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Multiple Layers of Transmission Gasán Jōseki and the Goi Doctrine in the Medieval Sōtō school

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Abstract Scholars have investigated Gasán's role in the so-called 'popularization' of the medieval Sōtō school. What is noticed less often is Gasán's doctrinal role in the shaping of medieval Sōtō Zen. This article sheds light on the particular importance given by Gasán to the transmission of the Five Ranks through an analysis of the *San'unkaigetsu* and the two Muromachi variants. The three texts share some common features in the analysis of the Five Ranks, which are at the center of the transmission process in Gasán's group. I suggest that the rediscovery of the Five Ranks attempts to legitimate Gasán and his group of disciples. *San'unkaigetsu* achieves this through three different layers: the textual layer, the cosmogonic layer and the secrecy layer which endow Gasán's group with the legitimacy of past tradition. My analysis collocates Gasán and *San'unkaigetsu* in the complex scenario of the medieval Sōtō school, providing a nuanced understanding of the influential role of Gasán.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The life of Gasán: The Importance of Being a Disciple. – 3 The Five Positions Prior to Gasán: Dōgen, Between Transgression and Transmission. – 4 The Architecture of *goi* Transmission: The Textual Layer. – 5 *Goi* Cosmogony of/in Practice: The Cosmogonic Layer. – 6 Secrecy in *absentia*: The Secrecy Layer. – 7 Conclusion.

Keywords Sōtō School. Gasán Jōseki. Five Ranks. Kirigami.


1 Introduction

Gasán Jōseki 峨山韶碩 (1275-1366), along with Meihō Sotetsu 明峰 素哲 (1277-1350), is considered one of the most prominent disciples of Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1268-1325). His role in the medieval Sōtō School scenario is frequently analyzed in relation to his master Keizan, thus avoiding the emergence of his doctrinal influence in the development of medieval Zen.

As is clear from extant sources, Gasán spent most of his life at Sōjiji 総持寺 (Ishikawa province), where he was able to construct a solid monastic community from which emerged the 'twenty-five disciples of Gasán' (*nijūgo tetsu* 二十五哲), who founded different groups (*ha* 派) and temples. Thanks to the community originally based at Sōjiji, Gasán nourished a group of disciples which created the basis for the 'popularization' of the school in the subsequent centuries. According to William Bodiford:

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337

histories compiled during the Tokugawa period credit the founding of more than twenty monasteries to just thirteen of Gasan's disciples. Geographically, these monasteries range over seventeen provinces, from Mutsu on the northern tip of Honshū to Hyūga on the southern tip of Kyūshū. In other words, monks from just one monastery (Sōjiji) laid the foundations for the development of Sōtō communities literally from one end of Japan to the other, within the span of just one generation. (1993, 108).

Even though these data were exaggerated in order to fill in gaps in the historical accounts of Gasan and his disciples, the contribution of Gasan's disciples to the foundation of Sōtō temples throughout the country is undeniable. On the other hand, the role of Gasan in medieval Zen appears to be more complex and varied, especially if we focus on his teachings. A common feature regarding Gasan is his use of the most prominent teaching of Caodong school founder, the five positions¹ (Ch. *wuwei*; Jp. *goi* 五位) of Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (Jp. Tōzan Ryōkai), as the main content of transmission for his closest disciples. Noticeably, the analysis of the sources related to *Gasan-ha* offers important elements, helping to define the development of the Sōtō school from the late Kamakura to the first half of the Edo period, with particular attention to the use of secret documents and the introduction of doctrinal syncretism.

The identification of the Sōtō school with its founder's teachings often occurs, limiting the emergence of tendencies distinct from Dōgen's 'pure Zen'. The return to the teachings of the Sōtō Zen 'founder' is the result of Menzan Zuihō's great philological effort, which aimed to rediscover Dōgen's work in the Edo period² (see Riggs 2002, 12-7). Before Menzan, medieval Zen presents some peculiar features, as seen in certain types of documents such as *monsan* 門參 and *kirigami* 切紙. In this sense, Gasan's related sources allow the (re)discovery of another side of medieval Japanese Zen and the (re)consideration of the implications about Gasan's doctrinal dimension. In this paper, I will try to situate the transmission of the five positions in the medieval panorama mainly relying on the *San'un kai-getsu* 山雲海月, dated 1677, and other editions of the text from the temples Ennōji 円応寺 (1479) and Jōrokuji 丈六寺 (1530); this material will also be

1 'Rank', frequently used to translate the term *goi*, appears too narrow in its connotations, exclusively emphasizing the hierarchy among the different positions rather than their mutual interaction. Thus, in this paper I decided to use the term 'positions', appearing more neutral in its meaning.

2 According to Riggs, Menzan used Dōgen as the 'raw material' of a new tradition, based on the textual authority which emerged from the rediscovery of the material related to Dōgen. "[Menzan] was inventing a tradition, using the authority of selected ancient texts to change customary practices" (2002, 12).

compared to a *kirigami* from Yōkōji 永光寺 (1613), which offers important information on the elaboration of Tōzan's *goi* in *Gasan-ha*. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part deals with Gasan's biography, with particular attention to the years preceding his abbotship at Sōjiji. In fact, the hagiographical sources recounting Gasan's life tend to focus on the importance of the past tradition before his abbotship at Sōjiji. The stress on the significance of the past assigns Gasan a role in the immutable tradition of buddhas and patriarchs, contributing to the construction of the paradigm of tradition/transmission, which constitutes an important element for the investigation of *goi* transmission. The second part will deal with the fundamental question: 'Why *goi*?'. In order to define the main features of *goi* transmission in Gasan's group, the five positions discourse will be seen as the product of multiple layers of semantic space, which overlap and include a textual, a cosmogonic and a secrecy layer. The five positions serve as semiotic space, conceived as a "multi-layered intersection of various texts" (Lotman 2009, XXII) that interact with each other creating a plethora of internal relationships in the displaying of the multi-discursive nature of *goi*.

2 The Life of Gasan: the Importance of Being a Disciple

The life of Gasan can be divided into two parts: prior to 1321 and after this date. The year 1321 represents a crucial moment in Gasan's life as it corresponds with Keizan's foundation of Sōjiji and the transmission of the precepts. We can also see this date as a divide, since the extant biographical sources³ particularly emphasize the presence of buddha and patriarchal tradition in Gasan's early years. The displacement of the narration regarding protagonists from the present (Gasan and Keizan) and from the past (buddha and patriarchs, i.e. the past tradition) is particularly useful when examining Gasan's teaching. Moreover, it allows the emergence of the transmission paradigm as a common thread, characterizing the first part of his life as a disciple and being central in his role of master.

According to the *Sōjiji nise Gasan oshō gyōjō* 総持寺二世峨山和尚行状, the only source clearly reporting this element, Gasan was born in the first year of the Kenji era (1275). A common feature of the examined sources is the emphasis on the importance of the mother figure. Quoting from *Gasandaioshō bōchoku* 峨山和尚芳躰:

3 In this paper I will examine the following material: *Sōjiji Gasan Jō Zenji den* 総持寺峨山碩禪師傳 (S-Shiden jō, 45); *Noshū Shogakusan Sōjiji Gasan Jōseki Zenji* 能州諸嶽山総持寺峨山碩禪師 (S-Shiden jō, 250-1); *Tōkoku Daiyonso Daiyūan Kaiki Sōjiji Nise Gasan Oshō den* 洞谷代四祖大雄庵開基総持二世峨山和尚伝 (S-Shiden jō, 598); *Gasandaioshō Bōchoku* 峨山大和尚芳躰 (S-Goroku 1, 42-3) and *Sōjiji Nise Gasan Oshō Gyōjō* 総持寺二世峨山和尚行状 (ZGR Vol. 9 II, 578-9).

When making a vow to Kannon of a Thousand Arms, Gasan's mother asked: "Please give me a child that will become a saint [*shōnin* 聖人]."⁴ One night, she saw Kannon in her dreams piercing her womb with a sword three *sun* long. The sword went through her womb and it was like eating cold ice. Once she woke up she was pregnant, and finally her son was born. (S-Goroku 1, 43)

The craving for a child that leads the mother to pray incessantly for child-birth; the revelation and thus the imminent realization of her hope in the form of a dream; an agonizing pain in her womb as a symptom of pregnancy: all these are hagiographic *topoi*, frequently recurring since the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni. They symbolize a recurring theme of 'monk genesis' in the hagiography narrations, where the conception is rooted in an oneiric world and is the materialization of the willingness of the mother and a non-human agent which realizes her desire. Furthermore, Gasan's mother was devoted to Kannon as was Keizan's mother Ekan Dai-shi. Hence, Gasan was ideally a child of Kannon sharing the same genesis as his master Keizan (see Faure 1996, 39). Consequently, from the very beginning of the different biographical accounts we can find evidence for a double directionality: on the one hand with Gasan's direct master Keizan and on the other with the past 'tradition' of eminent masters and patriarchs.

