Mystic Peak

妙峰 Mystic Peak

Japanese Art from the Jane and Raphael Bernstein Collection

Melissa McCormick

Contents

Introduction

Between April of 2021 and February 2022, the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College mounted an exhibition in honor of Jane and Raphael Bernstein called *A Legacy for Learning: The Jane and Raphael Bernstein Collection*. Attesting to the eclectic and far-reaching interests of the Bernsteins, it consisted of five separate installations encompassing 18th c. Hogarth prints, 20th-century American landscape and portrait photography, contemporary Inuit art from the Canadian Arctic, traditional Japanese art, and a collection of calligraphic prints and paintings by the Japanese artist Shinoda Tōkō (1913-2021). My own curatorial contribution and the opening lecture that I delivered in October 2021 are the

subject of this publication, created at the request of Raphael Bernstein.

The title of the Hood's exhibition, *A Legacy for Learning*, was apt for a university museum setting, and it commemorated the incredible foresight that Raph and Jane showed some thirty years ago in supporting the museum's original Bernstein Study-Storage Center. The facility has enabled object-based teaching and learning that prioritizes personal encounters with art that can be life-changing for anyone, but especially for college students eager to engage new ideas and to learn from artifacts made in another time and place. Raph and Jane also created a legacy *of* learning through a collection built on scholarship, research, and their well-honed aesthetic sense. In fact, I first got to know Raph and Jane when they became students of mine over twenty years ago. I was fresh out of graduate school and teaching at Columbia University as an Assistant Professor of Japanese art, and it was my first time at the front of a classroom. I offered an introductory lecture course on the history of Japanese art from Jōmon

pottery to the twentieth-century avant-garde, and Raph and Jane became dedicated auditors. They made the trip into the city from their home in New Jersey, showing up twice a week for my lectures. As a new faculty member, I was flattered that this accomplished couple would recognize my expertise and I found it moving that they cared so much about this culture to which I had dedicated my professional life. As a very green professor, I was buoyed by the enthusiastic engagement of these two auditors. Jane would charitably laugh at my awkwardly delivered jokes; Raph would sometimes crack a smile. More often, Raph seemed to delight in the quirky questions posed by the young students around him, or the creative answers they gave to my cold-call questions. When faced with undergraduates today reluctant to take classes that do not seem to pertain directly to their chosen future careers in finance, public policy, or social work, for instance, I still use the example of Raph and Jane to demonstrate the value of studying the humanities and building a foundation for lifelong learning.

The exhibition of Japanese art in the Bernstein Collection was done with an eye toward teaching and learning, highlighting some of the most important subjects, artists, genres, and formats of traditional Japanese art. The remarkable thing about the Bernstein collection is that it can teach a very broad survey of the history of Japanese art, and the nine works in the exhibition represent a small selection of their impressive holdings, more of which can be seen in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition.[1] Before delving into a detailed analysis of the specific work that inspired the title of the exhibition, *Mystic Peak*, the following section provides a brief overview of the installation, its themes and the logic of its display, as well as information on individual pieces.

Ink Landscapes and the Poetics of Place
Ink Paintings by Soga Shōhaku

The show begins with an introduction to spatial tropes in Japanese art as well as to the medium of ink painting with two paintings by the artist Soga Shōhaku (1730-1781): an image of the mountain that has become a symbol of Japan, Mt. Fuji, and a majestic pair of screens depicting sites on the Xiao Xiang River Delta in Southern China (Fig. 1). The pairing juxtaposes the *idea* of Japan and of China, through two paintings of actual sites that also represent imagined realms layered with poetic allusions and meaning. Neither of these paintings was striving for topographical accuracy; successful paintings of this type rather situated these sites within a matrix of poetic and literary and cultural references that went back centuries. The artist of both works, Soga Shōhaku, was one of the most intriguing of the so-called eccentric artists of Edo Japan, famous for his unique interpretation and dramatic renderings of traditional subjects.


Mystic Peak: Selections from the Bernstein Collection of Japanese Art
Ranging in date from the 12th to the 19th century, the works in this gallery reflect some of the most important painting subjects, literary themes, and religious beliefs in premodern Japan.
Chinese culture would always serve as a classical standard in Japan, and several objects in this room demonstrate how Japanese artists situated continental images for local contexts and audiences. For example, the majestic pair of screens depicting sites on the Xiao Xiang river deltas in southern China employs a visual idiom in ink and gold and a format distinctive to Japan. The Tale of Genji screen and the handscroll of fish and Kyogen paintings in the center of the room reflect more indigenous traditions, based upon literary and dramatic works. Genji inspired a distinctive kind of painting known as yamato-e or "Japanese painting."
Each of the four religious works on view emerged from different spiritual beliefs, best-warning, of the "way of the gods" (Shinto), Zen (Chan) Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism, and syncretic practices in which most Japanese have set as the avatars of Buddhist deities. A rare portrait of the tea master Sen no Rikyū, who was not an expressly religious figure, is likewise devotional in nature.
What unifies these eclectic objects from the Raphael and Jane Bernstein Collection is their exquisite artistry and historical value. Each offers a unique interpretation of its subject that rewards deep engagement. A fitting tribute to the Bernsteins' dedication to the advancement of learning in the rich calligraphy by the Zen Buddhist monk Saigyo Sō. It transcribes an ancient exchange between a Zen teacher and a student seeking to understand the Truth. The disciple asks, "Where is Mystic Peak?" The teacher refuses to answer. Only deeper contemplation will reveal that the mountain is the mind and that the student already stands atop its summit.
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This exhibition is organized by the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, and generously supported by the Evelyn A. J. Hall Fund, the Marie Louise and Samuel R. Rosenthal Fund, and the Ray Whitehill 1916 Memorial Fund.

FIG. 1
Installation view of *Mystic Peak: Japanese Art from the Bernstein Collection*, Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, 2021. The exhibition began with two works by Sōga Shōhaku (1730-1781), *Mount Fuji with Sunrise and Pine Tree* (left), and *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (right), pair of six-panel screens; ink and gold on paper, 154.3 x 358.8 cm each. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein. Photo credit: Rob Strong.

FIG. 2
Soga Shōhaku (1730–1781). *Lions at the Stone Bridge of Mount Tiantai*, dated 1779. Inscribed by Gazan Nansō (1727–1797). Hanging scroll; ink on silk, 114 × 50.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015.300.216.

Shōhaku's works often unsettle the viewer, as in a painting set at the stone bridge at Mount Tiantai in China's Zhejiang province, the base for the Tendai sect of Buddhism in China (Fig. 2).[2] Mount Tiantai also figured prominently in Daoist lore. In a depiction of an obscure anecdote, Shōhaku features a lioness in the center, observing numerous cubs leaping from the famous stone bridge to see who will survive. The way Shōhaku organizes the composition, with roiling clouds in the center and a vertigo-inducing stone bridge arching across the sky in the high distance, makes the trial seem even more harrowing.

Shōhaku painted for specific patrons and occasions, making it likely that *Mt. Fuji with Sunrise and Pine Tree* in the Bernstein collection (Fig. 3), may have been made as an auspicious New Year's gift. Although the painting may seem subdued compared to some of Shōhaku's other works, a close look reveals a similar exuberance and energy just below the surface. Mt. Fuji was more than a majestic mountain celebrated for its natural beauty and esteemed as Japan's tallest

FIG. 3
Soga Shōhaku (1730–1781). *Mount Fuji with Sunrise and Pine Tree*, 18th century. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, 48.9 x 77.5 cm. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

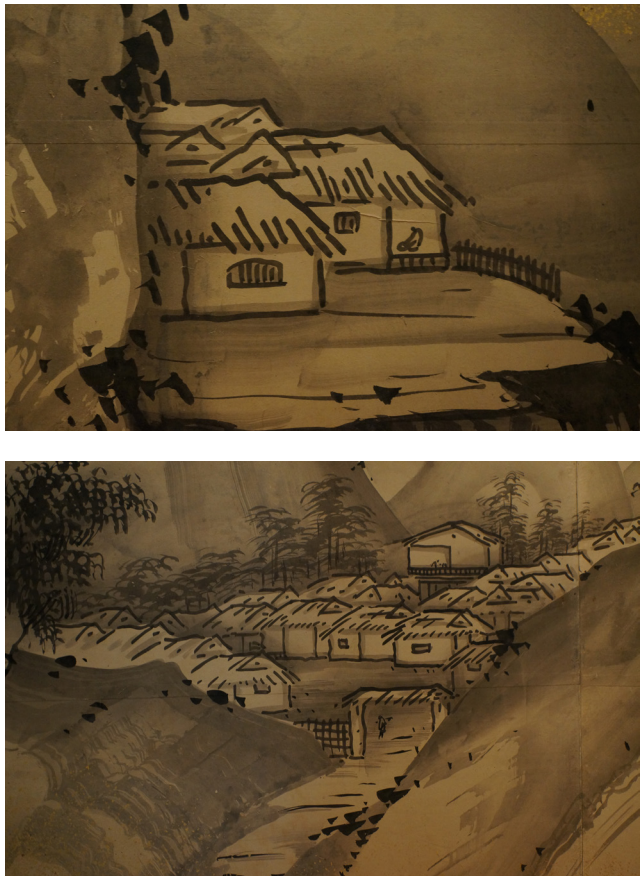
peak. It was and is a center of cultic worship, and Shōhaku's painting seems to capture Fuji's otherworldly aura. First, he almost perfectly centers the mountain in this composition, making it resemble an iconic object. Shōhaku used the unpainted paper ground to render the snowy mountain. Its whiteness is intensified by a dark penumbra of ink and a gray inky sky. Sharp, planar strokes suggest the powerful volcano's crater on the verge of being illuminated by a red rising sun. Near the foreground, a solitary fisherman floats in a void of white, seemingly indifferent to the mountain looming above. The large, craggy pine, however, is anthropomorphized. Highly animated by crisp black lines, its upper trunk appears to lean back, as if gazing in awe at the sacred peak. In this way, the composition evokes the trope of the mountain as sovereign, found in Chinese landscape painting. Both the pine tree and Mt. Fuji are symbols of longevity; a homonym of "Fuji" means "deathless." This, combined with the dawning sun, suggests a painting made as an auspicious image.

