

## 14 Zen Buddhism

### 14.1 The beginnings of Zen in Japan

Although knowledge of Buddhist techniques of meditation had, of course, been introduced into Japan at an early date, one cannot really talk of the formation of Japanese Zen until the late twelfth century. Chan teachings were indeed known as early as the eighth century, following the arrival of Daoxuán, who taught the monk Gyōhyō who, it may be remembered, was Saichō's first mentor. What is more, Saichō claimed to have received instruction from a monk called Xiuran 脩然 at the Chanlinisi on Mt Tiantai, who identified himself as a follower of the Ox Head tradition. Among the texts that Saichō brought back with him to Japan was a copy of Shenxiu's *Guanxin lun* and the biography of Huineng, *Caoxi dashi biezhuàn*, mentioned earlier. Although both Saichō and, indeed, Ennin, who came across some rather unruly Chan monks while he was in China, were familiar with early Chan, this was simply incorporated within the Tendai tradition as one element of the practice known as 'constantly-sitting' (*jōza zanmai* 常坐三昧), and the term *zensō* 禪僧 that one comes across in Heian texts meant 'monk adept at meditation' or 'monk whose duties include meditation'. It was not until Japanese started going to China again in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries that they discovered that in their absence Chan had become the major force in Song Buddhism. Apart from late tantrism and a greatly weakened Tiantai, the older philosophical traditions had almost died out.

The figure usually credited with introducing Song Chan into Japan is Myōan Eisai (§13.4), although this happened more by serendipity than by design. Certainly, he, and others like him, did not travel to China with a view to importing an entirely new set of Buddhist ideas and practices, but were more concerned with finding some way of revitalising their own institution. Eisai arrived in 1168 to find that most state-supported Buddhist institutions were now run by Chan abbots, and it was in these monasteries that he found the kind of strict adherence to regulations for which he was looking. His first visit to China, in 1168, lasted only six months. The dominance of Chan

meditation practices and the decline in Tiantai and other forms of scholarship with which he must have been familiar came to his attention, of course, but on his return to Japan he continued to study and practise Tendai ritual as normal. On revisiting China almost twenty years later in 1187, however, he first of all asked permission from the Chinese authorities to travel on to India and when that request was refused, he decided to stay on the southeast coast at Wan'iansi 萬年寺 on Mt Tiantai, where he studied for three years under the Chan master Xu'an Huaichang 虛菴懷敬, returning to Japan in 1191 with the necessary certificate showing that he was now a registered Chan master. He began by establishing one or two meditation halls in Kyūshū, but on reaching Kyōto ran into considerable opposition from Enryakuji. They did not see why yet another tradition should be given official approval; they were also somewhat resistant to the idea that their discipline might be in need of reform. Eisai was in fact seen as a threat. In 1194 the Tendai establishment secured a temporary ban on his attempts to promote his views, which in turn provoked him to produce the polemical work *On protecting the nation through the encouragement of Zen* (*Kōzen gokokuron* 興禪護國論). Driven out of Kyōto, he arrived in Kamakura, where his rejection by the monks at Enryakuji was seen as more of a recommendation than a bar and where his knowledge of things Chinese was recognised to be an important asset. Hōjō Masako 北條政子 (1157–1225), Yoritomo's wife, became his patroness and appointed him founder abbot of Jufukuji 壽福寺. Eventually the backing of the shōgunate allowed him to return to Kyōto, where he oversaw the building of Kenninji 建仁寺, completed in 1205. In 1214 he wrote *Kissa yōjōki* 喫茶養生記 for the third shōgun Sanetomo (1192–1219) 實朝 introducing the culture of tea drinking for the first time.

Eisai and men like him were employed by the Kamakura shōgunate firstly because they had up-to-date knowledge of China and secondly in their role as ritualists. Perhaps their chief asset was the hostility shown them by the Tendai establishment, for the Hōjō were not supporting Zen *per se*; they were simply taking advantage of a new source of knowledge and spiritual power that had no existing ties to any other centre of power in Japan to give their rule authority and prestige. Eisai himself was very far from being an advocate of meditation practice to the exclusion of all else – indeed normal Tendai ritual was maintained at both Jufukuji and Kenninji, the latter not even being provided with a hall for communal meditation (*sōdō* 僧堂), which was usually the focal point in a Zen monastery.

The temporary ban imposed on Eisai in 1194 shows that it was not just Pure Land Buddhism that was in danger of prohibition. Part of his self-

defence in *Kōzen gokokuron* involved a careful explanation of the fundamental differences between what he understood as Zen and the Zen of the monk Dainichi Nōnin 大日能忍, who was already infamous as the prime exponent of a movement called the 'Daruma tradition' 達磨宗. Daruma stands for Bodhidharma, but who was Nōnin? Until reconstructed by recent scholarship, this group had been effectively written out of history, but we now know that it was quite influential and remained a substantial force until well into the thirteenth century. Certainly, when Nichiren 日蓮 (§15.3) attacked Zen (among others) eighty years later, he was referring not to Eisai, but to Nōnin.