At the age of eleven Gasan's mother left him at a temple and at the age of sixteen (1291) he started the practice at Mount Hiei.⁵ During the winter of the fifth year of the Kenji Era (1297), Gasan met Keizan for the first time at Daijōji 大乘寺. Some of the examined texts⁶ report a dialogue between the two, in which Gasan explains his doubts about Tendai doctrine, asking Keizan why the different schools have different ways of conceiving the Law. Gasan did not receive any verbal answer, as Keizan replied with a smile, the encounter resembling the famous episode known as *nengemishō* 拈華微笑. In the *Gasan Daishō Bōchoku* we read:

Gasan turned to Keizan and asked: "According to the teaching of many masters from Tendai School: 'The mind of the person who casts off the body will neither obtain the thought of illusion nor the Nature of the Law. The Nature of Law does not encompass the Nature of Law'. This

4 Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Japanese are the Author's. The term *shōnin* 聖人 is here translated as 'saint' with the meaning of holy man, enlightened person.

5 This part is missing only in *Gasan Daishō Bōchoku*, where the first encounter between Master Keizan and sixteen-year-old Gasan is recorded.

6 The quoted dialogue also appears in: *Noshū Shogakusan Sōjiji Gasan Jōseki Zenji; Gasan Daishō Bōchoku; Sōjiji Nise Gasan Oshō Gyōjō*.

is considered the main point of our school. Then, why the teachings of other schools are different from ours?”. Keizan did not answer the question and just smiled. (S-Goroku 1, 43)

This specific event particularly emphasizes Gasan's uncertainty about the period of practice at Mount Hiei and, in general, the Tendai doctrine. It represents a rather familiar narrative pattern when dealing with life records of famous monks, as the same doubt arose in Dōgen, facing the discontent with the Tendai doctrine of original enlightenment. Under the impulse of change, Gasan eventually decided to join the school in 1299, after meeting Keizan for a second time. *Gasan Daioshō Bōchoku* and *Sōjiji nise Gasan oshō gyōjō* report an episode which does not appear in other sources. Gasan tried to refuse Keizan's request to join the school as his mother had fallen ill and he had to take care of her. This irrelevant detail stresses the fact that at that time Gasan was still immature and had not practiced properly, betraying in that way a strong feeling of attachment. In order to persuade him, Keizan quotes an episode related to the Sixth Patriarch Enō, who left his mother to practice the Dharma. Once again, the connection with past prominent figures strongly emerges, showing a constant resemblance to other masters, which not only seeks to legitimate Gasan's role, but also to place him in an ideal lineage of continuity firmly related to the past. Moreover, in the biography of Gasan's master, Keizan, a similar ambiguous attitude toward his mother frequently appears. Keizan's mother served as his spiritual guide: clearly, he nurtured a deep bond with both his mother and grandmother throughout his life. He also dedicated Enzūin to his grandmother and worshiped a statue of Kannon commissioned by his mother there (see Faure 1996, 39).

Eventually Gasan became part of the Daijōji community and began his training under Keizan's guide.

Even though there are some discrepancies between the biographical sources, all of them contain the account of the *Tsuki Ryōko* 月兩箇 episode, which appears in several *kirigami* documents and is often related to the transmission of the five positions (see Ishikawa 1991, 129-31; 2000, 241). This episode symbolizes the growth of Gasan as a disciple and his deep understanding of the received teachings. In 1302, Keizan succeeded Tetsū Gikai 徹通義介 (1219-1309) as the abbot of Daijōji, gathering around him disciples such as Gasan and Meihō Sotetsu, one of his closest pupils along with Gasan. In the same year, following Keizan's guidance, Gasan visited different temples whilst travelling throughout the country. This was a great chance to practice under different masters, especially those from the Rin-zai school. In the *Enpō Dentōroku* 延宝伝灯録 there is an important dialogue

between Gasan and Kyōō Unryō 恭翁運良 (1267-1341),⁷ which begins by stressing the fact that Gasan had travelled a lot before reaching Kyōō:

Gasan had travelled all over the country learning the wisdom of the different teachings. [During his journey] he visited Master Kyōō Unryō. Kyōō ordered him: “Rip that piece of paper!”. In that moment, the paper blew in the wind. Kyōō asked: “Is the paper moving or the wind moving?”. Gasan remained in silence. Then, Kyōō said: “I am the disciple”. Gasan replied: “One should understand what being a master means”. (Sahashi 1964, 17)

This short account introduces an important element, very common in the sources related to Gasan’s teachings. The practice under different Rinzai masters appears to have particularly influenced Gasan as the presence of *kōan* is very strong in his teachings and in that of his disciples. In particular, the encounter with Kyōō and the *kōan* between the two known as *fushikijō no ikku* 不識上之一句 emphasizes the central role of the five positions as a fundamental part of the transmission process and often appears as an independent *kōan* in many documents (see Ishikawa 2001b, 812-3).

In 1313, Keizan founded the Yōkōji in Noto, where Gasan joined his master after travelling for several years. In 1321, Gasan formally received the transmission of the Precepts from Keizan. The *Gasan Daishō Bōchoku* adds a particular emphasis to this moment, ascribing to Gasan the promise to contribute actively to the growth of the school: “I will spread everywhere the teachings I received and the greatness of my master” (S-Goroku 1, 43). In 1322⁸ Keizan designated Gasan and Meihō as his successors,⁹ making the former the guide of Sōjiji¹⁰ and the latter that of Yōkōji. Furthermore, referring to the formal succession from Keizan to Gasan at Sōjiji where the

7 After the death of Gikai, Daijōji was in an uncertain condition and Keizan was not able to maintain the temple under Sōtō school’s control. Eventually, the Togashi family replaced Keizan’s successor with the Rinzai master Kyōō Unryō. Only several years later, after Keizan’s passing, did the temple return to the Sōtō school under Meihō’s abbotship (see Bodiford 1993, 64).

8 This date is reported in the *Gasan Daishō Bōchoku* and the *Sōjiji nise Gasan oshō gyōjō (zoku gunsho)*, whereas the *Tōkokuki* states that Gasan became the Abbot of Sōjiji in 1324.

9 Even though the *Gasan Daishō Bōchoku* particularly stresses Gasan and Meihō as Keizan’s formal successors, it must be considered that according to the *Tōkokuki*, Keizan indicated six disciples as his successors and not only two (see S-Shūgen ge).

10 Prior to Keizan, Sōjiji was known as Morookadera and was part of the Morooka Hiko Jinja located in the northern half of the Noto Peninsula. In 1296, the temple received a conspicuous donation from a local warrior, which was the basis for a stable economic condition. Jōken Ritsushi was thus approved as resident priest and when in 1321 Jōken moved with Morooka Hiko Jinja as it was relocated to a different area, he placed Morookadera under

master handed over the robe to the disciple, Azuma presents an example from the *Tōhokuki*, in which such an important event was sealed with a poem composed by the same Keizan:

In the blowing wind, the green paulownia leaves fall
 Bamboo branches are aware of the surrounding green
 My disciple [Gasán], you shall wear the robe of gold
 Like the sun shining on our temple (Azuma 1996, 784)

Here, Keizan uses an image which recalls Śākyamuni's donation of the robe to Mahākāśyapa,¹¹ demonstrating a deep sense of respect toward Gasán. Indeed, this image links the episode with one of the historical Buddha, strengthening the connection and creating a symmetrical pattern, in which Keizan corresponds to Śākyamuni and Gasán is one of his main disciples, Mahākāśyapa. According to Diane Riggs,

the ancient story of the *kesa* woven with golden threads to be held in trust for Maitreya became fused with the Chan school's account of their lineage. Previously restricted to the Buddhas, the Chan school reinterpreted the golden robe as the mark of transmission in their lineage of living teachers. (2007, 92)

Moreover, the robe is not a simple sign as it "commits (*en-gage*) the future", its imagery going far beyond the gesture and the meaning of transmission (see Faure 2003, 215).

At Sōjiji, Gasán was able to create a group of disciples who deeply influenced the following developments of the school. The closest disciples were known as the twenty-five disciples of Gasán, from whom emerged his successors described as the five disciples of Gasán. Gasán died at the age of ninety-one.

The different episodes of Gasán's early life connect Gasán with his master and more in general with the past tradition of buddhas and patriarchs through common traits that weave him with illustrious predecessors' narratives. Likewise, any act or gesture is not important in itself, rather its relevance is embodied in the symbolic universe created by the resemblance of the past and the connection to the 'tradition'. In other words, is what Averintsev defined as "the ability of each person and event to serve as a sign and representation of things more general" (2002, 32).

Keizan's guardianship. Eventually, Keizan converted Morookadera into a Sōtō temple and renamed it Sōjiji (see Bodiford 1993, 97).

