

Means of Authorization: Establishing Hierarchy in *Ch'an/Zen* Buddhism in America

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Ch'an/Zen Buddhism has become widely accepted in the West during the past fifty years. At the head of Zen institutions sits the person of the Master/*roshi*. Through the mechanisms of sectarian histories, ritual performance, a special language, *koans*, *mondos*,^[2] and most importantly through the ideas of Dharma transmission and Zen lineage, the supposedly enlightened Zen Master/*roshi* is presented to the West as a person with superhuman qualities. This presentation, mostly idealistic, is meant to establish, maintain, and enhance the authority of the Zen Master. It is also meant to legitimate the Zen institutions and establish hierarchical structures within it. It is my contention that this idealistic presentation has been widely and uncritically accepted in the West, but more importantly it is the source of a variety of problems in Western Zen.

I begin the paper by giving four examples showing the extremely idealistic presentation of Zen in America. The examples will be from American, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese teachers. I will show that this presentation of *Ch'an/Zen* is widely accepted and in addition, display some of the consequences of this acceptance. The American sociologist Peter L. Berger will be introduced along with his view of the social construction of reality. Berger's theory will be used throughout the paper as a model for viewing Zen institutions. The defining terms of Zen; Master/*roshi*, Dharma transmission, and Zen lineage as well as *koans* and ritual behavior will be more closely examined. However idealistically these terms are presented to Zen students, the reality of how they have been used historically and what they mean in an institutional setting is quite different. This idealistic presentation of the defining terms of Zen is used to establish a mostly undeserved authority for the Master/*roshi* and to legitimate the hierarchical structures of *Ch'an/Zen*. The result of this presentation of Zen often leads to the Master/*roshi* being alienated, in Berger's sense of the word. The paper ends with a few suggestions for change in Zen from within the larger Buddhist tradition.

Idealistic Presentation

Richard Baker, in perhaps the best selling Zen book in the English language, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* describes the term *roshi* in the following manner,

A *roshi* is a person who has actualized that perfect freedom which is the potentiality for all human beings. He exists freely in the fullness of his

whole being. The flow of his consciousness is not the fixed repetitive patterns of our usual self-centered consciousness, but rather arises spontaneously and naturally from the actual circumstances of the present. The results of this in terms of the quality of his life are extraordinary-buoyancy, vigor, straightforwardness, simplicity, humility, security, joyousness, uncanny perspicacity and unfathomable compassion. His whole being testifies to what it means to live in the reality of the present. Without anything said or done, just the impact of meeting a personality so developed can be enough to change another's whole way of life. But in the end it is not the extraordinariness of the teacher that perplexes, intrigues, and deepens the student, it is the teacher's utter ordinariness.^[3]

It should be noted that this was written as the introduction to the words and teachings of Mr. Baker's teacher, Suzuki-*roshi*. This introduction was meant to describe a real person, and by extension, as is clearly stated, all people with the title *roshi*. It is not an idealized reference to a heavenly being or some distant or mythological religious figure.

Zen Master Seung Sahn, who is the most famous Korean Zen Master in the West, in *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*, one of his better selling books, related the following exchange of letters that indicates his view of the Zen Master. In a letter to the Master, someone asked, "If a Zen Master is capable of doing miracles, why doesn't he do them?... Why doesn't Soen Sunim do as Jesus did- make the blind see, or touch a crazy person and make him sane? Wouldn't even such a showy miracle as walking on water make people believe in Zen so that they would begin to practice..." The Master (that is, Seung Sahn) replied, "Many people want miracles, and if they witness miracles they become attached to them. But miracles are only a technique. They are not the true way. If a Zen Master used miracles often, people would become very attached to this technique of his, and they wouldn't learn the true way..."^[4]

Soen Shaku, the famous Rinzai Master who was D. T. Suzuki's teacher, commenting on Zen *satori*^[5] states, "To say the Buddha had a *satori* experience sounds as if we are talking about a Zen monk, but I think it is permissible to say that a monk's attaining *satori* corresponds to the Buddha's awakening effortlessly."^[6] Here we see that Zen *satori* is equated with the historical Buddha's great enlightenment, the very zenith of Buddhist attainment. Since the Master/*roshi* represents the Zen institution, it does not require too big a leap of imagination to make the correspondence between the present day Zen institution and the historical Buddha by laying the groundwork for the lineage convention.

The well known Chinese *Ch'an* teacher, Master Sheng-yen also said of the Zen Master, "it should be remembered that the mind of the master is ever pure... and even if the master tells lies, steals, and chases women..., he is still to be considered a true master as long as he scolds his disciples for their transgressions."^[7]

The reader is informed that no matter what the Zen Master does, it is beyond both

the reader's and the student's ken, because the Master's mind is ever pure, a mysterious state beyond the ordinary person's comprehension. The student is informed that the Master's authority must be taken totally on faith in the infallibility and omniscience that is implicit in his title. The student is incapable of making any judgments relating to the Master's activities. Zen's self-definition as a tradition beyond words and letters would lead one to believe that words and thinking are not important. Yet here we see, in terms of institutional authority and hierarchy, it is precisely words and title that are of primary importance.

Aside from Master Sheng-yen's implicit claim that the Master is beyond conventional morality, the above manner of describing the qualities of a Master/*roshi* does not make any explicit ethical or moral claims. This does not mean that such claims are absent from *Ch'an/ Zen*. The basis of Zen practice is often encapsulated in the six *paaramitaas*, the second *paaramitaa* (*siila*) being variously translated as morality or discipline. Another avenue where morality enters Zen practice is through the ten precepts, sometimes translated as the "Ten Grave Precepts." Robert Aitken-*roshi* underlines his understanding of the importance of the precepts by stating, "Without the precepts as guidelines, Zen Buddhism tends to become a hobby, made to fit the needs of the ego."¹⁸ Aitken-*roshi* is not alone in this belief, as it is commonly maintained in Zen and Buddhism in general, that the precepts are the foundation on which the meditation practice is based. Though there is a separation between how Zen practice works and the moral and ethical consequences of that practice, however since the Master/*roshi* represents the fullness of the practice, when authority and hierarchy in *Ch'an/ Zen* are examined, the two are tied tightly together.

In the four quotes of the modern day teachers cited above, one is given a rather exalted and idealized picture of what it means to be a Master or *roshi*. It is interesting to see how two of these teachers have manifested their words and how their students have responded. Though no mention is made of moral or ethical issues in any of the above statements, it does seem as if the students do have moral expectations, as we shall see below.

About two years after writing the above description of a *roshi*, Richard Baker was made *roshi* shortly before his teacher Suzuki-*roshi*, died at the end of 1971. Ten years later, Baker-*roshi* was involved in a scandal that revealed his repeated instances of sexual misconduct on his part, as well as his living in high style while paying the many members working at Center's enterprises something close to subsistence wages. This affair was extremely divisive for the San Francisco Zen Center ¹⁹, and resulted in Baker-*roshi* leaving the Center after long, heated negotiations over the amount of his severance pay and the ownership rights to the art collection and library purchased during his tenure as its *roshi* and abbot.

Some years later, Seung Sahn too was caught up in sexual scandals, having, over a period of years, simultaneous affairs with a number of his students directing his satellite Centers spread across the country. Seung Sahn's explanation was that the women needed

his power to keep the Centers running. This affair was very divisive to his followers causing many people to leave.

As research for this paper, I did a mail survey of one hundred fifty Zen Centers and individual Zen practitioners across the country. The questionnaire consisted of a cover letter and a second page with a list of eight terms.^[10] The purpose of the survey was to see how people from different Zen Centers understood a number of key terms, that define or color what Zen means in America. I received thirty-eight replies. Six were from people whom I knew were either in charge of large Centers or had Dharma transmission from their teachers. The results of the survey were inconclusive, though it yielded valuable anecdotal material such as the chronicles below of the retreat led by Carol and the meeting of a North American Zen Center. The term Dharma transmission elicited the closest agreement among respondents, most everyone stated explicitly or seemed to imply that the Zen lineage went back to the historical figure Sakyamuni. Most respondents expressed little awareness of the varied ways in which the terms Zen Master/*roshi*, Dharma transmission, and Zen lineage have been used during Zen's long history.

Words have power. It is through words that we understand the world around us, give the world meaning, and to a certain degree, determine what we actually see. Presenting Zen in an idealized way has consequences. I would like to relate two stories to underline the strength of the authority attributed to those in teaching roles in Zen, at least in America. One respondent to my survey, in addition to answering my questions, related the following story. In North America, in 1998, a retreat was held under the direction of a Zen teacher we will call Carol, with eight full-time and a number of part-time students participating.^[11]

The retreat started normally, however on the second day, Carol added her name to the list of dead on whose behalf the chanting on retreats is dedicated. On the third day private interviews as part of the *koan* study, were cancelled. In the evening Carol took the group to the movies, an unheard of activity during a seven-day retreat. On the fourth day Carol was absent most of the time; she had pizza and champagne served for the evening meal, which normally would consist of rather plain vegetarian, non-alcoholic fare. On the fifth day she announced that everyone would be moving to Miami and should begin studying Spanish. She also followed this announcement with a semi-coherent discourse about inner circles and outer circles. In the afternoon she showed the video of Steven Spielberg's film "*ET*." Subsequently she announced the group was going to have a funeral for her to celebrate the death of her ego. She would leave the room and the group was to plan the funeral and then tell her when they were ready. In the group were two women who had studied with Carol for over fifteen years. My correspondent related to me that after Carol left the room, he asked these women if perhaps Carol was having some sort of mental breakdown and suggested maybe the show should stop. Another student raised a question about psychodrama. The two senior students assured them that all was well. My correspondent recalls saying to himself, "What the hell, the show must go on" and remained on the retreat despite his skepticism about Carol's mental condition.

The group devised a funeral ceremony, Carol came out and the group performed it. Carol then claimed that since she was now dead she didn't know what her name was, but for the time being she should be called "Zen Ma." The fellow relating the story said that at this point he wondered if Jonestown wasn't next, but instead of cyanide laced Kool-Aid, the group then had more champagne. After dinner, Carol lapsed into a long ramble about meeting Swami Muktananda. Soon she stopped, announcing that she was feeling negative energy, and asked, "Does anyone in the room have negative energy?" My correspondent confessed that he did indeed, but did not want to discuss it. Carol commanded, "Just say it," to which the fellow replied that he had an interest in being someone's student but not someone's follower. She responded by undertaking a talk about Tibet and Milarepa, five minutes into which she stopped, and looking at the fellow said, "So why don't you get the hell out of here?" Which, at that point, is exactly what he did.

