

ONE

Text and Untext

On the Significance of Kōans

Introduction to the Two Texts

In considering Dōgen's relation to the kōan tradition, a number of conflicting perspectives must be confronted. First, Dōgen, who is generally known as a strong critic of kōans, emphasized the importance of zazen-only and referred to kōan training as misguided and deficient. Yet, Dōgen is also cited as playing a central role in introducing kōans to Japan, and it is said that he brought back to his native country the first copy of the most prominent kōan collection, the *Hekiganroku*, which he copied in a single night just before his return from China as the epitome of what he had studied there. Second, Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* is prized for its philosophical commentary on Buddhist doctrines written in Japanese, mainly in the period in the early and mid-1240s as he was leaving the Kyoto area and was settling in the Echizen mountains. But Dōgen also composed another text known as *Shōbōgenzō* that is a collection of three hundred kōan cases without commentary culled from Chinese Zen texts and written in Chinese in 1235 while he was still in Kyoto. Third, the Chinese monk Ta-hui was the main target of Dōgen's criticisms of what had gone wrong with Buddhism in Sung China primarily because he was the foremost proponent of kōan practice that was based on the teachings of his master, Yüan-wu, compiler of the *Hekiganroku* (hereafter HR), and that continued to spread to Japan and Korea. However, Ta-hui also apparently opposed the excessive use of kōans, and he is said to have burned in protest the xylographs of the HR so that it was lost in China for nearly two hundred years. Fourth, the aim of kōan

training is to foster a psychological process of suppressing and transcending ordinary consciousness and language to realize a nonconceptual truth without reliance on words. Yet, kōans can also be interpreted as rhetorical devices or literary symbols that utilize fully the resources of language in highly creative and original ways indicating that verbal expression supports rather than obstructs the attainment of Zen enlightenment. Fifth, Zen writings containing kōan cases express an essentially demythological standpoint that takes an irreverent, iconoclastic attitude toward Buddhist rituals and symbols. But many of the same Zen works are also highly mythical and hagiographical in their accounts of the lives of the leaders of the sect, and kōans themselves often seem to function in the Zen monastic institution as basically ritual exercises seemingly devoid of philosophical meaning.

Dealing with these conflicting perspectives raises fundamental questions in Dōgen studies and Zen studies as a whole: What is the nature and function of a kōan? Is it a psychological device that defeats language or a literary tool that fosters textuality? What is Dōgen's attitude toward kōans and kōan interpretation in Zen training? Does he really intend to support or refute the use of kōans? The complex hermeneutic context underlying this set of questions is highlighted in considering Dōgen's novel, even radical, reinterpretation of one of the most famous kōan cases, Bodhidharma's "skin, flesh, bones, and marrow." The original case cited by Dōgen deals with the first Chinese patriarch's process of selecting his successor from among his top four disciples. The dialogue first appears in the seminal Sung Chinese Zen work, the *Keitoku Dentōroku* (hereafter KD), which traces the "transmission of the lamp" of patriarchal succession beginning with the seven primordial buddhas culminating in Śākyamuni and continuing through and beyond the first and sixth patriarchs in China. Prior to the KD version, there were over half a dozen less embellished versions of the tale in earlier texts, with some of these referring to only three disciples and all of them lacking the full dialogue.¹ Dōgen cites the Bodhidharma dialogue as case no. 201 in his Chinese collection, and he comments extensively on it in the "Kattō" fascicle of the Japanese *Shōbōgenzō*. He also mentions it in the "Ōsakusendaba" fascicle and in several lectures included in the *Eihei Kōroku* (hereafter EK) collection.

This Bodhidharma dialogue is particularly significant because it seems to epitomize the fundamental view of kōans and of the role of language in general that is held not only by the first patriarch but by the mainstream

of Zen thought from the classical period to the present based on the ideal of a “special transmission outside the teachings (or scriptures)” (*kyōge betsuden*). According to the source dialogue, Bodhidharma, sensing that his time has come, asks his disciples to succinctly state their understanding of the Dharma. The first three disciples use some kind of metaphorical or philosophical expression, and the master’s response is that they express, in succession, his “skin,” his “flesh,” and his “bones,” thereby indicating a progression of understanding from superficiality to depth, or from exteriority to interiority, that still falls somewhat short of disclosing the ultimate truth. The final disciple, Hui-k’o, who in another dialogue is said to have begun his training under Bodhidharma by demonstrating his commitment to Zen by cutting off his arm as “heaven sends down a snow,” bows three times and remains silent. Bodhidharma responds, “You express my marrow,” apparently granting approval of the deepest and most interior level of understanding to Hui-k’o, who in traditional accounts goes on to become the second patriarch. Thus, according to conventional interpretations, silence prevails over speech, and there is a clear distinction and sense of hierarchy concerning the first three and the last of the disciples. Therefore, the *kōan*, and by implication all discourse and uses of language, functions as a dispensable tool of psychological transformation, or as a trigger mechanism for spiritual insight that has no validity in and of itself. By culminating in the termination of discourse the dialogue creates a double-bind that forces language, as well as the ego sustained by it, to “expend itself and actualize its ultimate limit not in terms of its external failures or impossibilities, but in terms of its inner structural antimony.”²

However, Dōgen challenges and reverses this reading of the *kōan* on several grounds. First, he argues for the *equalization* of each of the four responses as fully valid expressions of the Dharma if interpreted in the appropriate context and, while allowing for provisional distinctions, he refutes any final sense of hierarchy or superiority: “You should realize,” he writes, “that the first patriarch’s expression ‘skin, flesh, bones, and marrow’ does not refer to the superficiality or depth [of understanding]. Although there may remain a [provisional] distinction between superior and inferior understanding, [each of the four disciples] expresses the first patriarch in his entirety.”³ Furthermore, Dōgen maintains, in contrast to an exclusive emphasis on the priority of silence, that language is a necessary and effective means of conveying the Dharma. He reinterprets the term *kattō* (literally “vines,” but by implication “entanglements,” “complications,” or

