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Doctrinal Reformation of the Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism*

Hu Shi 胡適 asserts that “Chinese” Chan proper first took on complete shape in the Hongzhou 洪州 school.¹ This assertion has been generally accepted, and the Hongzhou school is regarded as the beginning of “classical” or “golden-age” Chan. However, when discussing exactly what marks the beginning of this new type of Chan, or in other words, what kind of reformation Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709-88) brought to the Chan tradition, there have been quite different explanations. YANAGIDA Seizan 柳田聖山 posits that the most salient characteristic of the Hongzhou school is that it is a Chan of everyday life and a religion of humanity.² IRIYA Yoshitaka 入矢義高 regards the ideas, “function is identical with [Buddha-]nature” and “daily activities are wonderful functions,” as the core of Daoyi’s teaching.³ John McRAE assumes that “encounter dialogue” distinguishes the “classical” Chan of Mazu from the “pre-classical” Chan of the Northern, early Southern, and Niutou schools.⁴ Bernard FAURE takes the disappearance of one-practice *samādhi* (*yixing sanmei* 一行三昧) as “an indicator of the ‘epistemological split’ that opened between early Chan and the ‘classical’ Chan of the

* I thank Professors Paul W. Kroll, Terry Kleeman, John McRae, Dr. Sarah Horton, and the anonymous examiner for their suggestions on draft versions of this article.

1. HU Shi: “Da Tang Yongtong xiansheng shu” 答湯用彤先生書 (1924), in *Hu Shi ji* 胡適集, ed. Huang Xianian 黃夏年 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue 1995), p. 60.
2. YANAGIDA: *Mu no tankyū: Chūgoku zen* 無の探求: 中國禪 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten 1969) pp. 145, 163.
3. IRIYA: “Preface” to *Baso no goroku* 馬祖の語錄 (Kyoto: Zenbunka kenkyūjo 1984).
4. McRAE: “Encounter Dialogue and the Transformation in Ch’an,” in *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1992), p. 357.

ninth century.”⁵ Each of these scholars insightfully focuses on an important aspect of Mazu’s reformation, yet the full dimension of the doctrinal development of the school still awaits further exploration, which is the aim of this article.

1. “*Ordinary Mind Is the Way*”

Earlier studies defined the expression, “the mind is the Buddha” (*jixin shi fo* 即心是佛) as the core of Daoyi’s teaching.⁶ However, in his *Tō Godai Zenshūshi* 唐五代禪宗史, SUZUKI Tetsuo 鈴木哲雄 presents plentiful evidence to indicate that this expression was not taught only by Daoyi, but had been a rather popular teaching since Huineng 慧能.(638-713) According to Suzuki’s analysis of the sources, the Chan masters before Daoyi who may have illustrated this teaching include Huineng and his disciples Benjing 本淨, Shenhui 神會 (684-758), Huizhong 慧忠 (d. 776), Huairang 懷讓 (677-744), and Xingsi 行思 (d. 740).⁷

SUZUKI further posits that, though Daoyi at the beginning of his career also taught that “the mind is the Buddha,” after he moved to Hongzhou, in order to fend off attacks from outside the Chan circle and to correct abuses inside the school, he used an alternative expression, “neither mind nor Buddha” (*feixin feifo* 非心非佛).⁸

The idea that “the mind is the Buddha” can be viewed as the major teaching of the Southern tradition since Huineng. SUZUKI is quite right when he indicates that it is not Daoyi’s core teaching, but his reason for Daoyi’s alternative expression, “neither mind nor Buddha,” lacks reliable evidence. He mentions the frequent defamation of Daoyi by the abbot of Da’an monastery 大安寺 in Hong prefecture, recorded in the *Zutang ji* 祖堂集, and also Nanyang Huizhong’s criticism about “the mind is the Buddha,” recorded in the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄. However, the *Zutang ji* does not relate any specific content of the

5. FAURE: *The Will to Orthodoxy: A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1997), p. 69.

6. For example, Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷快天, *Zengaku shisōshi* 禪學思想史, Tokyo: Meicho kankō kai 1969, pp. 436-7.

7. SUZUKI: *Tō Godai Zenshūshi* (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha 1984), pp.376-7, 383-4. The sources he cites also indicate that some earlier masters, such as Baozhi 寶誌 (428-576), Fu Dashi 傅大士 (497-569), Huike 慧可, and Daoxin 道信 (580-651), had begun this teaching. However, the true authors and dates of the sources cited remain questionable.

8. SUZUKI, *Tō Godai Zenshūshi*, pp. 377-82.

abbot's slanders.⁹ Huizhong himself also advocated that “the mind is the Buddha,” and did not really criticize it.¹⁰ The abuse of this expression by others, another reason offered by SUZUKI for Daoyi's abandonment of this expression, in actuality appeared only after Daoyi's death.¹¹

Daoyi's alternative expression, “neither mind nor Buddha,” was also not a new doctrine, but rather suggested an application of the Mādhyamika nondualism, which had already appeared in the teachings of various Chan lines earlier than the Hongzhou school.¹²

Daoyi took over these two teachings of early Chan, “the mind is the Buddha” and “neither mind nor Buddha,” and used them as expedient means (*upāya*) to guide learners. The *Jingde chuandeng lu* records a conversation between Daoyi and an anonymous monk:

A monk asked, “Why did you preach that the mind is the Buddha?” The master [Daoyi] answered, “To stop little boys from crying.” The monk asked, “What would you say when they have stopped crying?” The master replied, “Neither mind nor Buddha.” The monk asked, “If someone other than these two kinds of people comes, how would you guide him?” The master answered, “Tell him it is not a thing.” The monk asked, “What would you do if someone in the know suddenly comes?” The master replied, “Then teach him to comprehend the great Way.”¹³

Thus, both sayings were used only to guide beginners (crying youngsters);¹⁴ when more advanced learners came, he guided them directly to understand the great Way. Daoyi's major disciples understood this quite well. For example, Panshan Baoji 盤山寶積 instructed his own disciples:

If you say that “the mind is the Buddha,” you have not now entered the mysterious subtlety. If you say “neither mind nor Buddha,” you are still attached to the extreme rule of pointing to traces. As for the one single Way of going beyond, a thousand sages would not transmit it.¹⁵

9. *Zutang ji* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996), 14.304.

