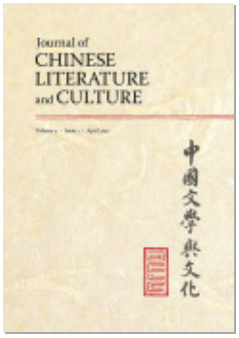
On Hu Shih's Coattails: Reflections on and Prognostications for Research on Chan Buddhism



Ge Zhaoguang, Jason Protass

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On Hu Shih's Coattails: Reflections on and Prognostications for Research on Chan Buddhism

GE ZHAOGUANG

JASON PROTASS, Translator

Abstract This article surveys the legacy of Hu Shih in order to assess the current state of the field of Chan studies in mainland China. Though the work of Hu Shih was long neglected in the mainland, his work has enjoyed renewed popularity since the 1980s and the dynamics of "culture fever" in Chinese intellectual communities. The article demonstrates that the strengths of Chinese scholarship today are particularly indebted to the methodological advances achieved by Hu Shih in the last century. Comparisons with Japanese and Euro-American scholarship underscore the particular contributions of Chinese scholars. The article concludes with a few prognostications regarding the field of Chan history in Chinese academia as well as a defense of Hu Shih's legacy.

Keywords Hu Shih, Chan Buddhism, culture fever, historiography, Chinese Buddhist history

Cultural and Intellectual Contexts in 1980s China

Previously stifled academic fields enjoyed renewed interest and energy in the 1980s in China. Academic research on Chan Buddhism had been largely idle after 1949. Many believed Chan was a philosophical school of Buddhism with little to contribute to a Marxist society. During this period, Chan Buddhism, a subject that involves inevitable references to Hu Shih, received only passing attention in Buddhist magazines and in books on Chinese intellectual history. Now, some decades later, we are well into a renaissance of Chan studies in China.

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What could account for this interest in Chan in contemporary Chinese society? The broader "culture fever" (*wenhua re* 文化熱) that has gripped China since the 1980s is one important context.[1] There is a tension running through the heart of culture fever, which is reflected in "Chan fever." In both cases we see modern Chinese people take pride in China's traditions but in the same breath feel compelled to critique China's past.

Many of the people who lived through the Cultural Revolution maintain a single-minded focus on modernization. Maoist slogans such as "the backward get beaten"[2] reiterated what had earlier been the "pursuit of wealth and strength,"[3] instilling these values in the people. Against the realpolitik of modernization, there remained in the background values such as science, democracy, and freedom. After the Cultural Revolution, Lu Xun's critique of national character was a source for a strong tradition of critique. Nonetheless, direct criticism aimed at those in power is a fool's errand. Instead, critiques of power have often taken the guise of history, culture, and tradition. One can indirectly register grievances. This is why so many Chinese essays trace the causes of China's current problems, often described in terms of backwardness and ignorance, to China's traditions. The impulse to critique and its manifestations in modern culture are woven into the fabric of the renewed interest in Buddhism.

On the other hand, China's intellectuals have always had special affection for Chinese traditions and history. Moreover, the psychology of *tianxia* 天下, that great-nation attitude, lives in our hearts and is a stalwart against complete capitulation to modern Western ways of living. We take comfort in the knowledge that our traditions were once mighty. The kind of Chan that interests such intellectuals is the Chan that once appealed to literati and discussed freedom, idiosyncratic behavior, and mystifying *gong'an* 公案. These topics resist the kinds of criticism described above. This is why in one chapter of my book *Chan Buddhism and Chinese Culture* (*Chanzong yu Zhongguo wenhua* 禪宗與中國文化), I critiqued Chan for being anti-intellectual and advocating navel gazing and then in a subsequent chapter wrote appreciations of the aesthetics of "profound seclusion" (*youshen* 幽深) and of the pursuit of a life of spontaneity (*ziran* 自然).

I believe contemporary novels also made important contributions to Chan fever. In general, novelists have found little inspiration in the high traditions of Confucianism, which are conservative, rigid, and perhaps even ossified. Although so-called Han values, aesthetics, and culture all exert strong pressures on society, they are uninteresting. By contrast, Chan, Daoist thought, shamanism, and the non-Han cultures of western China are all fodder for narrativizing the strange, iconoclastic, and marginal. Chan fever is not just an academic trend but has emerged from a broader cultural moment.

There is a curious history behind the movement of Chan from the obscure margins of Chinese culture to the vanguard of a modern cultural movement. The origins of Chan fever are in China's idiosyncratic exchanges with the West. There was a very popular book series titled *Zou xiang wei lai* 走向未來 (Toward the Future).[4] The series included the book *Wuli xue yu dongfang shenmi zhuyi* 物理學與東方神秘主義, a translation of the offbeat *Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra.[5] A physicist by training, Capra was an iconoclast at heart. He lodged real speculation beyond the limits of Western science in his eccentric understanding of Eastern thought. The book used Daoist and Chan sources to rethink assumptions about rationality and science. Naturally, at the time of its Chinese translation, this book and its criticisms had little impact on those Chinese who were fervently racing to study the sciences. For those of us who yearned to cherish our traditional culture, however, the book came as an inspiration. Suddenly it seemed that our native traditions had something to offer, something more advanced even than Western philosophy and science. This allowed many of us to imagine we could take pride in our own cultural capital and invited us to see Chan in a different light.