Hōnen and Dainichi (Nōnin) both appeared during the Kennin period [1201–03], and they gave rise to the Nenbutsu and Zen traditions. Hōnen said: 'Since we have entered the period of the final Dharma, not even one man in a thousand has obtained any benefit from the *Lotus sūtra*.<sup>1</sup> Dainichi said: 'The transmission [of truth] is something special, independent of teachings.' The country is filled with these two teachings. The scholars of Tendai and Shingon flatter and fear the patrons of Nenbutsu and Zen; they are like dogs wagging their tails in front of their masters, like mice afraid of cats.<sup>1</sup>

The scholar-monk Kokan Shiren 虎關師縵 (1278–1348), also writing somewhat tentatively in his *History of the Śākyamuni [tradition, written] in the Genkō era* (*Genkō shakusho* 元亨釋書) of 1322, explained Nōnin's role as follows:

Having heard of the popularity of the [Chan] school in Song China, a certain Nōnin sent his disciples there to question the *dhīyāna* master Fozhao [De]guang of Ayuwang shan. Impressed by the faith of these strangers, [Fozhao] took pity on them and offered them a Dharma-robe and a picture of Bodhidharma. Nōnin, bragging of these courtesy gifts, began to spread Chan teachings. But since he lacked a direct transmission from a master as well as a disciplinary code, the people of the capital scorned him.

When Eisai began to preach the mind, the nobility and common people alike confused him with Nōnin and wanted to reject him . . . [Finally] Hieizan monks supported his Zen preaching. Eisai debated several times with Nōnin on doctrinal matters and eventually defeated him (Faure 1987: 29).

Kokan Shiren's bias is probably responsible for the disappearance of Nōnin from history. It is generally accepted that Nōnin did in fact send two students to meet Choan [Fozhao] Deguang 拙庵 [佛照] 德光 (1121–1203), who had studied under Dahui Zonggao, their mission being to request certification of Nōnin as a Chan master. Bizarrely, this request was granted and on the

<sup>1</sup> From *Kaimokashō* 開目抄, quoted in Faure 1987: 28, the source of much that follows.

strength of this he became a well-known figure in Japan. Exactly how he became interested in Chan in the first place and how he first conceived of setting up as a master in his own right is not known. But then, given that Chan was so prominent in Song China, it might seem surprising that this move came so late in the day. What comes as no surprise is the response of the Buddhist establishment in Japan. They saw any move to isolate what they saw as one element of Tendai practice, 'constantly-sitting', and to transform it into a separate tradition as a threat, above all a political problem. Nōnin was an obvious and easy target because the claim that he had received legitimate transmission was preposterous, and other claims, such as the idea that his 'school' was in possession of various important Buddhist relics, for example, were also open to attack.

Among the recently discovered Daruma texts is one entitled 'On the attainment of bodhisattva awakening' (*Jōtō shōgekuron* 成等正覺論). This text is made up of three sections: a history of Chan, starting with the usual legendary material about Bodhidharma and ending with the arrival of Zen in Japan with Nōnin's students; a discussion of the phrase 'the mind itself is the Buddha'; and lastly, a description of the benefits that reciting the text itself would bring. The discussion in the second section makes great play of the idea that one simply looks for one's own Buddha Nature to achieve enlightenment. From the attacks made on Nōnin by Eisai and others, it would seem that his understanding of Zen had certain antinomian elements, which could easily fall into the assumption that practice and meditation were unnecessary. This would explain, of course, why he had popular appeal and why his success was viewed with such anxiety. Not surprisingly, Eisai tried to distance himself from precisely this aspect:

Someone asked: 'Some people recklessly call the Daruma tradition Zen. But they themselves say that there are no precepts to follow, no practices to engage in. From the outset there are no passions; from the beginning we are enlightened. Therefore do not practice, do not follow the precepts, eat when hungry, rest when tired. Why practice *nenbutsu*, why give maigre feasts, why curtail eating? How can this be?' Eisai replied that the adherents of the Daruma tradition are those who are described in the sūtras as having a false view of emptiness. One must not speak with them or associate with them, and must keep as far away as possible (Faure 1987: 39).<sup>2</sup>

Another aspect of this early form of medieval Zen was the cult of Buddha relics which, it was said, had been brought back from China by Nōnin's

<sup>2</sup> From the chapter entitled 'On solving the doubts of worldly people' 世人決疑論 in *Kōzen gokokuron*.

students. These were enshrined in the Sambōji 三寶寺, a Tendai temple in Settsu Province, as further proof of legitimacy, and, together with a robe supposedly handed down through Fozhao Deguang, they soon became the object of intense worship. The influence of this Daruma tradition was felt most strongly among the followers of the monk Dōgen (1200–53).

