

On A Snowy Night: Yishan Yining (1247-1317) and the Development of Zen Calligraphy in  
Medieval Japan

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## **Abstract**

On A Snowy Night: Yishan Yining (1247-1317) and the Development of Zen Calligraphy in Medieval Japan

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This dissertation is the first monographic study of the monk-calligrapher Yishan Yining (1247-1317), who was sent to Japan in 1299 as an imperial envoy by Emperor Chengzong (Temur, 1265-1307. r. 1294-1307), and achieved unprecedented success there. Through careful visual analysis of his extant oeuvre, this study situates Yishan's calligraphy synchronically in the context of Chinese and Japanese calligraphy at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and diachronically in the history of the relationship between calligraphy and Buddhism. This study also examines Yishan's prolific inscriptional practice, in particular the relationship between text and image, and its connection to the rise of ink monochrome landscape painting genre in 14<sup>th</sup> century Japan.

This study fills a gap in the history of Chinese calligraphy, from which monk-calligraphers and their practices have received little attention. It also contributes to existing Japanese scholarship on *bokuseki* by relating Zen calligraphy to religious and political currents in Kamakura Japan. Furthermore, this study questions the validity of the "China influences Japan" model in the history of calligraphy and proposes a more fluid and nuanced model of synthesis between the *wa* and the *kan* (Japanese and Chinese) in examining cultural practices in East Asian culture.

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Figure 5. 20. Anonymous, *White-Robed Kannon*. Yishan Yining inscription. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 110 x 54 cm. Kōmyōji 光明寺, Kyoto.

Figure 5.21. Anonymous, “Seeing the Ox,” the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of the *Ten Oxherding Parable*, with an inscription by Shaolin Miaosong 少林妙嵩 (act. first half of 13th century). Kōzō Yabumoto Collection, Amagasaki.

Figure 5.22. Anonymous, “Seeing the Ox,” from *Ten Verses on Oxherding*, dated 1278, Kamakura Period (1185-1333). Handscroll, ink and color on paper, 31.1 x 624.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 5.23. Anonymous, “Looking for the Ox” (*jingyū* 尋牛) of the Ox-Herding parables. Yishan Yining inscription. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 40.9 x 89.7 cm. Jōjūin, Kenninji, Kyoto.

Figure 5.24. Anonymous, “Leading the Ox” (*bokugyū* 牧牛) of the Ox-herding parables, dated 1310 (?). Yishan Yining inscription. Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 87.9 x 43.3 cm. Nara National Museum.

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Figure 5.26. Yishan Yining, *On A Snowy Night*, dated 1315. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 89.4 x 30.3 cm. Kenninji, Kyoto. Important Cultural Property.

Figure i (conclusion). Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275-1351), *Shunoku jigō hei geju* 春屋字号並偈頌, dated 1346. A pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper, 35.2 x 74.3 cm (upper) and 34.1 x 77.7 cm. Rokuon-in, Kyoto. Important Cultural Property.

Figure ii (conclusion). Musō Soseki, *Nachisan no ge* 那智山の偈. Ink on wax paper (*rōsen* 蠟箋), 79.7 x 23 cm. Junei'in, Kyoto.

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## Introduction

### *On A Snowy Night* (*setsuya saku* 雪夜作)

In the collection of Kenninji 建仁寺 in Kyoto, one of the oldest Zen temples fashioned after the Chinese continental model, is a rare work of calligraphy that exhibits the energy of beautiful writing in wild cursive script (fig. i). The style of the piece derives from a prestigious lineage of classical masters who dominated the history of Chinese calligraphy, such as Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361), Huaisu 懷素 (725-785), and Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322).

This scroll, titled *On A Snowy Night* (hereafter *Snowy Night*), serves as a witness to the remarkable life of its calligrapher, the Chinese Chan monk Yishan Yining 一山一寧 (1247-1317).<sup>1</sup> His arrival in Kyushū in the year 1299 was anything but auspicious: Yishan was incarcerated in the Shūzenji 修善寺 temple on the Izu 伊豆 peninsula on suspicion of

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<sup>1</sup> A note on the prefix Chan/Zen usage in this study: in the case of institutions, Chinese Chan monasteries and Japanese Zen monasteries are fairly straightforward. Similarly, I will use the prefix “Chan” for Chinese priests who stayed in continental China, and “Zen” for Japanese priests who were only active in Japan. In referring to concepts applicable to both China and Japan, I will use “Chan/Zen” as prefix. For the fair number of priests and monks who did move between China and Japan during the Southern Song (1127-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties: Chinese priests who went to Japan will have the prefix “Chan,” the name will be spelled out in Chinese pinyin with its Japanese pronunciation noted in parentheses; for Japanese priests who went to China, I will include the years they spent in China in parentheses as most of them did return to Japan with few exceptions.

espionage;<sup>2</sup> however, by 1315 when Yishan wrote *Snowy Night*,<sup>3</sup> two years before his death, he was a venerated Zen master presiding over the imperially sponsored Nanzenji 南禪寺, the foremost religious institution in the seat of the Japanese imperial power, Kyoto.

Yishan's calligraphy was widely sought after during his lifetime, a fact attested by the large number of surviving works attributed to him, including paintings that bear his inscriptions, outnumbering those of any Chan/Zen priests that preceded him.<sup>4</sup> *Snowy Night* epitomizes

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<sup>2</sup> The Kamakura *bakufu* was in fact debating whether to kill him or not given the recent two attempted invasions of Japan by the Mongols. *Issan Guoshi Miaoci Hongji Dashi Yulu* 一山國師妙慈弘濟大師語錄 [The recorded sayings of Yishan] (hereafter *Issan Goroku* 一山語錄), in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, (Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1961), vol. 80, p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> Another version of this work is extant, current whereabouts unknown. It has been commonly referred to as the “wax paper version” (*rōsen ban* 蠟箋版). Other than the character for the word “window” the content is the same. This waxed paper has underpainting of a pavilion in a landscape with a “Mount Plum” (Meishan 梅山 watermark. See Tanigawa Masao 谷川雅夫, “Yishan Yining shufa de guan cha—cong ‘laixianbei’ dao ‘liuzuji’ fu de shufeng shanbian” 一山一寧書法的觀察—從「賴賢碑」到「六祖偈」幅的書風嬗變 [Observations of calligraphy by Yishan Yining—stylistic change from *Raiken's stete* to *Sixth Patriarch's Poem*], in *Shanggu yu shangtai—yuanming shufa yanjiu lunji* 尚古與尚態—元明書法研究論集 [Admiration of antiquity and admiration of *tai*—an anthology of studies on calligraphy of Yuan and Ming dynasties], (Taipei: Wanjuanlou, 2013), pp. 209-211. In the *rōsen ban* transcription of the poem, Yishan tilted the paper by 90 degrees clockwise to write his calligraphy vertically from top right to lower left. This shows that he was very much aware of, and intentionally exploiting, the expressive potential of the vertical format for calligraphy. The poem is arranged in three vertical columns from right to left. The spatial distribution of the characters is close to that of the 1315 Kenninji scroll. Despite subtle variation in some of the individual characters, the work is very similar to the dated version of 1315. Thus, it can be inferred that these two versions of the same poem were created close in date.

<sup>4</sup> As recorded in the *Shiryō shū* 資料集 published in conjunction with the exhibition catalogue, *Sho no kokuhō: bokuseki* 書の国宝: 墨蹟 [National treasures of calligraphy: Zen calligraphy], (Osaka: Yomiuri Shinbun Osaka Honsha, 2006), Yishan has 114 calligraphic works under his name. The only other Zen priest in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with a comparable number his Japanese disciple Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275-1351), who has 190 works listed under his name.

Yishan's artistic achievement as a calligraphy virtuoso. Two characteristics of *Snowy Night* make it a work of special importance:

1) The calligraphy is in wild cursive, a style that was not practiced in Japan at the time. Wild cursive had been developed in China during the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), and its genesis was specifically linked to Chan monks.<sup>5</sup> However, it did not exert much influence on calligraphy in Japan.<sup>6</sup> The style that exerted the most overwhelming influence upon the development of Chinese calligraphy in Heian period Japan was that of the Two Wangs—Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361) and his son Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344-386)—whose calligraphic specimens had been brought to Japan by emissaries ( *kenzuishi* 遣隋使 and later *kentōshi* 遣唐使 ).<sup>7</sup> Emperor Taizong 太宗 (598-649) avidly collected works of the Two Wangs and amassed an impressive imperial collection. He ordered the authentication, tracing and copying of credible works and distributed the copies to aristocratic families and court officials. Thanks largely to the

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<sup>5</sup> Lu Hui-Wen, “Wild Cursive Calligraphy, Poetry, and Chan Monks in the Tenth Century,” in Wu Hung ed., *Tenth-Century China and Beyond: Art and Visual Culture in a Multi-Centered Age*, (Chicago: Art Media Resources, 2013), pp. 364-390; Adele Schlombs, *Huai-su and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy*, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990). Peter Sturman, “The ‘Thousand Character Essay’ Attributed to Huaisu and the Tradition of *Kuangcao* Calligraphy,” *Orientalia*, vol. 25, no. 4 (April 1994): 38-46.

<sup>6</sup> Chinese calligraphy in Japan is dominated by a fluid and smooth variant of the running script type, known as “(Japanese style) Chinese calligraphy” (*karayō* 唐様); see Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> For a list of Wang Xizhi's works that were deposited in the Shōsoin treasury in Nara as early as the eighth century, see Itakura Masaaki 板倉聖哲, “The Imperial Treasures of the Shōsoin and the Collection of the Tang Emperors,” in Tomizawa-Kay Eriko and Watanabe Toshio ed., *East Asian Art History in a Transnational Context* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 32-38; for a discussion on the influence of Wang Xizhi and Ou Yangxun's calligraphy in Nara Japan, see Horie Tomohiko 堀江知彦, “Sanpitsu ni senkō suru shina no shohō” 三筆に先行するシナの書法 [Chinese calligraphy the preceded the ‘Three Brushes’], in Horie Tomohiko, *Sanpitsu Sanseki* 三筆三蹟 [Three brushes and three traces], (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1971), pp.106-117.

emperor's unrelenting efforts, the calligraphy of the Two Wangs became a state-sanctioned model, and Wang Xizhi was elevated to the status of patriarch of Chinese calligraphy.<sup>8</sup>

2) The calligraphy is in the hanging scroll format. Since modern viewers often encounter calligraphic hanging scrolls, which became popular during the Ming dynasty, it is easy to forget what a novelty the vertical format must have been.<sup>9</sup> Precisely when calligraphy hanging scrolls appeared is unknown, but Yishan's *Snowy Night* is undoubtedly an early example that fully exploited the format's expressive potential.<sup>10</sup>

### When Cursive Meets Vertical

Text written and arranged in the vertical format was nothing new by Yishan's time—almost all Chinese texts had been written vertically since the Warring States period, such as Han dynasty banners and the age-old tradition of carving writings on stelae. However, it is the combination of

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<sup>8</sup> Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy*, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 24-26.

<sup>9</sup> Mei Yuehui 梅躍輝, “Shuzhou xingshi yu ming zhongwanqi shufaxingshi biao xian” 豎軸形式與明中晚期書法形式表現 [The vertical scroll format and the formal expression of Ming middle-late calligraphy], MA Thesis, Zhongguo yishu yanjiu yuan, 2011. Heinz Götze, “Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy” in Shigemi Komatsu and Kwan S. Wong compiled, *Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy: Spanning Two Thousand Years, The Heinz Götze Collection Heidelberg*, Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> One important subgenre in calligraphy in the vertical format is the *ichigyōmono* (one-line calligraphy hanging scroll). Scholars have not been able to agree upon its genesis; its appearance and proliferation have been associated with the rise of tea ceremony (*chanoyu*) towards the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the 114 extant works of Yishan, about 20 are *ichigyōmono*, suggesting Yishan's connection to this particular format of calligraphy that showed up in tea diaries from as early as 1579. It has been suggested that three-line calligraphy such as the *Snowy Night* might have been the first true vertical calligraphy scroll seen on its own. Nagoya Akira 名見耶明, “Sho ni shitashimu: Issan Ichinei no bokuseki to ichigyōsho” 書に親しむ：一山一寧の墨跡と一行書 [Calligraphy of Issan Ichinei and one-line calligraphy], *Chadō no kenkyū*, (July 2019), 43-44. For a list of appearances of Yishan's calligraphies in tea diaries from 1578 to 1613, see *ibid.*, p. 41.

the wild cursive calligraphy with the hanging scroll format that gives *Snowy Night* its abiding charm and expressivity.

Format dictates the way in which art is perceived. The vertical format enhances one distinct characteristic of calligraphy—its embedded temporality. A viewer literate in Chinese, when confronted with a piece of calligraphy, feels compelled to retrace in her mind the kinetic movement of the hand of the calligrapher that brought forth the brushstrokes that make up the written character; hence, more than any other artistic medium in the East Asian tradition, calligraphy with its emphasis on the art of the line incorporates the element of time in its final form.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, of all the script types, the wild cursive owes its formidable expressive potential precisely to the indexical recording of the calligrapher’s gestural movement unfolding in time.

The verticality of the scroll works in tandem with the fluidity of the wild cursive script, leading the gaze in an unobstructed movement from top right to bottom left—this must have represented a new mode of looking for contemporary viewers of Yishan’s calligraphy.

The medium (referring to the material makeup) and format (referring to the visual presentation) in which calligraphy appears matters; they offer important clues regarding the purpose of and the intended audience of the writing. Imperishable surfaces such as bone, stone and bronze often feature text that is commemorative and associated with authority and public display, hence the choice of scripts often emphasizes solemnity and legibility—seal (*zhuan* 篆),

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<sup>11</sup> “The art of calligraphy is unique among the arts of the world in that the process of creation in all its consecutive phases is visible in the object. A proper viewer follows with his eyes the brush movements through each of the characters and the sequence of the lines. He thus recreates for himself the moments of the actual creation.” Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition*, p. 29.

clerical (*li* 隸) and standard (*kai* 楷) script types.<sup>12</sup> Semi-perishable surfaces often are utilitarian in their purpose, serving as signs in the market place and records for bureaucratic purposes.

Paper and silk are by far the most suitable for the expressive power of calligraphy due to the medium's capacity to register the interaction between ink, water and brush that engenders much of the visual charm of calligraphy. The lightness of the medium of paper and silk combined with the format of either handscroll or hanging scroll that could be rolled up, results in greater portability, which makes scrolls suitable for circulation.

The environment in which calligraphy is displayed and its intended audience are crucial to understanding its significance. The medium and format of a work of calligraphy are often chosen in accordance with its intended audience, which varies across a spectrum from the private to the public. Stelae, such as the Xiping Stone Classics (*xiping shijing* 熹平石經), displayed canonical Confucian texts sanctioned by the state and intended for as wide a readership as possible.<sup>13</sup> At the other end of this spectrum is the fan—personal accoutrement—often conferred as a gift by the imperial court, normally viewed by the person holding it.<sup>14</sup> Handscrolls are less intimate than fans, as their viewing can accommodate more than one person at a time; they are, however, less public than large screens, which could be seen by many people at once. The handscroll also invites commentaries appended simply by attaching more paper or silk to the

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed overview of all five scripts in Chinese calligraphy, see Shen C. Y. Fu, *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy*, (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1977), pp. 41-176.

<sup>13</sup> For a brief recount of the history and a reproduction of the rubbing of the famous Classics of Xiping, see Tseng Yuho, *A History of Chinese Calligraphy*, (HK: The Chinese University Press, 1993), 138.

<sup>14</sup> For a case study of two fans bearing Empress Yang's calligraphy, see Hui-shu Lee, *Empresses, Art, and Agency in Song Dynasty China*, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2010), pp. 198-203.



original scroll, offering an opportunity for participation in a discourse that could span centuries.

Writing calligraphy on hanging scrolls was a major innovation that opened up new possibilities for this art. The hanging scroll strikes a balance between the public and the private as it allows viewing by an audience larger than that for handscrolls and fans; but it could also be rolled up and stored away, preserving the object's private nature. The vertical format decisively emphasizes the totality of the work, as one takes the entire composition in with one continuous glance; but unlike the handscroll, the hanging scroll allows little space for colophons, and thereby asserts a greater degree of autonomy for the calligraphy. The following sections examine how the vertical format combined with the wild cursive script makes Yishan's *Snowy Night* such a powerful work; curiously, the gestural expressivity of the calligraphy is in tension with the private nature of the poem itself—Yishan's reflections on his life and Chan Buddhism in his solitary abode in Kyoto on a snowy night in the last month of the year 1315.

### **The Poem and the Calligraphy**

#### On A Snowy Night<sup>15</sup>

In the cold, small room,  
frozen as if snow were piled up to my waist;  
On Mt. Ao, frozen in frost,  
reminiscent is the friendship formed during the journey;  
All night long, the window rattles,  
making an unrelenting sound;  
And since there are matters that haunt me,  
I did not find clarity for a long time.

雪夜作

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<sup>15</sup> This translation is based on Eikei Akao, in Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanazawa ed., Andreas Leisinger trans., *Zen, Masters of Meditation in Images and Writing*, (Zürich: Artibus Asiae, 1996), p. 102. See also entry on this work, *ibid.*, no. 37, pp. 276-277. The changes in the translation are informed by the translation of the poem in modern Japanese in Kinugawa Kenji 衣川賢治 and Tatatsu Kunie 高津久仁枝, *Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū* 一山一寧墨跡集 [Anthology of Issan Ichinei's calligraphy], (Shizuoka, Kiichiji: 2016), no. 16, pp. 88-92.

寒添少室齊腰恨  
凍結鰲山客路情  
一夜打牕聲淅瀝  
又因閑事長無明

In the first two lines of the poem, Yishan cites two well-known Chan Buddhist anecdotes that feature snow as their settings;<sup>16</sup> he then cleverly transitions from a remote historical past into his own thoughts in the here and the now by way of the sound of snow falling on the window. He ends the poem by lamenting the delay of his enlightenment due to his entanglements in worldly affairs. By this time, Yishan had attempted two escapes from his position as abbot of Nanzenji, but was called back by the retired Emperor Go-Uda 後宇多法皇 (1267-1324, r. 1274-1287) and remained in the position till his death, two years after he composed this poem.<sup>17</sup>

The poem itself epitomizes Yishan's literary style. Yishan has long been hailed as a forerunner of the Five Mountain literature (*Gozan bungaku* 五山文学), however, when compared to poems composed by his fellow émigré Chinese Chan monks in Kamakura, *Snowy Night* is almost remarkably plain due to its lack of stylistic embellishments and rhetoric finesse.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The first line refers to the anecdote of Huike 慧可 (487-593) standing in snow on Mt. Song begging Bodhidharma to take him as a disciple, an anecdote that first appeared in *Baolin zhuan* 寶林傳 (801); the second line refers to an anecdote recorded in the *Biyuanlu* 碧岩錄 (1125), where Xuefeng Yicun 雪峰義存 (822-908) obtained enlightenment during a conversation with his fellow monk Yantou Quanhuo 巖頭全燾 (826-885), when they were traveling on Mt. Ao under heavy snows. *Ibid.*, p. 90-91.

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 1 on Yishan Yining's biography.

<sup>18</sup> Kageki Hideo 蔭木英雄, *Chūsei Zenrin Shishi* 中世禪林詩史 [History of Poetry of Medieval Zen], (Tokyo: Kasama shoin, 1994), pp. 45-50. The author owes this insight to Kinugawa Kenji, a scholar in Five Mountain literature and professor at Hanazono University, Kyoto.

Yishan had an ambivalent attitude towards the pursuit of poetry and versification; he did however encourage his disciples to engage in literary activities as a means to achieving enlightenment.<sup>19</sup>

*Snowy Night* is the first known hanging scroll calligraphy done in the wild cursive script. The vertical format and the wild cursive calligraphy bring out the flavor of the poem. As suggested by calligrapher and scholar Ishikawa Kyūyō 石川九楊, the vertical format of this work marks a revolutionary development in the history of calligraphy, achieved simply by turning by 90 degrees a piece of the same paper used for hand scrolls and inscribing it in vertical columns of characters.<sup>20</sup>

In Japan, one does encounter calligraphy mounted in hanging scrolls such as sutra fragments and letters; however, it is important not to forget that these examples originally existed in handscroll format, and were then truncated and remounted as hanging scrolls for display purposes in *tokonoma* during tea ceremonies in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>21</sup> It is therefore remarkable that Yishan originally conceived *Snowy Night* as a vertical hanging

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<sup>19</sup> Yishan composed *Coda to Jufen yunlüe* (*Jufen yunlüe ba* 聚分韻略跋) for *Shūbun Inryaku* 聚分韻略, compiled in 1306 by his Japanese disciple Kokan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1278-1347); it's a dictionary on rhyming in Chinese poetry. Kinugawa and Tatatsu, *Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū*, (Shizuoka, Kiichiji: 2016), no. 11, pp. 68-70.

<sup>20</sup> Ishikawa Kyūyō 石川九楊, *Nihon shoshi* 日本書史 [History of Japanese Calligraphy], (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppansha, 2001), p. 408.

<sup>21</sup> Song Qiuyan, “Shakyō dankan ni okeru hyōsō ni tsuite: narajidai kara kamakurajidai no dankan wo chūshini” 写經断簡における表装について: 奈良時代から鎌倉時代の断簡を中心に [On the mounting of sutra fragments: centering on sutra fragments from the Nara to the Kamakura periods], *Daito Bunka University, Bungaku kenkyūka shodōgaku senkō shūshi ronbun/shūryō sakuhin hakase ronbun kenkyū shūroku* 文学研究科書道学専攻修士論文・修了作品博士論文研究集録, 2008.

scroll, as the height of the paper clearly demonstrates.

Two extant works of calligraphy in the hanging scroll format do predate the *Snowy Night*, however neither comes close to Yishan's work in its effective liaison of the expressive power of the wild cursive script and the verticality of the hanging scroll format.<sup>22</sup>

The quatrain is arranged in three columns reading from right to left, with 12, 11, 5 characters in each column; Yishan writes the title “On a snowy night” (*setsuya saku* 雪夜作) towards the lower half of the third column, before starting a fourth column with the date “the twelfth month of the fourth year of the Zhenghe (J: *seiwa*) reign period [1315]” (*zhenghe yimao layue* 正和乙卯臘月), and his signature “the old monk Yishan Yining” (*Yishan laona Yining* 一山老納一寧). A square seal reading “Yishan” (一山) in seal script in vermilion is faintly visible over the characters “Yining” (一寧) in the signature.

The scroll has long been hailed as a masterpiece of cursive calligraphy, epitomizing Yishan's achievement as a calligrapher. The fluidity of the brushstrokes works in tandem with the verticality of the scroll and creates a dynamic rhythm that guides the viewer through the poem. Dated to the year 1315 when Yishan was 69 years old, the piece fully captures the confidence and ease with which Yishan was wielding the brush. Yishan had by this time ‘made it’ in his career as an émigré Chan monk—he had won the respect and patronage of both the

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<sup>22</sup> Different from *Snowy Night*, both of these early vertical pieces are in running script, which is a script type whose legibility is in-between the standard and the cursive. The two earliest extant hanging calligraphy scrolls are the following two works:

1. A single-line calligraphy attributed to the Southern Song Chan monk Huaihai Yuanzhao 淮海元肇 (1189-?) in the Tokiwayama Bunko collection in Tokyo.
2. A more reliable early example is a four-line poem by Wu Ju (active second half of the 12c). The hanging scroll, currently in the Taipei Palace Museum collection, measures 98.6 x 55.3cm ink on silk; it has been recognized as the earliest calligraphy in the hanging scroll format.

powerful Hōjō clan in the Kantō region and the imperial court in Kyoto. At the time of the creation of this scroll, Yishan was presiding over Nanzenji, the most prominent Zen temple in medieval Japan.

A viewer encountering the *Snowy Night* in person for the first time is surprised by its modest size (89.4 cm x 30.3cm) as its reproduced images often project a sense of monumentality (in the sense that the work feels larger than life). The dramatic effect lies not so much in the thickening and thinning of the brushstrokes as in the unexpected variations in the dynamic way in which the characters relate to one another. The width of the brushstrokes is relatively even, a characteristic that comes directly from the cursive tradition of the Tang. Upon close examination of the brushstrokes, it is clear that Yishan was mostly wielding the brush perpendicularly to the paper surface, writing with a “centered tip” (*zhongfeng* 中鋒); he does also allow the tip to come at a slight angle to the paper (such as the character “da” 打 in column 2), giving visual variety to the flow of his brushstrokes.

The first three characters “han tian shao” 寒添少 announce a fairly charged opening to the piece. Each of the three characters tilts its right shoulder upward emphasizing the vertical tensile strength of the characters; starting with the fourth character “shi” 室, the calligrapher shifts to emphasize the horizontal tension within the structure of the character. The three characters that follow, “qi yao hen” 齊腰恨, feature full circular movement in the brush; the effect of flying white (*feibai* 飛白) becomes increasingly prominent as the brush runs out of ink. Yishan dips the brush in ink before starting the second quatrain with “dong jie ao shan” 凍結鰲山; as column 1 comes to an end, the characters are squeezed together, visually echoing the semantic meaning of the phrase “frozen together” (*dong jie* 凍結); with the last character of

column 1 “ke” 客 Yishan draws out the vertical flow of the energy again, which continues with the two characters “lu qing” 路情 at the beginning of column 2.

The characters “yi ye da chuang” 一夜打聽 features brushstrokes that tilt right and left like an inebriated man zigzagging, a proper visualization of the semantic meaning of this verse (“all night long [the snow] rattles the window”)—snow flying in all directions.<sup>23</sup> The vertically structured character “sheng” 聲 however, restores the centrality in the column that continues through the characters “xi li” 淅瀝; as column 2 comes to an end, Yishan arrests the vertical flow of motion with the characters “you yin” 又因, whose shapes are well-suited to the circular motion of the brush.<sup>24</sup>

Changes in the ink tone throughout the piece indicate that Yishan reloaded his brush with ink to write the characters *han* 寒, *dong* 凍, *lu* 路, *da* 打, *xi* 淅, *xue* 雪, *zheng* 正, and when he began the signature. These characters seem to be verbs that anchor the movement in the quatrain and indicate the element of sound in the poem, which playfully interacts with the dynamic forms of the calligraphy. In the last five characters in column 3, *xian shi chang wu ming* 閑事長無明 (“[due to] matters that are trivial, I have not found clarity for a long time”) has its visual correspondence in the calligraphic form, where the ink gradually fades out; this befits an ending that suggests a tinge of melancholy, loneliness, and perhaps even a faint sentiment of regret. The last character of the poem, “ming” 明, is written in a way that emphasizes equity and equilibrium

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<sup>23</sup> Most prominently the rightward movement of the *na* stroke of the character *ye* 夜 forms a clear contrast to the way the following character *da* 打 is tilted to the left of the column.

<sup>24</sup> This visual analysis is greatly inspired by Ishikawa Kyūyō, “Atarashii chugoku sho no ryūnyū to teichaku” 新しい中国書の流入と定着 [The influx of new Chinese calligraphy and its establishment] in Ishikawa Kyūyō, *Nihonshoshi*, pp. 406-411.

between its left and right components; this brings the different vectors that have been shifting throughout the poem to a stable finish. The faint ink tone and the attenuated brushstrokes that constitute this last character is a visual pun on its semantic meaning—“clarity”—which is key to this poem where the monk reflects on his lifelong quest for enlightenment. The buff color of the paper almost envelops the character written in faded ink, just as the day breaks at the end of this long and sleepless night of Yishan.

Yishan’s *Snowy Night* is a masterpiece of wild cursive calligraphy. The characters share a sense of artistic abandon in execution seen in the best works by the Tang dynasty wild cursive master Huaisu. Yishan’s innovative adoption of the vertical format presages the proliferation of this format for calligraphy, as it fully exploits the expressive potential of the combination of wild cursive script with vertical scroll. This is the new calligraphy that Yishan introduced to Japan that stood out as a gem in *bokuseki*, and did much to cement his reputation as a great calligrapher. Yishan’s cursive hanging scrolls could secure him a position amongst the best-known calligraphers that came before and after him; however, his name is absent from the history of calligraphy in China and this dissertation hopes to restore some visibility to this great monk-calligrapher.<sup>25</sup>

## **Methodology and Structure**

This study reconstructs Yishan’s practice as a calligrapher in the context of the history of Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, and explores how calligraphy functions as a site of meaning and

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<sup>25</sup> The relative absence of Chan monks from the history of paintings and calligraphy in China is possibly a result of art historiographical bias of the literati scholars who came to dominate the discourse on art. A recent scholarly effort to shed light on the much-overlooked monasteries as centers of artistic activities in Yuan China is Marsha Weidner, “Fit for Monk’s Quarters: Monasteries as Centers of Aesthetic Activity in the Later Fourteenth Century,” *Are Orientalis* vol. 37 (2009): 49-77.

exchange, which anchored the extensive socio-political network Yishan cultivated, spanning monasteries, the Kamakura shogunate, and the Kyoto court.

Studies of Yishan Yining began to appear in the 1920s in Japan, and in the 1980s in China. Most studies situate the monk either in the theological context of Chan/Zen Buddhism, the literary tradition of Gozan, or the political history of Sino-Japan exchange.<sup>26</sup> My dissertation will be the first monograph dedicated to Yishan Yining's calligraphy. I will examine the priest's extant works and map out stylistic changes in his oeuvre, tracing his trajectory from Kamakura to Kyoto.

In Japan, Zen calligraphy (*bokuseki* 墨跡 “ink trace”) has long been venerated as an art form; the focus of most Japanese studies on Zen calligraphy however, has been on semantic content and on typology based on sectarian lineages.<sup>27</sup> Discussion of Zen calligraphy is often

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<sup>26</sup> For a summary of recent publications in China on Yishan Yining, see Yao Huolin 霍耀林 and Che Cailiang 車才良, “Yishan yining yanjiu shu ping” 一山一寧研究述評 [Review of research on Yishan Yining], *Renjian shenghuo wenhua yanjiu*, no. 25 (2015): 65-69. In Japan, Yishan Yining has long attracted scholarly attention from the perspective of diplomatic relations between Japan and China. Baigyō Mizuno 水野梅曉, *Mōko raishū to Issan Kokushi no kika* 蒙古來襲と一山國師の歸化 [Mongol invasions and the emigration of National Master Issan], (Tōkyō: Shina Jihōsha; Hatsubaimoto Morie Honten, Shōwa 3 [1928]). An updated detailed study on Yishan's biography is Satō Shūkō 佐藤秀孝, “Issan Ichinei no shōgai to sono kōseki” 一山一寧の生涯とその功績, *Komazawa daigaku Zen kenkyūjo nenpō*, no. 25 (Dec. 2013): 197-255. Yishan Yining is also discussed in the context of Five Mountain literature, see Hideo, *Chūsei zenrin shishi*, pp. 45-50.

<sup>27</sup> Tayama Hōnan 田山方南's work laid the foundation for studies of *bokuseki*. He compiled *Zenrin Bokuseki* 禪林墨跡, (Kyoto: Shinbunkaku, 1981), and *Zenrin Bokuseki Shūi* 禪林墨跡拾遺, (Tokyo: Zenrin bokuseki kankōkai, 1977); Fujino Sōka 藤野宗郁 and Imaeda Aishin 今枝愛真, *Bokuseki Soshiden: Shintei Zusetsu* 墨跡祖師伝：新訂図説, (Tokyo: Hakurinsha shoten, 1970); Nishio Kenryū 西尾賢隆, *Chūsei Zensō no Bokuseki to Nitchū KōRyū* 中世禅僧の墨蹟と日中交流 [Ink traces of medieval Zen monks and Sino-Japan exchange], (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2011). A work in Japanese that looks at *bokuseki* as calligraphy is Nakajima Kōshō 中島皓象, *Shodō shi yori Miru Zenrin no Bokuseki* 書道史より見る禅林の墨蹟 [Zen bokuseki seen from the history of calligraphy], (Kyoto: Shibunkaku



limited by the presumption that Zen art is inherently unorthodox and iconoclastic, existing independently of historical vicissitudes. By conducting vigorous visual analysis, I hope to demystify *bokuseki* and re-contextualize it art-historically.<sup>28</sup>

As calligraphy by monks in China is severely understudied,<sup>29</sup> my work will contribute to restoring Chan/Zen calligraphy, a genre that encompasses an extensive and important corpus of visual materials, to its proper place in the history of calligraphy in East Asia.<sup>30</sup> I will demonstrate that Yishan's calligraphic practice took place at the intersection of scholarly, religious and political developments in medieval Japan.

Chapter 1 gives a biographical account of Yishan Yining, and reconstructs the process by which he matured and advanced in his career within the vibrant network of Chan monasteries of

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shuppan, 1990). For a recent Chinese study on calligraphy by Song Buddhists, see Hu Jianming 胡建明, *Songdai Gaoseng Moji Yanjiu* 宋代高僧墨跡研究 [Studies of calligraphy by Song Buddhist priests], (Hangzhou: Xiling yinshe chubanshe, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Uta Lauer's monographic study of calligraphy by Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263-1323) is a welcome step towards a better understanding of this art form; the proposed study is inspired by her work, in particular her exploration of the artistic and social relations between the monk and the eminent literatus Zhao Mengfu); see Uta Lauer, *A Master of His Own: The Calligraphy of the Chan Abbot Zhongfeng Mingben, 1262-1323*, (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2002). Another notable publication on *bokuseki* in the west is a monograph dedicated to Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275-1351), Yishan's Japanese disciple. See Ildegarda Scheidegger, *Bokutotsusō: Studies on the Calligraphy of Zen Master Musō Soseki (1275-1351)*, (Bern, Peter Lang, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> The few articles in Chinese are rather perfunctory. See Fang Kuangshui 方匡水, "Yishan Yining shufa yuanyuan tanxi" 一山一宁书学渊源探析 [An exploration of the sources for Yishan Yining's calligraphic style], *Da Wutai* 大舞台 no. 7 (2012): 119-20. This study benefited greatly from the timely publication of a compilation with transcription of extant calligraphy by Chan Buddhists of the Song and Yuan dynasties; Jiang Jing 江靜, *Ricang Songyuan Chanseng Moji Xuanbian* 日藏宋元禪僧墨跡選編 [Selection of Song Yuan Chan monks calligraphy in Japanese collections], (Chongqing: Xinan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Few if any calligraphy by Chinese Chan masters is extant in China; *bokuseki* from the Song and Yuan periods is largely preserved in Japan.

Jiangnan China in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The story continues with Yishan's emigration to Japan in 1299 and his subsequent appointments at various Zen temples in Kamakura and Kyoto.

Chapter 2 discusses the relationship between Chan Buddhism and calligraphy. The shared cultural capital between Chan monks and literati officials constituted an indispensable foundation for their friendship, of which the art of brush—calligraphy—was a prominent component. An important source from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Huihong's 慧洪 (1071-1128) *Shimen wenzichan* 石門文字禪, reveals the centrality of calligraphy in the cultural life of Chan monks in Jiangnan. The chapter then gives a sketch of the calligraphic environments of Southern Song China and its reception in Kamakura Japan.

Chapter 3 examines Yishan's calligraphy written while he was in Kamakura, focusing on two early works dated to 1301 and 1304. The chapter situates Yishan's practice of the classicizing Wang Xizhi style in the reception of that tradition in Japan since the late Nara period, as well as in the more immediate calligraphic environments of Kamakura and Kyoto in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter 4 treats Yishan Yining's cursive calligraphy when he was in Kyoto from 1313-1317, the most prolific period in his career as a monk-calligrapher. The chapter contextualizes Yishan's practice of the cursive script in the history of that tradition in both China and Japan, and in particular in the relationship between the cursive script and Chinese monk-calligraphers. The chapter explores Yishan's relations to the retired Emperor Go-Uda, and highlights the cultural dynamic between Kamakura and Kyoto as an important background for understanding the drastic change one sees in Yishan's calligraphic styles.

Chapter 5 examines Yishan's painting inscriptions in their relationship to the painted

image, especially in the context of the rising importance of ink monochrome landscape painting as an independent genre. The breadth of themes, the variety of media and styles, as well as the geographical span of these paintings bearing Yishan's inscriptions testify to the existence of an extensive network that connected Chan/Zen monks, warriors, and aristocrats in early 14<sup>th</sup> century Japan.

### **A Note on *Bokuseki***

*Bokuseki* is a peculiar category of calligraphy in the history of East Asian art.<sup>31</sup> Looking at the characters, *bokuseki* 墨跡 (C: *moji*) literally means “ink trace”; however, the term has evolved to exclusively describe calligraphy by Chan/Zen monks; exclusively; held in great esteem in particular are works of calligraphy by venerated Chinese Chan monks. The very pronunciation of these two characters also points to Japan as the cultural and historical environment in which this category took root; by contrast, in China this term has remained a general term for handwritten texts.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For an overview of Chan calligraphy in English, see Masaaki Chikusa, “Chan Calligraphy of the Song and Yuan Dynasties,” in Nakata Yūjirō ed., *Chinese Calligraphy*, (New York, Tokyo, Kyoto: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1983), 137-140. For an overview of the transmission of *bokuseki* to Japan and different types of *bokuseki*, see Imaeda Aishin 今枝愛真, “Bokuseki—Sono Denrai to Shoshiki” 墨跡—その伝来と書式 [*Bokuseki*: its transmission and format], in *Nihon no shoshi* 日本の書史, vol. 3: Kamakura/Nanbokuchō 鎌倉・南北朝, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1983), 50-58.

<sup>32</sup> The earliest record of the term is traceable to the *Song shu* 宋書 during the Six Dynasties period (220-589); the usage of the term picked up during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) as seen in Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) and Huang Tingjian's 黃庭堅 (1045-11-5) literary anthologies. Chan monks started adopting this term frequently in the Southern Song period; in Japan, the earliest record of the term is the list of books and calligraphies brought back to Tōfukuji 東福寺 by En'ni 円爾 (1202-1280, in China: 1235-1241), dated to 1241. Mine Gishi Kayō 峯岸佳葉, “Nansō shohō ni miru ‘bokuseki’ no genryū ni tsuite” 南宋書法にみる「墨跡」の源流について [The origin of the term *moji* in history of Southern Song calligraphy], in *Calligraphic Studies*, no. 16 (2006): 105-119.

Another peculiar aspect of *bokuseki* is that almost all extant works of the genre survive in Japan. In China, where Chan Buddhism reached its theological and cultural maturity by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, works by monk-calligraphers were all but ignored, by literati who were the arbiters of taste, which explains why very few survived there. Two factors contributed to the preservation of *bokuseki* in Japan. The first is the enormous respect that Japanese Zen disciples had for the Chinese masters under whose aegis they studied during their sojourns in China. These same Japanese disciples returned to Japan with specimens of their Chinese masters' calligraphy, and treasured these "ink traces" in the Japanese Zen monasteries that they later founded and presided over.<sup>33</sup>

The second factor came later but is extremely crucial in the survival of *bokuseki* in Japan—the rise of *chanoyu* towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As leading tea masters who were arbiters of taste at the time exalted *bokuseki* as indispensable to any worthy tea ceremony, this type of calligraphy became increasingly desirable for collectors and tea aficionados. This also explains why most *bokuseki* today are in the hanging scroll format—this format lends itself well to elegant display in *tokonoma*. Tea diaries from Edo period show that *bokuseki* frequently appeared in tea ceremonies from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the beginning of the Edo period, *bokuseki* had been elevated to the status of the most desirable display object in a tea ceremony.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The relationship between En'ni and his Chinese master Wuzhun Shifan 無准師範 (1179-1249) is well documented with primary sources such as letters; En'ni brought back Wuzhun's calligraphies which has been preserved in Tōfukuji, founded by En'ni as a center for the dissemination of Zen Buddhism in Kyoto. Nagoya Akira 名児耶明, *Sho no mikata: Nihon no bi to kokoro o yomu* 書の見方：日本の美と心を読む, (Tokyo: Kadokawa Gakugei shuppan, 2008), pp. 176-77.