About two weeks after the retreat Carol decided that the two women who were her long-time students and who had assured my correspondent of the teacher's sanity, were witches, ordering them to leave as well. Carol then gave away her belongings and moved to Florida.

It is interesting to note that despite Carol's bizarre behavior and disjointed speech, not one person on the retreat left on their own initiative or raised a question to the teacher directly. The two senior students maintained that nothing was wrong when a question was raised privately about the teacher's mental state. After two months, Carol returned from Florida and all the people who had been on the retreat, returned to study with her, except for the fellow who related this story to me. Again, I have related this story, as an illustration, albeit an extreme one, of the sort of unquestioning respect and obedience given to the Zen teacher by Western students. It also underlines the fact that the imputed attainment of the teacher repeated in one Zen context or another, will more often than not out weigh or transform what is happening in front of the student's eyes. It should be noted, that Carol was not an officially sanctioned Master or *roshi*, but was functioning in that role without the actual title.

The second story I would like to relate took place in 1999. A meeting was held by a North American Zen Center concerning the problematic behavior of a related Center's Zen Master, more specifically a pattern of excessive drinking, perhaps actual alcoholism, and instances of "sexual misconduct." I was told by one attendee that many of the group members were thoroughly baffled by the fact that one who has supposedly attained full enlightenment, the Zen Master, could manifest such unpleasantly unenlightened conduct. My informant wondered where these students had gotten this idea about the Master's "full enlightenment" along with its attendant immunity from human shortcomings. The Master himself had never made any such claims to "full enlightenment" or immunity to human shortcomings...

To summarize, in the definitions and descriptions of the Master or *roshi* quoted at the beginning of this paper, there is an extraordinary claim to authority. These descriptions were given by individuals who are themselves Masters/*rosHis*, the very

official spokespersons for Zen institutions. But from the examples given above, it appears that there is some disparity between the student's credulous expectations resulting from this idealized view and what takes place in the real world. It is fair to ask, what are the bases for such claims to authority and how valid are these claims? That these idealizations may have caused problems in the Far East is not the concern of this paper. *However, it is my contention that an idealized Asian version of Zen has been uncritically accepted in America and that it is a source of problems here.*

Around Zen Centers in America, there has been very little if any discussion pertaining to the meaning of terms and titles that define Zen or to how these terms and titles have actually been used in the East during Zen's long history. Perhaps one of the reasons behind this limited opportunity for discussion is that, lacking any sort of theoretical framework or critical focus, members of the Zen community have recourse only to the context provided by their personal experiences. This personal context to a large extent is the world of Zen, its language, ideas, and ways of thinking. If the student attempts to look critically at Zen institutions, he/she can do so only within the context and language of Zen, which for reasons discussed later in this paper, idealizes itself, its roles, and important defining terms. Even in this situation of critically examining Zen institutions, the student often ends up empowering the very authority figures in question, just as we shall see in this paper, the language of Zen was intended to do.

The confusion created by assumptions about enlightenment and spiritual authority is not confined to the above-mentioned North American Center, or even to the U.S. I have received correspondence from France, Germany, U.K., Australia, and New Zealand in response to a paper^[12] I wrote that has been posted on the Internet, dealing with the disparity between the ways in which the institutions of Zen Buddhism actually operate in the world and our expectation of them based on an idealized view that has been uncritically accepted. A person from France who contacted me and asked to translate my paper into French, specifically stated that his reason for doing so was because a French Buddhist nun had told him that a Zen Master is a fully enlightened person. These responses indicate that dogma of this sort is pervasive throughout Western Zen, and that Zen organizations fail to provide a context in which such assumptions can be critically addressed.

As an antidote to this situation, I believe it is necessary to view the Zen world, its hierarchy, and authority figures through a theoretical framework separate from Zen. I think one such a framework is provided by the work of the American sociologist Peter L. Berger. Parts of this paper will be informed by Berger's view of the social construction of reality and its inherent dialectical character. While Berger's views may seem like truisms now, thirty years after the publication of *The Sacred Canopy*^[13], I believe they provide a much-needed critical insight into the social and symbolic structures of the Zen tradition. The adoption of Asian, predominantly Japanese conventions by Western aspirants over the past fifty years has been, ironically for a school that supposedly emphasizes personal inquiry, uncritical to say the least.

In this paper we are primarily concerned with the individual practitioner's view of Zen roles and institutions in America. The view most frequently accepted is that propagated by the Zen institutions themselves. More specifically, we will examine authority and hierarchy, how it is established, how it is maintained, and how it is produced and reproduced. In the case of the earlier mentioned North American Zen Group who met to address problems resulting from the Master's excessive drinking and "sexual misconduct" we can see an illustration of the functional outcome of the process I wish to discuss. Recall that the person who recounted this meeting was surprised that so many students believed that the Master's enlightenment to be so "full" or "complete" that he/she would be incapable of quite human frailties, despite the fact the Master himself had never made such claims. However, *it is not necessary for any particular Master to make claims concerning his/her own enlightenment or his/her own level of perfection because Zen institutional traditions, in one form or another repeat this claim for the person sitting in the role of Zen Master.* In so far as the particular Zen follower is adequately socialized into the given group, he cannot but see the Master as expressing the Mind of the Buddha. Indeed, the Master often believes the same thing. Through its structure, its ritual practices, and perhaps most significantly through its use of a special set of terms and definitions, the institution reinforces this claim for the Zen Master.

The term Zen Master is especially glorified, and together with the two related concepts of Dharma transmission and Zen lineage forms a conceptual triad that supports the structure of authority within the Zen institutions. The terms of the triad support and reflect each other and their mutually dependent connection is presented in an idealized fashion to establish the imputed power, sacredness, and otherness of the Master. Along with the above triad, the use of *koans*, *mondo*, and ritual behavior act as supporting elements in establishing this authority. Variations of this paradigmatic idealization have been repeated by most exponents of Zen in the West, from D. T. Suzuki on. The four examples that opened this paper are demonstrations of this idealized view. It is also repeated in the many stories falsely presented as history in the form of *mondo* or as *koans* along with their accompanying commentaries. I think a remark Noam Chomsky made with reference to political indoctrination is applicable to this case. That is to say, the essence of propaganda is repetition.

For someone who has not spent much time around American Zen Centers, it is hard to believe how strong is the belief, among the students, in the authority of the teacher. Clearly, one does not begin Zen practice with this belief; it is acquired over time as part of a complex, collective process. Human beings, necessarily through a dialectical (that is, dialogue both internal with oneself and external with others) and collective enterprise create society and then society, as objectified reality is reflected back and contributes to the creation of the human individual.^[14] Considering the Zen world as a micro society, the collective world building of Zen takes place through the mechanisms of group and ritual practice. In addition all the information communicated, both verbally and non-verbally between people, acquired through the talks of the teacher and the senior students, and assimilated through the extensive collected writings and commentaries of the Zen

tradition, fill out and define the Zen world. Through this complex of mechanisms, a powerful belief system is imparted to the American Zen student.

Berger states, "that society is the product of man and that man is the product of society, are not contradictory. They reflect the inherently dialectical character of the societal phenomenon." [15] He also points out that, " man not only produces a world, but he also produces himself ... This world, of course, is culture...Culture must be continually produced and reproduced by man...Man also produces language and, on its foundation and by means of it, a towering edifice of symbols that permeate every aspect of his life." Hence we see that, "Society is constituted and maintained by acting human beings" from which follows, "the world-building activity of man is always and inevitably a collective enterprise... the humanly produced world attains the character of objective reality." [16]

Each individual is confronted by an overwhelming input of experience. In order to avoid a feeling of chaos, it is necessary to organize and make sense of this plethora of data, that is, literally to make the world. This process of world building carries with it a new vocabulary with new mental constructions and meanings. Let us now consider carefully each member of the triad of terms along with *koans* and ritual behavior.

Anyone who visits a Zen Center is usually struck by the formal and ritualized atmosphere of the temple or *zendo*, an atmosphere that creates a sense of the sacred. Before entering we remove our shoes, finding a certain quiet, the smell of incense, the altar with Buddha statues surrounded by offerings of flowers and fruit and a priest, monk, or nun in formal robes whom others show respect with bows or even prostrations. One quickly learns that there exists a hierarchy as clearly defined and rigid as anything in Western religious institutions. If one becomes involved with the life of the group, one learns that there are set ways to behave in the temple, in the meditation hall, in sharing common meals, greeting other members, monks or nuns, and when meeting the teacher, Master, or *roshi*. One also learns a whole new language comprised of a new set of terms and definitions. The adoption and continued use of this language will form the person's view of the world and his/her place in it - - both in relation to the larger world and to his/her place within the Zen world. The views espoused within the Zen community will, to one degree or another reshape and color the person's way of thinking about and views of the world. A person who becomes actively involved with a Zen group not only identifies themselves with Zen ideas and meanings, but also sees himself/herself as expressing these ideas through speech, attitude, and activity and as a representative of Zen itself. Interestingly, many people then attribute their new worldview to the fruit of "practice." What appears as spiritual fruit may in actuality be the adjustment to being schooled and indoctrinated into a prefabricated world-view.

Master/Roshi

In the Zen world, the Master is at the head of the hierarchy and is legitimated through the act of Dharma transmission. The Master stands in for or represents the absolute reality represented by the Buddha. This identification of the person of the Master with absolute reality serves as a sacred and universal reference and is the means by which

their authority and by extension, the authority of the institution is legitimated. The human Master is clearly flesh and blood, however he/she is also supposedly beyond human given the belief that his/her "mind is ever pure" and his/her activities come from the absolute.

Historically in Japan, "*roshi*" has indeed sometimes been understood to indicate rank based on spiritual development, while at other times it has been used as a term of address connoting no more than simple respect. There are occasions in Japanese (especially Soto) usage when it merely denotes an administrative rank. In a manner somewhat analogous to the historical bestowal of "Dharma transmission" for a number of different expedient reasons, the term "*roshi*" or its various analogs, appears to have meant different things in different circumstances and at different times. There is not, and never has been a central authority in China or Japan or anywhere else that certifies anyone's official passage into *roshi*hood based on *any* sort of formal criteria, certainly not on the basis of spiritual attainment. Perhaps Soko Morinaga-*roshi*, the former President of [Rinzai] Hanazono College, said it most aptly, "A *roshi* is anyone who calls himself by the term and can get other people to do the same."^[17]

An interesting example can be seen in the case of the American Zen teacher Philip Kapleau. Mr. Kapleau uses the title "*roshi*," and his students, along with most others involved in American Zen, address him as such. Mr. Kapleau has been extremely influential, both through his personal teaching and his writing of books and articles, in spreading Zen in America and abroad. He merits respect if for no other reason than the fact that he has taught for many years, while remaining untainted by financial or sexual scandals. This is an accomplishment that a number of others with officially sanctioned Dharma transmission and titles cannot claim. However Mr. Kapleau himself has explicitly stated that he is not a Dharma heir of his teacher, Yasutani-*roshi*, and did not receive the title *roshi* from Yasutani or from anyone else.^[18] Essentially, he took the title himself. This is not to say he is any more or less qualified than anyone else, only that he has never received formal recognition from an elder teacher in one of the "officially" recognized lines of Zen. Interestingly, Mr. Kapleau has "transmitted" to some of his disciples, establishing a line basically beginning with himself, and thereby different from all other Zen lines, in that these, at least rhetorically, maintain the myth of an unbroken lineage dating back to Shakyamuni. It is also true that virtually no scholars, either Eastern or Western, take seriously the idea of an unbroken Zen lineage going back to Sakyamuni Buddha.