#### 14.2 Eihei Dōgen

Dōgen 道元 studied first as a Tendai monk on Hieizan, moving to Kenninji in 1217 to study under one of Eisai's students, Myōzen 明全 (1184–1225). In 1223 he accompanied Myōzen to China, to the Jingdesi 景德寺 on Mt. Tiantong 天童山, where they studied under a Linji master called Wuji Liaopai 無際了派. Myōzen died there two years later and when Dōgen returned to Japan in 1227 he brought Myōzen's ashes back with him. There are two traditional sources for our information about Dōgen in China: the *Record from the Baoqing era* [1225–27] (*Hōkyōki* 寶慶記), which purports to be a record of notes taken at the time, but which is now accepted to be an edited version of Dōgen's reminiscences produced by the Daruma monk Koun Ejō (孤雲懷弁, 1198–1280) soon after Dōgen's death; and *Kenzei's record* (*Kenzeiki* 建斯記), a hagiography written by the fourteenth abbot of Eiheiji 永平寺, Kenzei (1415–74), but read in modern times in the form of a heavily annotated edition (*Teiho Kenzeiki* 訂補建斯記), produced by the Tokugawa-period scholar-monk Menzan Zuihō 面山瑞方 (1683–1769). The narrative we glean from these texts tells us that Dōgen had considerable difficulty in finding a Chan master with whom he felt an affinity, and that he travelled to a number of monasteries in Zhejiang Province, including visits to Tiantai and Jingshan 徑山, in his quest for the right teacher. What he was looking for was an answer as to why practice and meditation were necessary, if all we were being asked to do was realise that we were already enlightened; in other words, why was the Daruma tradition wrong? A full two years later he finally returned to the Qingdesi, where he 'discovered' the master Tiantong Rujing 天童如淨 (1163–1228), who had been appointed abbot there in late 1224. Rujing, it turned out, was a trenchant critic of most Southern Song monks and monasteries, considering them far too lax; as a monk of the Caodong lineage he had a particular dislike of the use of *kōan*, preferring to stress instead the virtues of silent meditation (Jp. *shikan taza* 只管打坐). Dōgen knew immediately that this was the master with whom he wished to achieve enlightenment, an aim in which he eventually succeeded,

casting off body and mind (Jp. *shinjin daisuraku* 身心脱落). He received a certificate of succession and a robe, and returned to Japan as a fully fledged Zen master with a recognised lineage. Just as Kūkai had returned to Japan four hundred years earlier embodying within himself the succession of Shingon, so Dōgen embodied the flame of the line of Caodong, which was not just transmitted but bodily transferred to Japan.

The problem with this account, as with so many other stories that deal with Japanese monks in China, is that very little of it is verifiable from contemporary sources. No one has yet tried to argue that Dōgen never went to China at all, but there is little sign in his writings that he travelled very widely, or that he ever left Jingdesi for any length of time (Heine 2003). What is more, the presentation of Rujing as a revered master who had passed on to Dōgen the one true form of Chan practice is only attested in Japanese writings that date from well after Dōgen's return to Japan. Rujing himself is hardly mentioned in standard histories of Chinese Chan and seems to have been little more than simply one of the abbots of an important monastery; he belongs to history as Dōgen's teacher, in much the same way that Huiguo is chiefly known as Kūkai's master. What remains of his teachings, as preserved in two short collections that only survive in Japanese editions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, gives little sign that he had ever been dismissive of normal Linji practice.<sup>3</sup> So one needs to be aware that Rujing lives almost entirely through Dōgen. There seems to be no doubt that he was of the Caodong lineage, but, as we have seen in Chapter 13, the automatic link that is often made between Caodong and the advocacy of exclusive silent meditation is highly problematic. But more of this later.

Back in Kyōto in 1227, Dōgen first stayed at Kenninji but moved south three years later to Fukakusa, where he eventually established a small monastery of his own, the Gokurakuji 極樂寺. It is thought that he may have written an early version of his manual on meditation techniques, the *Universal promotion of the principles of seated meditation* (*Fukan zazengi* 普勸坐禪儀), about this time, although the earliest extant copy is an autograph dated 1233. In 1231 he wrote 'Bendōwa' 辨道話, a series of questions and answers that explain his understanding of Zen Buddhism in Japanese. From the very beginning he was determined to be independent of Tendai and to transmit what he considered to be the true way to enlightenment. This allowed him doctrinal freedom, but by the same token cut him off from

<sup>3</sup> Bielefeldt 1985: 27. We are told that a copy of Rujing's 'recorded sayings' only reached Dōgen in 1242.

traditional forms of patronage. Nevertheless, he managed to raise enough funds to start building a meditation hall at Fukakusa and in 1236 he renamed the growing complex Kōshōji 興聖寺.<sup>4</sup> Two years earlier, in 1234, he had been joined by Ejō, whose record of Dōgen's teaching at Fukakusa, *Zuimonki* 隨聞記, is still used today as a beginner's introduction to Zen, despite the fact that it reveals areas of fundamental disagreement between Dōgen and Ejō. Ejō himself was joined in 1241 by a further group of Daruma followers, together with their master Ekan 懷鑿.

Suddenly, late in 1243, Dōgen upped sticks, left Kōshōji, and moved his whole group to a new and extremely isolated area in Echizen. The reasons for this abrupt departure are not known: it may have been that pressure from Hieizan became too intense, particularly since he was now harbouring members of a group that was considered heterodox and disruptive, but another factor may have been his discovery of an entirely new source of patronage, the locally based warrior class on which he was to rely for the rest of his life. His chief support from this time on was a man called Hatano Yoshishige 波多野義重, a Kamakura Bakufu retainer, who offered him both land and the resources to start building. In 1246 the monastery was given the name Eiheiji 永平寺.