11 This episode also appears in the *Jingde Chuandenglū* 景德伝灯録.

3 The Five Positions Prior to Gasan: Dōgen, Between Transgression and Transmission

From the Medieval period, the five positions¹² became one of the pillars of Zen transmission. This doctrine is often identified as the most representative teaching of Dongshan Liangjie (807-869) and of his disciple, Caoshan Benji 曹山本寂 (Jp. Sōzan Honjaku, 840-901). The assimilation of the five positions of vacuity and phenomena among Linji's teachings deeply affected the configuration of *goi*, to the extent that a shift of the importance of practice progression occurred. Although in the extant writings Dongshan does not highlight the correspondence of each position with the related improvement in practice, the subsequent interpretations of his doctrine are mainly based on this point, namely a direct correspondence between the five positions and the practice progression expressed in the five positions of merit (Ch. *gongxun wuwei*; Jp. *kōkun goi* 功勳五位) (see Ishikawa 2001b, 807-8).

In the case of the Sōtō school prior to Gasan, the transmission of *goi* appears in a sermon from the *Giunroku* 義雲錄 addressed to Giun, in which the five positions are not seen as an evaluation tool for practice progression. Nevertheless, in the records of Giun's disciples there is no reference to *goi*, making the reconstruction of the five positions transmission rather intricate (Arai 1993, 75). In *Shōbōgenzō* there are several references to the *goi*, although a full interpretation is lacking. Besides, Dogen's considerations about *goi* are the result of quotations from different chapters, thus often appearing incoherent and contradictory.

In the *Shunshū* chapter from *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen recounts a famous story based on a dialogue between Tōzan and one his disciples:

This master [Jōin Kōboku] is a descendant of Tōzan, a hero in the Patriarch's order. That being so, he clearly admonishes the many individuals who mistakenly prostrate themselves to Great Master Tōzan, the founding patriarch, inside the cave of the relative and the absolute.

12 When not differently specified, the term 'five positions' refers to the five positions of vacuity and phenomena (Ch. *pianzheng wuwei*; Jp. *henshō goi* 偏正五位). Here, I adopt 'vacuity' with reference to *shō* 正 and 'phenomena' to *hen* 偏. The most common translation is 'absolute' and 'relative' (see Verdú 1966; Nishijima, Chodo 2008), although it evokes a specific philosophical background that does not fully adapt to Dongshan's *wuwei*. Moreover, in the *Chongbian Caodong wuwei xianjue* 重編曹洞五位顯訣 we read: "According to [Cao]shan, the position of vacuity (Ch. *zhengwei*; Jp. *shōi* 正位) is the realm of emptiness (Ch. *kongjie*; Jp. *kūkai* 空界) [...]. The position of phenomena (Ch. *pianwei*; Jp. *hen'i* 偏位) is the realm of form (Ch. *sejie*; Jp. *shikikai* 色界)" (DNZZ, v. 63, 1236b). This terminology is also adopted in *Zengaku Daijiten*, where *shō* is explained as "the ultimate liberation of all *dharmas*" (524), whereas *hen* is "the discrimination, the phenomena, the myriad of forms, etc." (1113).

If the Buddha-Dharma were transmitted and received on the basis of limited consideration of the relative and the absolute, how could it have reached the present day? Wild kittens, barnyard bumpkins, who have never explored Tōzan's inner sanctum, people who have not walked the threshold of the truth of the Buddha-Dharma, mistakenly assert that Tōzan teaches people with his five positions of the relative and the absolute, and so on. This is an outlandish insistence and a random insistence. We should not see or hear it. We should just investigate the fact that the founding patriarch possesses the right Dharma-eye treasury. (trans. in Nishijima, Chodo 2008, 311)

In the analysis of this *kōan* about Dongshan, Dōgen uses eight different commentaries in order to allow the emergence of misleading interpretations. Even though from this passage it would be an easy conclusion to see Dōgen as a ferocious critic of Dongshan, a careful reading leads to different considerations. The focus of Dōgen's criticism appears to be the complete identification of Dongshan with *wuwei*, which leads an oversimplified hermeneutics of the teachings of Caodong's founder. In this passage, Dōgen is therefore well aware of the teachings of the founding patriarch, revealing the need for a rediscovery of his teachings. This is further confirmed in another essay from *Shōbōgenzō* called *Bukkyō*, where Dōgen describes Dongshan as "[the person who] has received the authentic transmission of the fundamental principles, and has directly indicated Buddhist conduct; his can never be the same as other lineages" (trans. in Nishijima, Chodo 2008, 149), demonstrating great reverence toward Caodong's founder. Nevertheless, Dōgen's disapproval particularly focuses on the five positions, as emerges in another passage from *Bukkyō*:

Sometimes, hoping to offer a guiding hand to others, they quote Rinzai's 'four thoughts' and 'four relations between reflection and action', Unmon's 'three phrases', Tōzan's 'three paths' and 'five relative positions', and so on, and see them as the standard for learning the truth. My late master Tendō was constantly laughing at this, saying, "How could learning the state of Buddha be like that? [...] Truly, we should know that old veterans in all directions have no will to the truth; it is evident that they do not learn in practice the body-mind of the Buddha-Dharma". (trans. in Nishijima, Chodo 2008, 144-5)

Quoting the words of his Chinese master Tiantong Rujing 天童如淨 (Jp. Tendō Nyōjo), Dōgen disapproves of anyone who seeks to learn the state of Buddha practicing among others Dongshan's *goi*, seen as an obstacle to complete realization.

The five positions was a somewhat criticized and questioned teaching method at the time (see Matsuda 2002, 297), so it is not surprising that Dōgen took part in this debate, neglecting *goi* as practice.¹³ Interestingly, he appears to distinguish the *goi* from Dongshan's other teachings, underlining the importance of studying the latter. However, Dōgen's decision to downplay the centrality of *goi* is not representative of medieval Zen, as the five positions generally occurs in many secret transmission documents such as *monsan* and *kirigami*.

4 The Architecture of *goi* Transmission: The Textual Layer

Dōgen's writings do not treat in depth the five positions teaching, raising many doubts of its effective role in the knowledge production at the time. In contrast, the reinterpretation of *goi* and its assimilation as an important part of the transmission discourse can be clearly traced back to Gasan (see Ishikawa 2001a, 195). In the case of Gasan, *goi* constitutes a complex semantic pattern that is the product of different layers. Among the different layers composing five positions discourse, the textual layer plays a fundamental part in Gasan's hermeneutics of practice.

From the study of the *goi* based upon Gasan's related sources, a clear link between Dongshan and the five positions emerges. However, the main source of reference appears to be other than Dongshan's *wuwei*. Thus, the five positions system Gasan refers to is anything but Dongshan and his disciple Caoshan's one, yet it reveals a complex textual architecture which blurs the 'categorization' of what is supposed to be the teaching of one sect or another. This feature undoubtedly appears in the different editions of the *San'unkaigetsu* text.

The *San'unkaigetsu* (S-Goroku 1, 44-63), which is categorized as a *goroku* and dates back to 1677, is composed of three chapters with a clear content structure: the first one describes the five houses and seven schools (Ch. *wujia qizong*; Jp. *goke shichishū* 五家七宗), whereas the last two deal extensively with an explanation of the *goi*. The organization of the text and the contents resembles the *Rentian yanmu* 人天眼目 (Jp. *Ninden ganmoku*), a well-known source¹⁴ at the time that focuses on the descrip-

¹³ It not clear on which type of *goi* Dōgen's criticism is based upon (see Matsuda 2002, 296). According to Arai, the later interpretations of *goi* were deeply influenced by the introduction of the *kōkun goi*, which he defines as a skillful means through which the student reaches a full understanding of the five positions. This led to a sort of hybrid system, which is the product of the overlapping of different teachings (1990, 240) and in which great importance is given to the measurement and the progression of practice.

¹⁴ The widespread usage of this text in the Chan/Zen context is further confirmed in a passage from the chapter *Butsudō* of *Shōbōgenzō*, where Dōgen critically depicts the spread

tion of the *wujia qizong* and their more representative teachings. When describing the Sôtō school, the first teaching displayed is Dongshan's *wuwei*, including the five positions of the lord and servant (Ch. *wuwei junchen*; Jp. *goi kunshin* 五位君臣); the Gāthā on the five positions of vacuity and phenomena; the five positions of merit; Caoshan's chart of five positions of the lord and servant (Ch. *wuwei junchen tu*; Jp. *goi kunshin zu* 五位君臣圖) (see T. v. 48: 2006). The structure of *San'unkaigetsu* appears to be symmetrical to that of the *Rentian yanmu*: after a brief presentation of the five houses and seven schools described as two "different flags of Buddha's Law" (S-Goroku 1, 45) the main attention is given to the description of the five positions of vacuity and phenomena, which covers the remaining two chapters. Whereas the *Rentian yanmu* attributes particular emphasis to the Linji School, Gasan transfers an identical structure and organization in favor of the Sôtō sect.