<sup>34</sup> Haga Kōshirō gives a detailed account of the instances where *bokuseki* appears in tea ceremonies, starting with the earliest tea diary, *Yamano ue sōjiki* 山上宗二記 (1588). By the late

The intimate connection between the sprawling Zen monastery complex Daitokuji 大徳寺 (founded 1326) and *bokuseki*'s status is evident from the very first recorded instance in which *bokuseki* was hung in *tokonoma* during a tea ceremony by a major originator of the *wabi* tea style, Murata Jukō 村田珠光 (1423-1502), as recorded in the earliest tea diary *Yamano ue sōjiki* 山上宗二記 (1588). In the record, during a tea ceremony Murata hung a *bokuseki* by the Chinese Chan monk Yuanwu Keqin 圓悟克勤 (1063-1135, J: Engo Kokugon), which he had received from the Daitokuji abbot Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394-1481).<sup>35</sup> Not incidentally, another Daitokuji abbot, Kōgetsu Sōgan 江月宗玩(1573-1643), was arguably the first major connoisseur of *bokuseki*: he left behind forty-nine volumes of journals containing transcriptions and notes on the *bokuseki* that he authenticated, which were collectively titled *Copies of Ink Traces (Bokuseki no utsushi* 墨跡の写), compiled from 1611 until his death in 1643.<sup>36</sup> The *Utsushi* includes fifty records of works bearing Yishan's name, including single-line calligraphies, inscriptions, and other types of writing associated with Zen monasteries.<sup>37</sup> Aoyama San'u 青山杉雨 (1912-1993), calligrapher and historian of calligraphy, observed that it was only in recent years that

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16<sup>th</sup> century *bokuseki* had decisively risen to the top of the display hierarchy together with paintings and ceramics. Haga Kōshirō 芳賀幸四郎, "Cha no yu to Bokuseki" 茶の湯と墨跡 [Tea ceremony and ink traces], *Chadōbijutsu zenshū* 茶道美術全集, no. 14, "Bokuseki 墨跡," (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1971), pp. 93-96.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>36</sup> For a most up-to-date analysis of this important document and the category of *bokuseki* in the context of Daitokuji, see Gregory Levine, "Part III: Tracing the Calligraphic Past," in Levine, *Daitokuji: The Visual Cultures of a Zen Monastery*, (University of Washington Press, 2005), pp. 145-221.

<sup>37</sup> Takeuchi Naoji 竹内尚次, *Kōgetsu sōgan bokuseki no utsushi no kenkyū* 江月宗玩墨跡の写の研究, (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1976).

professional calligraphers began to pay attention to *bokuseki* due to their peculiar characteristics: lack of stylistic consistency and lack of finishedness in formal terms.<sup>38</sup> The difficulty of applying an art-historical lens to *bokuseki* lies in this seeming resistance to systemic stylization and theorization. By applying art historical lens to Yishan's oeuvre, the present study hopes to contribute to the demystification of the genre of *bokuseki*.

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<sup>38</sup> Aoyama San'u 青山杉雨, "Zenrin Bokuseki no Tokushusei" 禅林墨跡の特殊性 [The peculiarity of Zen *bokuseki*], *Kindai Shodo Gurafu* 近代書道グラフ, no. 119 (1996).

## Chapter 1: A Chinese Monk-Calligrapher in Kamakura Japan

Yishan Yining (1247-1317) was a Chan Buddhist monk, a native of China, who by the end of his life had risen to the abbacy of the most important Zen temple in Japan. Yishan's astonishing trajectory within the clerical world of East Asia was inseparable from his artistic career: he became not only one of the foremost clerics in medieval Japan but also one of its most admired and influential calligraphers. Although these two aspects of Yishan's life were closely intertwined, it is helpful to begin with an account of his career in the Buddhist order, from his early days in temples of southeastern China, to his arrival in Japan and eventual elevation to not only the abbacy of Nanzenji but also to the status of spiritual guide of a retired emperor. The following account is based primarily on a biography of Yishan written by his Japanese disciple, Kokan Shiran 虎関師鍊 (1278-1347).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> This English account is based on the meticulously annotated Japanese translation in Satō Shūkō 佐藤秀孝, "Issan Ichinen no denki shiryō—Kokan Shiren sen 'Issan kokushi gyō jō' no yakuchū" 一山一寧の伝記史料—虎関師鍊撰『一山国師行状』の訳注— [Biographical materials on Yishan Yining: an annotated translation of Kokan Shiran's 'Record of Conduct of the National Master Yishan'], *Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyō gakubu kennkyū kiyō* 駒澤大学仏教学部研究紀要 no. 75 (March 2017): 37-128. A *gyōjō*, or "record of conduct," was a genre of eulogistic writing composed posthumously by members of the circle of intimates of the deceased, serving as a biography to commemorate the subject. The *gyōjō* of Yishan is included in Kokan Shiran's anthology *Saihoku shū* 濟北集. The last section of the text recounts Kokan Shiren's interactions with Yishan. Kokan had already met Yishan in 1299 in Kyoto. In this section Kokan mentions that he studied under Yishan for about a decade, and greatly benefited from his time with the master; he accompanied the Master during his tenure at Nanzenji. When approached by Yishan's disciples to compose a biography of the Master and his activities in Japan, Kokan then said that he had heard secretly that Yishan's disciples had gone to Yuan China and asked prominent Chan priests there to compose Yishan's biography, and that he asked why they had chosen to approach him instead. The response which in the end persuaded him was that the biography would be much more vivid coming from someone who has had close interactions with and observations of Yishan Yining while he was alive. Note that the part of the biography that recounts Yishan's activities in China prior to his arrival in Japan was composed by the monk himself: "自書行錄." The section ends with the date "certain day of the first year of

## 1.1 Yishan in China

Yishan Yining was born in Linhai 臨海 county, Taizhou 台州 prefecture in 1247.<sup>40</sup> His secular surname was Hu 胡. As a boy he was recognized for his precocity by his instructor in the private school of his village. His uncle, Lingjiang Zhiyue 靈江智月, a Chan Buddhist monk, was the Sutra Prefect (C: *cangzhu* 藏主; J: *zōsu*)<sup>41</sup> at the Hongfu Temple 鴻福寺 in Taizhou prefecture.<sup>42</sup> Realizing that their son's unusual intelligence and detachment from worldly affairs made him different from other boys his age, Yishan's parents consigned the body through the good offices of his uncle to the care of Master Wudeng Huirong 無等惠融 in the Hongfu Temple.<sup>43</sup>

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the Genkō 元亨 (1320).” See also Shi Juedue 釋覺多, *Furi yuanshi Yishan Yining Chanshi jiqi Chanfa* 赴日元使一山一寧禪師及其禪法 [A Yuan dynasty ambassador to Japan: the Chan master Yishan Yining and his Chan practices], (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> By this time Taizhou abounded in Buddhist monasteries; it was also the hometown of the famous Southern Song statesman Jia Sidao 賈似道 (1213-1275), who had an enormous collection of paintings and calligraphy. Jia was particularly fond of calligraphy by the Two Wangs; he ordered the cutting of the Dingwu version of Wang Xizhi's Lantingxu. See Toyama Gunji 外山軍治 1955 “Ka Shidō—kitai no korekuta—” 賈似道—稀代のコレクター— [Jia Sidao: the exceptional collector], in Toyama Gunji, *Chūgoku no sho to hito* 中国の書と人 [Chinese calligraphy and people], (Ōsaka: Sōgensha, 1971), p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> *Cangzhu* (J: *Zōsu*) is the librarian who oversees collections of books in Chan monasteries. For the bureaucratic organization of a Chan/Zen monastery around this period see “The Zen Monastic Bureaucracy” including translations of the various positions, in Martin Collcutt, *The Five Mountains: The Rinzai Institution in Medieval Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 85 (M.A.: Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 239.

<sup>42</sup> The site of the Hongfusi is about 80 *li* west to Huangyan county 黃巖県 in Taizhou prefecture. It was established during the Yonghe era (345-356) of the Eastern Jin dynasty. It received imperial sponsorship during the Song and was rebuilt during the Jingkan era (1126-1127). Satō Shūkō, “Issan Ichinen no denki shiryō—Kokan Shiren sen ‘Issann kokushi gyō jō’ no yakuchū,” p. 42.

<sup>43</sup> Wudeng Huirong's “Encouraging Words” to the Japanese disciple, a certain “簡上人”, is in the collection of Tokiwayama Bunko. See *Tokiwayama bunko meihin sen: sumi no irodoli* 常盤山文庫名品選：墨の彩, (Tokyo: Tokiwayama bunko, 2003), no. 50.



When Lingjiang Zhiyue moved to Mt. Taibai 太白 in the city of Siming 四明 (present-day Ningbo 寧波), Yishan joined him there at the Puguang Monastery 普光寺, where he studied the Lotus Sutra and teachings of the Tiantai sect.<sup>44</sup> Two years later Yishan took tonsure. The young monk visited numerous monasteries in the area to study teachings from various Buddhist sects and meditation techniques. He also traveled to the Shangtianzhusi Monastery 上天竺寺 in Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou) to study with Cao'an Wenjie 操庵文節 (1197-1282).<sup>45</sup>

Yishan, tired of what he saw as the fragmented and sometimes contradictory Buddhist teachings, voiced his frustrations to his uncle Lingjiang Zhiyue, who was then serving as Chief Seat (C: *banshou* 板首; J: *hanshu*, also known as *shuso* 首座)<sup>46</sup> at Jingde Chan Monastery 景德禪寺 on Mt. Tiantong 天童 under Jianweng Jujing 簡翁居敬 (act. 1253-1274).<sup>47</sup> Through Lingjiang's introduction, Yishan met Jianweng. When the abbot asked Yishan a question about the Tiantai sect, Yishan is said to have simply smiled, whereupon he was allowed to "enter the Buddha Hall" in the temple for training and study (*sandō* 參堂).

After following his uncle from monastery to monastery, Yishan was appointed Guest

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<sup>44</sup> The Puguang Monastery, founded in 947, became imperially chartered in 1064: “普光寺縣東四十五里舊號光化院晉開運二年建宋治平元年賜額。”

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed account of Cao'an's biography see *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 [A Chronicle of Buddhism in China], a historiography in the Tiantai sect tradition, compiled by Zhipan 志磐 and finished in 1269, (Yangzhou: Yangzhou guji chubanshe, 1991), *juan* 19.

<sup>47</sup> He was a dharma descendent of Wuzhun Shifan 無准師範 (1178-1249). There are a few paintings inscribed by him in Japanese collections, including two paintings attributed to Muqi: *Hotei* (ink on paper, 96.5 x 41.3 cm) in Kyushu National Museum and *Donkey Rider* (ink on paper, 89.3 x 31.1cm) in the Fukuoka Art Museum.

Prefect (C: *zhuke* 主客; J: *shika*)<sup>48</sup> at the Guangli Chan Monastery 廣利禪寺 on Mt. Ashoka 阿育王山. There he remained through a succession of abbots, appointed by Wanji Xingmi 頑極行彌, abbot at the time,<sup>49</sup> to the post of Sutra Prefect (C: *cangzhu* 藏主; J: *zōsu*)<sup>50</sup> and eventually became Wanji's dharma heir.<sup>51</sup> At the end of his tenure as Sutra Prefect, Yishan travelled to Mt. Tiantai 天台山 and Mt. Yandang 雁蕩山 with his friend and fellow monk Zicheng Miaoming 自誠妙明.<sup>52</sup> Following these travels, Yishan settled for a while on Mt. Tiantong, studying under Huanxi Weiyi 環溪唯一 (1202-1281); after a fire destroyed the monastery he returned to Mt.

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<sup>48</sup> *Shika* is in charge of receiving patrons and guests.

<sup>49</sup> Dates unknown; he was the dharma heir of Chijue Daochong 癡絕道衝 (1169-1250) at Mt. Tiantong 天童山. One of the abbots under whom Yishan served was the famous literary monk Zangsou Shenzhen 藏叟善珍 (1194-1277). See Huang Qijiang 黃啟江, *Wenxueseng Cangsou Shanzhen yu Nansong Moshi Wenhua* 文學僧藏叟善珍與南宋末世的禪文化 (Taipei: Taibei xinwenfeng chubanshe 台北新文豐出版, 2010). This could perhaps partially explain Yishan's literary erudition.

<sup>50</sup> See "The Zen Monastic Bureaucracy" in Collcutt, *The Five Mountains*, p. 239.

<sup>51</sup> We know this because Yishan composed a poem for Wanji which disclosed this relationship; the poem is included in *Yishan Guoshi Miaoci Hongji Dashi Yulu* 一山國師妙慈弘濟大師語錄 [The Recorded Sayings of Yishan], in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, (Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1961), vol. 80, p. 328. A Dharma heir is a designated successor to a Buddhist master. It is a term used often in Zen (Chan) Buddhism, since it involves the notion of transmission. What can be transmitted between master and disciple is of great importance to the Zen ideological message. A successor is a designated leader for a lineage. Finding and designating a successor are essential to ensuring the continuity of a lineage tradition after the death of a master. Irons, Edward A. "Dharma heir." In *Encyclopedia of World Religions: Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, by Edward A. Irons. 2nd ed. Facts on File, 2016. [http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fofbuddhism%2Fdharma\\_heir%2F0%3FinstitutionId%3D1878](http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fofbuddhism%2Fdharma_heir%2F0%3FinstitutionId%3D1878)

<sup>52</sup> Rinzai, Sōgen school 臨濟曹源派; his biography is not recorded. He seems to have also studied under Wanji Xingmi. Unlike Yishan, Zicheng did not go beyond the Zōsu (librarian) position.

Ashoka to study under a succession of abbots.

Benefiting from his family's financial support, the guidance of his uncle and his early wanderings, Yishan acquired a wide knowledge of Buddhist sects before choosing to focus on Chan under Jianweng Jujing on Mt. Tiantong. Also, important to his formation was the time he spent at the Guangli Chan Monastery at Mt. Ashoka, a prominent institution established in 282.<sup>53</sup> This site enjoyed imperial patronage and had been visited by many Song dynasty luminaries such as Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101).<sup>54</sup> Yishan's travels had also enabled him to gain access to classics and books of model calligraphy in temple libraries.<sup>55</sup>

After the collapse of the Southern Song in 1279, Yishan became abbot at Zuyin Monastery 祖印寺 in 1284, shortly after the founding of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1363) by the Mongols.<sup>56</sup> He spent a decade at the temple. Thanks to his growing fame as a prelate, soon after

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<sup>53</sup> The author visited the site where a monastery still stands in November 2018.

<sup>54</sup> The temple gazetteer contains two references to Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1163-1189), *Mingzhou Ayuwang Shanzhi* 明州阿育王山志, *juan* 4卷四 *shang* 上 (Beijing Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 北京爱如生数字化技术研究中心. *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中国基本古籍库 [Database of Chinese Classic Ancient Books]. Beijing: Beijing Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin, 2011. <http://server.wenzibase.com/dblist.jsp>; for poems and letters by Wang and Su, see *ibid.* *juan* 11.

<sup>55</sup> Marsha Weidner has argued that in its role as a site of aesthetic exchange and appreciation monasteries functioned like a premodern precursor to museums in our time; she also points out the challenges in reconstructing and reimagining that important role assumed by monasteries. See Weidner, "Fit for Monk's Quarters: Monasteries as Centers of Aesthetic Activity in the Later Fourteenth Century," *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 37 (2009): 49-77, esp. p. 54; Weidner, "Picturing Monks as Connoisseurs and Monasteries as Sites of Aesthetic Engagement," in *Zurich Studies in the History of Art, Georges-Bloch-Annual 13/14* (Zurich: University of Zurich, Institute of Art History, 2006/07), 399-417.

<sup>56</sup> In doing so Yishan was following the footsteps of his dharma master Wanji Xingmi, who lived at Zuyin temple after he retired from the Guangli Chan monastery in 1279. Shi Jueduo 釋覺多, "Yishan Yining chanshi dui zhongri wenhua jiaoliu de gongxian he yingxiang" 一山一寧禪師對中日文化交流的貢獻和影響 [Chan master Yishan Yining's contribution and impact

1284, he was appointed by government decree abbot of the Baotuo Guanyin Chan Monastery 寶陀觀音禪寺 on Mt. Putuo 普陀山 (present day Puji Monastery 普濟寺), a sacred site revered by Buddhists as residence of the Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音 (Avalokiteshvara; J: *kannon*). Yishan himself was reputed to have had a miraculous vision of the Bodhisattva encircled by a halo emerging from a cave; overjoyed, the monk bowed, but the deity soon disappeared.

## 1.2 A Priest-Envoy to Japan

The aura of sanctity now associated with Yishan led to an astonishing development in his career. After the two abortive attempts of Kublai Khan 忽必烈 (1215-1294, r. 1260-1294) to conquer Japan, his grandson, Emperor Chengzong 成宗 (Temur, 1265-1307, r. 1294-1307), attempted to establish formal relations with the island nation instead. He decided to send as envoy a Buddhist monk, knowing that the Japanese had great respect for Chinese Buddhist prelates. Yuxi Ruzhi 愚溪如智 (fl. late 13<sup>th</sup> century), from Yishan's hometown and a former priest at the Baotuo Guanyin Chan Monastery, was chosen for this role and made two attempts to reach Japan, in 1283 and again in 1284. Both attempts failed, due to a storm and then to a mutiny onboard ship. Barely making it back to Mt. Putuo, the priest recommended Yishan to the Yuan court as his replacement.

In the summer of 1298, Japanese merchant ships docked in Mingzhou 明州 (present day Ningbo 寧波).<sup>57</sup> Soon a group of Yuan officials arrived at Yishan's monastery on Mt. Putuo

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on the cultural exchange between China and Japan], *Foxue yanjiu* 佛學研究, Issue 1 (2009): 228-236.

<sup>57</sup> In spite of the two attempted invasions of Japan by the Mongols, commercial ships between the ports of Hakata and Ningbo even increased during this period. Kawazoe Shōji 川添昭二, “Kamakura jidai no gaikō kankei to bunbutsu no inyū” 鎌倉時代の對外關係と文物の移入 [Foreign relations during the Kamakura period and the influx of objects], in *Iwanami kōza* 岩

bearing a *kesa* 袈裟 (C: Jiasha) woven from gold thread and an imperial decree granting Yishan the title “Great Master of Wondrous Compassion and Magnificent Deliverance” (*miaoci hongji dashi* 妙慈弘濟大師). With conferral of this title came orders that Yishan must depart for Japan as an imperial envoy. He saw no choice but to obey. The next day, he was brought to the government bureau of Qingyuan prefecture 慶元府, and was briefed on what was to be accomplished during his sojourn in Japan; he also was given an imperial letter addressed to the Japanese court (fig.1.1).<sup>58</sup> Yan Gongnan 燕公楠 (1241-1302),<sup>59</sup> his political advisor for the trip, soon arrived and with Yishan boarded one of the Japanese merchant ships that had docked in Ningbo.<sup>60</sup>

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波講座, *Nihon rekishi* 6 chūsei 2, (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975), p. 64. This article offers a review of Sino-Japan exchanges during the Kamakura period (corresponding to late Southern Song through early Yuan).

<sup>58</sup> The letter was composed on the fourteenth of March in the third year of the Dade reign (1299); today the letter exists as a copy in the Kanazawa Bunko 金沢文庫, an archive and treasure of medieval documents that was attached to Shōmyōji 称名寺. *Kanazawa Bunko no Shihō—Kamakura Buke Bunka no Seika* 金沢文庫の至宝—金沢武家文化の精華 [The treasures of the Kanazawa Bunko Museum—the flowering of Samurai culture in the Kamakura period], (Nara: Nara National Museum, 2005), exhibition catalogue.

<sup>59</sup> On the embassies that the Yuan government dispatched to Japan and the changing diplomatic relations between Yuan China and Japan in 13<sup>th</sup> century, see Enomoto Wataru 榎本渡, *Temuru no Nihon shōyu to Issan Ichinei Yan Gongnan* テムルの日本招諭と一山一寧・燕公楠 [Yishan Yining and Yan Gongnan in Temur’s Diplomacy to Japan] *Shigaku kenkyū*, no. 300 (2018): 30-58.

<sup>60</sup> This shows how fast the government acted to make sure Yishan got sent to Japan; five guards were sent to the Baotuo Guanyin monastery with Yishan for fear that he might attempt to escape; when Yishan departed he was accompanied by his nephew Shiliang Rengong 石梁仁恭 (1266-1334) and Xijian Zitan 西澗子曇 (1249-1306; J: Seikan Shidon) who was also from the Taizhou prefecture. This is Xijian Zitan’s second time going to Japan. For a detailed account of the Chinese émigré’s life and his activities in Japan, see Satō Shūkō 佐藤秀孝, “Seikan Shidon no torai to sono kōseki” 西澗子曇の渡来とその功績 [The emigration of Seikan Shidon and his contribution], *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō gakubu ronshū*, no. 38 (2007): 39-147.

Three or four days later, they reached the Korean peninsula; in the eighth month of the year 1299, Yishan and his party arrived at Hakata 博多 harbor on Kyūshū.

Many Chinese monks prior to Yishan had travelled to Japan; however, his status as an imperial envoy was unprecedented.<sup>61</sup> Why was Yishan chosen? His abbacy of a monastery on Mt. Putuo was key.<sup>62</sup> The small island had been associated with worship of Guanyin since the Tang dynasty.<sup>63</sup> Its location on multiple maritime trade routes (between Korea and Japan to the

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<sup>61</sup> For example, Lanxi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (1213-1278; J: Rankei Dōryū) went to Japan in 1246 mainly to escape the social upheavals that were escalating in the last few decades of the Southern Song dynasty; Wuxue Zuyuan 無學祖元 (1226-1286; J: Mugaku Sōgen) went to Japan in 1279, the year of the fall of the Southern Song; he was invited by the Hōjō clan to succeed Lanxi after he passed away in 1278. For a brief overview of the biographies of Chinese émigré monks prior to Yishan's arrival in Japan, see Chapter 3.

<sup>62</sup> Mt. Putuo is an island off the coast of the city of Ningbo; its strategic location means that Korean and Japanese ships often stopped by before or after they reached the port city of Ningbo, usually the final destination of these trips. Marine time trade during the Song and Yuan dynasties contributed to the prosperity of the island and its reputation in the East Asian region. Emperor Taizu's 宋太祖 (927-976; r. 960-976) visit to Mt. Putuo in the year 967 marked the beginning of a long history of imperial patronage and sponsorship. See Xu Hongtu 徐宏圖, "Tan Putuo Guanyin Xinyang de lishi yingxiang" 談普陀觀音信仰的歷史影響 [On the historical influence of Guanyin belief on Mount Putuo], *Zhejiang Haiyang xueyuan xuebao* 浙江海洋學院學報 (Renwen sheke ban 人文社科版), vol. 21 no. 1, (2004): 15-16. For a succinct overview of the four historical stages of temple building activities by which Mt. Putuo became a mecca for the Guanyin cult, see Yang Shangqi 楊尚其 et al., "Putuoshan simiao yuanlin Xingjian kao" 普陀山寺廟園林興建考 [An investigation of the construction activities of monasteries on Mt. Putuo], *Beijing linye daxue xuebao*, vol. 15, issue 2 (2016): 41. See also Marcus Bingenheimer, *Island of Guanyin: Mount Putuo and Its Gazetteers*, published to Oxford Scholarship Online, April 2016, on the evolving representation of Mt. Putuo in local gazetteers.

<sup>63</sup> Zou Yi proposes an accurate dating of the founding of Guanyin cult on Mt. Putuo to the year 859. Zou Yi 鄒怡, "Cong daojia dongtian dao guanyin shengjie—zhonggu dongya wenhua jiaoliu beijingzhong de Putuoshan kaiji gushi" 從道家洞天到觀音聖界——中古東亞文化交流背景中的普陀山開基故事 [From the Daoist realm to sacred realm of Guanyin—the founding of Mt. Putuo in the context of cultural exchange in medieval East Asia], *Shilin* 史林 (No. 1, 2017): 53-63.

north and Southeast and South Asia) meant that the island and the Baotuo Guanyin Chan Monastery, over which Yishan presided, received international and interregional visitors. As noted by Steffen Döll, Yishan, the abbot of a monastery dedicated to Guanyin deeply venerated in Japan, was "chosen by the Yuan administration as emissary to the enemy country of Japan because his current status was believed to emphasize religious commonalities that were more fundamental than the present enmity between China and Japan."<sup>64</sup>

When Yishan's arrival in Hakata in the eighth month of 1299 was reported to the *bakufu*, the Japanese military regime in Kamakura, a heated discussion ensued regarding the treatment of the Chinese monk, and Yishan was temporarily kept under loose confinement at Shūzenji 修禪寺 on the Izu 伊豆 peninsula.<sup>65</sup> Some Japanese officials argued for the death penalty; others pointed out that Yishan was a priest of great reputation, possibly forced to come to Japan against his will, and that it would be indecent to treat a Buddhist monk so harshly.<sup>66</sup> Those in favor of welcoming Yishan prevailed, and after spending almost four months on Izu, he was invited to go to the seat of the *bakufu* at Kamakura in the twelfth month.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Steffen Döll, "Manifestations of the Mountain: Preliminary Remarks on the Utopian Study of Potalaka in Premodern East Asia," *Review of Asian and Pacific Studies* (vol. 37, 2012): 86. For an account of the miraculous beginning of Mt. Putuo as a sacred island associated with Guanyin, see *ibid.* 84-85.

<sup>65</sup> Founded in the year 793 by a disciple of Kūkai 空海 (774-835) as a Shingon temple; it has been suggested that during the Kenchō 建長 reign (1249-1256) the Chinese expat Chan priest Lanxi Daolong changed the temple's affiliation to Chan.

<sup>66</sup> The arguments put forward by those in favor of sparing Yishan of the death penalty are: "有道之士無心與萬物也。在元國元之福也、在我邦我之福也" [Those who set their minds on achieving the ultimate Enlightenment do not partake of worldly affairs. A prelate brings bliss to the land he sets his foot on.] *Issan Goroku*, p. 332.

<sup>67</sup> During his time on Izu, Yishan founded the Kiichiji 歸一寺 in present day Matsuzaki city 松崎, Shizuoka prefecture. See Funatsu Yoshiaki 船津好明, *Funata to Kiichiji ni kawaru*

### 1.3 From Foreign Envoy to Abbot of Nanzenji

Monks and lay folk who had been shocked by Yishan's detention were overjoyed by his release and vied to catch a glimpse of the master, whose reputation for piety had preceded him in Japan. Not only was Yishan welcomed, but he was appointed by the eighth regent of Kamakura *bakufu*, Hōjō Sadatoki 北条貞時 (1272-1311), as the third abbot of Kenchōji 建長寺, which was the first major Zen monastic complex built in Japan that closely followed Song continental protocols. Kenchōji was a major center for Sinological learnings and represented nothing short of a cultural beacon of the most advanced continental Song culture in Japan at the time, especially after the almost four-hundred years hiatus in diplomatic relations between China and Japan since the year 894.<sup>68</sup> Yishan assumed the abbacy on the seventh day of December, 1299.

Yishan quickly won the respect of the temple's monks by reasserting rules and regulations.<sup>69</sup> Upon hearing Yishan's lectures on Zen Buddhism, the regent himself regretted not

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*Issan Ichinei kō* 船田と帰一寺に関わる一山一寧考 [Investigation of Issan's activities as related to the Funata area and Kiichi temple], (Sofunetto shuppan エフネット出版, 2016). The temple holds a *chinsō* painting with an inscription signed by Yishan Yining and a hanging scroll of cursive calligraphy.

<sup>68</sup> Kenchōji was Founded by Yishan's predecessor, Chinese émigré Lanxi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (J: Rankei Dōryū) in 1253 under the aegis of Hōjō Tikiyori 北条時頼 (1227-1263), the fifth regent of the Kamakura bakufu; its second abbot, Yishan's predecessor, was also an émigré Chinese monk, Wu'an Puning 兀庵普寧 (J: Gotta Funei; 1197-1276; in Japan: 1260-1265). For an overview of émigré Chinese who served as abbots in Kamakura, see Satō Shūkō 佐藤秀孝, "Chūsei Kamakura no toraisō—Kenchōji Engakuji wo chūshin to shite" 中世鎌倉の渡来僧—建長寺・円覚寺を中心として [Émigré monks of medieval Kamakura: centering on Kenchōji and Engakuji], in Murai Shōsuke 村井章介 ed., *Higashi Ajia no naka no Kenchōji: Shūkyō, Seiji, Bunka ga Kōsasuru Zen no Seichi* 東アジアのなかの建長寺：宗教・政治・文化が交叉する禅の聖地 [Kenchōji in the context of East Asia: sacred site of Zen at the intersection of religion, politics, and culture], (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2014), pp. 186-199.

<sup>69</sup> *Chanlin qinggui* 禪林清規 (J: *Zenrin seiki*; rules and regulations pertaining to the behavior of Chan/Zen monks and the operation of Chan/Zen monasteries); the most important



having invited the Chinese master to Japan sooner.<sup>70</sup>

When Yishan's Chinese colleague Xijian Zitan 西澗子曇 (1249-1306) retired from his position as abbot of Engakuji 円覺寺 in 1302,<sup>71</sup> the Kamakura shogunate ordered Yishan to preside over that temple as well as Kenchōji, as the two monasteries are located close to each other.<sup>72</sup> The two were run according to the same principles, and both were known for the piety of their residents. In 1303, Xijian officially assumed the abbacy of Kenchōji, and Yishan then became responsible for Engakuji only.

In 1306, when Xijian died, Yishan was asked to become abbot of Kenchōji again; however, suffering from illness, Yishan soon obtained permission to retire from his duties as abbot. The shogunate ordered his *jutō* 寿塔 (a type of pagoda constructed for heads of temples in

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Song *qinggui* is *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪院清規. Yang Jun 陽琚, “Lüexi zaoqi chanrin qinggui de chengji yu biangeng: yi <chanmen guishi> yu <chanyuan qinggui> de bijiao wei zhongxin” 略析早期禪林清規的承繼與變更—以《禪門規式》與《禪院清規》的比較為中心 [Maintain or abandon: a brief analysis of the early Chinese Buddhist monastic codes—centering on the comparison between *Chanmen guishi* and *Chanyuan qinggui*], *Chan yu renlei wenming yanjiu* 禪與人類文明研究 issue no. 6 (2019 July): 141-153; on a study of the adoption and adaptation of *Chanyuan qinggui* by early Japanese Zen priests, see Liu Hengwu 劉恆武 and Pang Chao 龐超, “Shilun Rongxi, Daoyuan zhuzuo dui <chanyuan qinggui> de canjian—jianlun nansong chanlin qinggui de yuehai dongchuan” 試論榮西、道元著作對《禪苑清規》的參鑒賞—兼論南宋禪林清規的越海東傳 [Eisai and Dogen's reference of Zen temple regulations and the spread in Japan of Southern Song *qinggui*], *Ningbo daxue xuebao* no. 31 (2018): 62-68.

<sup>70</sup> For a study on how émigré Chan priests and their Japanese audience communicated in Zen monasteries in Kamakura during this time, see Tachi Ryūshi 館隆志, “Kamakura ki no zenrin ni okeru chūgolugo to nihongo” 鎌倉期の禪林における中国語と日本語 [Chinese and Japanese languages in the Chan/Zen communities during the Kamakura period], *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō gakubu ronshū*, no. 45 (2014): 259-286.

<sup>71</sup> Xijian served as abbot at Engakuji from the 19th day of the 10th month of 1299 till 1302. Satō Shūkō, “Seikan Shidon no torai to sono kōseki,” pp. 39-147.

<sup>72</sup> It takes about fifteen minutes to walk from gate to gate.

praying for their longevity) relocated from Engakuji to the cedar forest in the valley located to the right of Kenchōji. When it was completed, Yishan named it *Hut of Jade Cloud* (*Gyoku-un an* 玉雲庵) in honor of his dharma ancestors Chijue Daochong 癡絕道沖 (1169-1250) and Wanji Xingmi 頑極行彌.<sup>73</sup>

In spite of Yishan's status as a retiree from 1307 to 1309, he still received large numbers of believers who requested audiences with him on the first day and the fifteenth day of the month, sometimes outnumbering the visitors of the official abbots of Kenchōji and Engakuji at the time. In 1309 Yishan was summoned from his retirement and installed as abbot of Jōchiji 淨智寺.<sup>74</sup> After four years there, in 1313 Yishan received an invitation to the most prestigious office of his career, abbot of Nanzenji, a former villa of Emperor Kameyama 龜山天皇 (1249-1305, r. 1260-1274) in Kyoto.

The Retired Emperor Go-Uda 後宇多法皇 (1267-1324, r. 1274-1287), knowing of Yishan's reputation and eager to have audience with the master, had engineered the old priest's appointment to Nanzenji and visited Yishan frequently, discussing matters related to Chan/Zen.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> “Gyoku-un” takes the “Gyoku” 玉 character from Chijue Daochong (1169-1250)’s hut named “Yushan an” 玉山庵 and the “un” 雲 character from Wanji Xingmi’s hut named “Yunxi an” 雲西庵, demonstrating Yishan’s intense awareness and deference to his Dharma lineage.

<sup>74</sup> Jōchiji was founded in the year 1281 as the commemorative temple for Hōjō Munemasa 北条宗政 (1253-1281), the third son of the fifth regent Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (r. 1246-1256). The temple is located in-between Kenchōji and Engakuji.

<sup>75</sup> Regarding the emperor’s patronage of Yishan at Nanzenji, *Issan goroku* includes a description that shows an interesting difference in the reaction amongst the different social strata of Kyoto: “the aristocrats frowned as they peeped in from outside the window; however monks and commoners living in the capital were very pleased that someone so illustrious is now presiding over the Zen community” [搢紳之儔、蹙頰戶外、輦下道俗、喜叢社之有人].

Although Yishan pled several times to retire from the abbacy, his request was denied. When Yishan tried to leave Nanzenji secretly,<sup>76</sup> he received a handwritten note from Go-Uda entreating him to return. In the autumn of the first year of the Bunpō 文保reign (1317), Yishan’s health worsened; by October, he was in critical condition and was visited several times by Go-Uda. At dawn of the twenty-fourth day of the tenth month of the same year, Yishan wrote a farewell memo addressed to Go-Uda and then composed his own death poem (*yui*ge遺偈):<sup>77</sup>

Traveling recklessly across the world  
Even the Buddha becomes silent  
The arrow having already left the bow  
From the Void it falls to the ground.<sup>78</sup>

橫行一世  
佛祖飲氣  
箭既離弦  
虛空落地

Yishan thereupon died at the age of seventy-one in 1317. Learning of Yishan's death, Go-Uda rushed into his quarters and found him seated with crossed legs, as if in meditation. The Retired Emperor wrote a decree conferring upon Yishan the posthumous title “National Master” (*yissan*

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<sup>76</sup> According to a note in a Gozan version of Yishan *goroku* in the National Diet Library, Etchū province (present-day Toyama Prefecture 富山県) has a temple named Chōfukuji 長福寺, which claims Yishan as its founding master. Satō Shūkō, “Issan Ichinen no denki shiryō—Kokan Shiren sen ‘Issann kokushi gyō jō’ no yakuchū,” p. 101.

<sup>77</sup> On *yui*ge as a literary genre in Chan/Zen Buddhist context, see Gregory Levine, “The Faltering Brush: Material, Sensory Trace, and Nonduality in Chan/Zen Buddhist Death Verse Calligraphies,” in *Sensational Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 561-579.

<sup>78</sup> Translation based on modern Japanese translation in Satō Shūkō, “Issan Ichinen no denki shiryō—Kokan Shiren sen ‘Issann kokushi gyō jō’ no yakuchū,” p. 103; the author thanks Robert Hymes for his suggestion of revision.

*kokushi* 一山国師)<sup>79</sup> and ordered Rokujō Arifusa 六条有房 (1251-1319) to compose his eulogy.<sup>80</sup> Go-Uda ordered the construction of a memorial pagoda in the name of Yishan next to the mausoleum of Emperor Kameyama, and wrote by his own hand the characters “Dharma Rain” (*hō-u* 法雨) on a plaque for the monument. Go-Uda also inscribed “Exceptional Priest from Song China/ National Master for Our Nation” 宋地萬人傑/本朝一國師 on a *chinsō* portrait of Yishan.

During a long career serving in more than seven monasteries,<sup>81</sup> Yishan had accumulated a large collection of writings *goroku* 語錄 (a collection of recorded sayings of the Chan/Zen master usually collated by his disciple). Before his death, he edited and condensed these sayings to only about ten pages. Disciples carried these back to Yuan China, where prominent Chan priests, including Lingshi Ruzhi 靈石如芝 (1243-1328), Gulin Qingmao 古林清茂 (1262-1329),<sup>82</sup> and Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263-1323) added colophons to them.<sup>83</sup> Through

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<sup>79</sup> The title of “National Master” started with the Japanese monk En’ni 円爾 (1202-1280), founder of Tōfukuji 東福寺 in Kyoto. Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263-1323), Yishan’s contemporary in China, was a recipient of the title from the Yuan court. Yishan was the first émigré monk to have received this honorific title.

<sup>80</sup> Rokujō Arifusa was a high-ranking court official known for being learned in arts of both Chinese and Japanese. The text of this eulogy is included in Yishan’s *goroku*.

<sup>81</sup> Based on Yishan’s collated *goroku* and *gyōjō* by Kokan Shiren, the temples included: Zuyin Temple 祖印寺, Baotuo Guanyin Chan Temple 寶陀觀音禪寺 (China); Kenchōji 建長寺 (twice), Engakuji 円覺寺, Jōchiji 淨智寺, Nanzenji 南禪寺 (Japan).

<sup>82</sup> In Gulin’s colophon dated to 1320, three years after Yishan’s passing, he mentions that he first met Yishan in 1278 (至元戊寅), when Yishan was Keeper of Scripture (*zōsu* 藏主) in Guangli Chan Temple 廣利禪寺 on Mt. Ashoka 阿育王山.

<sup>83</sup> The three colophons are included in *goroku*, transcribed in Satō Shūkō, “Issan Ichinen no denki shiryō—Kokan Shiren sen ‘Issann kokushi gyō jō’ no yakuchū,” pp. 121-122.

this means, Yishan, or at least the essentials of his teachings, returned to his homeland.

#### 1.4 The Monk-Calligrapher

Although Kokan Shiran's biography of Yishan is the most important source for tracing his career as a noted Buddhist cleric, it tells us little about his calligraphy, which during his lifetime was already a major source of his fame. It is upon the evidence of surviving works and scattered comments about Yishan's art that a reconstruction of his achievements and influence as a calligrapher must be based. The work of doing so, as in the case of so many famous artists of his time, in China and in Japan, is complicated by the undoubted presence among attributed works of copies, imitations, and outright forgeries. Nevertheless, the meticulous efforts of generations of Japanese scholars have assembled a coherent body of more than fifty or so extant independent works of calligraphy and inscriptions on paintings.

The three-part periodization of Yishan's work developed by an early scholar of Yishan's calligraphy, Itō Takuji 伊藤卓治, remains a widely accepted framework for studying the priest's calligraphy and it is adopted here.<sup>84</sup> Appendix A lists all dated works in each of the three periods incorporating scholarship from a recent survey of Yishan's dated extant works on the occasion of seven-hundred years since his passing.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The earliest comprehensive study of Yishan's calligraphy is Itō Takuji 伊藤卓治, "Nen Issan bokuseki" 寧一山墨跡 [The calligraphy of Nen Issan], *Bijutsu kenkyū* no. 162 (1951): 1-32; no. 169 (1953): 163-189. For his periodization, see 1953, p.10.

<sup>85</sup> The project resulted in a publication of Yishan's extant works (transcription and translation into modern Japanese) by Professor Kinugawa Kenji 衣川賢治 (Hanazono University 花園大学, Kyoto) and Takatsu Kunie 高津久仁枝, *Issan Ichinei bokuseki shū* 一山一寧墨跡集 [Anthology of calligraphy of Issan Ichinei], (Shizuoka: Kiichiji, 2016). This current study greatly benefited from their work.

#### 1.4.1 Period I, Kamakura: 1299-1306

No example of Yishan's calligraphy predates his arrival in Japan in 1299. The six earliest extant works date from his abbacy at Kenchōji and Engakuji. In general, these works are Dharma words (*jōdōgo* 上堂語, lectures given by the abbot in the Dharma hall of a Chan/Zen monastery), thus strictly related to Chan/Zen Buddhist matters, and are currently mounted as hanging scrolls, ink on paper. When he arrived in Japan at the age of 52, Yishan was a fully mature calligrapher. Nothing is known of his early training in China, though as an analysis in Chapter 2 will show, the priest clearly had mastered the classical tradition of Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361). This is evident from the fluid running script of works dated to this period, such as “Dharma Words on the Occasion of the Delivery of Sansō E’un’s Death Poem” (1301) (fig. 1.2) and “Verses on Ruiyan Kongzhao” (1304) (fig. 1.3).