During the last seven years of his life Dōgen concentrated on writing a series of works on monastic regulations. These dictate in close detail the correct way to comport oneself within the monastery on a daily basis, how to work, eat and indeed defecate. Based on the principle that all actions were connected to enlightenment and that one of the best ways to express the concept of non-self was to subject oneself to strict regulations, they formed the basis of what is now known as the *Eihei Code* (*Eihei shingi* 永平清規). Perhaps the most important of these tracts was 'Bendōhō' 辨道法, which set down rules as to how monks were to sit, sleep, move about in the meditation hall and meditate (Beilefeldt 1988: 50). He also encouraged the participation of local lay men and women in rituals such as the recitation of the precepts, so that Eiheiji soon became recognised as an important place of spiritual power. That said, however, he was not interested in collapsing the distinction between monk and lay supporter and in fact strengthened it as time went on. How Dōgen managed to coexist with members of the Daruma tradition who came with Ejō and Ekan is still a mystery, for there was undoubtedly considerable tension, as the following exchange between Ejō and Gikai (dated c.1254) illustrates; both men were originally Darumashū adherents:

<sup>4</sup> This name was a reference to Xingsheng wanshou 興聖萬壽寺 on Jingshan.

Gikai: My Dharma comrades of past years would say: 'The Buddhist [expression], "All evil refrain from doing; all good reverently perform" (*shōaku makusa shūzen bugyō* 諸惡莫作衆善奉行) actually means that within [true] Buddhism all evil ultimately has been refrained from and all activities are Buddhism . . . Therefore merely lifting an arm or moving a leg – whatever one does, whatever phenomena one produces – all embody [true] Buddhism . . .

Ejō: In our master's [i.e. Dōgen's] community there were some who spread such heterodox views. That is why he cut off all contact with them while he was still alive. Clearly the reason he expelled them was because they held these false doctrines. Those who wish to honour the Buddhism [taught by] our master will not talk or sit with such [heretics]. This was our master's final instruction (Bodiford 1993: 34).

This suggests that in the end those who insisted on retaining their antinomian beliefs and refused to submit to Dōgen's strict regime were forced to leave the community, but we simply do not have enough information to be sure.

There is much that is contradictory in Dōgen's writings, for the main reason that his attitude to Zen theory and practice seems to have undergone a series of changes after his return to Japan. Take, for example, his attitude to his putative master Rujing. Before 1240, Rujing is mentioned only occasionally in Dōgen's writings and lectures, and even then he is not singled out for particular praise. Neither is there any overt criticism of Dahui Zonggao. In 'Bendōwa', for example, Dōgen writes of five lineages without any sign of opprobrium:

The Sixth Patriarch had two 'supernatural feet': Huatizhang of Nanyue and Xingsi of Qingyuan. Both carried on the transmission of the Buddha seal, becoming the teachers of men and gods. As their two factions developed, they opened five gates: the schools of Fayuan, Guiyang, Caodong, Yunmen, and Linji. Today in the great Song, it is the Linji school alone that dominates everywhere. The five houses differ, but they all [bear] the one Buddha mind seal (Beilefeldt 1985: 31, adapted).

From 1240 onwards, however, we find a marked shift; the Caodong lineage, and Rujing in particular, is given increased emphasis as Dōgen felt the need to carve out a space for himself. By 1243 and the tract 'Butsudō' 佛道 this had developed into a militant claim that Caodong was the only true line and that names for various lineages 宗 should be abandoned entirely, since they were misleading: there was only one transmission, the rest were fictions.

The treasury of the eye of the true Dharma of the Old Buddha [Huineng] was correctly transmitted only to the Eminent Patriarch Qingyuan. Even if we concede that [Huineng] had two 'supernatural feet' equally possessed of the way, the Eminent Patriarch [Qingyuan] represents the sole pace of the true supernatural foot . . . The Great Master Dongshan [Liangjie] was the legitimate successor in the fourth generation after Qingyuan. He correctly received the transmission of the treasury of the

eye of the true Dharma and opened the eye of the marvelous mind of nirvāṇa. There is no other transmission; there is no other school (Bielefeldt 1985: 31–32, adapted).

It is at this point that Dōgen, in the essay 'Sesshin sesshō' 説心説性 (1243), for example, attacks the degeneracy of Southern Song Chan as exemplified by Dahui and his student Choan Deguang, and in the process he begins to exaggerate the degree of antagonism between the various traditions. Why? It will be remembered that Deguang was the master from whom Nōnin had claimed succession. It has been suggested, most plausibly, that it was the presence of Daruma monks in his community that led Dōgen to pick a doctrinal fight with Deguang and, by extension, with the whole Dahui lineage. The criticism itself was certainly doctrinal, but the motive was political. Neither should we forget that if Dōgen was trying to carve out an authoritative position for himself, he had also to define himself vis-à-vis other groups of Zen monks, who, as we shall see from the next section, were rapidly outpacing his own group in terms of influence, patronised by the good and the great. His own Kōshōji, for example, was dwarfed by the new Tōfukuji which had been built just next door. He was thus inexorably led to define his own vision of what Zen should be in contrast to those who traced their own lineage back to Linji (Jp. Rinzai), making use of Rujing and the Caodong label for what was largely domestic purposes.