10. See *Zutang ji*, 3.78.

11. See *Jingde chuandeng lu* (*Sibu congkan*), 7.10b; *Zutang ji*, 15.338.

12. Such as the teachings of the Southern, the Niutou, and the Shitou schools.

13. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 6.2b.

14. The metaphor of stopping youngsters' cry is seen in the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, T. 374, 12: 485c, *Mahāprājñāpāramitā-sūtra*, T. 220, 7: 1104c, and so forth.

15. *Zongjing lu* 宗鏡錄, T. 2016, 48: 944c; *Zutang ji*, 15.330; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 7.5b. Other disciples of Daoyi, such as Damei Fachang 大梅法常, Nanquan Puyuan 南泉普願, and Funiu Zizai 伏牛自在, also had similar sayings; see *Zutang ji*, 15.336; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 7.8b-9a; *Zutang ji*, 16.351; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 7.5b.

Then, what is the “one single Way of going beyond that a thousand sages would not transmit”? It should be the teaching that “ordinary mind is the Way” (*pingchangxin shi Dao* 平常心是道). Daoyi preached to the assembly:

If one wants to know the Way directly, then ordinary mind is the Way. Ordinary mind means no intentional action, no right or wrong, no grasping or rejecting, no terminable or permanent, no profane or holy. The sutra says, “Neither the practice of ordinary men, nor the practice of sages – that is the practice of the Bodhisattva.” Now all these are just the Way: walking, staying, sitting, lying, responding to situations, and dealing with things.¹⁶

YANAGIDA is insightful in singling out that “ordinary mind is the Way” as Daoyi’s core teaching.¹⁷ However, his interpretation of “ordinary mind” seems somewhat contradictory. On one hand, he says that it is a complete mind including both ignorance and enlightenment:

The characteristic of the new Chan Buddhism created by Mazu is to regard the complete, actual activities of mind as manifestations of Buddha nature.¹⁸

The so-called “ordinary mind” is such a complete mind. It includes all ignorance and enlightenment, without partiality for either side.¹⁹

On the other hand, however, he asserts that “ordinary mind” should not contain ignorance but simply emphasizes the down-to-earth tendency of subjective awakening:

It does not mean that the mind is the original mentality that contains both ignorance and enlightenment, but rather the most substantial and common mind, the down-to-earth tendency of the subject. We can say that it makes the traditional idea of original or absolute enlightenment subjective and active.²⁰

Sometimes, he simply identifies Daoyi’s new slogan with the old saying that “the mind is the Buddha.”²¹

YANAGIDA’s confusion is understandable. Daoyi’s teaching itself contains various orders of meaning, and even his closest disciples understood it in quite different ways. It covers at least three orders of

16. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.9a. Cf. the translations of Bavo LIEVENS, *The Recorded Sayings of Ma-tsu*, trans. Julian F. PAS (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press 1987), p. 89; CHENG Chien, *Sun-Face Buddha: the Teaching of Ma-tsu and the Hung-chou School of Ch’an* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press 1992), p. 65.

17. YANAGIDA, *Mu no tankyū*, pp. 145-62.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 152-3.

mutually reinforcing and sometimes conflicting meaning. Someone once asked Zhangjing Huaihui 章敬懷輝 (756-815), one of Daoyi's major disciples: "Is the Dharma-gate of mind-ground transmitted by the patriarch the mind of Thusness, or the deluded mind, or neither true mind nor deluded mind?"²² These three questions are quite acute, deriving from the three orders of meaning implied in Daoyi's "ordinary mind." Each in turn requires careful analysis and response.

The first order of "ordinary mind" answers the question whether it is the mind of Thusness. As cited above, Daoyi said, "Now all these are just the Way: walking, staying, sitting, lying, responding to situations, and dealing with things." These are the spontaneous activities of daily life, not involving evil or defilement. As YANAGIDA explains, this kind of "ordinary mind" is "the most substantial and common mind, the down-to-earth tendency of the subject." It is easily understood as the true nature of human beings, as well as the pure mind of Thusness or Buddha-nature. As a matter of fact, several of Daoyi's major disciples understood it in this way. The *Jingde chuandeng lu* records an interesting conversation between Dazhu Huihai 大珠慧海 and a Vinaya master:

A certain Vinaya master, Yuan, came to ask, "Reverend, do you still make efforts in your cultivation of the Way?" The master replied, "Yes, I do." Yuan asked, "How do you make your efforts?" The master answered, "When I feel hungry, I eat food; when I am tired, I sleep." Yuan asked, "Everyone always does that. Are they making the same efforts as you?" The master answered, "No, they are different." Yuan asked, "Why are they different?" The master said, "When taking food, they do not eat, but ponder over hundreds of matters. When sleeping, they do not sleep, but worry about thousands of affairs. Hence they are different."²³

The pondering and worries of other people come from a deluded mind, and the spontaneous eating and sleeping are the manifestations of a pure mind. Pang Yun 龐蘊, a lay disciple of Daoyi, composed the following Chan verse:

No-greed surpasses giving alms;	無貪勝布施 <i>wutanshengbushi</i>
No-delusion surpasses seated meditation.	無癡勝坐禪 <i>wuchishengzuochan</i>
No-anger surpasses observing precepts;	無嗔勝持戒 <i>wuchenshengchijie</i>
No-thought surpasses seeking causes.	無念勝求緣 <i>wunianshengqiuyuan</i>

22. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 7.3b.

23. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 6.6a.

Manifesting all activities of ordinary men,

I sleep at ease at nights.²⁴

盡現凡夫事
jinxianfanfushi
 夜來安樂眠
yelaianlemian

Here the “three poisons” – greed, delusion, and anger – are excluded from the activities of ordinary men. Thus, to Huihai and Pang Yun, “ordinary mind” is close to the fundamental true mind (*benzhenxin* 本真心) or the pure mind of self-nature (*zixing qingjingxin* 自性清淨心) advocated by the patriarchs of pre-classical Chan. In this order, Daoyi’s teaching that “ordinary mind is the Way” is identical with the teaching that “the mind is the Buddha,” as YANAGIDA has noted.

The second order of “ordinary mind” answers positively the question whether it was neither true mind nor deluded mind. As cited above, Daoyi said, “Ordinary mind means no intentional action, neither right nor wrong, neither grasping nor rejecting, neither terminable nor permanent, neither worldly nor holy. The sutra says, ‘Neither the practice of ordinary men, nor the practice of sages – that is the practice of the Bodhisattva.’” The first three pairs of negation are variations of Nāgārjuna’s famous Eightfold Negation.²⁵ The last pair is a citation from the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*,²⁶ which is also famous for its teaching of nondualism. In the stupa inscription for Daoyi, Quan Deyu 權德輿 (761-818) also mentioned that Daoyi taught his followers about “the gate of no-differentiation and no-gradation.”²⁷ Daoyi applied the Middle Way theory of the Mādhyamika teaching to negate all dual differentiations: true and deluded, right and wrong, rejecting and grasping, permanent and terminable, holy and worldly, and so forth. The teaching of “neither mind nor Buddha” discussed above can be seen as an alternative expression of this second order of “ordinary mind.”

The third order of “ordinary mind” answers the question whether it is the deluded mind. The entry on Fenyang Wuye 汾陽無業 in the *Zutang ji* records:

[Wu]ye asked, “As for the literature of the three vehicles, I have already roughly understood their meanings. I heard that the teaching of the Chan school is that

24. *Zutang ji*, 15.349.

25. Nāgārjuna, *Mādhyamika-sāstra*, T. 1564, 30: 1c.

26. T. 475, 14: 545b.

27. “Tang gu Hongzhou Kaiyuansi Shimen Daoyi Chanshi taming bingxu” 唐故洪州開元寺石門道一禪師塔銘并序, in *Quan Zaizhi wenji* 權載之文集 (*Sibu congkan*), 28.2a.

‘the mind is the Buddha,’ but I am really unable to understand it.” Daji [Daoyi] replied, “This very mind that doesn’t understand is it, without any other thing.”²⁸

“This very mind that doesn’t understand” is the mind of ignorance and delusion. Daoyi directly identified it with the Buddha or Buddha-nature. This is a new idea in the history of Chan and of Buddhism, by which Wuye is said to have awakened immediately. Later, he passed it on to his own disciples, “The Patriarch came to this land ... only for transmitting the mind-seal, to certify the delusive nature of all of you. Those who get it do so regardless of being ordinary or sage, foolish or wise.”²⁹ Daoyi further preached:

Self-nature is originally perfect. If only one does not get hindered by either good or evil things, he is called a man who cultivates the Way. Grasping good and rejecting evil, contemplating emptiness and entering concentration, all these belong to intentional action. If one seeks further outside, he strays farther away.³⁰

These words can be explained in two ways. It can be seen as emphasizing the no-attachment of mind. But it also can be interpreted as “self-nature” or “ordinary mind” is the complete, substantial mind of good and evil, purity and defilement, enlightenment and ignorance, and it is unnecessary to grasp good or reject evil intentionally. Some disciples of Daoyi also expressed the second implication. Huaihui said, “Neither dismiss phenomena to accord the mind, nor reject defilement to obtain purity.”³¹ Daowu 道悟 said, “Defilement and purity stay together, as water and wave share the same substance.”³²

This interpretation is also consonant with Zongmi’s 宗密 (780-841) description of the Hongzhou school. Zongmi summarized its doctrine as “whatever one has contact with is the Way, and one should let the mind be free”, and further explained:

The idea of the Hongzhou school is that the arising of mind, the movement of thought, snapping fingers, twinkling eyes, all actions and activities are the function of the entire essence of Buddha-nature. All greed, anger, delusion, the

28. Zangning 贊寧, *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 12.247. Also see *Zutang ji*, 15.344; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 8.2a.

29. *Zongjing lu*, T. 2016, 48: 943a.

30. YANAGIDA, ed., *Shike goroku, Goke goroku* 四家語錄, 五家語錄 (Kyoto: Chūgoku shuppansha, 1983), 3b. Cf. the translations of PAS, *Recorded Sayings of Ma-tsu*, p. 86; CHENG, *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 63.