“word-tangles”), which is often understood as an illusion and therefore an impediment to enlightenment, to suggest a *self-entangling/dis-entangling vehicle* for expressing spiritual realization that is never free from the need to be expressed:

Generally, although all Buddhist sages in their training study how to cut off entanglements (*kattō*) at their root, they do not study how to cut off entanglements by using entanglements. They do not realize that entanglements entangle entanglements. How little do they know what it is to transmit entanglements in terms of entanglements. How rarely do they realize that the transmission of the Dharma is itself an entanglement.⁴

In numerous examples, Dōgen’s characteristically unconventional interpretations of traditional cases are frequently aimed at defeating their author’s apparent intentions in the belief that all expressions are fair game for the creative interpreter. In another interesting rereading of the tradition, he subverts a *kōan* almost always seen as advocating a classic pro-*kōan*/anti-*zazen* position so that it takes on a reverse meaning supporting meditation. Based on a KD anecdote, Nan-yüeh likens his disciple Ma-tsu’s practicing *zazen* in order to become a buddha to the futility of polishing a tile to create a mirror, apparently to point out the limitation of meditation as a gradual means of attaining enlightenment.⁵ Dōgen, who in contrast to the tradition maintains that Ma-tsu is already enlightened *before rather than after* the dialogue begins,⁶ subverts and remythologizes this understanding by arguing that the act of polishing does create a mirror, just as *zazen* brings about a realization of the potential illumination of Buddha-nature. “We truly know,” he writes, “that when we make a mirror by polishing a tile, Ma-tsu becomes a buddha. When Ma-tsu becomes a buddha, Ma-tsu immediately becomes Ma-tsu. When Ma-tsu becomes Ma-tsu, *zazen* immediately becomes *zazen*.”⁷ Dōgen argues that the *kōan* legitimates his view of *zazen* as the method of “practice in realization” (*shōjō no shu*) and thus can be interpreted as refuting the very point it is supposed to establish concerning the prioritizing of *kōans* in relation to *zazen*. However, such a reversal of meaning or contradictory interpretation represents the kind of self-subverting process that typifies and enhances the *kōan* tradition even as it criticizes the standard understanding of one of the cases.

What do these examples indicate about Dōgen’s view of *kōans*? Is he supporting or denying their usefulness? It is clear that Dōgen frequently cites *kōans* and uses them as the basis for articulating a philosophy of Zen.

Yet it is also apparent that he often deliberately deviates from the standard interpretation. But then the question becomes, How is the standard view established, and where is the line drawn between convention and deviation? Dōgen's view is that the kōan as the raw material for philosophical commentary related to religious praxis has an innate flexibility and open-endedness of utility that does not stand in contrast to but derives from within the very rhetorical structure of the source dialogue itself to generate diverse and multidimensional implications. He seems to suggest that the kōan should be seen not as a psychological tool that brings one to a labyrinthine impasse based on the paradoxicality of speech and silence, but as a *discursive means of generating shifting, self-displacing (and thereby self-correcting) parallaxical perspectives.*

In recent years, modern scholarship has begun rewriting much of the history of Zen Buddhist thought and institutional development by reexamining many of the stereotypical conflicts in a way that is free of sectarian polarization and traditional polemics. In the case of Dōgen, the stereotypical view of his support for zazen in opposition to Ta-hui's defense of kōans has been called into question, particularly in light of recent discoveries of medieval manuscripts of Dōgen's Chinese *Shōbōgenzō*, also known as the *Shōbōgenzō Sanbyakusoku* (or collection of three hundred kōans), long considered apocryphal. The Chinese text is now seen as a significant influence on Dōgen's Japanese *Shōbōgenzō*, which cites and interprets several hundred kōan cases in its philosophical discussions. According to Manabe Shunshō, co-editor with Kawamura Kōdō of an extraordinary new forty-one-volume "photo-fascimile" edition (*ei-in-bon*) that contains three manuscripts each of the Chinese and Japanese *Shōbōgenzō* texts: "The text in [Japanese] *kana* syllables is a work related by Dōgen himself of his experience of profound enlightenment on the basis of the ancient principles of the Chinese text."⁸ Therefore, the new understanding of the historical and interpretative relation between Dōgen's two *Shōbōgenzō* texts helps clarify an understanding of the importance of kōans in his teachings in a way that compels a rethinking and reevaluation of the unfolding of the entire kōan tradition, the history of which has generally been told without reference to Dōgen's approach.

Questioning the Conventional View

The central concern of this book is to provide an interpretation of the writings of Dōgen, particularly his two works known as *Shōbōgenzō* written

in Chinese and in Japanese, in relation to the historical and philosophical development of the Zen kōan tradition during the T'ang and Sung eras in China. As founder of Sōtō Zen in Kamakura era Japan, Dōgen traveled to China to study Zen for four years (1223–27) and ultimately to attain enlightenment under the guidance of his mentor, Sōtō master Ju-ching, who was known for his strict adherence to meditation and refutation of kōan studies. According to his traditional biographies and other sources, Dōgen rejected studying with Rinzai priests before being instructed by Ju-ching that the only way to attain enlightenment in Zen training is through just-sitting or zazen-only (*shikantaza*).⁹ In several passages of his writings Dōgen explicitly refutes the use of kōans, and he is at times harshly critical of the Chinese priest Ta-hui, a leading Rinzai proponent of kōans known for his approach emphasizing the exclusive use of “head-words” (*watō*) or main phrases extracted from traditional kōan cases. Ta-hui’s teacher, Yüan-wu, compiled the most prestigious of the Sung kōan collections, the HR. Therefore, Dōgen is generally associated with a pro-zazen and anti-kōan standpoint that seems antithetical to and isolated from the mainstream of the kōan tradition. When Dōgen does deal in his writings with the issue of the meaning and importance of the kōan, he seems to prefer the doctrine of *genjōkōan* (spontaneous manifestation of the kōan in concrete activities) to the Rinzai approach known as *kanna-zen* (introspecting the kōan), which involves examining and contemplating *kosoku-kōan* (old sayings or paradigmatic cases) included in kōan collections.