The stunning pair of Shōhaku screens in the Bernstein Collection (Figs. 1, 6) represents an adaptation of an ancient theme, depicting a vast waterscape across twelve panels. Artists in China began depicting the scenic views around the confluence of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers in China's Hunan Province in the eleventh century. By the fourteenth century, Japanese painters were interpreting the subject, most without ever having visited the site. Unlike more schematic compositions of orthodox Kano School painting for example, Shōhaku's work uses a high aerial perspective to convey a sense of limitless space. The artist structures the composition by using darkly inked, sharply defined motifs in the foreground and light, watery ink for the distant mountains. The sense of recession is further enhanced and staged by golden mists that imbue the screens with an otherworldly atmospheric haze. Integrated into the composition are scenes of the canonical Eight Views of the Xiao Xiang, such as "Wild Geese Descending to a Sandbar," near the center of the right screen, and "Sails

Returning from a Distant Shore," near the center of the left screen. The other six vignettes of the eight views remain open to interpretation, perhaps showing Shōhaku's privileging of his own vision over poetic legibility.

A hint of Shōhaku's eccentric artistic persona appears in the loose calligraphic style of the signature on the outer edges of each screen and in certain motifs that recall exaggerated forms from his other paintings. One example is the precariously attenuated stone bridge (Fig. 4) and the stark cliff plateau in the foreground of the left screen, which recall his *Stone Bridge of Mount Tiantai* painting among other works. Viewed from a distance the screens convey a powerful sense of the big picture, of cosmic time, and a sense of eternity in the vastness of space he conjures. At the same time, the paintings capture the everyday quietude amid houses nestled in villages (Fig. 5), and they zoom in on pathways populated by tiny figures (Fig. 6), juxtaposing the smallness of individual lives with the ethereal voids of the overarching landscape. Even in the

FIG. 4
Detail of *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers.*



FIGS. 5 & 6
Details of *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers.*

details, however, a life force is apparent, through the rendering of rocks with dry, scratchy ink brushwork in lines that echo each other and seem to reverberate with energy.

Japanese Literature and Performance
Genji and the Image of the Courtier

In the gallery at the Hood Museum of Art, the Shōhaku screens faced a vibrant scroll depicting Noh and Kyōgen performances, facilitating a transition to the next theme of the exhibition, on performance and courtly literature (Fig.7). The twenty-seven total scenes illustrated in the scroll (each from a different Noh and Kyōgen play) comprise some of the most famous and entertaining examples of this traditional form of Japanese theater. Noh is a dance-drama performed with highly ritualized movements centered on Buddhist themes, while Kyōgen are shorter, comical plays. All roles were tradition-

ally performed by male actors. The paintings in this deluxe scroll use rich mineral pigments and gold paint to depict each play's main actors, key props, and most memorable costumes, wigs, and masks. The title of the play and a brief excerpt of dialogue appear above every scene, making the scroll a useful primer of the Noh and Kyōgen repertoire. In a play based on *The Tale of Genji*, for example, the spirit of Lady Rokujō wears the ferocious horned demon hannya mask. She is about to attack Genji's wife, Lady Aoi, represented only by a folded robe on the ground (p. 25, Fig. 8).

The Tale of Genji, Japan's most celebrated work of fiction, is a prose-poetry hybrid work written by the court lady Murasaki Shikibu roughly one thousand years ago. The Bernstein Collection includes one of the most important *Genji* screens of the early modern period, which demonstrates how scenes from the tale were depicted on a monumental scale (p. 27, Fig. 9). Here, the protagonist Genji pursues Utsusemi, a nickname that means "Lady of the Molted Cicada Shell." He stands outside her residence secretly watching

FIG. 7
Installation view of *Mystic Peak: Japanese Art from the Bernstein Collection*, Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, 2021. In the foreground, *Noh and Kyōgen Plays*, late 17th century. Handscroll; ink, color, gold, and silver and gold on paper, 31.75 x 944.88 cm. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

her play a game of gō. Take note of his dress, elements of which will be seen in other works of art in this section: he wears relatively informal robes, but he dons a formal cap, called a *kanmuri*, or crown-style cap, typically paired with black formal robes when attending court or official ceremonies. Genji has seemingly just arrived at the residence of Utsusemi, having asked her young brother, Kogimi, to facilitate another meeting (he has already spent one night with her). The carriage from which Genji has disembarked appears in the left corner of the painting, just outside the wall of the mansion. Nearby, Genji's men have dozed off, indicating the late hour and perhaps their anticipation of not being aroused until dawn, at the conclusion of yet another tryst by the energetic young Genji (he is seventeen in this chapter). As Genji waits for his chance to enter, he espies both Utsusemi, shown in a red robe with her back to him, and her young stepdaughter, facing her, in the middle of a gō match. Later in the chapter, Genji invades the women's sleeping quarters, but Utsusemi escapes his advances and leaves her

FIG. 8
Scene from the Noh Play Lady Aoi. Detail from *Noh and Kyōgen Plays*, late 17th century. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

stepdaughter for Genji to discover. As Utsusemi flees the room, she drops a thin robe, which Genji takes with him, a memento of his failed attempt to sleep with her. Genji responds to the woman's rejection by sending her a poem that puns on the garment she left behind and equates the lady with a cicada who has molted its shell:

Utsusemi no	Empty cicada,
Mi o kaetekeru	Molting, you have left your shell
Ko no moto ni	At the foot of the tree;
Nao hitogara no	Still, I shall recall how sweet
Natsukashiki kana	Was the self within this husk.[3]

The famous poem appears on a square cartouche in the upper third panel of the Bernstein screen (Figs. 9, 10), superimposed over the floating gold clouds like a thought bubble at a point directly between Genji and Utsusemi. For the informed viewer, the hovering poem forecasts the failed romantic outcome for Genji, while for those less familiar with the narrative, its first word "Utsusemi," identifies the chapter and the woman in the painting.

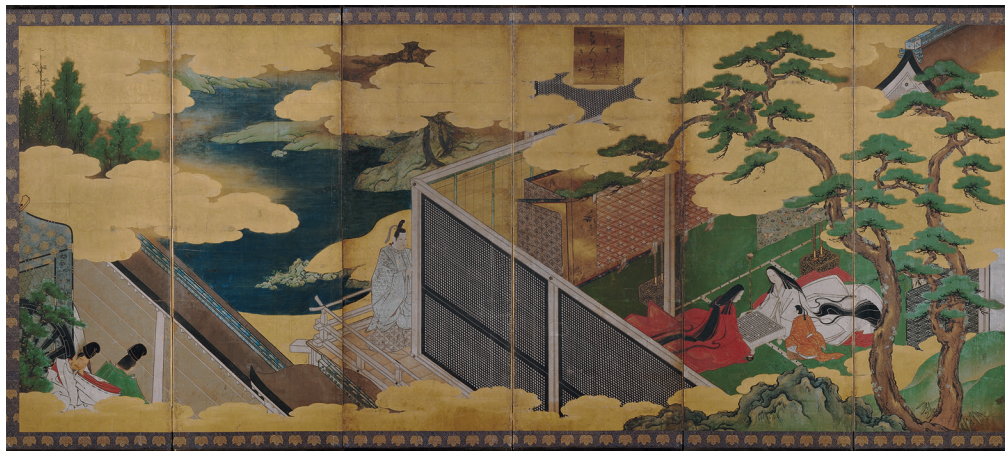


FIG. 9
Attributed to Kano Takanobu (1571–1618). *Utsusemi* (A Molted Cicada Shell), Chapter 3 from *The Tale of Genji*, late 16th–early 17th century. Six-panel folding screen; ink, color, and gold on paper, 163.8 x 381.0 cm. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

Although *Genji* paintings were primarily associated with Tosa-school artists, this important painting is most surely by the painter Kano Takanobu (1571-1618). Takanobu was frequently called upon for commissions by the court and aristocracy that had previously gone to Tosa-School artists, including imperial portraits, the most prominent wall paintings of the palace of Emperor Go-Mizunoo (1596-1680), and one of earliest hanging scrolls of Murasaki Shikibu.[4] The style of the figures in this screen are remarkably close to that of known works by Takanonbu, while the ink paintings in the Kano style on the folding screen depicted within the screen also suggest a Kano artist. *Genji* screens were commonly made for bridal trousseaus, and the intricately painted motifs in this screen, such as the gold-lacquered curtain stand and colorful butterfly-patterned textile in Utsusemi's room, suggest the sumptuousness and auspicious symbols appropriate for such a function.

Another image of the courtier in this section of the exhibition, in addition to that of the

FIG. 10
Detail of Fig. 9

youthful Genji, comes by way of a diminutive sculpture made from a single block of wood (Fig. 11). This male figure wears the formal costume of a courtier, including the crown-style courter's cap (as worn by Genji in the folding screen). The delicately carved sculpture does not simply represent an aristocrat, however, but a kami, and therefore provides a pivot to the next and final section of the show.

Instantiating Belief: Religious Artifacts, from Kami Worship to Zen Buddhism

In this section of the exhibition on the variety of spiritual beliefs in premodern Japan (Fig. 12), the courtier/*kami* sculpture represents a deity that was central to what was later reified as Shinto, the "Way of the Gods." Although understood to be formless spirits that animate nature, *kami* began to be personified in response to the

FIG. 11
Male Kami, 12th century. Wood with traces of pigment and lacquer, H. 35.5 cm. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

FIG. 12
Installation view of *Mystic Peak: Japanese Art from the Bernstein Collection*. Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, 2021.
Photo credit: Rob Strong.

introduction of anthropomorphic representations of Buddhist deities. *Kami* appear in a variety of male and female sculptural forms forming a category now known as shinzō.[5] One strain of *kami* sculptures renders them in the guise of high-ranking aristocrats, as here, where the male *kami* appears in formal court dress (*sokutai*) appropriate for appearing before the emperor. He wears a tall *kanmuri*, or crown-style cap that here bears traces of black lacquer, a round high-collared robe, a belt around the waist (as seen from the rear view), and he holds a *shaku*, a flat, ceremonial scepter, between hands that are concealed by the sleeves of his robe. This single sculpture may have once been part of a larger group, or one of a pair of a male and female *kami*. Such groupings were made for specific shrines and could refer to specific deities, although the identity and provenance of this sculpture is unknown. The squarish face and body, combined with the intricately carved facial features—gracefully arched brow, partially closed eye lids, and well-proportioned nose and full lips—justify the Heian-period date.