#### 1.4.2 Period II, Kamakura: 1306-1313

During this seven-year period, Yishan entered Kenchōji for the second time (1306) and later served as abbot of Jōchiji (1309-1313). One starts to see important changes in the type of calligraphy he produced. New in this period are (i) *Coda to Jufen yunlüe* 聚分韻略 (1307) and *Raiken’s Stele* (1307) (fig. 1.4) which no immediately recognizable connection to the teachings or concepts of Zen Buddhism;<sup>86</sup> (ii) a handsome calligraphic transcription of a poem by the Tang poet Li She 李涉 (poet dates unknown) that testifies to Yishan’s versatility as a calligrapher; (iii)

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<sup>86</sup> *Coda to Jufen yunlüe* (*Jufen yunlüe ba* 聚分韻略跋) was a coda Yishan Yining composed for *Shūbun Inryaku* 聚分韻略 compiled in 1306 by his Japanese disciple Kokan Shiren; it’s a dictionary on rhyming in Chinese poetry. See Kinugawa Kenji and Kunie Takatsu ed., “Issan Ichinen bokusekishū,” no. 11, pp. 68-70. For *Raiken’s Stele*, see *ibid.*, no. 9, pp. 58-62; Tachi Ryūshi 館隆志, “Issan Ichinei sen ‘Raiken no hi’ no hisseki ni tsuite” 一山一寧撰「頼賢の碑」の筆跡について [On the inscription by Yishan Yining for Raiken’s stele], *Komazawadaigaku daigakuin bukkyōgaku kenkyūkai nenpō*, no. 39 (2006): 115-132.

what would become an important part of Yishan's oeuvre in his final years—painting inscriptions—also first appear in this period, such as the seven-syllable quatrain inscribed on a painting of the Esoteric Shingon icon Chintamani Chakra Avalokitesvara (Wish-Granting Kannon, *nyoirin kannon* 如意輪觀音), as well as *Donkey Rider*, an ink monochrome on paper painting in the “apparition painting” genre (*mōryōga* 魍魎画).<sup>87</sup>

The majority of works from Period II are written in the fluid running script that was a continuation of his calligraphic style in the Wang Xizhi tradition seen in works from Period I; but stylistic changes begin to appear. In two works *Raiken's Stele* (1307) (fig. 1.4) and his inscription on *Wish-Granting Kannon* (1307) (fig. 1.5), a transition to a more cursive mode of writing emerges: characters are abbreviated, strokes are linked in continuous gestures, and a kinetic force known as *shi* 勢 in Chinese seems to animate Yishan's brushwork.

### 1.4.3 Period III, Kyoto: 1313-1317

At least fifteen dated works survive from the final period of Yishan life, during his years as the third abbot of Nanzenji in Kyoto, under the aegis of retired emperor Go-Uda. It was his innovations from these years that cemented his status as a great calligrapher. Although not unknown as a format for calligraphy in Japan before this time, vertical hanging scrolls became closely associated with the culture of Zen monasteries owing to Yishan's late-life preference for this format. Writing most often in cursive script, his style became bolder and more distant from the niceties of the Wang Xizhi tradition. This late style is on full display in his *On A Snowy Night* dated to 1315 (fig. 1.6) and examined in the introduction. To understand Yishan's development as a calligrapher it is essential to explore how the practice of this art became an integral part of

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<sup>87</sup> For an overview of this genre of painting intimately linked to Chan/Zen Buddhist teachings, see Yukio Lippit, “Apparition Painting,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* no. 55/56 (Spring-Autumn, 2009): 61-86.

the culture of Chan/Zen Buddhism in Song dynasty China and in Kamakura Japan. This is the story pursued in the following chapter.



## Chapter 2: Calligraphy and Monks

### 2.1 "Brush Talk"

Yishan Yining could not speak Japanese; most of the clerics and laypeople he encountered in Japan could not speak Chinese. They communicated through "brush talk" or *hitsudan* (筆談 C: bitan).<sup>88</sup> This was possible thanks to their shared ability to read and write classical Chinese—the language of Buddhism in East Asia.

Through centuries of laborious effort in China, sutras in Sanskrit and other South Asian languages believed to record the words of the Buddha were translated into Chinese. Transmitted by way of Korea, or directly from China, these texts were the foundation for all Buddhist sects in Japan. Classical Chinese, somewhat like Latin in medieval Europe, served as a shared mean of communication among educated people in Korea and Japan. Although they spoke linguistically unrelated languages and pronounced the characters differently, Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese communicated easily in writing.

According to his biographer, Kokan Shiran, Yishan welcomed large numbers of clerics and laymen who came to consult him and communicated by “brush talk”:<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> A “brush talk” is “talking with brush”—communicating by writing. The official linguistic environment in major Zen monasteries in Kamakura seemed to have been Chinese. However, even with “brush talk,” émigré Chinese Chan priests struggled to various degree in their communication with their Japanese disciples. For the condition of usage of Chinese and Japanese in the Zen monastic communities in Kamakura during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century, see Tachi Ryūshi 館隆志, “Kamakura ki no zenrin ni okeru chūgolugo to nihongo” 鎌倉期の禅林における中国語と日本語 [Chinese and Japanese languages in the Chan/Zen communities during the Kamakura period], *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō gakubu ronshū*, no. 45 (2014): 259-286.

<sup>89</sup> This was a common practice at the time between émigré Chinese Chan masters and their Japanese Zen disciples. A *bokuseki* in Shōkokuji Kyoto preserves the *hitsudan* between the

Sitting on his mat by himself, Yishan received visitors from far and near. Because there was no reservation required, people freely entered and left when they consulted him. Since Yishan did not speak Japanese, he communicated with the visitors via writing. People would come and consult him day and night even with simple phrases, and the master, being kind and patient, responded in his own handwriting.

師孤坐一榻、不須通謁、新到遠來、出入無間、人便於參請。  
然言語不通、乃課觚牘。隻字片語、朝諮暮詢、師道韻柔婉、執翰酬之。

## 2.2 Sacred Writing

In the image of Yishan and his visitors scribbling back and forth in Chinese lies an important truth about the importance of writing in East Asian Buddhism: its transmission and flourishing depended on access to handwritten texts. Significantly, the White Horse Monastery (*Baimasi* 白馬寺) established in 68 AD in Luoyang, and generally considered the first Buddhist temple in China, was initially a scriptorium for the translation and replication of scriptures said to have been carried there by white horses—a story that explains its name.<sup>90</sup>

Sutras were the foundation for preaching the Buddhist law. Reading, memorizing, and chanting sutras were acts of devotion. Copying a sutra, or paying someone else to do so, were also expressions of piety that were believed to accrue karmic merit for those who did so. The sanctity of these scriptures also inspired veneration like that accorded images or relics of the Buddha.<sup>91</sup>

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Chinese émigré Chan monk Wuxue Zuyuan (J: Mugaku Sogen; 1226-1286) and his dharma heir the Japanese monk Kōhō Kennichi 高峰顯日 (1241-1316) where the older Chinese monk asked his Japanese disciple to accompany him in Kamakura for a few months.

<sup>90</sup> Regarding the naming of the temple and its date of appearance in historical record, see Tang Chao 唐超, “Baimasi siming xintan” 白馬寺寺名新探 [A new exploration on the name of the white horse temple], *Chuancheng* (2014 no.4): 130-131.

<sup>91</sup> See Robert E. Harrist, *The Landscape of Words: Stone Inscriptions from Early and Medieval China*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 182-88.

Given the supreme importance of sutras, it was essential that they be copied with the utmost care. By the third or fourth centuries, conventions for copying sutras were widely observed by clerical scribes. The texts were written on sheets of paper usually about 25 to 28 cm high and 47 to 56 cm wide made from hemp or palm leaves; these sheets were then mounted as handscrolls several meters in length. To ensure accuracy in copying, sutra texts generally were written in lined columns of seventeen characters each.<sup>92</sup>

The most standardized feature of sutras was the calligraphy used to write them. This was a neat, trim, and easily legible form of small standard script (*kaishu* 楷書) that came to be known as the “sutra-writing script” (*xiejingtī* 寫經體)(fig. 2.1).<sup>93</sup> *Xiejingtī* emerged at a moment, in the development of Chinese calligraphy, when clerical script was being transformed into standard script. The script is distinctive not only for its small size and the compressed silhouette of the characters, but also for certain conventions of brushwork, such as emphasis on the downward right-moving *na* 捺 stroke (upper-left to lower-right diagonal stroke). As Buddhism was transmitted to Japan, conventions of sutra copying that had developed in China were adopted in scriptoria there, and it is often difficult to determine if a sutra was produced in Japan or continental China, as *xiejingtī* was relatively stable and saw only minor stylistic variation.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Gisela Pause, entry no. 23, *Dai hannya haramitta kyō* “The Great Sutra of Perfect Wisdom”, in Shigemi Komatsu and Kwan S. Wong et al., *Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy: Spanning Two Thousand Years, The Heinz Götze Collection, Heidelberg*, (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989), exhibition catalogue, p.77.

<sup>93</sup> The standard script type, *kaishu*, is intimately related to the history of sutra copying in China; the Elliot collection offers a sample of sutras that span a millennium. See Robert E. Harrist and Wen Fong ed., *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Art Museum, 1999), esp. Amy McNair, “Texts of Taoism and Buddhism and the Power of Calligraphic Style,” 225-239.

<sup>94</sup> “The earliest Japanese transcriptions of sutras show some variation in the style of

In China, in addition to being copied on paper, sutras were carved on stone, particularly during the Northern Dynasties (220-589). The medium of stone, when protected from the elements, ensured the preservation of sacred texts—an urgent task when the end of the Buddhist law (*mofa* 末法, J: *mappō*) was feared to be approaching in the sixth century. Sutras were also carved outdoors on granite and limestone cliff faces and mountain sides, in large characters of both clerical and standard script. Sponsored by affluent clerics, Buddhist laymen, and the imperial court, massive carved sutras in natural landscapes became sites for veneration of the words of the Buddha.<sup>95</sup> Unlike copying of sutra on paper, this practice was not transmitted to Japan, where the geology of the archipelago offered few sites suitable for stone inscriptions of this kind.<sup>96</sup>

The Japanese had their own way of transforming the written word into an object of

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writing, but by the middle of the eighth century the writing is highly disciplined and quite uniform.” Sylvan Barnet and William Burto, “Some Western Thoughts on *Shodō*: The Way of Writing,” in Miyeko Murase ed., *The Written Image*, exhibition catalogue, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 32; for a study of the formation of scriptorium in Liangzhou (important Silk Road town in northwestern China) during the early phase of Buddhism’s transmission from India to China, see Tsui Chung-hui 崔中慧, “Fojiao chuqi xiejingfang shezhi liche” 佛教初期寫經坊設置蠡測 [A preliminary study of early Buddhist scribal workshop], *Taida foxue yanjiu* 台大佛學研究 no. 32 (2016): 99-134. For a recent book-length study on the practice of transcribing sutras in 7th-8th centuries Japan, see Byran D. Lowe, *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2017); for an overview of continental scriptorium and a detailed institutional history of a scriptorium at Tōdaiji closely connected to Queen Consort Kōmyō 光明, see Chapter 4 “Instituting Transcription,” *ibid.*, pp. 107-146.

<sup>95</sup> Harrist, *Landscape of Words*, pp. 175-188.

<sup>96</sup> Despite not lacking mountainous terrains, the Japanese archipelago was not endowed with barren, flat, large rock surface that was necessary for sutra carving on a massive scale; even the number of stone stelae is extremely low compared to China. The content of the stelae is in general commemorative; the earliest extant stone stele is dated to the year 646. Nagoya Akira 名兒耶明, *Nihon Shodōshi* 日本書道史 (Tokyo: Geijutsu Shinbunsha, 2009), pp. 19, 30-31, 34-35.

eneration and devotion.<sup>97</sup> Sanskrit and Chinese characters were written in the form of word mandalas (*jizōhonzon* 字像本尊) (fig. 2.2). This genre of Buddhist writing was believed to possess apotropaic powers. The inventor of word mandalas is believed to have been the founder of the Nichiren sect 日蓮宗, the Japanese monk Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-1282). A word mandala he created in 1271—one of the earliest extant—features a phrase based on the *Lotus Sutra* (*Namu myōhō rege kyō* 南無妙法蓮華經) written in large characters in the center and flanked by Sanskrit characters representing Fudō 不動 and Aizen 愛染. This phrase was chanted within all subsets of Nichiren Buddhism. The composition, said to have been inspired by an image of a pagoda, is completed by the signature and cipher of Nichiren, who brushed word mandalas for his disciples as *honzon* icons or protective amulets. More than one hundred and twenty-seven examples of this type of word mandala by Nichiren are extant today.<sup>98</sup>

### 2.3 Monks and Literati: From Scripture to "Lettered Chan"

As much as Yishan must have been familiar with the handwritten sutras in *xiejing ti* that he

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<sup>97</sup> In Japan sutras were copied on sumptuously produced paper and donated to Shinto shrines; after Japan entered what was believed to be the *mappō* era (the year of 1052), the practice of sealing sutras into bronze or ceramic cylindrical sutra containers (*kyōzutsu* 經筒) and burying them underground in sacred mountain sites became popular; the earliest extant example of this practice is dated to 1007. “Kyōzutsu 經筒,” *Kokushi Daijiten*, <https://japanknowledge-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/display/?lid=30010zz138790>. Accessed April 12th, 2021.

<sup>98</sup> Watanabe Yoshikatsu 渡辺喜勝, “‘moji mandara’—hikari to kotoba no shinborizumu 文字曼荼羅—光と言葉のシンボリズム,” [Word mandalas—the symbolism of light and words] Sasaki Kaoru 佐々木馨 ed., *Nichiren* 日蓮 in *Nihon no meisō* 日本の名僧 no. 12, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 吉川弘文館, 2004), p. 167. See also Watanabe Yoshikatsu, *Moji Mandara no Sekai-Nichiren no Shūkyō* 文字曼荼羅の世界—日蓮の宗教 [The world of word mandala—the religion of Nichiren], (Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 1999); Manabe Shunshō 真鍋俊照, “Mandara ni okeru moji hyōgen” 曼荼羅における文字表現 [On the expression of words in Mandalas], *Indogaku bukkyō gaku kenkyū*, issue 59 no. 1 (2010 December): 12-20.

surely studied from boyhood onward, the cosmopolitan Chan Buddhist was heir to another tradition of calligraphy that was much closer to that of the secular world. Buddhist monks had been notable calligraphers for many centuries, famed not for laborious copying of sutra but for displays of script that had little to do with Buddhist teachings.

This lineage of monk-calligraphers can be traced to no later than the sixth century, when Zhiyong 智永 (fl. second half of the sixth century), a seventh-generation descendant of Wang Xizhi, made eight hundred copies of the *Thousand Character Essay* (*Qianzi wen* 千字文), a primer for the teaching of basic character-literacy that has nothing to do with Buddhism. Zhiyong wrote the essay in parallel columns of standard and cursive scripts in the style of his famed ancestor, and was instrumental in preserving and promulgating the Wang Xizhi style.<sup>99</sup> The most famous of monk-calligraphers of the Tang dynasty was the Chan monk Huaisu 懷素 (737–799), a master of wild cursive script (*kuangcao* 狂草), who often wrote calligraphy in a state of inebriated inspiration. The texts that Huaisu favored for his calligraphy were not sutras or theological tracts but poems and autobiographical statements. He, like Zhiyong, also made copies of the *Thousand Character Essay*.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Zhiyong was the calligraphy teacher to Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558-638), early Tang statesman and famed calligrapher; numerous famous calligraphers copied Zhiyong's *Thousand Character Essay*, such as the Tang monk-calligrapher Huaisu 懷素 (725-785) and the Yuan statesman Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322). Xiong Bingming 熊秉明, "Fojiao yu shufa" 佛教與書法[Buddhism and calligraphy], *The Voice of Dharma*, issue 5 (1987 May): 23-24. For studies of current versions of Zhiyong's *Qianziwen*, see Chen Zhisheng 陳智聲, "Zhiyong zhencao qianziwen xikao" 智永千字文析考 [An examination and comparison between different versions of the 'thousand character essay' by Zhiyong], *Zhonghua shudao*, issue 93 (2017): 39-58. Chen thinks the only extant paper version that is in Japan is a later copy.

<sup>100</sup> Peter Sturman, "The 'Thousand Character Essay' Attributed to Huaisu and the Tradition of *Kuangcao* calligraphy," *Orientalisms*, vol. 25, no. 4 (April 1994): 38-46.

During the same period that saw Huaisu, a Chan monk, attract the admiration of great literary figures such as the poet Li Bai 李白 (701-762),<sup>101</sup> many prominent literati became interested in the study of Chan Buddhism themselves. Chan thought was prominent in the writings of luminaries like Wang Wei 王維 (692-761), Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824), Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842), Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819). During the Song dynasty, this trend became even more prevalent: Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), and Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105) are among the best known Song literati who numbered among their friends and intellectual companions many Chan monks.<sup>102</sup>

The interaction of literati and Chan clerics yielded a cross-fertilization between religious practice and cultural pursuits during the Song dynasty. Many literati practiced Chan Buddhism, and their visits to Chan monasteries provided opportunities for monks to adopt ideas about art and literature through social interaction with these laymen.<sup>103</sup> In turn, literati culture increasingly

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<sup>101</sup> Li Bai appears frequently in *goroku* starting in the Song; Li Xiaorong 李小榮, “Chanzong yulu Zhong de Li Bai xingxiang” 禪宗語錄中的李白形象 [the image of Li Bai in Chan Buddhist *yulu*], *Anhui daxue xuebao*, no. 36 (2012): 32-38.

<sup>102</sup> This process was a natural result of the increasing interactions between Chan Buddhists and literati during the Song, where Chan Buddhism enjoyed increasing court sponsorship and patronage. During the Northern Song, Hangzhou was already a center of elite-clergy associations; see Huang Chi-chiang, “Elite and Clergy in Northern Sung Hang-chou: A Convergence of Interest,” in *Buddhism in the Sung*, ed. Peter Gregory and Daniel Getz (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), pp. 298-299. By the Southern Song period, Chan Buddhism had become the most prominent sect of institutionalized Buddhism; Patricia Ebrey and Peter Gregory, “The Religious and Historical Landscape,” in *Religion and Society in T’ang and Sung China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), pp. 18-23.

<sup>103</sup> Most significantly, the creation of *denglu* 燈錄 (lantern records) and *yulu* 語錄 (recorded sayings, J: *goroku*) that started in Northern Song—texts that acquired a scripture-like status in Chan/Zen Buddhist discourse—was heavily informed and influenced by literati politics and factionalism at court. See Albert Welter, “Literati Influences on the Compilation of Chan Records,” in *Monks, Rulers, and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 161-207.

adopted Chan Buddhist thought into its practice and discourse on art.<sup>104</sup> Unlike the gradual approach to enlightenment and self-discovery championed by the Northern School of Chan, the Southern School, which became dominant in the Southern Song, emphasizes the sudden awakening of the mind and discovery one's true nature.<sup>105</sup> This concept appealed greatly to Song literati who increasingly valued naturalness and spontaneity in the arts.<sup>106</sup> This cross-fertilization was to have important implications for the development of Chinese calligraphy.<sup>107</sup>

The best-known figure who drew a parallel between Chan Buddhism and calligraphy was Huang Tingjian, who proclaimed that he had achieved an epiphany in calligraphy thanks to his

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<sup>104</sup> This process culminated in the Ming dynasty polymath Dong Qicheng 董其昌 (1555-1636), who appropriated the binary structure of Northern and Southern schools of Chan Buddhism and applied it to his theorization of the history of Chinese painting, which was to have long-lasting art historiographical impact.

<sup>105</sup> For a quick overview of the disputes between the Northern and Southern Schools of Chan and the five sects within the Southern Schools of Chan, see Morten Schlütter, *How Zen became Zen: The Dispute Over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), pp. 18-27.

<sup>106</sup> This process is reflected in the literati's practice of calligraphy and art criticism and is best exemplified by the *pingdan* aesthetics championed by Mi Fu; his criticism of excessiveness and artifice in Tang *kaishu* calligraphers such as Ouyang Xun as well as the wild cursive monk calligrapher Zhang Xu is a case in point. Peter Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 128-132.

<sup>107</sup> Tsai Chieh-teng 蔡介騰, "Fojiao chanzong yu shufa—chan sis hen ronghui shufa biao xian zhi tantao" 佛教禪宗與書法—禪思神融會書法表現之探討 [Zen Buddhism and calligraphy: on Zen spirit-integrated calligraphic expressions], *Xiajingshan yishu lunheng*, issue 5 (2017): 23-49; the concept of "illusory appearance" (*huan chu* 幻出) was adopted by Huang Tingjian in his artistic criticism on Wen Tong's ink bamboo paintings; see Zhou Yukai 周裕鍇, "Zian, Yishu, Zongjiao, ziwo--'shimen wenzichan' zhong jing shi chan zhi jiaorong 自然藝術宗教自我—《石門文字禪》中景畫詩禪之交融 [Nature, art, religion and the self—the fusion of landscape, painting, poetry and Chan in 'Shimen wenzichan']", *Eco-Philosophy kenkyū* エコ・フィロソフィ研究, vol. 10 no. 10 (2016): p. 95.



study of Chan. Commenting on the relationship between calligraphy and Chan, Huang wrote:

When writing calligraphy, there should be an image in the brushstroke; portly but not obese, slender but not skinny. In each poem there must be a key sentence, just as there exists the ‘eye’ in Chan sayings. This is hard to explain to those who fail to comprehend deeply the teachings of the [Chan] patriarchs.<sup>108</sup>

作字須筆中有畫，肥不暴肉，瘦不露骨，正如詩中有句，亦猶禪家句中有眼，須參透乃悟耳。”<sup>109</sup>

Closer to Yishan’s own time, Zhang Jizhi 張即之 (1186-1263)— the last great calligrapher of the Southern Song—and his uncle Zhang Xiaoxiang 張孝祥 (1132-1170), both had close ties to Chan monks and their calligraphies are reflective of that association.<sup>110</sup>

Just as Chan thought infiltrated literati discourse, typified by the passage from Huang Tingjian, Song dynasty literati’s synthesis of the “three perfections”—poetry, calligraphy and

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<sup>108</sup> Translation modified from Peter Sturman, “Wine and Cursive: The Limits of Individualism in Northern Sung China,” in Cary Y. Liu, Dora C.Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith ed., *Character and Context in Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton University, 1999), p. 225.

<sup>109</sup> Shui Laiyou 水賚佑 ed., *Huang Tingjian shufa shiliao ji* 黃庭堅書法史料集 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1993), p. 22.

<sup>110</sup> Zhang Jizhi’s mature *kaishu* style is epitomized in *Diamond Sutra (Embodied Image)*, catalogue entry no. 10), which is dated to 1246, one year before Yishan was born; for an overview of Zhang’s life and works, see Fang Ailong 方愛龍, *Nansong shufashi* 南宋書法史 [History of calligraphy of Southern Song], (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 221-231. Zhang Jizhi was close to prominent literary monks such as Xiaoweng Miaokan 笑翁妙堪 (1177-1248), Wuwen Daocan 無文道璨 (1213-1271), and Wuchu Daguan 物初大觀 (1201-1268); for a detailed account of Zhang’s associations with these Chan monks, see Huang Chi-chiang 黃啟江, “Nansong shujia Zhang Jizhi de fangwai you” 南宋書家張即之的方外遊 [the *fangwai* associations of the Southern Song calligrapher Zhang Jizhi], *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究, *juan* 26, issue 4 (2008 December): 133-166. For his uncle Zhang Xiaoxiang’s friendship with Chan monks, see Huang Peiyu 黃珮玉, *Zhang Xiaoxiang yanjiu* 張孝祥研究, (HK: Sanlian shudian, 1993).

painting—also exerted influence on Chan Buddhists’ attitude towards the arts.<sup>111</sup>

That a Chan Buddhist should develop an active interest in cultural and artistic pursuits seems to go against the central tenet of Chan Buddhist teachings that as a school of religious thought and practice, it was “not to be established upon words and letters” (*buliwenzi* 不立文字)<sup>112</sup>—a paradox made all the more vivid by the massive number of surviving literary records and poetic anthologies associated with Chan/Zen.<sup>113</sup>

What might be called the “literary turn” within Chan inspired the coining of the term “lettered Chan” (*wenzi chan* 文字禪).<sup>114</sup> The term appears first in a poem by Huang Tingjian

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<sup>111</sup> For example, the practice of writing inscriptions on paintings was widespread amongst Chan Buddhists since at least the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century; painting subject matters such as plum blossom and ink bamboo enjoyed popularity with both literati scholars and their Chan Buddhist friends; this subject will be treated more extensively in Chapter 5 on Yishan’s painting inscriptions.

<sup>112</sup> The four-fold phrasing that came to be used in Song dynasty China to characterize Chan distinctiveness (of the Southern school of Chan): a special transmission outside the scriptures (*jiawwai biechuan* 教外別傳); not established upon words and letters (*buli wenzi* 不立文字); directly pointing to the human heartmind (*zhizhi renxin* 直指人心); seeing nature and becoming a Buddha (*jianxing chengfo*, 見性成佛). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddhism-chan/> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

<sup>113</sup> The relationship between Chan Buddhism and language is a fraught one, and its evolution is reflected in the various types of writings produced in different historical phases in the development of the sect. Fang Litian 方立天, “Chanzong de ‘buliwenzi’ yuyanguan” 禪宗的“不立文字”語言觀 [Chan school’s linguistic views of ‘independence-of-words’], *Zhongguo renmin daxue xuebao*, no. 1 (2002): 34-44. Zhang Shengzhen 張勝珍, “Chanzong yuyan yanjiu” 禪宗語言研究 [Studies on language in Chan Buddhism], PhD. dissertation, Nankai University, 2005. Notable Western scholarship on this topic is Bernard Faure, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan Buddhism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>114</sup> For a succinct introduction to this topic, see Jiang Hong 江泓, “Dui ‘wenzi chan’ wenti de jiedu yu chengqing” 對「文字禪」問題的解讀與澄清 [The clarification of the study on Wen’zi Chan and several interrelated questions], *Taipei daxue zhongwen xuebao*, issue 12 (2012): 57-76.

“Master Yuangong burns incense at the temple/Mr. Yimin composes an essay of Chan devotion” (遠公香火社/遺民文字禪).<sup>115</sup> The popularization of this term is attributable to the Chan monk Huihong 慧洪 (1071-1128), who was an admirer of Huang Tingjian; this highly literary Chan monk’s writing offers a glimpse of how calligraphy was assessed in the context of Chan Buddhism at this time.

#### 2.4 Calligraphy in Huihong’s *Shimen wenzi chan*

Among practices associated with "lettered Chan" during the Northern and Southern Song periods, calligraphy was foremost. Although the writings of Chan monks of these periods generally contain little about calligraphy, the poetry anthology of the prominent Northern Song Chan monk Huihong, titled *Lettered Chan of Stone Gate* (*Shimen wenzi chan* 石門文字禪), is an exception—it is studded with references to calligraphers. Su Shi and Huang Tingjian are mentioned most often. Colophons included in the anthology also show that Huihong often had the opportunities to view works of calligraphy, especially those of Huang Tingjian.

Running through Huihong’s calligraphy criticism are theories of art he shared with his Northern Song literati friends; the monk was attracted in particular to the idea that calligraphy was a revelation of the innermost nature of the writer, and the idea that one should appreciate “ink play” (*moxi* 墨戲)—an artless, unaffected approach to calligraphy—much prized and practiced by Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107) and others in the orbit of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Zhou Yukai 周裕鎧, *Wenzi chan yu songdai shixue* 文字禪與宋代詩學 [Wenzi chan and the poetics of Song dynasty], Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988, p.183. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>116</sup> There is evidence that the term *moxi* derives from the Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit term “samādhi” or “mindless playfulness in the state of spiritual concentration” (*youxi sanmei* 遊戲三昧), filtered through Chan Buddhism, and appears frequently in colophons and

Fundamental to the literati concept of art, especially the art of calligraphy, was the idea expressed even today in the familiar phrase "the characters are like the man" (*zi ru qi ren* 字如其人). Huihong whole-heartedly accepted this view. Writing about calligraphers of his own time and two famed masters of the past, Huihong wrote:

BY reputation Dongpo [Su Shi (1037-1101)] and Shangu [Huang Tingjian (1045-1105)] are no thunderers; the reason they yet shake and shock the world is that their moral uprightness begins and ends with heaven and earth. This is certainly manifest in their calligraphy. Wang Xizhi (303-361) and Yan Pingyuan [Yan Zhenqing (709-785)] were both morally upright at court, holding fast to principle like steel, and this is the reason why their calligraphic traces are still treasured by the world today.

東坡山谷之名，非雷非霆，而天下震驚者，以忠義之，與天地相始終耳，初不止於翰墨。王羲之、顏平原皆直道立朝，剛而有理，故筆跡至今天下寶之者，此也。<sup>117</sup>

Beyond assessments such as this, which could have come from the writings of many Song literati,<sup>118</sup> Huihong draws direct parallels between a calligrapher's cultivation of a unique personal style, which others cannot imitate, and the Chan adherent's search for self-realization.

Writing about the Tang calligrapher Li Yong 李邕 (674-746), he observes:

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inscriptions by Su Shi and his circle; Meng Xianwei 孟憲偉, "Lun Su Shi shuhua tiba zhong de chanzong sixiang" 論蘇軾書畫提拔中的禪宗思想 [On the Chan Buddhist thought in Su Shi's colophons and inscriptions on paintings and calligraphies], *Guizhou daxue xuebao*, vol. 28 no. 1 (February 2004): 33-36. This concept of *moxi* also had great implications for paintings in the Song, especially Chan/Zen paintings; Hu Dezhi 胡德智, "Songdai moxi yu chanzong" 宋代墨戲與禪宗 ['moxi' in Song dynasty and Chan Buddhism], *Meishu*, issue 10 (1985): 50-54.

<sup>117</sup> Huihong (1071-1128), *Shimen wenzichan* 石門文字禪, *juan* 30, p. 314. Beijing Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin 北京爱如生数字化技术研究中心. *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中国基本古籍库 [Database of Chinese Classic Ancient Books]. Beijing: Beijing Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin, 2011. <http://server.wenzibase.com/dblist.jsp>.

<sup>118</sup> On the idea of "moral uprightness" and the views of Northern Song literati on the art of Tang statesman, calligrapher Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709-785), see Amy McNair, *The Upright Brush: Yan Zhenqing's Calligraphy and Song Literati Politics*, (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 1998).

Because of the craftsmanship and correctness of Li Beihai [Li Yong]'s calligraphy, many seek to imitate his work. He laughs and says, "Those who study after me will acquire a style that is clumsy, and those who come close to me will produce lifeless calligraphy." People at the time did not understand the profundity of this statement, but I do appreciate it. The most precious trait in someone who learns is the ability to discern the idea (*yi*) behind the artist's intent. As for those who follow closely his traces, they are not great learners. This insight is not only applicable to worldly affairs, but also out of this world [in the realm of Chan Buddhism].

李北海以字畫之工而是多法其書，北海笑曰：學我者拙，似我者死。當時之人不知其言有味，余滋愛之。蓋學者所貴，貴知其意而已，至於蹤跡繩墨，非善學者也。豈特世間之法為然，出世間法亦然。<sup>119</sup>

Huihong implies that calligraphy is not meant to be mechanically imitated, just as Enlightenment cannot be obtained by methodically following texts—a view of art in perfect accordance with one of Chan Buddhism's central tenets: "seeing one's nature and becoming a Buddha" (*jianxing chengfo* 見性成佛).

Huihong also commented on the calligraphy of his fellow monks. Concerning the calligraphy of Huanglong Huinan 黃龍慧南 (1002-1069), he wrote:

[...] strangely virile dots and brushstrokes, like the raindrops in the sky, varying in size and scattering around, emerging from the natural. I put the scroll down and sigh: 'one who has moral rectitude, whatever he does, even when he writes with a brush in ink, naturally excels; how much more so those [activities] that cannot be verbalized?' Inscribed by myself [Huihong] (*Inscription after Huanglong Huinan's Autograph of Three Poem*)

...點畫奇勁，如空中之雨，大小蕭散，出於自然。予置卷歎曰：‘成德之人，其所作為，雖點筆弄墨之際，亦自卓絕，況其不可名者？’某題(題黃龍南和尚手抄後三首)<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Huihong (1071-1128), *Shimen wenzhi chan*, *ibid.*, *juan 23*, p. 267.

<sup>120</sup> Huihong (1071-1128), *Shimen wenzhi chan*, *ibid.*, *juan 25*, p. 299.

To support his assessment with evidence from esteemed literati, Huihong cites the views of Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) and Su Shi on the calligraphy of the same monk:

Ouyang Wenzhong [Ouyang Xiu] says: ‘when one discusses calligraphy, one should also discuss the calligrapher’s biography, even if Yan Lugong [Yan Zhenqing]’s calligraphy is sloppy, the world necessarily treasures it.’ Su Dongpo [Su Shi] also says: "Calligraphy and painting are for the most part just as the man is: though a true gentleman might not be very skillful in his calligraphy, his elegant aura naturally wins out; with an inferior man the opposite is the case." Old Huanglong is not one of those who has been transmitted to the world through the merit of their calligraphy, and yet his calligraphy was handsome and lofty; by this we know that Ou and Su are indeed correct in their statements. Someone at Shimen respectfully writes.

歐陽文忠公曰：‘論書當兼論平生，借使顏魯公書不工，世必珍之。蘇東坡亦曰：字畫大率如其為人，君子雖不工，其韻自勝，小人反此也。’老黃龍非其以筆墨傳世者也，而其書終亦秀發，乃知歐、蘇之言，蓋理之固然。石門某謹題(題黃龍南和尚手抄後三首)<sup>121</sup>

Old Huanglong seems to have been a good calligrapher; but more importantly, in the eyes of Huihong, it was the monk's virtue that was revealed, as literati aesthetic theory would predict, through the traces of his brush. The writing of another monk-calligrapher, Zhaomo 昭默 (fl. late 11-early 12 cent.) inspired a similar evaluation from Huihong:

Old Zhaomo is known for his understanding of the Way and the profundity of his morality, and he has long been respected by the monastic world. Even though his pieces contain only scraps of his words and verses, nothing more than a form of ink play, educated people have sought after them and treasured them. The reason for this is not the beauty of the calligraphy or the verses, but that they respect his virtue as a master of the Way.

昭默老人道大德博，為叢林所宗仰。雖其片語只偈，翰墨遊戲，學者爭秘之。非以其書詞之美也，尊其道師之德耳。<sup>122</sup>

Huihong understood that ink traces by learned Chan masters were collected and treasured not

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<sup>121</sup> Huihong (1071-1128), *Shimen wenzhi chan*, *ibid.*, *juan 25*, pp. 299-300.

<sup>122</sup> Huihong (1071-1128), *Shimen wenzhi chan*, *ibid.*, *juan 26*, p. 302.

purely for their aesthetic value but for the character of the calligrapher. His assessment of Zhaomo's calligraphy also introduces in the context of art produced by Chan monks the concept of “ink play,” an important element as we have seen, in literati discourse on calligraphy and painting. In an encomium on a Buddhist painting by Su Shi, Huihong images himself indulging in this seemingly light hearted but potentially highly expressive approach, unconcerned with technical finesse:

Playing with brush and ink,  
Slapping the thunder toppling the cloud.  
[I] sometimes embody my untrammelled thoughts,  
The illusoriness of this Buddhist monk.

遊戲翰墨  
擗雷翻雲。  
偶寄逸想，  
幻此沙門。<sup>123</sup>

Explaining an inscription that he wrote on a painting—an occasion of calligraphy that would become extremely important for Yishan's career in Japan—Huihong again professes to be indulging in ink play: “I inscribed the painting, not only as a gesture that condones the act of benevolence, but also as a kind of ink play.”<sup>124</sup>

Huihong's *Shimen wenzhichan* was the first of its kind and testifies to the wide adoption of literati aesthetic theories among Chan Buddhists in the Song. More than any other source, the monk's writings reflect the blossoming of “lettered Chan.” Circulating widely in the Southern Song period, Huihong's anthology contributed greatly to the legitimation and encouragement of

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<sup>123</sup> Huihong (1071-1128), “Dongpo hua yingshen Mile zan bing xu” 東坡畫應身彌勒贊並序 in *Shimen wenzhi chan*, *ibid.*, *juan* 19, p. 214.

<sup>124</sup> “我作贊辭，非止見聞隨喜，又以為翰墨之遊戲也。” Huihong, *Shimen wenzhi chan*, *ibid.*, *juan* 19, p. 214.

Chan monks' active engagements with poetry, calligraphy and painting—traditional pursuits of Song literati—and paved way for the view that cultural pursuits could facilitate enlightenment.<sup>125</sup>

## 2.5 Dominant Styles of Calligraphy in the Southern Song

Calligraphy during the Southern Song, unlike that during the Northern Song did not witness major breakthroughs or the emergence of great innovative calligraphers;<sup>126</sup> for the most part the legacies of Mi Fu, Su Shi, and Huang Tingjian dominated the calligraphic environment of the Southern Song.<sup>127</sup>

In Chan monasteries, the influence of Su and Huang was especially felt, a legacy of these two Northern Song luminaries' close associations with Chan monks.<sup>128</sup> For example, the oldest extant Chan calligraphy by the monk Daoqian 道潛 (1043-1106) (fig. 2.3) bears a strong resemblance to Su Shi's (fig. 2.4), from the gradually increasingly indentation of the first character of each column moving from right to left, to the deliberately lopsided structure of each individual character, to the angularity of the characters' overall silhouette, to the thickening and thinning of the brushstrokes; the striking similarity is not surprising given the friendship between

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<sup>125</sup> Huang Chi-chiang 黃啟江, *Yiweichan yu jianghushi—Nansong wenxueseng yu chanwenhua de tuibian* 一味禪與江湖詩—南宋文學僧與禪文化的蛻變 [‘Yiwei chan’ and ‘Jianghu shi’—the evolution of Chan culture and literary Chan monks in Southern Song], (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2010).

<sup>126</sup> Fang Ailong, *Nansong shufa shi*, pp. 1-5.

<sup>127</sup> See Marilyn Wong-Gleysteen, “Calligraphy and Painting: Some Sung and Post-Sung Parallels in North and South—A Reassessment of the Chiang-nan Tradition,” in *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, ed. Alfred Murck and Wen C. Fong (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 156-160.

<sup>128</sup> Tsai Chieh-Teng, “Fojiao chanzong yu shufa—chansi shen ronghui shufa biao xian zhi tantao,” 23-49. Su Shi's calligraphy served as the standard typeface for woodblock prints in the Southern Song.



the two calligraphers.<sup>129</sup>

Wuchu Dagan 物初大觀 (1201-1268), active a few decades before Yishan, served as the abbot of Guangli Chan Monastery on Mt. Putuo from 1263 till his death; he therefore was a predecessor of Yishan. Known for his literature and poetry, Wuchu also inscribed frequently on calligraphy by literati, such as Du Yan 杜衍 (978-1057) and Lu You 陸遊 (1125-1210); this shows that as abbot of a major Chan monastery located in the sacred site of Mt. Putuo, Wuchu had ample access to calligraphies by literati scholars.<sup>130</sup> Of the two extant pieces of calligraphies by Wuchu, one is a colophon dated to 1267 on a rubbing of Huang Tingjian's cursive calligraphy (fig. 2.5).<sup>131</sup> This is an important example of calligraphy produced in the same monastic

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<sup>129</sup> The piece by Daoqiang is a letter addressed to Yuwen Xuzhong 宇文虛中 (*jinsi* 1107-1110), a Chan layman who served under the Jin dynasty to the north; the absolute majority of Chan calligraphies by Chinese priests that survived in Japan are of the Linji sect (J: Rinzai), and this letter by Daoqing is an exception as it is a work of Chan calligraphy from the Yunmen 雲門 sect, a sect that was eclipsed by the Linji sect during the Southern Song; Daoqiang was not only close to Su Shi but also other literary luminaries such as Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100); Hu Jianming 胡建明, "Beisong shiseng chidu Daoqign lunkao" 北宋詩僧道潛尺牘論考 [An examination of the letter by the Northern Song poet Chan monk Daoqian], *Zhongguo shufa* issue 7(2005): 59-60. For a detailed study on the life and poetry of Daoqing, see Wu Qinghong 吳慶紅, "Beisong shiseng Daoqian yanjiu" 北宋詩僧道潛研究 [A study on the poet Buddhist Daoqiang of Northern Song], PhD. diss., Nanjing Shifan daxue, 2006.