31. See QUAN Deyu, “Tang gu Zhangjingsi Baiyan dashi beiming bingxu” 唐故章敬寺百巖大師碑銘并序, *Quan Zaizhi wenji*, 18.14a.

32. *Song gaoseng zhuan*, 10.233.

creation of good and evil, enjoyment of happiness, and suffering of bitterness are Buddha-nature.³³

The two points implied in this passage, the ordinary psycho-physical activities are the functions of Buddha-nature, and the complete, ordinary mind of good and evil, enjoyment and suffering is Buddha-nature, clearly elucidate Daoyi's teaching. Although we have not found in any sources that Daoyi said the "three poisons" were the manifestation of Buddha-nature, his disciple Qianqing Mingjue 千頃明覺 did openly say: "The dharmas of ten evils, five heinous offences, delusion, greed, anger, and ignorance are all manifested from the *tathāgata-garbha* and originally are Buddha."³⁴

This is a significant reformation in the development of Chan and Buddhist thought. Buddhist doctrine in general regards ignorance as the root of all sufferings and rejects the three poisons and other unwholesome activities. Within the Mahāyāna movement, the *tathāgata-garbha* theory holds that all sentient beings possess *tathāgata-garbha*/Buddha-nature, which is covered by adventitious ignorance and delusion so that it is even unknown to its owners. Based on this view, the various lines of early Chan made every effort to pacify, maintain, contemplate, or look into the pure fundamental mind/nature (*anxin* 安心, *shou benzhenxin* 守本真心, *guanxin* 觀心, *jianxing* 見性).³⁵ On the other hand, the Mādhyamika theory denies making an absolute commitment to anything, not even to the Buddha or Buddha-nature. Following this doctrine, some lines of early Chan advocated "no-thought" (*wunian* 無念), "no-mind" (*wuxin* 無心), or "no-affair" (*wushi* 無事) in order to free the mind from emotional and intellectual attachments.³⁶ The first order of Daoyi's "ordinary mind" is in accordance with the former doctrine, which was influenced by the *tathāgata-garbha* thought, and the second order of

33. Zongmi, *Zhonghua chuan xindi Chanmen shizi chengxi tu* 中華傳心地禪門師資承襲圖, Z. 110: 870b.

34. *Zongjing lu*, T. 2016, 48: 945a.

35. Those were advocated by Daoxin, Hongren 弘忍 (601-74), Shenxiu 神秀 (d. 706), and Huineng. For detailed discussions, see OGAWA Kōkan 小川弘貫, *Chūgoku nyoraizō shisō kenkyū* 中國如來藏思想研究 (Tokyo: Bukkyō shorin nakayama shobō, 1976), 394-5; David W. CHAPPELL: "The Teachings of the Fourth Ch'an Patriarch Tao-hsin," *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press 1983): 95-7; McRAE, *Northern School*, 135-6, 208-9; FAURE, *Will to Orthodoxy*, 60-1.

36. Those were advocated by the Southern, Baotang, Niutou, and Shitou schools.

“ordinary mind” with the latter doctrine, which was influenced by the Mādhyamika theory. In the third order, however, Daoyi set aside both doctrines, transformed absolute Buddha-nature into complete, substantial human mind that contains both purity and defilement, and identified an ordinary man with the Buddha. As his disciple Baoji said, “The complete mind is the Buddha, and the complete Buddha is a man. When a man and the Buddha are without difference, then there is the Way.” Danxia Tianran 丹霞天然, a disciple of both Daoyi and Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700-90), said, “If you want to recognize Śākyamuni, then this old ordinary man is him.”³⁷ From “the mind is the Buddha” to “the man is the Buddha,” though only a word different, is a critical reformation. Indeed, the various lines of pre-classical Chan had made strong efforts to shorten the distance between an ordinary man and the Buddha. In Huineng’s and his disciples’ teaching of “the mind is the Buddha,” this distance had been nearly negated. Only a single last step was left – the mind was still limited within the scope of its intrinsically pure nature, excluding the defiled mind. If one kept this last step, the essence of the Indian *tathāgata-garbha* theory would still remain. When this last step was overridden, with complete, substantial, ordinary mind, including both purity and defilement, becoming Buddha-nature, with no difference between an ordinary man and the Buddha, thereupon Chinese Chan took shape.

This reformation immediately drew serious criticism from more conservative quarters both inside and outside Buddhism. Nanyang Huizhong was the first to launch an attack:

Some have different names but the same essence, and some have the same name but different essences. Therefore they are abused. For example, Bodhi, Nirvāna, Thusness, Buddha-nature, these names are different, but their essence is the same. True mind and deluded mind, Buddha wisdom and mundane wisdom, the names are the same, but the essences are different. It is because the south[ern doctrine] wrongly taught deluded mind as true mind, taking thief as son, and regarding mundane wisdom as Buddha wisdom. This is like confusing fish eyes with bright pearls. These things cannot be taken as the same and must be distinguished.³⁸

37. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 14.6a.

38. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.1b-3a.

This statement was made sometime during the years 772-5, and its target was Daoyi's teaching.³⁹ Huizhong appreciated Daoyi's expression, "neither mind nor Buddha,"⁴⁰ but could not tolerate that he "taught deluded mind as true mind." This is because while the former did not betray the *prajñā* teaching, the latter made a reformation of the pre-classical Chan tradition.

Soon after Huizhong, criticism from outside the Chan movement also arose. Liang Su 梁肅 (753-93), a Confucian as well as a follower of the great Tiantai master Zhanran 湛然 (711-82), sharply condemned Daoyi's new idea:

Among today's people, those who have the right belief are very rare. Among those who open the gate of Chan, some use the teachings that "there is no Buddha or Dharma" and "no matter whether evil or good" to transform the people. Mediocre people run after them, and fellows with lustful desires go in and out of their halls. The gentry regard these words as the supreme [understanding], which will never be replaced, so that personal desires need not be abandoned. Consequently, people go to their gates like flying moths darting into bright candles, or broken rocks dropping down an empty valley. ... This kind of harm is the same as [that done by] the host of demon and heresy.⁴¹

This treatise was likely written in 781,⁴² a few years after Daoyi went to Hong prefecture and established the Hongzhou school. The alleged teaching of "no matter whether evil or good" and of affirming personal desires accords with the third order of Daoyi's "ordinary mind." Liang Su complained that this teaching betrayed the orthodox doctrine of Buddhism, and because it attracted numerous followers, it exerted a destructive effect on Buddhism.