FIG. 13
Fudō Myōō (Acalanātha), late 12th century. Wood, lacquer, quartz crystal inserts, and metal attachments, H. 50.0 cm. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

The other sculpture in the exhibition depicts Fudō Myōō (Acalanātha), the "Immovable One" (Fig. 13), and in contrast to the Shinto *kami*, it represents the Buddhist strain of religious belief in premodern Japan, which developed from Indian and Sinitic precedents. Fudō is one of the Five Great Myōō, or Radiant Wisdom Kings (Sanskrit: Vidyārājas), a group of deities within the Buddhist pantheon who protect the Buddhist Law with ferocious compassion. The wrathful expressions of these figures are meant to instill fear and push wayward sentient beings toward the righteous path. Fudō's countenance in this sculpture conforms to descriptions found in the Buddhist sutras, including the single squinting eye to inspire fear, here made extra lifelike through quartz crystal inserts set beneath knotted brows, and sharp fangs, one pointing up and one down, protruding from his closed lips. The weapons wielded by Fudō intensify his threatening appearance while enriching the iconographic symbolism. He brandishes a sword to quash ignorance and evil, with a handle in the

shape of a three-pronged vajra, a ritual object in Esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*). The vajra represents the strength of a diamond and the force of a thunderbolt and symbolizes the indestructability of wisdom. Gripped in the clenched fist of Fudō's left hand is a weighted lasso for ensnaring those who would obstruct the Buddhist path. Although some images of Fudō include a lotus flower atop his head to symbolize Buddhist enlightenment, no such feature appears in this example, only loose curls and a single braid that extends just beyond his left shoulder. Standing figures of Fudō like this one began to appear by the eleventh century in Japan. They were often posed atop wooden bases carved to resemble rocky outcroppings and outfitted with flaming mandorlas attached to the back of the sculpture. They could also be accompanied by small companion sculptures of child acolytes, forming a triad appropriate for a phase when the Fudō was singled out for worship as individual deity.[6] Fudō also appeared in rituals that called for images of the other Radiant Wisdom Kings, but all were intricately connected

to part of a larger cosmology of Buddhist belief. Fudō can thus be found alongside a multitude of other deities in painted mandalas and sculptural ensembles that attempt to diagram the structures and interrelationships of the Buddhist universe.

A painting that synthesizes a variety of premodern belief systems is the *Mandala of the Northern Dipper and Combinatory Deities* (Fig. 14). This is a rare and intriguing example of a "star mandala," a type of painting that among other things, were believed to have the power to deflect misfortune and evil influences. Here seven blue orbs painted across the top of the composition form the familiar pattern of the Big Dipper asterism, or the "seven stars of the Northern Dipper" (*hokuto shichisei*), as the constellation was known in East Asia. The twelve total figures beneath this celestial canopy represent a syncretic belief system in which *kami* indigenous to Japan connected to specific shrines throughout the land were understood to be manifestations of Buddhist deities (*honjibutsu*). The figures can be identified by names brushed beside them in gold ink and

FIG. 14
Mandala of the Northern Dipper and Combinatory Deities, 14th century. Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk, 68.8 x 37.9 cm. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

by their distinctive and familiar iconography. Moving from right to left, top bottom, the first column begins with Mañjuśrī (Monju bostasu) (Fig. 15), the bodhisattva of wisdom, and, as the inscription states, the Buddhist counterpart of the *kami* of Ono Shrine in the eastern province of Musashi.[7] Below are two figures that allude to Ariwara no Narihira, the protagonist of *The Tales of Ise,* and, on his back, the future Empress Nijō (Fig. 16). The image of the pair evokes the sixth episode in *Tales of Ise*, in which Narihira abducts a young woman, who is identified in later commentaries as the future Empress Nijō. Here, however, the inscriptions on the painting suggest that they may represent the *kami* of Suwa Shrine.[8] Below Narihira stands Sōtōsan Gongen (also known as Izusan Gongen).[9] This deity is associated with Mt. Izu in the Izu peninsula (present-day Shizuoka Prefecture), specifically with a thermal spring located at the foot of the mountain called Sōtō, or Hashiryū (literally "running hot spring"), the waters of which empty into the sea. The deity's appearance exemplifies the mingling of

Buddhism and kami worship. His garments are those of a high-ranking courtier— tall *eboshi* hat, white, round-collared robe, red undergarment, and voluminous trousers with a *tomoe* (comma-shaped) pattern—combined with a monk's surplice (*kesa*), and attributes usually held by Buddhist deities, the ringed staff with six jangling rings (*shakujō*), and the prayer beads in this left hand. The final figure in the right-hand column of the painting is Kūkai (774-835), the founder of the Shingon sect of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan.

The central column of the composition begins with what might be considered the most prestigious image of the assembly, the white deer representing the *kami* of Kasuga shrine (Fig. 17). A large orb usually in the form of a mirror, rests amid the branches of a sacred sakaki tree, interlaced with a flowering wisteria, which stems from the deer's back. Outlined in red, the orb connotes the sun deity Amaterasu as it rises into the sky and mingles with the constellation above. Beneath this figure is Kumano Gongen, the deity enshrined at the three main shrines of Kumano in the Kii

Peninsula. Below, occupying the near center of the composition is Hachiman, the tutelary deity of the Minamoto warrior clan, and a *kami* enshrined in Hachiman shrines across the country. This *kami* took the form of a Buddhist monk and was worshipped as Hachiman Daibosatsu—the great bodhisattva Hachiman. The final figure in the central row is Benzaiten (Fig. 18), a Hindu deity of agriculture or a river goddess, who in Japan became a goddess of music and war, and, as here, could be depicted with eight arms holding various weapons. Moving clockwise, she wields a trident staff, a vajra, a wheel, a bow, arrows, rope, a spear, and a key with a Sanskrit syllable on a red placard. A figure atop Benzaiten's head appears to be the harvest kami Ugajin, who takes the form of a coiled white snake with the head of an old man. At some point Benzaiten and Ugajin merged into a syncretic deity called Uga-Benzaiten.

The final three figures in the painting rounding out the left-hand column are the female deity of grains Inari, Mishima Myōjin, the *kami* of Mishima Shrine in Izu Province, and the

FIG. 15
Mañjuśrī (Monju bostasu), detail of Fig. 14, *Mandala of the Northern Dipper and Combinatory Deities*.

FIG. 16
Ariwara no Narihira and the Future Empress Nijō, detail of Fig. 14, *Mandala of the Northern Dipper and Combinatory Deities*.

FIG. 17
Messenger of the Kasuga Deity, detail of Fig. 14, *Mandala of the Northern Dipper and Combinatory Deities*.

FIG. 18
Benzaiten of Enoshima, detail of Fig. 14, *Mandala of the Northern Dipper and Combinatory Deities*.

Bodhisattva Jizō, the Buddhist counterpart of the *kami* enshrined at a place labeled in the painting, "Akimiya."[10] Taken as whole, this unique amalgamation of *kami* and Buddhist deities, which highlights shrines in the Eastern provinces with connections to the mountain ascetic practice Shugendō and deities with a martial persona, suggest associations and possible patrons from the warrior class or the Kamakura military government in the first part of the fourteenth century.

The Kamakura period also witnessed the rise of Zen Buddhism, a sect that continued to be influential in the visual culture of Japan into the Edo period, as richly represented in the final paintings in the exhibition, which will be the focus of the remainder of this essay. The topic of Zen Buddhism returns us to theme of the "legacy for learning," and the search for wisdom that is at the heart of the name of the exhibition, "Mystic Peak."

Mystic Peak: The Mind is the Buddha

The title of the 2021 exhibition at the Hood Museum, "Mystic Peak," derives from a Zen *kōan* (公案), a deliberately enigmatic verbal phrase meant to unsettle one's reliance on reason and convention. Often presented in the form of an exchange between a teacher and student, *kōan* were, and still are, used in Zen Buddhism to train the mind. The goal is to achieve an awakened state, specifically an ability to see beyond the false and illusory nature of the phenomenal world. "Mystic peak" (*myohō* 妙峰) is a key term found in Zen *kōan* and Buddhist texts and it appears in a striking work of calligraphy in the Bernstein collection by the prominent Zen monk Seigan Sōi (1588-1661) (Fig. 19).[11] Today the Zen *kōan*, which was central

to Seigan Sōi's religious practice as a teacher and adherent, has entered popular lexicons worldwide. There seems to be a general understanding of *kōan* as riddles that defy logic intended to trigger an instantaneous Buddhist awakening or higher state of consciousness. Most people with even a passing knowledge of Zen Buddhism have encountered the famous *kōan*, "What is the Sound of One Hand Clapping?" attributed to the monk Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1789). Scholars have attempted to go beyond the popular understanding of *kōan* to historicize the phenomenon, including in the context of Hakuin's works.[12] In this essay, I hope to build on this approach, examining the fuller world of *kōan* and the artifacts they inspired a generation prior to Hakuin, focusing on the example by Seigan Sōi in the Bernstein Collection.