<sup>130</sup> These colophons are only known from Wuchu's anthology *Wuchu shengyu* 物初賸語, compiled by his disciple in 1267, for which Wuchu himself composed a preface. The anthology survived in Japan and the woodblock printed version dated to 1708 is the oldest extant complete set consisting of 25 *juan*. It has been hypothesized that the anthology was brought to Japan by Wuchu's disciple Wuxue Zuyuan in 1279. This anthology exerted major influence on the Japanese Five Mountain literature. Lu Wanwan 魯鸞鸞, "Wuchu Dagan yanjiu" 物初大觀研究 [A research on Wuchu Dagan], MA thesis, Ningbo daxue, 2018, pp. 85-86. The *Autobiography* of Huaisu in the National Palace Museum Taipei bears a colophon in running script by Du Yan.

<sup>131</sup> The other calligraphy by Wuchu is "Shanyin yu" 山隱語, currently in the collection of Fujita Art Museum of Osaka. Han Tianyong 韓天雍, "Zhongri chanzong moji yanjiu—jiqi xiangguan wenhua zhi kaocha" 中日禪宗墨跡研究—及其相關文化之考察 [Research on Chan

communities in Jiangnan where Yishan trained during his formative years. Wuchu's running script is clearly indebted to that of Huang Tingjian in the lop-sided composition of the character and diagonals—jagged and elongated brushstrokes, full of tension and dynamism.

Thus, we see that up to Yishan's time, the representative style of Chan calligraphy practiced in Jiangnan monasteries was indebted to the Northern Song literati calligraphers Su Shi and Huang Tingjian. The reasons for this could be threefold: first, the close correspondence between Su, Huang and Chan monks fostered a tradition that Chan monks in the Southern Song continued to venerate; second, during the Southern Song period, as literati scholars predominantly practiced Su's and Huang's styles, it was natural that during their interactions with Chan monks these styles were transmitted and adopted in the monastic setting; third, the emphasis on naturalness and spontaneity in Su's and Huang's calligraphy allows room for experimentation that suited the quirky image in which Chan priests continued to fashion themselves. However, things started to change towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the tradition of Wang Xizhi was rediscovered and promoted by a highly influential circle of literati calligraphers centering on the scion of the Song imperial lineage, Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322).

## **2.6 Parallel Continuation of the Wang Xizhi Tradition**

Despite the prevalence of the Su, Huang, and Mi style in the Southern Song, the Wang Xizhi tradition did not vanish. Wang's influence persisted in the Southern Song imperial calligraphy that would have been familiar to Chan monastic communities in and around the area of the capital Lin'an. The most representative and most capable imperial calligrapher writing in the

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Buddhist calligraphy and examination of its cultural context], (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe, 2008), 34-35.

Wang Xizhi tradition was Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127-1162), who established what might be termed an imperial "house style" of cursive script followed by most of his successors.<sup>132</sup>

An important but often overlooked second venue for the preservation of the Wang Xizhi tradition was the Chan monasteries in the Jiangnan region. Chan monasteries were important centers of knowledge in Song society; the libraries of Chan monasteries, together with private libraries, government libraries, and academy libraries, constituted the four pillars of learning that supported the meritocracy of the Song examination system. It was not incidental that centers of vibrant print culture such as present-day Kaifeng (Henan), Jianyang (Fujian), Hangzhou (Zhejiang), Chengdu (Sichuan), were invariably sites of prominent Chan Buddhist monasteries.<sup>133</sup> Even in Chan monasteries of smaller scale located outside these geo-cultural

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<sup>132</sup> It is interesting that Emperor Gaozong started with Huang Tingjian style but decided to switch to Wang Xizhi soon after he assumed the throne, a decision likely motivated by the need to assert his mandate to rule after the disreputable abduction of his father Emperor Huizong by the Jin Jurchen; deviating from the "house style" established by Emperor Gaozong, Emperor Lizong 理宗 (1224-1264) practiced a calligraphy that was highly idiosyncratic. For an account of Emperor Gaozong and the imperial calligraphy in the Southern Song, see Fang Ailong, "Song Gaozong Zhao Gou he nansong diwang houfei de shufa" 宋高宗趙構和南宋帝王后妃的書法 [The calligraphy of Emperor Gaozong and the imperial household in Southern Song], *Shufa* 書法 no. 1 (2013): 35-47; Chu Hui-liang, "Imperial Calligraphy of the Southern Sung," in Alfreda Murck and Wen Fong ed., *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), 289-312. See also entry on Emperor Gaozong's inscription on a fan in the Elliot Collection, in *Embodied Image*, catalogue entry no. 8, pp. 114-115.

<sup>133</sup> The term "academy of learning" (*shuyuan* 書院) appeared in the Tang first, under Emperor Xuanzong, who set up the Lizheng Academy 麗正書院 in the year 718. Zhao Na 趙娜, "Lüelun beisong shiqi henan diqu shuyuan yu chansi de xiangsixing" 略論北宋時期河南地區書院與禪寺的相似性 [On the similarities between academies and Chan monasteries in the Henan region during the Northern Song], *Xin xibu* 新西部 no. 23 (2014): 73-74. For an overview of libraries in Ningbo Buddhist monasteries as major centers of learning in the Jiangnan region, see Cheng Yanlin 程艷林 and Lei Jing 雷靜, "Ningbo siyuan cangshu de lishi jiqi tezhi" 宁波寺院藏書的歷史及其特質 [the history and characteristics of the library collections in Ningbo monasteries], *Zhejiang wanli xueyuan xuebao* 浙江萬里學院學報, vol. 24 no. 3 (May 2011): 45-50.

centers, a commitment to education was evident in the monastic regulations (*qinggui* 清規) pertaining to the training of aspiring Chan disciples.<sup>134</sup>

Although in Chan monasteries of the Southern Song, calligraphers were profoundly influenced by Northern Song styles, the older, classical Wang Xizhi tradition was not forgotten, handed down through model books and rubbings. Remarkable evidence of this survives in a colophon written by Zhao Mengfu, a contemporary of Yishan Yining. In a well-known episode in the history of Chinese calligraphy, Zhao borrowed from a monk he identified as “Elder Dugu” a copy of the Dingwu version of Wang Xizhi's *Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection* (*Lanting jixu* 蘭亭集序).<sup>135</sup> Studying this famed masterpiece during a journey by boat from Lake Tai to Beijing in the year 1310, Zhao composed “Thirteen Colophons”; the fifth one, quoted in full below, is of particular importance to this current discussion:

Some time ago I heard about a senior monk in the northern Chan [Buddhist establishment] from Wu [i.e., the Suzhou area], whose name was Zhengwu and whose *zi* was Dongping. He had this Dingwu version of the *Orchid Pavilion*. Actually, it was a piece from the collection of his master, Master Huiyan Zhao. I was never able to borrow it for viewing [from either of them]. Now I have obtained it [from Dugu], I am overcome with joy. Dugu is worthy as Dongping was unworthy.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> For example, Zhongfeng Mingben's cloisters were deliberately located outside Hangzhou, the religious-cultural center of Chan Buddhism and yet it was evident that he had access to books and learning; he enjoyed a lifelong friendship with Zhao Mengfu and his family. For a discussion on the parallelism between academies and Buddhist monasteries in the Song and Yuan and how small remote Chan cloisters figured against the background of educational institutions, see Natasha Heller, *Illusory Abiding: The Cultural Construction of The Chan Monk Zhongfeng Mingben*, (Harvard University Press, 2014), 215-221.

<sup>135</sup> For a reproduction of the surviving fragments of this work currently in the collection of Tokyo National Museum and rubbings of it dated to the 17th century in Palace Museum Beijing, see Shane McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu: Calligraphy and Painting for Kublai's China*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), illustrations 1.36 & 1.37, pp 86-91.

<sup>136</sup> McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, p. 84.

This testimony, from one of the foremost calligraphers in Chinese history, proves that the Wang Xizhi tradition was safeguarded in Chan monasteries in the Jiangnan region; it was also in the monasteries of this region that Zhiyong, almost five centuries before, had deposited some eight hundred copies of the *Thousand Character Essay* mentioned earlier that contributed to the perpetuation of the Wang Xizhi style.<sup>137</sup>

However, it seems that, as demonstrated by Wuchu Dagan's calligraphy, Chan monks in China before and around Yishan's time in the Jiangnan region largely wrote in a style highly indebted to the Northern Song masters; their style was highly idiosyncratic, and did not seem to have been affected by the *fugu* movement that was ongoing in the literati circle represented by Zhao Mengfu.<sup>138</sup> Besides the three possible explanations for the prevalence of Northern Song calligraphic styles in Jiangnan monasteries proposed earlier, the deteriorating political and social situation in Jiangnan at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century could have been another factor. Due to distrust by the Mongol government of "Chinese from the south" (*nanren* 南人) and the suspension of the civil service examination system until 1313, disenfranchised learned men in the region became ever closer to Chan Buddhists who shared their cultural capital and who were faring better than their literati friends under the new foreign rule.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> For a detailed study of the *Thousand Character Essay* and comparison of different versions as well as their records, see Chen Zhisheng, "Zhiyong zhencao qianziwen xikao."

<sup>138</sup> On the *fugu* movement in calligraphy and painting in the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, see McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu*, pp. 81-99.

<sup>139</sup> In the Yuan dynasty, the association between literati scholars and Chan Buddhists became even more intimate. Due to the strict hierarchical order imposed by the Mongol government, literati from the south found themselves at the bottom of the four-level caste system devised by their foreign ruler. The Mongol government, suspicious of the *nanren*, did not institute the civil service examination until 1313, and when it did, the number of degree conferrals was drastically reduced. This path of upward mobility thus was cut off for the literati scholars down the south, contributing to their downtrodden social and economic status. The

The embracing by Chan Buddhists of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian's calligraphic styles led to experimentation that resulted in idiosyncratic personal styles in Chan calligraphy. Although he was only nine years old when Yishan left China, and never went to Japan himself, Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263-1323)'s calligraphy was highly prized in Japanese Zen monasteries (fig. 2.6).<sup>140</sup> Zhongfeng's individualistic style was created under the Yuan dynasty but within a world of Chan monasteries little different from that known to Yishan, whose style, the subject of the next chapter, appears highly conservative in comparison with that of the younger monk. This is all the more curious considering the very close relationship between Zhao Mengfu and Zhongfeng.

In this context, Yishan's choice to write in the classicizing Wang Xizhi style was almost prescient—the *fugu* movement was to gain traction under Zhao Mengfu's leadership a few years later. His decision to write calligraphy in the Wang Xizhi style after his arrival in Japan in 1299

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Mongols however did respect Chan Buddhism as part of their policy to take advantage of existing religious apparatuses for better management and control of the vast and diverse land that they conquered. By aligning themselves with Chan monks, Yuan literati were perhaps attempting to reclaim their lost social prestige; in this process, the shared cultural capital of the arts of the brush and knowledge of the classics became a bedrock of these friendships giving focus to their social interactions. The friendship between Chan priest Zhongfeng Mingben and Zhao Mengfu is a well-known example. Hou Kaijia 侯開嘉, "Yuandai shufa shengtai xinlun—cong Yanti shufa zai yuandai de jiyu tanqi" 元代書法生態新論—從顏體書法在元代的際遇談起 [A new thesis on the ecological system of Yuan dynasty calligraphy—from the perceptions of Yan Zhenqing style calligraphy during the Yuan], *Shufa yanjiu* 書法研究, issue 3 (2017): p.7. The Southern Song loyalist Zheng Sixiao 鄭思肖 (1241-1318) writes in his "History of Heart" 心史 that the Yuan society was divided into ten levels: "1, civil officials; 2, clerks; 3, Buddhist monks; 4, Daoists; 5, doctors; 6, artisans; 7, hunters; 8, common people; 9, Confucian scholars; 10, beggars." ( "一官、二吏、三僧、四道、五醫、六工、七獵、八民、九儒、十丐。") Zheng Tianting 鄭天挺, *Yuanshi jiangyi* 元史講義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), p. 106, cited in Hou Kaijia, *ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>140</sup> Uta Lauer, *A Master of His Own: The Calligraphy of the Chan Abbot Zhongfeng Mingben, 1262-1323*, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002).

thus represented a parallel development to Zhao Mengfu's adoption of the same tradition, and was highly related to the cultural context in which he found himself—Kamakura Japan at beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.7 Song Calligraphy in Kamakura Japan

In order to understand Yishan's work during his early years in Japan, the subject of the next chapter, it is important to know something of how Chinese calligraphy of the Song period was known and perceived there. The thirteenth century witnessed extensive contacts between monks of Chan monasteries in China and their Zen counterparts from Japan. Japanese monks traveled to China, the homeland of what they called Zen, to study under renowned masters there, and returned to their home monasteries bearing not only new Buddhist learning but also works of calligraphy, in the form of rubbings and ink-written originals. These specimens of calligraphy displayed what was à la mode during the Southern Song—largely a stylistic mix of Yan Zhenqing and the Northern Song calligraphers such as Su Shi, Huang Tingjian and Mi Fu.

En'ni 円爾 (1202-1280) went to China and studied with Wuzhun Shifan 無准師範 (1178-1249) from 1235 to 1241. Upon his return, En'ni founded Tōfukuji 東福寺 in southeastern Kyoto, where a syncretic form of Zen Buddhism mixed with Esoteric Buddhist teachings was practiced. En'ni brought numerous texts and objects from continental Song China, including rubbings of stelae, most of which no longer exist in China today. An inventory of these rubbings, *List of Archive in the Fumon'in* (*Fumonin zōsho mokuroku* 普門院藏書目錄) dated 1241 offers valuable information on the Song calligraphy known in Japan during the Kamakura period. Among the Chinese calligraphers and their works were the following:<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> The text survives in the form of a copy dated 1353. Nakata Yūjirō 中田勇次郎, *Nihon shodō no keifu* 日本書道の系譜, (Tokyo: Mokuji sha, 1970), p. 145.

1. Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) 明州阿育王山廣利寺宸奎閣碑 (1291)
2. Daoqian 道潛 (1043-1106) 明州天通山景德寺轉輪藏記(1093)
3. Emperor Gaozong 宋高宗 (1107-1187 r. 1127-1162) 明州阿育王山佛頂光明塔碑 (1133)
4. Shi Zhengjue 釋正覺 (1091-1157) 明州天童山景德寺新僧堂記 (1142)
5. Emperor Xiaozong 宋孝宗 (1127-1194 r. 1162-1189) 太白名山四大字 (1178)
6. Emperor Xiaozong 宋孝宗 賜問佛照禪師語碑 (1179)
7. Emperor Xiaozong 宋孝宗 賜佛照禪師頌 (1180)
8. Emperor Xiaozong 宋孝宗 和靈隱長老偈碑 (1182)
9. Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126-1193) 賜佛照禪師詩碑 (1181)
10. Jiang Can 蔣燦 (dates unknown) 大聖等慈普照明覺大師之傳碑

Works from this list that have survived, by Su Shi (fig. 2.7), Fan Chengda (fig. 2.8), and Emperor Gaozong (fig. 2.9), display a Song calligraphic style that was more notable for visual exuberance and inventiveness than for strict adherence to rules. In general, the characters are off-balanced and slanted, with rapid changes in the width of the brushstrokes; these characteristics were also consistent with calligraphic style practiced by Chan Buddhists in the Jiangnan region at the time. In the collection of Kenninji in Kyoto is a rare example of a contemporary rubbing of calligraphy by the Southern Song Chan priest Shiqiao Kexuan 石橋可宣 (d. 1217?) (fig. 2.10). The writing displays clear affinity with Emperor Gaozong's calligraphy rubbing brought to Japan by En'ni, as both show influence by Huang Tingjian (fig. 2.11).<sup>142</sup>

The introduction of Song calligraphic specimens such as these rubbings could account for the prevalent influence of calligraphers such as Su Shi and Huang Tingjian on Zen calligraphy prior to Yishan's arrival. Interest in Su and Huang was also stimulated by examples of their work, or that of late Southern Song and early Yuan calligraphers working in their styles, seen by Zen monks traveling in China. In addition, calligraphy by the Southern Song calligrapher and

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<sup>142</sup> This calligraphy rubbing by Emperor Gaozong brought to Japan by En'ni is a rare example showcasing the emperor's early calligraphic style (before he decided to shift to Wang Xizhi after assuming the throne) in the manner of Huang Tingjian.



Chan devotee Zhang Jizhi was also influential in Japan; besides his *Diamond Sutra*, which made its way to Japan around mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, several plaques bearing robust and large characters preserved in Tōfukuji (probably brought by En'ni) have been attributed to him.<sup>143</sup>

Works by two Zen calligraphers, Myōan Eisai 明菴栄西 (1141-1215) (fig. 2.12) and Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253) (fig. 2.13), clearly demonstrates the influence of Huang and Zhang, respectively. Myōan's work shares certain characteristic traits of Huang Tingjian's running script calligraphy (fig. 2.11), most prominently the elongated diagonal strokes; Dōgen's calligraphy bears a striking resemblance to Zhang Jizhi's standard script calligraphy (fig. 2.14), where a main visual interest in the calligraphy consists of a sharp contrast between the thickness and the thinness of the brushstrokes.

While in China a critical discourse of calligraphy had begun as early as the Han dynasty, the first systematic treatise on calligraphy in Japan—*Jubokushō* 入木抄—did not appear until 1352. It was a text compiled by Prince Son'en 尊円 (1298-1356), the seventeenth head of the imperial school of calligraphy affiliated with Shōren'in 青蓮院, an imperially sponsored Tendai Buddhist monastery (*monzeki* 門跡) located near Nanzenji where Yishan served as abbot from 1313 to 1317. Included in the text is a paragraph commenting on “recent trends” in calligraphy that shows an unfavorable attitude towards continental Song influence:

The recent calligraphic styles from Song China have mostly been underwhelming. Nowadays people who are engaged in literary matters imitate Song styles and use unconventional abbreviation for writings on banquet poetry sheets, court documents and imperial edicts. This is not good development. In our country, we value tradition above anything else and hence preserve the ‘national aura’. In foreign lands [China], such is not the case, where people change the traditional style and liberally spread the contemporary

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<sup>143</sup> Fu Shen 傅申, “Zhang Jizhi jiqi dazi” 張即之及其大字 [Zhang Jizhi and his large script], *Gugong xueshu jikan*, *juan* 28, issue no. 3 (2011): pp.1-37.

style. This is reflected also in how calligraphy is done.<sup>144</sup>

From the prince's critique it is not difficult to see that Song calligraphic styles were popular, too popular, in the prince's view, and widely practiced in Japan by mid-fourteenth century.

Undoubtedly, émigré Chinese Chan monks and their Japanese disciples writing calligraphy in styles derived from Su and Huang contributed to this trend in calligraphy that Prince Son'en frowned upon. In this context, Yishan's calligraphic choice would have appeared highly conservative in its classicizing adherence to the orthodox Wang Xizhi tradition. This is the nature of his calligraphy evident in works from his early years in Japan discussed in the next chapter; however, when Yishan made his way into Kyoto in 1313—where the court had been steeped in the Wang Xizhi tradition for centuries—the monk's calligraphic style underwent a drastic change, and this will be the subject of Chapter 4.

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<sup>144</sup> “隨而近來宋朝の筆體多分非神妙歟。當世文學の輩、宋朝の筆體を摸する間、公宴懷紙、或は綸旨、院宣等、頗異體不可然事也。本朝は每事跡を追て國風を不失也。異朝は不然。先代の舊風を改て當時の風俗を流布せしむるなり。仍筆體も皆改也。” Hayashi Tatsusaburō 林屋辰三郎 annotated, *Kodai chūsei geijutsuron* 古代中世芸術論, in *Nihon shisō taisei* 日本思想大系 no. 23, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), p. 258.

## Chapter 3: Yishan's Calligraphy in Kamakura and the Wang Xizhi Tradition

Five émigré Chan monks preceded Yishan in their experience of life in Kamakura Japan, starting in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century. They invariably served as abbot to a group of Zen monasteries (most notably Kenchōji 建長寺 and Engakuji 円覚寺, both founded by Chan monks) that were built after the continental style—the first of their kind—in the city of Kamakura, the seat of shogunal power. Their presence and activities at these Zen monasteries, and their ongoing correspondence with the Chan network in Jiangnan China transformed Kamakura into a center of Sinological learning and knowledge that incorporated the latest developments in poetry, philosophy, art and religion in continental Song China.<sup>145</sup>

Extant calligraphy by these predecessors of Yishan show the prevailing influence of Northern Song individualist calligraphers Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105) and Mi Fu 米芾 (1051-1107). Southern Song calligrapher Zhang Jizhi 張即之 (1186-1263) was also quite influential, given his status as a Chan devotee and the early introduction of his works into

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<sup>145</sup> For an overview of émigré Chinese Chan monks in Kamakura including those who later returned to China, see Satō Shūkō 佐藤秀孝, “Chūsei kamakura no torai sō—kenchōji Engakuji wo chūshin to shite” 中世鎌倉の渡来僧—建長寺・円覚寺を中心として [Émigré monks in medieval Kamakura—centering on Kenchōji and Engakuji], in Murai Shōsuke ed., *Higashi Ajia no naka no Kenchōji: shūkyō seiji bunka ga kōsa suru zen no seichi* 東アジアのなかの建長寺：宗教・政治・文化が交叉する聖地 (Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2014), pp. 186-199. For a detailed account of the founding of Engakuji, see Tamamura Takeji 玉村竹二, *Engakuji shi* 円覚寺史 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1964), pp. 4-55. For a brief overview of objects and paintings in Engakuji, see Nuki Tatsuto 貫達人, *Engakuji* 円覚寺 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 1967 reprint of 1964), pp 31-40.

Japan.<sup>146</sup> In a word, their calligraphy was “contemporary” in style—in alignment with the style that Chan priests were practicing in continental China—and reflective of the general calligraphic environment of Southern Song. It was in this calligraphic environment that Yishan found himself when he became the tenth abbot of Kenchōji in the twelfth month of 1299.

Below is a brief overview of the lives of these five Chan monks and their calligraphy, in chronological order of their arrival in Japan.<sup>147</sup>

### 3.1 Émigré Chinese Chan Monks in Kamakura Japan

#### 3.1.1 Lanxi Daolong 蘭溪道隆 (J : Rankei Dōryū, 1213-1278 ; arrival in Japan : 1246)

Lanxi was born in the western part of present-day Sichuan province. After travelling and studying with various Chan masters at different temples, he became the dharma heir of Wuming Huixing 無名慧性 (dates unknown). He learned about the prosperity that Buddhism enjoyed in Japan while at the Jingde Chan Temple of Mt. Tiantong in Ningbo. In 1246 he arrived in Hakata on board a Japanese merchant ship. He received the patronage of Hōjō Tokiyori 北条時頼 (1227-1263), and became the founding abbot of Kenchōji in 1249. Around 1259, he left Kenchōji and briefly served as abbot of Kenninji in Kyoto; although he did seem to have received some attention from the court,<sup>148</sup> he left Kyoto around the second month of 1261 and returned to Kamakura.

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<sup>146</sup> Fu Shen 傅申, “Zhang Jizhi jiqi dazi” 張即之及其大字 [Zhang Jizhi and his large script], *Gugong xueshu jikan*, *juan* 28, issue no. 3 (2011): pp.1-37.

<sup>147</sup> The biographies are based on entries in the *Dictionary of National History* (*kokushi daijiten* 国史大辞典) in Japan Knowledge database. <https://japanknowledge-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/search/basic/index.html>.

<sup>148</sup> The retired emperor Go-Saga 後嵯峨 (1220-1272, r. 1242-1264) summoned him to the palace for enquiries. Japan Knowledge, <https://japanknowledge-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/display/?lid=30010zz496860>. Accessed March 9, 2021.

During his time away, another émigré Chinese Chan priest Wu'an Puning 兀庵普寧 (1197-1276; introduced below) presided over Kenchōji; when Wu'an later returned to China in 1265, Lanxi again took over the abbacy of Kenchōji. As the Mongols made their attempts to subjugate Japan during the Bun'ei era (1264-1274), Lanxi was suspected to be a spy and twice banished to present-day Yamanashi prefecture. He was able to return to Kenchōji in the fourth month of 1278. He died three months later. From this biography, it is clear that as the first émigré Chinese Chan monk in Japan, Lanxi's status seemed to have been threatened by the worsening diplomatic relationship between the *bakufu* and Yuan China. He left behind three volumes of "Recorded Sayings" (*goroku* 語録).

### **3.1.2 Wu'an Puning 兀庵普寧 (J: Gotan Funei, 1197-1276; in Japan: 1260-1265)**

Wu'an was also from the western part of present-day Sichuan province; he was Dharma heir to Wuzhun Shifan 無准師範 (1178-1249). After serving as the Head Monk at various prominent Chan monasteries, such as the Lingyin Monastery in Hangzhou and Tiantong Monastery on Mt. Taibai in Ningbo, Wu'an served as abbot in smaller Chan temples in the Jiangnan region before he was invited by Lanxi Daolong to come to Japan. Upon his arrival, Wu'an entered Shōfukuji 聖福寺 in Hakata. Soon, through an introduction by his former fellow student under Wuzhun Shifan, the Japanese monk En'ni, founder of Tōfukuji in Kyoto, Wu'an became the second abbot of Kenchōji after receiving an invitation from Hōjō Tokiyori, who eventually achieved enlightenment under Wu'an, in the tenth month of 1262. However, after Tokiyori passed away, Wu'an could not find a patron who could appreciate the style of Chan Buddhism that he practiced; in addition, disputes arose amongst his disciples at the temple. Thus, Wu'an returned to China in 1265 after a mere five-year stay in Japan. Despite the brevity of his sojourn, Wu'an's

stay was instrumental for the development of Zen Buddhism in Japan.<sup>149</sup> He left behind one-volume of “Recorded Sayings.”

### **3.1.3 Daxiu Zhengnian 大休正念 (J: Daikyū Shōnen, 1215-89; arrival in Japan: 1269)**

Daxiu was from the Yongjia 永嘉 county of Wenzhou, present-day Zhejiang province. He was dharma heir of Shixi Xinyue 石溪心月 (d.1255) at Jingshan Temple. Upon invitation by Hōjō Tokimune 北条時宗 (1251-1284)—son of Tokiyori— Daxiu boarded a merchant ship and became the third abbot of Kenchōji in 1269. He presided over Jufukuji 寿福寺 before serving as the second abbot of Engakuji in 1284. Daxiu’s seven-volume “Recorded Sayings” shows that he was a man of great learning; Daxiu was said to have reached many members of the powerful Hōjō clan.<sup>150</sup>

### **3.1.4 Wuxue Zuyuan 無學祖元 (J: Mugaku Sogen, 1226-1286, arrival in Japan: 1279)**

Wuxue was from Ningbo and was dharma heir to Wuzhun Shifan. He studied after Yanxi Guangwen 偃溪廣問(1189-1263), Xutang Zhiyu 虛堂智愚 (1185-1269), and Wuchu Dagan 物初大觀 (1201-1268), all prominent Chan masters at the time.<sup>151</sup> When the Mongols were pushing into the Hangzhou area, Wuxue took refuge in Mt. Yandang 雁蕩 (in the vicinity of present-day Wenzhou, Zhejiang province), before returning to Tiantong Monastery of Mt. Taibai

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<sup>149</sup> <https://japanknowledge-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/display/?lid=30010zz189830>  
国史大辞典, accessed March 5, 2021.

<sup>150</sup> 国史大辞典 <https://japanknowledge-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/display/?lid=30010zz290080>. Accessed March 5, 2021.

<sup>151</sup> Calligraphy and paintings inscriptions by these three Chan masters have passed down to us in mostly Japanese collections.

in Ningbo in 1272 to serve as the Head Monk under Huanxi Weiyi 環溪惟一 (dates unknown), with whom Yishan also studied. In 1274 Hōjō Tokimune invited Huanxi Weiyi to come to Kamakura as successor to Lanxi Daolong. Huanxi declined citing old age as a reason and recommended Wuxue instead; then he appointed Jingtang Jueyuan 鏡堂覺圓 (J: Kyōdō Kaku'en, 1244-1306; arrival in Japan: 1279) to accompany Wuxue on his trip to Japan. They were greeted by Mushō Jōshō 無象靜照 (1234-1306) at Shōfukuji in Hakata.<sup>152</sup> Wuxue became abbot of Kenchōji in the eighth month of 1279; in 1282, he founded Engakuji. Wuxue left behind a copious amount of records of sermons and other writings.

### **3.1.5 Xijian Zitan 西澗子曇 (J: Saikan Shidon, 1249-1306; first sojourn in Japan: 1271-1278; second arrival in Japan: 1299)**

Xijian was from Taizhou, hometown of Yishan. Upon Hōjō Tokimune's invitation, he came to Japan for the first time in 1271; Xijian returned to China in 1278 a year before the Southern Song dynasty ended. He served under Huanxi Weiyi at Tiantong Monastery of Mt. Taibai, and was dharma heir to Shifan Weiyan 石帆惟衍 (dates unknown). In 1299, he accompanied Yishan Yining on his mission and arrived in Japan for the second time. Xijian presided over Engakuji until his retirement in 1306. He passed away in the tenth month of that year.

From this brief overview of the biographies of these five émigré Chinese Chan monks, who were active in Kamakura prior to or around the time of Yishan's arrival, we can see that his appointment as an imperial envoy by Emperor Chengzong 成宗(r. 1294-1307) was a formal recognition of the active network of Chan/Zen monks between Kamakura, Hakata, and the

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<sup>152</sup> Mushō Jōshō had studied in China (1252-1265) and received dharma from Shixi Xinyue. Later he was invited by Hōjō Sadatoki and presided over Jōchiji in Kamakura.

cluster of prominent Chan monasteries in the Zhejiang coastal area; Japanese monks, who had studied in the monasteries of the Jiangnan region, often served as intermediaries for Chinese Chan monks who came to Japan under extremely volatile circumstances during the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when Southern Song rule in the Jiangnan region was crumbling under the increasing pressure, and finally the invasion, of the Mongols. These Chinese monks met with various degrees of success in Japan, and their careers often took them from Hakata to Kamakura. They seem to have had little luck in Kyoto, the seat of the imperial power, owing partially to the tension caused by the attempted Mongol invasions of the archipelago and to the hostility from the Esoteric Buddhist sects firmly entrenched in the capital city.<sup>153</sup> Against this background, Yishan's success in Kamakura and his promotion to abbacy of Nanzenji in Kyoto were remarkable.

### 3.2 Chan/Zen Calligraphy in Kamakura

The five émigré Chinese Chan monks who preceded Yishan brought with them styles of calligraphy that were current in their homeland.<sup>154</sup>

The Southern Song was established in 1127, less than two decades after the passing of the three most important calligraphers of the Northern Song, Su Shi, Huang Tingjian and Mi Fu, and

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<sup>153</sup> Eisai Myōan 栄西明庵(1141-1215) and En'ni 円爾(1202-1280), both early promulgators of continental Chan Buddhism, facing pressure from the Esoteric Buddhist sects, compromised by practicing a syncretic form of Buddhism of Tendai, Chan, and Shingon teachings in the temples they established in Kyoto. Martin Collcutt, "Zen and the Gozan," in Kozo Yamamura ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 589-592.

<sup>154</sup> The number of extant works of calligraphy by these five Chan priests are as follows (excluding painting inscriptions): Lanxi Daolong, 62; Wu'an Puning, 45; Daxiu Zhengnian, 11; Wuxue Zuyuan, 47; Xijian Zitan, 9. Yishan has 115 works under his name. *Shiryōshū* 資料集, published as part of the *Sho no kokuhō:bokuseki* 書の国宝: 墨跡 exhibition, Osaka Municipal Art Museum and the Gotoh Art Museum 2006.



most Chinese calligraphers active in the early Southern Song were familiar with the works of these masters. It has been observed that “calligraphers imitating Su are most numerous, followed by those who are in the Mi style, and then come those who aspire after Huang.”<sup>155</sup> The influence of these late Northern Song calligraphers is evident in the works of émigré Chinese priests who preceded Yishan, as is that of the Southern Song master, Zhang Jizhi.

For example, the style of Mi Fu was an important source for the calligraphy of Wuxue Zuyuan, as seen in his *Dharma Words on the Day of the Double Ninth Festival* (fig. 3.1), dated 1279, the year of his arrival in Japan. Its text, written in a fluid running script, is a poem the priest composed on the occasion of the Double Ninth Festival (*chongyang* 重陽) earlier that year.

Each column slants slightly from top left to bottom right, as if giving visual form to the scene of “a gust of evening wind blew off some gentleman’s hat,” described in the poem. There is ample space between each plump character and the brush was saturated with ink to write the uniformly jet black strokes. Balancing the neatly arranged columns of three to five characters, the more casually aligned horizontal rows create an air of ease and relaxation. Furthermore, variation in the size of characters imparts a rhythmic flow to the work.

When compared to Mi Fu’s *Escaping Summer Heat* (*Taoshu tie* 逃暑帖) (fig. 3.2), Wuxue Zuyuan’s calligraphy clearly reveals Mi’s influence: in the writing of both calligraphers, the brush is wielded loosely; both display undulating thickness and thinness of strokes that creates a sense of three-dimensionality in the characters, and both show the use of broad flat

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<sup>155</sup> Cao Baolin 曹寶麟, *Zhongguo shufashi song liao jin juan* 中國書法史/宋遼金卷 (Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2009), p. 268; for an overview of calligraphers and their works active in the first few decades of Southern Song and their inheritance of Su Huang Mi, see Fang Ailong 方愛龍, *Nansong shufa shi* 南宋書法史 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), pp. 40-86.

brushstrokes created by moving the brush at a slanting angle to the paper in a technique known as "slanted brush tip" (*cefeng* 側鋒). Distinctive in the writing of both Mi Fu and Wuxue is also the internal compression of parts of characters, which creates an effect of centripetal force, a trait that also defines Wu'an Puning's *Letter to Tōgan E'an* (fig. 3.3).<sup>156</sup>

Wu'an Puning's calligraphy represents another interpretation of the Mi Fu heritage that was influential in the Southern Song period. In both Mi Fu and Wu'an's calligraphy, some vertical strokes are deliberately crooked, which introduces some precariousness to the composition of each character. In addition, as is the case in Mi Fu's calligraphy, the central axis of each character in Wu'an's calligraphy are not in parallel to one another (as is in Wuxue Zuyuan's work). These two traits impart a sense of instability and dynamism to Wu'an Puning's calligraphy.

The calligraphy of both Lanxi Daolong and Daxiu Zhengnian reveals their knowledge of the calligraphy of Zhang Jizhi. The diptych of *Dharma Words and Regulations* was written by Lanxi when he was abbot at Kenchōji. Its text chastises monks, urging them to be more diligent in their pursuit of the Dharma and to uphold the stringent regulations required of a rigorous monastic life (fig. 3.4).<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Tōgan E'an 東巖慧安 (1225-1277) studied with Wu'an Puning at Kenchōji in 1262; this letter was written five years after Wu'an returned to China. A letter from Tōgan E'an to Wu'an from two years before is also extant. Together these two letters indicate that Wu'an and his Japanese disciple kept in touch via letter correspondence.

<sup>157</sup> It has been posited that Lanxi gave this sermon during the early years of his abbacy at Kenchōji (which he founded under the aegis of Tokiyori) and is reflective of the strict monastic order to which Japanese monks were subject. For a detailed analysis of the calligraphy and the content of this fascinating piece, see Hu Jianming 胡建明, "Rankei Dōryū zenshi 'hōgo kisoku' no bokuseki to shisō" 蘭溪道隆禪師「法語・規則」の墨蹟と思想 [The diptych by the Chan Master Lanxi Daolong: its calligraphy and content], *Bukkyō keizai kenkyū* no. 40 (2011): 95-116.

The calligraphy is in a highly legible standard script, a suitable script choice as Lanxi's words likely had been displayed at the entrance to the Dharma Hall as a public announcement.<sup>158</sup> The calligraphy resembles that in the *Epitaph for Li Kan* by Zhang Jizhi in the National Palace Museum (fig. 3.5).<sup>159</sup> Lanxi Daolong's life overlapped with the final decades of Zhang's, who was the most innovative calligrapher active in the Southern Song period and a known Chan devotee whose friendship with many Chan priests in the Jiangnan region is well documented.<sup>160</sup> Zhang's characters, like Lanxi's, are slightly squat, and the brush moved at a slanted angle to the paper to write the heavy horizontal and diagonal brushstrokes. These contrast greatly with the thinner, vertical strokes written with a more upright brush, which generates much of the visual interest in both works.

Daxiu Zhengnian also followed the style of Zhang Jizhi. A representative work, *Record of the Origin of Buddhist Relics and Their Blessings* (fig. 3.6), dated 1278, was written during his abbacy at Engakuji. When compared with an album leaf of the *Huayan Sutra* by Zhang Jizhi (fig. 3.7), it becomes clear how much Daxiu's calligraphy is indebted to Zhang's. In both there is a marked contrast between thick and thin brushstrokes that constitute the characters. Flickering movements at the beginnings, and the endings of strokes animate the writing. Besides Zhang

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<sup>158</sup> Qingzhuo Zhengcheng 清拙正澄 (J: Seisetsu Shōchō, 1273-1339; arrival in Japan: 1326) in his "Small Regulations" (*shō seiki* 小清規) stipulates that announcements to be displayed in a public space in a monastery should be written in standard script in a very neat fashion. Hu Jianming, "Rankei Dōryū zenshi 'hōgo kisoku' no bokuseki to shisō," p. 106.

<sup>159</sup> The work measures at 29.3 x 604.5 cm, handscroll; another version of the same content and composition is in the Yūrinkan Museum in Kyoto; it has been observed that the NPM version is a copy.

<sup>160</sup> Much of this correspondence is documented in poetry exchanges and colophons recorded in literary anthologies of these Chan priests. Huang Qijiang 黃啟江, "Nansong shujia Zhang Jizhi de fangwai you" 南宋書家張即之的方外遊 [The *fangwai* life of the Southern Song calligrapher Zhang Jizhi] *Hanxue yanjiu*, vol. 25, issue no. 4 (2008): 133-166.

Jizhi, the elongation and slight tremble in horizontal and diagonal brushstrokes indicate that Daxiu had also studied the work of Huang Tingjian (fig. 3.8), which explains the upward slanting in the top-right part of the characters.

### 3.3 Yishan and the Tradition of Wang Xizhi

Unlike their literati friends, Chan monks wrote few critical commentaries on calligraphy.<sup>161</sup>

Yishan's disciple and biographer Kokan Shiren 虎関師鍊 (1278-1346) describes, however, the calligraphic practice of Cangsou Shanzhen 藏叟善珍 (1194-1277), abbot of Guangli Chan Monastery 廣利禪寺 on Mt. Ashoka 阿育王山, where Yishan served as the Guest Prefect:

Kokan visited Yishan when he was free, and the conversation turned to painting and calligraphy. Yishan thus says: "Forty years ago, Master Cangsou Shanzhen was abbot at Mt. Yuwang; I was also training under him. This old fellow was known for his literary abilities, and his calligraphy was also marvelous. Not a single character was brushed without deliberation. On the occasion of sending something in writing, he combed through model books as the basis for imitation. Before the piece was dispatched, if there was even one character that was not optimal, he would without fail take a fresh piece of paper and redo the writing. It would take half a month for him to finish one piece, which the old man enjoyed doing. He enjoyed ancient literature and clearly wanted to establish his reputation for writing."<sup>162</sup>

師（虎関師鍊）又閑過山（一山），餘論忽及書畫。山語曰：「四十年前，藏叟珍住育王，一寧亦居座下。此老文高一世，字法亦妙。一字不亂寫。凡發一書，書字時，必一一檢法帖，摹其體法。方書發一書，或一字不善，必換紙再書。一書非半月寫不成，亦是老子之好事也。其意好古文，欲名行於文也。」<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Of those that do survive in texts and anthologies, for example, Huihong's *Shimen wenzichan*, most writings are encomia and covers little discussion of techniques or aesthetic principles. See Chapter 2. For a study on the different attitudes of monks and literati commentators towards Zhang Jizhi's calligraphy, see Amy McNair, "Buddhist Literati and Literary Monks: Social and Religious Elements in the Critical Reception of Zhang Jizhi's Calligraphy," in Marsha Weidner ed., *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 73-86.

<sup>162</sup> Based on the modern Japanese translation of the text by Kinugawa Kenji 2017.