39. See ISHII Shūdō 石井修道, "Nanyō Echū no nanpō shūshi no hihan ni tsuite" 南陽慧忠の南方宗旨の批判 について, *Chūgoku no bukkū to bunka: Kamata Shigeo hakushi kanreki kinen ronshū* 中國の佛教と文化: 鎌田茂雄博士還暦記念論集 (Tokyo: Daizō shuppansha 1988), pp. 315-44; "Nansōzen no tongō shisō no tenkai: Katakū Shine kara Kōshūshū e" 南宗禪の頓悟思想の展開: 荷澤神會から洪州宗へ, *Zenbunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 禪文化研究所紀要 20 (1990): 136-8; JIA Jinhua, "Mazu Daoyi: A Complete Biography," *Taiwan Journal of Religious Studies* 1.2 (2001): 119-150.

40. See *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.1b-3a.

41. Liang Su, "Tiantai famen yi" 天台法門議, in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 517.15a/b.

42. See Kanda Kiichirō 神田喜一郎, "Ryō Shuku nenpu" 梁肅年譜, in *Tōhōgaku ronshū: Tōhō gakkai sōritsu nijūgoshūnen kinen* 東方學論集: 東方學會創立二十五周年紀念 (Tokyo: Tōhō gakkai 1972), pp. 270-1.

A little while later, there came Zongmi's criticism. Although he stood in the sectarian position of the Heze school, he fiercely criticized the Hongzhou thought as representing the most serious challenge not only to the Huineng-Heze line but also to the whole Buddhist tradition.

Now, the Hongzhou school says that greed, anger, precepts (*śīla*), and concentration (*samādhi*) are of the same kind, which is the function of Buddha-nature. They fail to distinguish between ignorance and enlightenment, the inverted and the upright. ... The Hongzhou school always says that since greed, anger, compassion, and good are all Buddha-nature, there could not be any difference between them. This is like someone who only observes the wet nature [of water] as never changing, but fails to comprehend that, since water can both carry a boat or sink it, its merits and faults are remarkably different.⁴³

Zongmi attacked the Hongzhou teaching for equating greed and anger with compassion and good, taking ignorance as enlightenment, and inverting right and wrong. The danger of this teaching was not only ethical but also doctrinal. The metaphor of water-nature implies a warning that the Hongzhou teaching might sink the boat of Buddhism. This, as we will see, is definitely not an overreaction.

From Liang Su to Huizhong and Zongmi, from outside to inside, the critics aimed at Hongzhou school's identification of the entire mind of purity and defilement with Buddha-nature. This fact in turn shows that this identification was truly a significant reformation in the doctrines of Chan and Buddhism.

The above analysis of Daoyi's teaching, "ordinary mind is the Way," reveals that the "ordinary mind" is more complex than might at first be apparent. Its first two orders of meaning comprehend the "Dharma-gate of mind-ground" of the Chan tradition, the "dualism" and nondualism advocated by early masters. Its third order of meaning, however, develops and reforms Chan traditions in its unconditional identification of substantial mind with Buddha-nature, an ordinary man with the Buddha, so as to make Chan Buddhism a religion of humanity, as YANAGIDA Seizan puts it. On the one hand, it affirms the value of the entirety of human being and human life, representing a humanistic and pragmatic turn in Chan and Buddhist tradition. On the other, it changes the Buddha back to a man, reducing his holy aura, and establishing a new relationship of equality between the Buddha and an ordinary man.

Nevertheless, a dangerous seed of self-deconstruction was at the same time planted into the body of Buddhism, as warned by Liang Su and

43. Zongmi, *Chengxi tu*, Z. 110: 875a/b.

Zongmi. If there is no difference between the Buddha and an ordinary man, or between transcendental and mundane worlds, the attractive power of Buddhist belief would be reduced, and the existing ground of Buddhist religion would become questionable. Tianran dared to sit astride the neck of a statue of a Bodhisattva, and burned a wooden image of Buddha to warm himself, saying: “As for the one single word, Buddha, I never like to hear it.”⁴⁴ Later, descendants of the Hongzhou school did even more astonishing activities to abuse the Buddha and ridicule the patriarchs.⁴⁵ Accompanying the attainment of a free mind was a tendency to religious self-deconstruction.

2. *Inherent Enlightenment and No-Cultivation*

The purpose of cultivation and enlightenment in Mahāyāna Buddhism is to make one a Buddha. If one is unconditionally identified with the Buddha, he is inherent enlightened and needs no cultivation. Consequently, Daoyi further advocated inherent enlightenment and rejected cultivation.

[Enlightenment] intrinsically existed and exists at present. It does not depend on the cultivation of the Way and seated meditation. Neither cultivation nor seated meditation – this is the pure Chan of Tathāgata.⁴⁶

Out of an ethical concern and criticism, Zongmi summarized the Hongzhou teaching of no-cultivation as follows:

If one understands that this is spontaneous and natural, he should not arouse the intention to cultivate the Way. Since the Way is the mind, one cannot use the mind to cultivate the mind. Since evil is also the mind, one cannot use the mind to cut off the mind. Neither cuts off evil nor cultivation, but freely follows one’s destiny, that is called liberation.⁴⁷

44. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 14.5a/b.