Calligraphies by Zen masters were called *bokuseki* in Japanese, which literally means "ink traces." These "traces" preserved the words and teachings that were left behind by eminent Zen teachers. Those words, often in the form of a dialogue, captured the orality of the person—a

FIG. 19
Seigan Sōi (1588-1661). *Zen Kōan and Bodhidharma*, 17th century. Hanging scroll; ink on paper, 41.0 x 86.8 cm, accompanied by two vermilion intaglio seals, "Seigan" 清巖 and " Korōan" 孤陋庵. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

sense of their voice and physical presence—as well as the content of their teachings. When those words were captured as "ink traces" in the calligraphic hand of the teacher, rather than being recorded by someone else, the result was an embodied artifact that preserved the aura of the Buddhist teacher. Ink traces therefore were imbued with a unique combination of spiritual and aesthetic power. Such is the case with the Bernstein calligraphy scroll, which was brushed by the famous monk Seigan Sōi himself.

Seigan held the exalted position of 170th abbot of the powerful Rinzai Zen monastery Daitokuji, an identity made evident in a self-inscribed portrait in the temple's collection (Fig. 20). The eminent monk is depicted seated in a low-backed black lacquered armchair (*kyokuroku*) in the typical pose of teachers in Zen portraiture. His shoes are placed on the footstool before him, implying that his legs are folded cross-legged beneath his robes. He wields the staff of the Zen master, said to be used for striking inattentive students, which came to symbolize the teacher's authority in the iconog-

FIG. 20
Portrait of Former Daitokuji Abbot, Seigan Sōi (1588-1661), Self-inscribed, dated 1654. Hanging scroll; ink and colors on silk, 117.5 x 51.4 cm. Kōtōin, Daitokuji.

raphy of such portraits. As Steven Heine explains, "…Zen rhetoric exalts the utility of the staff for testing, taunting, and threatening idle disciples by challenging and cautioning the consequences of incompetence if they should continue to fail to grasp the philosophical complexity and perplexity of *kōan* cases or other sayings."[13] Seigan wears the robes of a Buddhist cleric, including a brown underrobe and a traditional surplice called a *kesa* (*kāṣāya*) draped over his left shoulder and here secured with a tortoise shell ring and a twisted silk cord. Seigan's *kesa* adheres to the conventional patchwork-style panel design of the garment, which was imbued with symbolic meaning beginning with allusions to the tattered robes of the historical buddha Śākyamuni and his followers.[14] The fabrication of *kesa* out of sumptuous brocade reflects the long-standing history of adaptation of the surplice in Japan. Although subdued in color, Seigan's *kesa* appears to have been made of figured satin and brocade fabrics likely containing gold threads. The *kesa* along with the other attributes, combine in the portrait to convey Seigan's elevated

status, institutional authority and lineage, and his seriousness of purpose.

The site of Daitokuji is central to understanding Seigan's identity and the Zen Buddhist artifacts he inscribed, including the *kōan* ink trace in the Bernstein Collection. Beyond the famous Sanmon gate of Daitokuji (Fig. 21) lies a campus of remarkable subtemples (*tatchū*), each with its own culture, patronage network, and collection of texts and artifacts. In addition to holding the overall position of Daitokuji abbot for a brief time, Seigan was also the third abbot of one such subtemple, Kōtō-in. Kōtō-in has one of the most widely photographed walkway vistas in Kyoto, consisting of a narrow stone path through a grove of tall bamboo and greenery or, depending on the season, magnificent autumn foliage (Fig. 22). The atmospheric approach insulates the visitor from the noise of the city outside and prepares the mind for a contemplative experience. Given his positions at Daitokuji and the Kōtō-in subtemple, Seigan would have been called upon to brush numerous works of calligraphy. His ink traces would have

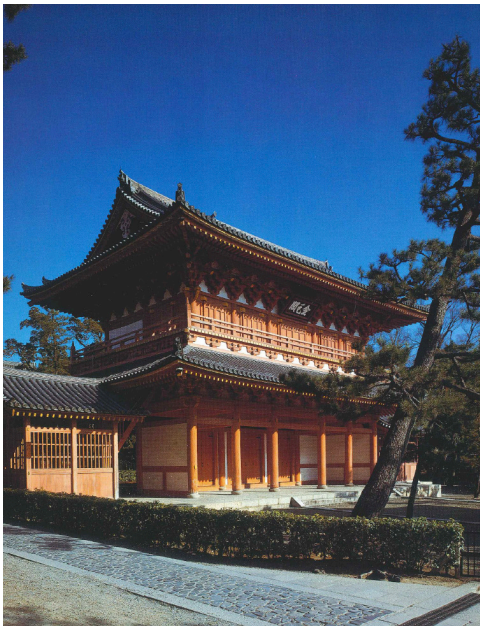


FIG. 21
Daitokuji Sanmon Gate

FIG. 22
Kōtōin Subtemple, Daitokuji

been highly prized and revered, valued for their ability to confer social prestige and to connote a priestly lineage within the sect. Mounted on hanging scrolls, his calligraphies were likely hung to commemorate special dates within the ceremonial calendar, and given the didactic or spiritually inspirational nature of their content, they surely functioned as objects for personal contemplation.

Seigan's works might have also been hung in tea ceremony settings, where the teachings they communicated could be noted and discussed by the participants (Fig. 23). The history of ritualized tea drinking (*chanoyu*) was intimately connected to Daitokuji, and it is worth briefly noting Seigan Sōi's ties to tea culture. The origins of the tea ceremony are somewhat mysterious, but it almost certainly came from China, where members of the Buddhist priesthood drank tea primarily for its medicinal value. The practice of drinking powdered tea in Zen temples was exported to Japan probably sometime during the thirteenth century. In the following fourteenth century, as more and more warrior houses and other members of the Japanese

cultural elite began to adopt Zen cultural practices, a form of tea gathering arose in merchant households that mimicked the strict rules of drinking tea in a monastic setting. Daitokuji became an important site for the practice of tea; its founding abbots came from merchant families in Sakai. Like other abbots, Seigan's practice of the tea ceremony was intricately connected to his Buddhist practice. Seigan even became the Zen teacher of the tea master Sen Sōtan (1578–1658), who was ten years his senior and the grandson of the revered founder of the tea ceremony in Japan, Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591).

The visual environment that surrounded Seigan Sōi and Sen Sōtan, two men who existed in a rarified circle of disciples, acquaintances, and family members of Sen no Rikyū, included posthumous portraits of the famous tea master, which were hung at tea gatherings. Among the few surviving old portraits of Rikyū is one completed a mere four years after the sitter's death by the artist Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539 -1610) (Fig. 24), which Sen Sōtan displayed at a tea gathering in

FIG. 23
The *shoin* study and tea ceremony room of *Ihokuken*, a building said to have been relocated to Kōtōin Subtemple, Daitokuji in 1602 from the residence of Sen no Rikyū (1522–91) at Jurakudai Palace.

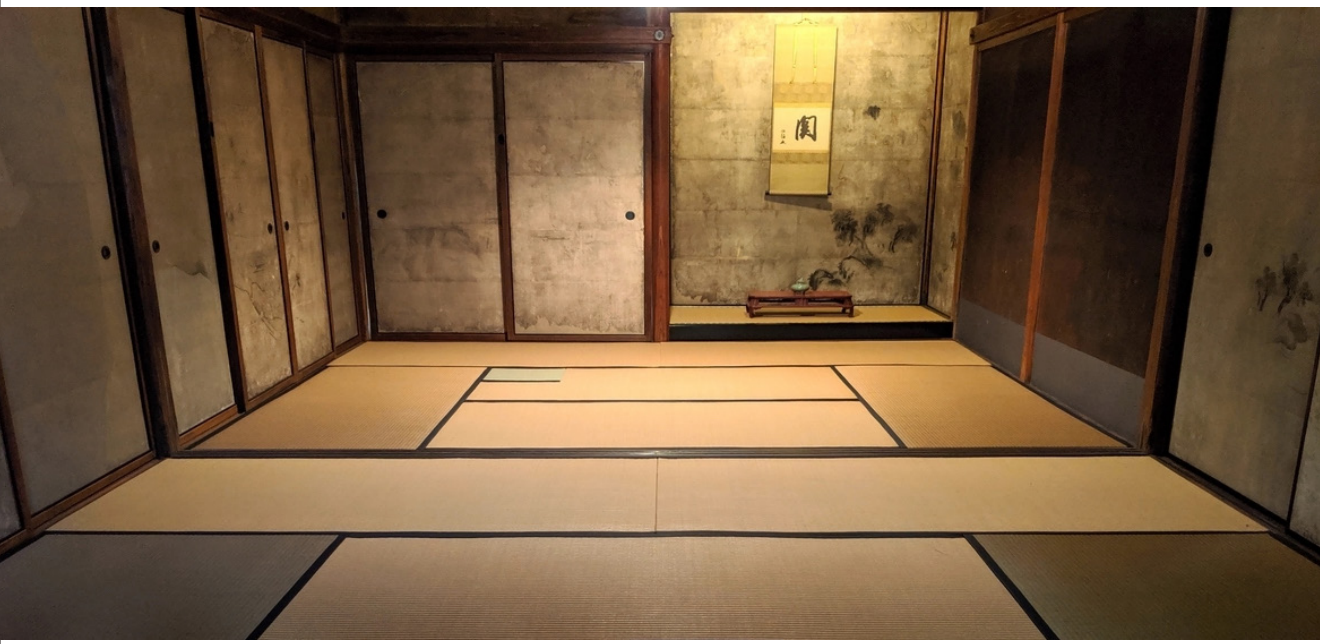


FIG. 24
Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539-1610). *Portrait of Sen no Rikyū*, dated 1595. Inscribed by Shun'oku Sōen (1529-1611), 111th Head Priest of Daitokuji. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 80.6 x 36.7 cm. Omotesenke Fushin'an Foundation, Kyoto.