<sup>163</sup> Kokan Shiren 虎関師鍊, *Kaizō ōsho kinenroku* 海蔵和尚紀年録, *Zoku gunsho ruijū*

This passage offers a rare glimpse of the calligraphy practice of Chan monks. It is interesting that model books for calligraphy were consulted, and that Cangsou was so exacting as a calligrapher.<sup>164</sup> In another passage from Kokan Shiren's biography, Yishan discusses the grape paintings and calligraphy of Wen Riguan 溫日觀 (fl. late 13<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>165</sup> revealing his admiration of "the style of Jin," which refers to the classicizing, elegant calligraphy style epitomized by the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi:

Yishan again says: "Wen Yushan (Riguan 日觀)'s paintings of grapes are playful and in the state of Samadhi [state of equanimity]. His personality is quite naive and uninhibited, just like that of Master Weizheng,<sup>166</sup> and his calligraphy, painting and poetry are all lofty and beautiful. His calligraphy possesses the aura handed down by sagely calligraphers of the Jin and Song periods [Six Dynasties 220-589], and his poetry carries the tradition of Tang. He was indeed outstanding for his generation. Wen Yushan has died. Lofty gentlemen of the country all loved and respected him.

(一山) 又曰：「溫玉山畫葡萄，乃遊戲三昧耳。其為人甚真率無拘檢，如政黃牛之類，筆畫詞句俱高美。字有晉宋間諸賢筆法遺意，語句有唐詩高僧之體，乃一代偉人也。今已

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續群書類從, vol. 9, *juan* 232, (Tokyo: Zoku gunsho ruijū kanseikai, 1986-1991).

<sup>164</sup> Cangsou Shanzhen was a learned Chan priest active towards the end of the Southern Song. His literary activities are documented in Huang Chi-chiang 黃啟江, *Wenxue seng Cangsou shanzhen yu nansong moshi de chanwenhua: cangsou zhaogao zhi xilun yu dianjiao* 文學僧藏叟善珍與南宋末世的禪文化：《藏叟摘藁》之析論與點校 [The literary monk Changsou Shanzhen and Chan culture at the end of the Southern Song: the analysis and annotation of *Selected Anthology of Cangsou*] (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban, 2010).

<sup>165</sup> Riguan, a monk painter known for his ink monochrome grapes, was active towards the end of the 13c century in and around Hangzhou area; in the year 1292 the Chan monk Pingshi Rudi wrote an inscription on a painting of ink grape by Ri Guan. Shimada Shūjirō, "Nikan to Bokubudou" 日觀と墨葡萄 [Ri Guan and ink grapes] 美術研究, no. 337, 1987: 28-38.

<sup>166</sup> Master Weizheng 惟正 (986-1049), commonly referred to as *Zheng of the Yellow Ox* (*Zheng Huangniu* 政黃牛) due to a legendary anecdote that one day, on his way to visit a friend, he rode a yellow ox with a water jar hanging from its horns. This became a favorite Zen painting subject beginning in the 12th century. The pictorial theme entered Japan in the early Muromachi period and enjoyed renewed popularity in the early 17th century.

死矣。我國之名士皆愛重之。」<sup>167</sup>

Yishan's admiration for the “aura of Jin and Song” epitomized by the tradition of the Two Wangs echoed Prince Son'en's sentiments expressed in his *Summary of Calligraphy* (*Jubokushō* 入木抄, compiled in 1352) discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>168</sup>

Yishan's admiration for this tradition manifested itself most vividly in his own practice of calligraphy, in works dated to his first seven years in Kamakura (Period I, 1299-1306). Yishan's choice of pursuing the tradition of Wang Xizhi appears conservative within the calligraphic environment of Kamakura, where his fellow émigré Chinese Chan monks wrote in styles influenced by more recent Song calligraphers. Although we know little of Yishan's awareness of developments in the practice of calligraphy in China after he settled in Japan 1299, there is a striking parallel between his work and that of Chinese artists at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century associated with the movement known as *fugu* or “returning to antiquity,” championed most notably Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, as the following section will argue, Yishan's adherence to the tradition of Wang Xizhi should be seen in a very different context associated with the Japanese imperial court—politically and militarily weak, but still accorded great cultural prestige in Kamakura, seat of the shogunate.

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<sup>167</sup> Kokan Shiren, *Kaizō ōsho kinenroku*, vol. 9, *juan* 232.

<sup>168</sup> This treatise is seen as the first systematic calligraphy treatise in Japan; the text is a compilation of the twenty-five principles on calligraphy that Prince Son'en prepared for the then fifteen-year-old Emperor Go-Kōgon. r. 1352-1371). See Itō Ryokutai 伊藤緑苔, *Jubokushō no kenkyū* 入木抄の研究 [Studies of the *Summary of Calligraphy*] (Nagoya: Chūbu Nihon Shinbunsha, 1965). For the only English study on this text, see Gary Decoker, “Secret Teachings in Medieval Calligraphy: Jubokushō and Saiyosho” and “Continued”, *Monumenta Nipponica* vol. 43, issue no. 2 and no.3 (1988): 197-228; 259-278.

<sup>169</sup> Translation of the term *fugu* is adopted from Peter Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 169-171.

There is no extant calligraphy by Yishan from his time in China. His earliest extant work is dated 1301, two years after his arrival in Japan (fig. 3.9), titled *Dharma Words Delivered in the Lecture Hall upon the Delivery of the Death Verses of Sansō Ei'un*. Written when the monk was 55, it reflects Yishan's mature calligraphic style. The text is a sermon composed on the occasion of the arrival at Kenchōji of the death poem of Sansō Ei'un 山叟慧雲 (1227-1301), abbot of Tōfukuji in Kyoto, which had close ties with Chan Monasterys in the Jiangnan region of China.

Dharma Words Delivered in the Lecture Hall (*hattō* 法堂) Upon the Arrival of the Death Poem of the Priest Sansō Ei'un

The death verses by Sansō Ei'un have arrived in the lecture hall. I say: the monk left death verses at Tōfukuji, as he departed this world. The moon shining in the sky washes over the land with its clear light, and he returns to where he came from all alone. This is a complete sham. The Sansō priest of Tōfukuji was making a fool out of his disciples. If this poem claims to represent the final thoughts of the priest, I challenge you all to come with me to the tomb of the monk and hear what he has to say about this.

Late Autumn of the Third Year of the Sei'an reign [1301] Kenchōji Issan Ichinei brushed [this].

山叟慧雲遺書至上堂法語

東福山叟和尚遺書至上堂，云：慧日峰前露一機，翻身拶倒五須彌，照天夜月光輝滿，廓爾無依又獨歸。此猶是東福山叟和尚，當面謾人底一著子，若是末後全提，下座同詣靈前，分明聽取。

正安辛丑秋暮 建長一山一寧書<sup>170</sup>

Mounted as a hanging scroll, the text is arranged in ten columns of between seven and nine characters in length. These are followed by larger characters recording the date and season, the

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<sup>170</sup> Kinugawa Kenji and Takatsu Kunie, *Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū* (Shizuoka: Kiichiji, 2016), no.2, pp. 26-29. A copy on silk of this work exists in the Idemitsu Museum.

signature, and institutional affiliation of Yishan.<sup>171</sup> His seal reads “Issan” in ancient orthography. According to Itō Takuji, this seal probably was used during the Kamakura period of Yishan’s time in Japan.<sup>172</sup>

Although there are signs of retouching in various strokes, overall, the work is in excellent condition. The calligraphy is mainly in running script with occasional cursive elements, a rare combination for writings by Chan/Zen monks at the time.<sup>173</sup> There are subtle variations in the alignment of characters and in the ink tone. Ligatures join more cursive characters, but overall, each character is self-contained. The slightly increasing distance between the upper border of the paper and beginnings of the final four columns of the principal text create a gently sloping profile.<sup>174</sup>

Considering that this is a calligraphic rendering of verses written by Yishan for monks assembled in the Dharma Hall on the occasion of the delivery of the death verse by an abbot of a prominent Zen monastery in Kyoto—possibly meant to be sent back to Kyoto—it was important that the writing be legible. Yishan's running script retains the legibility of standard script while incorporating the fluidity of cursive script, allowing him the freedom to imbue the writing with an elegant personal style.

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<sup>171</sup> This pattern of detailed dating and signing is observable on other dated Yishan calligraphies, signifying the status of the object as a gift.

<sup>172</sup> Itō Takuji 伊藤卓治, “Nen Issan bokuseki” 寧一山墨跡 [The calligraphy of Nen Issan], *Bijutsu kenkyū* no. 162 (1951): 11.

<sup>173</sup> Most Chan/Zen monks prior to Yishan’s time wrote in a less cursive script. See previous section.

<sup>174</sup> This is an idiosyncrasy in Yishan’s calligraphy that we observe in other work as well, especially the 1316 masterpiece *Encouraging Words* in the Nezu Museum, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.



A comparison of the characters “正” and “安” written by Yishan with the same characters by Wang Xizhi shows that the priest's style at this time was heavily indebted to that of the great Eastern Jin master (fig. 3.10). This is visible in the overall silhouettes of the characters and the distribution of visual weight within them. Yishan's calligraphy of 1301 also reveals traces of Northern Song calligraphy. For example, the same “安” character has a slightly bulbous shape and elongated central stroke that make it appear weighted towards the bottom, much in the way Mi Fu wrote the character in his *Qiezhong tie*.<sup>175</sup>

Yishan's *Dharma Words* helps to date to Period I a letter he sent to Xijian Zitan, the abbot of Engakuji (partially dated “the twenty-fourth”) (fig. 3.11).<sup>176</sup> Owing to its private nature, the letter, not intended to be read by anyone but the recipient, features characters more abbreviated than those seen in the 1301 *Dharma Words*, but the fluid brushwork is very similar. Another calligraphic sketch<sup>177</sup> dated 1303 shows that Yishan's calligraphy had become more cursive, foretelling a style that would mature during his Kyoto years (fig. 3.12).

The three works introduced above preserve the calligraphic style that the monk practiced in the first years following his arrival in Japan—a classicizing and elegant running calligraphy based on the tradition of the Two Wangs. A slightly later work that epitomizes Yishan's calligraphy from this period is signed and dated 1304, *Verses on the Teachings of the Chan Master Ruiyan Kongzhao* (*Zuigan kūshō Zenshi geko* 瑞巖空照禪師頌古) (fig. 3.13)<sup>178</sup> In this

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<sup>175</sup> Running/cursive script, ink on paper, 28.4 x 395 cm, ca. 1091, National Palace Museum, Taipei.

<sup>176</sup> Xijian died in the year 1306 offering the *terminus ante quem* for the letter.

<sup>177</sup> “calligraphic sketch,” *shitagaki* 下書, is a draft for letters before they are copied in the final iteration.

<sup>178</sup> Kinugawa and Takatsu, *Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū*, no.7, pp. 48-51. Ruiyan

text, Yishan writes about an enigmatic anecdote concerning a venerated Chan master active in eighth century China:

Chan Master Ruiyan Kongzhao often calls himself the Old Host and he responds to himself: Yes sir! Wake up! Do not be deceived by others in the future! Yes sir! Yes sir! My verses [inspired by him] goes:

Calling oneself and answering oneself has its reasons,  
[But] gives cause to unsuppressed snickers from onlookers.  
They all say that Zhuangzi dreamed of the butterfly,  
Who would've known that it was the butterfly who dreamed of Zhuangzi.

The second year of the Kagen reign [1304), Engakuji Issan brushed [this.]<sup>179</sup>

瑞巖空照禪師常自喚主人翁，自應云：諾！惺惺著！諾！他日莫受人謾！諾！諾！  
頌曰：自呼自諾有來由，引得旁觀喋不休。盡謂莊周夢蝴蝶，誰知蝴蝶夢莊周。甲  
辰鹿峯一山書

As in the *Dharma Words* of 1301, the characters of this work are evenly spaced, only two joined by a ligature.

Although Yishan had developed a distinctive personal style, his study of Wang Xizhi remains detectable in *Verses on the Teachings. On the Seventeenth Day (Shiqi tie 十七帖)* (fig. 3.14) was one of the most admired examples of Wang's writing, preserved in many rubbings and widely studied. In Wang's letter and in Yishan's calligraphy, the columns are evenly and amply

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Kongzhao (J: Zuigan Kūsho, dates unknown), was dharma heir of Yantou Quanhuo 巖頭全叢 (826-885). He was affiliated with the temple on Ruiyan Mt. in Taizhou in present day Zhejiang province. When examining the piece in person, the author noticed that the condition of the paper is uneven, and upon close examination it is clear that the work has suffered paper loss in various locations, mostly prominently in-between the three rows in the middle; there are heavy retouching to the characters; the paper reveals signs of repair. The author was able to confirm what Itō Takuji suspected to be a column of characters that was erased; Itō located the text in Issan's *goroku* with the title missing; the faint ink shadows to the right of the current first column fit with the characters that are missing. See Itō, "Nei Issan Bokuseki," pp. 13-15.

<sup>179</sup> This translation is based on the modern Japanese translation by Kenji and Takatsu, "Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū," pp. 48-51.

arranged; the brushstrokes are pliant and brisk, with almost no ligatures between the characters, which are slightly elongated, directing the eye down the flow of the writing. The spatial arrangement of Yishan's 1304 calligraphy is also reminiscent of another work by Wang Xizhi, the *Thinking of You* (*Sixiang tie* 思想貼) (fig. 3.15). The characters are loosely aligned vertically and horizontally, though in spite of this freedom of composition there are few ligatures between the characters. The continuity of the fluid brush movement from one character to the next is effectively conveyed, however, by the manner in which the final strokes of characters create visual momentum that directs the eye to the first stroke of the characters that follow.

### **3.4 The Wang Xizhi Tradition in Japan and *karayō* 唐様**

Yishan's style during his early years in Japan was singular among his fellow émigré Chan monk-calligraphers. Like his contemporaries back on the mainland associated with the *fugu* movement in calligraphy, but apparently independently of them, Yishan devoted himself to the classical tradition of Six Dynasties masters, above all Wang Xizhi, rather than to the more recent trends of Song dynasty calligraphy. Yishan's writing based on the Wang tradition would have been known to contemporary viewers in Japan not only through his formal works mounted as scrolls but also through his writing in "brush talk" (*hitsudan* 筆談) sessions with laymen and devotees who did not speak but could read Chinese.

Admiration for the calligraphy of Wang Xizhi and that of his son Wang Xianzhi was not new in Japan. Wang Xizhi was one of the first Chinese artists named in the literary records of Japan. Early awareness of the great Chinese calligrapher is evident from the appearance of his name in the oldest extant poetry anthology in Japan, the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集, compiled in the

eighth century.<sup>180</sup>

As early as the seventh century, Japanese monks traveling on imperial embassies to Tang China (*kentōshi* 遣唐使)<sup>181</sup> and Buddhist laymen accompanying them brought back specimens of writing by the two Wangs in the form of traced copies produced at the Tang court at the command of Emperor Taizong, whose efforts elevated Wang Xizhi to the status of "Sage of Calligraphy."<sup>182</sup>

The prestige that Wang's calligraphy enjoyed in China ensured his lofty status in Japan. The inventory of the Shōsōin 正倉院 treasury, where copies of works by Wang Xizhi were preserved no later than the eighth century, reflects the Japanese court's effort to assemble an art collection like that of the Tang emperors. The imperial collection privileged calligraphy, which

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<sup>180</sup> Seven poems contain "Xizhi"; four poems contain "Da Wang," referring to Wang Xizhi. Chen Hua 陳華, "Zhongguo fashu dui riben shufa de yingxiang" 中國法書對日本書法的影響 [The influence of Chinese calligraphy model books on Japanese calligraphy], *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲 no. 288 (2005): 82.

<sup>181</sup> Imperial embassy to Tang China was a diplomatic trip sponsored by the Japanese imperial court; it took place between 630 and 894; there were twenty trips planned, and in reality, sixteen made it to Tang China. The embassy was abolished as Tang China's prosperity declined following the An Lushan rebellion (755-763). 国史大辞典, Japan Knowledge, <https://japanknowledge-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/display/?lid=30010zz167180>, accessed March 8, 2021.

<sup>182</sup> When Jianzhen arrived in Japan and went to the imperial palace, he had with him one model book of running-script calligraphy by Wang Xizhi and three of calligraphy by Wang Xianzhi. *Catalogue of State Treasures (Kokka chinpō chō* 国家珍宝帳), recorded in an inventory of the collection of objects that Empress Dowager Kōmyō bequeathed to Tōdaiji to commemorate the 49th day anniversary of the death of Emperor Shōmu in 756. The inventory includes twenty volumes of copies of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi. *Catalogue of Folding Screens and Patterned Rugs (Byōbu kasen tō chō)* states that folding screens bearing calligraphy by the hand of Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641) and Wang Xizhi were added to the collection of Shōsōin. Itakura Masaaki 板倉聖哲, "The Imperial Treasures of the Shōsōin and the Collection of the Tang Emperors," in Tomizawa-Kay Eriko and Watanabe Toshio ed., *East Asian Art History in a Transnational Context* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 32-38.

achieved prestige as a fine art much earlier than painting. As Itakura Masaaki puts it, “it would not be an exaggeration to say that Wang Xizhi is the artist who initiated Japanese appreciation for Chinese painting and calligraphy.”<sup>183</sup>

In the practice of calligraphy, responses to the works of Wang Xizhi available in Japan unfolded in two phases, the first marked by direct emulation as in the works by the “Three Brushes” (*sanpitsu* 三筆)<sup>184</sup> of early Heian period, and the second marked by the emergence of “[Japanese style] Chinese calligraphy” (*karayō* 唐様) at the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The famous monk Kūkai 空海 (774-835) learned how to write calligraphy during his sojourn in Tang China and brought back copies of calligraphy by the two Wangs, which he presented to Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇 (786-842, r. 809-823), who later also became known for his calligraphy.

Kūkai's *Annotation of Kongōhannya-kyō sutra* 金剛般若經開題 (fig. 3.16) is representative of the phase of direct emulation of Wang Xizhi (fig. 3.17 and fig. 3.18) in Japanese calligraphy. The monk's indebtedness to Wang Xizhi's cursive calligraphy is clear, most notably in the way the characters seem to tilt backward, a result of skillful changes in the direction of the brush and the angle at which it moves on the surface of the paper. The variation in thickness and thinness of the characters is spontaneous; the transition within the characters is

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<sup>183</sup> Itakura Masaaki, “The Imperial Treasures of the Shōsōin and the Collection of the Tang Emperors,” p. 38. See also, Itakura Masaaki, “Higashi Ajia ni okeru rantei kyokusui en zuzō no tenkai” 東アジアにおける蘭亭曲水宴図像の展開 [The development of the iconography of Orchid Pavilion Gathering in East Asia], *Bijutsushi ronsō*, vol 29 (2013): 1-25.

<sup>184</sup> Besides the Buddhist Kūkai, who will be introduced below, the “three brushes” include Emperor Saga and the aristocrat Tachibana no Hayanar. They were first identified as such in *Wakan Meisū* 和漢名数, published in mid Edo period by Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714). Japan Knowledge.

smooth; the forms are rounded and elegant.

Compared to those of Wang Xizhi however, Kūkai’s characters appear to be flatter, as there is less overlapping of brushstrokes, a result of greater abbreviation in the orthography; Wang Xizhi on the other hand (fig. 3.17), especially in the first five characters of the fourth column on the right, was more comfortable with writing overlapping brushstrokes that contribute to an illusion of spatial depth. Kūkai wrote with less pressure on the brush in the beginnings and endings of the characters and with more centered tip brush movement (*zhongfeng* 中鋒), whereas Wang Xizhi often wrote with a tilted brush movement producing thicker, more angular forms (for example the “頓”, “亂” and “極” characters in the first column, fig. 3.17).

After the abolition of the imperial embassies to Tang China in 894, Japan entered a phase of relative cultural insularity, during which time an indigenous taste in the arts flourished; hence the culture of this period is often referred to as the “indigenous Yamato culture” (*kokufū bunka* 国風文化).<sup>185</sup> It is in this context that calligraphers known as the “Three Traces” (*sanseki* 三蹟)—Ono no Michikaze 小野道風 (894-966), Fujiwara no Sukemasa 藤原佐理 (944-998), and Fujiwara no Yukinari 藤原行成 (972-1027)—began the digestion of the imported continental calligraphy and eventually produced what became the classical form of “[Japanese style] Chinese calligraphy” (*karayō* 唐様).

Ono no Michikaze was already famous as a calligrapher during his lifetime. In a record dated to 959, he was hailed as a “reincarnation of Wang Xizhi.”<sup>186</sup> His calligraphy—clearly

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<sup>185</sup> This period reached its zenith from the end of the 10th century to the early 11th century, witnessing the appearance of *Tale of Genji*, *The Pillow Book*, *Shinden-zukuri* in architecture and the kana system. Entry on “Kokufun bunka” in *Koshiku daijiten*, Japan Knowledge.

<sup>186</sup> Emi Chizuko 恵美千鶴子, “Sanseki—Ono ’Tōfū’ to wayō no seiritsu” 三蹟—小野 「

based on that of Wang—began to manifest certain traits that would eventually come to characterize the *karayō* calligraphy that Fujiwara no SukeSugumasa brought to maturity about one century later. A fragment of Chinese Poetry (*tōshi dankan* 唐詩断簡), known as the “kinuji gire” 絹地切,” so named because it is on silk, is a representative work of *karayō* calligraphy by Ono no Michikaze (fig. 3.19). A comparison with Kūkai’s calligraphy reveals subtle but important differences between the two.

The effect of variation in Kūkai’s work derives from change in the thickness and thinness of brushstrokes within individual characters; as previously explained, the obliqueness in the form of individual characters produces a foreshortening effect, which makes the character appear to be positioned at an angle to the surface. By contrast, in Michikaze’s calligraphy, there is little variation in the width of strokes within characters; the variations occur, instead, from character to character. There is much less abbreviation in the orthography, although the brushstrokes do not overlap as seen in Wang Xizhi’s *Sang luan tie* (fig. 3.17). There is no break between the strokes. The characters seem to be floating on top of the silk surface, creating an illusion of spatial depth—an effect commonly observable in Japanese style Chinese calligraphy as well as *kana* calligraphy.

### 3.5 The Emperor’s Autographic Style: *shinkan’yō* 宸翰様

By the Kamakura period, the process of ‘Japanization’ of calligraphy of Chinese characters (*karayō* 唐様) was complete. Since this process took place in and around the capital city among aristocrats who had access to calligraphy of Wang Xizhi as well as that of Wang Xianzhi, it is

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唐風」と和様の成立 [The Three Traces—Ono no Michikaze’s ‘Chinese aura’ and the establishment of Japanese style Chinese calligraphy], in *Gan Shinkei—Ōgishi wo koeta meihitsu* 顔真卿—王羲之を超えた名筆, (Tokyo: Tokyo kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 2019), exhibition catalogue, p. 232.

natural that this *karayō* style was adopted by the Japanese emperors, whose works acquired a collective designation— “the Emperor’s Autographic Style” (*shinkan’yō* 宸翰様).<sup>187</sup>

A transcription of a Bai Juyi poem *On Reading Hanshu* (fig. 3.20) by Emperor Fushimi 伏見 (1256-1317)—an exact contemporary of Yishan Yining—is an important example of the *shinkanyō* practiced by the imperial house. Even though Emperor Fushimi was active some three centuries after Ono no Michikaze, the continuity between their styles is undeniable. Both works feature a fluid running script in which circular movements of the brush yield characters with slightly swollen shapes. Variation in ink tone appears not within the individual characters but between characters. Emperor Fushimi’s brushwork does display more flickering motions and signs of wrist movement in the nimble change of direction in some of the endings of brushstrokes, perhaps revealing a subtle influence of calligraphy from Song China.

When viewed next to each other—Emperor Fushimi’s calligraphic transcription of Bai Juyi’s poem and Yishan’s 1304 *Verses on the Teachings of the Chan Master Ruiyan Kongzhao*” (fig. 3.21)—it is clear that both derived from the Wang Xizhi tradition. As we will see in Chapter 4, however, Yishan’s classicizing style began to change after his years in Kamakura, becoming more uninhibited and cursive following his promotion to the abbacy of Nanzenji in Kyoto in 1313 at the invitation of Emperor Go-Uda 後宇多天皇(1267-1324, r. 1274-1287). Knowledge of the dynamic between the cities of Kamakura and Kyoto discussed in the next chapter will be a

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<sup>187</sup> The *shinkanyō* is mostly associated with the calligraphic style of the Jimyōin lineage of the imperial house in the Nanbokuchō period when there were two courts in Japan. Mirroring their political rivalry and opposition, the Jimyōin and the Daikakuin lineages practiced different calligraphic styles. Overall, the *shinkanyō* style remained faithful to the Japanized Wang Xizhi tradition inherited from the “Three Brushes” of the Heian period. Nagoya Akira comments that the *shinkanyō* remained essentially imperturbable to external stimulations. See Nagoya Akira 名兒耶明, *Nihon shodōshi* 日本書道史, (Tokyo: Geijutsu shinbunsha, 2014), p. 92.



necessary for comprehending the change in Yishan's calligraphic style.

## Chapter 4: Yishan's Two Cursive Styles in his Kyoto Years (1313-1317)

More extant works date to the final four years of Yishan's life, when he was abbot of Nanzenji in Kyoto, than to the preceding fourteen years he spent in Kamakura.<sup>188</sup> The most masterful of these calligraphic works feature two stylistic variants of cursive script—one that derives from the wild cursive tradition begun by the Tang calligraphers Zhang Xu 張旭 (ca. 675-759) and Huaisu 懷素 (fl. ca. 730s-770s), and one highly idiosyncratic and abbreviated cursive style that Yishan Yining developed towards the end of his life. Yishan was the only Chan calligrapher in his time who wrote in cursive script.

### 4.1 The Cursive Tradition in China

Cursive is the most abbreviated of all script types in Chinese calligraphy. It affords the calligrapher remarkable artistic freedom, because it relaxes the orthographic rules required by the seal, clerical and standard scripts. As an expedient shorthand, cursive script had been widely adopted in epistolary writing in China since the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

With cursive script, the calligrapher is encouraged to improvise and to take liberty with the shapes of characters. During its evolution, cursive calligraphy took three forms: draft cursive (*zhangcao* 章草), the earliest form of cursive that derived from clerical script during the Han dynasty (202-220 BC); modern cursive (*jincao* 今草), developed by the second century AD, reaching its finest expression in Wang Xizhi's calligraphy in the fourth century; and finally, wild

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<sup>188</sup> Fifteen extant works of calligraphy (excluding painting inscriptions) by Yishan Yining date to Period III (Kyoto, 1313-1317). See Appendix A.

cursive (*kuangcao* 狂草), developed during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762, r. 713-756). It was Wang Xizhi, the “Sage of Calligraphy,” who elevated cursive script into an ideal form of art that could reflect the calligrapher’s self-cultivation and temperament. From draft cursive to wild cursive, the execution of the brushstrokes became speedier. Therefore, wild cursive is perceived to be the most personal and uninhibited mode of calligraphic self-expression, seismographically registering the emotional state of the calligrapher during the creation process.<sup>189</sup>

By the Tang dynasty, modern cursive derived from Wang Xizhi was the dominant mode of cursive calligraphy, featuring abbreviated orthography with few ligatures between characters. The preservation of this mode of writing was attributable to Wang Xizhi’s descendant, the monk Zhiyong 智永 (fl. 6<sup>th</sup> century), who made eight hundred copies of the *Thousand Character Essay* in the style of Wang Xizhi and distributed them among monasteries in the Jiangnan region (fig. 4.1).<sup>190</sup> Modern cursive was continued by Tang calligraphers such as Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (646-691) (fig. 4.2) and He Zhizhang 賀知章 (659-744).<sup>191</sup>

The Kaiyuan 開元 (713-741) and Tianbao 天寶 (742-756) eras witnessed the appearance of two calligraphers who captured the imagination of the court and capital city of Chang’an with

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<sup>189</sup> For an overview of the development of the cursive script and its representative practitioners through the Qing dynasty, see Fu Shen, *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy* (New Haven: Yale University, 1977), pp. 81-123.

<sup>190</sup> For a detailed study of the *Thousand Character Essay* and comparison of different versions as well as their records, see Chen Zhisheng 陳志聲, “Zhiyong zhencao qianziwen xikao” 智永真草千字文析考 [A study of the thousand character essay in standard and cursive scripts by Zhiyong], *Zhonghua shudao* 中華書道, no. 93 (2017/03): 39-58. The extant version on paper in the Ogawa collection in Japan seems to be a Tang Dynasty copy.

<sup>191</sup> Sun Guoting’s *Shupu* in National Palace Museum, Taipei; He Zhizhang’s *Xiaojing*, 26.0 x 265.1 cm, is in the Museum of the Imperial Collections.

their dazzling performances of wild cursive calligraphies: Zhang Xu and Huaisu (figs. 4.3 and 4.4).<sup>192</sup> Wang Xianzhi's calligraphy (fig. 4.5) was considered the prototype and inspiration for this script style.<sup>193</sup> By the Song Dynasty, draft cursive had largely fallen out of fashion<sup>194</sup> and its revival awaited the *fugu* movement led by Yishan's contemporaries Zhao Mengfu and Deng Wenyuan 鄧文原 (1258-1328).<sup>195</sup>

## 4.2 Yishan and Wild Cursive

The calligraphic style that Yishan practiced during his years in Kyoto (1313-1317) is epitomized by *Xin yue fu* (J: *shingafu*, 新樂府) (fig. 4.6), dated 1316.<sup>196</sup> It features a handsome wild cursive

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<sup>192</sup> Nakata Yūjirō, "Calligraphic Style and Poetry Handscrolls: On Mi Fu's *Sailing on the Wu River*," in Alfred Murck and Wen C. Fong, ed., *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, painting, and Calligraphy* (New York and Princeton: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 104.

<sup>193</sup> Fu Shen, *Traces of the Brush*, p. 81.

<sup>194</sup> Mi Fu was a rare exception. Gao Mingyi 高明一, "Qufa gaogu: Mi Fu dui zhangcao de xuexi yu lijie" 取法高古：米芾對章草的學習與理解 [Learning from the high antiquity: Mi Fu's study and understanding of the draft cursive script in Northern Song], *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊 no. 416(2017): 47-55.

<sup>195</sup> Deng Wenyuan's "Jijiu zhang" 急就章, dated 1299, ink on paper, handscroll, 23.3 x 368.7cm in the Palace Museum, Beijing, is a representative work of the draft cursive revived in the Yuan dynasty. There are three "Jijiu zhang" attributed to Zhao Mengfu, in the Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shanghai Museum, and Palace Museum Beijing.

<sup>196</sup> This segment contains the latter part of the poem "Er wang hou" 二王後 by Bai Juyi; the poem concerns the infamous An Lushan rebellion that profoundly changed the political, economic and cultural landscape of Tang dynasty China. It is interesting that Yishan would brush this poem given that the memory of the two attempted invasions by the Mongols were still very much fresh in the memory of the court and the *bakufu*. This work is currently mounted as a hanging scroll; however, given that the scroll only contains the ending part of a Bai Juyi poem, it is highly plausible that this current work was a segment from a much longer handscroll. The work is elaborately signed and dated: "The fifth year of Shōwa [1316], two days before the eighth day of the twelfth month, brushed by the retired, and idle aged monk Yishan Yining of Nanzen" ("正和丙辰歲臘月八日前二日、南禪退閑老僧一山野衲一寧書), suggesting that this scroll was meant to be presented to an audience towards whom Yishan held great deference.

calligraphy that came directly out of the tradition of Zhang Xu and Huaisu. Like Huaisu's *Autobiography* (fig. 4.4), Yishan's *Xin yue fu* features fluid, continuous brushstrokes showing that the brush was rarely lifted off the surface of the paper; the characters are rounded in form, a result of the circular motion in the calligrapher's arm that requires great control from the shoulder. Yishan's characters are slightly taller than those of Huaisu and less circular. Compare for example the characters "guo" 國 (third character of second column in Yishan, and first character of the last column in Huaisu) (fig. 4.7). Yishan also slightly tilts the form towards the upper right corner, introducing a subtle element of instability that contributes to the visual dynamism.

Yishan's use of decorated paper is unusual. The paper was treated with wax, which explains the diffuse quality of the ink tone; there are also clusters of silver and gold dust on the upper right and lower left corners of the paper,<sup>197</sup> creating a diagonal space in which the calligraphy was placed. This type of paper decorated with gold and silver dust was produced in Japan from the mid-twelfth century onward.<sup>198</sup> It is extremely rare to see Chan/Zen calligraphy

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Another segment that might have originally belonged to this long handscroll is the "Fa qu" 法曲 segment, now also mounted as hanging scroll; ink on waxed and decorated paper, 36.8 x 56.9 cm, private collection, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The decorative pattern of both fragments is similar. As the "Fa qu" segment contains the title "Er wang hou", we can surmise that the part in the original handscroll that would have preceded the current segment in question, must have been cut into yet another hanging scroll. However, given the slightly different calligraphic styles in these two segments, it is possible that there was more than one set of the handscroll of Bai Juyi poetry that Yishan transcribed.

<sup>197</sup> The decorative pattern is similar to *kasumi*霞, a pictorial device that makes use of gold and silver dust as well as pigment to delineate cloud. The *Heikei nōkyō* 平家納経 in Itsukushima Shrine dated to 1167 is one of the earliest extant works that features this type of pictorial decoration. This device is often used to suggest spatial transition and illusionistic depth in yamato-e. Entry on "kasumi," in *Kokushi Daijiten*, <https://japanknowledge-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/display/?lid=30010zz101150>, accessed March 23, 2021.

<sup>198</sup> For overviews of decorated paper used in Chinese and Japanese calligraphy, see

done on such sumptuously decorated paper usually associated with the aesthetic taste of the imperial court.<sup>199</sup> Like the Japanese style Chinese calligraphy (*karayō*) discussed in Chapter 3, the calligraphy seems to be floating in the illusionistic space between the surface and the background defined by the two clusters of gold and silver dusts.

Yishan's choice of a Bai Juyi poem as the text for his calligraphy is significant: Bai had been by far the most popular Chinese poet at the Kyoto court ever since his literary anthology had become available in Japan during the Heian period.<sup>200</sup> In addition to the choice of text, the use of sumptuously decorated paper—a material also associated with courtly taste—suggests that the patron of this work was likely someone at the imperial court.

The original scroll was most probably used as a “hand model copy [of poetry]” (*chōdo*

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Tomita Jun 富田淳, “Chūgoku shohō shi ni okeru sōshoku kakō shi ni tsuite” 中国書法史における装飾加工紙について [On the decorated paper in the history of Chinese calligraphy], Shimatani Hiroyuki 島谷弘幸 ed., *Ryōshi to sho: Higashi ajia shodōshi no sekai* 料紙と書：東アジア書道史の世界 (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppansha, 2014), pp. 259-268; Takahashi Yūji 高橋祐次, “Nihon no ryōshi sōshoku no gihō ni okeru juyō to hatten ni tsuite” 日本の料紙装飾の技法における受容と発展について [On the reception and development of technique of decorated paper in Japan], *ibid.*, pp. 269-258.

<sup>199</sup> Another rare example of extant Zen calligraphy written on Japanese decorated paper is a Buddhist verse piece by Nanpo Shōmyō 南浦昭明 (1235-1308) dated to 1307 in the Gotoh Art Museum collection, reproduced in color in *Kamakura: Zen no Genryū* 鎌倉：禅の源流, exhibition catalogue, (Tokyo: Tokyo kokuritsu hakubutsukan, 1993), no. 31. For the most part, this type of decorated paper is used in *kana* calligraphy. For an overview of decorated paper used in *kana* calligraphy during the Heian period, see Nakata Yūjirō 中田勇次郎, *The Art of Japanese Calligraphy* (New York: Weatherhill, 1973), pp. 138-141; Takahashi Yūji, “Nihon no ryōshi sōshoku no gihō ni okeru juyō to hatten ni tsuite”, pp. 269-258.

<sup>200</sup> The oldest extant complete Bai Juyi “Xin yue fu” in Japan dates to 1107. Nakata Yūjirō, *Nihon shodō no keifu* 日本書道の系譜 [The lineage of Japanese calligraphy] (Tokyo: Mokujiisha, 1970), p. 113-114. *Tale of Genji*, which was completed around the turn of the 12th century, makes frequent allusions to Bai Juyi's poetry, especially *Everlasting Sorrow* (*Changhen ge* 長恨歌).

*tehon* 調度手本) by members of the imperial court in their practice of calligraphy. *Chōdo tehon* served an important role in the calligraphic education of court aristocrats, a practice that went back to at least the Heian period. These model books were often sponsored by aristocrats who commissioned capable calligraphers to grace luxuriously decorated paper with beautiful writings, which then served as models for calligraphic exercises. These model books were often exchanged as gifts at court. What was *not* part of this artistic tradition at the court around this time was the wild cursive script in which Yishan transcribed the poem.

### 4.3 Cursive Calligraphy in Japan

In order to understand the novelty of the wild cursive style in Yishan's 1316 calligraphy, it is necessary to take a look at the reception and practice of cursive calligraphy in Japan. The prevalence of the Wang Xizhi style in Heian period Japan has received much scholarly attention, but little has been written about wild cursive calligraphy popular when the Japanese embassies visited Tang Chang'an in the eighth century.

Although there was no record of Huaisu's calligraphy reaching Japan during the Nara period, there is evidence that his wild cursive style was inspiring Japanese imitators by the 9th century. Extant works by Kūkai who went to Tang China when wild cursive was becoming popular in Chang'an, show that he was exposed to both the modern cursive style associated with Wang Xizhi (fig. 4.8) and the wild cursive style of Huaisu (fig. 4.9).<sup>201</sup> In a work attributed to Emperor Daigo 醍醐 (885-930, r. 897-930), the wild cursive writing of Zhang Xu and Huaisu (fig. 4.10) attains a new level of calligraphic freedom, notable in the extravagantly florid

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<sup>201</sup> Kūkai mentioned that he studied "crazy grass writing." Nakata Yūjirō, *The Art of Japanese Calligraphy* (New York: Weatherhill, 1973), p. 107.

ligatures. It is interesting that it was Emperor Fushimi 伏見天皇(1265-1317, r. 1287-1298) who attributed this work to Emperor Daigo, which suggests that Fushimi, an exact contemporary of Yishan, was aware of Huaisu's style.<sup>202</sup> Fushimi's interest in Huaisu might have been one of the reasons why the Chinese monk adopted it.

The history of the reception of Chinese cursive calligraphy in Japan is intertwined with the reception of Bai Juyi's poetry at the Heian court. After *Anthology of Bai Juyi* (*Baishi wenji* 白氏文集) was brought to Japan in the 9th century,<sup>203</sup> the texts of his poems were transcribed often by aristocratic calligraphers at the Heian court, most notably in calligraphy by the "Three Traces"—Ono no Michikaze (894-966), Fujiwara no Sukemasa (944-998), and Fujiwara no Yukinari (972-1027) — introduced in the previous chapter.

The popularity of Bai Juyi's poetry for calligraphic transcriptions developed in tandem with frequent references and allusions to Bai Juyi poetry in contemporary literary works such as the *Tale of Genji*; Bai's poetry of the *Xin yue fu* sub-genre was also a favorite with calligraphers writing in cursive script.<sup>204</sup> Their experiments gave impetus to the development of *kana*

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<sup>202</sup> Haruna Yoshishige 春名好重, "Heian zenki" 平安前期 [Early Heian period], in Nakata Yūjirō 中田勇次郎 ed., *Nihon shodōshi* 日本書道史, (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1982), p. 53.

<sup>203</sup> The earliest credible textual record shows that *Bai Juyi Anthology* was brought to Japan in the year 838. Lin Wenyue 林文月 "Tangdai wenhua dui Riben ping'an wentan zhi yingxiang--cong Riben qiantangshi dao Baishi wenji zhi dong chuan" 唐代文化對日本平安文壇之影響—從日本遣唐使時代到白氏文集之東傳 [The influence of Tang culture on literature of Heian period—from the embassy to Tang to the introduction of the Bai Juyi Anthology], *Bulletin of the College of Arts*, National Taiwan University, no. 21 (1972): 115-202; esp. pp. 171-174.