Looking back, of course, we know that the Chan that featured in Capra's book was a peculiarly modern conception of Chan, a result of European and Japanese influences. Already in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thinkers from Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche to Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers began to use ideas and language from translations of sacred texts of the East, whether Vedic or Buddhist in origin. At roughly the same time, Japanese thinkers grew interested in Buddhist philosophy. Philosophers such as Suzuki (D. T.) Daisetsu Teitarō 鈴木大拙貞太郎 (1870–1966), Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一 (1889–1980), and Masao Abe 阿部正雄 (1915–2006) believed that Zen could be a panacea for all manner of Western ills. Buddhist thought was repackaged in Western concepts and exported to the West. To extend this metaphor in order to think about this history as a background to the influence of the Chinese translation of Capra's book, we might say that some Westerners like Capra received a foreign package containing traditional Chinese culture and then, perhaps unwittingly, exported it back to China.

Research of Chan in general has followed one of three approaches: (1) research of historical textual criticism and philology; (2) philosophical and psychological explanations of Chan thought; and (3) histories of material, social, or economic conditions. However, in the 1980s, we generally did not distinguish among these methods. My *Chan Buddhism and Chinese Culture*, for example, drew freely from each of these distinct approaches. Looking back, I am not sure that our publications were always entirely academic, but they were participants in that Chan fever.

On the Importance of Hu Shih:
Fundamental Questions and One Hundred Years of Chan Studies

The study of Chan, in the broadest terms, has tended to focus on four fundamental themes—meditation, emptiness, sudden awakening, and the use of language. These four themes at first appear to refer to purely philosophical or practical aspects of Chan. However, each is integrally related to matters of Chan history. Examining these four themes one by one will show how social, intellectual, and other historical contexts prove essential to research on Chan.

Meditation, known as *chan* 禪, was a prominent practice in early Chinese Buddhism. Later in Chinese history, however, the word *chan* no longer referred to meditation only and was also the name of the Chan school. This school amalgamated nearly all of Buddhism within itself—not just meditation—and dominated the landscape of Chinese Buddhism. This quickly becomes a set of historical questions. How did the practice of *chan* transform into a theoretical system called *Chan*? What connects methods of personal cultivation with the institution? How is it that *chan* became *Chan*?

The differences and linkages between Chan conceptions of *kong* 空 (emptiness) and the Daoist *wu* 無 (nothing) are also an important topic of research. A related matter is the shift in early Chan away from an association with the *Lengjia jing* 楞伽經 (Skt. *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*) and its emphasis on *xin* 心 (mind) toward *Bore* 般若 (Skt. *Prajñā* [*pāramitā*]) literature and its emphasis on *kong*. Comparing early and late recensions of the *Platform Sūtra*, a reader may notice a profound difference between the cataphatic statement "Buddha-nature is always clean and pure" and the apophatic "fundamentally there is not a single thing."[6] These developments can be construed as sinification, the process by which Buddhism conjoined with China's native language and its attendant philosophy.

As for research on sudden awakening, the fundamental question seems to center on how "no thought" transforms into "everyday mind is the way."[7] Some scholars have identified distinctions between early schools of Chan, like Oxhead (*Niutou*) 牛頭, Heze 菏澤, or Hongzhou 洪州. Over time, the discourse of sudden awakening bends toward freedom and transcendence. How does this tendency reflect and in turn shape the social stratum and background of those who are most likely to become Chan adherents? This may be one reason that Chan was able to penetrate the upper echelons of Chinese society. We might also reconsider its movement from south to north and from peripheral mountain forests to imperial monastery halls.

Buddhism is fundamentally a religion of scripture, and Chan is unusual for the dictum "do not rely on words and letters."[8] Every Buddhist *sūtra* begins with the words "thus have I heard" in order to convey confidence that this text is a

reliable record of the Buddha's teachings. When did this distrust of language emerge? What are its theoretical principles? How does it relate to practice and to awakening? Chan deploys contradictions, poems, and intentional misreadings in order to disrupt our ordinary faith in language. How did this aspect of Chan religion become a literary pursuit, lifestyle, and form of artistic cultural capital in modern times? How did Chan transform from a practical religion to one of classics and corpus?

At first, researchers in China in the 1980s were not interested in the kind of scholarship typified by these themes. At that time, the important research was focused on Chan thought as a philosophical system and how Chan had influenced Chinese culture. Ever since the intellectual transformations wrought by the culture fever era of the 1980s, there have been dramatic changes in the study of Chan. Now we have reached a moment when it is instructive to return to Hu Shih and the work he completed in the 1920s and 1930s.