1648.[15] A portrait of Rikyū by Tosa Mitsuoki (1617-1691) in the Bernstein collection (Fig. 25) is equally rare and intriguing in its iconography.[16] Rather than depicting Rikyū seated and in the black robes of a Buddhist monk, Mitsuoki took a unique approach by painting a standing Rikyū in the garb of a Confucian scholar. The formal white robes trimmed in black, and the "scarf-cap," common to images of the Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi (1130–1200), reflect a heightened interest in Neo-Confucianism in Edo Japan and among Mitsuoki's patrons. The inscription was added years after the artist's death by Hyakusetsu Gen'yō (1668–1749), a monk of the Ōbaku sect of Zen Buddhism. Established in Japan in 1654 by the Chinese priest Yinyuan, Ōbaku Zen is usually associated with a form of Chinese tea called *sencha*, rather than the rustic tea, or *wabicha*, promoted by Rikyū. This rare portrait suggests the possibility of practitioners of *sencha* embracing the image of Rikyū for their own purposes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. No matter the specific sectarian context for the creation of

FIG. 25
Tosa Mitsuoki (1617-1691). *Portrait of Sen no Rikyū*, 17th century. Inscribed by Hyakusetsu Gen'yō (1668-1749). Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 98.9 x 39.1 cm. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

these portraits, they both demonstrate the inextricable connection in the Momoyama and early Edo periods between tea and religious practices that centered on interpersonal relationships as well as a rhetoric of master-disciple transmission.

The ink traces and *kōan* were also tied to modes of transmission in keeping with the priority that Zen Buddhism placed on mind-to-mind transmission directly from teacher to disciple. Zen practitioners believed that enlightenment could be attained in the here and now by their own efforts, that individuals were originally enlightened, imbued with Buddhahood. The only thing required was the ability to recognize the intrinsic emptiness of the self— to "look within and recognize the Buddha"— by seeking personal enlightenment through meditation. Zen positioned itself as an iconoclastic sect. It inspired figurative icons, but they came to depict iconoclastic figures, as in The Sixth Patriarch Tearing a Sutra (Fig. 26). This image epitomizes the idea that transmission and teaching should be rooted in the immediacy of direct transmis-

FIG. 26
Attributed to Liang Kai (Chinese, active c. 1200 -1230). *The Sixth Patriarch Tearing a Sutra*, Song Dynasty, early 13th century, Chinese. Hanging scroll; ink on paper, 72.9 x 31.6 cm. Mitsui Memorial Museum, Tokyo.

sion beyond written words and a reliance on textual sutras. Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen deliberately constructed a cannon of such exemplary unorthodox figures. This pantheon legitimized the sect by creating a lineage of famous patriarchs as in other sects of Buddhism. The first such patriarch was the historical buddha, Śākyamuni (Fig. 27), and he was the source to which all Zen patriarchs would trace their lineage. His six years of ascetic practice in the mountains also became the quintessential example of the efficacy of meditation.

The founder of Zen Buddhism and therefore the first patriarch of that sect, is the Bodhidharma, or "Daruma" in Japanese, and the history of his image is central to the Seigan calligraphy piece in the Bernstein Collection. Bodhidharma was thought to be the twenty-eighth-generation disciple of Śākyamuni. He not only founded the Zen sect but took the religion to China in the fifth century. His identity is shrouded in mystery, and it is better to think of him as a purely mythical figure. As the legend goes, after a perilous

three-year sea voyage, Bodhidharma finally reached China, whereupon he made his way to the court of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (r. 502-549). His verbal exchange with the ruler came to be known as the first *kōan*:

Emperor Wu: "What is the primary meaning of the sacred truth?"

Bodhidharma: "Vast emptiness, nothing sacred."

Emperor Wu: "Who is now standing before me?"

Bodhidharma: "I don't know."

In this exchange with Bodhidharma, the pious monarch, one of China's most fervent patrons of Buddhism, was told that his building of temples, ordaining of monks, carving of Buddha statues, and copying of sutras had no karmic merit. The emperor was puzzled and perhaps annoyed, so Bodhidharma headed north

FIG. 27
Liang Kai (Chinese, active c. 1200 -1230). *Śākyamuni Descending the Mountain After Asceticism*, Southern Song Dynasty, 13th century, Chinese. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 118.4 x 52.0 cm. Tokyo National Museum.

to Shaolin Temple on Mt Song in the state of Wei. To reach his destination, he had to cross the mighty Yangtze River, as depicted in this fourteenth-century Japanese painting (Fig. 28). With his robust body and big belly, he appears to defy gravity as he balances on a flimsy reed to ride the waves. After Bodhidharma arrived in the north of China he sat in a cave and meditated for nine years before another local ruler championed him, inaugurating the spread of the Zen or Chan sect in China. This image (Fig. 29) is supposed to represent the nine years that Bodhidharma spent meditating in the cave, and his dedication to his sect and to the practice of meditation, one of the key characteristics of Zen. Images like this one, commemorating this important moment in Bodhidharma's hagiography, while also being relatively large in scale, were used for rites at Buddhist temples and thus performed an altogether different function than Seigan's Bodhidharma image in the Bernstein scroll, which as we shall see, was made for personal contemplation.

FIG. 28
Bodhidharma (Daruma) on a Reed, 14th century. Hanging scroll; colors, and gold on silk, 69 x 40.6 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, 11.6312.

FIG. 29
Red-Robed Bodhidharma, ca. 1271. Hanging scroll; ink and colors on silk, 104.8 x 46.4 cm. Kōgakuji, Yamanashi Prefecture.

Seigan's ink trace of Bodhidharma can only be understood in conjunction with the text to its right on the hanging scroll (pp. 72-73, Fig. 30). Moving across the scroll from right to left, it begins with a *kōan* taken from an ancient Chinese Chan/Zen Buddhist text. Next, Seigan inscribed a brief comment of his own, then he added his signature and seals, and finally he brushed an image of the patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China, the Indian sage Bodhidharma. Although this essay should explain the precise meaning of this inscription for you, a good Zen *kōan*, should be inexplicable. A student of Zen Buddhism might contemplate a *kōan* for decades or even a lifetime before finally comprehending something close to its full meaning. The brief discussion that follows may not reveal the essence of Mystic Peak, but I hope it will at least limn the outlines of its lofty summit from a humble spot below.

The unknowable nature of Mystic Peak is at the heart of the *kōan* that Seigan brushed on the scroll, which features the most frequently quoted Chan Zen master, Zhaozhou:

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is the lone summit of the mystic peak?"

Zhaozhou said: "I won't answer this question of yours."

The monk asked, "Why won't you answer this question?"

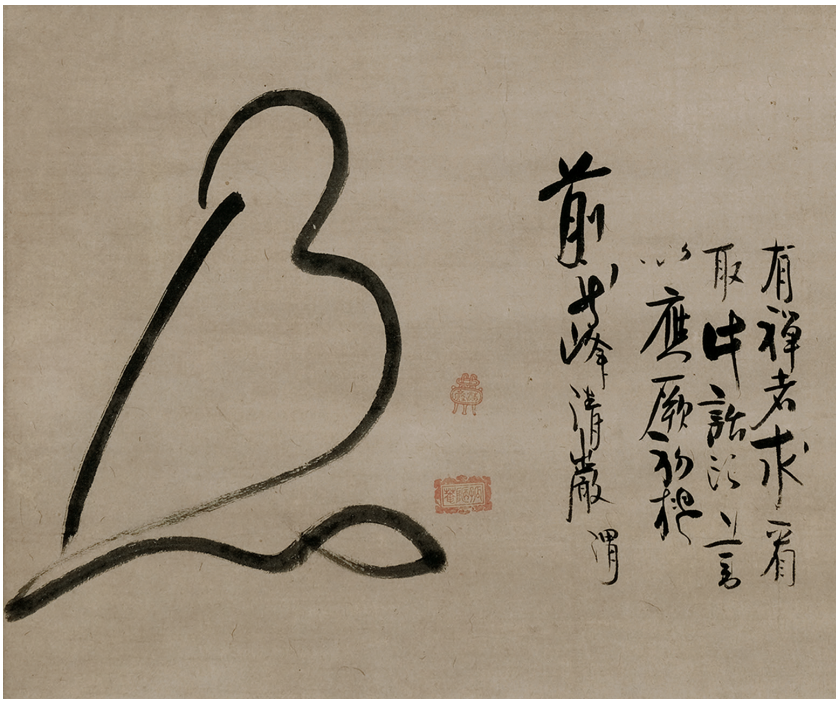
Zhou said, "I fear that if I answered you, you would fall onto the level ground."[17]

僧問趙州:「如何是妙峰孤頂?」
州云:「老僧不答你這話」
僧云:「為什麼不答?」
州云:「我若答汝恐落在平地上」

The text thrusts the reader without warning into the middle of a conversation. Upon first reading, one might sympathize with the perspective of the monk earnestly desiring to understand the definition of mystic peak, perplexed at the teacher's refusal to answer, and baffled by the final line about falling to the ground. Zen texts in general emphasize dialogue, stories, and

orality, more so than those of other Buddhist schools, and this example represents a quintessential Zen "encounter dialogue."[18] Rather than simply recording the sermons of spiritually enlightened teachers, these dialogues include the voices of students, and feature natural sounding, colloquial speech. The *kōan*, as John McCrae has argued, employs an array of "literary techniques to generate the impression of oral spontaneity and lively immediacy," at the same time, the ability of written texts to convey orality should be interrogated.[19]

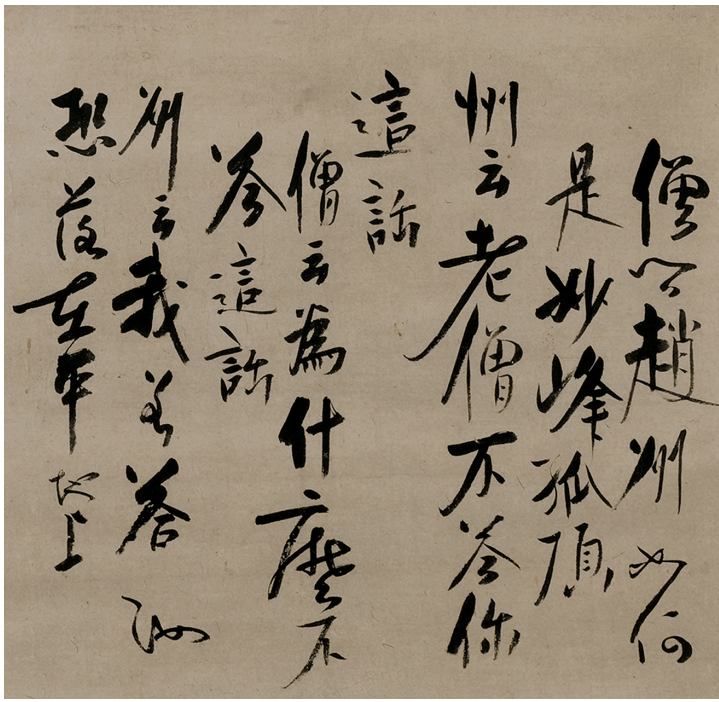
The seekers, novices, and student-monk figures who appear in numerous *kōan* are often depicted to be asking foolish questions. In the *kōan* of the Seigan Sōi piece, the monk's question is in fact so misguided that Zhaozhou, the teacher, does not at first even phrase his refusal to answer in the form of a metaphor, but denies him explicitly. More typical of Zen dialogues is Zhaozhou's final line where he engages in analogical thinking. He answers the second follow up question ("Why won't you answer this question?") with an enig-



Comment

Signature

FIG. 30
Seigan Sōi (1588-1661). *Zen Kōan and Bodhidharma*, 17th century. Detail of Fig. 19. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.