The important implication of *Rentian yanmu*, especially within Gasan's group, emerges from the oldest extant commentary of the text, namely the *Ninden ganmoku shō*, ascribed to Sensō Esai 川僧慧濟 (?-1475), a component of the *Gasan-ha*, which proves the spreading of this source among Sōjiji's group (see Ishikawa 1978, 781). Another source related to this commentary is a manuscript from Rokujizōji 六地藏寺, namely the *Ikkekaigoyō* 一華開五葉,¹⁵ in which the *Gasan Oshō Ninden ganmoku dai* 峨山和尚人天眼目代 is listed. From the title, it is clear that it is a collection of *daigo* ascribed to Gasan about the *Rentian yanmu* (see Iizuka 1996, 189). Moreover, the *Ninden ganmoku shō* was very popular at the time and played a fundamen-

of *Rentian yanmu* as follows: "The names of the five sects were not established during the lifetimes of the respective ancestral masters. Since the deaths of the ancestral masters who are called the ancestral masters of the five sects, flotsam in the stream of their lineages—people whose eyes were not clear and whose feet did not walk—without asking their fathers, and going against their forefathers, have established the names. The principle is evident and anyone can know it. [...] So, please, do not give names to sects, and do not say that there are five sects in the Buddha-Dharma. Latterly there has been an infantile man named Chisō who made a collection of one or two sayings of ancestral masters and described the five sects. He called [this collection] Eyes of Human Beings and Gods [*Ninden ganmoku*]. People have not recognized it for what it is; beginners and late learners have thought it to be true, and there are even some who carry it hidden in their clothes. It is not the eyes of human beings and gods; it darkens the eyes of human beings and gods. [...] [But] this work is deranged and stupid. [...] We should not call [the author] Chisō, which means 'Wise and Clear'; we should call him Gumō—'Stupid and Dark'" (trans. in Nishijima, Chodo 2008, 96-101). The collection of quotations from *Butsudō* displays Dōgen's sharp irony in judging *Rentian yanmu*. Despite Sôtō Zen founder criticism, this text proved to be an extremely influential source in *goi* scholarship, and so to say it was the lenses through which Tōzan and Sōzan's five positions doctrine was actually learned and transmitted during the medieval period.

15 In the *San'unkaigetsuzu* from Ennōji, the *Ikkekaigoyō* is listed among the commented *kōan*, though this commentary appears to be different from that of the Rokujizōji (see note 21 in Iizuka 1996, 199).

tal role in the tendency of Sōtō Zen to rely more and more on *kanna zen* rather than on Dōgen's *shikantaza* (see Ishikawa 1978, 780).¹⁶

The sources cited above prove the ascendancy of *Rentian yanmu* as a pillar in reshaping the five positions and in *Gasana ha* in general. Thus, the *Rentian yanmu* and its commentaries allow the evaluation of the predominant presence of this source as an essential reference in the hermeneutics of *goi*, revealing its authoritative role.

In the third chapter of *San'unkaigetsu*, Gasan clearly identifies the teaching of the five positions with Tōzan and his disciple Sōzan:

Tōzan and Sōzan's teaching is based on the practice of the word that has yet to be understood. This is also the entry not yet gained. [This teaching] is the interdependence of phenomena and vacuity. The body of the person who receives this teaching awakens and their eyes open. (S-Goroku 1, 44)

This passage results in being a crucial point in the analysis of Gasan's *goi*, since it establishes a direct connection between Tōzan/Sōzan, the five positions and Gasan as the transmitter and thus heir of this 'tradition'. Furthermore, it discloses the intertextual binary structure. We thus have an authoritative intertext and an effective intertext. The former is unified under the label 'Tōzan and Sōzan's teaching'. Several times throughout the text, Gasan refers to Tōzan and Sōzan teachings as the authentic teaching of the Sōtō school, designating this as the knowledge to be transmitted and the inspirational and especially authoritative source of his sermons. On the other hand, the *Rentian yanmu* represents the most prominent intertext which is the basic structure and reference that serves as foundation of *goi* hermeneutics within *Gasana ha*. The sum of these 'intertexts' allows the development of multiple textual relations which actively contribute to the continuity of the school through master-disciple relationship. This text, as the kernel of knowledge within transmission, is not a flat and lifeless surface, yet it manifests itself as multidimensional and dynamic space in which the single textual elements blend and clash (see Barthes 1977, 146).¹⁷

16 The span of time from the first part of Muromachi period to the first part of Edo period is called 'the dark period of the Sōtō school', as it assumed a completely different shape from the one advocated by Dōgen. The widespread use of *kōan*, the display of secret transmission and the consequent formation of 'esoteric Zen' constitute some of the most prominent features in the depiction of the medieval reshaping of the Sōtō school (see Ishikawa 1978, 780).

17 Beal also defines intertextuality as "[the] total and limitless fabric of text which constitutes our linguistic universe - Derrida's 'general text' - and from which all writings are untraceable quotations, inscriptions, transpositions" (1992, 27), where "attempts to close down a text's meaning will always be frustrated, because the text-as-dialogue is always referring beyond itself to other texts and other contexts" (30).

In the explanation of the five positions, the *Rentian yanmu* recalls some famous *gāthās*, among which Fenyang Shanzhao's five positions *gāthā* is also included. This *gāthā* is particularly important for Gasan, as it constitutes the basis on which the organization and description of *goi* takes place.

The highlighting of the hierarchical progression represents the hermeneutical foundation elaborated by Fenyang Shanzhao 汾陽善昭 (Jp. Fun'yō Zenshō; 947-1024), a member of the Linji School. Fenyang is well-known for the subversion of the order and the complete re-adaptation of Tōzan's *goi* (see Sahashi 1956, 95). Fenyang was one of Shimen Huiche's disciples and began to practice *goi* under his master¹⁸ (see Kirino 1997, 244).

The influence of Fenyang in Gasan's five positions stresses one of the main differences between Tōzan and Gasan. Gasan accentuates the progression among each position, creating a hierarchy expressing the improvement in practice achieved by the practitioner. On the other hand, Tōzan's *goi* are based on the vacuity/phenomena polarity, yet the depiction of every single position compared to each other is not integrated in any cumulative hierarchical scheme, rather the different positions appear to be in a discursive interaction that avoid any form of supremacy. The different positions are displayed following a logic that goes from a superficial level of comprehension and interpenetration to a deeper one, whilst avoiding any hierarchical structure of the different positions as each of them contains the previous one. The supremacy of the last two positions and the deconstruction of *goi* as they appear in Gasan was the reflection of Fenyang's interpretation, whose groundbreaking character was deeply influential in both China and Japan regardless of which school. Therefore, the further re-elaborations of the five positions, especially within the Linji School, introduced a progression converting the *goi* into an evaluation system of practice improvement. This tendency was due to the integration with Tōzan's five positions of merit, often seen as a skillful means through which prepare the practitioner to a full understanding of *goi*. Practice progression as a peculiarity of the five positions of merit was then integrated within the five positions of vacuity and phenomena, constituting a hybrid system, which is the product of the two (see Arai 1990, 240; Kirino 1997, 249).¹⁹ The five positions thus went beyond the boundaries of categorization, revealing itself as a dynamic and fluid teaching, subject

18 In the *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* 禪林僧寶傳 (Jp. *Zenrin sōhō den*), Juefan Huihong 覺範慧洪 (Jp. Kakuhan Ekō; 1071-1128) reports that Fenyang was introduced to the *goi* by his master Shimen (see Kirino 1997, 244).

19 In the *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* there is a dialogue between Shimen Huiche and another Linji member. Shimen advocates the five positions of merit in reference to Dongshan's *wuwei*. This episode proves that Shimen adopted this teaching with his disciples and this might have influenced Fenyang's progressive approach to the five positions explanation (see Kirino 1997, 248-9).

to a multiplicity of interpretations and re-adaptations. What is classified as 'Tōzan's five positions' only formally bears Tōzan's name and nothing else, as 'the five positions' is actually an ever-changing teaching which constantly adapts and is re-adapted.

Both in the *Rentian yanmu* and in *Fenyang Shanzhao chanshi yulu* 汾陽善昭禪師語錄 (Jp. *Fun'yō Zenshō Zenji Goroku*) the *gāthā* of the five positions is displayed as follows:

Gāthā of the Five Positions

Coming from vacuity: Brandishing the five-pronged Vajra, one side of the world of divine light is crossed and its light eliminates the dust of the world.

Vacuity within phenomena: Look at thunder's eyes! Their blinding light has already dimmed. Thoughts and doubts are thousands mountains far away.

Phenomena within vacuity: Realizing the fair directions of the Great King is [like] one thousand children craving the jewel mirror.

Approaching togetherness: Arrange a golden-haired vassal and any arising obstacle or doubt will be turned down on earth with a shout.