This exaggerated stance was taken up much later in the writings of Tokugawa Sōtō sect apologists, in particular Menzan Zuihō, who strengthened the polarity of the argument and claimed that Dōgen had only ever been interested in 'quiet meditation' (*shikan taza*) to the exclusion of all else. Dahui, in particular, who had championed the cause of contemplating short phrases (*kanna zen* 看話禪) and criticised Caodong practice as mere passive quietism that forgot the importance of sudden enlightenment, was treated as being quite beyond the pale. Unfortunately, although this may well have served the immediate interests of Menzan, who was involved in a difficult struggle of his own with other Zen sects, such a view of Dōgen does not fit the facts as we now have them. If Dōgen was indeed critical of the use of *kōan*, how was it that while still in Kyōto in 1235 he produced a collection of *kōan* cases, entitled *Eye of the true Dharma: three hundred precedents* (*Shōbō genzō sanbyakusoku* 正法眼藏三百則), the title of which was probably taken from a similar collection edited by none other than Dahui himself? And how was it that a few years later he began a project to write extended commentaries on these cases? In the end, the nature of the enterprise changed somewhat and the result was the large collection of essays in Japanese entitled *Eye of the true Dharma* (*Shōbō genzō* 正法眼藏), written over the

period 1231 to 1253, for which he is so famous. The fact remains, however, that many of these essays are rooted in a discussion of one or two *kōan*.<sup>5</sup>

On more careful analysis, it turns out that the criticism of Dahui, which had admittedly been started by Dōgen himself and then picked up by Menzan and exaggerated, was really limited to Dahui's arguments in favour of *kanna zen* and his concentration on the short word or phrase (*watō* 話頭). It was not that Dōgen decried the use of *kōan* per se; he merely had different ideas as to how they should be best used. The idea of *kanna zen* had emerged from a desire to negate the intellectualism that came from the study of such a complex literary product as a *kōan*, with its multiple voices, its interlocking layers of authority, and its fascination with language. This worry was such that, as already mentioned, a myth had even grown up that Dahui had tried to destroy the woodblocks of Yuanwu's *Emerald Cliff record*. Dōgen, in his turn, saw yet another way to use *kōan*. If Dahui was concerned to condense the case into a single word and then to concentrate on that one word, the Dōgen that we find operating in the *Eye of the true Dharma* did exactly the opposite, adding his own particular brand of complexity, embracing the fertility and plurality of language itself in order to produce in the individual an awareness of the shifting sands on which his thought always stood.

Perhaps the best example of this is the essay 'The ungraspable mind' (*Shin'fukaitoku* 心不可得), which deals with the case of the Zen master Deshan 德山, an expert on the *Diamond sūtra*, who stopped one day to buy some refreshments (Ch. *dianxin*, Jp. *tenshin* 點心) by the roadside. The old woman asks him: 'According to the *Diamond sūtra*, the past mind is ungraspable, the present mind is ungraspable, and the future mind is ungraspable. So, where is the mind 心 that you now seek to refresh 點 with rice cakes?' Deshan is simply struck dumb at this sophisticated piece of wordplay. The general response to this *kōan* was to praise the old woman as being enlightened. The *kanna zen* response to this would have been to concentrate on the word 'tenshin', but Dōgen takes the opportunity to expand. He criticises the *kōan* for stopping at that point and proceeds to invent a further conversation that builds on it. No point, he says, in just praising the enlightenment of the old woman. Better to retort and ask her: 'As past mind is ungraspable, present mind is ungraspable, and future mind ungraspable, where is the mind that now makes the rice cakes used for refreshment?', in which case the old woman could have responded: 'You know that one cannot refresh the mind with a rice cake. But you do not realise that the mind refreshes the rice cake,

<sup>5</sup> The following discussion makes much use of Heine 1994.

or that the mind refreshes the mind.' And so on, and so on (Heine 1994: 254–56).

Just as Dōgen's collection of 300 *kōan* are given quite straightforward commentaries rather than the juxtaposition of cryptic phrases that one finds in more normal *kōan* collections, so the essays and sermons in the *Eye of the true Dharma* are prolix rather than cryptic, discursive rather than disjointed. Dōgen is not afraid of explaining at length. This does not really make him any less difficult, but it does pull Zen prose in quite a new direction; there is a poetic quality to his writing. Take, for example, the following from '*Kōan* as manifest activity' (*Genjō kōan* 現成公案):

Enlightenment is like the moon that dwells in water. The moon does not get wet and the water is not broken. It is a broad, bright light but dwells in a foot or an inch of water. The whole moon, the whole sky dwells in the dew on the grass, in a single drop of water. Enlightenment does not break the person, just as the moon does not break the water. Just as the man does not stop enlightenment, so the dew drop does not hinder the sky or the moon. Depth can be measured as height; time can be measured by volume of water and by breadth of sky and moon (Terada and Mizuno 1970, vol. I: 37).

But what of Dōgen's attitude to what is usually considered the most important activity for Zen monks, the act of seated meditation (*zazen* 座禪) itself? We must not be misled by Tokugawa Sōtō masters trying to tell us that Dōgen's special form of 'just sitting' (*shikan taza*) was unique, somehow different from all other techniques of meditation. One text that has occasioned a good deal of study in this regard is his meditation manual *Fukan zazengi*. As already stated, although it is possible that a manual was written immediately after Dōgen's return to Japan, the earliest example we have is an autograph dated 1233 (the so-called Tenpuku MS), which is in fact little more than a revision of the section on meditation entitled 'Zuochan yi' 坐禪儀, in the standard *Chaneyuan qinggui* of 1103. It in fact had no influence because it remained in manuscript form until quite recently. The commonly available text (*rufubon*) of *Fukan zazengi*, however, is of much later provenance and represents a revision of this first manual. This second version, still in use today, was first extracted by Menzan from *Eihei kōroku*, a collection of Dōgen's discussions and writings edited by Ejō and published by Manzan Dōhaku (1636–1715) in 1673 (Bielefeldt 1988: 36). It has been dated somewhere between 1242 and 1246, just at the time Dōgen was establishing himself, attacking Dahui, and drawing legitimacy from a newly defined role given to Rujing and the Caodong/Sōtō lineage as the true heirs of the patriarchal tradition.