The linchpin of the conventional view of the tradition is that there is a diametrical opposition between two approaches that emerged by the southern Sung/early Kamakura period: Ta-hui’s iconoclastic attitude toward language and thought following the ideal of Zen as a “special transmission outside the teachings (or scriptures),” and the view that seems to be supported by Dōgen of continuing hermeneutic reflection on scripture, sometimes referred to as the “oneness of Zen and teachings (or scriptures)” (*kyōzen itchi*) as seen from the standpoint of sustained zazen meditation. However, while there is no question that Dōgen and Ta-hui were quite different and even opposed in many respects, the context of interrelations between Dōgen, Ta-hui, the HR, as well as numerous other key Zen texts and thinkers of this period is quite complex and indicates that the stereotypical polarization is misleading. A close look at Dōgen’s life and teachings reveals that he did have a strong connection to kōans and kōan collections in several ways. For example, there is a tradition that it was Dōgen himself who introduced to Japan the HR, which he is said to have copied in a single

night just before leaving China to return home. Even if reports of the “one-night HR” (*Ichiya Hekiganroku*) (hereafter IH) are legendary or mistaken, it is clear that Dōgen’s main philosophical work, the ninety-two fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* written in Japanese, is thoroughly grounded in the use of kōans.¹⁰ The *Shōbōgenzō* consists of novel interpretations, sometimes in several different versions, of dozens of kōans attributed to masters who were leaders of the tradition, including some of the most famous cases like Chao-chou’s “Mu” and “oak tree in the garden,” Te-shan’s “rice cake,” Ma-tsu’s “polishing the tile,” Bodhidharma’s “skin, flesh, bones, marrow,” and Pai-chang’s “fox.” Furthermore, the standard hermeneutic procedure in Dōgen’s Japanese *Shōbōgenzō* is to justify philosophical arguments by citing, often with critical, interlinear commentary in a way that resembles the hermeneutic style of kōan collections like the HR, the sayings of prominent Zen masters that served as the source material for kōan cases. The Japanese *Shōbōgenzō* relies heavily on standard Sung era Zen texts, especially the KD and the *Shūmon Rentōeyō* (hereafter SR) as well as the recorded sayings of Ta-hui, Hung-chih, Ju-ching, and Yüan-wu for its references and citations.

In addition, recent scholarship has demonstrated the authenticity of Dōgen’s own collection of three hundred kōan cases for centuries regarded as spurious, the *Shōbōgenzō Sanbyakusoku*, also referred to as the *Mana* or *Shinji Shōbōgenzō* (*Shōbōgenzō* in Chinese) (hereafter MS) to distinguish it from the *Kana* or *Kaji Shōbōgenzō* (*Shōbōgenzō* in Japanese) (hereafter KS). The MS text, which may have been very important for the training of monks at Eihei-ji temple in Dōgen’s lifetime and for a substantial period thereafter, was apparently kept in limited circulation in several Sōtō branch temples from the Muromachi period to the Tokugawa period, and was not known even by many leaders of the sect. In the mid-1700s a version of the *Sanbyakusoku* was discovered and commented on with prose commentary by a Sōtō scholastic, Shigetsu Ein, and it was published posthumously with additional commentary by his disciple, Honkō Katsudō, who was well-known for his own KS commentaries.¹¹ The Shigetsu/Honkō text, the *Nempyō Sanbyakusoku Funogo* (hereafter NS), was actually produced, somewhat ironically, at a time when the general atmosphere of sectarian polarization between the Rinzai kōan and Sōtō zazen methods was escalating. However, the NS *Sanbyakusoku* along with a subsequent Edo poetic commentary, the *Sanbyakusoku Juko* (from 1787 by Taigen Ryōnin) gained considerable popularity among Sōtō followers and became prominent texts within the sect well into modern times. Yet many Dōgen specialists were

still unwilling to accept the authenticity of the *Sanbyakusoku*, largely because its existence tended to contradict the standard image of Dōgen's approach to Zen practice as being fundamentally anti-kōan. The general attitude was that since Dōgen did not value kōan practice he could not have been involved in compiling a kōan collection. Consequently, the main Tokugawa commentaries on the MS were not included in the early twentieth century major collections of the Sōtō sect.¹²

Then, in 1934, the earliest known manuscript containing a portion of the *Sanbyakusoku* dating back to 1287 was discovered by the library of the Kanazawa Bunko Buddhist Institute, where a number of classical Buddhist texts have been found.¹³ The Kanazawa text (hereafter KB) contains only the *chūkan* section (cases no. 101 to 200), or the middle of three sections containing one hundred cases each; the first and third sections as well as the preface (*jobun*) are not available in the KB. Although it is incomplete and differs in the exact wording and sequence of some cases from the NS text, the existence of the KB text confirmed that the MS was extant as early as the Kamakura era, and it thus reawakened speculation about the status of Dōgen's kōan collection. The real breakthrough, however, came during the 1980s, when Kawamura Kōdō, a professor at Komazawa University in Tokyo researching textual and historical issues in the formation of Dōgen's Japanese KS text, discovered three complete printed manuscripts of the *Sanbyakusoku* from the Muromachi era (each contained three sections of one hundred cases plus the preface), as well as what appeared to be a Tokugawa period handwritten version of the NS text.¹⁴ There are several important historical questions remaining concerning the status of the Chinese MS text, which will be discussed in the final section of Chapter 3. Yet Kawamura's examination of the Muromachi versions of the MS in comparison with the KB and NS manuscripts, and in light of the KS and Dōgen's collected writings as a whole, has made an exceptionally strong case supporting the view that the *Sanbyakusoku* was a genuine Dōgen text.