Attainment of togetherness: Express the no-merit and stop arriving. The wooden ox after a long walk arrived at the reverse of fire. The true king of the Dharma is inconceivable within the inconceivable. (see Kirino 1998, 105)

In Fenyang's *gāthā* there are some expressions which recall the *Baojing sanmei ge* 宝鏡三昧歌 (Jp. *Hōkyō zanmai ka*) (e.g. the five-pronged Vajra), yet the displayed order is different from Dongshan's, as the first position is 'coming from vacuity' (Ch. *zhengzhonglai*; Jp. *shōchūrai* 正中来), usually the third position.²⁰ Furthermore, the denomination of the fourth position 'approaching togetherness' (Ch. *jianzhongzhi*; Jp. *kenchūshō* 兼中至) does not compare in Dongshan²¹ and thus the 'phenomena' of the

20 There are several interpretations explaining why the third position is placed as the first. According to Kirino it might be due the irreverent teaching style of Fenyang, or a stratagem to draw practitioners' attention to the teaching (1998, 107).

21 In the *Shimen wenzi chan* 石門文字禪 (Jp. *Sekimon moji zen*), Juefan Huihong discusses whether the fourth position should be called 'approaching from phenomena' or 'approaching togetherness'. Since the former appears in the *Record of Caoshan*, Juefan considers it the correct denomination. Juefan's commentary on the fourth position appears in *Shimen wenzi*

'approaching from phenomena' (Ch. *pianzhongzhi*; Jp. *hENCHŪSHŌ* 偏中至) is not taken into consideration, avoiding the achievement of the unreciprocal relation (*fuego* 不回互) (see Sahashi 1956, 97). Hence, there is a slight difference between the fourth and the fifth position, although ultimately both represent the "supreme position achieved by the true man" (see Kirino 1998, 106). Fenyang develops a completely new hermeneutics of the five positions, generating a different theory whose ascendancy goes far beyond the Linji school.

At the beginning of the third chapter of *San'unkaigetsu*, Gasan claims that "both the position of 'Approaching togetherness' and 'Attainment of togetherness' represent the fundamental part of the teaching [of Sōtō Zen]" (S-Goroku 1, 58), thus the fourth and fifth positions are placed at the top of the *goi*, embodying "the complete realization of true man's original position".

5 *Goi* Cosmogony of/in Practice: The Cosmogonic Layer

In the *Baojing sanmei ge*, the reference to the doubled *li* hexagram (Ch. *zhong li*; Jp. *jūri* 重離) initiated the interpretation of the five positions using the hexagrams as in the *Yijing* 易經 (Jp. *Ekikyō*):

In the end, things are not gotten at, because the words are still not correct. In the six lines of the doubled *li* hexagram, Phenomena and the Real interact; Piled up to become three, each transformed makes five. (trans. in Powell 1986, 64)

The absence of further elaborations about the connection between the five positions and *Yijing* allowed the emergence of numerous speculations about the integration of hexagrams in the *wuwei* system. This integration is expressed through the creation of a hybrid cosmogony displaying the five positions in a complex organization within Buddhist hermeneutics. Focusing on Japanese Buddhism, we see that in the *San'unkaigetsu* the five positions are placed in an organization informed by different and heterogeneous elements. The text presents a large usage of terms that

chan as follows: "The five positions are composed by 'vacuity within phenomena' and 'phenomena within the vacuity', [these first two positions are followed by] 'coming from vacuity' and 'approaching from phenomena' and lastly there is 'attainment of togetherness'. Then, why [the name of the fourth position] has been changed from 'approaching from phenomena' to 'approaching togetherness'? The Great Old Master in the state of calm does not know any form of suspicious. He just laughs" (see Kirino 1998, 237). In Japan during the Muromachi period, the problem of the correct denomination of the fourth position was at the center of the doctrinal debate and especially Nan'ei Kenshū 南英謙宗 (1387-1460) extensively dealt with this problem (see Matsuda 1995, 263-74).

evoke the *Taiji tu* 太極圖 (Jp. *Taikyoku zu*) and the *Yijing*, relying on the “cosmogony of concretization” (Rambelli 2009, 252)²² as developed by Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (Jp. Shū Ton’i).²³ In Song period, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (Jp. Shuki) placed Zhou Dunyi at the center of Neo-Confucianism cosmogony. The rediscovery of Zhou Dunyi’s thought in Song China²⁴ was also influential in Japan through Gozan scholarship, which greatly contributed to promoting the *Yijing* and its related commentaries during the medieval period (see Ng Wai-Ming 1997, 26).²⁵ Gasan outlines the main elements of *goi* cosmogony as follows:

From its origins, the Buddha Law is the profound truth of the Mind of Buddha and the Mind of Law. The ‘Mind’ is unborn and its complete realization [leads to the understanding that] before the arising of Su-

22 Rambelli defines the cosmogony discussed in Daoist and Neo-Confucian texts as ‘cosmogony of concretization’, since “it describes a process moving from formlessness to the appearance of differentiated forms and, in mathematical terms, from zero (primordial void) to one (undifferentiated chaos), two (yin and yang), three (Heaven, Earth and Humanity), and many (the myriad of things)” (2009, 252).

23 Hon describes the diagram of Supreme Polarity as follows: “Graphically describing the evolution of the universe, the *Diagram of the Supreme Polarity* consists of five circles. The top circle is an empty circle symbolizing the universe as a whole. The round shape of the circle indicates that the universe is an organic entity which has no beginning and end. Like a bouncing ball, the universe is constantly in motion. Movement and self-regeneration are the two hallmarks of the universe. The second circle contains three nested semi-circles with dark and light colors. The dark-colored semi-circles represent *yin* 陰 (the yielding cosmic force), and the light colored semi-circles represent *yang* 陽 (the active cosmic force). The third circle is the most complicated. It consists of a group of five small circles, each symbolizing one of the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行): Water, Fire, Wood, Metal, and Earth. These small circles represent the Five Phases’ driving all activities and revitalizing all beings in this universe. To highlight the inter-connection of Five Phases, the five circles are arranged in a rectangle with lines linking one circle to the others. At the center of the rectangle is the earth circle, and the other four circles are scattered at the corners of the rectangle. This arrangement signifies that the earth force is the source of other forces. It will be noted that this group of circles is linked to the second circle by a small ‘V’ sign. The sign shows that the Five Phases are the products of the interaction of the *yin* and the *yang*” (2010, 4-6).

24 Zhou Dunyi was placed at the head of the Neo-Confucian lineage of Song sages by Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi elaborated his thought on the basis of Zhou Dunyi’s writings, connecting the cosmological discourse on the *qi* 氣 in the *Taiji* with the metaphysical discourse elaborated by the Cheng brothers (Adler 2014, 4-6).

25 As pointed out by Ng Wai-Ming: “A large number of Zen Buddhist monks studied the *I Ching*; they punctuated, annotated, and reprinted some important Chinese commentaries. [...] Believing that *I Ching* could help them attain enlightenment, Zen Buddhist monks studied it in the final stage of their training and used it widely to explain Buddhist ideas” (1997, 26-7). When summing up the main features in the studying of *Yijing* in medieval Japan, Ng Wai-Ming identifies a particular element which is particularly important in my analysis: “[...] it was a secret transmission among Zen Buddhist scholar. Its main lineage was kept unbroken for centuries” (1997, 32).

preme Polarity the Mind did not depend from the word 'Mind'. From the origins, the 'Law' manifests [itself] and turns everything into the True Dharma-Eye. From the past to nowadays, [the Law] has never resorted to concrete form. This is why the Great Shadow encompasses the Great Light, the Great Light reaches the Great Shadow, before/after and after/before are possible and the seal of the Dharma is confirmed [i.e. the reality appears in its true aspect]. You should forget that Mind/Dharma are two [different words] and return to the One Position. This One Position is the No-Position, the Original Position, the True Position, the Present Position, the Lord Position and the Void Position. When this Position is fully achieved, the Supreme Polarity is the Non-polarity. (S-Goroku 1, 45)

The 'Buddha Law' allows the student to overcome the duality grounded in the deluded mind, hence the Great Shadow encompasses the Great Light and vice versa, creating the basis for a reality where illusion and enlightenment are possible in a non-obstruction (*muge* 無礙) relationship as expressed in Huayan Buddhism.

According to Gasan, the condition prior to the emergence of the Supreme Polarity and the subsequent actualization of its activity as *Yin* and *Yang* correspond to the state 'above form' as we conceive it. Therefore, the Mind was purely Mind without relying on its signifier, the word 'Mind'.²⁶ The practice and the achievement of the condition which precedes form in a dualistic sense is identified with the One Position and thus with the Supreme Polarity/Non-polarity.²⁷

Gasan especially focuses on the upper part of the scheme of Supreme Polarity. In particular, the first line of the *Taiji tu* "Nonpolar and yet Supreme Polarity" (*wuji er taiji* 無極而太極) is clearly quoted at the end of the aforementioned passage, thus interpreting it as a non-dual element. Despite its 'twoness', the principle of *taiji/wuji* is seen as undifferentiated,²⁸ it is the representation of the non-dual reality which manifests itself in the awakened mind.