The modern Chinese study of Chan history may begin with Shen Zengzhi 沈曾植 (1850–1922). Shen never published a monograph on the subject, but the *Hai ri lou zha cong* 海日樓札叢 (Collected Notes from the Hairi Tower) compiled by his disciples includes several brief but important essays.[9] Shen was one of the dominant scholars of his time and later influenced major figures such as Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) and Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1967). Shen had a scholarly interest in Buddhist and Daoist learning during roughly the same period as monastic and lay leaders such as Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947) and Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 (1871–1943) and was nearly contemporaneous with Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) and Meng Wentong 蒙文通 (1894–1968). Nonetheless, a strong template for Chan scholarship did not take shape. These early scholars made some progress but failed to weave together history, philology, and philosophy. Such modern scholarship did not appear until Hu Shih's work in the 1920s.

Hu Shih has long been recognized as responsible for the transformation of the study of Chan history into a modern discipline. Hu's interest in Chan seems to have arisen in response to two other interests. Hu was a scholar of vernacular literature, and the Chan *yulu* 語錄 (recorded sayings) are an indispensable source for the study of written vernacular language. Hu was also interested in a history of Chinese philosophy and recognized the importance of Buddhism in China's intellectual history. According to his biographers, Hu Shih set out to study Chan history in 1924.[10] Though he had earlier written about Dunhuang Chan materials, it was not until 1926 that Hu had the opportunity to travel to Europe and begin his work in earnest.[11] In 1927 Hu gave a series of lectures at the Shanghai American School titled "A Brief History of Chinese Chan" 中國禪宗小史 (*Zhongguo Chanzong xiao shi*) and in 1928 penned "Investigations of

Ancient History in Chan Studies" 禪學古史考 (*Chanxue gushikao*). That same year Hu met historian Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 (1893–1964). We can see in the records from this encounter that Hu's ideas were already well formed.[12]

Between 1927 and 1935 Hu published a series of important articles focused on the early history of the Chan lineages, Shenhui and the *Platform Sūtra*, and the succeeding generations after Huineng and Shenhui.[13] With these publications, he commanded the attention of the academic world. Hu had discovered documents pertaining to the early history of Chan that no one had looked at for one thousand years. He was also provocative. He stated that the *Platform Sūtra* was not authored by Huineng but by Shenhui; that the Kaiyuan-era (713–741) convocation at Huatai 滑台 was a turning point in the history of the Northern and Southern schools; that the court's donation to Shenhui during the An Lushan Rebellion was a definitive moment in establishing the Southern school orthodoxy; and that relying on traditional Chan documents, lineage charts, and "lamp records" (*denglu* 燈錄) texts was a historiographic error. These assertions remain symbolic of the birth of a new kind of Chan history.

Hu Shih was not a specialist Chan scholar as we have today, but in that generation most intellectuals studied and researched Chan. After just more than a decade of productivity, with the advent of World War II, Hu put aside his research and assumed responsibility as China's ambassador to the United States. In 1952 he resumed his scholarly activities. In September of that year, he once again picked up *Platform Sūtra* materials and revised some of his earlier positions. That year, Hu was lecturing at Taiwan University on research methods, and he included his earlier discovery of materials pertaining to Chan history. In January 1953, at an event to memorialize the illustrious educator Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940), he presented a lecture, "New Perspectives on Chan History" 禪宗史的一個新看法 (*Chanzong shi de yi ge xin kan fa*). The same year he published an essay about Zongmi's account of Shenhui's life. Altogether these activities show that in the postwar period Hu returned to the research topics he first addressed in the 1930s. Hu's renewed interest in Chan history continued until his death in February 1962. In the previous year, on May 23, 1961, Hu worked from bed on the *Chuan fa tang bei* 傳法堂碑 inscription by Bai Juyi, a topic he first wrote about in 1928.

In the decades since Hu Shih's passing, Chinese and Japanese scholars of Chan history have continued to work with Hu's documents and with similar methodological perspectives. Even the relative paucity of Chan scholarship in mainland China resulted in part from the influence of Hu Shih. When Hu Shih was declared an enemy of the state, his style of research on Chan history was no longer tenable.[14] As a result, studies of Chan on the mainland adopted methods that were necessarily distinct from the historical and philological strategies

advocated by Hu. In China today, one still finds scholars of religion in departments of philosophy. There are institutional pressures to study religion from the perspective of Marxist ideology. This has resulted in research focused on cosmology (*yuzhou lun* 宇宙論) and theories of knowledge (*zhishi lun* 知識論), or on juxtapositions of materialism and idealism. A second methodological adaptation within mainland scholarship was to focus on social history. In general, this approach somewhat uncritically inherited the traditional Confucian critiques that underscore the negative social impacts, politics, and economics of religious institutions. A well-done representative study in this latter mold is *Tangdai Fojiao* 唐代佛教 (*Buddhism in the Tang*) by Fan Wenlan 范文瀾 (1893–1969), which studied the economic and political contexts of the early Chan lineages. There were few major developments or landmark publications in Chan studies on the mainland until the 1980s.