Kōan

僧問趙州如何
是妙峰孤頂
州云老僧不答你
這話
僧云為什麼不
答這話
州云我若答汝
恐落在平地上

KŌAN

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is the lone summit of mystic peak?"

Zhaozhou said: "I won't answer this question of yours."

The monk asked, "Why won't you answer this question?"

Zhou said, "I fear that if I answered you, you would fall onto the level ground."

SEIGAN'S COMMENT

A Zen novice requested this kōan for study, so I wrote this to support this first opportunity to step into Zen training.

SEIGAN'S SIGNATURE

Former Abbot of Dragon Peak [Daitokuji], Seigan I

matic statement that seems metaphorical—the monk will be shocked by the answer and brought down to earth by its powerful force. The spatial imagery of the dialogue, however, which juxtaposes the "mystic peak" with "flat ground" can induce a feeling of vertigo, as the earthly coordinates of the two figures become more imprecise with each spoken line.

Zhaozhou would not be the famous Zen teacher that he was if he had provided his student with a straightforward answer. The point was to deploy a kind of language that could assist the student in their meditative endeavors, to engage the discerning mind in a way that would ultimately lead to an understanding of the fundamental truth, and to see all phenomena as undifferentiated and nondual.

A monk asked Zhaozhou,
"Does a dog have buddha nature or not?"
Zhaozhou replied,
"No."

Here "no" (無 *mu* in Japanese, and *wu* in Chinese) means "emptiness/nothing" and came to epitomize the blunt non-answer for which Zhaozhou was famous. The dog *kōan* was so well known that it became of the subject of art works, used thematically and as records of Zen practice. A fascinating painting from Seigan's era (Fig. 31) memorializes the enlightenment achieved by the warrior Kuroda Nagamasa (1568 –1623), daimyo and advisor to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598). The military man's heightened spiritual consciousness was said to have resulted from his contemplation of Zhaozhou's dog *kōan*, as described in the original inscription of the painting by Shun'oku Sōen (1529 - 1611) 111th Head Priest of Daitokuji, and Nagamasa's Zen teacher. Most surprisingly, the painting includes an image of Sōen's pet dog, named Sōshō, which also alludes to the *kōan*.[20] Entire scholarly volumes have been devoted to thinking through Zhaozhou's dog *kōan*; suffice it to say here that although the question of whether the dog possesses the buddha nature might seem

FIG. 31
Kuroda Nagamasa Practicing Zen under Abbott Shun'oku Sōen (Nagamasa sanzen zu), 17th century. Inscription by Denshō Sōteki (1624-97), copy of Shun'oku Sōen's inscription. Hanging scroll; ink and colors on silk, 105.2 x 46.3 cm. Ryōkōin, Kyoto.

misguided, nothing in Zen is ever that simple. The admonishment against the question recalls the work by Seigan Sōi and the monk's question about Mystic Peak.

The exchange between Zhaozhou and the monk brushed by Seigan can be found in the famous Blue Cliff Record (ca. 1125), a Chinese Chan compilation of one hundred *kōan* that became a core Zen text in Japan.[21] The text circulated widely among monastics and Buddhist practitioners in medieval Japan and Seigan's understanding of this canonical source must have been profound. The lines of dialogue quoted above that Seigan brushed on the scroll appear in the commentary to *kōan* number twenty-three in the compilation, which takes Mystic Peak as its theme:

> Once Baofu and Changqing were
> wandering in the mountains.
>
> Baofu, pointing with a finger, said,
> "This right here is Mystic Peak."

Changqing said, "That may
be so, but it's a pity."[22]

Dense commentary was appended by generations of Chinese editors to each one of the one hundred *kōan* in the *The Blue Cliff Record*. Early commentators in China responded to the *kōan*, not trying to explain it necessarily, engaging in a kind of textual heckling. Baofu and Changqing, the two protagonists in *kōan* twenty-three, for example, are criticized relentlessly in the commentary for having attempted to display their enlightenment. Several pages follow with more commentary and related *kōan* (such as the one singled out and brushed by Seigan centuries later in Japan), and by the end of the section on *kōan* twenty-three both Baofu and Changqing have been praised. Xuedou Chongxian (980-1052), the compiler of the original one hundred *kōan* of The Blue Cliff Record, included a poem in praise of each man, where he suggests that Baofu's statement about Mystic Peak does not foolishly display his own enlightenment, but is

meant to test Changqing's discernment, to learn if he "had eyes or not":

妙峰孤頂草離離、
On the summit of the mystic peak
grasses grow in rich abundance.

拈得分明付與誰。
You discern it clearly, but to
whom could you impart it?

不是孫公辨端的、
If Changqing had not discriminated,

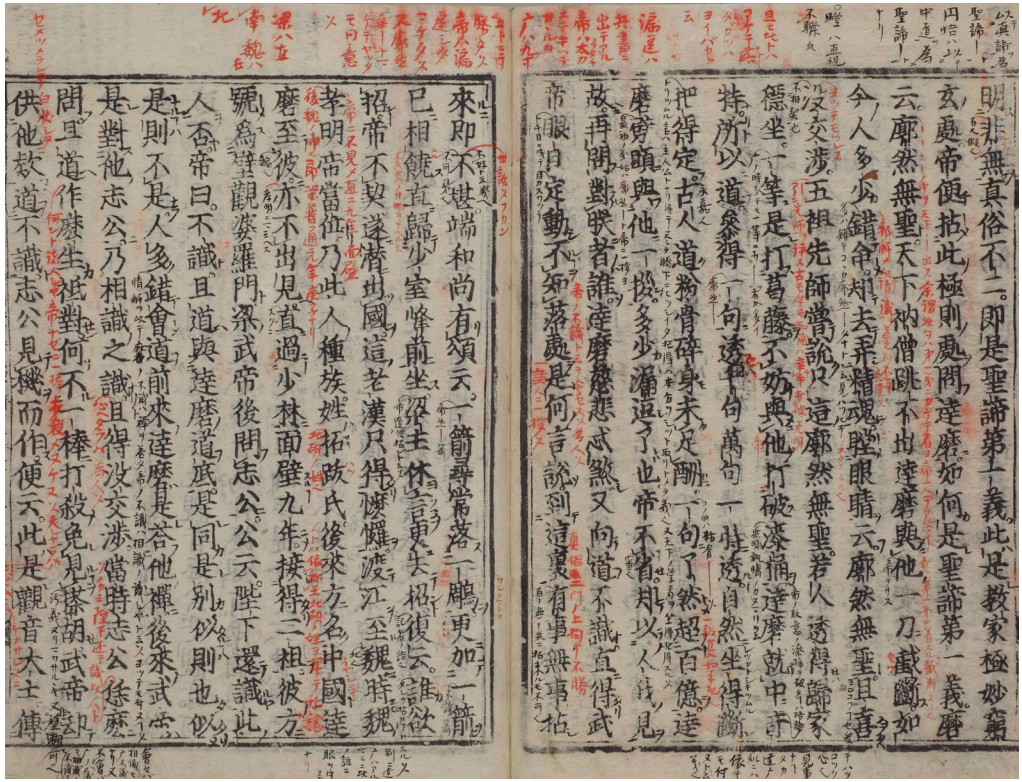
髑髏著地幾人知。
would anyone have known that
skulls in fact litter the ground?[23]

The foolish Baofu is perhaps not so foolish after all, and yet later commentary on Xuedou's verse critiques every line of his poem. The Zen text thus never allows a definitive statement to be made but encourages an incessant critique. Evidence of a discerning mind is always called into question,

which at once removes the boundary between master and disciple, suggesting the interdependent relationship of two individuals engaged in dialogue.

In the editions of The Blue Cliff Record that circulated in Japan, one finds traces of how such confounding exchanges were used in Zen training. In printed examples (Fig. 32), interlinear and marginal notes, reactions, and glosses in red and black ink cover the page. Such writing, produced at different times, conveys perhaps an even greater immediacy and spontaneity than the original dialogues. These markings capture a reader grappling with the complexity of the text in real time, while also suggesting the back and forth between teacher and student resulting in the addition of yet more comments and clarifications. The Seigan scroll in the Bernstein Collection is fundamentally a part of this world of Zen training and exchange between teacher and student. In the brief commentary that Seigan adds to the ancient *kōan* from The Blue Cliff Record, he explains how he came to brush the scroll (Fig. 30):

FIG. 32
Blue Cliff Record (Bukka Engo Zenji Hekiganroku), edition printed Enpō 5 (1677) Detail from set of five bound volumes, ink on paper, 25.4 x 18.4 cm. National Institute of Japanese Literature, 96-1259-1-5.