26 From this passage, it is clear that Gasan relies on Zhu Xi's interpretation of Zhou Dunyi, collocating the *Taiji* and all its correlated elements in the realm above form.

27 The origin of the term *Taiji* can be traced back to the *Xici* appendix of the *Yijing* (see Adler 2014, 116). The term also appears in *Laozi* (chapter 28), revealing the Daoist connection between the supreme polarity and Zhou Dunyi. Furthermore, the diagram was probably transmitted by a Daoist master to Zhou Dunyi, thus revealing as strong connection between Supreme Polarity and Daoism (68).

28 In this sense, Gasan was deeply influenced by the interpretation of the Scheme of Supreme Polarity given by Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi collocates the bipolarity of *wuji er taiji* at the basis of Chinese cosmology, of which it constitutes the basic principle. *Wuji er taiji* is "the undifferentiated principle of differentiation" or "the formless basis form" (Adler 2014, 105).

The One Position here described as “No-Position, Original Position, True Position, etc.” is identified with the fifth position, as “‘Attainment of togetherness’ is the Original Position” (S-Goroku 1, 58); hence, the last position is to be seen as the One Position or the Original Position. In the first two chapters, the occurrence of the term ‘One Position’ is extremely high, even though only in the third part it is possible to determine that the ‘One Position’ corresponds to the fifth position. It reveals an unfolding cosmogony that is not delineated in once, yet it proceeds by degrees through the revelation of its composing elements. The ‘One Position’ constitutes neither an immobile status nor an achievement, as it is often associated with the action of ‘*ki*’ 帰, here with the meaning of ‘return to’. The act of returning implies dynamism in the process of coming back to a prior form of reality which constitutes the authentic condition of the practitioner. Even though the action of ‘return to’ might advocate a physical space or dimension, here the One Position-Supreme Polarity/Non-polarity equivalence does not indicate any concrete place in order to avoid a sort of parallel substantial reality which will cause different forms of attachment.

The representation of Supreme Polarity/Non-polarity/One Position in terms of Zhou Dunyi’s “dynamic and self-generating universe” (Hon 2010, 6) reveals the dynamics leading to the production of reality, making possible the overturning of this cosmological configuration. The aim of Zhou Dunyi is to affirm the “centrality of human morality in the unfolding universe” (Hon 2010, 3), whereas Gasan intends to display the map of a practitioner’s mind using *goi* theory. In other words, he aims at faithfully depicting the student’s condition in reality, i.e. lacking a stable selfness and thus emptiness. The real comprehension of the multiplicity of things becomes possible in the fifth position, seen as the return to the condition preceding the world as pure form and appearance, and the displaying of the phenomena without the intermediation of form.

Jōrokuji’s *San’unkaigetsuzu* (1530) displays a correlative cosmogony where the reciprocity between the five positions, the five positions of merit and hexagrams strongly emerges.

●☰☷ The Great Polarity (the birth within the palace;²⁹ attainment of togetherness; not-departing; the union of lord and servant); Merit upon Merit (emptiness and existence have not been overcome yet; principle and phenomena do not obstruct); Unsudden (the uniqueness of *ki*; the innumerable forms do not exist yet; it is similar to the fields of the Mind in which there is no seedling to grow. It precedes the arising of Buddha and sentient beings).

29 Here we find the five positions of the prince (Ch. *wangzi wuwei*; Jp. *ōji goi* 王子五位) by Shishuang Qingshu 石霜慶諸, which were deeply influenced by the five positions of merit.

○☳☳ The changing (the changing form birth; approaching togetherness; the inconceivable activity; the lord faces the servant). Merit in common (the light of emptiness; the understanding of mind and consciousness). Unreciprocity (it is similar to the perfection of the sun and the moon in the sky; it is the luminousness of Mind and Earth).

◎☳☳ The two opposites (the birth of the multitude of vassals; coming from the vacuity; the servant staring at the lord). Merit (the manifestation of the emptiness form; the attempt to interrupt critics). Nonexistence of word/Existence of word (It is similar to Heaven/Earth/Shadow/Light and the distinction of feminine and masculine. The actual form of feminine and masculine).

●☳☳ The four symbols (the illegitimate child birth; the vacuity within the phenomena; the servant); Serving the lord (the form is empty; Buddha's Truth towers above everything like the highest peak). The dew (wood/fire/metal/water; the limits of the four directions; four constituents).

●☳☳ The eight trigrams (the legitimate heir; the phenomena within the vacuity; the Lord); The orientation (the emptiness is form, the emptiness is in smithereens). Before the separation of black and white (the unexpected formation of the four directions; the coming of the perfection of the eight activities). (Iizuka 2002, 125)

In this passage Gasan quotes the *Diagram of the five positions of merit* as it appears in the third chapter of the *Rentian yanmu* (T. v. 48: 2006). The *Rentian yanmu* thus proves to be the main source on which Gasan relies for the elaboration of the five positions doctrine in which the five positions of vacuity and phenomena and the five positions of merit are completely integrated. A very similar elaboration also occurs in a *kirigami* from Yōkōji (Ishikawa prefecture), dating back to 1613 and entitled *Gasan Daishō Goi no zu narabini hōgo* 峨山大和尚五位之図并法語 (see Ishikawa 1992, 34-5). As can be gleaned from the title, the first part displays a scheme illustrating *goi*, followed by an *hōgo*. It presents several similarities with Jōrokuji's *San'unkaigetsuzu*, except for the fact that here the hexagrams are not displayed. Moreover, we find the full description of every position using some expressions from the *Baojing sanmei ge*. Noticeably, Yōkōji's *kirigami* focuses on the five positions of vacuity and phenomena while failing to mention the five positions of merit, hence lacking the progressive development within every position as stressed in the different versions of *San'unkaigetsu*. In the *hōgo* following the scheme, the case known as *fushikijō no ikku* 不識上之一句 is mentioned several times, described as "the place where the unity of *yin* and *yang* illuminates the Supreme Ultimate" (Ishikawa 1992, 34). Particular attention is given to the fourth and

fifth position through the explanation of each character of the respective denominations and interestingly the ideogram 'ken' 兼 is identified with the unity of *yin* and *yang*, displaying a deep correlation between the name and its cosmological equivalent (see Ishikawa 1992, 34-5).

In both cases, we notice the emergence of a correlative thinking which "draws systematic correspondences among aspects of various order of reality or realms of the cosmos" (Henderson 1984, 1). The diagram of Supreme Polarity serves as a hermeneutical basis in the displaying of *goi*, producing a binary combination of elements, which interacts with each other in the formation of a spatialization of practice. In Jōrokuji's *San'un-kaigetsuzu*, the arrangement of the 'cosmogony components' occurs in list form. Interestingly, we find a list in the list, as each element is explained by the list of elements between brackets, revealing a kaleidoscopic interaction of practices. The list allows the plethora of elements to be organized in a clear and distinct form (see Eco 2009, 131), yet these lists are not finite and every part of it can be integrated with further explanations and elements. For instance, in the *Kango fumi* 閑語不見 we find a series of correlations which associate the vacuity and phenomena with different elements, integrating the passage from the Jōrokuji's document:

The vacuity and phenomena [teaching] of Tōzan is the *Yang*, the servant, the white, the light, is the no-discipline-and-method. It is the patriarchs' words. The 'vacuity' is *Yin*. It is the Lord, the darkness, the discipline and method, the *tathāgata* meditation. [...] The 'phenomena' is rebellion, [whereas] the 'vacuity' is obedience. The rebellion of the phenomena means that when it emerges it is the no-original position. The obedience of vacuity means that when it immediately arises it becomes part of the Original Position that must be preserved. In the middle [of phenomena and vacuity], there is the complete turning and continuous changing and movement. There is rebellion and obedience, life and death, past and present, *tathāgata* and the patriarchs; discipline and method, no-discipline-and-method; the servant and the lord; black and white. They all are one. (Iizuka 1999, 203-4)

In the passage, the vacuity and phenomena are explained following the organization of the five positions, from the first to the fifth.³⁰ Moreover,

³⁰ The passage can be divided as follows:

The vacuity within the phenomena: The vacuity is *Ying*. It is the Lord, the darkness, the discipline and method, the *tathāgata* meditation. [...] The phenomena within the vacuity: The 'phenomena' is rebellion [whereas] the 'vacuity' is obedience. The rebellion of the phenomena means that when it emerges it is the no-original-position. Coming from the vacuity: The obedience of 'vacuity', means that when it immediately arises it becomes part of the Original Position that must be preserved. Approaching togetherness: In the middle [of phenomena and vacuity] there is the complete turning and continuous changing and

the organization through the list form and the correlation of each element particularly resembles the *kirigami* from Yōkōji, yet the full explanation of the different positions integrates the document from Yōkōji enhancing *goi* cosmogony.