The key question as regards meditation was how the monk was supposed to control the mind during practice. Whereas someone like the Tiantai master Zhiyi had gone into considerable technical detail about how one should go about preparing oneself mentally for the ordeal, Zongze's rather simple text pays little attention to this aspect and even runs the risk of appearing to support an entirely passive approach to simply clearing the mind. In the second version of *Fukan zazengi*, Dōgen puts it as follows:

Sitting fixedly, think of not thinking. How do you think of not thinking? Nonthinking. This is the essential art of *zazen*. *Zazen* is not the practice of *dhyanā* (trance): it is just the entrance to the Dharma of ease and joy. It is the practice and verification of ultimate bodhi. The *kōan* realized, baskets and cages cannot get to it (Bielefeldt 1988: 181, adapted).

Whether this really helps us to understand is a moot point, because it somewhat begs the question of how we can think of non-thinking, how we can use the mind against itself, detach ourselves from the stream of discursive thoughts that the mind continually provides us with when awake (or asleep). What is clear, however, is that Dōgen was as concerned as other Zen masters to counteract any idea that simply emptying the mind and avoiding all thought was the answer, because that would be too easy, an example of 'mental vacuity' (*kyōkūn buji* 胸襟無事) or of 'suspending thoughts and freezing the mind' (*sokuryō gyōshin* 息慮凝心) (Bielefeldt 1988: 136). To think of non-thinking had to be an active procedure, whereby every thought that arises is not so much killed as dissolved within itself, turned back on itself in a radical form of reflexivity. This was, of course, one of the reasons why no Zen master could seriously ignore the use of *kōan*, which provided a mode of discourse that forced the mind to think against itself, whether via the path of building up a creative intellectual impasse or via concentration on a single word.

When Dōgen died in 1253, the community at Eiheiji was faced with a problem. He left no obvious monk to fill his shoes and his success had been largely built on his own charisma as a teacher. Ejō took over the leadership, but he lacked Dōgen's authority and was not immune from challenge. Somehow, however, the group held together. Dōgen's senior students, men like Giin 義尹 (1217–1300) and Gikai 義介 (1219–1309), both of whom used the character 'gi' that identified them as Daruma followers, spread out into various parts of Japan founding a series of monasteries. Giin founded Daijiji 大慈寺 in Kyūshū in 1282, patronage for which came from a warrior family with close ties to the Hatano. He had studied in China in 1264–65 and had gone there, so it is said, to obtain Chinese recognition for Dōgen's *goroku*.

Ōikai had studied under Ekan and had strong local ties in the Echizen region. After making efforts to finish the construction of Eiheiji and being appointed third abbot from 1267 to 1272, he then moved northeast into Kaga to found Daijōji 大乘寺. It was here that he was joined by Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1264–1325), who succeeded him as abbot in 1298 and whom many see as the 'second founder' of what would eventually become known as the Sōtō tradition. By 1300 there were five largely independent groups based on five monasteries: Daijōji in Kyūshū, Daijōji in Kaga, Eiheiji in Echizen, Hōkyōji 寶慶寺 also in Echizen, and Yōkōan 永興庵 in Kyōto.

Much of the history of this period from Dōgen's death to 1300 is obscure, and things are made much more difficult by the fact that what sources we do have are tendentious in the extreme. What is clear, however, is that these monks had discovered a rich and relatively untapped source of patronage: local warriors and local farmers who had become wealthy landowners in their own right. It was a combination of this discovery and the willingness (indeed positive desire) of the monks themselves to travel throughout rural Japan and proselytise in areas remote from the traditional bases of power that laid the foundation for what was to become one of the largest Buddhist organisations in the land.

There were two other reasons for its eventual success. Firstly, the nature of the monks themselves. Up to this point the higher echelons in monasteries had been those scholar-monks (*gakuryō* 學侶) who were capable of reading difficult doctrinal texts and sūtras; those who were given jobs such as performing menial tasks and routine rituals such as chanting sūtras or sitting in meditation were distinctly second class (Bodiford 1993: 16). Dōgen, however, reversed these priorities: he wrote essays on the importance of cooks and bothered himself with the minutiae of everyday life. The ability to meditate was given a much higher profile than before and knowledge of the written tradition thereby reduced in importance. Huineng, after all, had been an illiterate. All these differences drew in a different kind of monk, the kind of person who was quite happy to live away from the main centres of population. Secondly, although Dōgen and his followers might have been exclusive about their own practice, they were only too willing to fit in to what was a very eclectic landscape, taking care not to denigrate local spirits, and becoming closely involved with mountain cults wherever they found themselves. Without this flexibility and the awareness of what was felt to be sacred in the population at large, this sect would never have achieved the popularity it did.

