

International Symposium “On the Front Line of Studies of the History of Early Chan Buddhism”

Opening Remarks

TAKEMURA Makio*

Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to the symposium on the latest research on Early Chan. On behalf of Toyo University, I would like to thank you for attending today.

This symposium was made possible with support from the *kakenhi* grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Research Topic: The formation and acceptance of Chan philosophy in China and Japan, in cooperation with overseas researchers) and the Inoue Enryō Memorial Grant (Research Topic: The formation and development of Buddhist philosophy in East Asia, and its meaning). This weekend we have researchers participating from the US, China, Taiwan, Canada and Japan, including Professor Bernard Faure of Columbia University who will give the Memorial Lecture. We have a meaningful program planned for the next two days. I would like to take this time to extend my warmest thanks to all the speakers who have gathered from Japan and abroad to participate in this symposium.

Since being designated as a “Top Global University” by MEXT in 2014, we have been committed to the globalization of education and research at Toyo University. The University is very excited to have an international group of researchers from around the world together at this event engaging in academic exchange. I would like to thank Professor Ibuki Atsushi and all those involved in planning and organizing this event.

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Chan Buddhism first gained international attention thanks to the efforts of Daisetz Suzuki, who published books on Chan in English, and lectured abroad, most notably at Columbia University. It is also thanks to missionary efforts of the Japanese Sōtō Zen school in France that a large number of Westerners have been drawn to Chan Buddhism. In today's world, where belief in Christianity is being questioned, I believe that dogma-free Chan Buddhism will become a new source of spirituality in the West. Interest in Chan Buddhism is on the rise around the world today.

When comparing Chan Buddhism with other Buddhist schools, one of the points that separates Chan is the idea that spiritual awakening cannot be experienced through words and letters. The founder of Toyo University, Dr. Inoue Enryō, researched various schools of Buddhist thought. He thought highly of Tiantai, Huayan, and Vajrayāna philosophy, but he also thought very highly of the views of the Chan school.

Dr. Inoue wrote the following in his book entitled *Introduction to Zen Buddhist Philosophy (Zenshū tetsugaku joron)*:

The above schools (The Hīnayāna Abhidharmakośa school, and the Mahāyāna schools of Yogācāra, Madhyamaka, Tiantai, Huayan, and Shingon) revealed the path to enlightenment based on this mysterious and difficult to comprehend theory. However, in actual practice they were still not able to discover the path to complete enlightenment instantaneously. In response to this, the Chan school appeared and advocated a new theory: the transmission of the mind outside the teachings (教外別傳). In other words, the Chan school created a new sect in which one can gather all mysterious phenomena into one's practice, and reveal the true nature of suchness to one's mind by using one's infinite power of volition, and therefore be able to directly realise the

mysteriousness of phenomena. This is not only the “transmission of mind outside of teachings” of Buddhism, but also should be considered as the “transmission of mind outside the teachings” of all religions that ever have or will exist in the world. (“選集,” Vol. 6, p. 299)

In other words, the Chan school witnessed other Buddhist schools focusing on unnecessary words, and not realising the profound meaning which cannot be expressed through words. In reaction to this, the Chan school advocated a new theory that spiritual awakening cannot be experienced through words and letters (不立文字). They showed that the true nature of suchness, or Buddha mind is mysterious and difficult to comprehend, and that one cannot perfectly realize it by relying on only one sūtra or śāstra. They called this theory “the transmission of the mind outside the teachings.” This revealed, for the first time, the origin of the most subtle Buddhist teaching, and the miraculous light of suchness became more and more brilliant. This should be considered the most excellent view of the Chan school. (ibid., p. 304)

As you can see, Dr. Inoue recognized and gave high praise to the significance of the fact that, unlike other schools of Buddhism, Chan teaches how to realise true Buddha nature instantaneously. We can see that this characteristic of Chan has remained unchanged since the beginning of the tradition.

In regard to how the Chan school began, tradition has held that Bodhidharma came to China from India to spread the teachings. However, the latest research shows that this story was fabricated by a later school in order to gain authority. There is still much research that needs to be done, in particular on the early period of the tradition, in terms of understanding the

history of Chan. It is my hope that over the next two days we will be able to shed light on these issues from various angles, and help to answer some of these questions. I hope that there will be lively debates and discussions in each session, and that this symposium will make a meaningful contribution of academic research to the field.

In conclusion, I sincerely wish that this symposium will be fruitful, and that it will contribute to the advancement of Buddhist studies on an international level.

Thank you.

(Translated by Matthew Sisco)