45. Some scholars explain these abusive activities as an impact of Mādhyamika thought. See, for example, Hsüeh-li Cheng, “Zen and San-lun Mādhyamika Thought: Exploring the Theoretical Foundation of Zen Teachings and Practices,” *Religious Studies* 15 (1979): 355-6. Since the three orders of the “ordinary mind” are mutually reinforcing, the idea of “neither mind nor Buddha” under Mādhyamika impact may indeed have been one of the reasons. However, considering the fact that the schools of Mādhyamika thought or those mainly under its influence, such as the Sanlun (Three Treatises) and the Niutou schools, did not lead to such abusive activities, this influence may not be a major reason.

46. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.7b.

47. Zongmi, *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序, T. 2015, 48: 402c.

The spontaneous state of human mind is the Way or Buddha-nature. It is inherently enlightened, without depending on cultivation and seated meditation. What one needs to do is simply follow his destiny freely and practise daily activities spontaneously. As a result, all traditional forms of Chan practice, such as seated meditation, pacifying the mind, maintaining the fundamental true mind, contemplating the mind, or transcending thought, became useless. Yaoshan Weiyan 藥山惟儼, a disciple of both Daoyi and Xiqian, called precepts (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*) as useless furniture.⁴⁸ Tianran said, “Here in my place is no Way to be cultivated, and no Dharma to be certified.”⁴⁹

Furthermore, under Daoyi’s advocacy of inherent enlightenment, the gradual/sudden paradigm of Chan awakening also became meaningless. Daoyi said: “It is in contrast to ignorance that one speaks of awakening. Since intrinsically there is no ignorance, awakening also need not be established.”⁵⁰ Zongmi criticized that though the Hongzhou school was close to the gate of sudden awakening, it totally betrayed the gate of gradual awakening.⁵¹ However, Daoyi ultimately denied any kind of awakening. Awakening presupposes ignorance and delusion. Since an ordinary man is the Buddha, intrinsically lacking any ignorance and delusion, awakening is nowhere to be found, no matter whether it is sudden or gradual.

Nevertheless, just as the idea, “ordinary mind is the Way,” covers at least three orders of meaning, the Hongzhou school’s concept of cultivation and awakening is not as simple as might at first be thought. It sways between no-cultivation and cultivation, no-awakening and awakening, in accord with the various orders of “ordinary mind.”

First, in the highest order of “ordinary mind,” theoretically and ideally the Way needs no cultivation, and a man needs no awakening, because the mind is the Way and an ordinary man is the Buddha. However, most men do not know that the spontaneous state of their mind is enlightenment itself, so they still need to be awakened through a distinctive

48. *Zutang ji*, 4.104; *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 14.9b.

49. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 14.6a. A similar speech is also cited by *Zongjing lu*, T. 2016, 48: 844a.

50. *Shike goroku*, *Goke goroku*, 4a.

51. Zongmi, *Chengxi tu*, Z. 110: 875b.

teaching method. This method is the so-called “encounter dialogue,” which McRAE defines as follows:

The spontaneous repartee that is said to take place between master and student in the process of Chan training. This type of communication includes both verbal and physical exchanges that are often posed in the form of sincere but misguided questions from the Chan trainees and perplexing, even enigmatic, responses from the masters.⁵²

HU Shi asserts that this method was first used by Daoyi.⁵³ This assertion has been generally accepted, though some scholars have indicated that antecedents of encounter dialogue were apparent earlier in the Chan tradition.⁵⁴ The forms of encounter dialogue used by Daoyi include illogical, nonconceptual rhetoric, beating and shouting, various kinds of physical gesture, illocutionary signs, and making use of daily essentials.⁵⁵ The awakening attained through encounter dialogue is intrinsically sudden and thorough, as Daoyi said: “When ignorant, it is the ignorance of one’s own inherent mind. When awakened, it is the awakening of one’s own inherent nature. Once awakened, one is awakened forever, never again becoming ignorant.”⁵⁶ The intuitive, spontaneous, and nonconceptual nature of encounter dialogue derived from the nature of the awakening defined by the Hongzhou school. It, in turn, justifies the Hongzhou Chan’s distinctive identity and its claim of being an independent transmission of Buddhism.

52. McRAE, “Encounter Dialogue,” p. 340.

53. HU Shi, “Zhongguo Chanxue de fazhan” 中國禪學的發展 (1934), in *Hu Shi ji*, p. 260.

54. See Nukariya Kaiten, *Zengaku shisōshi*, pp. 408-13; McRAE, *Northern School*, pp. 91-7.

55. For detailed discussions on Daoyi’s application of various forms of encounter dialogue, see Yinshun 印順, *Zhongguo Chanzong shi* 中國禪宗史 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian 1992), pp. 410-1; YANAGIDA, “Goroku no rekishi: Zen bunken no seiritsushiteki kenkyū” 語錄の歴史: 禪文獻の成立史的研究, *Tōhō gakuhō* 東方學報 57 (1985): 517-8; Whalen LAI, “Ma-tsu Tao-i and the Unfolding of Southern Zen,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 12.2-3 (1985): 177-80; Robert E. BUSWELL, Jr., “The ‘Short-cut’ Approach of K’an-hua Meditation: The Evolution of a Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch’an Buddhism,” in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1987), pp. 334-8.

56. *Jingde chuangdeng lu*, 28.7b. See also McRAE, “Encounter Dialogue,” p. 354.