An important component of *goi* cosmogony is introduced in *San'unkaigetsu*:

The reason why the Supreme Polarity is Non-polarity is 'not-known'. [...] The primary cause of the 'not-known' is above the hidden principle of Non-polarity. This is why even the Seal of Buddha Mind cannot reach [the 'not-known']. (S-Goroku 1, 61)

This passage introduces 'not-known' (*fushiki* 不識)³¹ as the *raison d'être* of the two pillars of the entire cosmology, namely the Supreme Polarity/Non-polarity and thus the One Position. It represents an important concept in Gasan's related documents, appearing several times as a key term at the basis of *goi*. *Fushiki* is directly related to Keizan, as "Master Keizan's secret teaching of *fushiki* lays here" (Iizuka 1999, 178). In a case analyzed in the *Hōonroku* the *fushiki* emerges as a *kōan*, the *fushikijō no ikku*, between Gasan and Kyōō Unryō and it is developed through three different stages (*san'i* 三位), namely 'the self', 'the unknowable' and 'the when'. In the fourteenth case from *Hōonroku*, *Gasan Osho fushikijō tokusho kien narabini goi gosōden* 峨山和尚不識上得所機縁並五位御相傳 Gasan offered Keizan his awakening to the truth, yet Keizan did not accept it and sent his disciple to Master Kyōō, who formally recognized Gasan's awakening based on the *fushijō no ikku*. The same episode appears in Enōji's version of *San'unkaigetsuzu* (see Iizuka 1999, 178). Here, it is clear that the *fushikijō no ikku* was transmitted as an independent *kōan* and was included in secret transmission documents, as it appears in a *kirigami* from the Shōryūji in the Saitama province (see Iizuka 1999 178-9). This *kirigami* reports that "the *fushikijō no ikku* is the achievement of the principle irradiating the

movement. There is rebellion and obedience, life and death, past and present, *tathāgata* and the patriarchs; discipline and method, no-discipline-and-method; the servant and the lord; black and white. Attainment of togetherness: They all are one.

31 The term *fushiki* appears in a famous *mondō* between Bodhidharma and the Chinese Emperor Wu of Liang in the *Blue Cliff Record*: "Emperor Wu of Liang asked the Great Master Bodhidharma: 'What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?' Bodhidharma said, 'Empty, without holiness'. The Emperor said, 'Who is facing me?'. Bodhidharma replied, 'I don't know'. The Emperor did not understand. After this Bodhidharma crossed the Yangtse River and came to the kingdom of Wei. Later the Emperor brought this up to Master Chih and asked him about it. Master Chih asked, 'Does your majesty know who this man is?'. The Emperor said, 'I don't know'. Master Chih said, 'He is the Mahasattva Avalokitesvara, transmitting the Buddha Mind Seal'. The Emperor felt regretful, so he wanted to send an emissary to go invite (Bodhidharma to return). Master Chih told him, 'Your majesty, don't say that you will send someone to fetch him back. Even if everyone in the whole country were to go after him, he still wouldn't return'" (trans. in Cleary 1977, 1).

Supreme Ultimate” (Iizuka 1999, 178-9). From this quotation, it is clear that the achievement of the One Position is not considered as the ultimate achievement. The true understanding and practice of the One Position depends on incessant practice, thus represented by the *kōan* of the *fushikijō no ikku*. The correlative cosmogony displayed starting from the five positions and organized according to Zhou Dunyi’s principle, reveals itself to be fluid and dynamic. It is a never-complete system based on the *kōan* teaching, which encourages the practitioner to continue the practice without seeking a destination. *Taiji/Wuji* and all its related elements are seen as a turning point, a juncture (see Adler 2014, 118) which unfolds a further ‘reality’ that practices and is practiced.

The cosmogony elaborated in Gasan’s related sources is intimately connected with transmission and religious authority. Gasan collocates the *fushikijō no ikku kōan* between the material to be studied and practiced, placing himself among the patriarchs and eminent past masters’ *kōans*. He thus becomes part of the corpus of texts and teachings that his disciples are to transmit from generation to generation. This particularly emerges from the fact that the *fushikijō no ikku* often appears in the many *kirigami mokuroku* along with famous cases from *kōan* collections. As pointed out by Griffith Foulk, “on the one hand, it is clear that the patriarchs, being ancestral figures, have seniority in the Ch’an lineage. Their words, especially ones that have repeatedly been raised as *kōans* within the tradition, are invested with great prestige. To be living heir in the lineage – a Ch’an or Zen master – is to benefit from association with eminent patriarchs of old. To comment on the words of the patriarchs, similarly, is to be on the receiving end of the prestige with which those words are invested” (2000, 34). Therefore, Gasan places the *kōan* he originally practiced under Kyōō’s guide as a textual tradition for his community of disciples, actively participating to the craft of this same ‘tradition’ in which he gained a pivotal role. In this sense, the tradition laid out by eminent patriarchs is renewed and manipulated in the process of legitimation and self-legitimation that inevitably involves knowledge and its production.

6 Secrecy in *absentia*: The Secrecy Layer

The different variants of *San’unkaigetsu* report an explanation of the context in which *goi* transmission took place. The text is the recorded collection of the sermons held by Gasan for his closest disciples in his last years of his life. This is a clarifying element about the study of the five positions and its role within the process of transmission in itself.

In the sermons held during the night, Master Gasan allowed only the disciples who would succeed him into his quarters. This is what he taught them. The disciples who took part to these sermons did not exceed three

to five people. What is taught here is the secret part of the transmission (S-Goroku 1, 44).

The text does not clearly state the names of the involved disciples, hence it is possible to presume that they might be the so-called *gotetsu*, i.e. Gasan's closest disciples. Therefore, only a very small group among the many disciples was supposed to be admitted to the master's quarters and involved in the explanation of *goi*, apparently considered as a secret doctrine. Secrecy is the "normative mode of transmission" which characterizes the five positions doctrine and in general medieval Buddhism and the cultural sphere (Klein 2002, 145). In the Sôtô school, a secret form of knowledge transmission emerges during the medieval period, especially regarding *monsan* and *kirigami* documents. This material often reports the final remark 'secret' to stress the fact that the contents cannot be shared with any person outside the relation master-disciple. In a broader sense, the process of secrecy developed within the so-called 'popularization' of the Sôtô school and its development throughout the country. As mentioned above, Gasan's disciples significantly contributed to the foundation of a great number of temples, which corresponded to the formation of different groups. The pressure deriving from the arising of different *ha* led to elaboration of legitimacy strategies, in order to express and preserve the 'identity' of the group (see Ishikawa 1977, 157).

In *San'unkaigetsu* the secret nature of the teaching is expressed as follows:

In our school, the deepest teachings are secretly transmitted from master to disciple. However, recognizing one's own enlightenment and that of disciples on the base of a superficial and wrong understanding [of these secret teachings] is the expression of Buddhas and Patriarchs' sorrow. (S-Goroku 1, 53)

Furthermore, in the *Jitokukiroku shō* 自得暉録抄 some important elements help to define *goi* as secret teaching. The *Jitokukiroku shō* is a commentary about Zide Huihui's recorded sayings and addressed to Gasan. The version from the Ennōji (Kaga prefecture) is dated 1571 and it is one of the oldest extant commentaries written in *kana*, after Keizan's *Hōonroku* (see Ishikawa 2001a, 84). At the end of the final chapter, we read: "Transmitted by Master Gasan. [The contents] must be kept secret" (Ishikawa 2001a, 90). Even though the title itself indicates that this text is a commentary of recorded sayings (*gorokushō*), in practice it was considered as a prototype of *monsan* and thus kept secret (see Ishikawa 2001a, 91). Moreover, the many references to the five positions doctrine throughout the text attributed to Gasan lead us to suppose that the *goi* doctrine was considered a secret teaching.

Ennōji has preserved many documents such as important *kirigami* regarding transmission within the Gasan-*ha*. Among these, the material

about Gasan and *goi* is comparatively significant in number (see Iizuka 1998, 201), emphasizing the important role of the *goi* system. In particular, the *Sanunkaigetsu zu* from Ennōji (1479) reports an important passage that does not appear in the text from the *Sōtōshū Zensho*:

The person who has not understood and practiced the teachings of our school is not allowed to receive the teachings in this document. These teachings are the most secret part of our school. [...] [In this occasion] along with the alms bowl, the monastic bowl and the worship necessary, Gasan gave [to the extant disciples] the inner secret of the temple. (Ishikawa 1980, 755)

The manuscript from Ennōji contributes to shedding light on the modalities through which *goi* transmission took place in Gasan's group. The admonition not to divulgate the contents applies to the entire manuscript from Ennōji, emphasizing the important function of the five positions in the master-to-disciple transmission process (see Ishikawa 1980, 755). The nature of secrecy implies that the teachings in it should be unknown and thus hidden to other sects. However, there is no real reason for the first three chapters to be kept secret as they follow the same structure and contents of *Rentian yanmu*, a well-known source in medieval Zen. On the other hand, the fourth and fifth chapters present different structures and contents and are not part of the text included in the *Sōtōshū Zensho* and dated 1677. The last two chapters focus on the development and explanation of famous sayings attributed to eminent Zen Masters.³² Interestingly, some famous quotations³³ present the commentary of both Meihō and Gasan, revealing some typical characteristics of *monsan* documents (see Ishikawa 1980, 756). Therefore, the final chapters from Ennōji's manuscript should be considered as the actual secret part of *San'unkaigetsu*; in this sense, Ishikawa points out the need to distinguish between the first three chapters dealing with *goke shichishū* and *goi* and the last two, centered on the commentary of famous passages and thus resembling a *monsan* structure (1980, 756).