Just as a renaissance of research on Chan began during the 1980s, there was a corresponding revival of interest in the work of Hu Shih.[15] Researchers emphasized historical and cultural criticism. What began as a trickle of essays on Chan and Chan history in the 1990s became a torrent of books and articles.[16] In this new century, the latest works in Chan studies have reflected the influence of Western scholarship and postmodern thought. At this point in time, the sheer quantity of research on Chan being done in mainland China is staggering.

There are three general trends in Chinese academic research on Chan, not including the publications coming out of Buddhist seminaries. First, those in the mold of the history of philosophy tend to use Marxist and social-historical methods in their analysis. In many cases, these studies use a Western model to be anti-Western. Second, historical and philological studies focus on the discovery of newly excavated epigraphy or on Dunhuang materials. These studies employ sophisticated methods to do narrowly focused research. Third is the field of cultural criticism. When done well, such studies call into question assumptions of modernity and offer reevaluations of the past. Unfortunately, too many writers take this approach beyond its limits. There are few in China who have been able to perform the analysis of linguistic phenomena one sees done well in Western writing. To step back and examine these three trends, Chinese scholars have excelled most at historical studies and textual analysis. However, even in this subfield, we have in many ways not yet surpassed Hu Shih and his generation.

The significance of Hu Shih's work on Chan history is not that it advanced particular, concrete historical or philological details. Rather, Hu demonstrated how to be motivated by questions. Some notable examples include Hu's work on the authorship of the *Platform Sūtra*, on the significance of Shenhui's sermon at Huatai in 734, and on Shenhui's successful participation in the imperial

government's selling of ordination certificates in 757 to raise funds to fight the An Lushan Rebellion that doubled as a vital lifeline for the fledgling Southern school. Although Hu's original hypotheses have not gone without some modification, his method of examining sources and framing questions established precedents for Chan studies scholarship that continue to the present day.

There are at least three salient traits that can be ascribed to Hu Shih's scholarship as a model. First, Hu developed the use of newly discovered source materials, including those from Dunhuang. He remarked in a lecture at Beijing Normal University in 1935 that materials from both Japanese temples and from Dunhuang would revolutionize the received history of Chan.[17] The documents pertaining to Shenhui have become fundamental records of Tang-era Chan history, without which we would be unable to see past the hagiographic Song-era "lamp records."

Second, Hu also pioneered methods to rewrite the history of Chan lineages. He regarded the later legends of Bodhidharma's encounter with Liang Wudi as "a snowball growing ever larger."[18] He held that as the *Platform Sūtra* grew from a relatively short text in the Dunhuang manuscripts to a text nearly twice the size in late Ming editions, it was the result of "Chan monks recklessly altering ancient books."[19] Hu's emphasis on the singular role of Shenhui has been revisited by later scholars, including myself.[20] Even when we dispute details, we continue to build on the edifice Hu created. He early on noted the profound difficulties of using religious materials edited and compiled by Song-era monks to do Tang-era history.[21] His use of Dunhuang materials and Tang epigraphy allowed him to see beyond the strictures of Song historiography. This basic contribution to the very fabric of historical methodology may be more profound than the voluminous contributions by Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷快天 (1867–1934) and Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿 (1882–1963).

Third, Hu's emphasis on using historical source materials from outside the Chan tradition's self-fashioned histories led him to demonstrate the utility of literati writing. From what I can see of Hu's extant notes, it seems Hu once made a careful catalogue of Buddhist and Daoist inscriptions contained in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文. His catalogue included not only 216 citations but also details about the subject of the inscription, the year of death, the author, and contemporary events in Buddhist history.[22] It seems to me that Hu Shih in his later years held inscriptions in ever-higher esteem. He continued to advocate consulting the original epigraphic sources and not relying on the transcriptions in *Quan Tang Wen*. In this regard Hu Shih surpassed Nukariya.

Hu spurred other scholars to begin using materials from outside the Buddhist canons—materials including received literati writing, inscriptions, gazetteers, Japanese and Korean sources, and newly discovered texts from

Dunhuang and elsewhere. Hu demonstrated how to use new materials to contradict the received history transmitted by China's religious traditions. This historical methodology is now the most common in scholarship in China. Those who continued to follow in the footsteps of Hu Shih include Yinshun 印順 in his landmark *Zhongguo Chanzong shi* 中國禪宗史 (History of Chinese Chan Buddhism) and my own *Zhongguo Chan si xiang shi* 中國禪思想史 (A History of Chinese Chan Thought).[23]

Contributions by Chinese Scholars to the Study of Chan History—Comparisons with Japan and the West

As for the enormous contributions of Japanese, European, and US scholars to the study of Chan history, I am in no position to offer a comprehensive overview. My intention is to focus on a few examples that contrast with the Chinese case in order to draw out the strengths of Chinese scholarship.

