "five hindrances" held that Buddhahood and four other kinds of desirable births could not be attained in their next birth by those who in this lifetime were born female. The karmically-determined capacities were simply not there.

Others in the Mahāyāna, however, tended to make less of monastic renunciation, adherence to precepts, and aeons of study and practice as prerequisites for enlightenment. They held that the Buddha's *Dharma* and the merit of his Enlightened Mind were more powerful than any negative set of causes and conditions affecting the capacities of sentient beings. A moment of sincere faith and insight on the part of any sentient being could lead to enlightenment, overcoming any karmic impediments that might obtain. By arguing that masculinity and femininity and other such capacity-reflecting distinctions are merely in the realm of *hsiang*, and thus empty, and that they are not ultimately relevant to the success of the objective of attaining enlightenment, Ch'an/Zen teachers placed their teaching clearly in this second stream. They joined those who supported the universalizing tendency of the Mahāyāna.

Although Ch'an is traditionally thought to have begun in Chi-

na in the sixth century, and in fact probably attained a self-conscious identity in the eighth, references to the need for establishing a point of view that gender differences make no difference to attaining enlightenment cannot be found for certain before the eleventh century.<sup>4</sup> An exception may be the "Song of Proving the Way," found for the first time in an eleventh-century text, but thought to date from the late eighth century (see below). One finds more interest in the subject in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and sixteenth centuries (the latter three in Japan) with Yüan-wu, Ta-hui, Hung-chih, Dōgen, Bassui,<sup>5</sup> Jakushitsu,<sup>6</sup> as well as minor figures. The identical teaching can be found in our own century in the writings and sermons of Chinese teachers like Hsü-yün, Lu Kuan-yü (Charles Luk), and Nan Huai-chin, as well as the Korean master Seung-sahn.<sup>7</sup> The teaching of the school appears to have been clear and consistent over the centuries.

In this essay I wish to focus on two stories that Ch'an and Zen teachers have traditionally used to give substance to their claim that such a point of view, contrasting as it does with the low estimate of the capabilities of women held by Confucian society from the Sung onward in China and throughout most of Japanese history, was not only to be preferred as an attitude leading to enlightenment but also was realistic. To establish the latter point it was necessary to buttress the assertion that everyone could attain enlightenment with specific examples. Those to whom the tradition has consistently appealed in preaching are the *nāga* (dragon) girl in the *Lotus Sūtra* and the abbess Mo-shan Liao-jan, whose story appears for the first time in the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* of 1004. Other women who are enlightened are mentioned in Ch'an literature,<sup>8</sup> but the stories of the dragon girl and Mo-shan Liao-jan have the particular virtue of underlining the point by showing their heroines demonstrating their enlightenment while at the same time refuting the specific charge that as women they cannot have attained it.

### *The dragon girl*

The story of the dragon girl appears in the "Devadatta" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*.<sup>9</sup> In the story the daughter of the *nāga* king Sāgara, on hearing the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī preach the *Lotus Sūtra*,

attains supreme *bodhi*, enlightenment. When the reality of her attainment is challenged by Śāriputra on the ground that she cannot possibly have carried out preparation comparable to that of Śākyamuni Buddha as a *bodhisattva*, and that no enlightenment could be so speedily attained, the dragon king's daughter appears before the assembled company. Śāriputra puts before her his strongest challenge:

“You state that in no length of time you attained to the supreme Way. This thing is hard to believe. Wherefore? (Because) the body of a woman is filthy and not a vessel of the Law. How can she attain to supreme *bodhi*? The Buddha-way is so vast that only after passing through innumerable *kalpas*, enduring hardship, accumulating good works, and perfectly practicing the perfections can it be accomplished. Moreover, a woman by her body still has five hindrances, viz., she cannot become firstly, king of the Brahma-heaven; secondly, Śakra; thirdly, a *māra*-king, fourthly, a holy wheel-rolling king; and fifthly, a Buddha. How then could a woman's body so speedily become a Buddha?”<sup>10</sup>

The dragon girl does not reply to the substance of this challenge, but offers a demonstration:

Now the dragon's daughter possessed a precious pearl worth a three-thousand-great-thousandfold world, which she held up and presented to the Buddha, and which the Buddha immediately accepted. The dragon's daughter then said to the *bodhisattva* Wisdom-Accumulation and the honored Śāriputra: “I have offered my pearl, and the World-honored One has accepted it—was this action speedy?” They answered: “Most speedy.” The daughter said: “By your supernatural powers behold me become a Buddha, even more rapidly than that!”