Perhaps surprising to Americans, who commonly assume the Japanese model to be the most authentic, or even the only authentic form, is that there exists other, older, and no less authentic models of Zen monasticism, such as that of Korean Zen (*Son*). Robert Buswell, in his study of Zen monastic life in modern day Korea, describes an organizational structure that is refreshingly different from the Japanese-inspired centers familiar to most Western Zen students. In Korean Zen, the equivalent of *roshi*/Zen master, the *pangjang*, occupies an elected position that is held for an initial ten-year term. If the Master does not perform adequately, a petition by fifty monks would be enough to have a recall vote. A monk's affinities are more with his fellow meditation monks than with a specific master."^[19] That the monk's allegiances are more to his fellow meditators

than towards a particular master is an orientation towards group practice that we in America may want to explore further. This type of structure would remove much of the dependence on the teacher and the resulting idealization and hierarchy that are encountered in Japanese-style centers. The contemporary and prominent Masataka Togaroshi has stated, "*In Japanese Zen, loyalty is most important. Loyalty to one's teacher and to the tradition is more important than the Buddha and the Dharma.*"^[20] This attitude may be well suited to Japanese culture, a culture very different from our own. However, it may be time for American practitioners to begin to explore structures of practice not modeled exclusively on the Japanese form, but on ways that are more compatible with our own culture of democratic and egalitarian ideals. They might place less emphasis on absolute loyalty to a superior or to an institution and more emphasis on equality and minimizing hierarchical structures.

In a sense, Zen has inverted its self-definition of "a separate transmission outside of words and letters." We should keep in mind that according to the Zen view truth cannot be expressed in words but rather only alluded to in spontaneous and natural activities of daily life.^[21] However, Zen gives great prestige and authority to a ceremonially invested institutional role, whether Master, *roshi*, or Shi-fu, rather than basing authority on the actual lived, observable activity of the individual. At least in theory, this latter criterion is the only legitimate means in the East of discerning the mark of the sage. It is based on the concept of *t'i-yung*, usually translated as essence-function, which is prominent in all East Asian philosophical systems.^[22] According to this view, it is the transformation of the personality reflected in a person's ability to act spontaneously (directly) and without hindrance in response to phenomenal situations, that marks the sage or enlightened one. The Master/*roshi* is said to be realized, that is to make the ideal of enlightened activity "real in his everyday experience."^[23]

Zen has put the cart before the horse. Zen institutions define any teacher having the title Master or *roshi* as a sage or enlightened being. This imputation of character is independent of the teacher manifesting any qualities that could be seen as marks of realization or enlightenment. Regardless of whether or not the individual can manifest any evidence of such an exalted level of spiritual attainment, this status is conferred upon the teacher with the institutional title. By virtue of the investiture of an institutional position the individual automatically acquires a whole array of impressive qualities. He is extraordinary, or else utterly ordinary. He also gains the ability to act and speak from the perspective of the Absolute, to perform miracles, to always maintain a pure mind, and ultimately becomes the repository, if not the living manifestation of the perfectly realized mind of Shakyamuni Buddha. The students are not empowered to have confidence in their own abilities of empirical observation and intuition to assess the actual moment-to-moment everyday conduct of a teacher.

Though Zen institutions persist in defining themselves as a tradition, "not depending on words or letters," there is an unstated imperative to do precisely that. It is expected and repeatedly taught that the students should defer to and exalt the term "Master" or "*roshi*," a title and the ceremonial position it stands for, rather than relying on their own good sense and intuition in matters relating to the teacher's authority. There is a

deception operating here. On the one hand Zen rhetoric tells its followers to be in the moment, to see what is in front of their eyes- "look look" Lin-chi exclaims.^[24] Yet, on the other hand, Zen rhetoric implies to its followers that they are incapable of seeing what is going on in front of them, when seeing is directed towards the Master/*roshi*. The nature of enlightened activity must be taken by virtue of a title, on faith. What the Master does, is by definition, enlightened activity.

Clearly, this is a situation that is disempowering to Zen students who accept or internalize this construction of reality. It places the Master in a position somehow over and above the human, since all the Masters activities are enlightened, coming from the Absolute. Hence, viewing the Master is tantamount to viewing Buddhahood in the flesh. Not surprisingly, the North American Zen group mentioned earlier, being well socialized into Zen's rhetoric, expressed astonishment that a Zen Master was capable of displaying human foibles. The Master transcending being human, becomes an icon, an idealized representation of a greater truth beyond comprehension and judgment. For example, one bright undergraduate philosophy major, after some reading about Zen and upon seeing a Chinese Master walk across a room for the first time, gave expression to this icon-like view by stating, "it was intense man, it was intense."

Dharma transmission

Dharma transmission, according to convention, is the formal recognition on the part of the Master that the student has attained an understanding equal to that of the teacher. A person with Dharma transmission in the Rinzai line who teaches in a large city in New York State provided the following definition of Dharma transmission to my questionnaire, "Formal acknowledgement by a teacher that a student is officially his/her Dharma heir--that the wordless understanding passed from Sakyamuni Buddha to Mahakashyapa and on and on has now come to this one time, one place. Written and recorded in the lineage." The view adhered to by this teacher is a widely held one regarding the transmission of "authentic" Zen teaching. This acknowledgement by a teacher that a student is a Dharma heir is supposedly identical with the fully realized mind of the Buddha. It is the continuity of this chain of enlightened minds in an unbroken lineage, supposedly unique to Zen, going back to the historical but also highly mythologized figure of Sakyamuni Buddha (and beyond according to another respondent) that forms the conceptual basis for the present teacher's considerable authority. According to the traditional Zen viewpoint, Dharma transmission justifies giving the teacher the authority that one would accord to the Buddha himself. Dharma transmission has been employed in this manner since the Tang dynasty (CE 618-907).^[25] It is this use of a spiritual lineage as the basis for authenticity ("a special teaching outside the scriptures")^[26] rather than dependence on the authority of a particular scripture, or in conjunction with the scriptures, that distinguishes the *Ch'an* school from other Chinese sects of the period. This view implies that Dharma transmission is given solely on the basis of the spiritual attainment of the student and further that Dharma transmission is received from one's living teacher, rather than in a dream or in some other fashion.^[27]

On investigation, the term "Dharma transmission" turns out to be a much more flexible and ambiguous term than we in the West suppose. To be sure, it is in theory given in recognition of the student having attained as deep a realization of mind as the teacher himself (assuming the teacher has a deep realization). This view, for contemporary Western Zen followers is the understanding of the term "mind-to-mind transmission." Mind-to-mind transmission logically implies the enlightenment of the disciple, for if the teacher is enlightened, and what is being transmitted is the teacher's enlightened mind, then the student must be also enlightened. However, Dharma transmission has over the course of *Ch'an/Zen's* long history been given for other reasons. It can be awarded for any one of a number of reasons, presumed to be legitimate at a particular time or in certain conditions. According to some scholars, Dharma transmission has actually been used as a means for bestowing membership in a teaching lineage. It has been used to establish political contacts vital to the well-being of the monastery, to maintain the continuity of the lineage though the recipient has not opened his/her Dharma eye, to cement a personal connection with a student, to enhance the authority of missionaries spreading the Dharma in foreign countries,^[28] or to provide salvation (posthumously, in medieval Japan) by allowing the deceased recipient to join the "blood line" of the Buddha. In the later Sung Dynasty (CE 960-1280), Dharma transmission was routinely given to senior monastic officers, presumably so that their way to an abbacy would not be blocked.^[29] *Clearly, enlightenment was not always regarded as the essential criteria for Dharma transmission.* Manzan Dohaku (CE1636-1714), a Soto reformer, propagated the view that Dharma transmission was dependent on personal initiation between a Master and disciple rather than on the disciple's enlightenment. He maintained this view in the face of strong opposition, citing as authority the towering figure of Japanese Zen, Dogen (CE 1200-1253).^[30] This became and continues to this day to be the official Soto Zen view.

For a contemporary example of the functional role of Dharma transmission within the Zen institution, as well as a lesson in institutional history, let us look at the present-day Soto sect in Japan. This sect strives to match the institutional structures of Dogen's time when every Soto temple had to have an abbot and every abbot had to have Dharma transmission. In 1984 there were 14,718 Soto Zen temples in Japan and 15,528 Soto priests. Since every abbot has to be a priest, it follows that almost every Soto priest (95%) has Dharma transmission. It should be noted that a majority of these priests would spend less than three years in a monastery. Many will have as little as one year or even six months of training. Significantly, while there is much written in Soto texts on the ritual of Dharma transmission, there is almost nothing on the qualifications for it.^[31]

The vast majority of today's Japanese Soto Zen priests are themselves the sons, typically the eldest sons, of temple priests who take over their father's temple more or less as a 'family business.' In the event there are only daughters in the family, an 'arranged marriage' will be made between one of the daughters and a young priest who has no other prospect for acquiring his own temple. The main purpose of all of these arrangements is to ensure that the retired abbot and his wife will have a place to live after their retirement. Dharma transmission is now little more than a formality.^[32]

For an example of transmission between the living and the dead from modern times, Yasutani-*roshi*, one of the most influential Zen teachers in the West, felt that he had a personal spiritual bond with Dogen, and considered himself Dogen's direct Dharma heir by virtue of his possession of the "true Dharma eye." He could thus establish his own authority without reference to the Soto or Rinzai patriarchal lines.^[33]

The meaning and value of Dharma transmission and Zen lineage is not a strictly modern day concern. At the end of the Ming dynasty (CE 1368-1644) in China these issues were prominent topics among the leading *Ch'an* Masters, who expressed a broad range of views. Some Masters believed in giving Dharma transmission to a disciple whose eye was not open, but who was capable of running the monastery. This was referred to as "the seal of the winter melon," i.e. not comparable to a stone seal. Fa-tsang (1573-1635), a famous Lin-chi Master believed that Dharma was something to be understood and concerned the affirmation of the mind. This Master believed it is possible to be a successor of a Master long dead, whom one has never met, as long as the understanding between living and dead Master matched. He did not think it necessary to have a lineage certificate to be considered a *Ch'an* Master. His Dharma brother, Tung-rung (1592-1660), thought just the opposite, that it was necessary to meet your living Master and to have a lineage certificate.