According to the studies of Dōgen specialists Kawamura, Ishii Shūdō, Kagamishima Genryū, as well as other scholars of Japanese Zen, including Yanagida Seizan, who have been studying the relation between the two *Shōbōgenzō* texts, the *Sanbyakusoku* was probably compiled by Dōgen in Chinese around 1235 or during his stay at Kōshōji temple in Uji outside Kyoto. This was the period about eight years after Dōgen returned to Japan but before he began composing most of the fascicles that came to form the more prominent Japanese KS, one of the first works of Buddhism in Japan to be written in the vernacular. The title for these main works by

Dōgen—the *Mana* and the *Kana Shōbōgenzō* (Treasury of the True Dharma-Eye, C. *Cheng-fa yen-tsang*), as well as the *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (hereafter SZ)—was apparently borrowed from the title of Ta-hui's kōan collection of over six hundred and fifty cases.¹⁵ Unlike the HR and other prominent Sung Chinese kōan collections, Dōgen's Chinese MS is a listing of cases without any interpretation. Kawamura and Ishii maintain that Dōgen's Japanese work consisting primarily of philosophical essays must now be evaluated in terms of its relation to the Chinese compilation of paradigmatic cases. Each considers several possibilities about the relationship between the two texts. For example, it is quite likely that the KS was created initially to provide prose commentary on, and thus it grew directly out of the Chinese collection. As Kawamura observes:

After the compilation of this *Shōbōgenzō Sanbyakusoku* in Chinese literary style, Dōgen Zenji began to write many chapters of *Shōbōgenzō* in *kana* successively. So the existence of the former, the *Sanbyakusoku*, began to be overshadowed by the latter, the *Shōbōgenzō* in *kana*, and gradually [the former] was transmitted [only] among a very limited number of people.¹⁶

According to Kawamura and Ishii, the MS was a preparatory work eventually used as notes or memos for the composition of the KS, which was written over a span of twenty years, from 1231 (“Bendōwa”) to just before Dōgen's death in 1253 (“Hachidainingaku”). During the years that the KS was still being produced by Dōgen, the MS may have been given to new acolytes at Eiheiji temple as a textbook for their Zen studies until they were ready to tackle the more challenging philosophical work, the KS. Another possibility is that the MS represented a crystallization—without the need for extensive commentary—of the ideas expressed in the KS.

This debate to a large extent revolves around two factors: the status of the preface to the MS, which is not included in the Kanazawa text so that its authenticity is still questioned, and the otherwise rather obscure *Shūmon Tōyōshū* (hereafter ST) text. According to Ishii, the ST was the single main source contributing over one-third of the cases in the MS, but it was also apparently a relatively minor influence on the KS text especially when compared to other Sung texts, such as the KD, that are cited in the MS.¹⁷ However, the overriding point is that Kawamura and Ishii demonstrate convincingly that the composition of the Chinese text highlights the way in which the Japanese KS text fundamentally and extensively draws upon Sung Chinese kōan collections and commentaries. According

to Ishii, the KS reflects the fact that “Dōgen’s thought is part of a continuum of Sung Chinese Zen thought,” and it should be studied as another though distinctive text in the series of T’ang and Sung Zen kōan texts that include, among others, the *Hōrinden* (801), *Keitoku Dentōroku* (1004), *Setchō* (C. *Hsüeh-tou*) *Juko Hyakusoku* (1026), *Shūmon Tōyōshū* (1133), *Engo* (C. *Yüan-wu*) *Goroku* (1136), *Shūmon Rentōeyō* (1183), and *Wanshi* (C. *Hung-chih*) *Kōroku* (1201), among others.¹⁸ Kawamura, who tends to see some of these texts, especially the KD and the SR, as more influential on the MS than the ST, strongly agrees that in either case Dōgen was steeped in reading and interpreting a remarkably wide variety of Sung era sources.

Based on these findings several conclusions become clear supporting the depth of Dōgen’s involvement in the kōan tradition. First, the authenticity of Dōgen’s kōan collection shows the importance of kōans in his thought and writings, especially during the first ten or twelve years after his return from China. Second, the two *Shōbōgenzō* texts very much depend upon and reinforce one another, so that the Japanese work can only be understood properly in connection to or as initially deriving from and eventually overshadowing the Chinese text. Third, Dōgen played a great role in introducing and disseminating the voluminous Sung Zen literature containing kōans and kōan commentaries, including recorded sayings texts and transmission of the lamp histories, into early medieval Japan. He developed the literary style of the KS, which departs from the Chinese textual models, as a way of accomplishing this task quickly and effectively in response to Japanese cultural and religious influences. Both of Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō* texts—in addition to the ninth chapter of his *Eihei Kōroku* collection (hereafter EK-9), which contains verse commentaries on ninety traditional kōan cases (over two-thirds of these are included in the MS)—must be seen in terms of their interrelatedness, not only to each other, but to the kōan tradition from which they sprang. Therefore, the MS text’s real significance is not only for Dōgen studies and Dōgen’s approach to kōans, but for an understanding of the kōan tradition itself. The MS represents a bridge between Dōgen and the kōan tradition. As a “missing link” in the connection between Sung and Kamakura, and Rinzai and Sōtō Zen, the MS also functions as a window opening up a very different view of what the development of kōans from their origin in the T’ang era to their flourishing in the Sung era was like, now seen from a perspective no longer excluding but rather pointing to Dōgen’s hermeneutical approach. In fact, Dōgen’s method of interpreting kōans in the KS, understood in light of the MS and its relation to Sung texts, can be interpreted as a logical outcome

and perhaps even a culminating stage in the formation of kōans as a Zen literary genre.