Of course, Japanese scholarship on Chan is of extremely high quality. This is in part because the Japanese Zen traditions did not experience the same transformations as those in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. As a result, not only are Zen temples numerous, but many also have robust financial resources. There are Buddhist universities that support the study of Zen and Chan history, culture, and modern thought. Moreover, the modern tradition of scholarship in Japan began relatively early. Meiji period (1868–1912) scholars already were adapting Western traditions of religious studies and history.[24] As a result, some significant research was completed using manuscripts from Japan and Korea, as well as from Dunhuang.

The Japanese Zen studies tradition has a storied past. I can cite only a few examples from the large catalogue of important works, which I divide into two general categories: history and philology, and philosophy.

Japanese research of Chan history and philology has advanced without interruption for more than a century. Some pioneering works of the Taishō period (1912–26) include *Daruma* 達摩 by Matsumoto Bunzaburō 松本文三郎 (1869–1944), *Zengaku shisōshi* (禪學思想史; Intellectual History of Chan Studies) by Nukariya Kaiten, and *Zenshūshi kenkyū* (禪宗史研究; Studies on the History of Chan Buddhism) by Ui Hakuju. Representative postwar works include *Chūgoku Zenshūshi no kenkyū* (中国禅宗史の研究; Studies on the History of Chinese Chan Buddhism) by Abe Chōichi 阿部肇一 (b. 1928)[25] and *Zenshū shisōshi* (禪宗思想史; Intellectual History of Chan Schools) by Sekiguchi Shindai 関口真大 (1907–86). As is well known in the West, the works by Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 (1922–2006), including *Shoki Zenshū shisho no kenkyū* (初期禪宗史書の研究; Studies on the Historical Works of Early Chan), are essential reading for understanding early Chan history. Other noteworthy

works belonging to this type of scholarship include the research by Yamazaki Hiroshi 山崎宏 (1903–92) on Shenhui; Suzuki Tetsuo 鈴木哲雄 on Chan in the Tang and Five Dynasties; and Shigenoi Shizuka 滋野井恬 on the geographic distribution of Tang-era Chan. Some important recent works in this vein include the work of Ishii Shūdō 石井修道 on Song-era Chan; the research of Noguchi Yoshitaka 野口善敬 on Yuan-era Chan; the groundbreaking work by Ogawa Takashi 小川隆 on "recorded sayings" literature; and the work by Ibuki Atsushi 伊吹敦 on Tang Chan.[26] This style of scholarship is also associated with a special kind of seminar that can last many years and focus on a single text. The detailed results of such seminar research are peerless in their philological rigor.

Philosophical Zen studies is not popularly practiced by Chinese academics, who have closer affinity with the above historians. Aside from Yinshun, most Chinese scholars are strictly academics with little connection to the monastic *sangha* or laity. This situation is very different from Japan, where many Zen scholars are themselves Zen monks who are trained to participate in the ritual and spiritual lives of their communities. The names of major figures in Japanese Zen philosophy are well known and need not be repeated here.

Japanese and Chinese research on Chan differ in many ways. There are historical reasons for these disparities. Zen developed in Japan independent from its Chinese roots. The differences seem to become more pronounced later in history. Whereas Zen became part of mainstream culture beginning in the Gozan period, Chan became less and less central in the Chinese landscape after the Song and Yuan dynasties. In the modern period, Zen was a vital component in Japanese philosophy in a manner that Chan has not been in modern Chinese thought. Modern academic institutions in China and Japan provide dissimilar environments for scholarship. The Japanese adoption of Western Indology, Buddhology, and philosophy has led to phenomena such as critical Buddhism and Christian-Zen dialogue. The prominence of Buddhist institutions in Japan, as opposed to the strictly secular academic environment in China, has encouraged monks and devotees to be integral members of academia. Owing in part to the religious resources accessible by such institutions and persons, Zen studies has been a crucial site for the modernization and vitality of Zen through the development of philosophy and making meditation activities more widely available. Chinese scholars, for whom history and philology remain paramount, are ill prepared to make similar contributions.

As for European and US studies of Chan history, I can discuss only my distant impressions of some trends. Whereas Chinese scholars have tended to regard Chan as an example of *Han chuan Fo jiao* 漢傳佛教 (Han Chinese Buddhism),[27] the European tradition of Oriental studies has left an interdisciplinary

legacy that spans the fields of geography, history, linguistics, and cultural studies. Contemporary US and European scholars often make original contributions by drawing on multiple language skills, fieldwork, and archaeology, as well as by considering Chinese Chan history beyond the confines of China and in transnational contexts.