Similarly in the Tsao-tung sect there was a range of views. One fairly common view was that enlightenment is in one's mind, there is no reason to seek affirmation from another if you are free from doubts. One master of this sect, Wui-yi Yuan-lai (1575-1630), believed that the essence of the *Ch'an* sect was that there had to be a matching of minds, not the formal transmission of the sect. He believed all the *Ch'an* sect's lineages had been broken, their lines terminated, but that all five of the original Ch'an sects could still be thought as present so long as some practitioner has the right understanding matching exactly the earlier understanding of that sect. This Master was also against giving Dharma transmission to maintain the institutional lineage. He described this as, "adding water to dilute the milk." Hence, to this Master, it was preferable to have a person with real insight with no Dharma transmission than to have a person with a certificate not based on insight. With a person with real insight but no Dharma transmission, only the sect stops, the path remains true and no harm is done to the Dharma. With Dharma transmission not based on realizing the mind, the school continues but reality is false, deceiving one's mind, deceiving the Buddha, deceiving the world. In this case, you will have the blind leading the blind, all will jump into the great fire. It was mentioned that both the Lin-chi and Tsao-tung lineages were broken.^[34] Notably, of the four great Masters^[35] of the late Ming era, none belonged to either the Lin-chi or the Tsao-tung sect and three of the four did not have formal lineage certificates.

Not surprisingly, given the implications of the convention of Dharma transmission, rather idealized views of the person receiving it, and of the role itself, prevail among contemporary American Zen students. Most students will understand the term Dharma transmission as a sort of USDA seal of approval guaranteeing that the Master/*roshi* is fully enlightened, and that his or her every gesture therefore manifests the Absolute. This

attitude is well illustrated by one of the responses to my questionnaire: "a Zen Master is a person who has been certified as existing in fully awakened mind..."

Zen Lineage

The third element of the conceptual triad of terms supporting institutional authority is "Zen lineage." In Master Sheng-yen's introduction to a recent book, *Subtle Wisdom*, he states that his purpose is to describe the background and development of *Ch'an* for both new readers and for those with little or erroneous information. He then informs us that, "Since the time of the Buddha, masters have given 'transmission' of their wisdom to their disciples when they demonstrated experience and understanding of the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha. As a result of this form of recognition, lineages have developed..."^[36] Clearly implied in this is the idea that the *Ch'an* lineage goes back to the Buddha. Though he doesn't say that it is an unbroken lineage, it is implied in the writing, as the *Ch'an* tradition is still thriving and it is passed along from Master to disciple. What is carefully omitted by the author who knows well otherwise, is that there is *no such thing* as an unbroken *Ch'an* lineage going back to the Buddha and that the lineage that is upheld is not based on deep spiritual attainment.

The notion that *Ch'an/Zen* is an unbroken lineage going back to the Buddha is repeated in one Zen context after another. The above mentioning of the Zen transmission/lineage myth by Master Sheng-yen is only a recent repetition of the myth that the Zen sect has propagated and repeated since the sects beginning in China during the Tang dynasty. In the responses to my questionnaire, it was repeated by at least three respondents who I know are "transmitted" teachers of American Zen groups.

The lineage paradigm, along with the idea of various "patriarchs" standing out among a line's ancestors did not occur by chance. It is well known the Chinese culture places great importance on ancestor worship and patriarchal genealogy. Essentially, *Ch'an* replaced the birth family line central to the social structure of traditional Chinese society with a "spiritual" family line descending from the Buddha, i.e. *Ch'an* lineage. This is not to say that the lineage structure of *Ch'an* is intrinsically Chinese or a creation exclusively of the Chinese imagination. The Kashmiri Masters who established the foundation of the meditation tradition in China brought "the nucleus of the transmission theory whereby the true teachings of Buddhism are handed down from Sakyamuni Buddha through a succession of patriarchs," into China.^[37] This convention fit in well with the existing Confucian order, helping to facilitate the acceptance of what was in fact an alien religion. Alan Cole has written:

Since the opening of the Dun Huang caves at the beginning of this century, we know that Chan lineage texts in the mid-and late-Tang were quite at odds with one another in their varied claims to own enlightenment--lineages harking back to Bodhidharma looked quite different, depending on who was writing them. On the whole, these lineage texts represent a new form of disputation which works as follows, 'I am right and you are wrong because I stand in a singularly perfect

lineage of truth and you don't.' The structure of this polemic ought to be provocative simply at face value. How did this happen to Buddhism? Why did it get locked into a Confucian model of patrilineal inheritance...?"^[38]

As we have seen above though, *Ch'an/Zen* attempts to legitimate itself through the idea of an unquestionable lineage and transmission going back to the mythologized Shakyamuni Buddha. This myth is a humanly constructed form that is necessarily open to human interpretation. By legitimation I mean socially objectified "knowledge" that serves to explain the social order. Put differently, legitimations are answers to any questions about the "why" of institutional arrangements. All legitimation maintains socially defined reality. At times a given legitimation may seem above question and the whole idea of human construction and interpretation may be hidden or lost. But at other times, for whatever historical reasons, the contingencies of human situations break through this covering and show how based in human interpretation and understanding the seeming absoluteness of the construction really is. Berger writes: "All socially constructed worlds are inherently precarious. Supported by human activity, they are constantly threatened by the human facts of self-interest and stupidity."^[39]

Zen appears trapped by its own rhetoric into idealizing key terms such as Master/*roshi*, Dharma transmission, and Zen lineage. It has divorced its own claims to authenticity from the sutras or any other canonical texts and based its legitimation on lineage. Inherent to this model is the corollary idea of Dharma transmission from enlightened Master to enlightened Master going all the way back to the Buddha. The Buddha represents ontologically, the nature of the universe as well as the epitome of human attainment. It is as necessary today to maintain the myth of unbroken lineage based on mind-to-mind transmission, as it was necessary for the Sung dynasty monks who created the myth and fought to have it accepted as historical fact. Otherwise, there is no way to maintain *Ch'an's* claim to represent the mind of the Buddha. It then becomes important to stress the ancestral connections, through mind-to-mind transmission, whether real or fabricated. The level of praise and sanctity attained in the human realm by the *Ch'an* patriarchs and succeeding teachers is a matter of concern to the living members of the *Ch'an* lineage, i.e. the living Masters and *rosHis*. It is the prestige of the mythological lineage that affords the living teachers their privileged position in the Buddhist monastic tradition and the Buddhist world at large.^[40]

Though the three terms Master/*roshi*, Dharma transmission, and *Ch'an/Zen* lineage may be looked at separately, in terms of authority in Zen, they are intertwined and almost function as a unit. This convention of transmission within a lineage requires that that which is transmitted be totally and authentically the mind of the Buddha. Importantly, there can be no partial transmission. Hence one is a Master or one is not a Master. There is no intermediate or equivocal state; no one is recognized as being "kind of a Master" or "almost a Master." If one is a Master, then one has perfectly realized the mind of the Buddha, and thus functions from the perspective of the absolute, a viewpoint beyond the understanding of the ordinary sentient being. In this sense, the Master stands in for the sacred, the mysterious living manifestation of true nature, Buddha Mind. Berger states the more general case thus, "Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the

precarious reality constructions of empirical society with ultimate reality. The tenuous realities of the social world are grounded in the sacred *realissimum*, that is, by locating them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference, which by definition is beyond the contingencies of human meanings and human activity. The historical constructions of human activity are viewed from a vantage point that, in its own self-definition, transcends both history and man." [\[41\]](#)

Hence, according to the rhetoric of Zen, every act of the Master is a manifestation of the living truth of Zen, every activity is a teaching if only the student can grasp it. Anything that seems wrong or problematic or contradictory is due to the student's lack of insight into the absolute, or the Buddha Mind, from which all the Master's insights and actions arise. This model leads necessarily to an idealization of the Master/*roshi*. As the embodiment of the Buddha's enlightened Mind, the Master is totally beyond all our comprehension and hence exempt from our understanding and all judgments. It is no wonder that much of the behavior one sees around American Zen Centers might appear cultish to the uninitiated.

Koans

One of the distinctive features of Zen that has caught the attention of Americans is the Zen *koan*. As we shall see below, the *koan* is used in many ways and serves a number of functions. As many people know, a *koan* is a story or more correctly an encounter dialogue between a Master and a disciple or another person or persons. *Koans* are used in a form of Zen meditation known as *koan* meditation (Ch. *k'an hua Ch'an*, J. *kanna Zen*), or more popularly as *koan* study. In Japan, *koan* study has, over the years become formalized within each teaching line; each line has a selected course of *koans* to "go through," accepted answers to go with the given cases, and a standardized method of secretly guiding students through the curriculum of *koans* and answers.[\[42\]](#) The contents of a given course within a line are a guarded secret. These dialogues are most often totally perplexing to the uninitiated. *Koans* are not historical accounts of actual events although East Asian Buddhists, as well as many, if not most practitioners today in the West believe that they are. Rather they are literary re-creations of how the enlightened masters of the past might have spoken and acted. The popularity of the *koan* texts eventually informed the actual oral practice.[\[43\]](#) That is, they came to serve as models for the rhetorical and procedural forms of public discourse within Zen institutions. If the idea of the *koan* stories as literary inventions implies too much calculation or artifice on the part of the compilers, another way to view them might be as the folk tales of the Zen tradition. [\[44\]](#)

Though Americans may think they are following some ancient, orthodox form of Chinese, Korean, or Japanese Zen *koan* study, this hardly is the case, for no such form exists. There is no single way of using the *koans*; it is not known exactly how the *koans* were used in Sung and later China. One Korean teacher popular in the United States has constructed a *koan* course that seems to mirror the view that Americans have come to expect, which is the method of the modern Rinzai school of Japan, though that is not the form that is employed in Korea. This truncated version of the Rinzai curriculum model would lead the student to believe that there is little or no intellectual content to *koan*

study in contemporary Japan, however G. Victor Sogen Hori, a Canadian scholar who spent roughly fifteen years in monasteries in Japan doing *koan* study paints a very different picture. According to him there was considerable time spent in writing talks on the *koans* to be presented to and graded by the *roshi*. Much effort was made to become familiar with the book of capping phrases^[45] so that this large collection of phrases was essentially memorized. Finally, for those capable, writing matching poems in Chinese for the various *koans* was required.^[46]

Like almost all other aspects of Zen, the *koans* and the enlightenment that is hopefully to follow from their study, are presented to Americans in an extremely idealized fashion. The qualities presented in the idealized descriptions contained in *koan* anecdotes are quite naturally transposed to the living Master or *roshi*, since the Zen rhetoric presents the people in these positions as having completely mastered the *koans*.