<sup>204</sup> For an overview of the relationship between calligraphic transcription of Bai Juyi poetry and the popularity of *Bai Juyi Anthology* during the Heian period, see Nakata Yūjirō, *Nihon shodō no keifu* (Tokyo: Mokujisha, 1970), 112-119.



calligraphy, a form of Japanese writing deeply influenced by Chinese cursive script calligraphy that would come to epitomize the aesthetic sensibilities of the court in the Heian period.<sup>205</sup>

Ono no Michikaze, as discussed in Chapter 3, was credited with adapting the tradition of the two Wangs to a nascent Japanese sensibility in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, leading to the birth of *karayō* calligraphy; however, the influence of Huaisu's wild cursive style in his work seems to have been overlooked.<sup>206</sup>

A handscroll by Ono no Michikaze displays poems by Bai Juyi transcribed in three calligraphic scripts: standard, running, and cursive (fig. 4.11). The cursive segment of the transcription closely resembles Zhang Xu's *Stomach Ache* (*Dutong tie* 肚痛貼) (fig. 4.3). In both works ligatures link one character to the next without the brush lifting off the surface of the paper; the characters differ considerably in size, and the width of the brushstrokes varies greatly. These features, combined with a disregard of horizontal alignment in the composition, animate both works. Only Michikaze's adherence to a slightly more regular vertical spacing of columns of characters makes his composition more stable.<sup>207</sup>

There is further evidence that Huaisu served as an important source of inspiration for Michikaze. Michikaze's *Gyoku sen jō* 玉泉帖 (fig. 4.12) bears a striking semblance to *Eating*

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<sup>205</sup> On the increasingly importance of the cursive script over other script types in the Japanese context and its importance to kana calligraphy, see Nakata Yūjirō, *The Art of Japanese Calligraphy* (New York: Weatherhill, 1973), pp. 143-144.

<sup>206</sup> So far, the author has not been able to locate any primary sources testifying to the introduction in Japan of the wild cursive—the most contemporary continental calligraphic style—during the Heian period.

<sup>207</sup> These faint vertical lines give the name of this type of paper of “paper with vertical lines” (*jūrenshi* 縦簾紙); this paper is used in Empress Kōmyō's *Lin yue yi lun* 臨樂毅論 and Wang Xizhi's *Sang luan tie* 喪亂帖.

*Fish* (*Shi yu tie* 食魚帖) by Huaisu, discovered in the Municipal Museum of Qingdao in 1979 (fig. 4.13).<sup>208</sup>

A fragment of a transcription of Bai Juyi's poetry (fig. 4.14) attributed to Fujiwara no Sukemasa—Ono no Michikaze's younger contemporary—seems to have been based closely on another work by Huaisu, the *Bitter Bamboo Shoot Note* (*kusun tie* 苦筍貼) in the Shanghai Museum (fig. 4.15). Both are ink on silk. The spacing of the characters, the speediness of the execution, the strokes moving at a diagonal to one another, threatening to break off from the character and yet being held together by a centripetal force—all of these characteristics testify to the Japanese calligrapher's acute awareness of the precedent of the Tang Dynasty calligrapher's wild cursive style.

Despite the presence of the wild cursive style in early Heian calligraphers' practice, it eventually gave way to the more moderate and more legible Japanese style Chinese calligraphy, which was essentially a variant of running script. Even Kūkai, who had learned to write wild cursive while he was in China, followed the modern cursive manner of Wang Xizhi, Zhiyong and Sun Guoting in the majority of his extant works, featuring minimal ligatures between the characters and short, plump brushstrokes.

However, the energy of wild cursive calligraphy from Tang China exemplified by Huaisu's *Eating Fish* (fig. 4.10), did find an afterlife in the *kana* calligraphy that matured in the elegant world of Heian court during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Already in Fujiwara Sukemasa's

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<sup>208</sup> The copy is believed to date to pre-Northern Song due to the coarse hemp fiber paper used; *Shi yu tie* is seen to be reflective of Huaisu's calligraphic style besides the *Autobiography*. Xu Bangda 徐邦達, "Gu mo Huaisu shi yu tie de faxian" 古墓懷素《食魚帖》的發現 [The discovery of an ancient copy of Huaisu's *Eating Fish*], *Wenwu*, issue 2 (1979): 11-14. The article also includes a black and white reproduction of the work. Adele Schlombs, *Huaisu and the Beginning of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy*, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), pp. 118-122.

Letter known as *Onmei Jō* 恩命帖 (fig. 4.16)—a text that features a type of *kanbun*<sup>209</sup>—there appear traits that prefigured *kana* calligraphy.<sup>210</sup> For example, ligatures are almost ubiquitous throughout the composition, giving rise to the term “connected style” (*renmentai* 連綿体) that became a hallmark of *kana* calligraphy. Perhaps the most important legacy of Huaisu’s wild cursive style for *kana* calligraphy was his departure from the restraints of the imaginary (or sometimes drawn) grid within which standard and running scripts are written. Disregard for this grid opened rich possibilities in the spacing of characters and the overall composition of the calligraphy. Freed from the grid, the characters may be written in slanting lines rather than the normal vertical ones; or one line may partially overlap with a previous line; or the lines may be stacked so that they do not align.<sup>211</sup>

#### 4.4 The Novelty of Yishan’s *Xin yue fu* of 1316

When Yishan transcribed Bai Juyi’s poetry in the wild cursive style of Huaisu, three centuries had passed since this style was last practiced at the Heian court. A comparison of his calligraphy with a classic Heian period example of a Bai Juyi transcription—Fujiwara no Nariyuki’s 1018 *Poetic Anthology of Bai Juyi* (fig. 4.17)—reveals the novelty of Yishan’s *Xin yue fu* of 1316.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Much thanks to Professor David Lurie’s comments that the text was a type of *kanbun*, and not *kana*.

<sup>210</sup> For a great overview of the defining traits of *kana* calligraphy, see Nakata Yūjirō, *The Art of Japanese Calligraphy*, pp. 126-138.

<sup>211</sup> Nakata Yūjirō, *The Art of Japanese Calligraphy*, p. 128.

<sup>212</sup> Currently in the collection of Tokyo National Museum, the poetry scroll was authenticated to be by one of the Three Traces of Heian (*heian sanseki*), Fujiwara Yukinari, by Fujiwara Sadanobu (1088-1156), patriarch of the Sessonji School of calligraphy, fairly soon after Yukinari’s own life time (972-1027). The authentication is appended at the end of the scroll and dated to the year 1140. The source of the text inscribed in this work has been traced to be an older anthology of Bai Juyi currently in the Kanazawa Bunko, as the nine poems correspond perfectly to one particular chapter within the anthology. Tamura Etsuko 田村悦子, explanatory essay in

Both works are hybrids of Chinese and Japanese elements: Nariyuki's work is that of a Japanese calligrapher writing Chinese poetry on dyed paper imported from China; Yishan's work is that of a Chinese calligrapher writing Chinese poetry on decorated paper made for the Japanese court. However, the paper, the script type, and the size of the characters differ greatly in the two works. As noted above, the paper used in Yishan's 1316 transcription was made in Japan and the aesthetic sensibilities are decidedly Japanese; the paper used in Yukinari's 1018 work consists of nine sheets dyed in light brown, purple and pink--a type of paper imported to Japan from continental China during the Tang dynasty.<sup>213</sup>

Yukinari's handscroll, written in controlled, rounded brushstrokes, displays mature, highly legible *karayō* calligraphy characteristic of the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Yishan's scroll by contrast features barely legible wild cursive script written in erratic strokes derived from Huaisu and other Tang masters. Yishan's characters are also significantly larger than that of Yukinari's.<sup>214</sup> By the time Yishan wrote his Bai Juyi poetry scroll in 1316, the court was most familiar with the orthodox calligraphic style exemplified by Yukinari's 1018 scroll, a style that was most often seen in the transcription of Bai Juyi poetry.<sup>215</sup> The novelty of Yishan's writing

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*Fujiwara Kōzei Hakushiken/Honnōji gire* 藤原行成白詩卷/本能寺切(Tokyo: Nigensha, 1977), p. 44-45. This particular anthology of Bai Juyi poetry is currently in the collection of Dai Tōkyū Kinen Bunko.

<sup>213</sup> Zhang Xu's *Cursive Calligraphy of Four Ancient Poems* (*gushisishou* 古詩四首), handscroll, ink on paper, 29.5 x 195.2 cm, in the Liaoning Provincial Museum, features a similar type of dyed paper. This polychrome paper seems to have been produced first during Eastern Jin (317-420) in present-day Sichuan region. Tomita Jun, "Chūgoku shohō shi ni okeru sōshoku kakō shi ni tsuite," p. 261; Takahashi Yūji, "Nihon no ryōshi sōshoku no gihō ni okeru juyō to hatten ni tsuite," p. 273.

<sup>214</sup> Yishan's inscription of Bai Juyi's poetry (the fragment of "Taizong") measures at 34.3cm, about 10 cm taller than that by Yukinari. Each column in Yishan's work also consists of about half of the number of characters in Yukinari's scroll.

<sup>215</sup> The scroll was in the collection of Emperor Fushimi (1265-1317), an exact

almost surely surprised and perhaps shocked contemporary viewers.

Yishan's viewers may have been aware that in China transcriptions of poetry on handscrolls in large characters had become popular in the Tang dynasty, representing a new development in the history of Chinese calligraphy. Prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the texts of most works that came to be seen as masterpieces of calligraphy were personal letters, Buddhist sutras, or highly formal texts carved on stelae. The appearance of transcriptions of poetry in large characters perhaps was linked to the popularity of poetic versification enjoyed by even moderately educated people of the Tang period.<sup>216</sup> Wild cursive calligraphy, assumed to reveal the moods and personality of the writer, may also have seemed most appropriate for transcriptions of poetic sentiments.

Similarly, in Japan, transcribing poetry in Chinese—almost exclusively that of Bai Juyi—in beautiful calligraphy on sumptuously decorated paper was a common practice beginning in the early to mid-Heian period (8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries).<sup>217</sup> Examples of these transcriptions introduced in the previous section show that legibility was important, as most specimens feature standard or running script. This was perhaps due also to the difficulty of mastering Chinese cursive script. In contrast with transcriptions produced earlier in Japan, Yishan's version of *Xin yue fu* of 1316 was unusual, not only for the large size of the characters, but also for the exuberant freedom of the

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contemporary of Yishan, based on the presence of cipher( *kaō* 花押) found straddling the paper seams.

<sup>216</sup> For an overview of the development of large-character calligraphy of poetry in handscroll, see Nakata Yūjirō, "Calligraphic Style and Poetry Handscrolls: On Mi Fu's Sailing on the Wu River," in Alfreda Murck and Wen C. Fong eds., *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 91-106, esp. pp. 104-105.

<sup>217</sup> Nakata Yūjirō, *Nihon shodō no keifu* (Tokyo: Mokujisha, 1970), p. 199.

writing, which differed profoundly from the restrained and elegant Japanese-style Chinese cursive script familiar to the Japanese court.

Reviving the style of Huaisu, which had not been widely practiced since the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Yishan demonstrated both his keen awareness of the potential of poetry scrolls for calligraphic experimentation, as well as the readiness of the Kyoto aristocrats for something more exciting and less conventional in the art of calligraphy. Although Yishan's 1316 calligraphy was unusual, Japanese aristocrats might have detected in it traits that derived ultimately from the Huaisu cursive tradition which, as explained above, played a role in the development of *kana* calligraphy in the Heian period. This Huaisu-derived tradition of wild cursive script also informs *On A Snowy Night* of 1315, discussed in the Introduction (fig. 4.18). The question why, after moving to Kyoto, Yishan departed so radically from the cursive script tradition of Wang Xizhi, which he had learned in China and practiced during his time in Kamakura, remains to be answered.

#### **4.5 Poem by the Retired Emperor Go-Uda (1315) and Yishan's Changing Styles**

Yishan's abbacy at Nanzenji led to the production of two hanging scrolls, both titled *Poem by the Retired Emperor Go-Uda*. The poem was composed by Go-Uda (1267-1324, r. 1274-1287) during a visit to Nanzenji in the seventh month of 1315. The two transcriptions, produced within a month of each other, show strikingly different manners of writing cursive script.

Yishan had entered Nanzenji as its third abbot in 1313. After two years he pleaded with the court to allow him to retire owing to age and illness. His request denied, Yishan secretly fled to the Echizen region (present-day Fukui prefecture) northeast of Kyoto in 1315. The retired emperor sent letters entreating the monk to return to Kyoto, whereupon Yishan complied and resumed his abbacy of Nanzenji.<sup>218</sup> The visit from the Go-Uda took place soon after Yishan's

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<sup>218</sup> This was recounted in the *Life and Deeds of Master Yishan (Issan Kokushi Gyōjyō* —

reinstallation. During this visit Yishan presented a poem to the emperor, to which the emperor then composed a poetic response on the spot. It was this imperial poem that Yishan transcribed in a fluid wild cursive style, most likely sometime after the retired emperor's visit, in the seventh month of 1315 (fig. 4.19).

In this transcription, referred to hereafter as the “Seventh Month scroll,” Yishan’s brush moved with great speed down the vertical surface of the paper. The form of the characters is open and airy as a result of circular movements of his arm and in his shoulder. The size of the characters increases as the poem progresses, adding to the work’s visual dynamism, and the freedom of the writing is reminiscent of that seen in Zhang Xu’s *Stomach Ache* (fig. 4.3).

Another transcription of Go-Uda’s poem, differing by only one character and held in the Tokiwayama Bunko, displays a different style of cursive script developed by Yishan during his time in Kyoto. This transcription, dated to the tenth day of the eighth month of the year 1315 and hereafter referred to as the “Eighth Month scroll” (fig. 4.20), is not a copy of the earlier transcription— “the Seventh Month Scroll” (fig. 4.19). Both the overall composition and the cursive style are quite different. The paper of the “Eighth month” scroll is about one third shorter, and the characters are significantly smaller.

Characters in the “Eighth Month scroll” are more compact and the brush strokes are more densely spaced. Consider for example the characters *long shan* 龍山 that Yishan included in both signatures (fig. 4.21, L1 and L2). In the “Seventh Month Scroll,” the form of these two characters seems more open and airier, and the circular motion of the brush is more prominent. However, despite these differences, these two characters share certain idiosyncrasies commonly

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山国師行状) by Kokan Shiren, Satō Hidetaka, 2017, pp. 99-102.; the letter from the emperor is included in *Recorded Sayings of Issan* (*goroku* 語録), dated to the sixth day of the fifth month.

observable in Yishan's calligraphy from this period; these idiosyncrasies become clear when placed next to the same characters by Wang Xizhi and Huaisu (fig. 4.21, L3 and L 4). The characters in Yishan's works are taller, perhaps echoing the verticality of the hanging scroll on which they were written; in particular, the final stroke in "shan" 山 is elongated in an exaggerated manner.

The difference in style of the two scrolls written about a month apart can be explained in several ways, none of them conclusive. The more dazzling and gestural wild cursive style used in the "Seventh Month Scroll" could be attributable to the circumstances of its creation: that Yishan wrote the calligraphy on the occasion of the visit of Emperor Go-Uda. Given Yishan's reputation as a great calligrapher and his stature as abbot of Nanzenji, it was plausible that he was asked to transcribe the poem that the emperor had composed during the visit, possibly in front of the emperor himself. The performative nature of writing calligraphy in front of spectators could explain the bigger characters and the greater gestural energy seen in the "Seventh Month Scroll." As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the wild cursive script lends itself well to public performances of calligraphy and its effect on spectators could be mesmerizing.

The smaller scale and more subdued calligraphic style in the "Eight Month Scroll" of the same poem may be explained by the fact that it was addressed to a certain Dōkei "道啓" (dates unknown), a lay Buddhist in Yishan's circle, as the signature makes clear. Hence the creation of this version did not involve the performative imperative of the "Seventh Month Scroll" written on the occasion of the emperor's visit. Instead, the purpose of the "Eight Month Scroll" was to relay and explain the circumstances of the composing of the poem, which Yishan states at the beginning of the scroll: "The retired emperor [Emperor Go-Uda] his royal highness visited [Nanzenji] and asked me to stay [for an audience], when I presented a poem of mine. His royal



highness graciously composed the following poem on the spot as a response [to my poem]” (“法皇御幸相留, 依呈偈, 即席賜偈云”).

This more abbreviated cursive style is also observable in a fragment from a handscroll transcription of Bai Juyi’s *Xin yue fu* poetry by Yishan, possibly dated to 1316 (fig. 4.22). In this work we see again extremely abbreviated cursive orthography and characters more elongated than those of the earlier Huaisu-inspired cursive works; the Bai Juyi transcription also evinces a subtle stylistic affinity to *kana* calligraphy, and the decorated paper on which the poems are written reflect courtly tastes.

The four works of calligraphy discussed above were all produced in connection with the imperial court in Kyoto, reflective of Yishan Yining’s success in winning the court’s patronage for himself and the Chan/Zen Buddhist sect that he represented. Among émigré Chinese Chan monks his achievement was unprecedented and marked an important milestone for Chan/Zen Buddhism in Japan.

#### **4.6 Encouraging Words (*shindōgo* 進道語) of 1316**

The highly abbreviated personal cursive style that Yishan practiced towards the very end of his time in Kyoto finds its finest expression in *Encouraging Words* (*shindōgo* 進道語), a masterpiece in the Nezu Museum, dated 1316 (fig. 4.23). This work was Yishan’s gift to the Zen monk Kozan Ikkyō 固山一鞏 (1284-1360), a Japanese disciple who had studied under Xijian Zitan in Kamakura and later became the abbot of Tōfukuji in Kyoto. At the time Yishan sent him the scroll, Kozan was the Head Monk under Yishan in Nanzenji. In this work, Yishan acknowledges Kozan’s achievement in his training as a Zen Buddhist and encourages him to continue to apply himself with diligence.

The calligraphy is quite different from the Huaisu-derived wild cursive style of

calligraphy that Yishan employed in his *On A Snowy Night* (fig.4.18) and his “Seventh Month Scroll” transcription of *Poem by the Retired Emperor Go-Uda* (fig.4.19). Like the “Eighth Month Scroll” transcription of the imperial poem (fig. 4.20), this work represents a quirky style that Yishan practiced towards the very end of his life.

The text consists of nine columns--the first six Yishan’s message to Kozan and the final three his signature.<sup>219</sup> The writing displays extreme abbreviations in the characters and imbalances in their compositions that deviate from conventional cursive orthography. For example, in the two characters “jia zhi” 嘉之 (“to praise him [Kozan Ikkyō]”) (fig. 4.24, L1), *jia* is abbreviated to the point of illegibility; and *zhi* is written in such a way that it resembles the kana syllable *shi* し as it appears in an album leaf attributed to Fujiwara no Yukinari (fig. 4.24, L4). Moreover, the compositional relationship between the two Chinese characters resembles that between the two *kana* syllables *so shi* ぞし, especially in the way the second character *zhi* (or *shi*) emerges from the final stroke of preceding character *jia* (or *so*). In both cases, two independent characters (or syllables) cohere into a single visual unit thanks to the smooth transition between them that was made possible by the ligature.

Another idiosyncrasy of Yishan’s late style derives from the peculiar silhouettes of the characters. Each tilts slightly upward to the right and tapers off towards the bottom, creating an inverted pyramidal shape. In the two characters *ying jie* 英傑 (“outstanding [Zen masters]”) (fig. 4.25, L1) the “man” radical of *jie* is elongated downward, making the rest of the character seem to float upward to the right; this effect is balanced by the preceding character *ying*, which tilts

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<sup>219</sup> Yishan had dated this piece very precisely and included his title; in addition, the presence of the two seals shows a degree of care and thoughtfulness that is in alignment with the purpose of this work.

leftward. The upward tilt in the silhouette of the character is also observable in *kana* calligraphy by Yishan's contemporary, Emperor Fushimi, especially in the way the emperor writes the *kana* syllable *na* 𑖯𑖰 (the first syllable in fig. 4.25, L3). The evenness in the width of the brushstroke in *Encouraging Words* is also reminiscent of the wiry thinness typical of *kana* calligraphy. As if echoing the lopsidedness of individual characters, each column of Yishan's work begins lower than the one before, creating an uneven upper border slanting from upper right to lower left.<sup>220</sup>

Yishan's calligraphic transcription of Emperor Go-Uda's poem (the "Seventh month Scroll" version, 1315) and his *Encouraging Words* (1316) epitomize the two stylistic variants of cursive script that the monk developed in works of calligraphy he produced in Kyoto; in doing so, he departed drastically from the classicizing Wang Xizhi style that he practiced earlier in Kamakura discussed in Chapter 3.

#### **4.7 Wild Cursive as Performance Art**

A performative element is inherent in calligraphy. Anyone who has watched a calligrapher write understands the satisfaction of vicariously experiencing the movement and kinetic energy of the calligrapher. In pre-modern China and Japan, possessing the ability to write with brush and ink increased this pleasure of watching someone perform the act of writing, just as it does in our own time. And, as in the past, the gestures through which wild cursive calligraphy is written make the creation of a work in this script especially exciting to watch.

Buddhists had a special affinity for wild cursive calligraphy, and in what might be termed the lore of East Asian calligraphy, the quintessential wild cursive calligrapher is a Buddhist who defies monastic rules and embraces moments of creative inspiration, often in a state of inebriation. The progenitor of this image was none other than Huaisu, who portrayed himself in

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<sup>220</sup> This is a characteristic that is observable in some other Yishan inscriptions.

his *Autobiography* as a Buddhist with a passion for calligraphy and an untrammelled lifestyle.<sup>221</sup>

His status as a Buddhist monk in Tang dynasty China also gave him a unique position outside the established social order imposed by politics and court hierarchy—a position often envied by literati officials who yearned for the freedom of a monastic life and also practiced wild cursive script.<sup>222</sup>

Wild cursive, as we have seen, appeared during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong, when great artists such as Wu Daozi (685-758?) and virtuoso monk-calligraphers attracted attention with displays of their mastery of the brush.<sup>223</sup> Poems from the Tang period describe performances by Buddhist monks who wrote cursive calligraphy before admiring onlookers. One such poem, by Ren Hua 任華 (dates unknown, fl. mid 8<sup>th</sup> century), provides a vivid description of Huaisu's performance of wild cursive calligraphy at a banquet hosted by a court official in the Tang capital.

#### A Eulogy on Huaisu's Cursive Calligraphy

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<sup>221</sup> For an overview on the wild cursive tradition, see Peter Sturman, "The 'Thousand Character Essay' Attributed to Huaisu and the Tradition of *Kuangcao* Calligraphy," *Orientalism* vol. 25, no. 4 (April 1994): 38-46. To see a discussion of the relationship between alcohol and the wild cursive tradition in the Northern Song dynasty, see Peter Sturman, "Wine and Cursive: The Limits of Individualism in Northern Sung China," in Cary Y. Liu, Dora C.Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith eds., *Character and Context in Chinese Calligraphy* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1999), pp. 200-231.

<sup>222</sup> Chan Buddhism's ascendancy in China after the Tang was related to its ability to gain acceptance by the court. Albert Welter, *Monks, Rulers and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 5-6.

<sup>223</sup> Zhang Xu 張旭 (658?-748?) gained fame as one of the "Eight Drinking Immortals," and was credited with the invention of the wild cursive script. For the master-pupil relationship between Zhang Xu and Huaisu, see Adele Schlombs, *Huaisu and the Beginning of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy*, (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1998), pp. 34-37. Nakata Yūjirō, "Calligraphic Style and Poetry Handscrolls: On Mi Fu's *Sailing on the Wu River*," in Alfred Murck and Wen C. Fong, ed., *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, painting, and Calligraphy* (New York and Princeton: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 91-92.

His talent for ink outshines his craziness, he possesses untrammelled talent in the crazy ink  
 The wild monk became the sensation of the capital city the other day,  
 In the morning he rides the horses of princes and ministers, and at night he lodges in their homes.  
 Who does not commission white screens, who does not paint white walls?  
 The white walls reflect brightness of the sunlight, the white screens congeal the frost of dawn, ready and waiting for you [Huaisu] to wield your wild brush  
 The handsome horse carries the monk in and he is seated in the hall, the golden goblet is filled with wine amidst the fragrance of bamboo  
 Five or ten cups do not suffice, only after a hundred cups does he go crazy  
 Crazed and uninhibited, full of emotions and thoughts, the monk let out a loud cry and rolled up his sleeves.  
 Wielding the brush momentarily he already brushed tens of thousands of characters, sometimes one or two characters measure 1 *zhang* 2 *chi* [1 *zhang* measures about 3 meters].  
 Converging like whales colliding into islands in the ocean, swiftly done like long snakes disappearing into deep grass  
 The brushstrokes weave in and out of the characters which are interconnected, giving rise to myriad changes right in front of the eye.  
 The sudden raindrops and moving wind shoot into each other, the quickly moving brush upsets the rooftop.  
 Throwing giant boulders on Mt. Hua as the dots, dragging the cloud formation on Mt. Heng as the diagonal stroke.  
 [...]

This wild monk has outstanding arts, the kinetic energy of the brush can only manifest itself properly if the wall is high [and the surface is large]  
 Sometimes he also works on decorated paper and white silk, and that is when he recalls his thoughts and his brush methods observe established rules.  
 [...]

Wild monk, wild monk, even if you harbor great artistic talent, you still need a good middleman.  
 If it is not that Mr. Zhang of the Rites Department invited you, how could you possibly obtain a reputation overnight that reverberates throughout the realm?

懷素上人草書歌

[...]

負癡狂之墨妙，有墨狂之逸才。  
 狂僧前日動京華，朝騎王公大人馬，暮宿王公大人家。  
 誰不造素屏，誰不塗粉壁。  
 粉壁搖晴光，素屏凝曉霜，待君揮灑兮不可彌忘。

駿馬迎來坐堂中，金盆盛酒竹葉香。  
十杯五杯不解意，百杯已後始顛狂。  
一顛一狂多意氣，大叫一聲起攘臂。  
揮毫倏忽千萬字，有時一字兩字長丈二。  
翕若長鯨潑刺動海島，欵若長蛇戍律透深草。  
回環繚繞相拘連，千變萬化在眼前。  
飄風驟雨相擊射，速祿颯拉動簷隙。  
擲華山巨石以為點，掣衡山陣雲以為畫。  
[...]

狂僧有絕藝，非數仞高墻不足以逞其筆勢。  
或逢花箋與絹素，凝神執筆守恆度。  
[...]

狂僧狂僧，尔雖有絕藝，猶當假良媒。  
不因禮部張公將尔來，如何得聲名一旦喧九垓。

The poem describes two sizes of wild cursive calligraphy in which Huaisu worked: freely brushed big characters on the surface of a wall or screen, and smaller characters on decorated paper or silk handscrolls in a more controlled manner. Written centuries later, Yishan's *Xin yue fu* follows the tradition of the second category.

The closing of Ren Hua's poem reminds the reader that Huaisu acquired his fame with the help of Zhang Wei 張謂 (?-778?), Vice President of the Ministry of Rites (*jinshi* degree 743), who provided room and board for the monk-calligrapher while he was seeking recognition in Chang'an.<sup>224</sup> This alludes to the phenomenon, common at the time, of monks obtaining fame and

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<sup>224</sup> Zhang Wei was an important patron for Huaisu during his sojourn in Chang'an and he was representative of a new social stratum who warmly received Huaisu and his calligraphy. With the exception of Yan Zhenqing, Huaisu's audience in Chang'an and Luoyang mainly consisted of medium rank bureaucrats who entered civil service by the examination system and did not come from illustrious families. For a detailed account of the various patrons that helped Huaisu in his advancement as a monk-calligrapher as he moved from Changsha to the capital city of Chang'an, see "The Ascent –from Local Fame to Metropolitan Recognition," in Adele Schlombs, *Huaisu and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy*, 1998, pp. 13-22.

personal advancement through displays of their cursive calligraphy skills at parties hosted by the upper echelon of society in the Tang capital city. Some of these monk-calligraphers attracted the attention of the court, and obtained the title of “Cursive Calligrapher in Attendance” (*caoshu gongfeng* 草書供奉). Indeed, Huaisu states in his *Autobiography* that the pursuit of calligraphy was the motivation behind his relocation from his hometown to the capital city.<sup>225</sup>

Another Buddhist who also achieved fame through his skills in cursive calligraphy was the monk Bianguang 晫光, who through an introduction by the minister Lu Xisheng 陸希聲 (d. 895) obtained the title of “Cursive Calligrapher in Attendance” after a virtuoso performance of cursive calligraphy before Emperor Zhaozong 唐昭宗 (867-904, r. 888-904).<sup>226</sup> In fact, all eight Tang Dynasty calligraphers listed under the cursive category in the *Xuanhe Catalogue of Calligraphy* (*Xuanhe shupu* 宣和書譜), the catalogue of Emperor Huizong’s calligraphic collection, are monks, several of whom were favored with imperial audience at the Tang court.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> “(...) I was very discontented at having no opportunity to study the masterworks of the calligraphers of previous ages. (...) So, I took up my book box, picked up my monk’s staff, and travelled westward to the capital Chang’an.” Adele Schlombs, *Huaisu and the Beginnings of Wild Cursive Script in Chinese Calligraphy*, p. 13.

<sup>226</sup> No work by Bianguang survives. Records show that in Huizong’s collection of calligraphy, there were two works by the calligrapher. From the numerous poems composed by court officials on Bianguang’s cursive calligraphy, it is clear that many witnessed the monk’s calligraphic performance. Wang Yuanjun 王元軍, “Wantang yunei gonffeng caoshu seng Bianguang shiji taolun” 晚唐御內供奉草書僧晫光事跡討論 [A discussion of the activities of the cursive calligrapher in attendance Bianguang in the imperial household of late Tangy] in *Tangdai shufa yu wenhua* 唐代書法與文化 (Beijing: zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 2009), pp. 16-26.

<sup>227</sup> These eight monk cursive calligraphers are: Huaisu 懷素, Yaqi 亞栖, Gaoxian 高閑, Bianguang 晫光, Jingyun 景雲, Guanxiu 貫休, Menggui 夢龜, Wenchu 文楚. *Xuanhe shupu* 宣和書譜 [The Xuanhe catalogue of calligraphy] (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1984), pp. 146-152.

The *Xuanhe Catalogue* offers the following explanation for why monk-calligraphers achieved such fame:

With the flourishing of the Tang, literati officials all were fond of calligraphy. Besides them [literati scholars], it was Buddhist monks who most often took pleasure in it; Buddhist calligraphers further often enjoyed writing cursive characters. Why was this? The Buddhists Zhiyong and Huaisu took the lead in promoting it [cursive calligraphy], and their reputation dominated their contemporaries and excited their age, so that their disciples marveled at the glory of [Zhiyong and Huaisu] in later times. It is just like ants being attracted to the smell of lamb. Thus, there were the disciples who were eager to surpass [Zhiyong and Huaisu's reputation], which could not be hidden once they obtained it.

唐興，士大夫皆尚字學，此外惟釋子多喜之，而釋子者又往往喜作草字。其故何耶？以智永、懷素前為之倡，名蓋輩流，聳動當世，則後生晚學，瞠若光塵者。不啻羶蟻之慕，於是其徒亦有駸駸欲度，不可得而掩者。

Echoing the tone of this explanation in the section of general introduction to monk calligraphers, which lightly chides their careerism,<sup>228</sup> the accompanying entries on individual masters tell us that these monk-calligraphers wrote frequently on walls at residences and palaces as well as on handscrolls. They seemed to have engaged in public performances of wild writing—examples of “staged spontaneity” that Han Yu (768-824) cited as an example of the trickery of which Buddhists are capable—the subject of the following section. These public stunts certainly boosted the reputations of calligraphers and led to imperial audiences and a court title for some.

The legacy of Zhiyong and Huaisu captivated later generations of Buddhist monks seeking fame as calligraphers by offering an alternative to standard script, considered to have reached its apogee in the calligraphy of the Tang masters Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557-641), Yu

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<sup>228</sup> The criticism is insinuated through the idiom “just like ants being attracted to the smell of lamb” (*ruyi mushan* 如蟻慕羶), a phrase from *Zhuangzi* that describes people forming a cohort based on their collective attraction towards something that is morally dubious.



Shinan 虞世南 (558-638), and Chu Suiliang 褚遂良 (596-658).<sup>229</sup> Standard script is characterized by a strict adherence to rules of orthography that in a sense paralleled codes of behavior at the imperial court. Despite its long involvement with imperial power, Buddhism offered an alternative set of values, and monasteries were environments in which innovations in the art of calligraphy unacceptable at court might have been tolerated or even encouraged.<sup>230</sup>

#### 4.8 Wild Cursive and Buddhist Calligraphy

Yishan Yining was the first Chan monk-calligrapher to write in a highly cursive style. Unlike, their predecessors of the Tang period, among whom cursive script was popular, most Chan/Zen calligraphers of Yishan's day wanted their calligraphy to be easily legible and wrote in either standard script or running script. That a Buddhist monk should write in cursive script had been a subject of debate for many centuries. In the eyes of some critics, there was a fundamental tension between the Buddhist goal of transcending all emotional states and the practice of cursive script, which was considered a graphic expression of turbulent inner states.

As early as the Eastern Han period (25-220AD), cursive script had been viewed with distaste by moralizing critics, and one of the first treatises on calligraphy was "Against Cursive Script" (*Fei caoshu* 非草書) by Zhao Yi 趙壹 (ca. 122-196). According to Zhao Yi, in approaching illegibility, cursive script was potentially subversive of social norms and was being

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<sup>229</sup> Stephen J. Goldberg, "Court Calligraphy of the Early T'ang Dynasty," *Artibus Asiae* vol. 49, no. 3/4 (1988-1999), pp. 189-237.

<sup>230</sup> Taizong's adoption of Wang Xizhi's running script for stone inscriptions "forced those calligraphers who still sought to establish their independence from the official tradition to take refuge in graphically extreme creations, like the eighth century monk Huaisu in his 'crazy *caoshu*.'" Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the Classical Tradition of Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 32.

pursued for morally suspect expression of personal feelings.<sup>231</sup>

The most famous discourse on cursive script from the Tang dynasty was “Preface to Seeing off the Monk Gaoxian” (*song Gaoxian shangren xu* 送高閒上人序) by the Tang statesman Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824). This text made explicit the idea that cursive script, assumed to give visual form to personal emotions, was unsuitable for use by Buddhists. Gaoxian (dates unknown), the subject of Han Yu’s preface, specialized in wild cursive and was one of the eight calligraphers-monks listed in the preface of the *Xuanhe Catalogue of Calligraphy*. Although Han Yu admired the cursive script of Zhang Xu, that of a Buddhist monk was a different matter:

In our day the monk Gaoxian aspires to the art of cursive calligraphy, however, how could he have the same spirit as Zhang Xu! Without the spirit behind the trace [of Zhang Xu] it is difficult to compare to him. The philosophy of Zhang Xu is that utility and harm are clearly divided, nothing is spared, passion is fired up within him, and worldly concerns and desires compete with one another. Gains, losses—he does not forget any of these and lets everything out in his calligraphy; only with this attitude could one approach Zhang Xu’s [level of calligraphy]. In our day, the Buddhist Gaoxian sees life and death as equal, and thus is relieved of attachments to the external world. Thus, his heart must be quiet and still, and his way of conduct in the mundane world must be blandly without desires. Where quietude and blandness meet, one declines into listlessness and defeats from which one cannot be recovered, which when manifested in calligraphy, reveals no signs of emotions. However, I have heard that Buddhists are good at illusions and abound in knacks and copetences, so if the monk Gaoxian is familiar with these techniques, then I wouldn’t know [anything about it].

今閒之于草書，有旭之心哉！不得其心而逐其跡，未見其能旭也。為旭有道，利害必明，無遺錙銖，情炎於中，利慾斗進，有得有喪，勃然不釋，然後一決於書，而後旭可幾也。今閒師浮屠氏，一死生，解外膠。是其為心，必泊然無所起，其於

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<sup>231</sup> Zhao Yi believed that practicing cursive script went against the teachings of Confucianism and its seductiveness as an art form contributed to the moral decrepitude of society at the time. Ni Xuqian 倪旭前, “Wei he Zhao Yi zhi hou bu zai ‘fei cao shu’” 為何趙壹之後不再“非草書” [Why there was no more diatribe against the cursive calligraphy after Zhao Yi’s ‘Fei cao shu’], *Meishu guancha* no. 3 (2014): 105-110. The same author has a dissertation titled “Caoshu de xingqi yu Hanmo shehui sichao—yi Zhao Yi <fei caoshu> wei zhong xin” 草書的興起於漢末社會思潮--以趙壹《非草書》為中心 [The rise of cursive calligraphy and the social thoughts at the end of the Han dynasty—centering on Zhao Yi’s *Fei cao shu*], Ph.D. dissertation, Zhong Guo Meishu Xueyuan, 2015.

世，必淡然無所嗜。泊與淡相遭，頽墮委靡，潰敗不可收拾，則其於書得無象之然乎！然吾聞浮屠人善幻，多技能，閒如通其術，則吾不能知矣。<sup>232</sup>

According to Han Yu, the power of cursive calligraphy as it was practiced by Zhang Xu stemmed from the calligrapher's sensitivity to human emotions that propel the calligrapher to take up his brush in the first place. A Buddhist's quest for enlightenment, on the other hand, precludes cultivating emotions that disturb the quietude and equanimity in his mind. If the cursive calligraphy of a monk such as Gaoxian *did* appear to express strong emotions, Han Yu suggests, the effect likely was a trick. Despite disapproval by such a prominent Tang statesman, wild cursive calligraphy from mid-Tang till the Five Dynasty period continued to be practiced by monk-calligraphers; indeed, they seemed to have monopolized the script type of *kuangcao*.<sup>233</sup>

A few centuries later, Mi Fu took on the chore of criticizing the wild cursive tradition of Zhang Xu and Huaisu, this time from the vantage point of that their calligraphy did not “partake of the character of the Jin writers” and failed to “achieve ‘lofty antiquity.’”<sup>234</sup> The sensationalism exhibited by wild cursive calligraphy could not have been further from the aesthetic of

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<sup>232</sup> Huang Jian 黃簡 ed, *Lidai shufa lunwen xuan* 歷代書法論文選 [Selections of calligraphy criticism from various dynasties], (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), pp. 291-292.

<sup>233</sup> Sturman notes that most notable practitioners of *kuangcao* after Zhang Xu were all Buddhist monks, including Huaisu, Bianguang, Gaoxian, Guangxiu, and Yaxi, who were coined the Five Calligrapher Monks of the Tang by Mi Fu's friend Liu Jing; a Tang-Five dynasty wild cursive calligrapher by the name of Yanxiu (otherwise unknown) is preserved in a stele at Xi'an. See footnote no. 45, in Peter Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 238.

<sup>234</sup> Mi Fu in the same passage of “The Sage of Cursive Calligraphy” (ca. 1097-99, album leaf in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei) famously derided Gaoxian and those below him as only suitable to be hung in wineshops. Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China*, pp. 129-131.

“blandness” (*pingdan* 平淡) that Mi Fu championed in his calligraphic practice and theory.

Su Shi (1037-1101) and Huang Tingjian, —both enjoying close friendship with Chan monks, —tried to justify the practice of wild cursive calligraphy by separating its inventor Zhang Xu from his lesser followers; they emphasized that Zhang Xu’s bravura was built on a solid foundation of orthodox study, and it was his imitators who made it vulgar. In a poem addressed to his Chan Buddhist friend Daoqian 道潛 (1043-1106), Su Shi defended the right of Buddhist calligraphers to practice cursive script, arguing that “in quietude one comprehends the myriad movements; in emptiness one absorbs the ten thousand scenes.”<sup>235</sup>

In Yishan’s own time, the discussion of the suitability of wild cursive calligraphy for monk calligraphers continued. Zhao Mengfu defended Huaisu in his 1318 colophon to *On Calligraphy* (*Lunshu tie* 論書帖), a work attributed to Huaisu. His colophon demonstrates an acute awareness of this debate in the Northern Song period and he tries to recuperate Huaisu’s wild cursive calligraphy by arguing that he “never departs from the methods and standards of Wei and Jin.”<sup>236</sup> The point of contention still seems to reside in the seeming irreconcilability between the animated visual form of the wild cursive script and the equanimity of mind that Buddhist monks strive after.

Certain cursive works of Yishan might be interpreted as a resolution of the tension between the quest for inner calm and the outward expression of feeling through art, a tension that

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<sup>235</sup> This translation of Su Shi’s “Song Canliao zi 送參寥子” is by Peter Sturman, *Mi Fu: Style and the Art of Calligraphy in Northern Song China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 118. For a full translation of the poem and a contextualization of this discussion in the Northern Song, see *ibid.*, pp. 117-120.