In the last few decades, many Western scholars have engaged in important critiques of Japanese Zen studies. No longer do scholars work with the kind of Zen promoted by D. T. Suzuki and others, turning away from the made-for-export Zen and its attendant arts. As attention has turned to the historical and political contexts, Zen itself was shown to have been implicated in modern nationalism. Some have been vociferous about the exaggerations of our Japanese colleagues regarding the opposition of East and West and the uniqueness of Zen.[28]

Western scholarship is also known for the application of postmodern theories. These new historiographic methods have overturned some principles in the study of Chan history. Whereas Hu Shih did not trust the "lamp records" and other genealogies, he still looked at these sources from the perspective of a historian seeking reliable data. Some leading Western scholarship has instead begun to consider genealogies of earlier Chan patriarchs as the memory, *imaginaire*, and reconstruction of later Chan traditions. Western scholars have made similar critiques of epigraphy and other sources that previously were considered reliable historical documents, declaring these also to be reflections of an *imaginaire*. Such scholarship calls into question the very fundaments of telling history.[29]

Chinese scholars at present do not focus on subjects such as the construction of Zen in the context of Japanese nationalism. The strengths of Chinese Chan scholarship do not lie in postmodern methods or in philosophical exposition. Among these international trends, Chinese academic work on Chan continues its industriousness in the fields of history and philology. I believe the next important work to be done by Chinese scholars will focus less on the Tang and Song dynasties and instead will rewrite the history of Chan in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing by incorporating epigraphy, nonreligious literati writings, gazetteers, and Korean and Japanese source materials. However, this ongoing focus on history and philology raises a question. Are these traditions of scholarship that will continue in China, traditions that I believe Hu Shih embodied, still relevant today?

Are Hu Shih's Methods Outdated?

Bernard Faure, in his *Will to Orthodoxy*, which reevaluated the Northern school of Chan, criticized the work of Hu Shih as adhering too closely to the views of Zongmi 宗密 (784–841), who himself was aligned with Shenhui.[30] Zongmi used

the rubric of "sudden and gradual" to distinguish between Northern and Southern schools of Chan. Hu Shih, while critiquing the reliability of particular documents for their historicity, nonetheless regarded the debate between Northern and Southern schools as a historical event in which orthodoxy was determined. Faure, on the other hand, regards the supposed debate as a symptom of a broader struggle between competitors for patronage, which manifested in "a will to orthodoxy." Hence, Faure created the following periodization of Chan history: (1) Bodhidharma Chan gained a foothold in northern China in the sixth century but did not flourish. (2) In the mid-seventh century the East Mountain community began to flourish, though it did not yet assert any connection to the earlier northern group. (3) In the late seventh century Shenxiu began to grow closer to the imperial government. (4) Under the circumstances of the An Lushan Rebellion the successful community descendent from Shenxiu and the new movement lead by Shenhui transformed into orthodoxies. (5) In the fallout from the An Lushan Rebellion as the central government weakened, new Chan communities developed in disparate regions, and the mantle of orthodoxy was transferred to the community of Mazu Daoyi. This schema, which apparently relies on all manner of theoretical treatment, in the end reiterates the schema established by Hu Shih and others who relied on Dunhuang materials and other manuscripts to craft what was then a truly radical and new historical narrative. When I consider the future of scholarship on Chan history and then look at Faure's use of numerous technical terms and quotations from Michel Foucault, I wonder if historical narratives about Chan really do require an engagement with structuralism, modern hermeneutics, or "archaeologies of knowledge."

For a comparison, the work by John McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism*, more closely follows the style of history and philology.[31] As is well known, both McRae and Faure were deeply influenced by Yanagida Seizan, who was clearly influenced by Hu Shih. However, they both differed from Yanagida in their attitude toward early texts, perhaps owing to the academic environment in the West. McRae's *Northern School* implicitly analyzes the unreliability of texts, but only in his later works is this attitude made explicit.[32] In *Seeing through Zen*, McRae structures his introduction around "McRae's Rules of Zen Studies," which also appeared prominently in the front matter.[33] Although these rules convey his scholarly acumen, they also place postmodern approaches before historical or philological principles. I believe most scholars would agree with the general principle that all narratives are constructed from within their historical contexts. However, is this principle specific to the Chan tradition such that it should bear such a prominent place in the telling of Chan history?