At the same time that Dōgen's role is reevaluated, it is important to recognize that Ta-hui's attitude toward kōans is much more complex, and perhaps not nearly as favorable or supportive as it first appears. Ta-hui was a tremendously important figure in the twelfth century who had a great impact on the development of Rinzai Zen in China, Japan, and Korea. He was an extremely innovative and prolific author who, in addition to proposing the *watō* "shortcut" method and writing extensive collections of recorded sayings and kōan commentaries, developed two Zen genres primarily aimed at laypersons: sermons (*fusetsu*) used as a way of preaching the Dharma during times of mourning or other personal hardships; and letters (*tegami*) of instruction pedagogically suited to the particular person's situation and level of learning. While he lectured and wrote extensively on kōans, Ta-hui is said to have burned the HR out of fear that it would lead to a rigid formalization of Zen instruction. Even if that report is fictive, Ta-hui's central doctrine of citing only the main phrase of cases suggests that the basic content of kōans and kōan commentaries is superfluous and even counter-productive for his method of training, which leads to the suppression of ordinary consciousness.

Ta-hui and Dōgen in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, respectively, appeared toward the end of the classical period of the development of kōans that is said to have had its roots in the sayings and dialogues of the eminent Zen masters of the eighth and ninth centuries. They were equally eager to restore a lost sense of spontaneity and vitality to the kōan tradition, so that these leaders of Chinese Rinzai and Japanese Sōtō cannot be appropriately understood as standing for monolithic ideologies that somehow co-existed in polarized and antithetical fashion. The historicity of the accounts that Ta-hui burned and that Dōgen copied the HR may well be in doubt. Yet the irony in the symbolism that the supposed proponent destroyed while the avowed critic salvaged the main kōan text cannot be unnoticed. In some ways Dōgen's KS *Shōbōgenzō* is closer in style and content to the seminal kōan texts, including the HR and *Mumonkan* (hereafter MMK), than are some of Ta-hui's writings. It is probably these issues involving the overlooked connections as well as the overemphasized discrepancies between Dōgen, Ta-hui, and kōan collections that prompted Taizan Maezumi, a contemporary Sōtō abbot in America who has used kōans extensively as a training method, to comment in his preface to an English translation of the HR that there is "an unfortunately widespread

impression nowadays that Dōgen Zenji and the Sōtō School represent a non-kōan or even anti-kōan orientation within Zen. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.¹⁹ Maezumi and others have been calling for a reorientation of our understanding and appreciation of Dōgen's work in relation to the practices of zazen meditation and kōan studies.

Postmodernism and Zen Discourse

The single, overriding issue in modern Dōgen studies has been an examination of the nature and significance of the Japanese KS, including textual and historical topics concerning how and when it was written and compiled in relation to Chinese Buddhist thought and medieval Japanese religion, as well as philological and philosophical concerns dealing with the value and impact of its use of language and literary symbolism for religious life and spiritual attainment. As Heinrich Dumoulin writes, "The Japanese *Shōbōgenzō* shows a fluency of style of unmistakable uniqueness. Dogen's thought is branded with his own language. Even when he takes over expressions from colloquial Chinese of the Sung period, he renders them in Japanese constructions suited to his own style. He labored for special effects through the repetition of certain expressions and a liberality of grammar and syntax."²⁰ Dōgen's text needs to and frequently has been studied from a variety of methodologies and perspectives to evaluate the full range of religious, literary, and cultural factors impacting on its formation. For example, the KS has been analyzed in terms of how it absorbs and reflects influences from Japanese Buddhism, literature, aesthetics, and views of nature in addition to Chinese Buddhist doctrines of Buddha-nature, time, or meditation. Furthermore, methodologies in Dōgen studies range from positivist historiography and linguistic studies to comparisons with modern Japanese or European phenomenological and analytic philosophy.²¹ The aim here is to draw on recent Japanese scholarship on the relation between the two *Shōbōgenzō* texts, which demonstrates the great importance kōans had for Dōgen's writings and approach to Zen. Without overlooking the many other angles from which the KS can be viewed, the current study seeks to situate and highlight the creation and the use of language in Dōgen's text in terms of the role of kōans and kōan collections in twelfth- and thirteenth-century China and Japan.

Therefore, the significance of this topic is to carry out a reconsideration of the conventional view in sectarian and modern studies that one-sidedly stresses Dōgen's rejection and tends to obscure his profound relation

to the kōan tradition. Revising the standard interpretation of Dōgen's approach to kōans necessarily involves reexamining and rethinking the kōan tradition itself, because its history is generally explained in a way that excludes Dōgen since he is seen as one of its main detractors rather than participants. That is, a work on Dōgen's understanding of the meaning and function of kōans must at the same time be a study of the philosophical, literary, and psychological implications in kōan collections and kōan training in Zen as a whole. This issue involves clarifying why Dōgen has been defined as standing outside the tradition and in opposition to Ta-hui in terms of the historically and culturally rooted differences between these thinkers, despite their use of common textual materials and sources. One of the key points is to lead the discussion away from the polarity of Dōgen vs. Ta-hui, or at least to explain the relative appropriateness of this contrast, and toward an appreciation of the affinities between the KS *Shōbōgenzō* and kōan collections, including the HR and MMK in addition to the kōan commentaries in the recorded sayings of Ta-hui and other Sung thinkers. Accomplishing this requires, in turn, examining the origins of the kōan tradition in T'ang era dialogues and recorded sayings in order to see how a number of divergent styles for presenting and interpreting the source dialogues emerged during the Sung period. Thus, rewriting the history of Dōgen Zen is a matter of rewriting the history of kōan Zen, and vice versa, to demonstrate how these areas of study are interconnected in many crucial respects concerning views of language in relation to religious practice and enlightenment.