### 14.3 Official patronage

Dōgen and those who came after him made a conscious choice to stay away from the centres of power and seek life and patronage in the provinces; and this turned out to be the source of much of their strength. But there was another very different kind of Zen institution developing, one patronised by the new rulers in Kamakura for largely political ends. Not that members of the Kyōto aristocracy were uninterested. They in fact became great patrons themselves, but as an institution the court was too closely identified with Tendai and Shingon to be able to lay exclusive claim to Zen for their own. Kamakura, on the other hand, needed a new spiritual backing for its new authority, and Southern Song Zen offered interesting possibilities. Not only was it a form of Buddhism free from ties to Kyōto, but the monks involved were men who had recent experience of living in China; they were a valuable commodity.

Once it became clear that Kamakura was interested in becoming patron to a new group of religious advisers, the number of monks travelling to China increased rapidly. We have seen how Eisai was given protection by Hōjō Masako and allowed to set up operations at Jufukuji in the very early years of the century. Dōgen went to China in 1223. Enni Ben'en 圓爾辨圓 (1202–80), who came from a similar background, left Japan in 1235 and stayed for six years studying at Jingshan under the Linji master Wuzhun Shifan 無準師範 (1177–1249). This choice, if choice it really was, was to have interesting consequences. Wuzhun Shifan happened to belong not to the dominant lineage that traced itself back to Dahui Zhonggao, but to a rival group that claimed its lineage from Huqiu Shaolong 虎邱紹隆 (1077–1136). The Huqiu tradition was in turn split into two factions, one descended from Poan Zuxian 破菴祖先 (1136–1211) and the other from Songyuan Chongyue 松源崇岳 (1132–1202). Later, in the fourteenth century, this question of affiliation was to have important political ramifications.

After his return to Japan in 1241, Enni continued to correspond with his Chinese master, with the result that a large number of Japanese monks were to receive their training at Jingshan. Obtaining the patronage of Kujō Michie (1192–1252), for whom he wrote *Shōichi hōgo* 聖一法語 to explain the essentials of Zen, he managed to resist pressure from Enryakuji and eventually became the founder of the impressive complex in Kyōto known as Tōfukuji 東福寺. He was eclectic in his practice and continued the Japanese tradition of lecturing on tantric texts alongside the practice of meditation, but

at least Tōfukuji was organised as a Zen monastery under the correct regulations, with Zen ritual, bureaucratic structure, and four daily sessions of mandatory *zazen*.<sup>6</sup> Staying for most of the time in Kyōto rather than Kamakura, Enni was fortunate in his patron and kept close ties with the aristocracy. One of his students, Mukan Gengo 無關玄悟 (1212–91), in turn became the founder of Nanzenji 南禪寺.

It was at this stage, in the mid-thirteenth century, that something entirely unexpected happened: a number of Chinese Chan masters decided to move to Japan. By no means all of them were actually invited, and each one of them must have had his own reasons. In some cases the perceived threat from the Mongols was enough to persuade them to move; in others it may have been as a result of factional rivalry and marginalisation. Whatever the causes, one should not underestimate either the dangers of the voyage or the boldness of the move. It was to have a lasting impact on Japan, for it was really a result of the arrival of these men, more than a dozen in all, that Zen eventually took such strong root in Japan and was not simply re-absorbed into Tendai. The man who did more than anyone to bring this about was the fifth regent Hōjō Tokiyori 北條時頼 (1227–63). Tokiyori was the first member of the Hōjō family, and one of the first Japanese laymen, to explore fully the religious and philosophical assumptions of Zen, to devote himself seriously to the practice of Zen meditation and confrontation with a Zen master (*mondō*), and to finance the building of monasteries in which Song Zen monastic discipline and practice were enforced' (Collett 1981: 58). It is important to remember, however, that men like Tokiyori looked to Zen masters to provide cultural and spiritual prestige; the positing of some natural affiliation between Zen principles and the warrior ethos is little more than a modern myth.

The first such Chinese master to arrive was Lanqi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (1213–78), who came in 1246. Making his way up to Kamakura, he soon came to the attention of Tokiyori, who built for him Kenchōji 建長寺. This was to be the first Zen monastery in Japan properly modelled on Song lines, with no concessions being made to either Tendai or Shingon practice. He soon had an enrolment of several hundred monks. Lanqi stressed daily meditation sessions and discussion of *kōan*, together with strict observance of the regulations. Tokiyori also extended his patronage to Wuan Puning 兀庵普寧 (1197–1276), a renowned master who was already in his sixties when he arrived in Japan. He became the second abbot of Kenchōji, allowing Lanqi to move to Kyōto to transform both Kenninji and Tōfukuji into more recog-

<sup>6</sup> Collett 1981: 45. Collett is the source for much that follows.

nisable Song-style Zen monasteries. Wuan Puning found Tokiyori a good disciple and granted him a seal of transmission (*in'ka* 印可), thereby recognising his achievement of enlightenment; in the end, however, he found it very difficult to adapt to life in Japan and after Tokiyori died in 1263 he requested to be allowed to return to China. When Lanqi himself died in 1274, Tokiyori's son Hōjō Tokimune 時宗 (1251–84) sent for a replacement, Wuxue Zuyuan 無學祖元 (1226–86). This too turned out to be a fruitful relationship, although we should not be too quick to paint a picture of a military ruler debasing himself in front of a Chinese monk. The following tale probably illustrates more accurately what the real relation was between these two men:

In their encounters, the Chinese monk, Zen master though he was, did not forget that he was dealing with the most powerful warrior in Japan. Discussions on Zen were conducted through an interpreter. When the master wished to strike his disciple for incomprehension or to encourage greater effort, the blows fell on the interpreter (Collett 1981: 72).

