

Friday November 2, Culture and Society Building (CU) 3rd Floor Seminar Room,

9:00-9:30 Welcome

9:30-10:30 Approaches to Reality in Tang Chan

Mario Poceski, University of Florida

The paper explores some of the key philosophical reflections on the nature of reality that were formulated within the Chan tradition during the Tang era (618-907), and their impact on the construction of specific soteriological templates. It contends that central Buddhist ideas, such as emptiness, skillful means, detachment, and ineffability exerted significant influences on the ways in which Chan monks understood the tradition, fashioned their identity, and situated themselves within the overall milieu of Tang Buddhism. There was a general tendency within Chan circles to view all doctrinal templates and soteriological systems as provisional constructs devoid of substance or self-nature, whose main function is to point or orient towards a higher level of reality that cannot be captured by conceptual thought or religious dogma. Accordingly, Chan teachings purportedly not only challenged established values and conventional ways of thinking, but also pointed towards their own provisional (or unreal) nature. Such approach to truth, from absolute and conventional perspectives, points to a subtle but pragmatic understanding of spiritual doctrines, beliefs, and practices. Ultimately, they are ostensibly meant to provide practical tools for attuning practitioners towards a more enlightened mode of being or understanding, rather than serving as metaphysical blueprints of experiential reality or templates for organizing social life.

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45-11:45 An Alternative Interpretation of Immediacy in the *Linji lu*

Tao Jiang, Rutgers University

This paper hopes to accomplish two goals: first, it proposes a more effective framework for philosophers who engage in philosophical interpretations and constructions of Chan Buddhist texts, like the *Linji lu*, to deal with challenges from historians when the integrity of those Chan texts as well as their authorship is called into question, so that a more robust intellectual space for the philosophical discourse on Chan classics can be carved out from the dominant historicist discourse. Second, it puts forward an alternative interpretation of Linji's signature teaching of sudden enlightenment by connecting his demand for immediacy in the training of disciples with the nurturing of a particular set of character traits conducive to Chan enlightenment. It argues that only those practitioners with a strong character can weather the grueling demand of the arduous spiritual journey prescribed in Chan teachings.

Lunch: 11:45-1:00

1:00-2:00 Liturgy and Practices in Buddhist caves on the Silk Road

Lidu Yi, Florida International University

The art and architecture of Yungang, a 5th-century court cave complex, and UNESCO World Heritage site, exemplifies the infusion of various cultural, material, and religious exchanges between the west and east, north and south, as well as religious and secular influences, all into a Buddhist rock-cut cave temple complex. The art, architecture, and liturgical rituals in Yungang are the result of rather complicated cross-cultural phenomena. Such intricacy does not appear in any other Buddhist cave temples in China, or even the whole of Asia. The architecture, imagery, and liturgy in Yungang all bear marks of multicultural origins. One can observe Greek and Roman influences, and Indian and Gandhara influences, as well as the implantation of elements from Xinjiang and Liangzhou.

Archaeological excavations above the caves in 2009, 2010 and 2012 have shed significant new light on the architectural configurations of monastery ruins in Yungang and in the Northern Wei capital Pingcheng, the functions of different sections of the entire cave complex, as well as monastic life within it. For the first time, it is possible to reconstruct where the monks lived, meditated and translated sacred literary texts, and to fully understand that freestanding monasteries are an important component of the rock-cut cave complex. These new discoveries not only explained why the Yungang complex does not have vihara (residence) caves, but also provided scientific evidence on the process of the excavation of Yungang.

These findings triggered my inquiries into the sacred areas and monastery ruins at Takht-i-Bāhī in the Peshawar Basin, Pakistan, as well as the monastery ruins of Mekhasanda, Jaulian, Dharmarajika and Thareli since they demonstrate similarities of architectural configurations with those in Yungang. This paper therefore examines the art and architectural dissemination and integration of different cultures through the Silk Road.

2:00-3:00

Zen Thorns: Modern Japanese Buddhism and Progressive Politics

James Mark Shields, Bucknell University

In addition to the birth and development of “Imperial Way Zen,” late Meiji Japan witnessed the emergence of a number of young lay Buddhist scholars, priests and activists who attempted, with varying success, to reconstitute Buddhism along progressive and occasionally radical—even revolutionary—political lines. While groups such as the New Buddhist Fellowship (Shin Bukkyō Dōshikai, 1899–1915) were made up mainly of young men associated with the two branches of the Shin sect, several of its members did affiliate themselves with Zen, such as Suzuki Daisetsu (1870–1966) and Inoue Shūten (1880–1945). A more radical contemporary figure, Sōtō sect priest Uchiyama Gudō (1874–1911), has received more attention, due in no small part to his being executed as one of the 24 conspirators of the High Treason Incident of 1910–11. This paper will examine some of the ideas of Inoue and Uchiyama, focusing on their use of Chan and Zen precedents to justify and explain their progressive positions. It will also reflect on the promise as well as the “limits” of progressive Zen Buddhism in a modern and contemporary context.