Second, in the “lower” orders of “ordinary mind”, not only awakening is necessary, but also various traditional forms of cultivation are still applicable. Daoyi taught his disciples:

The Way needs no cultivation, just not defiling it. What is defilement? When one has a mind of birth and death and an intention of action, all these are defilement.⁵⁷

If one simply lacks a single thought, then he cuts off the root of birth and death and obtains the supreme treasure of the Dharma-king.⁵⁸

If you understand the holy mind, there is never anything else.⁵⁹

Thus, in order not to defile, one still needs the expedient means of “no-thought” and “no-affair”, “empty” of any conceptual and intellectual attachments. Some of Daoyi’s disciples did apply experientially these two expedients. Pang Yun said, “No-thought is better than seeking causes.”⁶⁰ Daowu said, “When even one single thought does not arise, then Buddha-mind is seen.”⁶¹ Baoji said, “If the mind has no affairs, myriad dharmas will not emerge.”⁶²

Moreover, not only did some internal expedients of pre-classical Chan continue to be applied, but also various traditional forms of external practice, such as seated meditation, reciting scriptures, observing precepts, and making offerings, were still practiced within the Hongzhou school. For example, Huaihai often asked his disciples to keep the mind indifferent, like wood or stone.⁶³ This state of mind is actually a kind of *samādhi*. The *Jingde chuandeng lu* records the following anecdotes:

One day, [Weijian 惟建] was sitting in meditation at the back of Mazu’s Dharma hall. When the Patriarch saw him, he blew twice in his ear. The master [Weijian] emerged from meditation. When he saw it was the Reverend, he entered meditation again.⁶⁴

One day, Mazu asked the master [Zhizang 智藏], “Why don’t you read sutras?” The master answered, “How could sutras make a difference?” Mazu said, “Although this is so, later you will need them for the sake of others.”⁶⁵

57. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.6b.

58. *Shike goroku, Goke goroku*, 3b.

59. *Ibid.*, 4a.

60. *Zutang ji*, 15.349.

61. *Song gaoseng zhuan*, 10.233.

62. *Zutang ji*, 15.330.

63. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 6.12b/3a.

64. *Ibid.*, 6.7b-8a.

65. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 7.2b.

These anecdotes show that seated meditation was still practiced in Daoyi's hall, and he required his major disciples to read scriptures in order to teach others. Weiyan, who did not allow others to read the scriptures, often read them himself.⁶⁶ In the famous story of watching the moon, when Mazu asked what should be done then, Zhizang said that it was better to make offerings to the Buddha, and Huaihai said it was better to practice cultivation.⁶⁷ Baoji was famous for his "extraordinary seriousness in observing precepts throughout his life."⁶⁸ Huaihai's "Regulations of the Chan School" (*Chanmen guishi* 禪門規式) even established harsh punishments for those who broke the Buddhist precepts and monastic disciplines.⁶⁹

3. *The Ultimate Realm: The Return to the Human Realm*

Since the late Han, both Buddhism and religious Taoism had grown rapidly in China, and both reached their golden age in the high Tang. The holy realms of both religions became the ultimate pursuit of numerous followers. Then, from the mid-Tang, there came a humanistic turn in Chinese intellectual history. Mazu Daoyi's Hongzhou school marked the beginning of this turn and displayed a self-deconstruction in the religious world. YANAGIDA says: "The Buddhist standing point of Linji is its absolute recognition of the fundamental value of the human being."⁷⁰ However, this recognition was initiated by Daoyi, and Linji Yixuan was simply his best follower.

While transforming absolute Buddha-nature into substantial human mind and the Buddha to an ordinary man, Daoyi affirmed that the entirety of daily life is of ultimate truth and value.

Since limitless kalpas, all living beings have never left the *samādhi* of Dharma-nature, and they have always abided in the *samādhi* of Dharma-nature. Wearing clothes, eating food, talking and responding, making use of the six senses, all activities are Dharma-nature.⁷¹

66. *Ibid.*, 14.7a, 9b.

67. *Ibid.*, 6.11a.

68. *Zutang ji*, 15.331.

69. See *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 6.14b-5b.

70. YANAGIDA: *Mu no tankyū*, p. 167.

71. *Shike goroku, Goke goroku*, 4a. Cf. the translations of PAS, *Recorded Sayings of Ma-tsu*, p. 88; CHENG, *Sun-face Buddha*, p. 64.

If you now understand this reality, you will truly not create any karma. Following your destiny, passing your life, with one cloak or one robe, wherever sitting or standing, it is always with you.⁷²

Daily activities of ordinary life are equated with the ultimate reality of Dharma-nature. The Buddha becomes a man again, and the holy realm turns back to the mundane world. The Way manifests itself everywhere in human life, and Buddha-nature functions in every aspect of daily experiences. Ordinary men are liberated from their former karma in limitless kalpas; they spontaneously practice Chan in daily life and attain personal and spiritual freedom, “indulging their nature, being carefree, following causes, and acting unrestrainedly.”⁷³ Indeed, from early Chan’s “pacifying the mind,” “maintaining the mind,” or “contemplating the mind” to Hongzhou school’s “indulging one’s nature” and “letting the mind be free,” a great change undoubtedly happened. This is the true liberation of humanity in the development of Buddhism, as YANAGIDA indicates: “After Mazu, the characteristics of Chan demonstrate the strong significance of life; it is a religion of humanity born in the vast expanse of Chinese land.”⁷⁴

In order to verify this new idea of an ultimate realm, Daoyi applied the paradigms of absolute/phenomena and essence/function to supply its ontological ground:

The absolute (*li*) and phenomena (*shi*) are without difference; both are wonderful functions. All are because of the revolving of the mind, and there is no other principle. For example, though the reflections of the moon are many, the real moon is not manifold. Though there are many springs of water, the nature of water is not manifold. Though there are myriad phenomenal appearances in the universe, empty space is not manifold. Though there are many principles being spoken of, the unobstructed wisdom is not manifold. Whatever is established, it all comes from the One Mind. One can construct it or sweep it away; either way is wonderful function, and this wonderful function is oneself. It is not that there is a place to stand where one leaves the Truth, but the very place where one stands is the Truth. This is the essence of oneself. If it is not so, then who is one? All dharmas are Buddha-Dharma, and all things are liberation. Liberation is Thusness, and all things never leave Thusness. Walking, staying, sitting, and lying, all are inconceivable function, which does not wait for a timely season.⁷⁵

72. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.7b.