An example of this idealized view is seen in the following quote of Yasutani-*roshi* in his commentary on the Mu *koan*,

Once you burst into enlightenment you will astound the heavens and shake the earth. As though having captured the great sword of General Kuan [a great general invincible in combat], you will be able to slay the Buddha should you meet him [and he obstruct you] and dispatch all patriarchs you encounter [should they hinder you]. Facing life and death, you are utterly free; in the Six Realms of Existence and the Four Modes of Birth you move about in a *samadhi* of innocent delight.^[47]

One could think from the description above, that the *roshi* only moves about in the "*samadhi* of innocent delight." However, this is how the same enlightened *roshi* manifested his wisdom when addressing the social and political conditions of modern Japan. The quote that follows are words written for a strictly Japanese audience by Yasutani, shortly before his death in 1972. After calling Japan's labor movement and unions traitors, he goes on to say, "The universities we presently have must be smashed one and all. If that can't be done under the present constitution, then it should be declared null and void just as soon as possible, for it is an un-Japanese constitution ruining the nation, a sham constitution born as the bastard child of the allied occupation forces."^[48] This type of view was a consistent feature of Yasutani's discourses in the social and political arena, at the least covering the last 40 years of his life.

Koans are used mainly in two ways. In the groups associated with the Soto tradition of Japanese Zen, they are used in formal talks either as the main theme of the lecture or as pedagogical devices to bring out some point or to act as pointers. In the groups associated with the Rinzai or Sanbokyodan traditions of Japanese Zen as well as in some groups within the Chinese or Korean traditions, the *koans* are also used in these ways, but also and most importantly, they are used as the topic or subject of the student's meditation. Private meetings with the teacher (J. *sanzen* or *dokusan*) are part of the

process when the *koans* are used in this last fashion.

In the schools of Zen where the *koan* has preeminence as the focus of meditation practice, the *koan* has the added function of empowering the teacher and reinforcing the authority of an institutional hierarchy founded in part on what is a largely literary invention. The teacher, having ostensibly mastered the *koan*, is a living representative of the enlightened mind to which the *koan* points. The teacher judges the student's insight and decides whether the response is complete or deep enough to attain confirmation or approval and to move to the next case in the curriculum. In spite of popular rhetoric to the contrary, though one may "move on" to the next case, this "moving on" in no way means that the student has seen deeply into the present case at all. There is a certain "moving along" that takes place, which is not openly discussed or written about. That is, the student is kept progressing through the course of *koans* though there may be little insight or realization into many of the *koans*.

The private meetings between teacher and student take place in a stylized form: incense burns in the hushed atmosphere and privacy of the interview room, the student bows on entering and leaving the room, and prostrates to the floor before coming to sit in front of the waiting seated teacher. The teacher controls the interview; the teacher decides whether to encourage lightly or forcefully, to give a pointer or to just dismiss, to scold or to encourage, to tell a personal anecdote or to be cold, and terminates the interview at will with the ring of a bell. Finally, the teacher decides when the student should "move on" to another case or, more importantly, when someone's insight is a genuine Zen experience or not.^[49] It is understood among practitioners, that this is the *real* Zen, where the *real* training goes on in secret. The student is not to discuss anything that goes on in *sanzen* with anyone else. In this atmosphere and context it is easy to see how the student makes a connection between the present day teacher and the great Masters of the past whose words and gestures are examined in the *koans*.

As I have hopefully shown, the rhetoric of Zen institutions recognizes the present day teacher awaiting the student in the hushed interview room as the living descendant of our Chinese ancestors, the great Masters of the *koan*. The discourse maintains that through mind-to-mind transmission and unbroken Zen lineage, there exists a direct connection between the living teacher and the Sixth Patriarch and Bodhidharma, in fact, to the whole line of patriarchs and ultimately to the Buddha himself. This notion of direct connection is stated in the Zen idiom as "eyebrow to eyebrow," implying great intimacy, that is, hearing with the same ears, seeing with the same eyes.^[50] Thus, through his participation in an exchange intimately linked through form and symbol to the activities of enlightened Masters the student reenacts the actual case of the *koan*, and in a sense enters a timeless realm of sacred space. Throughout all of the private interview, the Master/*roshi* introduces the case, directs the line of discussion or enquiry, will introduce a special language and at times a physical way of responding or may tell a private story. But always the teacher is the final and sole arbiter of correct insight or understanding, that is "of going through" or "of passing through" the *koan*. What this "passing through" actually means varies widely from teacher to teacher and from case to case. Even among towering figures of the Zen tradition we find great disagreement as to what "attainment" means. For instance, Dogen, the founder of Soto Zen in Japan criticized Ta-hui (CE

1088-1163) a contemporary of Dogen's own teacher, and perhaps the greatest exponent of *koan* Zen and a towering figure of *Ch'an* in China, as having no insight, accusing him in essence of being a fraud.

During a seven-day retreat the private meetings between the student and the Master/*roshi* are repeated many times a day, at other times maybe once or several times a week. But it is always done with the understanding that this is the "real " teaching and that one is confronting the essence of Zen. Not of little importance, it is here that someone will advance in the given group, be recognized as a good or favored student to be groomed for a teaching role and perhaps entry into the Buddha family through the act of Dharma transmission. Berger writes, "Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical society with ultimate reality."^[51] Here in the *sanzen* room, in private, among bows, bells, and incense, through the medium of the *koan*, the student confronts the Zen understanding of reality, the whole of the Zen tradition or of our "Zen ancestors" as one group states it. The student confronts the Buddha nature or Buddha Mind as manifest in the everyday world in the role of the Master who sits silently waiting for the student to come and present his/her own Buddha nature. This is done in an environment where the Master/*roshi* is the manifestation of the absolute, the stand-in for the Buddha. The Master invites, cajoles, encourages the student to join in, to see, to take part in this sacralizing of the everyday world through the *koan* and the manifest Buddha and ancestors. The teacher sits in front of the student, confronting the student, to whom the student fully prostrates and wholeheartedly presents himself.

The orchestration of the encounter operates on at least two levels of idealization. One is tacit and textual, in the use of literary wisdom stories, whose inner esoteric meaning the teacher has supposedly mastered, and that present an idealized paradigm of the Master/disciple relationship. The other, more explicit and gestural, is enacted in the ritualized exchange of bows, the care taken in the physical arrangement of the room, the learning of a new language, a way of expressing ideas not easily grasped by the uninitiated, and the training in responding spontaneously and iconoclastically, that is, in actions almost formally prescribed. The ultimate result of this idealization of the teacher and the institution he/she represents is the legitimation of the institutional hierarchy. Through these highly ritualized acts and, to a certain extent, the ritualized responses to the *koans* themselves, the authority of the Master/*roshi* is embodied and given significance. The student participates in a ritual that embodies the living Master as the equal of the Buddha and the line of patriarchs. At the same time the student submits to his/her own position as an ordinary human being, with desires for progress, attainment, and recognition.

Despite the fact that all of the elements of the interview are monastic conventions, reflecting the institutional structure more than some inherent quality of enlightenment, the student may have the impression that in fact he/she is participating in an event located in a timeless and sacred space. This whole scenario is entirely constructed by people, yet the student is made to believe that this is the only way or is the way it has always been done since the beginning or earliest times of Zen. As Berger describes it, the intent of the

ritual is to "let people forget that this order was established by men and continues to be dependent on the consent of men. Let them believe that, in acting out the institutional programs that have been imposed upon them, they are but realizing the deepest aspirations of their own being and putting themselves in harmony with the fundamental order of the universe."^[52]

The Alienation of the Master/Roshi

At this point, I would like to look at the person of the Master/*roshi* and examine some of the effects on both the teacher and the student of assuming a mostly idealized role for the teacher. I am going to develop the thesis, following Berger's model, that the Master is "alienated," using the word "alienated" in a precise technical sense.^[53] Berger describes the embodiment of institutional principles as a two way process, "The institutional order is real only insofar as it is realized in performed roles and that, on the other hand, roles are representative of an institutional order that defines their character and from which they derive their objective sense."^[54] Clearly, all socially constructed worlds change because they are historical products of human activity. Looking at the intricacies of the conceptual make up by which any particular world is maintained, one may forget that, "*Reality is socially defined. But the definitions are always embodied, that is, concrete individuals and groups of individuals serve as definers of reality.*"^[55] In Zen, the idealized role of Master/*roshi* is the embodiment of all that Zen stands for. The Master, through words and gestures, not only defines reality, but serves also to set the tone and coloring of how Zen is to be manifest in life.

People take part in the Zen institution's activities and accept its beliefs mainly for two reasons: they are both looking for meaning in their own lives and they are looking for a personal transformation that will incorporate this meaning into their lives. It is necessary for people to believe that personal transformation is possible. The Zen Master/*roshi* is that living embodiment of personal transformation. Zen promotes a transformation that is so complete that as the Zen institutions define it, it is beyond human understanding and judgment, which also implies great freedom and power; an ideal well worth struggling for. However, the idealizations are too great to actually fulfill the institutional needs for an embodied Master, with a real human. Yet a flesh and blood person must fill the role. Often, a person who is very far from the ideal they supposedly embody necessarily fills the role. In fact, there are very few people who can approach the standard set in the idealization of the Zen Master. The teacher attempts to act the part and their students accept the authority and specialness as they have been instructed through varied means. But a large institution such as Zen requires many teachers, so that most of its teachers do not fully embody the practice nor can they be a living example of the transformation promised. In a heterogeneous and highly individualistic society with few structural social controls such as ours, the idealization of the Master appears to me to be a prescription for problems.