At that moment the entire congregation saw the dragon's daughter suddenly transformed into a male, perfect in *bodhisattva*-deeds, who instantly went to the World Spotless in the southern quarter, where (she) sat on a precious lotus-flower, attaining Perfect Enlightenment, with the thirty-two signs and the eighty kinds of excellences, and universally proclaiming the Wonderful Law to all living creatures in the universe.<sup>11</sup>



The story has been used to give Buddhists a double message: on the one hand, a person born as a woman becomes a Buddha only after having traded her female body for a male body; on the other, "a woman can achieve Buddhahood" (J. *nyonin jōbutsu*).<sup>12</sup> Within the Ch'an school and its Japanese derivative the attaining of a male body as a prerequisite to Buddhahood is far less emphasized than in, for example, the Nichiren tradition, and far more emphasis is placed on the instantaneous quality of each of the important moments of the story. The story appears to have been understood in the Ch'an school as one that emphasizes the extraordinary and rapid transformation that comes with enlightenment, a transformation on which there are no limitations. The dragon girl's offering of her priceless pearl to the Buddha and his acceptance of it are both rapid, completely without deliberation or obstruction; so of course are the steps that follow. The allusion to the story in the famous Ch'an "Song of Proving the Way," attributed to Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh (665-713) but probably written in the late eighth century,<sup>13</sup> is typical of Ch'an interest in the story as demonstrating the absolute and instantaneous character of enlightenment:

Wrong is not wrong, right is not right  
 To be off by a hair's breadth results in a mistake of a thousand miles  
 [If] right, then the dragon girl suddenly achieves Buddhahood  
 [If] wrong, then Ānanda is born in hell.<sup>14</sup>

The difference between delusion and enlightenment is merely a single instant of thought. Even someone of low status in terms of apparent closeness to enlightenment like the dragon girl can leap to enlightenment through a single moment of right thought. Likewise, a great disciple of the Buddha like Ānanda, whose position as a man, monk and *arhat* indicates great karmic roots, experiences, in a moment of deluded thought, rebirth in hell.

A reference to an unknown version of the dragon girl story appears in the following intriguing episode in the record of the master Yu-chou T'an-k'ung in *chüan* 12 of the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* of 1004:

A nun wanted to "open the hall" and preach the *Dharma*.

(To “open the hall” is to preach ceremonially for the first time as abbot or abbess of a particular temple.)  
The master (T’an-k’ung) said: “Nun, as a woman you should not open the hall.”  
The nun said: “The *nāga* girl attained Buddhahood at age seven—what do you think about that?”  
The master said: “The *nāga* girl [could change into] eighteen [different] forms. Try one change of form for me.”  
The nun said: “Even if I were to change, I would still be a fox spirit!” (Fox spirits could change into other forms, including that of a pretty woman, to delude humans.)  
The teacher chased her out with blows.<sup>15</sup>

Although this story is puzzling in certain respects, it appears that insofar as the verbal content of the exchange is concerned, the nun holds her own, demonstrating that she knows clearly that enlightened mind is the source of authority to teach, not external attributes. Whether the master’s statement that as a woman she should not become a teacher is an allusion to current norms for which he thinks there is a “good reason,” or represents merely his own opinion, or is simply a statement to test whether the nun’s mind has sufficient enlightenment and confidence to transcend conventional notions, the nun’s allusion to the dragon girl is an excellent answer. The second exchange offers a particularly Ch’an resolution to the ambiguity of the dragon girl story. The *Lotus Sūtra* story reaches an ambiguous compromise between the position that birth as a woman does not reflect inferior roots for enlightenment and the position that only as a man can one reach the full enlightenment of Buddhahood: the dragon girl does perform the transformation. When T’an-k’ung challenges the nun to do the same, she points out that that would prove nothing except that she has magical powers; the question of whether she is qualified to be an enlightened teacher must be resolved in a different realm entirely.