3:00-4:00 Cognitive Transformation Via Meditative Movement and Stillness: Taijiquan and Zazen as Multi-dimensional Representations

Steven Geisz, University of Tampa

Advocates of martial arts and meditation often see their practices as having some kind of transformative potential. The transformation is most obviously a change in a practitioner's physical body and bodily skill, in the case of martial arts. However, for meditative practices and for some kinds of martial arts—particularly the so-called “internal” martial arts—the transformation is often also seen as a change in the practitioner's ability to perceive, understand, and appreciate some kind of difficult-to-articulate, esoteric fact.

In this paper, I consider taijiquan (i.e., “t'ai chi”) and zazen (i.e., the simple seated meditation of Zen/Chan Buddhism) as case studies and seek to make sense of what this transformation might be and how these practices could bring it about. I argue that one aspect of the transformation can be understood as a cognitive change involving the practitioner's body serving as a multi-dimensional representation of a fact that cannot practically be represented in other ways.

4-4:30 Break

4:30-5:30 Keynote: Zen Trunks, Funks, and O by the Way, Monks
Steven Heine, Florida International University

5:30-6:30 Reception

7:00 Dinner for Speakers

**Saturday November 3, Culture and Society Building (CU) 3rd Floor Seminar Room,
9:00-10:00 The historical development of the idea of Daitō-Zen**
Osvaldo Mercuri, Hanazono University

Shūhō Myōchō 宗峰妙超 (Daitō Kokushi 大燈国師, 1282-1338, hereafter Daitō) is the second patriarch of the so-called Ōtōkan 応燈関 line, the only line of transmission in the Japanese Rinzai Zen school that has survived up until the present day. He is also the founder of one of the most important and culturally influential Zen temples of Japan, Daitokuji 大徳寺 in Kyōto, the temple where most of the Japanese tea ceremony tradition developed.

Today, the image of the Zen practiced by Daitō (or Daitō-Zen) is mostly derived from a brief text in kanbun, “Daitō Kokushi’s Final Admonitions”, recited daily in many Rinzai temples. In it, the monk highly praises a life of struggles in poverty, away from the great monastic institutions, completely devoted to the understanding of the ultimate truth in Buddhism. This is the kind of life that Daitō, according to tradition, is believed to have personally experienced during the twenty years of his post-enlightenment practice. His image as a Zen monk is an ideal that has spiritually nourished the Rinzai school, even deeply influencing the famous Rinzai school reformer Hakuin Ekaku (白隠慧鶴, 1686-1769), who considered Daitō the greatest Japanese Zen monk of all time.

Through a detailed analysis of the historical sources, most of which have never been presented to a western audience, this paper will illustrate how the idea of Daitō-Zen has evolved over the centuries — how his tradition has been built starting from some historical facts, giving emphasis to some elements while ignoring others, filling the gaps with the use of imagination, and possibly generating mistakes and/or misunderstandings.

10:00-10:15 Break

10:15-11:15 Teaching Zen through Non-Zen Soil, Roots, Branches, and Blooms
Sarah Mattice, University of North Florida

In this presentation I explore several issues connected with teaching Zen, in terms of both the content of coursework focused on Zen traditions, and the influence of Zen ideas and practices on university level philosophy and religious studies pedagogy. I am especially interested here in the interplay between “Zen” and “non-Zen” traditions, ideas, and practices, and how this interplay can be beneficial in a classroom setting. Using the plant growth metaphors of soil, roots, branches, and blooms, I offer some techniques and ideas for incorporating material into teaching about Zen that is often not part of “traditional” (philosophical) narratives about Zen. I conclude by considering some of the potential benefits and challenges related to how Zen has or can influence non-Zen related pedagogy.

11:15-12:15 Cultivating a Poetic Heart: A Reading on Yu Ji’s A Pointing Finger on Poetry and Other Poems
Xueqing Luo, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

In this article, I want to do an intimate and interpretive reading on text and poems by a leading literati, poet and educator in 13th century China, Yu Ji (虞集). In his text A Pointing Finger on Poetry (诗家一指, Shi Jia Yi Zhi) and poems, Yu Ji talked about the cultivation of a poetic heart of poets, artists and humanistic scholars as inspired by especially Chan Buddhism in his typical pithy, poetic and metaphorical language. In a time of ethnic inequity, political upheavals and devaluation of humanities, Yu Ji presented a vision and a pathway for younger scholars to reconnect with the core experience in Chinese aesthetics.

For myself, Yu Ji's idea belongs to the tradition I come from. Yet for my American readers, clearly he is from another tradition which may be very different from theirs in fundamental ways. Therefore, the reading of his texts is a combination of traditional Chinese interpretation of philosophical ideas, as well as inspirations from Scarry's ethics of reading and Said's return to philology.

It is hoped that this reading could give contemporary readers a glimpse on experiencing Chinese aesthetic education from within, as well as inspire them about cultivating a poetic heart in a time of social, cultural and political challenges.