In the last part of the *San'unkaigetsu*, we read that the text was originally part of the *Taihakuhōki* 太白峯記. The name *Taihakuhō* refers to the records collected at the Tiantong temple 天童寺 on Mount Taibai located in the Song realm. These records are actually a series of *mondō* between Rujing and Dōgen during his stay in Song China and were

32 For instance, these commentaries regard the three mysteries, the four shouts, the four classifications by Linji Yixuan; Dongshan's three paths, etc.

33 Among the commented passages, we find: the four classifications, the *gāthā* from Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 and some sayings about the *sokushin jōbutsu*.

gradually integrated with other texts ascribed to the same genre (Ishikawa 1981, 191; 1977, 149). In the last part of *Taihakuhōki*, it states: "To Patriarch Dongshan's [successor]. [The contents] of the *Taihakuhōki* must be kept secret and nobody [except the person who received it] is allowed to see it" (Ishikawa 1981, 191). Since it is a collection of records which can be traced back to Dōgen and was updated over the years with texts of the same nature, the final remarks about the secrecy of the text serves as a pure formality responding to the need for authority³⁴ rather than secrecy itself (see Ishikawa 1981, 191-2). However, the standard formula of secrecy is not always a realistic feature of transmission knowledge, appearing more as a standardized formula which does not necessarily reflect the real contents of these documents as it mainly refers to the type of document rather than the information contained. Consequently, secrecy became a contagion and its proliferation especially affected the transmission as such. Secrecy as 'contagion' allows the emergence of its heterogeneity, as it applies to different sphere of knowledge but it is also possible with different elements of the same sphere. According to Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction, sexual production. [...] The difference is that contagion, epidemic, involves terms that are entirely heterogeneous: for example, a human being, an animal, and a bacterium, a virus, a molecule, a microorganism. (1987, 241-2)

The transmission is thus displayed as secret and "[there] is no secret because [it has] become a secret itself" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 289). The proliferation of the 'secrecy virus' exclusively affects the ones who were not provided with the vaccination, i.e. the people admitted to the group and bestowed with the preservation of the secret. This group owns the secret, yet since there is no secret to preserve, they become themselves the secret through the identification with the act of transmission itself. Therefore, the nature of secrecy that characterizes transmission affects the subjects who receive it. The perception of the secret is the product of the people who do not know it. If we apply this notion to Sōjiji's group of disciples led by Gasan, it is possible to identify a specular relationship within the group and the knowledge it possesses and partially hides. The creation of a privileged group among the disciples, namely the *gotetsu*, emphasizes the proximity and the relation to the center, i.e. the owner of the knowledge of transmission (the master). This small group of people is

34 The *Taihakuhōki* often appears in many *kirigami* lists, among the documents related to the transmission of the Dharma from master to disciple.

bestowed with the secret, represented, among other things, by *goi*. In this sense, secrecy appears as the “grey eminence” which becomes the “grey immanence” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 290). Secrecy is developed at different stages of complexity which are not revealed at once, and eventually the secret becomes an infinite form. Released from the form, the secret permeates every layer of society and thus of transmission, as “the more the secret is made into a structuring, organizing form, the thinner and more ubiquitous it becomes, the more its content becomes molecular, at the same time as its form dissolves” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 289).

7 Conclusion

In *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen clearly criticizes *goi*, raising doubts over the validity of this doctrine. However, Dōgen’s criticism did not affect the (re)appropriation of the five positions and its subsequent reshaping. The five positions can be considered as one of the most representative doctrines of the medieval Sōtō school, often appearing in secret transmission documents. In this paper, in light of the considerations we have shown thus far, it is clear that Gasan played a pivotal role in the initiation of *goi* transmission, collocating it at the center of the inner transmission discourse, which has been defined as the product of different levels of complexity. These levels encompass three different layers.

There is a textual layer, which displays binary sources of reference. Apparently, the main reference of Gasan’s elaboration is identified with Dongshan and Caoshan’s teaching, which is placed as an authoritative source. However, on a deeper level the effective source is nothing other than *Rentian yanmu*, which lays the basis for both the content organization and the reinterpretation of *goi*, mainly relying on Fenyang. The second level is the cosmogonic level, which aims at placing the five positions in a primordial ontological discourse. The cosmogonic layer is a powerful tool which situates the student’s mind in the world, creating an ordinate system of progression which actually interacts with reality and manipulates it. The cosmogony of *goi* as created by Gasan is borrowed from Zhou Dunyi and the *Yijing*, appearing as a ‘heterodox’ discourse from which a proliferation of symbols occurs. In the Yōkōji’s *kirigami*, symbol production is realized in a correlative form, allowing the unfolding of the cosmogony of practice. The heterodox nature that emerges from this elaboration is unified with *kōan* practice, placing at the top of *goi* cosmogony the *fushikijō no ikku*, which avoids the creation of a parallel substantial reality. The textual and cosmogonic layers are displayed along with the secrecy layer. Secrecy creates a hierarchy based on the relationship with the center (the master). In the case of *goi*, the group believed to possess the secret represents the secret itself. Indeed, there is no need to hide the transmission of a well-

known teaching such as the five positions as secrecy serves as a discourse strategy for the groups not placed within the secret discourse.

The three layers pertain to the “specific layer” (Lotman 2009, XXII) weaving them together as a multi-layered intersection of various texts. In Gasan, the five positions doctrine appears as the skillful mean through which the reduction of temporal and authority distance between himself and the past tradition occurs. Gasan places himself in the mythical, linear and uncorrupted time of patriarchal tradition (see Faure 1996, 54), acting as the direct successor of Dongshan when transmitting and readapting the five positions.

In *San'unkaigetsu*, *goi* doctrine is depicted as the authentic and true teaching of the Sōtō school, emphasizing the rhetoric of legitimacy connected to its elaboration. In Gasan,

the practice of commenting³⁵ on the words and actions of venerable Chan masters of the past clearly functioned to reify the central claim of Song Chan school [Sōjiji's group, in this case] that as a member of the grater Chan transmission family, a Chan master was the direct heir to its past master and even to the Buddha himself, and that he was therefore fully qualified and authorized to comment upon and judge past masters' sayings and doings. (Schlütter 2008, 110).

The influential role Gasan played in the spreading of Sōtō Zen with the foundation of temples and communities throughout the country needs to be explained through his key role in the transmission of doctrines such as the five positions, identified as a core element of secret documents of the group related to Gasan's disciples. The construction of a stable community at Sōjiji was sustained by the manipulation of the past tradition, which serves as a mirror of this same tradition. At that time, the Sōjiji community was facing a conflict with the Meihō's group based at Daijōji. A passage from Daijōji's *Tōkokuki* reports the rivalry between the two groups, clearly showing that the group of successors designated by Keizan himself had irremediably split (see Kawai 1996, 719; 2000, 175). Therefore, the transmission of *goi* is the blood which actualizes and legitimizes kinship between a group of people sharing the same origins. Gasan identifies these origins with Dongshan and Caoshan's *goi* and bestows his closest disciples with the 'authentic' doctrine of Sōtō tradition. Indeed, this group owns and defends the authentic teaching they received, sharing common origins that allow them to nourish their own community and face the conflict with other groups. In this sense, the making and the actualiza-

35 The practice of commenting, adapting, re-elaborating the saying of the past tradition constitutes a fundamental tool in medieval group from Sōtō tradition and it clearly appears in documents such as *daigo* and *monsan*.

tion of kin relationship create the basic scheme on which the social order and its legitimation occur. We thus have what Pierre Bourdieu defines as representational kinship, which is “the group’s self-representation and the almost theatrical presentation it gives of itself” (1977, 35).

Abbreviations

DNZZ = Nishi, Giyū; Tamaki Kōshirō; Kawamura, Kōshō (1975-89). *Dai Nihon zoku zōkyō*. Tōkyō: Kokusho konkōkai.

T = Takakutsu, Junjirō; Watanabe, Kaigyoku (eds.) (1924-32). *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. 100 vols. Tōkyō: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai.

S = Sōtōshū Zensho (ed.) (1970-73). *Sōtōshū Zensho Kankōkai*. 18 vols. Tōkyō: Sōtōshū Shūmuchō.

ZGR = Hanawa, Hokiichi; Ōta, Toshiro (ed.) (1959-60). *Zoku gunsho ruijū*. 37 vols. Tōkyō: Zokugunshoruijū Kanseikai.

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