Society, through the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization is the product of collective human activity. Through these three processes, society confronts the individual as an external, subjectively opaque, and pre-emptive

facticity. Externalization and objectification imply the production of a real social world, external to the individuals inhabiting it; internalization implies that the same social world will have the status of reality within the consciousness of these individuals. . This is an ongoing process as each individual necessarily ventures into the world. Through these three processes the individual participates and cooperates in the reality of social construction. This same social world retains its character of objectivity as it is internalized in consciousness. *The fundamental persuasive power of society is not in its means of social control, but in its power to impose itself as reality.*

There are two points of importance here. First, that socialization is always partial and that internalization sets one part of consciousness against the rest of consciousness. Second, internalization entails self-objectification: a part of the self becomes objectified, not just to others, but to itself. A "social self" is created, which is and remains in a state of uneasy accommodation with the non-social self-consciousness upon which it has been imposed. For instance, one's socialized self and place in society may be as a nine to five, hard working, middle class family man, yet this same person may see himself as a Don Juan. This could lead to all manner of problems for this person with his wife and children. However, the role of middle class family man becomes an objective "presence," carrying a powerful sense of reality within the consciousness of the individual. Since the socializing process is never perfect, man produces "otherness" both outside and inside himself as a result of life in society. The possibility then arises that not only does the social world seem strange to the individual but that he becomes strange to himself in certain aspects of his socialized self. One may have the objectively socialized role of Zen Master, a role that carries an institutional representation of extremely high ideals, while the non-socialized self upon which the role has been imposed still hungers after fame, the bodies of attractive young students, a larger group of followers, a larger temple and more land, more money, or any number of other objects of desire. In a situation such as this one part of consciousness is left in an uneasy relation with another part.

It should be noted that the division or split in one's consciousness that sets a social self in an uneasy accommodation with the non-social self consciousness is necessary, to one degree or another, as a quality of being a social being. In other words, it is part of being human. However, as Berger underlines below, one may proceed along different paths,

There are, however, two ways in which this estrangement may proceed - one, in which the strangeness of world and self can be reappropriated by the "recollection" that both the world and self are products of one's own activity- the other, in which such reappropriation is no longer possible, and in which social world and socialized self confront the individual as inexorable facticities analogous to the facticities of nature. This latter process may be called alienation. Put differently, alienation is the process whereby the dialectical relationship between the individual and his world is lost."[\[56\]](#)

Alienation is a false consciousness in that it is forgotten that this social world was and continues to be co-produced by the individual as an active participant in the collective enterprise of social life.

It is important to understand that alienation does not necessarily weaken or disempower the alienated individual. In fact, the opposite may be the case -- it may become a source of great power as it removes the doubts and uncertainties that may cause problems and hesitancy in a non-alienated person. For the alienated individual, "The social world ceases to be an open arena in which the individual expands his being in meaningful activity, becomes instead a closed aggregate of reifications divorced from present or future activity."^[57] Importantly, perceiving the social cultural world in alienated terms serves to maintain its structures that give meaningful order to experience, with particular efficacy, precisely because it immunizes against the innumerable contingencies of the human enterprise of world building. In the case we are examining here, namely that of the Zen Master in America, we have seen a number of cases where no matter how poorly the Master has performed, he/she seems able, almost as if blinded to his/her own shortcomings, to continue to act and maintain his/her position of Master. There is an apparent strength, that allows the Master to maintain his/her position, almost totally divorced from his/her activity, despite the rhetoric of Zen that places so high a value on the normal activities of daily life and that maintains that every act of the Master comes from the Absolute. The alienation in these cases immunizes against the innumerable contingencies and setbacks of everyday life.

In Zen, the institution is "embodied" or "realized" in the performed role of the Master or *roshi*. A role that is almost necessarily idealized (with rare exceptions) through the mechanisms of Dharma transmission, Zen lineage, *koans*, *mondo*, and ritual. The students internalizing the Zen rhetoric, expect the real teacher to be an ideal teacher, so they look forward to having such an ideal teacher lead and instruct them.^[58] These idealizations are repeated in one form or another throughout the *Ch'an* tradition. In one of the earliest of *Ch'an* texts, the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* Hong-ren, the fifth Patriarch, tells his successor Hui-neng, the sixth and last Patriarch, "If you are able to awaken another's mind, he will be no different from me." What is implied here is that each Master in the line of transmission is equal to every other, and that the teaching each new Master gives is identical to that given by all the masters of the past. Essentially, at least as far as understanding is concerned, one teacher is the same as all the others,^[59] each one being the same as the Buddha.

To rise in Zen institutions, as in any institution, one must be well socialized in its ways and not question the institutional order and its roles. Since the role of Master is connected to the historical and semi-mythological Buddha through the mechanisms of Dharma transmission and Zen lineage, the Master's self identification in his/her role is further enhanced and deepened as is her/his sense of ultimate rightness. *It is my contention that the idealizations associated with this position lead the Master or roshi to have an alienated view of the world.* The person inhabiting the role of Master becomes, through the process of internalization of the privileges and qualities embodied in her/his

role, something other than herself/himself. The role as defined by the Zen institutions, as we have seen describes a person actualizing perfect freedom, free of fixed repetitive patterns, not self centered, filled with simplicity, buoyancy, humility, perspicacity, and compassion, or according to another description capable of performing miracles and still another description has the Master always maintaining a pure mind. This is truly a stupendous person, very rare indeed.

However, the internalization of the role is never complete, and some part of the person remains that has all the normal shortcomings and the concomitant doubts, desires and uncertainties that comprise all fallible people. By saying that the Master/*roshi* becomes something other than herself/himself, I mean that the role and its imputed qualities are foreign to, or in conflict with her/his activities and thoughts manifest in her/his daily life, to her/his non-socialized self upon which the role Master has been placed. For the alienated person, in this case the Zen Master, there is an "otherness" (the role of Zen Master) produced within herself/himself that is formed by the social world and is in addition, strange to herself/himself. It is strange to herself/himself because the process of socialization is never perfect. There remains an uneasy accommodation with the non-socialized self-consciousness and its varied desires." Alienation is an overextension of the process of objectivation, whereby the human ("living") objectivity of the social world is transformed into the non-human ("dead") objectivity of nature... In this loss of the societal dialectic, activity itself comes to appear as something other--namely, as process, destiny or fate,"^[60] or in Buddhist terminology, as karma or causes-and-conditions. In this case, the students too become reified to the Master. Though not necessarily with sinister intent, the students become objects to be used and insidiously manipulated for the Master's ends, whatever they may be. It is insidious because the Master's actions and motives as defined by the institutional role are "good," based in the absolute, coming from a pure mind, serving to spread the Dharma, and in order to help all sentient beings while in reality they are serving his/her own human desires. Simultaneously, critical thinking and questioning are explicitly denigrated with the worst of Zen epithets, "ego-centered activity."

Once this sort of alienated, *near delusional world-view* has been largely accepted, the door has been opened to all manner of potential abuses on the part of the person occupying the role of Master/*roshi*. A split has occurred between the person in power and the role they inhabit, between their personal responsibilities and their title. The Master, who was originally looked to as a role model, a more complete or developed human than the students, now appears to a viewer who has seen through the process of idealization and its resultant alienation, as a diminished person. The living person is gone, replaced by a reified role player. The normal balancing of different roles and positions, along with the accompanying internal dialectic, that one must assume in the course of dynamic normal life is now replaced mostly by one role, the role of Master. Unfortunately, in Zen this is often masked behind a rhetoric of non-ego and emptiness wherein the teacher's alienation only deepens. At this point, the Zen Center comes to resemble theater, where all the participants gladly play their roles, each for his/her own reasons. The students mostly become reified to themselves as students. A few students working their way up the

hierarchy who aspire to become teachers, may avoid for the time being the reification of their position as student, which they view as is in transition.

A person holding the view of the Master being alienated would predict, that however the Master acts in the ordinary world, the Master would still see himself as a Master and continue to act in that role. The Master is acting in a role that is idealized and superimposed onto a self that is ordinary with all regular human foibles. The students, being socialized into Zen rhetoric and its legitimating mechanisms see the Master as approaching the ideal, as they have been indoctrinated to do. The members of the Zen group in North America mentioned earlier in this paper, which was surprised that Zen Master could display human foibles, is just one of many examples that can be given of individuals who accept the Zen rhetoric and the idealized view of the Master. Because no socialization is complete there is a part of the Master that is aware of the falsity of his/her words, activities, and role-playing. That side of the Master's consciousness is aware of the ordinariness that he/she shares with the rank-and-file of the Center. However, the Master sees his/her flock accepting their activities through the lens of the idealized role. While the Master is aware of the "ordinary" side of his/her own consciousness, he/she sees the students responding to him/her in his/her idealized role. As is often the case in this type of encounter, the tendency exists to then see the students as dupes, "rubes," or people easy to fool. That is, the alienated Master views his students with little respect, hence there is an inclination to treat them with disdain and contempt. Berger states,

The gigantic projections of religious consciousness, whatever else they may be, constitute the historically most important effort of man to make reality humanly meaningful, at any price... The great paradox of religious alienation is that the very process of dehumanizing the socio-cultural world has its roots in the fundamental wish that reality as a whole might have a meaningful place for man. One may thus say that alienation, too, has been a price paid by the religious consciousness in its quest for a humanly meaningful universe"[\[61\]](#)

The disparity between the Master's lived everyday life with its occasions for error, desires, and doubts and the idealized presentation of the person as Master often repeated in the histories, *mondos* and *koans*, is too great. However, the rhetoric of Zen hinges on the doctrine of Zen lineage as passed on through Dharma transmission and the institutional legitimacy and the authority of the Master/*roshi* is dependent on this model. Put another way, "doctrine and a narration of the origin of that doctrine are completely intertwined, with the historicity of ... events essential to the narration of truth. Though the transmission moment might be toyed with in later disclaimers that nothing was ultimately transmitted, the historicity of the lineage cannot be disposed of."[\[62\]](#) That is, the content of the transmission is not so important as is the performance, the transmission and the re-creation of the social fact of lineage. However, the latter is ignored by the emphasis on the former. The Soto sect in Japan is just one very prominent example. In modern day America, as was probably most often the case, the maintenance of institutional stability and continuity is of primary importance. The family of supposed Buddhas is continued into the next generation, the institution is perpetuated, and of course some "ordinary"

members of the community are necessarily expendable. In this respect, Zen is no different from other major religious institutions.

There is a clearly visible power dynamic at the core of the Zen student-teacher relationship. According to sociologist David Bell, "Power implies the existence of a valued object that a) can be manipulated (i.e., increased or diminished by one actor with respect to another); b) is valued by the respondent; c) is in relatively short supply; d) is divisible. Any object fulfilling these criteria can become the basis of a power relationship."^[63]

Using the above criteria, insight and understanding of *koans* and Buddha Dharma can function as the basis of a power relationship between student and the Zen Master. The struggle occurs in this area over at least two issues, the student wanting to be recognized for having realized the truth of Zen, and over the student being authorized to be a teacher in his/her own right. An example of this dynamic can be seen in an event that took place some years ago in a Zen that group was experiencing tension. A student went to the teacher and said that there was dissatisfaction and tension in the group. The teacher replied that the problem was that he was not passing people so easily with their *koans*. Not passing *koans* means that students were not being recognized for attaining insight, for being enlightened, and also, for those moving along in the *koan* curriculum, it means being held back from completing the *koan* course and hence, from becoming teachers themselves. That is, their attaining Dharma transmission and entry into an official Zen lineage was being blocked. What "not passing the people so easily" says about *koan* study and what "passing a *koan*" actually means, will not be considered here. Unfortunately, the actual source of the dissatisfaction and tension was that the teacher, married with a child was secretly involved with two of his female students, neither of who was his wife.