This points up an extraordinary fact that is easily forgotten: more often than not, when a Chinese master was involved, Zen was not taught verbally but via written dialogue (*haisuadan* 筆談). Interpreters were available for a man like Tokimune, of course, but within a monastery the only language that master and student normally had in common was written Chinese. Little wonder then that Zen in the larger official monasteries patronised by the Kamakura authorities became increasingly involved with the ability to read and write classical Chinese, which in turn demanded a good knowledge of Chinese culture. Somewhat ironically for a practice supposedly based on the spoken word and direct person-to-person interaction, texts became even more important in Japan than they had been in China. The monk Mingji Chuzhun 明極楚俊 (1264–1336) put it well when he sent a poem to his patron Ōtomo Sadamune that read in part:

Not long after I arrived to live nearby as a guest  
We made good friends and got to know each other well.  
To communicate my feelings I used a brush to transmit my speech  
And you grasped my meaning by using your eyes to hear my words.

(Pollack 1985: 157, adapted).

And what of the life within these monasteries?

The Zen monastery and its lifestyle are today so accepted as Japanese that it is difficult to realize how exotic the new Zen monasteries must have seemed in the thirteenth century. Not only were monastery buildings different in style, disposition,



and furnishing from anything existing in Japan; the robes of Zen monks, their manner of walking and bowing, their etiquette before and after eating, bathing, and even defecating were also distinctive. So too were the sounds of the Zen monastery: the signals on bells, clappers, and gongs that regulated the meditative pattern of daily life; the musical accompaniment of the ceremonies and chants; even the style of *sūtra* chanting. The vocabulary of Zen monastic life included hundreds of terms unfamiliar to Japanese ears. And, as a final reminder of the foreign origin of the institution, spoken Chinese was heard frequently . . . until the end of the thirteenth century, and the Chinese literary flavour continued to thicken in the fourteenth. The new Zen monasteries were outposts of Chinese religion and culture in medieval Japanese society (Collcutt 1981: 171–72).

The three most important buildings in the monastery were the Buddha Hall (*butsuden* 佛殿), the Dharma Hall (*hattō* 法堂) and the Monks' Hall (*sōdō* 僧堂). Of these the Buddha Hall housed images and was used for devotional prayers. The Dharma Hall was similar to the lecture halls in traditional temples except that it was designed not for disquisitions and lectures on the *sūtras* but for discussion between the abbot and monks in open assembly. It was the Monks' Hall, however, that was peculiar to Zen. Previously in Japan monks had lived in separate small cells. In a Zen monastery the rule was communal living and it was in the Monks' Hall that they all sat in meditation, ate their meals and slept. Their personal living space was restricted to one mat on a long knee-high platform, just deep enough to allow them to stretch out and sleep when necessary (Collcutt 1981: 206–15).

The life of all monks was rigidly governed by rules and regulations, which helped to bring home to the monk a number of Buddhist 'truths': that every daily activity of whatever hue was an enlightened act; that enlightenment would only be found through strenuous exertion and the willingness to undergo privation; and that the self did not exist. These rules were central to Zen of no matter what persuasion and ranged from instructions on how to meditate to how to eat, wash and carry oneself.

## 15 Reform from within and without

### 15.1 The Saidaiji community

Both Hōnen and Shinran were ordained, but had become disillusioned with the way in which the Tendai tradition had allowed itself to become mired in secular and political matters; they questioned the relationship between Buddhism and secular authority, re-evaluated the *raison d'être* of the sangha, and professed a radical egalitarianism. Both men were convinced that their brand of popular devotion was the only path to salvation in a degenerate age; it was precisely this strength of conviction that ensured they became sectarian founders but it also ensured that they incurred the enmity of both the ecclesiastical authorities and those who ruled Japan. There was an open recognition that their radicalism amounted to a denial of the sangha: it was too dangerous to gain wide support. But not all such reformers caused antagonism. We also have examples of priests and monks who had just as strong convictions, but who preferred to work within the system, putting their ideas into practice with the active help of at least some sections of the establishment. They knew only too well that standards in monasteries were lax and that the very success of Buddhism, especially as regards its relationship with the state, had led to a secularisation with which they were uncomfortable. One such was Eison 叡尊 (1201–90).

Eison was the son of a Kōfukuji scholar-monk, something that should give pause for thought precisely because it sounds so normal. Shinran was exoriated for taking a wife but in fact it was only too common in the older monasteries. Eison received the usual precepts at Tōdaiji and spent his early years studying tantric practice at Daigoji, but then at some stage he began to have serious doubts as to whether his ordination had been really valid according to a strict interpretation of the rules, and in 1234 he was given permission to join a small band of six monks at the Hōtōin 寶塔院 at Saidaiji 西大寺 who were engaged in a strict regime of observing the precepts to the letter (Groner 2001 and 2004). Attending lectures on the four-part *vinaya* at Tōdaiji, he became more and more convinced that his ordination had indeed