Both Ta-hui Tsung-kao, the leading representative of Lin-chi Ch’an in Sung China, and Dōgen (1200-1253), transmitter of Ts’ao-tung Ch’an to Japan, and a great original master, use the story of the dragon girl in their writings and sermons to illustrate their conviction of the irrelevance of *hsiang* to enlightenment. In Dōgen’s case, the story is cited in a discussion of the enlightenment of women. In his argument in the “Raihaitokuzui” chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō* that enlightened women are as worthy of respect as

enlightened men and should be taken by men as teachers, Dōgen brings up the example of the *nāga* king's daughter. He says:

Even a seven-year-old girl who practices the Buddha Dharma and is enlightened in it is the leader and guide of the fourfold community of Buddhists, the compassionate parent of living beings. For instance, the *nāga* maiden in the *Lotus Sūtra* achieved Buddhahood. Giving respect and homage to someone such as her is the same as giving it to all the Buddhas.<sup>16</sup>

Later in the chapter, in his criticism of the contemporary Japanese practice of creating certain territories for serious monastic training and excluding women from them, he returns to the dragon girl:

At the time a female became a Buddha, everything in the universe was completely understood [by her]. What person would hinder her [from entering the restricted territories], thinking that she had not truly come into this world? The merits [of her attainment] exist right now, illumining the whole universe, so even though you set up boundary lines, they are of no use.<sup>17</sup>

Ta-hui also mentions the story more than once, and tells it from beginning to end in one sermon. He repeats what he believes to be the fact that although the Buddha preached the *Dharma* in over three hundred and sixty assemblies, only three persons in all of the *sūtra* literature are described as attaining complete, perfect enlightenment in that very life. One is a butcher, who lays down his knife and attains perfect enlightenment. The second is the youth Sudhana in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* section of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. The third is the *nāga* girl.<sup>18</sup> All three are lay persons, while the butcher because of his occupation and the girl because of her gender and youth are unlikely candidates.

In one of his sermons, Ta-hui tells and comments on the story in such a way as to raise one of the crucial questions about it from the point of view of Ch'an. In what moment of the story did the *nāga* girl's attainment of perfect *bodhi* begin to take place? What is the point at which the person who acts and behaves authoritatively as an enlightened one makes her or his presence felt? Ta-hui focuses on the moment of her offering her precious pearl to the

Buddha. He says: "Was her offering of the pearl speedy? Indeed, it took place in her single instant of thought,"<sup>19</sup> and goes on from there to discuss how to understand the fact that perfect enlightenment takes place in an instant. For him the important thing is not her change of bodily form, nor her attainment of Buddhahood in the southern quarter, but rather the single instant of enlightened thought in which she offers her pearl to the Buddha.

For T'an-k'ung and the would-be abbess, for the author of the "Song of Proving the Way," for Dōgen and Ta-hui, the story is not that of a woman who became a male Buddha, it is the story of a woman who, upon becoming a Buddha, is still thought of as a woman. For them she becomes a Buddha not when she changes her bodily form, but when she gives rise to supreme *bodhi* in a single moment of enlightened thought. Apparently for these members of the Ch'an/Zen school, to have it any other way would be to give too much emphasis to form (*hsiang*), and not enough to the power of the one thought of enlightenment and the Mind in which it is grounded.

#### *The story of Mo-shan Liao-jan*

An original Ch'an story that shows such a family relationship to that of the dragon girl that it might be regarded as fundamentally the same story in a characteristically Chinese transformation is that of the encounter between the monk Kuan-ch'i Chih-hsien and the abbess Mo-shan Liao-jan. To understand the story it is necessary to know that in China the order of nuns was always autonomous, fully separate from the order of monks. Yet in the larger four-part *saṅgha* or assembly of the disciples of the Buddha, monks ranked above nuns, who in turn ranked above lay men and lay women. Whenever nuns and monks happened to meet, therefore, monks took precedence. Thus we have the dilemma of etiquette faced by the participants in this story. A monk, being higher in status, does not bow to a nun. A student, on the other hand, bows in submission to a teacher:

When the monk Kuan-ch'i Chih-hsien was travelling from place to place [looking for a teacher] he came to Mo-shan. Before [meeting Liao-jan, the abbess of Mo-shan] he said [to

himself] "If this place is all right, then I will stay. If not, then I will overturn the Ch'an platform (that is, show up the ignorance of the teacher)." So saying, he entered the hall. Liao-jan sent an attendant nun to ask: "Are you merely sightseeing, or did you come for the Buddha *Dharma*?" Chih-hsien replied: "For the Buddha *Dharma*." Liao-jan then ascended to her seat. Chih-hsien asked for instruction. Liao-jan asked: "Where did you start your journey today?" Chih-hsien replied: "From the entrance to the road (lit., from the mouth of the road)." Liao-jan said: "Why didn't you cover it?" Chih-hsien had no reply. He then for the first time performed a kneeling bow. He asked: "What is Mo-shan (lit., summit mountain)?" Liao-jan said: "Its peak is not exposed." Chih-hsien said: "What is the occupant of Mo-shan like?" Liao-jan replied: "(S)he has neither male nor female form (*hsiang*)." Chih-hsien shouted: "Why doesn't she transform herself?" Liao-jan replied: "She is not a spirit, nor a ghost. What would you have her become?" Chih-hsien at this could only submit. He became a gardener at the nunnery, where he stayed three years.<sup>20</sup>

The *Chih-yüeh lu* (*Record of Pointing at the Moon*) and Dōgen both tell us that later, when Chih-hsien was instructing his own disciples, he said:

"When I was at Lin-chi's place I got half a ladle, and when I was at Mo-shan's place I got another half-ladle, thus obtaining the full ladle that has enabled me to satisfy my hunger until today."<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting that Mo-shan Liao-jan is the only nun who is given a record of her own in the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu*. This is almost certainly connected to the fact that she had a male disciple willing to give her credit for an important role in his enlightenment. Dōgen, who recounts this story in support of his view that one should seek out enlightened teachers regardless of sex, comments:

Now, reflecting on this story, Mo-shan was a prominent disciple of Kao-an Ta-yü. Her power of *satori* was superior, and she became the mother who taught Chih-hsien. Lin-chi had inherited the *Dharma* of the great Zen master Huang-po. His was the great power of practice, and he became the father of Chih-hsien. The father was male and the mother was female. Chih-hsien showed that he had a superior spirit when he

sought the *Dharma* from Mo-shan and paid homage to her. He was unflagging in his pursuit of later training, and he is famous for seeking the *Dharma* without consideration of male and female.<sup>22</sup>

From a doctrinal point of view, it is of great interest that the question and answer that convinced Chih-hsien that he could profitably learn from Mo-shan Liao-jan was a question of the relevance to enlightenment of the distinction between male and female. She says, in effect: "My enlightened Mind has neither male nor female *hsiang*." He counters: "Why do you not transform yourself?" One way of reading his question is to see it as asking: "Why not become a male and then a Buddha, as the dragon girl did, and thus prove that you are enlightened?" The fact that Mo-shan, like the nun in the story quoted above, does not recognize any need to transform herself, and therefore demonstrates her enlightenment in a way different from that of the dragon girl, is characteristic of the changes that had taken place within Mahāyāna in China and particularly in Ch'an. Mo-shan Liao-jan shows her enlightenment precisely by not showing it, letting it be known that the top of her head is not visible. The loftiness of her insight is demonstrated by her lack of interest in super-normal powers (*shen-t'ung*). Likewise, Buddhahood as a final accomplishment of perfection that can be externally displayed and verified through the possession of the thirty-two marks (*hsiang*), one of which requires a penis, has paled in interest compared to the vivid personalities of the enlightened Chinese teachers. Chih-hsien's question thus only shows that he does not realize that mind enlightened to any degree transcends distinctions of *hsiang*. In preserving this story, Tao-yüan, the compiler of the *Ching-te Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, Dōgen, and the influential Ts'ao-tung monk Hung-chih (who mentioned it frequently),<sup>23</sup> and others record the agreement of the tradition that Liao-jan has had the best of the exchange. In the thought world of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the same story could not be read as a triumph for Mo-shan.