In order to maintain the appearance of spiritual authority, the person chosen to fill the role of Master/*roshi* is almost forced by the idealizations attributed to the role by the Zen institution to live in a state of false consciousness, that is, to live a lie. At the same time there is a determination among the students to elevate and idealize the Master as an exemplar of the teaching and principles enshrined in the lineage's tradition. People want an outstanding teacher, no one wants an average or mediocre one. The rhetoric of Zen feeds into the student's desire to have an outstanding teacher as a role model, stating that the teacher is by definition outstanding, or as three of the teachers quoted at the beginning of this paper have informed us, "beyond your understanding," capable of performing miracles and possessed of a quality of life that is extraordinary. These sorts of words feed the student with a collection of hints and teasers to stimulate their fantasies of purity and outstanding spiritual attainment.

This pressure of the students is a form of complicity with the institution in accepting the title Master/*roshi*; they commit themselves to the descriptions of the position established within the tradition, and will attribute those qualities to whoever holds the title. In fact, the qualities imputed to the role of Master, may be all the student will see. There is a collusion between the Master and the student, a symbiotic relationship

in that it plays into the comforting position for the student in having a sense of certainty in an idealized role model; while at the same time the Master is elevated to an idealized authority figure that in extreme cases almost becomes cultic, as one can observe around certain Zen centers.

Those coming to Zen are to some large degree attracted by the sense, meaning, or ordering that it gives to the experience of life. As we have seen, this structure and order in Zen, is embodied in the Zen teacher. The teacher's certainty about his role, largely the result of alienation, asserts hierarchy. The teacher, seemingly immunized from normal human doubts, shortcomings and errors, stands high above the students with their sense of precariousness, self-questioning, and doubt. In a sense, the student cooperates with the teacher's alienation in order to maintain the meaning that Zen gives to life, that the teacher "embodies" and that the student craves, almost with the force of an instinct.^[64] The very hierarchy implied by the alienation of the teacher itself imposes a structure that is a second level ordering of sorts. One now has the Zen institution, a system with rituals and hierarchy to live in, the Master/*roshi* seen as an idealized figure at the head, monks and nuns and older students below and so on. This structure offers a channel for the students' aspirations for progress, and satisfies the desire for an orderly and sensible world. One can settle into in a well-understood hierarchy. Each person finds his/her place, either as a new student or some level of wiser, older student or to become ordained, all with their attendant privileges and status. One becomes part of an initiated in-group with a special language, a special way of talking, special ritual behavior, and an insight into or understanding of the world beyond the rest of society's comprehension.

The hierarchy related to the symbiotic relationship between the authority of the Master and the members of the Zen group is enhanced in many other ways. The wearing of special robes during ceremonies as well as the special place and bows reserved for the Master during services, emblematic accoutrements such as the use of special bells, wands of office, tools, accents, and furnishings all serve to locate the source of authority.^[65] In some Zen centers, there is much pomp and ceremony preceding and surrounding the talks given by the Master. In other places the representation of authority and hierarchy may take the form of stylized behavior such as standing or holding ones hands in a specific fashion or of talking and responding in prescribed or stylized ways. Elsewhere, the authority may be displayed in the aloofness or distance that the Master keeps from the rank and file. At still other places hierarchy may be shown in the ceremonial activities reserved for the Master and the ordained. By whatever means, authority and hierarchy are located, established, and enhanced.

Zen in America has been presented in an extremely simplistic manner, so that one is led to believe that the terminology of Zen is "pure," that is, that it has no sociopolitical implications. One is led to think that Zen and hence the terminology that defines it, in the words of D. T. Suzuki, "stands aloof from the scene of worldly sordidness and restlessness."^[66] Rinzai Zen priest Ichikawa Hakugen points out that the concepts we so identify with Zen were all factors that facilitated Zen to be united with Japanese militarism and authoritarianism--terms such as, harmony, nonresistance, tolerance, Dogen's term "body-and-mind-falling-away," *karma*, no self, the concept of debt or

gratitude, mutual interdependence of all things, the doctrine of the Middle Way, emphasis on inner peace rather than justice, and finally the characteristic of "just as it is" which can lead to a static, aesthetic perspective, a detached, subjective harmony with things.^[67] These terms, naively viewed seem pure and straightforward, the essence of Zen, yet with more thought and historical perspective we see that they have no meaning whatsoever outside of the culture in which they are embedded, or more precisely, who in that culture is using them and at what time. Berger, in 1966 stated this nicely, "Put a little crudely, it is essential to keep pushing questions about historically available conceptualizations of reality from the abstract 'What?' to the sociologically concrete "Says who?"^[68]

Summary

In this paper we have looked at how *Ch'an /Zen* has been presented to America in a most idealized fashion. Specifically, we have seen how the terms Dharma transmission, Zen lineage, and Master/*roshi* are intertwined to form a seamless web that along with *koans* and ritual behavior falsely elevates the Zen teacher, by whatever title he/she may assume, to a position that is paradoxically human, but simultaneously beyond human. I have shown that it is not necessary for any individual teacher to make claims concerning his/her own enlightenment or level of spiritual attainment because the Zen institutions repeat this claim, in one form or another, for the person sitting in the role of Zen Master. We have seen that these defining Zen terms and most of the elements of Zen's self definition have been accepted uncritically in America and the West in general. In addition, as students are discouraged from resorting to any non-Zen theoretical framework to critically examine Zen institutions, a member who attempts a critical view is thrown back into Zen terminology that only tends to enhance the power of the teacher. In this paper, I have proposed one theoretical framework to view Zen institutions, namely that of the American sociologist, Peter L. Berger. Surely there are others and I hope Zen students seek them out.

Zen makes the claim to be concerned with the absolute, true Mind, seeing ones original nature. Yet, the Zen sects' self definition and institutional structures are essentially based on idealism, falsehood, and deception that serve certain institutional interests and the interests of those holding roles legitimated by the Zen institutions. But one may ask, "At what price?" The Masters themselves pay a high price. Being elevated by the rhetoric of Zen and by the internalization of the Zen rhetoric by the students to a position far beyond anything that matches their own attainment, they are forced to play a role rather than function as normal humans in teaching positions. This places the teacher in the unenviable position of living a lie or into denying, or at best hedging the rhetoric of the very institution that legitimates his/her role. This is an untenable situation. All too often the teacher chooses to internalize the social role, setting one side of consciousness against the rest, rather than question that which legitimates and empowers, i.e. the Zen terminology and rhetoric. As internalization entails self objectification, the teacher then objectifies himself as the Master or *roshi*, a self-image recall based on an idealized convention, namely, mind-to-mind transmission going back to the semi- mythological historical Buddha, a convention not related to the reality of his/her own life. This self-deception of the Master leads to alienation, the process whereby the dialectical

relationship between the world and the individual is lost.^[69] This position often leads to a view of the students as objects to be used, as lesser beings worthy of disdain or contempt.

The students too pay a price. At the very least, any sort of critical thinking being strongly discouraged, the critical faculties of individual students are devalued so that an important aspect of what it means to be human is nullified. Being cut off from critical thinking also places the student in the position of viewing the Zen world only through its own lens. Inherent in this view, are strong elements of hierarchy and authority that are mostly undeserved for reasons already mentioned. This has, to one degree or another, allowed for all sorts of excess and craziness to pass either unnoticed, or understood in ways that preserve the institution, its idealizations, and its hierarchy at all costs.

Another aspect of establishing an unreal hierarchy is the necessary inverse reflection of power, namely the denigrating or making less of the student both by the teacher and the student himself/herself. One sees this in the lack of questioning of the teacher, which if it does occur, is dismissed as egocentric behavior by the teacher as well as by other students properly socialized into Zen rhetoric or in the almost cult like adoration of the teacher, common around Zen centers. A common phrase heard all too often around Zen centers is, "*roshi* says..." This is usually in reply to a question, disagreement, or to someone's resisting an order or questioning some aspect of the how the Center functions. Clearly implied in this "*roshi* says," is that whatever *roshi* says, is beyond question, simply because *roshi* has said it, and *rosHis* are, by definition, never wrong. A closing of the mind takes place as the student internalizes the Zen rhetoric and elevates and idealizes the teacher. One does not question problematic statements or situations for fear of being out of place in questioning the authority figure, for fear of being demoted or losing privilege in the organization, or for fear that the whole edifice will crumble; an edifice that one has come to depend upon to make sense of themselves and of the world, the most terrifying position of all.

Social and historical reasons required *Ch'an/ Zen* to construct a mythology and rhetoric that is based on idealization and false claims. A re-evaluation is in order if Zen is to adapt to modern Western culture, a culture based on liberal democratic ideas as opposed to the long traditions of hierarchy, obedience, and authoritarianism of the Far Eastern cultures from which Zen institutions and usage grew. How do we look at Zen in a way that is more in tune with our modern culture, a culture open to critical enquiry, with a view of the individual and his/her leaders grounded in our own cultural setting with its sense of individualism, freedom, and openness, as well as its dilemmas and fears, rather than attempting to function within rigid institutional idealizations and old myths suited to Far Eastern cultures? How do we place Zen squarely in the human realm that deals with human problems of flesh and blood humans, not with cardboard cutouts of projections of fantasy role models? Can we do this and still maintain a respect for past Zen institutions that have kept the tradition alive? Can we find forms of organization and language that resonate with modern people, that address their concerns and fears and can instill life with meaning and purpose?

Perhaps one place to look is the old Buddhist idea of *kalyana-mitra*, that is, the

idea of a spiritual friend. In this view, the *kalyana-mitra* is not idealized and elevated to a position beyond human and human frailty, but is viewed as someone having more insight, more experience, knowing more, displaying patience and the ability to listen, the merit of learning coupled with good meditative knowledge, a deeper understanding that a fellow practitioner can look to for guidance, advice, and help, as a mentor. One is a *kalyana-mitra* by being in relationship with someone else or others. This is a relationship between friends with a common interest, though one person may have more knowledge and experience than the other. The relationship is the responsibility of both friends and both bring something to it.

However, in Zen students are not made to understand their responsibility nor to make judgments or to discriminate. In fact, in Zen we have seen that the student is told he/she cannot understand the teacher, because the teacher functions from a place beyond his/her understanding. The *kalyana-mitra* would function in the context of a more experienced fellow traveler, companion on the path without the necessary extreme hierarchy and "otherness" inherent in the idealized view proffered by Zen institutions. The spiritual friend would not function as an exemplar of Buddhahood but rather to demonstrate qualities lacking in oneself and as a reminder of your own inherent resources.