On "Discourse Analysis"

The interpretive method that will be used in this study is referred to as a "discourse analysis," which incorporates some of the main categories of postmodern literary criticism and intellectual history. These categories include intertextuality and genre criticism, which pertain to the formation and organization of interrelated yet distinctive styles of texts, and narrative theory and tropology, which help disclose the function and meaning of a text's rhetorical images and ideals.²² Discourse analysis, the categories of which will be explained more fully near the end of Chapter 2, focuses on the historical context and literary implications in the ways that Zen, as a religious tradition, has created a cluster of linguistic and visual symbols as well as symbolic actions—or discourse—to communicate its vision of spiritual fulfillment. Discourse refers to an historically determined totality

of utterances and references, signifiers and significations that appear in oral and written form constituting texts.²³ Rather than echo the partisan polemics and apologetics of the kōan vs. zazen, or Rinzai vs. Sōtō debates that all too often cloud an appreciation of the development of Zen, the ultimate goal of discourse analysis is to formulate a methodology that goes beyond a sense of Dōgen's "relation" to kōans in a way that assumes that these are separate and independent texts. The aim is to make use of postmodern notions of the insubstantiality of author, the inseparability of creator and audience, and the intertextuality linking the formation of texts, in order to demonstrate a profound interdependence of the texts of Dōgen and the kōan tradition.

Discourse analysis takes a different approach than and has several advantages over the two prevalent Western models of interpreting Zen kōans: psychology or psychotherapy, and comparative philosophy of mysticism. A key difference involves the way that these other methods focus on the mind, or the internal, mental processes involved in the attainment of enlightenment. Psychology and mysticism generally presuppose bifurcations between self and other, mind and reality, conscious and unconscious, or sacred and secular, such that one category is deemed to have priority over its polar opposite. For example, Erich Fromm finds a parallel between psychoanalysis and the function of kōans in that both attempt therapeutically to "make the unconscious conscious."²⁴ D. T. Suzuki, in comparing Zen and Christian mysticism, notes affinities between Zen's notion of intuitive wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*) and Christian conceptions of the trinity, particularly in Meister Eckhart's view of the ultimate human experience as being one with "the love with which God loves himself." According to Suzuki, these words referring to the mystic's union with God and final full identification with the divine perspective "sound unfamiliar to Buddhist ears but when they are read with a certain insight we will find [they are the] same [as enlightenment]."²⁵ Postmodern criticism, however, stemming from the disciplines of semiotics, poststructuralism, and deconstruction, primarily examines the role of language and symbols in terms of the form and function conditioning the way texts are generated and come to be interrelated. For example, Jacques Derrida tries to subvert conventional bifurcations when he maintains that "nothing exists outside of the text"²⁶—an holistic, non-logocentric approach that appears to be in accord with the nondualistic foundations of Zen philosophy. Also, the postmodern notion of intertextuality, which argues that every text is a "mosaic of citations . . . the absorption and transformation of other texts,"²⁷ suggests the

possibility of a nonhierarchical and decentric means of explaining the mutuality of influences and reverberating reactions within the Zen tradition. Thus, psychotherapy and comparative mysticism highlight the development and transformation of the "self," or a profound subjectivity that presupposes a contrast between subject and object. Postmodernism, on the other hand, discloses the "stereographical plurality of the signifiers that weave [the text]," which is entirely open-ended and dynamically created, and "must not be thought of as a defined object,"²⁸ for it is beyond the subject/object dichotomy.

Another methodological difference is that when psychotherapy and mysticism are applied to comparative studies, they tend to be somewhat ahistorical in taking up cross-cultural representatives of thought without regard for sequence or diachronic determination. For example, they may harbor an implicit assumption that a medieval Chinese or Japanese Zen thinker can be compared to a post-Reformation Christian mystic or to a contemporary psychotherapist without taking into account fully the relevant historical discrepancies. This often results in an uncritical acceptance of the romanticized and mythologized hagiographies that are pervasive in Zen chronicles apparently under the guise of biography.²⁹ Discourse analysis, on the other hand, tries to be sensitive to the view expressed by Foucault and others that modes of discourse are never far removed from bids for power and approval, and are therefore very much historically conditioned. According to Edward Said, "Too many exceptions, too many historical, ideological, and formal circumstances implicate the text in actuality. . . . Texts are a system of forces institutionalized at some expense by the reigning culture, not an ideal cosmos of ideally equal [writings]."³⁰ Discourse analysis is also responsive to recent developments in historiographical studies that have questioned the veracity of Zen's own historical accounts. It therefore takes a neutral stance toward the truth-claims that are posited by a tradition by seeking through an archaeology of knowledge, which deals with the way that ideologies are shaped by social, political, and economic concerns, to uncover amidst levels of sedimentation the *fundamental literary structure of the texts* in question. This structure consists of two interconnected components which in tandem establish the literary symbolism of religious texts: *narratology*, or the use of narrative elements involving temporal sequencing and character development contributing to a sacred emplotment that depicts the historical development of the sect and its leading personalities; and *tropology*, or the use of rhetoric and word-play—the "tropics of discourse,"³¹ including metaphor, metonymy, synech-

doche, and irony—to create a base of philosophical insight that stimulates spiritual awakening and enhances the experience of religious freedom. Discourse analysis, therefore, looks holistically (that is, intertextually) at the major trends in Zen theory and practice in the appropriate time frame—eighth- to thirteenth-century China and Japan—out of which Dōgen's KS and other interpretations of kōans emerged as literary variations on a common spiritual theme of attaining and expressing Zen enlightenment. It asks how the similarities and differences in the literary forms of these works reflect underlying affinities and disparities in religious conviction.