<sup>236</sup> Shane McCausland, *Zhao Mengfu: Calligraphy and Painting for Khubilai’s China*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), pp. 102-104.

is implicit in the ideas of Han Yu and Su Shi. The text of *On A Snowy Night* (fig. 4.18) describes Yishan's effort to maintain a state of great quietness. Kept awake by the sound of snowflakes falling on his window that make him think of Chan/Zen anecdotes related to snow, the monk laments that such distractions might hinder his achievement of Enlightenment.

The *Sixth Patriarch's Poem* (fig. 4.26) is a famous expression of the Buddhist quest to dissolve the border between the mind and the exterior world.<sup>237</sup> Although both poems are expressions of Buddhist longing for a higher state of awareness that is beyond the dualism of conventional thought, Yishan embodies the two poetic texts in vigorously expressive wild cursive script. What might be interpreted as a tension or contradiction between semantic content and visual form is perhaps itself an illusion that these works of Buddhist art seek to overcome.

Just as delicate, barely legible *kana* calligraphy on decorated paper by writers such as Emperor Fushimi embodied *waka* poetry (Japanese poetry with a 5-7-5-7-7 syllabic structure) of great emotional depth, with which Yishan was familiar through his proximity to the imperial court, the exuberant gestures of the monk's wild cursive script gave form to texts that express the value of utter stillness of mind.

#### **4.9 Calligraphy in Kamakura and Kyoto**

The change in Yishan's calligraphy from the classicizing Wang Xizhi style of his Kamakura years (1299-1313) to the unbridled cursive style inspired by Huaisu of his Kyoto years (1313-1317) should be seen against the background of Japanese geopolitical and cultural tensions of the Kamakura period. During this period, there were two centers of power in Japan: the *bakufu* in Kamakura, which had de facto military control of the archipelago, and the imperial court in

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<sup>237</sup> The famous poem reads "Bodhi originally has no tree/The clear and bright mirror also has no support/Buddha-nature is constantly purifying and clearing/Where could there be dust?" "菩提本無樹，明鏡亦非臺。本來無一物，何處惹塵埃。"

Kyoto, which for centuries had dominated cultural and artistic life.

Power dynamics in the realm of culture between the aristocrats of Kyoto and the warriors of Kamakura manifested itself early on, notably in how Emperor Go-Shirakawa 後白河(1127-1192) deftly deployed the cultural capital of the court vis-à-vis the military strongman Minamoto Yoritomo 源頼朝(1147-1199)—later the first shogun. Mired in the social and political upheavals accompanying the rise of military strongmen in mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, Emperor Go-Shirakawa made use of the massive art collection of the court assembled in Rengeōin 蓮華王院 and engaged Minamoto Yoritomo in what could be called a “diplomacy of art,” when the shogun made his way to the Kansai region in 1185 for the “Eye Opening Ceremony” (*kaigan kyōyō* 開眼供養) at the newly reconstructed Tōdaiji 東大寺 in Nara.<sup>238</sup>

According to *A Collection of Notable Tales Old and New (Kokon Chomonjū* 古今著聞集), a Kamakura period collection of anecdotes (*setsuwa* 説話) compiled in 1254, the emperor sent the shogun an invitation to view famous illustrated handscroll paintings in the imperial collection in Kyoto; however, Minamoto Yoritomo declined and went back to Kamakura immediately after the ceremony in Nara. It has been suggested that the shogun did not want to expose his sense of cultural inferiority vis-à-vis the emperor by encountering objects of art long held in the imperial collection. In this way, the emperor used his superb knowledge of illustrated handscroll paintings (*emakimono* 絵巻物) to assert his cultural superiority over the warlord.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> On the intricate political landscape of mid-12<sup>th</sup> century Japan and the dynamic between a dwindling court and a rising *bakufu*, see Jeffrey P. Mass, *Yoritomo and the Founding of the First Bakufu: The Origins of Dual Government in Japan*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 133-151.

<sup>239</sup> Kobayashi Taizō 小林泰三, *Goshirakawa Jōkō : "emakimono" no chikara de bushi ni katta mikado* 後白河上皇 : 「絵巻物」の力で武士に勝った帝 (Tōkyō : PHP Kenkyūjo,

There is a luxuriously decorated writing box in the Kamakura shrine Tsurugaoka Hachimangū 鶴岡八幡宮 said to have been given to Minamoto Yoritomo by Emperor Go-Shirakawa; the box is sumptuously decorated with designs of chrysanthemums and clover, motifs evocative of the cultural sophistication and sensibilities of the Heian period (794-1185) court. The bestowal of such an object on a shogun by the emperor could be interpreted as the emperor's way of reminding the shogun of the splendor of court culture and its traditions.

The Minamoto clan quickly recognized the importance of educating its future leaders. In 1213, a “Learning Academy” (*gakumon jo* 学問所) was established for Minamoto Sanetomo 源実朝, at which he studied Japanese and Chinese classics.<sup>240</sup> Minamoto Sanetomo was an avid *waka* practitioner. *Waka* had historically been the strong suit of aristocrats of Kyoto; anthologies of *waka* poetry had been monopolized by the imperial court since the first of its kind was compiled in 905—*The Collection of Japanese Poetry Ancient and Modern* (*Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集). Sanetomo's effort to partake of the highly prestigious literary genre of *waka* resulted in *Kin kai shū* 金槐集, a compilation of *waka* poetry, which testifies to the desire of a Kamakura

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2012), pp. 236-238; Kobayashi Taizō thinks that the shogun did not accept the invitation out of fear of the power possessed by the handscrolls. Go-Shirakawa is associated with a period of efflorescence of arts including famous *emakimono* such as the Chōjū giga; see *Emaki mania retsuden* 絵巻マニア列伝 [Picture scroll enthusiasts], (Tokyo: Santori Bijutsukan, 2017), exhibition catalogue; on Shirakawa's patronage of Buddhist arts, see Fujisawa Norio 藤澤令夫 et al ed., *Goshirakawa inseiki no busshi to butsumō: kenkyū happyō to zadankai* 後白河院政期の仏師と仏像: 研究発表と座談会 (Kyoto: Bukkyō Bijutsu Kenkyū Ueno Kinen Zaidan Josei Kenkyūkai, Heisei 3 [1991]).

<sup>240</sup> Satō Kazuo 佐藤和夫, “Kamakura buke shakai ni okeru gakumon ishiki 鎌倉武家社会における学問意識 [On the awareness towards learning in the military society of Kamakura], *Nihon shisō shigaku*, no. 2 (1970): p. 11.

shogun to match the poetic skills of the Kyoto courtiers.<sup>241</sup> The court responded by becoming even more active in its effort to sponsor *waka* poetry. The number of the *waka* gatherings held in public increased during the Kamakura period, motivated by the court's desire to assert its dominance in this genre of literature.<sup>242</sup> This undoubtedly was a reaction to the *bakufu*'s efforts to engage in cultural pursuits previously monopolized by the court.

After the assassination of Minamoto Sanetomo in 1219—the last in the Minamoto line—Fujiwara Yoritsune 藤原頼経 (1218-1256), son of the Regent (*sesshō* 摂政) Kujō Michiie 九条道家 (1193-1252), was hastily sent from Kyoto to be installed as the fourth shogun at the age of one. The child shogun's retinue was steeped in manners of the court, and their presence further accelerated the infiltration of court learning and culture in the milieu of the Kamakura *bakufu*. Furthermore, the regent Hōjō Sanetoki 北条実時 (1224-1276), who wielded actual power behind the shogun, amassed an impressive collection of printed books and manuscripts from Kyoto and continental China, which he housed in Shōmyōji 称名寺, the family temple of the Kanazawa branch of the Hōjō clan of which Sanetoki was a descendent.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> For a reproduction of a version from the Edo period, see *Buke no koto: Kamakura* 武家の古都：鎌倉 [Kamakura: Home of the samurai], exhibition catalogue, (Kamakura: Kamakura kokuhō kan, 2012), entry no. 1-67.

<sup>242</sup> This is also manifested in the increased frequency of the compilation of imperial *waka* anthologies. Beppu Setsuko 別府節子, “Jidai wo utsusu kana no katachi” 時代を映す仮名のかたち [the form of kana that reflects the change of time], in *Jidai wo Utsusu Kana no Katachi* 時代を映しかなのかたち, exhibition catalogue (Tokyo: Idemitsu Museum, 2016), pp. 8-9.

<sup>243</sup> Satō Kazuo, “Kamakura buke shakai ni okeru gakumon ishiki,” pp. 11-13. Sanetoki's collection formed the core of present-day Kanazawa Bunko 金沢文庫, an archive that is a treasure trove of medieval primary texts, manuscripts and printed books imported from continental China. The Bunko is built next to the site of the historic Shōmyōji. See Fukushima Kaneharu 福島金治, “Kamakura chūki no Kyō, Kamakura no kanseki denju so sono baikaisha—Kanazawa bunkohon to sono shūhen” 鎌倉中期の京・鎌倉の漢籍伝授とその媒介者—金沢



As the principal center for the creation of *waka* poetry and the main patron of illustrated handscrolls and other forms of art, the court also shaped the training of calligraphers in Chinese calligraphy through its possession of model books and works of calligraphy brought from China that were stored in the imperial treasure house, the Shōsōin.<sup>244</sup> Taking advantage of this access to calligraphic specimens from China through diplomatic and commercial connections, court calligraphers, such as the “Three Brushes” and the “Three Traces” of the Heian period, created works of both *kana* and Chinese calligraphies that accrued great prestige. These works of calligraphy naturally formed a prized portion of the art collection of the imperial court in Kyoto, and some of them were used by emperors as gifts to high ranking members of the *bakufu* in Kamakura, perhaps in the hope to encourage the pursuit of the art of calligraphy as part of the shogunal education.<sup>245</sup>

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文庫本とその周辺 [Introduction of Chinese texts into Kyoto and Kamakura in the mid-Kamakura period and key players—a study centered on the Kanazawa bunko collection and other manuscripts], *Kokuritsu rekishi minzoku hakubutsukan kenkyū hōkoku*, no. 198 (2015): 91-109. A case study of how a 1280 manuscript copy of *Wenxuan* 文選, the prized anthology of Chinese literature that had been popular at court since the Heian period, was collected and annotated by scholars of the *bakufu*, demonstrates the medieval shogunate’s institutional efforts to replicate the cultural capacities of Kyoto. See Brian Steininger, “Manuscript Culture and Chinese Learning in Medieval Kamakura,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 78, no. 2 (2018): 339-369.

<sup>244</sup> The Shōsōin contained twenty volumes of copies of Wang Xizhi’s calligraphy as well as works by his son Wang Xianzhi and the Tang calligrapher Ouyang Xiu. Itakura Masaaki, “The Imperial Treasures of the Shōsōin and the Collections of the Tang Emperors,” in Watanabe Toshio and Tomizawa-Kay Eriko ed., *East Asian Art History in A Transnational Context* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 33-37.

<sup>245</sup> The arts were increasingly seen as an indispensable part of the education of the military leaders, together with more conventional skills of horse-riding and archery; in fact, some minor aristocrats went to Kamakura to be employed as scribes or composers of edicts serving the *bakufu*. Satō Kazuo, “Kamakura buke shakai ni okeru gakumon ishiki 鎌倉武家社会における学問意識 [On the awareness towards learning in the military society of Kamakura] *Nihon shisō shigaku*, no. 2 (1970): p. 12.

A beautiful transcription of Bai Juyi's poem in the Maeda Ikutokukai 前田育徳会 Foundation is attributed to one of the "Three Traces," Ono no Michikaze (fig. 4.27). It is an exemplary Chinese style calligraphy (*karayō*) by a master Japanese calligrapher. A note dated 1338 records that the retired emperor Go-Fukakusa 後深草 (1243-1304) gave this calligraphy to the son of the regent Hōjō Tokimune 北条時宗, Hōjō Sadatoki 北条貞時(1271-1311), who later became a patron of Yishan in Kamakura.<sup>246</sup> This gift from the emperor was no doubt intended to encourage the young future regent to study the court-sanctioned style of Chinese calligraphy.<sup>247</sup>

Finding himself in Kamakura, where the still young military government admired and sought to emulate cultural norms of aristocratic Kyoto, Yishan likely chose to continue practicing the cursive script style of Wang Xizhi, which had the cachet of being revered at the imperial court. Ironically, it was after Yishan took up residence in Kyoto as abbot of Nanzenji that he moved away from the Wang Xizhi tradition, writing instead in a wilder cursive style associated with Huaisu.

When Yishan arrived in Kyoto in 1313, where the Wang Xizhi tradition had been digested and adapted to the court's taste since as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century, his art evolved in order to become a visual language appealing to an audience whose calligraphic literacy was much more developed and nuanced than that of viewers in Kamakura. The performative thrill of the

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<sup>246</sup> The work is reproduced in color in *Sho no shihō: Nihon to Chūgoku* 書の至宝：日本と中国 [Two Peaks: The Finest of Chinese and Japanese Calligraphy], Tokyo National Museum, exhibition catalogue, 2006, entry no. 76.

<sup>247</sup> There are two extant edicts, ink on paper, signed with Sadatoki's name; however, it is highly likely that these edicts were brushed by scribes rather than Sadatoki himself. The calligraphy displays affinity with the *wayō* calligraphy in the roundness of the characters and the overall gentle impression of the piece. For reproductions, see *Kuge no koto: Kamakura*, cat. no. 1-72 & 1-73, p. 93

Huaisu-derived wild cursive calligraphy was resuscitated by Yishan, a style that though long known in Kyoto, had been practiced rarely for several centuries and probably was seen as a novelty by viewers there. In addition, Yishan, the newly appointed Chinese abbot of a prominent Zen monastery in Kyoto—a first in Japan—developed his cursive style to make it closer to the appearance of *kana* calligraphy familiar to the imperial court.

In conclusion, the changes in Yishan's calligraphy could be seen as a cultural tactic to survive and prosper as a Chan/Zen master in Kyoto, an environment long dominated by powerful sects of Tendai and Shingon Buddhism; calligraphy and poetry were the two main weapons in the arsenal of Chan Buddhists during their successful ascendancy in Song China, and Yishan Yining's genius lay in his ability to adapt those tactics to the sociopolitical environment of 14<sup>th</sup> century Japan. The next chapter will examine Yishan's prolific inscriptional activities in which he used poetry to imbue paintings with Chan/Zen Buddhist significance.

## Chapter 5: Inscribed Images

It was with the arrival of émigré Chinese Chan Buddhists in Japan in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that ink paintings (*suibokuga* 水墨画) began to gain prevalence as a major genre of pictorial art in Japan.<sup>248</sup> Yishan Yining’s sojourn in Kamakura from 1299 to 1313 coincided with a period when ink painting techniques and compositional schemes of continental Song China were being explored by painters associated with the monastic communities in Kamakura.<sup>249</sup> By the Muromachi period (1336-1537), Zen monks’ communal act of writing inscriptions on “poem and painting scroll” (*shigajiku* 詩画軸)—mostly ink landscape paintings—became a significant cultural phenomenon channeled by the extensive social and political network of the powerful Five Mountain (*gozan* 五山) monasteries in the metropolitan centers of Kyoto and Kamakura as well as the associated constellation of regional temples (*jissatsu shozan* 十刹諸山) (fig. 5.1).<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Although evidence of “paintings within paintings” (*gachūga* 画中画) in illustrated handscrolls from the 13<sup>th</sup> century shows that ink paintings on screens and sliding door surfaces were already widely present in Japanese interiors, Zen monasteries were instrumental to the development of ink painting in Japan because they provided institutional support for professionalized ink painting production starting from the Nanbokuchō 南北朝 period (1331-1392) such as the painting workshop established at Tōfukuji temple in Kyoto, where painters such as Minchō 明兆 (1352-1431) worked. For a study on evidence of early ink paintings in *gachūga* in *emakimono*, see Oonishi Shōko 大西昌子, “Nihon no shoki suibokuga shi no saikentō—gachūga shiryō ni yoru” 日本の初期水墨画史の再検討—画中画資料による [Reconsidering the early Japanese ink painting history—from ‘paintings within paintings’], *Bijutsushi*, volume 31 no. 2 (1982): 95-114.

<sup>249</sup> Hayashi On 林温, *Kamakura Bukkyō kaiga kō—Butsuga ni okeru ‘Kamakura ha’ no seiritsu to tenkai* 鎌倉仏教絵画考——仏画における「鎌倉派」の成立と展開 [A study of Buddhist paintings in Kamakura—the establishment and development of ‘Kamakura school’ of Buddhist paintings], (Tokyo: Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppansha, 2010), pp. 9-12.

<sup>250</sup> Based on diary of Gidō Shūshin 義堂周信 (1325-1388), there were at least two

The early phase of the development of this practice from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> to the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century—in particular in the context of the rise of ink landscape as an independent painting genre—remains murky. The corpus of paintings bearing Yishan Yining’s inscriptions date to this period and offer important clues to the development of inscriptions on landscape paintings.<sup>251</sup>

## 5.1 Characteristics of Paintings Bearing Yishan’s Inscriptions

This corpus of paintings is characterized by great diversity in medium, technique, and subject matter. They range from sumptuously produced commemorative portraits of Chan/Zen masters (*chinsō* 頂相)<sup>252</sup> (fig. 5.2) in heavy pigment on silk, to sketchy “ink play” monochrome paintings

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landscape scrolls inscribed by multiple Zen monks, one handscroll and one hanging scroll. Shimada Shūjirō 島田修二郎, “Muromachi jidai no shigajiku ni tsuite” 室町時代の詩画軸について, in Shimada Shūjirō and Iriya Yoshitaka 入谷義高 ed., *Zenrin gasan* 禅林画賛 (Tokyo: Mainichi shinbunsha, 1987), p. 14. For introductions and inscription transcriptions of two earliest extant examples of *shigajiku*—*Saimon shingetsu zu* 柴門新月 dated to 1405 and *Kei-in shōchikuzu* 溪陰小築図 dated to 1413, see Shimada Shūjirō and Iriya Yoshitaka, *ibid.*, pp. 182-190 and pp. 216-233. See also Joseph D. Parker, *Zen Buddhist Landscape Arts of Early Muromachi Japan (1336-1573)*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1999), pp. 51-107.

<sup>251</sup> Twenty-four paintings bearing Yishan’s inscriptions survive, and about twenty more are known through auction catalogues, compendia of Zen calligraphy, and Edo period records; see Appendix B for the full list. The number of paintings bearing Yishan’s inscriptions far exceeds that by any other Chan/Zen Buddhist before and after his time; the Chan priest who came second in number is Qingzhuo Zhengcheng 清拙正澄 (J: Seisetsu Shōchō, 1274-1339), who emigrated to Japan in 1326. There are fifteen extant paintings bearing his inscriptions; see Kayama Satōe 香山里絵, “Seisetsu Shōchō shūhen no kaiga katsudō—shoki Zenshū suibokuga no hitoyōsō—” 清拙正澄周辺の絵画活動—初期禅宗水墨画の一樣相 [Painting activities in the orbit of Seisetsu Shōchō—a glimpse of early Zen ink painting], in *Nihon bijutsu no kūkan to keishiki : Kawai Masatomo kyōju kanreki kinen ronbunshū* 日本美術の空間と形式 : 河合正朝教授還暦記念論文集, (Kyoto: Nigensha, 2003), pp. 179-194.

<sup>252</sup> Writing inscriptions on portraits of abbots of other Zen monasteries seemed to have been part of the obligations of Chinese émigré Chan monks in Japan. Inscriptions were requested on the occasion of the completion of memorial portraits of Zen masters, some of whom had studied in China and thus were related to Yishan’s former communities.

(fig. 5.3). Yishan not only inscribed paintings conventionally associated with Chan Buddhism,<sup>253</sup> but also portraits of patriarchs of other Buddhist sects (fig. 5.4). Records of other paintings appear in *The Catalogue of Temple Property in Butsunichi'an* (*Butsunichi'an Kōmotsu Mokuroku* 仏日庵公物目録), a 1363 inventory record of treasures held at a subtemple of Engakuji in Kamakura, which lists a pair of paintings titled *Xu You and Chao Fu* (“許由仲[窠]夫”) and a pair titled *Peach and Plum Blossoms with Bamboo* (“桃花梅竹二鋪”) both bearing Yishan’s inscriptions (fig. 5.5).<sup>254</sup> Besides legendary figures associated with Confucianism and subjects beloved by literati painters, Yishan inscribed paintings depicting figures from Daoist lore such as Saiweng 塞翁,<sup>255</sup> testifying to his reputation as an erudite Buddhist well-versed in the other major philosophical traditions of China.

Most of the extant paintings bearing Yishan’s inscriptions are anonymous, and his inscriptions thus provide their *terminus ante quem* (Yishan died in 1317). The few that do bear signatures or seals are rare examples by Chinese painters whose names are recorded only in Japanese records, such as the Yuan dynasty Buddhist figure painter Li Yaofu 李堯夫 (fig. 5.6)

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<sup>253</sup> For a comprehensive overview of painting subjects related to Chan Buddhism, see Helmut Brinker, “Themes and Genres of Zen Painting,” in Helmut Brinker and Hiroshi Kanazawa ed., Andreas Leisinger trans., *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings* (Zurich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1996), exhibition catalogue, pp. 131-198.

<sup>254</sup> None of these four paintings are extant. For a full English translation of the *Catalogue*, see Aaron M. Rio, “Ink Painting in Medieval Kamakura,” PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015, pp. 344-362.

<sup>255</sup> This is a painting attributed to Liang Kai, known from a 1934 auction catalogue of Matsuura family collection, reproduced in Itō Takuji 伊藤卓治, “*Zoku Nen Issan bokuseki*” 續寧一山墨跡[Calligraphy of Nenissan continued], *Bijutsu kenkyū* no. 169 (1953): 183; current whereabouts unknown.

and the bamboo specialist Tan Zhirui 檀芝瑞 (fig. 5.7).<sup>256</sup> The monastic community of Kamakura also drew Japanese painters into Yishan's orbit, such as a certain Kikukei 菊溪 (dates unknown) who seems to have been a professional painter of Buddhist subjects active in the region (fig. 5.8).<sup>257</sup> Seals of important early Japanese ink painters such as the elusive Kaō 可翁 (fl. mid-14<sup>th</sup> century) also appear on some of the paintings (fig. 5.9).<sup>258</sup>

This sample shows that Yishan's inscriptional activities were prolific and diverse, and that paintings passing through Zen monasteries in Japan at this time were by no means limited to ink monochrome but encompassed both professional and amateur works. Zen monasteries newly established in Kamakura also had extensive contact with institutions of other Buddhist sects in Japan. The inscriptional activities of émigré Chan priests represented by Yishan were instrumental in establishing the presence of Zen Buddhism in medieval Japan and in consolidating it within a network of ecclesiastical institutions vying for patronage from various

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<sup>256</sup> There is another Tan Zhirui-attributed painting of bamboo and rocks bearing Yishan's inscription in the Kimball Art Museum, Texas. Both Li Yaofu and Tan Zhirui are recorded in the *Kundaikan'souchōki* 君台觀左右帳記, the manual of interior decoration compiled by Nōami 能阿弥 (1397-1471), the connoisseur-in-residence of Ashikaga Yoshimasa 足利義政 (1436-90). See Shimaō Arata 島尾新, "Den Dan Shizui hitsu Jikusen Bonsen san chikusekizu" 伝檀芝瑞筆竺仙梵僊贊竹石図 [A bamboo and rock painting bearing an inscription by Zhuxian Fanqian and attributed to Tan Zhirui], *Kokka*, no. 1487.

<sup>257</sup> Of Kikukei precious little is known. There was a triptych by this same artist, also inscribed by Yishan Yining while he was abbot of Kenchōji, which was recorded in *Bokuseki no Utsushi* 墨跡の写 by the monk connoisseur Kōgetsu Sōgan 江月宗玩 (1574-1643). See Itō, "Zoku Nen Issan bokuseki," p. 164. The tritych does not survive.

<sup>258</sup> A white-robed Kannon painting attributed to Kaō in the Tokiwayama Bunko museum also has a Yishan inscription. Kaō is believed to have been active about twenty years or so after Yishan's death. For an overview of Kaō and other early Japanese ink painters, see Takana Ichimatsu 田中一松, *Nihon no bijutsu* 日本の美術 [History of Japanese Art], (Tokyo: Mainichi Press, 1952), pp. 158-191; Tanaka Ichimatsu, trans. Bruce Darling, *Japanese Ink Painting: Shubun to Sesshu*, (Tokyo: Heibonsha; New York: Weatherhill, 1972), pp. 58-64.

strata of the Japanese society.

Existing scholarship looks at these early inscribed paintings in the context of Japanese reception of Chinese painting by tracing their continental precedents and prototypes. However, two defining characteristics of Yishan's inscribed paintings of Bodhidharma (C: Damo, J: Daruma 達磨) and Avalokitesvara (C: Guanyin 觀音, J: Kannon 觀音) have not received sufficient attention: first, the presence of ink monochrome landscape elements; second, the relationship between the image and its accompanying inscription. Yishan's inscriptions reveal a serious engagement with the landscape elements in the images that is unprecedented. This new text-image relationship transformed the conventional pictorial archetypes of Bodhidharma and Kannon, frequently depicted in Zen paintings since medieval times, from detached icons to humanized figures dwelling in natural landscapes.<sup>259</sup> The mediation of the relationship between viewer and painted image by inscriptions contributed to the spread of Zen Buddhism in 14<sup>th</sup> century Japan; the significance of this cultural strategy can only be grasped by contextualizing it in the pictorial schemes of competing Buddhist sects in Kamakura Japan.

## 5.2 Paintings and Chan Buddhist Inscriptions in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century

The earliest extant examples of works inscribed by Chan Buddhists date to the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century and are largely figure paintings such as the *chinsō* portraits (commemorative portraits of Dharma masters) (fig. 5.10).

*Chinsō* paintings constituted a significant part of the earliest paintings bearing Chan Buddhists' inscriptions. The inscriptions were sometimes written by Chinese masters themselves

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<sup>259</sup> This could be seen as part of what the scholar Tanaka Ichimatsu posited to be the transition from paintings of decoration of the late Heian period to paintings of aesthetic appreciation of the Kamakura period. Tanaka Ichimatsu, *Nihon no bijutsu*, pp. 158-159.



and, as a token of the master-disciple relation, bestowed upon Japanese disciples upon the occasion of their return to Japan. Dharma lineage is a core component of Chan/Zen Buddhism's self-fashioning, and portraits were used in ceremonies that commemorated the Dharma master of disciples who had studied in China and who often founded or became the abbot of Zen temples in Japan.<sup>260</sup> The autograph from the master's hand naturally enhanced the efficacy of the portrait. Professional Buddhist workshops were commissioned for these works, as their technical finesse indicates. The portraits often were done in ink, rich pigments, and gold on silk; the material sumptuousness of the production befits the works' ceremonial nature and their function as quasi-icons.

Besides *chinsō* portraits, paintings of Bodhidharma and Avalokitesvara (J: Kannon) are also among the earliest works to be inscribed by Chan Buddhists (fig. 5.11).<sup>261</sup> Pictorial representation of the founder of Chan Buddhism developed in tandem with the consolidation of Bodhidharma lore after the Tang dynasty.<sup>262</sup> The iconographic source for some early Bodhidharma imagery such as "Bodhidharma Crossing the Yangzi River on a Reed" (*royōdarumazu* 蘆葉達磨), the subject of a superb early ink monochrome figure painting with an

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<sup>260</sup> T. Griffith Foulk and Robert Sharf, "On the Ritual Use of Chan Portraiture in Medieval China," Chap. 3 In Bernard Faure ed., *Chan Buddhism in Ritual Context*, (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 128-248. T. Griffith Foulk, "Ritual in Japanese Zen Buddhism," in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright eds., *Zen Ritual: Studies of Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66 pages.

<sup>261</sup> Bodhidharma was the founding patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China and was a popular subject for pictorialization in Chan/Zen paintings. He spent nine years as an ascetic and meditated on Mt. Song after an unproductive audience with Emperor Wu of Liang. For a succinct account of three popular iconographies associated with Bodhidharma, see Brinker and Kanazawa, *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*, pp. 149-154.

<sup>262</sup> Helmut Brinker, "Themes and Genres of Zen Painting," in Brinker and Kanazawa, *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*, pp. 149-154.

Yishan inscription at Jōdōji 成道寺 (fig. 5.12), has been connected to the iconography of “Luohan crossing the sea” (*duhai Luohan* 渡海羅漢).<sup>263</sup>

Besides professionally produced paintings of figures in the Chan/Zen pantheon, a type of ink monochrome painting of a more amateurish nature was also developing during the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Chan monastic environments in Jiangnan. This tradition had its roots both in the practice of professional painters of the Southern Song painting academy and in the more amateurish works of literati and their Chan Buddhist friends, who engaged in the production and appreciation of art in Chan monasteries of Jiangnan.<sup>264</sup> The technique of ink painting of Buddhist themes could be traced to Wang Mo 王墨 (ca. 734-805) and Shi Ke 石恪 (dates unknown, act. ca. mid-10<sup>th</sup> century), two painters associated with the category of “untrammeled” (*yipin* 逸品) in Chinese art criticism.<sup>265</sup> The Northern Song literatus painter Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1042-1106)

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<sup>263</sup> Ebine Toshio 海老根聰郎, “Issan Ichinei San Royō Daruma zu 一山一寧贊蘆葉達磨圖” [Bodhidharma Crossing the Yangzi River on a Reed with Yishan Yining inscription] *Bijutsushi*, 81, vol. XXI, no. 1 (1971): 35-40.

<sup>264</sup> Marsha Weidner, “Fit for Monk’s Quarters: Monasteries as Centers of Aesthetic Activity in the Later Fourteenth Century,” *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 37 (2009): 49-77. The alignment of interests in other arenas served as foundation for these shared cultural activities. Chi-Chiang Huang, “Elite and Clergy in Northern Sung Hang-chou: A Convergence of Interest,” in Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr. eds., *Buddhism in the Sung* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press; Kuroda Institute, 1999), pp. 295-339. This phenomenon of monks and literati sharing aesthetic experience is not limited to Jiangnan region; see Jesse D. Sloane, “Connoisseurship in the Monastery: Discerning a Distinctive Identity for Jin Elites in Sacred Precincts,” *Studies in Chinese Religions* vol. 1, no. 4 (2015): 357-374.

<sup>265</sup> On the influence of Li Gonglin on Chan monk-painters, see Ogawa Hiromitsu 小川裕充, “Mokkei –Kotenshugi no Hen’yō” 牧谿—古典主義の変容, *Bijutsushi Ronsō*, vol. 4 (March 1988): 95-111. On the category of “untrammeled” in art criticism, see Sudan E. Nelson, “*I-p’in* in Later Painting Criticism,” in Susan Bush and Christian Murck ed., *Theories of the Arts in China* (New Jersey, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 397-399. Shimada Shūjirō 島田修二郎, “Ippin gafū ni tsuite” 逸品画風について [On the painting style of ‘yipin’], *Bijutsukenkyū* 美術研究165 (1952): 12-25. James Cahill translated this article in three parts,

painted monochrome Buddhist subjects, and Southern Song academy artists played an important role in raising the level of technical sophistication of this painting tradition. Given the proximity of numerous Chan monasteries and the painting academy in the capital city of Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou), it is entirely plausible that academy painters such as Ma Yuan (act. 1189-1224) and Xia Gui (act. 1194-1224) were at least aware of paintings made within Chan monastic communities.<sup>266</sup> Liang Kai (act. early 13<sup>th</sup> century), an extremely accomplished academy painter, is known to have associated with the monk-painter Muqi during the latter's abbacy at Liutongsi 六通寺 on the West Lake.<sup>267</sup>

Another cultural practice that developed out of the interactions between literati and Chan monks in Jiangnan was that of adding poetic inscriptions to paintings. This activity is well attested by literary anthologies of both literati scholars and Chan Buddhists<sup>268</sup> and seems to have begun among Northern Song scholars such as Su Shi and Huang Tingjian, who wrote on landscape paintings, mainly as a form of private communication, often with political

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published in *Oriental Art* 7 (1961): 66-74; 8 (1962): 130-137; 10 (1964): 19-26.

<sup>266</sup> Ma Yuan painted parable paintings (*zenkizu* 禅機图) such as the *Priests Qingliang and Yunmen*, both bearing Empress Yang's inscription, in the Tenryūji collection.

<sup>267</sup> Liang Kai at one point stayed at Liutongsi. Weng Wange 翁萬戈, "Liang Kai zhi yanjiu ji <Daojun xiang> zhi tanwei" 梁楷之研究及《道君像》之探微, in Weng Wange, *Laixiju du Liangkai Daojun xiang* 萊溪居讀梁楷道君像 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chunbanshe, 2018), pp. 31. Liang Kai's works are some of the finest Chan/Zen Buddhist paintings, such as the *Shakyamuni Leaving the Mountain* (*Shussan shaka* 出山釈迦) in the Tokyo National Museum.

<sup>268</sup> See section on the Northern Song monk Huihong and his anthology *Shimen wenzichan* in Chapter 2.

implications.<sup>269</sup> Chan Buddhists' similar practice must have been inspired by the literati.<sup>270</sup> It is clear that prior to Yishan's departure for Japan in 1299, ink monochrome paintings were frequently made and admired among the literati and Chan monks, who shared a common cultural repertory rooted in Confucian classics and Buddhist scriptures.

Perhaps the most significant genre to emerge within the tradition of ink painting is that of landscape. The presence of ink monochrome landscape elements in several early paintings of Bodhidharma and Guanyin bearing Yishan's inscriptions presaged the development of landscape as an independent painting subject of great importance to the Gozan monks from the Nanbokuchō period (1337-1392) onward.

### **5.3 *Bodhidharma Meditating on a Rock Plateau under a Pine Tree (shōka daruma zu 松下達磨圖)***

*Bodhidharma Meditating on a Rock Plateau under a Pine Tree* (fig. 5.13) bears an inscription in fluid running script by Yishan. The painting depicts Bodhidharma in a three-quarter view, seated on a rock; he wears a red tunic that covers his head. Nearly a third of the painting is occupied by the crown of a luxuriant pine tree hanging from above, forming a canopy that frames the seated figure. Billowing clouds in ink outline serve as a backdrop. Dominating the lower third of the painting is a rock plateau painted with axe-cut texture strokes, which reveals the anonymous artist's indebtedness to the style of the Southern Song painting academy. Foreshortened, the rock

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<sup>269</sup> Alfreda Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2000).

<sup>270</sup> Morton Schlütter observes that "in the Song, the success of a Chan master was, to a large degree, dependent on his ability and willingness to participate in literati culture"; quoted in Yukio Lippit, "Awakenings: The Development of the Zen Figural Pantheon," in Gregory Levine and Yukio Lippit, *Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan* (New York: Japan Society; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), exhibition catalogue, pp. 38.

platform seems to extend out of the bottom edge of the picture plane, a pictorial conceit that bridges the illusionistic space of the painting and the physical space occupied by the viewer. A pair of bejeweled sandals in the lower right corner creates a similar effect. Three clusters of bamboo leaves surround the rock, suggesting the height of the plateau.

The rich pictorial effects of the painting are attributable to a deft deployment of a variety of ink lines and carefully gradated ink washes. The billowing forms of the clouds in the middle-background are articulated with extremely attenuated ink lines; a subtle gradation in ink tonality of these lines, together with light ink washes around the silhouette, give volume to the clouds.

The ink lines deployed in the face and beard of Bodhidharma are slightly thicker but still extremely fine, as are the short, truncated brushstrokes used for the pine needles in the crown of the pine tree hovering above Bodhidharma. Still thicker brushstrokes are found in the articulation of the red robe; with gradated ink wash along the folding lines of the robe they contribute to the three-dimensionality of the figure. The most impetuous ink lines are reserved for the rock plateau and its texture strokes in the foreground as well as the rough bark of the pine tree in the upper left corner. Finally, there is a base layer of ink wash visible in the upper right corner of the painting, which sets off the clouds. The importance of landscape elements in this painting becomes evident when it is compared to a slightly earlier painting titled *Red Robed Bodhidharma* bearing an inscription dated to 1264 by Yishan's predecessor Lanxi Daolong, the founding abbot of Kenchōji (fig. 5.14).

The painting inscribed by Lanxi resembles an icon, such as an image of Kannon in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 5.15); depicted in a frontal posture, the bodhisattva is seated on a lotus dais that seems to float mid-air. The image of Bodhidharma displays a similar pose, the use of heavy pigment, and most importantly, the absence of any identifiable setting. The

intense gaze of the Chan founder and his frowning eyebrows indicate a state of deep introspection. By contrast, Bodhidharma in the painting inscribed by Yishan is placed in a richly articulated and lush natural landscape that occupies most of the pictorial surface. The spatial recession created by the foreshortened rock plateau and the volumetric clouds create a sense of space like that of the real world. The three-quarter pose is more relaxed, and parting his lips, the founder seems to be speaking. This image of Bodhidharma is more approachable—situated in a space like that occupied by the viewer. The inscription by Yishan also reveals the importance of the landscape:

One remark at court  
 Ruffled the the dragon’s scales [Emperor Wu of Liang]  
 Going into an empty mountain  
 Becoming someone who faces the cliff  
 Transmission outside the sect  
 What exactly is being transmitted?  
 The vines circling around the tree till they reach the clouds  
 Green leaves forming a tangle.

彤墀一語逆龍鱗  
 去作空山面壁人  
 教外別傳傳什麼  
 藤纏雲樹碧粼粼<sup>271</sup>

As mentioned in the fourth line, vines are depicted around the trunk of the pine tree in the upper-left corner of the painting, and the speaking Bodhidharma seems to inspire the question “what exactly is being transmitted?” In contrast, composed for Hōjō Tokimune, Lanxi Daolong’s patron, the inscription by Yishan’s predecessor is a standard account of Bodhidharma’s journey from India to China and of the spread of Chan Buddhism to Japan, and therefore not a response

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<sup>271</sup> Transcription by Kinugawa Kenji 衣川賢治 and Takatsu Kunie 高津久仁枝, *Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū* 一山一寧墨跡集, (Shizuoka: Kiichiji, 2016), no. 10, pp. 64-66.

to the imagery of the painting itself.

The earliest extant Zen painting of the White-robed Kannon is in the Kyūshū National Museum 九州国立博物館 (fig. 5.16); it bears an inscription by the Chinese Chan monk Jingtang Jueyuan 鏡堂覺圓 (J: Kyōdō Kaku'en, 1244-1306), who emigrated to Japan with Wuxue Zuyuan in 1279.<sup>272</sup> The anonymous painter took much interest in depicting elements of the natural landscape such as the triangularly shaped rock platform protruding from the right on which the white-robed Kannon is seated; there are careful ink washes on the rock to suggest shadow and strokes that delineate the texture of the rock formation. Ink dots suggest vegetation in the crevices of the rock. This composition would prove to be popular in later iterations of the same subject in Zen paintings.

#### **5.4 *Guanyin of Mount Putuo with Shancai and the Dragon (guanyin tu 觀音圖)***

Far exceeding these 13<sup>th</sup> century images of the White-robed Kannon in compositional and spatial complexity and abundance of landscape motifs is a sumptuously produced painting with gold on silk titled *Guanyin of Mount Putuo with Shancai and the Dragon* in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, inscribed by Yishan (fig. 5.17). Of the twenty-four extant paintings bearing Yishan's inscriptions, five are depictions of this Bodhisattva, suggesting the importance of this painting subject to the monk.<sup>273</sup>

The Yishan inscription on the Boston painting is squeezed into a rectangular space in

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<sup>272</sup> For a study on paintings bearing Jingtang Jueyuan's inscriptions, see Tanaka Ichimatsu 田中一松, "Kyōdō Kaku'en chosan no shosaku hin wo meggute" 鏡堂覺圓著賛の諸作品をめぐって [On several paintings bearing Kyōdō Kaku'en's inscriptions], *Kokka*, 74-8 (1965): 7-23.