> A student of Zen requested this *kōan* for training, so I wrote this in support of the initial action.[24]
> 有禅者求看取此話頭書以應厥初機

Seigan's statement clarifies that he brushed this calligraphy in response to someone attempting to study Zen who came to him expressing a desire to learn from this *kōan*—to contemplate the answer as a method of training, and then to present ideas to the teacher and to receive criticism. By writing out the *kōan* as a work of calligraphy, Seigan was meeting the moment of this person's commitment and initial inspiration to begin the contemplation of Zen. But Seigan did not merely brush the words of the *kōan* and explain the motivation behind the production of the scroll, he supplied further food for thought through his image of Bodhidharma.

Bodhidharma: Kōan Embodied

Seigan's Bodhidharma looks very different from the painting of the patriarch crossing the Yangtze on a reed, or from the painting of the Bodhidharma meditating in a cave. Seigan's image is simplified to the extreme and yet it encapsulates the all-important wall-gazing moment in the Bodhidharma's hagiography mentioned earlier. During those nine years when Bodhidharma sat in contemplation, he was approached by the monk Huike, as captured in a painting by Liang Kai (Fig. 33). When Huike visited Bodhidharma at the Shao-lin Temple, Bodhidharma said "If you seek the Dharma, you must risk your life for the Way." Huike stood in the cold snow for a long time, waiting for Bodhidharma's permission to become his disciple. Finally, Huike was so determined to be accepted that he cut off his arm and offered it as proof of his dedication. The horizontally oriented painting by Liang Kai depicts Bodhidharma in his distinctive red robe as he faces right toward

FIG. 33
Attributed to Liang Kai (Chinese, active c. 1200 -1230). *Huike and Bodhidharma, from Eight Eminent Monks*. Hanging scroll; ink and colors on silk, 26.6 × 64.1 cm. The Shanghai Museum of Art.

the cliff wall of the cave deep within a craggy forest. The aspiring disciple Huike mimics the master's posture as he humbly approaches him, his severed arm presumably hidden within the sleeve of his robe. The Japanese artist Sesshū (Fig. 34) took a more graphic approach and highlighted the would-be disciple's severed arm. Bodhidharma's robe is no longer red, but seemingly ineffable, rendered with thick but faint ink that stands in contrast to the dark brushstrokes that make up the surrounding rocks, and the polychromed and detailed face of the patriarch.

In his depiction of Bodhidharma's robe, Sesshū worked within a long-standing tradition of representing the garment in an ethereal manner, as seen in a late thirteenth-century Chinese painting (Fig. 35). According to Zen lore, Huike received from Bodhidharma the Dharma Seal, transmitted from mind to mind, along with his robe. The robe was thus understood as an external manifestation of the teachings, which were handed down through generations of Indian teachers beginning with

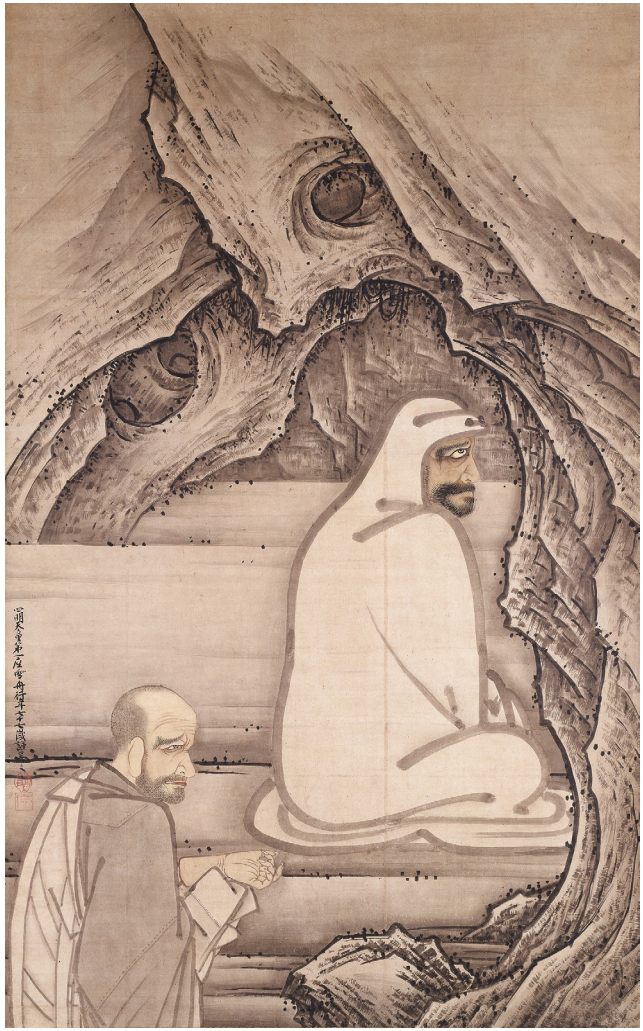


FIG. 34
Sesshū Tōyō (c. 1420-1506), *Huike Offering his Severed Arm to Bodhidharma*, 1496. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, 182.7 x 113.6 cm. Sainenji, Aichi Prefecture.

FIG. 35
Formerly attributed to Yan Ciping (act. 1164-1181). *Bodhidharma and Huike*, Southern Song Dynasty, late 13th century, Chinese. Hanging scroll; ink on silk, 116.2 x 46.3 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art, 1972.41.

Śākyamuni. Zen teachings encouraged the interrogation of the ontology of objects, meaning that to depict any subject was to engage in a philosophical debate. How could an artist communicate the principles of non-duality, of undifferentiated existence, in the representation of things? When it came to Bodhidharma's robe, and its symbolic and concrete nature as evidence of Dharma lineage and transmission, the answer was to exploit the unique properties of ink painting to depict the robe as both materially present, and, crucially, as dematerialized.

In numerous paintings of Bodhidharma, the robe is emphasized and visually differentiated so that it stands both inside and outside of the representational world, symbolizing the essence of Zen teachings and serving as a visual instantiation of mind-to-mind transmission. The so-called "one stroke Bodhidharma" (*ippitsu daruma*), as in this example from the fourteenth-century (Fig. 36), epitomizes how the robe may be brushed to evoke a world of meaning. Here the narrative motifs from the

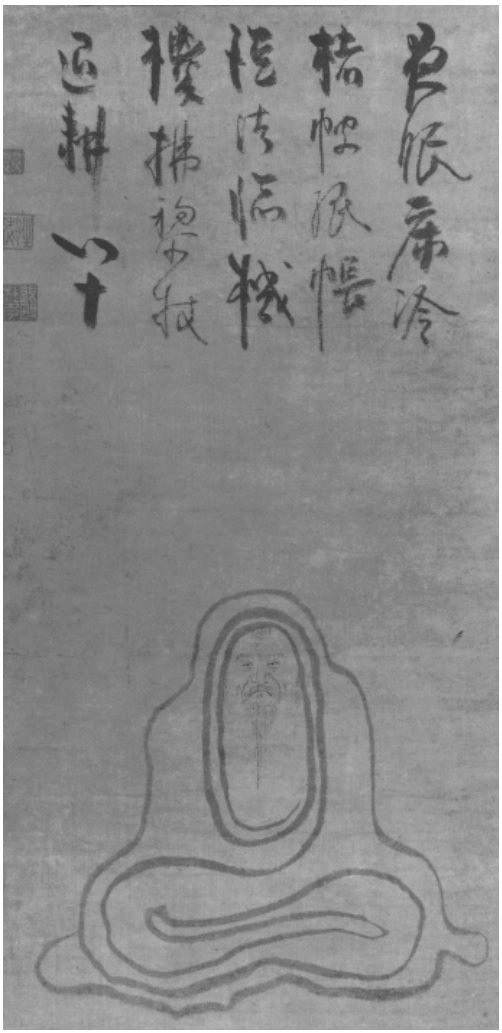


FIG. 36
Bodhidharma, dated 1394. Inscribed by Shōkai Reiken (1315-1396). Hanging scroll; ink on paper, 65.7 x 32.6 cm. Umezawa Kinenkan, Tokyo.

famous scene of Bodhidharma's wall-gazing have been reduced to the solitary figure who faces the viewer rather than a rocky cave wall. The finely painted face with features delineated through precise ink brushwork conveys the Bodhidharma's meditative state—the pupils of his downcast eyes seem to gaze inward rather than toward any external point. The single line for the hooded robe begins at the chest of the figure and coils around the head twice then downward to delineate the knees and legs of a person in meditation. The line moves back upward to form the familiar head and shoulders of the Indian patriarch and then back down for a final flourish to depict the evocative hem of his robe. By understanding that the robe is the Dharma or Buddhist Law it becomes meaningful for the viewer to trace the movement of the brushed line in the minds' eye as its own meditative act.

By the early Edo period the one-stroke Bodhidharma had become even more simplified, and in Seigan Sōi's calligraphy (Fig. 37),

the image of the patriarch seems to provide something of an answer to the written *kōan* that precedes it to the right. The picture clearly communicates the Bodhidharma in profile by using two strokes, one representing the backbone of the patriarch on the left, and one continuous line delineating the hooded head, the front of the body, belly and arms beneath the robe, and the hem of the garment. A corporeal body emerges from the ink outline, but the body and the robe are entirely unified. The finely detailed face of the patriarch juxtaposed with the abstracted robe, as seen previously, has been eliminated. Although there is no longer an approaching disciple, this simplified calligraphic work of Bodhidharma with his back turned toward the left, still manages to recall the countless images of encounter between him and Huike. The profile pose also evokes the nine years that Bodhidharma spent wall-gazing. Here he even seems to gaze at the wall of text to the right in Seigan's scroll, as if gazing at the logographs across the paper and contemplating the lofty

crag of mystic peak (妙峰孤頂) in the second line. For a moment the characters might evenseem to dissolve into pure brushstrokes of a mountain represented in ink. In this way, Seigan's image, juxtaposed with the preceding text, opens a space in between word and image that is beyond language. The word-like abstract form of the picture of Bodhidharma rendered in the same ink as the text ensures a reciprocal, nondual dialectic between text and image—the highest aspiration of Zen image making.