A key advantage of discourse analysis is that it seeks to be more open-ended than other methodologies that have portrayed kōans almost exclusively in terms of the function of silence and abbreviation informing the choice of words used in the dialogical exchanges between master and disciple. Psychotherapy and mysticism are very useful but also somewhat problematic methodologies in this regard. In defining kōans as a form of abbreviated, paradoxical communication harboring an underlying silence and rejection of language and leading to a personal transformation from conscious to unconscious, or from a state of diffusion to unification with the sacred, these interpretive methods often fail to come fully to grips with how the multifaceted significance of language and symbols contribute to the way that kōans accomplish their religious aims or contribute to the goal of spiritual liberation. An emphasis on the priority of silence has been so strong and pervasive that it has greatly influenced most of the psychological-mystical, or self-oriented, as well as many of the literary-historical, or text-oriented, accounts of the history and meaning of kōans. For example, Suzuki and Garma Chang, among others, have categorized kōan rhetoric as being deliberately “irrational,” “illogical,” and “nonsensical.” Also John McRae maintains that “ineffability” is the key to the Zen dialogues. “Ch’an is more emphatic,” he writes, “than any other Buddhist School in its position that the ultimate goal of religious practice cannot be understood with words. Elsewhere [in Buddhist thought] this ineffability is taken to mean that the words of the scriptures point at some higher, more abstract truth, but in Ch’an those very words are perceived as impediments to understanding.”³² In a genre critical account of recorded sayings (*goroku*), Judith Berling argues that Zen discourses are “puzzling because their stance toward language is that all thought, all language or silence, all conventional ways of communicating and responding are incapable of conveying the substance of Zen.”³³ This conclusion emphasizing ineffability and silence probably derives in part from a twofold tendency: first, an overreliance on

Ta-hui's shortcut *watō* approach, which is set up as the norm or standard by which to evaluate all other aspects of *kōan* studies leading up to or competing with it; and at the same time an almost complete neglect of the role of Dōgen's hermeneutics in interpreting *kōans*.

Part of the reason that some interpreters of Zen discourse emphasize exclusively the role of silence may be that they are overly informed by certain modern myths about supposedly unique features of Japanese (and East Asian) intellectual life and cultural identity, resulting in a vicious cycle of (mis)interpretation. In this trend, a traditional Zen notion such as *ishin-denshin* (mind-to-mind understanding without the need for external communication or words, i.e., "the less said the better") is first taken out of its Zen context for somewhat inappropriate or misleading reasons, such as to support the *nihonjinron* ("Japanism") thesis of Japanese uniqueness.³⁴ *Ishin-denshin* is applied to an understanding of modern Japanese society as being founded on silent communication, and from this contemporary vantage point it is projected retrospectively to interpreting various traditional literary phenomena, including *kōans*, that have actually helped inform the modern standpoint.³⁵ According to Roy Miller, when the myth, or "anti-myth," that silence is the distinctive feature of Japanese expression is applied to problems in literary history and criticism (often stemming from Chinese sources), "it is not the texts themselves that are important. To [these critics], texts are valuable only because they represent 'violations of silence,'"³⁶ that is, interruptions or exceptions that somehow prove the rule of cultural uniformity.

Silence and abbreviation are indeed significant but simply do not exhaust all the levels of meaning in Zen discourse. For example, these forms of expression can be seen as contributing, along with ambiguity, ellipsis, and nonverbal gestures, to the function of the trope of irony. But it must be recognized that there are also numerous examples in *kōans* in which irony is challenged, undercut, or displaced within the bounds of discourse by a metonymic wordplay, as in Dōgen's frequent punning, or some other tropical mode, such as the metaphor of comparing *samādhi* to an ocean, the *synecdoche* of referring to the moon as Buddha-nature, or the deceptively non-literal mimetic, or tautological, assertion that "mountains are mountains." For example, Dale Wright argues that Zen claims like "no dependence or reliance on words or letters, or on language and text" (*furyū monji*) are themselves linguistically constituted, textually transmitted strategies of discourse aimed at explaining and initiating experiences they identify and categorize in Buddhist thought. Furthermore, he argues that "Far from

being a transcendence of language, this process would consist in a fundamental reorientation within language . . . [that] require[s] training to a level of fluency in distinctive, nonobjectifying, rhetorical practices.”³⁷ Kōans utilize decentered signs and signifiers—or it could be said that *the kōans themselves represent the process of the decentering of all signs*—so that they function flexibly and provisionally as symbolic discourse without reference to an absolute or transcendental Signified. When the kōan is seen holistically in terms of the overall discourse of Zen, it becomes clear that there are many aspects of literary symbolism other than paradox and silence in operation. Zen discourse encompasses a kind of seamlessly woven structure combining narratology stressing the trope of metaphor to depict and legitimate the transmission of lineage as well as numerous other tropological elements that deliberately subvert or reorient the mythical narrative. Thus it is important to analyze the use of tropical discourse in Zen dialogues and kōans as a whole in order to clarify more specifically the contrast between Dōgen’s emphasis on metonymic wordplay in interpreting kōan cases and Ta-hui’s stress on silence as an example of irony.