I believe the greatest contribution to the study of medieval Chan in the last decades has come from non-Chinese researchers. Both Ibuki Atsushi and Bernard Faure made exemplary use of epigraphic evidence from *Houmochen da shi ta ming* 侯莫陳大師塔銘 (Inscription for the Funerary Stupa of the Grand Master Houmochen) to demonstrate that *Dunwu zhenzong yaojue* 頓悟真宗要訣 (The Essential Teachings According to the True Principle of Sudden Awakening), found in Dunhuang, was written by a Northern school monk named Dazhi (660–713) in the year 712.[34] Another discovery concerned the Dunhuang document *The Treatise on the True Principle of Opening the Mind and Manifesting the [Buddha-]Nature in Sudden Enlightenment [According to] the Mahāyāna* (*Dasheng kaixin xianxing dunwu zhenzong lun* 大乘開心顯性頓悟真宗論) and determined that it was a document from the Northern school community and not from the Southern school as originally thought. These discoveries have shown that the Northern school discussed "sudden awakening" in texts that predate the activities of Shenhui. Thus, we know the old cliché "Southern sudden, Northern gradual" to be inaccurate. Perhaps Shenhui is guilty of stealing the Northern school teachings just as he began mounting a contest to distinguish between North and South. If the history of "Southern sudden, Northern gradual" turns out to have been a naive reading by later traditions, then this indeed is a profound discovery. My point in rehearsing these findings here is that this discovery is not the result of some postmodern theory but of the very kinds of historical and philological work that are now seemingly out of fashion.

Conclusion: A Salute to Hu Shih

The study of Chan in China shows its greatest strengths in the same fields developed by Hu Shih. One would be hard pressed to find Chinese scholars who can repeat the philosophical rigors of Nishida, the work of D. T. Suzuki, or the postmodern analyses by scholars in the West. Chinese scholars are at their best when using noncanonical materials such as literati writing and epigraphy to situate Chan history within complex, historical sociopolitical contexts.

To conclude, I'd like to give Hu Shih the last few words. Hu once remarked of his Japanese interlocutors that "they are Buddhist devotees, but I am just a historian." He also said, "Studying the history of Buddhism, and studying the Buddha's teachings, are two different propositions, and the methods likewise should be different."[35] Shortly before publishing the infamous English-language exchange with D. T. Suzuki in 1953, Hu recorded some related thoughts in his diary: "One must master history, to be able to show how Chan was an integral part of Chinese thought."[36] Thinking on Hu's comments today, we might recall when Zigong said of Confucius, "The master has in fact described himself."[37]


GE ZHAOGUANG 葛兆光
National Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies, Fudan University
gezhg@fudan.edu.cn

JASON PROTASS
Brown University
jason_protass@brown.edu

Notes

1. On "culture fever" in the 1980s, see the article published in Taiwan by Lin Tongqi 林同奇, "*Wenhua re* de lishi hanyi jiqi quoyuan sixiang liuxiang." Another good Taiwanese publication is the book by Chen Kuide 陳奎德, *Zhongguo dalu dangdai wenhua bianqian*.
2. *Translator's note:* The maxim "the backward get beaten" was coined by Joseph Stalin in a 1931 speech, and later the Chinese equivalent *luohou jiu yao ai da* 落後就要挨打 was made popular by Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. The phrase is circulated in a nationalist education that emphasizes the so-called century of humiliation.
3. *Translator's note:* In certain discourses, the phrase "pursuit of wealth and strength" (*zhuiqiu fu qiang* 追求富强) is set against "pursuit of democracy" (*zhuiqiu minzhu* 追求民主) in order to prioritize policies that would promote economic growth and technological progress. The origins of this debate can be traced to the late Qing.
4. Jin Guantao and his wife, Liu Qingfeng, began publishing the series in 1984 to introduce recent developments in the social sciences, sciences, and humanities. By the time the series was banned in 1989, it included around eighty books.
5. See Capra, *Wuli xue yu dongfang shenmi zhuyi*. The book was recently reprinted under the title *Wulixue zhi dao* 物理學之道.
6. *Translator's note:* This is a reference to the different editions of the *Platform Sūtra* and variants in Huineng's enlightenment verse. The first phrase, "*Fo xing chang qing jing*" (佛性常清淨), appears in the earlier Dunhuang editions, whereas the latter, "*benlai wu yi wu*" (本來無一物), appears in the later, received editions compiled in the Song Dynasty.
7. *Translator's note:* "No thought" (*wunian* 無念) is associated with the *Platform Sūtra*, whereas "everyday mind is the way" (*ping chang xin shi dao* 平常心是道) serves as a watchword for the Hongzhou school of Mazu.
8. *Translator's note:* This is the well-known phrase "*bu li wen zi*" (不立文字).
9. See Shen, *Hai ri lou zha cong*, *juan* 5 and 6, especially pages 185, 188, and 195–97.
10. See Hu Songping, *Hu Shizhi xiansheng nianpu*, 2:570. See also Hu Shih, "Chanzong shi cao gao," 9:56–57.
11. As a graduate student in 1915, Hu Shih had published corrections to the work of an eminent British scholar. See Hu Suh, "Notes on Dr. Lionel Giles's Article on 'Tun Huang Lu.'" See also Wang, "Hu Shi yu Dunhuang lu."
12. See the diary entries for July 21, 1928, in Hu Shih, *Hu Shi ri ji quan bian*, 5:235.
13. Essays published during this period include "Puti damo kao" 菩提達摩考 (An Investigation into Bodhidharma; 1927), "Bai Juyi shidai de Chanzong shi xi" 白居易時代的禪宗世系 (Genealogy of Chan Lineages in the Time of Bai Juyi; 1928), "Heze Dashi Shenhui zhuan" 荷澤大師神會傳 (A Biography of Heze Shenhui; 1930), "Tanjing kao zhi yi" 壇經考之一 (Investigation of the *Platform Sūtra* 1; 1930), "Lengjia shizi ji xu" 楞伽師資記序 (On the