73. Daowu’s words, in *Zutang ji*, 5.115.

74. YANAGIDA: *Mu no tankyū*, p. 145.

75. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.7a. Cf. the translations of PAS, *Recorded Sayings of Ma-tsu*, p. 89; CHENG: *Sun-Face Buddha*, p. 66.

Daoyi first identified the phenomenal with the absolute. Their relationship is that of many and one, which is inseparable and unobstructed, many being one, one being many. The absolute is manifested in each of the manifold phenomena, and each of the manifold phenomena possesses the value of the absolute. Daoyi then assimilated this paradigm to the essence/function paradigm and identified function with essence in the same way. Finally, he attributed the essence to One Mind, or Buddha-dharma, or Thusness, to affirm that all functions are of true value and are liberation themselves. Since everything that occurs to the individual is a manifestation of the functioning of his intrinsic Buddha-nature, the daily life he experiences is identical with the ultimate experience of Buddhist enlightenment and liberation. In other places, Daoyi used the *maṇi* pearl as a metaphor. The *maṇi* pearl changes in accord with the colors it touches. When it touches the color blue, it becomes blue; when it touches the color yellow, it becomes yellow, though its essence is lack of coloration. Hence “seeing, listening, sensing, and knowing are originally your intrinsic nature, which is also called intrinsic mind. It is not that there is a Buddha other than the mind.”⁷⁶ As Buswell insightfully points out, here lies the conceptual divide of early and classical Chan: instead of contemplating and seeing the internal essence of the true mind, Daoyi stressed that it is through the external functioning of the mind that its essence is seen.⁷⁷

Critics of the Hongzhou school did not miss this doctrine of “function is identical with Buddha-nature.” Nanyang Huizhong was again the first to criticize it:

If we take seeing, listening, sensing, and knowing to be Buddha-nature, Pure Reputation [i.e., *Vimalakīrti*] should not say that the Dharma is separate from seeing, listening, sensing, and knowing. If one practices seeing, listening, sensing, and knowing, then these are seeing, listening, sensing, and knowing, not seeking the Dharma.⁷⁸

Huizhong cited the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* to verify the differentiation of the psycho-physical functions from Buddha-nature. Later, Zongmi further attacked Daoyi on the basis of the essence/function paradigm. He

76. *Zongjing lu*, T. 2016, 48: 492a. A large part of this speech is also attributed to Qingyuan Xingsi in the same book, T. 2016, 48: 940b. Considering Zongmi’s attack (see below), this speech is likely by Daoyi. See YANAGIDA, “Goroku no rekishi”, p. 490.

77. BUSWELL: “The ‘Short-cut’ Approach of K’an-hua Meditation,” p. 341.

78. *Jingde chuandeng lu*, 28.1b.

picked up the metaphor of the *mani* pearl used by Daoyi. The nature of the pearl is intrinsically perfect and luminous, but when it comes into contact with external objects, it reflects different forms and colors. When it reflects the color black or other colors, its entire surface appears black or as other colors. The Hongzhou school would aver that this very blackness, or blueness, or yellowness, was the pearl, and did not know those colors were all delusion and empty. Zongmi objected that the Hongzhou school collapsed essence into function and did not realize the difference between them, therefore they did not really see the essence of the true mind. The fact that they defined all activities of daily life, no matter good or evil, as Buddha-nature represented a dangerous anti-nomianism.⁷⁹ While Zongmi was quite right in indicating Daoyi's faulty logic that collapsed essence into function and the antinomian tendency that might result from this teaching, he was nevertheless unable to see that behind the intentional faulty logic was Daoyi's dedication to recognize the ultimate value of the colorful activities of the human realm.

In conclusion, the core of Daoyi's teaching, "the ordinary mind is the Way," covers at least three orders of meaning. The first two orders comprehend two major teachings of pre-classical Chan tradition, namely "the mind is the Buddha" or the pure mind of self nature, and "neither mind nor Buddha" or nondualism, which are respectively based on Indian *tathāgata-garbha* thought and Mādhyamika theory. The third order of ordinary mind affirms that ordinary mind is the spontaneous state of human mind, which is a mixture of good and evil, purity and defilement, and enlightenment and ignorance. These three orders are mutually reinforcing and sometimes conflicting, but the third order is the most innovative and significant. It reforms Chan and Buddhist tradition by its unconditional identification of complete, substantial human mind with absolute Buddha-nature. Based on this new perspective of the relationship between human mind and Buddha-nature, Daoyi further advocated inherent enlightenment and no-cultivation, and designed a

79. Zongmi, *Chengxitu*, Z. 110: 872a-4b. See Peter N. GREGORY: *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 236-44. In the same text, Zongmi also introduces a critical distinction between two levels of function, the intrinsic function of self-nature (*zixing benyong* 自性本用) and the responsive function in accord with conditions (*suiyuan yingyong* 隨緣應用), and relates them to the teachings of the Heze and Hongzhou schools respectively.

new mode of Chan discourse, the encounter dialogue, to guide learners. In addition, he took the essence/function paradigm to assume that psycho-physical functions are identical with Buddha-nature and that daily activities are all wonderful functions, in order to recognize the ultimate truth and value of human life, as well as to supply an ontological ground for his new doctrine. All these made Chan Buddhism a religion of humanity and marked the final shaping of Chinese Chan proper.