Seigan's work goes further still. The image of Bodhidharma is not merely "word-like," butmade of words—a word-picture (moji-e) (Fig. 37). The strokes that comprise the Bodhidharma's robe-body are also graphs referring to the notion that "the mind is the buddha." The upper part of the body traces the lines of the character for the word for "one and the same" (sunawachi 即, calligraphically abbreviated to: 乃) which in medieval religious texts denotes an equivalence. The equivalence in this case is to the "mind" (kokoro 心), a word which can be read

in abbreviated calligraphic form in the hem of the Bodhidharma's robe. Together the two characters refer to the phrase, "the mind is the buddha" (*sokushin sokubutsu* 即心即仏).[25] The image thus provides a truism for the student of Zen to contemplate when studying the *kōan* on the scroll: that the mind and the buddha are the same, illustrated through the body of the Bodhidharma, or more precisely, by graphically embedding that message in the depicted robe.

In this way, the dharma robe literally contains the teachings in form and content—the word-image avoids unilateral finality and lives in a space in between text and image. The work produces textual and pictorial meaning simultaneously, thus demanding a kind of mental cognition that is also in-between, and achieves a formal nonduality. The Zen sect explicitly eschews the written word and a reliance on scriptures, understanding language to be deceptive since it lends a fixed reality to a phenomenal world that should be seen as illusory. Seigan's Bodhidharma ink trace communicates the idea

FIG. 37
Seigan Sōi (1588-1661). *Zen Kōan and Bodhidharma*, 17th century. Detail of Fig. 19. Collection of Jane and Raphael Bernstein.

乃 *sunawachi* (即)
one and the same

心 *kokoro*
mind

即心即仏

sokushin sukubutsu
the mind is the Buddha

that the mind is the buddha, but only through a written language that is self-conscious about its own illusory nature. For the student seeking to answer the *kōan* about Mystic Peak, the word-image does not simply suggest looking to oneself to find the buddha nature, but asks that one scrutinize perception itself. First and foremost, Seigan's Bodhidharma is a provisional text and a provisional image, residing in a space of non-dualism, central to Buddhist philosophy perfectly expressed in this mode of the ink trace.

Years after Seigan had passed away, the Zen monk Hakuin, himself known for Bodhidharma images like the one this essay has discussed, painted an image of Mount Fuji, which he referred to in a colophon as the "true likeness" of Bodhidharma. He depicted a solitary white mountain, very much like the one by Soga Shōhaku in the Bernstein Collection (Fig. 3), but as a symbol of the Buddha nature. Zen would have us seek the ultimate reality of existence in the depths of the One Mind that is inherent within all sentient beings. In this way we have

come full circle, from Shōhaku's misty peak to Seigan's Mystic Peak, taking the Bodhidharma's teachings to heart, both may be seen as undifferentiated.

妙峯孤頂難人到
The summit of Mystic Peak is
hard for people to climb.

只看白雲飛又歸
I just sit here watching the
white clouds come and go.[26]

End Notes

1 John R. Stomberg, Katherine Hart, Jessica Hong, Melissa McCormick, Jami C. Powell, and Hood Museum of Art organizer, host institution, *A Legacy for Learning: The Jane and Raphael Bernstein Collection* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, 2020).

2 For more information and the translation of the inscription on this painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, see the catalogue entry by Miyeko Murase in *Art Through a Lifetime: The Mary Griggs Burke Collection*, vol. 1, Japanese Paintings, Printed Works, Calligraphy (New York: Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2013), p. 356, cat. no. 436.

3 Translation from Edwin A. Cranston, *A Waka Anthology*, Volume Two: Grasses of Remembrance, Part B (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 699.

4 The Kano Takanobu portrait of Murasaki Shikibu, in the collection of Ishiyamadera temple, is discussed in Melissa McCormick, "Ishiyamadera and the Buddhist Veneration of Murasaki Shikibu," chapter two in Carpenter and McCormick, eds., *The Tale of Genji: A Japanese Classic Illuminated* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2019), pp. 114-141.

5 See Christine Guth, Shinzō: Hachiman Imagery and Its Development (Harvard University Asia Center, 1985).

6 For examples from the early Heian period to the Kamakura period showing the transformation of sculptural styles see Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Myōō: ikari to itsukushimi no hotoke: tokubetsuten* (Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 2000).

7 Ono shrine burned down in 1926, but an icon of Monju Bodhisattva once at the shrine survives, having been transferred to the nearby Buddhist temple of Shinmyoji after the forced separation of Shinto and Buddhism in the Meiji period (1868).

8 The inscription beside the woman appears to read "lower shrine" (gekū), while the figure of Narihira is labelled simply "Suwa." The Main and Lower Suwa shrines are each currently comprised of two shrines, each with their own Buddhist counterparts for the enshrined *kami*: for the Main

Shrine, Fugen Bosatsu and Nyoirin Kannon, and for the Lower Shrine, Senjū Kannon and Yaskushi nyorai.

9 See the entry by Yamaguchi Ryusuke on the sculpture *Standing Izusan Gongen* in the Nara National Museum Collection, which also reproduces the Bernstein painting, pp. 172-73 in *Shinto: Discovery of the Divine in Japanese Art*, edited by Sinéad Vilbar and Kevin Carr (Cleveland Museum of Art, 2019).

10 "Akimiya" may refer to one of the Suwa Lower Shrines (Suwa gekū, Akimiya and Harumiya), although the *honjibutsu* or Buddhist counterpart of its *kami* is not known to be Jizō, but Senjū Kannon. Clearly when it came to the Suwa shrines, the producers of this painting veered from what is now orthodox, in having Ariwara no Narihira and Empress Nijō for example represent the upper and lower shrines overall. This is one of several subjects for further research concerning this painting that I will pursue in a future study.

11 For an account of Seigan's biography and an analysis of a work of his calligraphy Jigoku (Hell), formerly in the Barnet and Burto Collection and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2014.719.11), see Stephen Addiss, *The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks*, 1600-1925 (H.N. Abrams, 1989), 40-42.

12 See for example the study of Hakuin's works and their relationship to his teaching of Zen in Audrey Yoshiko Seo and Stephen Addiss, *The Sound of One Hand: Paintings and Calligraphy by Zen Master Hakuin* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010); and for in-depth examination of a medieval *kōan*-centric painting, see Yukio Lippit, *Japanese Zen Buddhism and the Impossible Painting* (Getty Research Institute, 2017).

13 Steven Heine, "Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Discomfort Me: Zen Staffs as Implements of Instruction," in Pamela D Winfield and Steven Heine eds., *Zen and Material Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 5.

14 Bernard Faure, "Quand l'habit fait le moine: The Symbolism of the Kāsāya in Sōtō Zen," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8, no. 1 (1995): 335–369.

15 Hōrin Jōshō (1593-1668), the abbot of Rokuonji, recounts in his diary, *Kakumeiki*, seeing the Rikyū portrait with the Shun'oku inscription brought out by Sōtan for a tea gathering in 1648; cited by Matsushima Masato in *Hasegawa Tōhaku: botsugo 400-nen* (Mainichi Shinbunsha: NHK: NHK Puromōshon, 2010), 272.

16 The portrait was previously introduced in Ebine Toshio, "Tosa Mitsuoki hitsu Sen Rikyū zō," *Kokka* 1336 (2007), pl. 4, pp. 23-24.

17 Translated in Thomas F. Cleary and J. C. Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record* (Shambhala, 1977), 156.

18 John R. McCrae, "The Antecedents of Encounter Dialogue in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," in *The Kōan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 46-74.

19 Ibid., 48.

20 See the entries by Kadowaki Mutsumi for this painting and an identical version in the Fukuoka Museum in Tanaka Atsuko, et al., *Daitokuji Ryōkōin kokuhō yōhen tenmoku to hasōai* (Miho Museum, 2019), 382-383.

21 See the Introduction and translation by Thomas F. Cleary and J. C. Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record* (Shambhala; distributed by Random House, 1977).

22 Translated in Cleary and Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record*, 156.

23 My translation is based on the annotated Japanese edition of *The Blue Cliff Record* in vol. 1 of Sueki Fumihiko, et al., *Gendai goyaku Hekiganroku* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001), 395.

24 My translation is based on an explication of Seigan's comment generously provided by Professor Horikawa Takashi (personal communication, November 1, 2021), specialist in medieval Zen Buddhism and inscriptive practices. I extend my gratitude to Professor Shimao Arata for introducing me to Professor Horikawa. I also wish to thank Professor Ziliang Alex Liu and Dr. Xiaotian Yin for their assistance in deciphering Seigan Sōi's handwriting.

25 Patricia Fister has pointed out the same use of a word picture embedding the "the mind is the buddha" (*sokushin sokubutsu*) phrase in a Daruma painting by the imperial nun Tokugon Rihō (1672-1745), abbess of Hōkyōji and daughter of Emperor Gosai (1638-1685; r. 1655-1663) who was on the throne when Seigan died in 1661; see Patricia Fister, "Zen Painting and Calligraphy by Emperors and Imperial Nuns," in Institute for Medieval Japanese Studies, et al. *Amamonzeki jiin no sekai: mikotachi no shinkō to gosho bunka* (Sankei Shinbunsha, 2009), 158.

26 This verse is from the twentieth-century Zen phrase book, *Shinsan zengoshū* (*A New Compilation of the Zen Phrase Collection*), edited by Tsuchiya Etsudō; translated by Victor Sōgen Hori, in his monumental study, *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Kōan Practice* (University of Hawai'i, 2003), 582.

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Figs. 20 and 21
From *Daitokuji chadō meihōten*. Tokyo: Kyōdō Tsūshinsha, 1985.

Fig. 22
From *Nihon koji bijutsu zenshū* vol. 23, Daitokuji. Tokyo: Shueisha 1979.

Fig. 24
From Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan and Mainichi Shinbunsha, *Hasegawa Tōhaku: botsugo 400-nen*. Mainichi Shinbunsha: NHK Puromōshon, 2010.

Figs. 29 and 36
From Fontein, Jan and Money L. Hickman. *Zen Painting & Calligraphy*. Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1970.

Fig. 31
From *Daitokuji Ryūkōin kokuhō yōhen tenmoku to hasōai*. Miho Museum, 2019.

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