<sup>273</sup> One more White-robed Kannon painting with Yishan's inscription is known through the *Compressed Pictures* by Tanyū (*tanyū shukuzu* 探幽縮図). See Appendix B.

upper left corner of the painting, which indicates that the anonymous painter (and his workshop) did not anticipate that it would be inscribed. The painter displays a high level of technical finesse in his treatment of the heavily pigmented figures of Kannon and Shancai 善財 (lower left) and the ink landscape. The iconography is reminiscent of the water-moon Kannon (*shuiyue guanyin* 水月觀音); one leg is straight and the other folded over the opposite knee; the right hand dangles elegantly from the right knee, while the left hand, foreshortened, is placed casually on a boulder that juts out from the right. The left foot rests on a perfectly flat and symmetrical rock stool. The ink lines that constitute the body of Guanyin are fluid, and the well-placed gold accents adds touch of luxury.<sup>274</sup>

Mt. Putuo, an island off the coast of the port city of Ningbo, had been associated with the cult of Guanyin in China since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, as the island was seen as Mt. Potalaka mentioned in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (C: *Huayanjing* 華嚴經; J: *Kegonkyō* 華嚴經), as the dwelling place of Guanyin.<sup>275</sup> The detailed landscape of the BMFA painting must have reminded Yishan Yining of a miraculous scene that he witnessed as abbot at the Baotuo Guanyin Chan Monastery 寶陀觀音禪寺 on Mt. Putuo, his last post before going to Japan. In an inscription on an anonymous *chinsō* painting now in Kiichiji 歸一寺 on Izu peninsula, Yishan recalls this miraculous scene, The inscription is accompanied by a small ink sketch of Guanyin (fig. 5.18):

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<sup>274</sup> This effort to harness the visual language to the effect of realism is quite different from what can be seen in some later paintings of Kannon in Japan where ink lines and gold often are deployed for a flat, decorative purpose. In this the Boston painting reveals influences from the Song Yuan Buddhist paintings. For an overview of Water-Moon Kannon paintings from the Kamakura period, see Hayashi On, *Kamakura Bukkyō kaiga kō—Butsuga ni okeru 'Kamakura ha' no seiritsu to tenkai*, (Tokyo: Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppansha, 2010), pp. 28-30.

<sup>275</sup> Brinker and Kanazawa, *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*, p. 136



The region of Mt. Putuo is sacred site by the ocean;  
The reputation of the Master [Yishan] grows with the reputation of the sacred site.  
Six years passed. One day [Yishan] went to a grotto, suddenly there appeared the image  
of Guanyin with a halo, now visible, now obscured in a bright light.  
Master [Yishan] was overjoyed and made a gesture to worship [Guanyin], [but] the  
apparition soon disappeared.

“普陀之地、海岸靈區、師之道價、與勝域並騰。  
六更歲序。一日詣巖洞、忽現圓光聖像、隱映光中。  
師感喜作禮、須臾即沒。”<sup>276</sup>

The BMFA painting adheres closely to the description of this apparition of Guanyin that Yishan witnessed. The setting is a deeply recessed grotto with a waterfall in the background and a pond that fills the bottom half of the composition; the skillfully rendered mist rising from the waterfall in the middle ground fills the air with moisture, much as in the actual natural environment of Mt. Putuo often shrouded in mist from the East China Sea. A large halo hovers behind Guanyin. Perhaps most remarkable is how the painter captured the “now visible now obscured” quality of the apparition described in the inscription; in fact, such is the degree of visual unison between the body of Guanyin and its setting that if it were not for the gold and opaque white pigment on the drapery folds and headdress, the body of Guanyin would almost melt into the background. Bamboo leaves painted in gold surrounding the rock formation in the upper-right corner and the *kundika* bottle holding a branch of willow to the left of the halo add depth to the pictorial space. Overall, the painting evokes the transience of the apparition Yishan recorded in the inscription. The rich landscape details help the viewer vicariously experience this vision.

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<sup>276</sup> Satō Hidetaka 佐藤秀孝, “Issan Ichinei no denki shiryō—Kokan Shiren sen ‘Issan Kokushi Gyōjō’ no shakuchū” 一山一寧の伝記資料—虎関師鍊撰「一山国師行状」[The Biography of Issan Ichinei—an annotation of ‘Life and Deeds of the National Master Issan’ by Kokan Shiren], *Komazawadaigaku bukkyō gakubu kenkyū kiyō* no. 75 (2017): p. 65.

## 5.5 Text and Image

The relationship between texts and images has been one of the major themes in the study of the history of Chinese art. Interactions between texts and images could be traced to the practice of the Tang poet Du Fu of writing poems about paintings.<sup>277</sup> Su Shi and his coterie of Northern Song literati scholars were instrumental in promoting the synthesis of poetry, calligraphy, and painting—the “three perfections” in Chinese art, which laid the foundation for the interaction of the semantic content of a poem, the formal qualities of the calligraphy in which it was written, and the image depicted in the painting on which such a poem was inscribed.<sup>278</sup> In the view of many scholars, the relationship between texts and images developed “from one of complementary illustration to one of complex integration—a major shift occurring during the late Song and early Yuan dynasties, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.”<sup>279</sup> This period coincided with the large-scale introduction of ink paintings from continental China to the archipelago and Yishan’s prolific inscriptional activities in Japan.

By the time Chan Buddhism arrived in Japan with Lanxi Daolong’s emigration to Kamakura in 1246, Buddhist sects in Japan had long employed paintings as objects of meditation and worship. Early sutra illustrations featured texts written above corresponding images (fig. 5.19). Using paintings of deities, Esoteric Buddhist sects sought to inspire faith in their devotees

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<sup>277</sup> Jonathan Chaves, “‘Meaning beyond the Painting’: The Chinese Painter as Poet,” in Fong and Murck ed., *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting*, (The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 431-458.

<sup>278</sup> For a translated sample of Northern Song literati’s views on poetry and painting, such as Ou Yangxiu, Su Shi and Huang Tingjian, see Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih ed., *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Hong Kong University Press, 2012), pp. 203-205.

<sup>279</sup> Wen C. Fong and Alfreda Murck, “The Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting,” introduction to Fong and Murck ed., *Words and Images*, pp. xv.

by creating an immersive and mystic optical experience. Writing, which would have disturbed the illusion of an apparition, rarely was added to such icons. New Buddhist sects, such as the Pure Land sect, made use of illustrated handscrolls that depicted the hagiography of founding patriarchs or the miraculous origins of temples. In these scrolls, texts are placed next to painted scenes as narrative explanations. In sum, pictorial images sponsored by various Buddhist sects in Japan at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> century depended primarily on optical experiences; texts were secondary to images. It was against this background that a new relationship between text and image was introduced by émigré Chan monks.

Writing inscriptions on paintings at the request of patrons was a key strategy that Yishan developed in his effort to promote Chan/Zen after his arrival in Japan.<sup>280</sup> His inscriptions elucidated iconography, called attention to certain aspects of images or placed them within particular interpretative frameworks, and sometimes to undermine their apparent significance, thus creating a subversive relationship between texts and images unknown in inscriptions by earlier writers.

While his predecessors often wrote about the biography of, or the anecdotes associated with figures depicted in paintings, Yishan's inscriptions are less predictable. They are less ornate in vocabulary and imagery, and their blandness has been considered suitable for the expression of Zen Buddhist spirit.<sup>281</sup> His poems challenge binary thinking and provoke the reader to think

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<sup>280</sup> “The recipients of most of these [inscribed] scrolls were often times situated at the peripheries of monastic communities, but precisely because of this were in a position to offer financial and various other forms of patronage.” Yukio Lippit, “Awakenings: The Development of the Zen Figural Pantheon,” p. 36.

<sup>281</sup> For example, when compared to Daxiu Zhengnian and Wuxue Zuyuan who both emigrated to Kamakura before Yishan, Yishan was less adamant about poetic versification and saw it only as a means to the end of achieving enlightenment. Kageki Hideo 蔭木英雄, *Chūsei Zenrin Shishi* 中世禪林詩史 [History of Poetry of Medieval Zen], (Tokyo: Kasama shoin,

beyond categories prescribed by conventional rationality. The reader-viewer cannot remain passive but must participate in an intellectual and spiritual dialogue with the inscribed images.

Yishan's inscriptions also add a temporal dimension to the experience of looking at a painted image that combines aspects of how hanging scrolls and handscrolls were viewed and read. A hanging scroll promotes an instantaneous experience of an image, perceived as a unified visual entity in a vertical format. Although careful looking at such an image can take place over a long period of time, the viewer's eye is free to explore the hanging scroll at will, moving from one area to another. The experience of viewing an illustrated narrative scroll, such as the *Ippen Hijiri-e*, is completely different: words and images appear gradually during the passage of time necessary to unroll the scroll. An inscribed hanging scroll requires both the scanning of the image, presented fully to the viewer all at once, and the act of reading, which can only take place in a temporal progression determined by the syntax and structures of the inscribed phrases.

### **5.5.1 Wish-Granting Kannon (*nyoirin kannon-zu* 如意輪觀音図)**

The presence of an inscription on a painting requires the viewer to slow down, to reflect on the experiences of looking and reading, and on the relationship between text and image. Inscriptions by Yishan often surprise or confound expectations, setting up a kind of dissonance between words and images that, like a *kōan* 公案, disrupt normal patterns of thought. Such dissonance can be observed in *Wish-Granting Kannon (Nyoirin kannon-zu* 如意輪觀音図) in Matsuoji 松尾寺 in Maizuru 舞鶴, which bears a Yishan inscription dated to the year 1307—a rarity among the monk's inscriptions, most of which are undated (fig. 5.8).

The Wish-Granting Kannon had been a central icon of the Esoteric Shingon Buddhist

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1994), pp. 45-50.

sect since the Nara period. That Yishan, though a Chan priest, was asked to write on a painting of a Shingon icon is not surprising, given his reputation as a learned Chinese priest and the syncretic nature of Zen Buddhism practiced in Japan at the time. The glowing six-arm bodhisattva sits on a lotus dais floating in an ambiguous space. The sumptuousness of the images and the slightly archaic style of the painting contribute to its mysterious aura befitting an esoteric Buddhist icon meant to inspire absolute faith in the devotee's mind.<sup>282</sup> But Yishan's inscription satirizes the icon:

Kannon Bodhisattva seated on the lotus throne,  
    meditating in quietude;  
His six arms intertwining  
    each holding an accoutrement.  
What on earth are they useful for  
    the wish-granting jewels and the dharma wheels,  
When the world thought to be populated with suffering people who need delivery  
    is already empty.

寶蓮臺上靜思惟  
六臂紛然互執持  
如意妙輪何所用  
眾生苦海已空時<sup>283</sup>

Yishan's inscription exposes the futility of relying on an esoteric deity for salvation rather than achieving this state through the self-discipline taught by the Zen sect.<sup>284</sup> The inscription thus

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<sup>282</sup> The Matsuo painting is a curious melange of archaic iconography and Song continental style. For a stylistic and iconographical study on this painting, see Hayashi On, *Kamakura Bukkyō kaiga kō: butsuga ni okeru "Kamakura-ha" no seiritsu to tenkai*, pp. 139-152.

<sup>283</sup> Transcription by Kinugawa and Takatsu, *Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū*, no. 10, pp. 64-66. The poem starts from the left side of the painting, and each column contains seven characters; the signature is by far the most formal in all his extant inscribed paintings, with date, month, year, as well as Yishan monastic affiliation.

<sup>284</sup> “directly pointing to the human heartmind (zhizhi renxin, 直指人心); seeing nature and becoming a Buddha (jianxing chengfo, 見性成佛).”  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/buddhism-chan/>

undermines the significance of the hanging scroll's well-established iconography.

### 5.5.2 *White-Robed Kannon* (*byaku-e kannon zu* 白衣觀音図)

Yishan deployed the same satirical stance towards the iconography of Zen Buddhist paintings, such as the *White-Robed Kannon* in Kōmyōji 光明寺 (fig. 5.20). His inscription on the

Kyōmyōji painting reads:

You preach that one ought to hear the teaching and practice meditation  
in order to enter the state of Samadhi,<sup>285</sup>  
While you yourself are unaware that  
you are seated in the grass nest [that is the anxiety attached to worldly  
entanglements].<sup>286</sup>  
Magpies and crows chirping and chattering  
in the idleness of the bright day:  
This is the original and harmonious way  
in which the world exists in its entirety.

聞思修入三摩地  
不知坐在草窠裡  
鵲噪鴉鳴白日閒  
法尔圓通應一切<sup>287</sup>

Despite being badly damaged, the painting reveals the technical finesse of the artist's handling of details such as the bird perched on the branch in the upper left corner and the delicate figure of Kannon, which is outlined with an opaque white pigment (*gofun* 胡粉).<sup>288</sup> Although the figure

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<sup>285</sup> Samadhi, a state of intense concentration achieved through meditation.

<sup>286</sup> Unkempt grass/weeds left to grow on their own is a metaphor in the Chan Buddhist context for letting one's mind be taken control by one's desires and illusions.

<sup>287</sup> Transcription by Kinugawa and Takatsu, *Issan Ichinei Bokuseki Shū*, no. 23, pp. 120-122.

<sup>288</sup> The association of parakeet and Avalokitesvara is traceable to the *kōōkannon kyō* 高王觀音教. The inclusion of bird in Kannon paintings is rare. See Shimada Shūjirō and Iriya Yoshitaka, *Zenrin gasan*, p. 41.

of Kannon is painted with heavy pigments, the landscape setting is rendered in ink—a feature seen also in the *Guanyin of Mt. Putuo* (BMFA) and *Bodhidharma Seated under A Pine Tree* (Tokyo National Museum) examined in previous sections; this was a sign of the growing importance of ink monochrome painting in the Zen environments in which Yishan was active.

## **5.6 Yishan’s Inscriptions and the Rise of Ink Monochrome Landscape Painting in 14<sup>th</sup> century Japan**

Paintings of various subjects bearing Yishan’s inscriptions reflect the growing importance of ink monochrome painting; in these paintings, the inscriptions often show a deep engagement with the landscape elements. The prominence of landscape in both the text and the image presages what would soon become a widely spread mode of pictorial and literary production among Zen monks in Japan—that of the “poem and painting scrolls” (*shigajiku*).

### **5.6.1 Illustrations of The Ten Oxherding Parables (C: *shiniu tu* 十牛圖 J: *jūgyūzu* 十牛図)**

Yishan inscribed two sets of parable paintings of the theme “Ten Oxherding Parables” (*shiniu song* 十牛頌), a popular Chan/Zen Buddhist painting subject. The ten verses were attributed to Kuo’an Shiyuan 廓庵師遠 (dates unknown) of the Northern Song period.<sup>289</sup> In these parables, ten progressive stages in the quest for Enlightenment are symbolized by the relationship between an ox and his herdboys.<sup>290</sup> One of the earliest extant examples of this theme in Chinese painting is dated to the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 5.21); the earliest extant example in Japan is dated

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<sup>289</sup> Paul D. Clasper, *The Ox-herder Pictures: Zen Buddhism’s version of “The Pilgrim’s Progress”* (Hong Kong: Lotus-Logos Press, 1970).

<sup>290</sup> For an overview of this painting subject using a set of commentaries by the prominent Gozan Zen Buddhist Zekkai Chūshin (1336-1406), see Brinker and Kanazawa, *Zen: Masters of Meditation in Images and Writings*, pp. 169-172.

to 1278 (fig. 5.22). Both feature a sketchy one-corner landscape within a circle, a shape that for Zen Buddhism “symbolizes the absolute deliverance from any adherence to the world of phenomena.”<sup>291</sup>

The two extant oxherding paintings with Yishan’s inscriptions are exceptional because of their format and the prominence of ink landscape elements in the scenes. Unlike conventional oxherding pictures depicted in circles, these paintings, mounted as vertical hanging scrolls, are rectangular (fig. 5.23 and fig. 5.24). In both, the landscape setting almost eclipses the actual subject of the paintings. The spatial complexity of the landscape and the attention devoted to its details deflect attention from the oxen and herdboys. In fact, if not for Yishan’s inscriptions which address the theme of oxherding, both works could have been classified as ink monochrome landscape paintings. Also, the content of each inscription directly engages with the landscape elements in the painting.<sup>292</sup> In “Looking for the Ox” (*jingyū* 尋牛) (fig. 24), the inscription reads thus:

Originally,  
    there was no trace to follow,  
Endless layers of clouds and trees,  
    deep are the sprawling grass.  
Although underneath the feet,  
    paths diverge,  
In front of the rock,  
    the old trees rustle without care.

本無形跡可求尋  
雲樹蒼蒼煙草深  
腳下雖然歧路別

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>292</sup> Both poems are recorded in *The Recorded Sayings of Yishan* (*Yishan guoshi miaoci hongji dashi yulu* 一山國師妙慈弘濟大師語錄), in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, (Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1961), vol. 80, p. 327.



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The second and fourth verses clearly adhere to the landscape setting elaborately composed in the painting. Finely gradated swaths of ink wash throughout the painting imparts depth and a somewhat mysterious ambience to the layered peaks rising up from the mist in the middle ground; in the foreground, three luxuriant deciduous trees are perched on the robust rock formation, prominently occupying the center-right part of the composition. The herdboy gazes towards outside the left edge of the painting, seemingly at loss as to where to go forward.

“Looking for the Ox” is the first stage in the Ten Oxherding Parables. It signifies the anxious search by the herdboy after knowledge of the true nature of the world (his ox). The depth of the landscape and its somber ink tone heighten the sense of desolation and disorientation that the herdboy experiences at the onset of his quest. By contrast, the tone is much lighter in the “Leading the Ox” (*bokugyū* 牧牛) (fig. 5.24), the fifth stage that signifies the secure grasp of true knowledge of the world by the herdboy. Its inscription reads:

Everywhere irrigation and grass  
enliven the canal,  
Pure and clean,  
how has it [the mind] ever gotten even one speck of dust.  
The rice paddy naturally  
will not be ruffled [by the ox],  
Now drawing close, now letting go,  
it is in complete control of the boy.

隨時水草活渠身  
純淨何曾染一塵  
苗稼自然混不犯  
收來放去卻由人

Compared to the “Looking for the Ox,” the landscape setting in “Leading the Ox” seems more luminous, as there is less overlapping between its various components, and the general ink tone is lighter. The ox, its head lowered towards the ground, seems to be perfectly obedient to his

master, who now stands in the foreground and looks out of the pictorial plane at the viewer with a content facial expression that verges on complacency. Echoing the first two verses of Yishan's poem, the middle ground of the painting is devoted to the depiction of a calm, untainted body of water that flows in a slightly diagonal direction along the boy and his ox. Overall, the landscape emanates an aura of renewal—the season is indeed spring and full of hope, befitting the joy that the herdboys feel now that they have grasped the true knowledge of the world (his ox).

### **5.6.2 *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (C: *xiaoxiang bajing* 瀟湘八景; J: *shōshōhakkei*)**

The most frequently painted subject in the history of landscape paintings in East Asia is Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang Rivers.<sup>293</sup> The earliest extant Japanese painting of this subject bears a Yishan inscription (fig. 5.25). The painting has a seal that reads “Shitan” 思澗 in the lower right corner, but the painter's identity remains obscure.<sup>294</sup>

What is clear is that the painter attempted to depict an illusionistic space, although the result is rather awkward as the composite elements of the spatial recession seem chaotically

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<sup>293</sup> I Ruofen 衣若芬, "Xiaoxiang bajing: Dongya gongtong muti de wenhua yixiang" 想象八景：東亞共同母題的文化意象 [Eight Views of Xiao-Xiang: The Culture Image of East Asia] *Dongya guannian shi ji kan* 東亞觀念史集刊, issue no. 6 (2014): 35-55.

<sup>294</sup> Saitō Takashi 齊藤孝, "Satomike zō Issan Ichinei san 'Heisa rakugan zu' ni tsuite -- wagakuni chūsei ni okeru yamato-e to suibokuga no setten" 里見家藏一山一寧贊「平沙落雁図」について——我国中世における大和絵と水墨画の接点 [On 'Geese Descending on the Sandbar' with Issan Ichinei inscription in the Saotmi family collection--the connecting point between yamato-e and ink painting in medieval Japan], *Shisen* 史泉 no. 50 (1975): 143-160. See also entry on this painting in Shimada Shūjirō and Iriya Yoshitaka ed., *Zenrin gasan*, pp. 277-280; *Tanyūshukuzu* contains a sketch of *Autumn Moon Over the Dongting Lake* bearing Yishan's inscription and the same seal as the *Geese Descending on the Sandbar*; another work, possibly *Returning Sails from Distant Shore*, is known through an auction catalogue reproduction. See Appendix B.

placed. For example, the boulder that juts out from the ground towards the center-right is disproportionately large next to the precipitous mountain formation immediately behind it. The layering of the distant peaks bespeaks a continental model that is reminiscent of the “high distance” (*gaoyuan* 高遠)—a compositional formula of monumental landscape paintings in the Northern Song idiom. The painting thus seems likely to be a work by a Japanese painter in Yishan’s orbit who was either copying a Chinese model or experimenting with an illusionistic landscape space using a pictorial vocabulary from continental examples. The painting is a reminder of the intimate connection between the milieu of Chan/Zen monasteries and the genre of ink monochrome landscape paintings.

The inscription does not make any explicit reference to Zen Buddhism but rather seems to contain an oblique allusion to Yishan’s personal experience regarding his emigration to Japan:

The arrival of cold air in the north should be early,  
 Geese flying south rest in the autumn [of Xiao and Xiang].  
 Lightly they thread air above the shallow sand bar in the water,  
 How could they be only after rice and millet?

紫塞寒應早  
 南來傍素秋  
 飛飛沙渚上  
 豈止稻梁謀<sup>295</sup>

The poem alludes to Du Fu’s “On Climbing the Ci’en monastery Pagoda” (*Tong zhugong deng ci’ensi ta* 同諸公登慈恩寺塔) in the phrase “*dao liang mou* 稻梁謀.” Du Fu’s poem draws an analogy between bureaucrats seeking salaries to geese flying south for food; Yishan inverts Du Fu’s original meaning by suggesting that the geese were motivated by things beyond mere the

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<sup>295</sup> Transcription by Kinugawa and Takatsu, *Issan Kokushi Bokuseki Shū*, no.27, pp. 136-138. See also entry on this painting in Shimada Shūjirō and Iriya Yoshitaka, *Zenrin gasan*, pp. 277-280.

need for food. Given that Yishan himself made the journey to Japan in 1299 and achieved great success as the first émigré Chan Buddhist to have been warmly received by the court in Kyoto, perhaps he was trying to express that he, like the geese, were not just motivated by sustenance or reputation, but by the desire to promulgate Chan Buddhism across the sea.<sup>296</sup>

Although not dated, the calligraphy of the inscription resembles the abbreviated cursive style of his Kyoto years (1313-1317) (see Chapter 4), when, as abbot of Nanzenji he had reached the zenith of his career, sought out by the retired emperor, court aristocrats and Japanese disciples for guidance in spiritual matters.<sup>297</sup> This poem composed for *Geese Descending the Sandbar* strikes a personal note that resonates with the sentiment encapsulated in his cursive masterwork *On A Snowy Night* of 1315 (fig. 5.26)—an account of Yishan in his abbot's quarter in Nanzenji listening to the sound of snowflakes falling against his window, lamenting that he had yet to reach Enlightenment owing to “idle thoughts” [the entanglements in worldly affairs].

This painting is the earliest extant example of an ink monochrome landscape by a Japanese painter, and it stood at a pivotal moment when, in addition to monumental, decorative format of sliding doors and screens (*sōshokuga* 装飾画), Japanese painters were increasingly producing works in smaller, more portable formats such as the hanging scroll, suitable as objects of appreciation (*kanshōga* 鑑賞画).

The practice of writing inscriptions on landscape paintings—of which Yishan Yining was a pioneer—effectively integrated the image of landscape and the words of Chan/Zen Buddhist

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<sup>296</sup> Kinugawa and Takatsu, *Issan Kokushi Bokuseki Shū*, pp. 136-138.

<sup>297</sup> None of Yishan's extant painting inscriptions are written in the Huaisu-derived wild cursive style we have seen on his hanging scrolls dated to his Kyoto years; most often the abbreviated cursive style is used in these painting inscriptions. This is possibly due to the constraint of space on paintings that does not accommodate the gestural, circular form of the wild cursive.

teachings. Furthermore, this important development prefigured the efflorescence of *shigajiku* towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the act of inscribing an ink landscape painting became an important social activity among monks of the Gozan institutions.

## Conclusion

In autumn of 1299, when Yishan Yining made a brief stop in Kyoto on his way from Hakata to Kamakura, the young Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石(1275-1351) went to Yishan and expressed his desire to study with the Chinese master; later Musō followed Yishan to Kamakura, passed a challenging versification exam on sutras and literary classics that the Chinese master required for those who wanted to study with him, and began his training. After his years with Yishan, Musō went on to become one of the most influential Zen monks of the 14<sup>th</sup> century—advisor to the first Ashikaga shogun Takauji 足利尊氏(1305-1358), spiritual guide to Emperor Go-Daigo 後醍醐(1288-1339, r. 1318-1339), and abbot of the most powerful Zen monasteries in Kyoto (Tenryūji and Nanzenji).

It was not, however, under Yishan that Musō Soseki obtained Enlightenment; this he achieved under Kōhō Kennichi 高峰顯日 (1241-1316), a renowned Zen prelate who never went to China and arguably the first Japanese Zen master whose stature was comparable to that of Yishan Yining. As a calligrapher, though, Musō was deeply influenced by Yishan’s writing and practiced a highly fluid and classicizing style derived from that of Wang Xizhi and close to that of Yishan Yining during his Kamakura years (fig. i).<sup>298</sup> Musō also wrote cursive calligraphy on

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<sup>298</sup> Musō Soseki was the first in number of extant *bokuseki* in his name—190 works; Yishan Yining has 114 works under his name. See *Shiryō shū* 資料集, published in conjunction with the exhibition catalogue, *Sho no kokuhō: bokuseki* 書の国宝: 墨蹟 [National treasures of calligraphy: Zen calligraphy], (Osaka: Yomiuri Shinbun Osaka Honsha, 2006). In the entry on the eighth day of the twelfth month of *Tenshō* 天正 17 (1589) of *Rokuon nichiroku* 鹿苑院日録, the diary kept by the abbots of Rokuonin from 1487 to 1651, Yishan and Musō’s calligraphies appear together with the author referring to “calligraphy of the Yishan school” (“一山宗派墨跡”), Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助 ed., *Rokuon nichiroku* 鹿苑日録, (Tokyo: Taiyosha, 1934-1937), 5: 341.

hanging scrolls (fig. ii) reminiscent of Yishan's works from his Kyoto years, such as *On A Snowy Night* of 1315. Although the format of the hanging scroll inscribed by Musō is like that of the scrolls bearing Chinese poems by Yishan, the subject of Musō's poem is the Nachi waterfall (*nachi no take* 那智の滝), a sacred site on the ancient Kumano pilgrimage (*kumano kodō* 熊野古道) associated with *Shugendō* 修験道, an indigenous and highly syncretic Japanese religious practice.<sup>299</sup>

Perhaps the most important legacy of Yishan for Musō and those who came after him was the example he set, as an émigré Chan monk, of responding to and synthesizing “Chinese” (*kan* 漢) and the “Japanese” (*wa* 和) elements in the cultural and religious life of Kamakura Japan.<sup>300</sup> Arriving in Japan as a mature calligrapher, whose style was based on the classical tradition of his homeland, dominated by Wang Xizhi, Yishan continued to write in this style, long admired in Japan, during his years in Kamakura (1299-1313), seat of the military government. It was after moving to Kyoto, the undisputed cultural capital of Japan, where the Wang Xizhi style had also been admired as early as the Nara period, that Yishan broke with the classical Chinese tradition, writing in uninhibited cursive styles. Such calligraphy, associated with the Chinese monk Huaisu, was not unknown to the Kyoto clergy and aristocrats at the imperial court, but Yishan's bold transformation of this manner might be said to have created a

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<sup>299</sup> For a detailed study on the Kumano pilgrimage sites, see D. Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>300</sup> On the conceptual framework of *wa* and *kan*, see Shimao Arata 島尾新, “*Wakan no sakai wo magirakasu*”—*chanoyu no rinen to nihonbunka* 「和漢のさかいをまぎらかす—茶の湯の理念と日本文化 [Ruffling the distinction between *wa* and *kan*—the way of tea and Japanese culture], (Kyoto: Kōdansha, 2013), pp. 59-83.

minor sensation. By late in his life, Yishan had also achieved a synthesis of Chinese and Japanese cultural traditions, assimilating into his cursive script stylistic features that resembled those of highly fluid Japanese *kana* script. At the same time that Yishan achieved this synthesis in his art, the Chinese monk enjoyed warm relations with Emperor Go-Uda and court aristocrats in Kyoto.

Beyond the depth of his Buddhist learning and the force of his spiritual presence, the secret of Yishan Yining's unprecedentedly successful career as an émigré Chan monk in Kamakura Japan was inseparable from his ability to assimilate practices of his adopted land and to arrive at innovative fusions of Chinese and Japanese cultural forms—epitomized in the changes in his calligraphy.<sup>301</sup> But it was not only the style of Yishan's writing that was remarkable in the history of Sino-Japanese art: the formats in which he wrote also were of great importance.

Like the illustrious tradition of Chinese calligraphy of which Yishan, living in Japan, was an embodiment, he also was the product of an artistic tradition permeated by combinations of texts and images, in the form of calligraphy written on paintings. Yishan's inscriptions on paintings made in Japan, in particular his inscriptions on hanging scrolls, not only transferred to these works the Chinese practice of combining words and images, their contents also generated a

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<sup>301</sup> Known as a man of great learning, Yishan composed poetic encomia for important religious leaders and cultural superstars of Japan such as Shōtoku Taishi 聖德太子 (late 6<sup>th</sup>-early 7<sup>th</sup> century) and Kūkai 空海 (774-835). Yishan Yining, *The Recorded Sayings of Yishan* (*Yishan guoshi miaoci hongji dashi yulu* 一山國師妙慈弘濟大師語錄), in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, (Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, 1961), vol. 80, p. 330. For transcriptions of and brief introductions to these two poems, see Kageki Hideo 蔭木英雄, *Chūsei zenrin shishi* 中世禪林詩史 [History of poem in medieval Zen world], (Tokyo: Kasama shoin, 1994), pp. 48-49. For the further “Japanization” of poetry produced by Gozan monks, see *ibid.*, pp. 51-67.



new relationship between visual and verbal communication. Yishan's poems on hanging scrolls demanded that the viewer-reader actively engage with images and, goaded by the Chinese monk's *koan*-like inscriptions, reconsider their apparent significance. Reading one of Yishan's inscriptions on an image of Kannon, for example, might subvert everything a believer assumed about this deity and the nature of salvation itself. Yishan's inscriptions also reveal a thoughtful engagement with landscape elements in paintings, prefiguring the rise of the poetry-painting scrolls (*shigajiku* 詩画軸) in the Nanbokuchō 南北朝 period (1337-1392) that epitomized the efflorescence of the Gozan culture. Perhaps more than any other cultural artifacts, inscribed landscape paintings reflect the successful acculturation of Chan Buddhism in Japan, or more precisely "lettered Chan," of which Yishan was a brilliant representative.

Yishan's diverse calligraphic practices in Japan are emblematic of what Yukio Lippit has termed "the uniqueness of Yishan's circumstances in his new Japanese environments."<sup>302</sup> Placed under arrest when he first arrived in Japan, Yishan had no choice but to adapt to the complex political and cultural climate of Kamakura Japan. Demonstrating his success in doing so in the domain of calligraphy was a goal of this dissertation. My goal also was to contribute to the current reevaluation of an art historical narrative of "China influences Japan" long accepted in the study of East Asian art.<sup>303</sup> It is my hope that in exploring Yishan Yining's career as an

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<sup>302</sup> Yukio Lippit, "Awakenings: The Development of the Zen Figural Pantheon," in Gregory Levine and Yukio Lippit, *Zen Figure Paintings in Medieval Japan*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), exhibition catalogue, p. 45.

<sup>303</sup> Ide Seinosuke 井手誠之輔, "Eikyō denpa ron kara ibunka juyō ron e—Kamakura butsuga ni okeru Chūgoku no juyō" 影響伝播論から異文化受容論へ—鎌倉仏画における中国の受容 [From theory of 'influence' and 'transmission' to theory of 'reception of foreign culture'—the reception of China seen through Kamakura Buddhist paintings], in Itakura Masaaki 板倉聖哲 ed., *Keitai no denshō* 形態の伝承 [The succession of form], (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 2005), pp. 13-40.

émigré Chan Buddhist monk and calligrapher I have shown the limitations of the discourse of “influence” in the history of calligraphy, a form of art and a cultural tradition shared by China and Japan, and have raised awareness of the ways in which continued study of medieval Chan/Zen calligraphy might yield a more complex and nuanced understanding of the cultural dynamics of East Asia in premodern times.

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## Appendix A: Works of Calligraphy by Yishan Yining with Dates

### Period I, Kamakura: 1299-1306

- 1300 (?) *Letter to Xijian Zitan* 西澗子曇宛尺牘. location unknown. Important Cultural Property.
- 1301 *Dharma Words On the Occasion of the Delivery of Sansō E'un's Death Poem* 山叟慧雲遺書至上堂法語. Teikan'en Foundation 貞觀園保存会, Niigata Prefecture. National Treasure.
- 1301 *Dharma Words* 上堂法語 (不求諸聖). Previously in Tokugawa family collection, current location unknown.
- 1301 *Dharma Words* 上堂法語 (慧日峰前). Idemitsu Museum.
- 1303 *Calligraphic Sketch* 書下. Engakuji.
- 1303 *Dharma Words* 上堂法語 (二月望). Moriya Family collection.
- 1303 *Dharma Words on Mukan Fumon* 無關普門拈香法語, Nanzenji, Kyoto.
- 1304 *Verses on Chan Master Ruiyan Kongzhao* 瑞巖空照禪師頌瑞巖空照禪師頌古, Izumi City Kubosō Memorial Museum of Arts. Important Cultural Property.

### Period II, Kamakura: 1306-1313

- 1306 *Preface to Amida Sutra copied by Jingtang Jueyuan* 金剛經序. Shōkokuji 相国寺, Kyoto. Important Cultural Property.
- 1307 *Coda to Jufen yunlüe* 聚分韻略跋. Location unknown.
- 1306 *Raiken's Stele On Ojima Island of Ōshū* 奥州御島賴賢碑. Zuiganji 瑞巖寺, Miyagi Prefecture. Important Cultural Property.
- 1307 *Inscription on Chintamani Chakra Avalokitesvara* 如意輪觀音圖贊. Matsunoodera 松尾寺, Kyoto. Important Cultural Property.
- 1310 *Buddhist Verses to the Public by Master Yuanwu* 圓悟示眾偈. Kiichiji 帰一寺, Shizuoka Prefecture.
- 1310 (?) *Inscription on Oxherding Parable* 牧牛圖. Nara National Museum.

1312 *Buddhist Verses on Master Chijue* 癡絕頌. Location unknown.

1312 *Poem by Tang Poet Li She* 唐李涉詩. Location unknown.

### **Period III, Kyoto: 1313-1317**

1313 *Buddhist Verses in Cursive Calligraphy* 草書偈語. Location unknown.

1314 *Eulogy on the Buddhist Name of Kongan* 空嚴道號頌. Private Collection.

1315 *Poem by the Retired Emperor Go-Uda* 大覺法皇合韻偈. Private Collection.

1315 *Poem by the Retired Emperor Go-Uda* 後宇多法皇合韻偈. Tokiwayama Bunko. Important Cultural Property.

1315 *On A Snowy Night* 雪夜作. Kenninji, Kyoto. Important Cultural Property.

1315 (?) *On A Snowy Night* 雪夜作蠟箋本. Location unknown.

1315 *The Sixth Patriarch's Poem* 六祖偈. Tokiwayama Bunko. Important Cultural Property.

1315 *Inscription on Portrait of Muhon Kakushin*. 覺慧筆無本覺心像贊. Kōkokuji 興国寺, Wakayama Prefecture. Important Cultural Property.

1316 *Encouraging Words* 進道語. Nezu Museum. Important Cultural Property.

1316 *Verses from Amida Sutra* 阿彌陀經語. Private Collection.

1316 *Xin yue fu* “Taizong” segment 新樂府太宗篇. Private collection.

1316 (?) *Xin yue fu* “Faqu” segment 新樂府法曲篇. Location unknown.

1316 *Buddhist Verses inspired by Kannon Bodhisattva* 大士讚法語. Sōunji 早雲寺, Kanagawa Prefecture.

1316 *Dharma Words of Farewell to Zōsu Mr. Kū* 送空藏主歸里法語. Rokuonji 鹿苑寺, Kyoto. Important Cultural Property.

1316 *Postface of an Anthology of Encomia Inspired by A Portrait of Kannon Bodhisattva* 觀音像偈頌集跋. Current location unknown.

## Appendix B: Extant Paintings Bearing Yishan Yining Inscriptions

1. Anonymous, *Portrait of Fu Dashi*. Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 24.6 x 70.9 cm, Private Collection (Heizando).
2. Shitan 思澹 (dates unknown). *Geese Descending on Sandbar*. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 30.3 x 57.5 cm. Satomi collection.
3. Tan Zhirui 檀芝瑞 (act. mid 14<sup>th</sup> century) attributed. *Bamboo in Snow*. Album leaf, 31.5 x 20.6 cm. Freer Gallery.
4. Tanzhi Rui 檀芝瑞 (act. mid 14<sup>th</sup> century) attributed. *Bamboo and Rocks*. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper, 100.3 x 38 cm. Kimball Art Museum, Texas.
5. Anonymous. *Reeds and Geese*. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 32.2 x 80.4 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art.
6. Anonymous. *Reeds and Geese*. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 32.0 x 63.7cm. Gunma Modern Art Museum.
7. Anonymous. *Bodhidharma Seated Under a Pine Tree*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 50.8 x 100.8 cm. Tokyo National Museum. Important Cultural Property.
8. Anonymous. *Bodhidharma Crossing the Yangzi River on a Reed*. Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 48 x 101.6 cm. Jōdōji, Shizuoka Prefecture. National Treasure.
9. Li Yaofu 李堯夫 (act. ca. 1300). *Bodhidharma Crossing the Yangzi River on a Reed*. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 85.7 x 33.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art.
10. Anonymous. “Kongōchi” in *Eight Patriarchs of the Shingon Buddhist Sect*. Dated 1314. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 83 x 40.8 cm. Tokyo National Museum.
11. Anonymous. *Portrait of Shinkai*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 53.3 x 95.4 cm. Shōmyōji. Important Cultural Property.
12. Kakue 覺慧 (dates unknown). *Portrait of Muhon Kakushin 無本覺心 (Hottō kokushi)*. Inscription dated 1315. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 84.2 x 174.8 cm. Kōkokuji 興国寺, Wakayama Prefecture.
13. Anonymous. *Portrait of Nanpo Shōmyō 南浦紹明 (1235-1308)*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 100.8 x 55.3 cm, Myōshinji, Kyoto. Important Cultural Property.
14. Anonymous. *Guanyin of Mount Putuo with Shancai and the Dragon*. Panel, ink, color, and gold on silk, 105.5 x 51 cm. Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

15. Kaō 可翁 attributed. *White Robed Kannon*. Hanging scroll, ink monochrome on silk, 38.5 x 82.4 cm. Tokiwayama Bunko Museum
16. Kaō 可翁 attributed. *Kanzan and Jittoku*. A pair of hanging scrolls, ink on silk, 39 x 111 cm. Shōkokuji 相国寺, Kyoto.
17. Anonymous. *White Robed Kannon*. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 54 x 110 cm. Kōmyōji 光明寺, Kyoto.
18. Anonymous. *Kannon on a Lotus Petal*. Hanging scroll, Ink and color on silk, 38.2 x 89 cm. Private Collection.
19. Anonymous. *White Robed Kannon*. Hanging scroll, ink monochrome on silk, 87.0 x 38.5 cm. Masaki Art Museum.
20. Kikukei 菊溪 (dates unknown). *Chintamani Chakra Avalokitesvara (Nyoirin Kannon zu 如意輪觀音圖)*. Inscription dated 1307. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 53.9 x 101.4 cm. Matsunoodera 松尾寺, Kyoto.
21. Anonymous. *Kanzan 寒山*. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 29.2 x 71 cm. MOA Art Museum.
22. Anonymous. *Ox-herding* (“Herding the Ox”). Painting dated 1310 (?). Hanging scroll, ink on silk, 87.9 x 43.3 cm. Nara National Museum.
23. Anonymous. *Ox-herding* (“Looking for the Ox”). Hanging scroll, ink and light color on silk, 40.9 x 89.7 cm. Jōjūin, Kenninji, Kyoto.
24. Anonymous. *Manjushri on a Lion*. Hanging scroll, ink monochrome on paper, dimensions unknown. Private Collection, China.