Another area to examine, mentioned earlier, is to place more emphasis on the allegiance to the community of practitioners, fellow seekers rather than the almost complete dependence and loyalty to a given teacher and institution. Robert Buswell has pointed out that Korean Zen monks, by not maintaining allegiance to a specific master, Buddhist thought and practice are kept separate from the person of the master. One learns from many teachers, but does not take any one person's version of the Dharma to be definitive.^[70] At least in theory, this is inherently more democratic, and would cultivate a sense of independence, allowing for a more dynamic and open flow of dialogue and ideas.

Finally, I think it necessary to open up to critical examination all of what we call Zen. In this area, the work of scholars can serve as an invaluable asset to the American Zen community-scholars insight into historical precedent and development are at least as valuable as their ability to translate texts. It is through the work of scholars that we can begin to look at the formation and development of the Zen tradition, viewing it at least partially from within the context of the cultures in which it was formed and developed, but also from the viewpoint of our own culture, our own concerns and conceptualizations. Scholars may also serve as a check on the hagiographies being written today of recently deceased as well as living Masters. These hagiographies, just as in the past, are meant to enhance the prestige and authority of the living, present day Zen Masters/roshis. Unfortunately, at this time scholars are mostly viewed as a threat by the American Zen community, hopefully this will change in the near future.

The end

[1] Much thanks to Simeon Gallu for editorial assistance. I welcome any comments from the reader. Please send to <slachs@worldnet.att.net>.

[2] *mondo*- a Japanese term meaning question and answer- a dialogue or verbal encounter between a teacher and a student in which the student asks a question that is particularly troubling and the teacher answers attempting to bring out an answer from the student's intuitive mind. *Koan* (J.), *kung-an* (Ch.)-- originally in China, a public case of law that established a precedent. In *Ch'an /Zen*, a *koan* is a dialogue or encounter between a Master and another person(s), usually in what appears to be confusing language and gesture; yet in this manner, it is pointing to some truth of *Ch'an*. It can be used as a place of focus in meditation as well as a topic for a teacher's talk.

[3] Shunryu, Suzuki, *Zen Mind , Beginners Mind*, Weatherhill, 1970, p.19.

[4] Sahn, Master Seung, *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha: The Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn*, Grove Press, 1976, p.99.

[5] *satori*- a Japanese term translated as enlightenment, Self realization, seeing ones true nature, or opening ones eye. One sees/experiences the emptiness of things and self, though this emptiness is not different from the 10,000 things. This emptiness is alive and one sees the interrelationship of all things. There are deep and shallow experiences of *satori*.

[6] Victoria, Brian, *Zen At War*, Weatherhill, 1997, p.199, fn. 50, quoting from the Eastern Buddhist, 26/2(1993), p.141

[7] Stated in a public talk given at his Center. It was later printed in his Center's newsletter, *Ch'an Newsletter*, No. 38, 1984, pp.1-2.

[8] Aitken, Robert, *The Mind of Clover*, North Point Press, 1984, p.3. See also, Lori, John Daido, *The Heart of Being: Moral and Ethical Teachings of Zen Buddhism*, Charles Tuttle and Co., 1996. Paaramitaa has been translated as perfection or transcendence. The six are giving, morality, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom. The ten precepts have been translated as to refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, taking recreational drugs, discussing the faults of others, praising oneself, covetousness, indulging in anger, and defaming the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha).

[9] Butler, Katy, "Events Are The Teachers," *The CoEvolution Quarterly*, winter 1983, pp.112-123. To give some sense of scale, in 1982, while the students working at the Center's enterprises were just getting by on minimum wage, Baker spent more than \$200,000. Much of this was related to his job as abbot, but he also spent money impulsively on art, furniture, and expensive restaurant meals. Zen Center spent \$4,000 for his membership in New York's exclusive Adirondack Club and despite the governing Board's uneasiness, \$26,000 for his BMW.

[10] The eight terms were Dharma transmission, mind to mind transmission, Zen master, *roshi*, Zen lineage, enlightened being/person, monk/nun, and *kensho/satori*.

[11] The person relating the story had been doing *koan* study with Carol for a year and a half. He had been involved in Zen for 20 years or so, part of the time with a major Zen group in another part of North America, from whom he attained permission to teach introductory classes.

[12] Lachs, Stuart. "Coming Down From the Zen Clouds," 1995, *Articles on Buddhism and East Asian Philosophy*, www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/articles/eaprforum.htm

[13] Berger, Peter, L., *The Sacred Canopy*, Doubleday, 1967.

[14] *The Sacred Canopy*, pp.7-9.

[15] *The Sacred Canopy*, p.3.

[16] *The Sacred Canopy*, p.6-9

[17] Said to the author privately during a visit to the U.S.A. in 1983.

[18] Public letter from Koun Yamada *-roshi* 1/16/86. Yamada *-roshi* was Yasutani *-roshi's* heir. He became the leader of the Sanbokyodan School of Zen started by Yasutani *-roshi* and also gave Dharma transmission to Robert Aitken. Also a letter from Mr. Kapleau to Koun Yamada 2/17/86.

[19] Buswell, Robert E., *The Zen Monastic Experience*, Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 204-208.

[20] Masataka Toga, director of the Institute of Zen Studies, Hanazono University, and Dharma successor of the prominent Rinza *roshi*, Yamada Mumon, quoted in Josh Baran's complete review of Brian Victoria's *Zen At War*, on the internet at WWW.darkzen.com.

[21] McRae, John, "Encounter Dialogue and Transformation in Ch'an," in *Paths to Liberation*, ed. by Robert Buswell and Robert Gimello, University of Hawaii Press, 1992, P.354.

- [22] Muller, Charles A., "The Key Operative Concepts in Korean Buddhist Syncretic Philosophy, Interpenetration and Essence- Function in Wonhyo," Chinul, and Kihwa, *Bulletin of Toyo Gakuen University*, No.3, March 1995, P.2.
- [23] Cook, Francis, Hua- yen Buddhism, The Pennsylvania State University Press, p.18.
- [24] Watson, Burton, The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi, Shambala, 1993, p.13.
- [25] Foulk, T.Griffith and Robert H. Sharf, "On the Ritual Use of *Ch'an* Portraiture in Medieval China," *Cahiers D'Extrême Asie*, 7, 1993, p. 195.
- [26] For an interesting discussion of the rather late (early twelfth century) and even controversial acceptance of this self- defining idea in *Ch'an/Zen* see Welter, Albert, " Ch'an Slogans and the Creation of Ch'an Ideology, A Special Transmission Outside the Scriptures," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the AAR, November, 1995.
- [27] Faure, Bernard, Rhetoric of Immediacy, Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 221,225; Sheng- yen, Master, Investigation of Chinese Buddhism in the Late Ming Era, translated privately for the author by Ming-ye Wang, Dharma Drum Publications, 1987, pp. 48-53. For a broken and strange type of transmission in the Tsao-tung lineage see Schlutter, Morten, "Silent Illumination, Kung-an Introspection, and the Competition for Lay Patronage in Sung-Dynasty Ch'an" in Buddhism in the Sung, edited by Peter N. Gregory and Daniel Getz, Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1999.
- [28]. Welch, Holmes, Buddhism in China, 1900 to 1950, Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 315. Welch gives the interesting case of one Chinese monk in the twentieth century who gave Dharma transmission to another Chinese monk then in Burma, "without ever having met him, and indeed, without even finding out whether he would accept the Dharma."
- [29] Foulk, T. Griffith " Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice," Religion and Society in Tang and Sung China, Ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, University of Hawaii Press, 1993, p.160.
- [30] Bodiford, William M., Soto Zen in Medieval Japan, University of Hawaii Press, 1993, p. 215."Zen Dharma transmission between master and disciple could occur whether or not the disciple had realized enlightenment, just so long as the ritual of personal initiation had been performed." For a further discussion of the surprising usages of Dharma transmission see, Bodiford above, p.149, Welch previously cited, The Rhetoric of Immediacy, pp.14, 17, 225. See also "On the Ritual Us of *Ch'an* Portraiture in Medieval China."
- [31] Foulk, T. Griffith, "The Zen Institute in Modern Japan," pp.157-177 , Zen, Tradition and Transition, Kenneth Kraft ed., NY, Grove Press, 1988
- [32] Brian Victoria related this information to me in a private correspondence.
- [33] Sharf, Robert, "Sanbokyodan, Zen and the Way of New Religions," Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, Fall 1995, Vol. 22, no. 3-4.
- [34] Sheng-yen, Master, Investigation of Chinese Buddhism in the Late Ming Era, Dharma Drum Publications, 1987, pp.5-7, 48-53, translated privately for the author by Ming-ye Wang. For a broken and strange type of transmission in the Tsao-tung lineage see Schlutter, Morten, "Silent Illumination, Kung-an Introspection, and the Competition for Lay Patronage in Sung-Dynasty Ch'an." In Buddhism in the Sung, edited by Peter N. Gregory and Daniel Getz, Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1999.
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- [38] Cole, Alan, "Fathering Your Father and Other Literary Privileges in the Platform Sutra," a paper delivered at a seminar at Princeton University under the auspices of Stephan Teiser, December 1998, p. 12, permission to quote granted by the author.
- [39] The Sacred Canopy, pp.32-34
- [40] " Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice" in Sung Ch'an Buddhism, in Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China, p.174.
- [41] The Sacred Canopy, pp. 32-34.

- [42] Soto Zen in Medieval Japan, pp.145-148.
- [43] McCrae, John, Encounter Dialogue and Transformation in *Ch'an*, in Paths To Liberation, Ed. by Robert E. Buswell and Robert M. Gimello, p.340
- [44] The idea of *koans* as folk tales was suggested by Robert Aitken, Original Dwelling Place, Counterpoint, 1996, p.103
- [45] capping phrase- jakugo(J)- literally means "attached phrase"- used to show one's understanding of the *koan* by selecting a verse or phrase from the Zenrin Kushin, Collected Zen Verses- a collection of 4,380 verses all taken from a wide range of Chinese sources. See Hori, G. Victor Sogen, "Koan and Kensho in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum," p.26, an unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Nov.21, 1994. Permission to quote granted by the author.
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- [49] For an interesting discussion of institutional volatility in the Sanbokyodan line of Yasutani and who controls enlightenment, along with nationalist interests, see Sharf, Robert H., "Sanbokyodan: Zen and the Way of the New Religions," Japanese Journal of Religious Studies, Fall, 1995, Vol. 22 /nos.3-4, pp.444-452.
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