Another interesting aspect of this story is that the question of the relevance of unequal *hsiang* to enlightenment and the question of the relative status of male and female are raised together. As a monk, Chih-hsien, though not overly polite, is not incorrect in not bowing to a nun. But if he intends to learn from her, he must bow

to her as a teacher. In his belated bow and final submission, Chih-hsien concedes the point that within the school, the status of teacher is a matter of demonstrated wisdom, not of phenomenal characteristics.

Dōgen takes up the question of the status of women within the Ch'an/Zen school at some length in the "Raihaitokuzui" chapter of his *Shōbōgenzō*. He is concerned that attachment to external appearances (*hsiang*) prevents many monks from paying homage to women or nuns even if they have acquired the *Dharma* and transmitted it. Such persons, he says, do not understand the *Dharma*; they have left the Buddha's path. They are like animals, far removed from the Buddhas and patriarchs. In demonstrating the error of this attitude, he points out that rank in the world and rank in the *Dharma* are two different things. He does not challenge the accepted relative ranking of men and women in the world. Nor does he challenge the view that all other things being equal, nuns rank below monks in the *saṅgha*. But he insists that rank in the *Dharma* depends upon one's progress toward complete, perfect enlightenment. Women, he points out, have attained the four fruits, as well as the higher stages of the *bodhisattva* path. One, the dragon girl, even attained to the stage of "wonderful enlightenment," the final stage on the fifty-two-stage path to Buddhahood conceived by the Hua-yen school. A hundred-year-old monk who has not acquired the Way is not the equal of a woman who has acquired it. Dōgen says:

When you make *Dharma*-inquiries of a nun who transmits the treasury of the eye of the true *Dharma*, . . . who has reached the stages of the *bodhisattva*'s last ten stages, and you pay homage to her, the nun will naturally receive your homage.<sup>24</sup>

### *Concluding remarks*

On a recent stay in Taiwan I discussed these stories with a group of nuns in their late twenties and thirties. They belonged to a nominally Ch'an order, had experienced Ch'an training under the nun Hsiao-yun Fa-shih, and were pursuing studies in the *Lotus Sūtra*. When asked whether the story of the dragon girl reflected a

reservation about the capacities of women to attain enlightenment, given that the dragon girl must first manifest maleness before becoming a Buddha, the young nuns unanimously stated that that would be a mistaken interpretation. Maleness and femaleness have nothing to do with enlightenment, since enlightenment is a matter of mind and heart. Clearly the point of the story, they said, was that the dragon girl had the power of insight and determination to become a Buddha, and the truth taught by the *sūtra* had the transformative power to make this possible. The transformation of her body into a male body had no real significance as an element in the story; for them it was part of the miraculous trappings of the myth rather than the heart of the myth itself.

The historian of Buddhism readily sees in these stories and their interpretations within the Ch'an/Zen tradition a blending of the *ekayāna* ("one vehicle") tendency within the Mahāyāna with the Chinese belief in the "suddenness" of enlightenment. What intrigues this historian is that the Ch'an and Zen schools included these stories in preaching and teaching at a time when their societies were putting more emphasis on Confucian education as a path of self-cultivation, while at the same time failing to educate women, or to allow women to become leaders and teachers. In doing so Ch'an and Zen teachers planted seeds of the conviction that gender differences were accidental, not essential. As Ch'an and Zen appealed to members of the classes whose sons and husbands were being educated, women from those classes found themselves drawn to a path to enlightenment which granted them in principle at least an equal status, as well as autonomy and leadership roles, and one in which it was taught that gender and social status were irrelevant considerations that could and should be dropped from the minds of all genuine seekers. The point of view truest to the tradition is well expressed in the *Shōbōgenzō*:

"What demerit is there in femaleness? What merit is there in maleness? There are bad men and good women. If you wish to hear the *Dharma* and put an end to pain and turmoil, forget about such things as male and female. As long as delusions have not yet been eliminated, neither men nor women have eliminated them; when they are all eliminated and true reality is experienced, there is no distinction of male and female."<sup>25</sup>



## NOTES

1. Tao-yüan, comp. and ed., *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* (Taipei: Chen-shan-mei ch'u-pan-she, 1967), p. 159–61. Hereafter cited as *CTCTL*. About Hung-pien nothing further is known.