Yet discourse analysis is intended to be complementary rather than in conflict with other interpretive models, particularly psychotherapy. Both approaches recognize how the dynamics of the interrelated psychological and linguistic dimensions contribute to the effectiveness of the kōan as the single main symbol of Zen enlightenment. Psychotherapy is useful in describing the process of inner, psychological transformation, that is, the experience of *satori* or “great death” (*taishi*) that takes place as a result of using kōans, especially the *watō* method in which head-words catalytically stimulate the “great doubt” (*taigi*) of anxiety and despair as a necessary preparatory stage for awakening. Discourse analysis emphasizes the literary devices such as metaphor and wordplay used in creating and disseminating the kōans through various literary genres. On the other hand, some approaches to postmodern criticism, including Lacan, Bloom, Kristeva, and Ricoeur, also integrate key aspects of psychoanalytic theory, such as the role of anxiety, oedipal confrontation, and emotional displacement, in their studies of the complexities of the creative process of text formation. For example, Lacan’s work explains the relation between signifier and signified as functioning parallel to the relation between conscious and unconscious states. Bloom examines the role of anxiety and of the inevitability of oedipally generated misreading and rewriting in establishing an author’s originality in relation to the intertextual influences he or she has absorbed from a mentor or other strong predecessors. Therefore, psycho-

therapy can be used in relation to discourse analysis to explain not only the attainment of Zen enlightenment, but some of the reasons for the discord and conflict between the diverse, often competing philosophical positions that claim to represent it.

Satori Dialogues in Relation to Sung Zen Genres

A central aim of discourse analysis is to examine the ways in which the choices reflected in a text concerning style and form announce its underlying intentions. For example, decisions about whether to emphasize prose or poetry, autobiography/subjectivity or history/objectivity, or philosophy or mythology in making an argument or establishing a position can indicate the text's fundamental orientation. It is important to try to recognize how a literary style or genre reflects the relation between and value attached to orality and writing, individual interpretation and traditional ideology, liberalism and orthodoxy. Whether or not Ta-hui burned the xylographs of the HR, or Te-shan several centuries before him destroyed the copies of his prized *Diamond Sūtra* commentaries, the fact that these masters are said to have done so, and the narrative patterns in the way such assertions are made, become crucial indicators of the intentionality of the tradition.

In the case of Zen in Sung China, nearly all written texts present and interpret dialogues that were originally based on an oral context for which the mutuality of interacting participants leading to the realization of authentic subjectivity was decisive. Therefore, one of the most important points to keep in mind for an understanding of Dōgen's use of kōans is that the KS and the Sung era kōan collections appeared near the final stages of a long tradition of recording oral dialogues. Zen dialogues, according to traditional accounts, were initially spontaneous utterances attributed to T'ang era (eighth and ninth centuries) masters delivered in a specific existential context for the sake of liberating a disciple from a particular psychological fixation or philosophical delusion that impeded the quest for enlightenment. In the early Sung (eleventh and twelfth centuries) there were several important new genres of Zen literature attempting to transform oral utterances into written scriptures. The major kōan collections, which select and comment on paradigmatic cases culled from other textual materials of the period, include the HR, the *Shōyōroku* (hereafter SH), and the MMK. These were published in 1128, 1224, and 1229, respectively, though the first two works were initially composed nearly a century before (1026 and 1166) and then were reissued with amplified commentary by

new editors/authors. The first text that can be considered a kōan collection was the *Fun'yō Roku* by Fen-yang (J. Fun'yō) in 1024 only twenty years after the most prominent transmission of the lamp history. The HR is a collection of one hundred cases with prose and poetic commentary first compiled by Hsüeh-tou in the early eleventh century with additional prose commentary, including some discussion of Hsüeh-tou's original remarks, supplied by Yüan-wu. The SH has a parallel structure and development, but was first compiled by Hung-chih, a Chinese Sōtō predecessor of Dōgen, and then further commented on by Wan-sung. The MMK contains briefer prose and poetic comments on forty-eight cases provided by a Rinzai monk, Mumon. Dōgen's MS text seems to fit into the mold of the kōan collections in that it represents a selection and listing of paradigmatic cases, but it obviously lacks the multileveled commentary that is characteristic of the prominent collections. One of the main subdivisions of the kōan collection genre involves the distinction between commentaries on old or paradigmatic (*ko*) cases (*soku*) that are written in either poetry (*juko*) or prose (*nenko*). While the main collections including the HR, SH, and MMK contain prose and poetic materials, the root of their interlinear commentary appears to be the *juko* style. The *nenko* style is the basis of Yüan-wu's *Gekisetsuroku* collection and of Hung-chih's *Shinekiroku* collection.

There were also two other main genres composed during the Sung era containing *satori* dialogues that served as sources for the kōan collection genre. One of the genres is "transmission of the lamp" histories (*dentōroku*) that trace the origin and development of the genealogy of the sect through several stages. The *dentōroku* texts begin with the seven primordial buddhas culminating in Śākyamuni, then continue through the twenty-eight Indian masters leading up to Bodhidharma, who was also the first patriarch in China, and go on to include the first six Chinese patriarchs leading up to Hui-neng, and conclude with the succession of fifteen or more generations of subsequent Chinese masters. Most of the main ingredients of the transmission theory, as well as many anecdotes concerning prominent Zen masters, were already present in T'ang works, such as the *Rekidai Hōbōki* (date uncertain but before 779) and especially the *Hōrinden* (801). However, these elements did not become popular until they were given systematic and comprehensive treatment in Sung transmission texts that were composed after the 845 suppression of Buddhism, including the *Sodōshū* (952) and especially the seminal lamp-transmission historical text, the KD. Shortly after the KD, there was a flurry of lamp histories, including the *Tenshō Kōtōroku* (1036), the *Kenchū Seikoku Zokutōroku* (1101), and the SR