Preface to the Records of the Masters and Disciples of the Laṅkāvatāra; 1932), "Tanjing kao zhi er" 壇經考之二 (Investigation of the *Platform Sūtra* 2; 1934), and "Lengjia zong kao" 楞伽宗考 (Investigation of a Laṅkāvatāra School; 1935). These essays are collected in *Hu Shi wen ji*, volumes 3 and 5. During this same period, Hu published the volume *Shenhui heshang yiji*.

14. See, for example, the denouncements in Ren, "Lun Hu Shi zai Chanzong shi yanjiu zhong de miuwu."
15. See Lou, "Hu Shi Chanzong." This article was recently translated into English and published in Lou, *Buddhism*, 68–86.
16. Some representative monographs include Du and Wei, *Zhongguo Chanzong tongshi*, and Yang, *Tang Wudai Chanzong shi* and *Song Yuan Chanzong shi*, as well as works by Hong Xiuping 洪修平, Lai Yonghai 賴永海, Ma Tianxiang 麻天祥, Pan Guiming 潘桂明, Cai Rixin 蔡日新, and Liu Siguo 劉思果.
17. See Hu Shih, "Zhongguo chanxue de fazhan" 中國禪學的發展 (The Development of Chan Studies in China), in *Hu Shi wen ji*, 12:301–2.
18. Hu Shi, "Puti damo kao," in *Hu Shi wen ji*, 4:257.
19. Hu Shi, "Tanjing kao zhi er," in *Hu Shi wen ji*, 5:254.
20. See Ge, "Heze zong kao."
21. See Hu's preface to *Shenhui heshang yi ji*, in Hu Shih, *Hu Shi wen ji*, 5:235. He also gave a lecture on the subject, titled *Zhixue fangfa* 治學方法, at Taiwan University on December 6, 1952.
22. See Hu Shih, *Hu Shi quan ji*, vol. 9.
23. Yinshun's book was published in 1971. An expanded and revised edition of my book, originally published in 1995, was published as *Zeng ding ben Zhongguo Chan sixiang shi*.
24. This history is detailed in Tanaka, *Zengaku kenkyū nyūmon*.
25. See the *Zōtei* edition published by Kenbun Shuppan, 1986.
26. See Suzuki, *Tō Godai Zenshū shi*; Shigenoi, *Tōdai Bukkyō shiron*; Ishii, *Sōdai Zenshū shi no kenkyū*; Noguchi, *Gendai Zenshū shi kenkyū*; Ogawa, *Goroku no shisōshi*; and Ibuki, *Zen no rekishi*.
27. Early and notable exceptions include Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) and Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896–1989).
28. See Victoria, *Zen at War*, which was translated and published in Japan in 2001 and thereby known to some Chinese colleagues.
29. See Faure, *La volonté d'orthodoxie*.
30. *Translator's note:* The author cites the Chinese translation, Faure, *Zhengtong xing de yiyu*, 6, which corresponds to pages 4–5 of the English edition. The English volume itself was based on Faure's earlier French publications, including *La volonté d'orthodoxie dans le bouddhisme chinois*, which was based on his 1984 PhD dissertation.
31. *Translator's note:* McRae's *Northern School* was based on his 1983 PhD dissertation.
32. McRae, *Seeing through Zen*.
33. Ibid., xix–xx.
34. Ibuki, apparently unaware of Faure's work, independently found Zhida's epitaph and reached the same conclusions. Ibuki published several related articles in 1992. The full title of the recovered text is *Dunwu zhenzong jingang bore xiuxing da bi'an famen yaojue* 頓悟眞宗金剛般若修行達彼岸法門要決 (The Essential Teachings to Reach the Other Shore by Vajraprajñā Practice According to the True Principle of Sudden Awakening). For more information on this text, including an annotated bibliography, see Tanaka Ryōshō *Tonkō Zenshū bunken bunrui mokuroku*, 117–22.

35. *Translator's note:* The first quote comes from a 1961 letter addressed to Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山. See page 619 of *Ko Teki Zen gaku'an*, edited by Yanagida Seizan. The second quote may be found at the close of chapter 29 in the recent collection of Hu Shi's writing, *Chan zong shi shen me*.
36. See Hu Shih's diary for May 15, 1952, in Hu Shih, *Hu Shi ri ji quan bian*, 6:229–31. See also Hu Shih, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method."
37. *Analects*, 165.

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