2. *Ta-hui P'u-chüeh Ch'an-shih p'u-shuo*, *Dainihon zokuzōkyō* 1, 31, 5, p. 455a. Hereafter cited as *Ta-hui p'u-shuo*.

3. *Ta-hui p'u-shuo*, p. 433b.

4. The passage attributed to Hung-pien quoted above, the earliest, is not in any source earlier than 1004. The closest thing to a doctrinal statement on the subject appearing in earlier Ch'an works is found in the work called *Erh-ju ssu-hsing lun* ("Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices") attributed to Bodhidharma. The passage reads as follows:

*Question:* What does it mean to say "a male is not a male, a female is not a female"?

*Answer:* If you seek [enlightenment] relying on *Dharma*, then masculinity and femininity are not things you can grasp onto. How do we know? Form itself is not male form or female form. If form were male, then all grasses and trees would correspondingly be male; and the same for female [form]. People who are deluded do not understand; in their deluded thinking they see male and female, [but] that is an illusory male, and illusory female; ultimately they are not real.

This of course merely states that the distinction is empty; it does not address the question of whether the distinction is relevant to enlightenment. Cf. Yanagida Seizan, ed. and trans., *Daruma no goroku* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1969), pp. 77–79.

5. Cf. Philip Kapleau, comp. and ed., *The Three Pillars of Zen* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 160–61 and 166.

6. Cf. Thomas Cleary, trans. and ed., *The Original Face* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), p. 78.

7. Cf. Lu K'uan Yü, *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, First Series (Berkeley, Ca.: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1970), p. 87. Also Stephen Mitchell, ed., *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* (New York: Grove Press, 1976).

8. Most notably Bodhidharma's disciple Tsung-chih, Layman P'ang's daughter Ling-chao, and Candrottarā, as well as a number of nameless laywomen and nuns who inspire, challenge, or confound monks such as Te-shan, Chao-chou and Lin-chi.

9. I have used the Chinese text in *Taishō* 9, pp. 34b-35c. Translations are taken from Bunnō Katō, trans., "*Myōhō-enge kyō*": *The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law* (Tokyo: Kosei Shuppansha, 1971), ch. 12, pp. 256–61.

10. *Taishō* 9, p. 35c; Katō, p. 260.

11. *Taishō* 9, p. 35c; Katō, p. 260.

12. Cf. Harada Norio's interesting essay, "Ryūnyo," in *Zen bunka*, no. 68 (March 15, 1973), pp. 25–30.

13. Cf. the introduction to *Yōka shōdōka* by Ōmori Sōgen in Nishitani Keiji

and Yanagida Seizan, eds., *Zenke goroku II* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1974), p. 113.

14. *CTCTL*, *chüan* 30, p. 229.

15. *CTCTL*, *chüan* 12, p. 34

16. Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, in Terada Toru and Mizuno Yaoko, eds., *Dōgen* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970, 2 vols.), I, p. 324. Hereafter cited as Terada and Mizuno. The translation used here is from Francis Dojun Cook, *How to Raise an Ox* (Los Angeles: Center Publications, 1978), p. 140. Hereafter cited as Cook.

17. Terada and Mizuno, I, p. 328. Cook, pp. 145–46. I have added “[by her]”.

18. *Ta-hui p'u-shuo*, p. 458d; see also pp. 447b-c. Ta-hui brings up the story of the dragon girl elsewhere in *Ta-hui p'u-shuo*, pp. 402a, and 438c, and in *Ta-hui P'u-chüeh Ch'an-shih yü-lu*, *Taishō* 47, p. 838a, where he quotes Yung-chia's "Song of Proving the Way," p. 900c and p. 909b.

19. *Ta-hui p'u-shuo*, p. 447c.

20. *CTCTL*, *chüan* 11, p. 19. An English translation by Lu K'uan-yü is given in a translation by him of a sermon by the twentieth century teacher Hsü-yün. It is found in Lu K'uan Yü, *Ch'an and Zen Teaching*, First Series, p. 87. Dōgen tells the story somewhat differently in the "Raihaitokuzui" chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*. Cf. Terada and Mizuno, I, pp. 318-20. Lu K'uan-yü's notes are interesting. Of the final exchange he says:

When Kuan Ch'i asked about the owner of Mo Shan, i.e., about herself, she replied that the owner was neither male nor female for sex had nothing to do with enlightenment, and the *dharmakāya* was neither male nor female. Generally, women had many more handicaps than men, and Kuan Ch'i seemed to look down upon her because of her sex and asked her why she did not change herself into a man if she was (*sic*) enlightened. His question showed that he was still under delusion.

21. Hsü Ju-chi, comp., *Chih-yüeh lu* (Taipei: Chen shan-mei ch'u-pan-she, 1959), *chüan* 13 (vol. 2), pp. 932-33. Cf. Terada and Mizuno, I, p. 320.

22. Terada and Mizuno, I, p. 320; Cook, p. 137.

23. *Hung-chih Ch'an-shih kuang-lu*, *Taishō* 48, pp. 1-121, mentions Mo-shan's story on pp. 16b, 32b, 42b, 44c, 47b, 94b. *Ta-hui p'u-shuo* mentions it on p. 446d; *Yüan-wu Fo-kuo Ch'an-shih yü-lu*, *Taishō* 48, pp. 714-810, retells it on p. 779b, in a *Dharma-instruction (Fa-yü)* given to a nun.

24. Terada and Mizuno, I, p. 322; Cook, p. 139.

25. Terada and Mizuno, I, p. 326; Cook, p. 143.

## GLOSSARY

Bassui 拔隊

Ch'an 禪

Chao-chou 趙州

Chih-hsien 志閑

*Chih-yüeh lu* 指月錄  
*Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* 景德傳燈錄  
*Daruma no goroku* 達摩の語錄  
 Dōgen 道元  
*Erh-ju ssu-hsing lun* 二入四行論  
 Fa-yü 法語  
 Harada Norio 原田憲雄  
 Hsiang 相  
 Hsü Ju-chi 瞿汝稷  
 Hsü-yün 虛雲  
 Hsüan-tsung 宣宗  
 Hua-yen 華嚴  
 Hung-chih 宏智  
*Hung-chih Ch'an-shih kuang-lu* 宏智禪師廣錄  
 Hung-pien 弘辯  
 Kao-an Ta-yü 高安大愚  
 Jakushitsu 寂室  
 Kuan-ch'i Chih-hsien 灌溪志閑  
 Layman P'ang (P'ang Chu-shih) 龐居士  
 Liao-jan 了然  
 Lin-chi 臨濟  
 Ling-chao 靈照  
 Mizuno Yaoko 水野彌穗子  
 Mo-shan 末山  
 Mo-shan Liao-jan 末山了然  
 Nan Huai-chin 南懷瑾  
*Myoho-rengé-kyo* 妙法蓮花經  
 Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治  
 Nyonin jōbutsu 女人成佛  
 Ōmori Sōgen 大森曹玄  
 Raihaitokuzui 禮拜得髓  
 Ryunyo 龍女  
 Shen-t'ung 身通  
*Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏  
 Ta-hui 大慧  
*Ta-hui P'u-chüeh Ch'an-shih p'u-shuo* 大慧普覺禪師普說  
*Ta-hui P'u-chüeh Ch'an-shih yu-lu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄  
*Ta-hui p'u-shuo* 大慧普說  
 Ta-hui Tsung-kao 大慧宗杲  
 T'an-k'ung 譚空

Tao-yüan 道原  
Te-shan 德山  
Terada Toru 寺田透  
Ts'ao-tung 曹洞  
Tsun-g-chih 總持  
Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山  
*Yōka shōdōka* 永嘉證道歌  
Yu-chou T'an-k'ung 幽州譚空  
*Yüan-wu Fo-kuo Ch'an-shih yü-lu* 圓悟佛果禪師語錄  
Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh 永嘉玄覺  
Zen 禪  
*Zen bunka* 禪文化  
*Zenke goroku* 禪家語錄

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