

# Special Features of the Popularization of Bodhidharma in Korea and Japan

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## Abstract

According to tradition the founder of Chan or meditational Buddhism, Bodhidharma, originated from India, yet his legend and first representations are more typically associated with China and his legendary figure is frequently seen in the visual art and popular culture of the East Asian countries. In my paper I focus on the visual representations of Bodhidharma as they became popular in Korea and Japan, attempting to show the basic differences in the popularization of the visual images of Bodhidharma in these countries, focusing mainly on the visual appearance and iconography. The power of the image is seen in the commercialization of representations of Bodhidharma, particularly in Japan, where this practice occurred much earlier than in Korea and developed different traditions compared to those in China, where the legend came from.

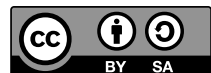
**Keywords:** Bodhidharma, Korea, Japan, visual representation, popularization

## Izveček

Po tradicionalnem verovanju ustanovitelj chana ali meditativnega budizma, Bodidharma, izvira iz Indije. Vendar njegovo legendo in prve predstavitve vse bolj povezujejo s Kitajsko, kjer je njegovo karizmatično podobo pogosto opaziti v vizualni umetnosti in popularni kulturi vzhodnoazijskih držav. V članku raziskujem vizualne predstavitve Bodidharne, ko so postale popularne v Koreji in na Japonskem, s čimer poskušam prikazati glavne razlike v popularizaciji vizualnih podob Bodidharne v teh državah, pri tem pa se osredotočam predvsem na vizualne podobe in ikonografijo. Moč podobe je premišljena skozi komercializacijo upodobitev Bodidharne, predvsem na Japonskem, kjer se je komercialna uporaba pojavila veliko prej kot v Koreji in kjer so se razvile drugačne tradicije kot na Kitajskem, od koder legenda prihaja.

**Ključne besede:** Bodidharma, Koreja, Japonska, vizualne podobe, popularizacija

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## Introduction

According to tradition, the founder of meditational Buddhism, Bodhidharma originated from India, and nowadays this legendary figure is frequently seen in the visual art and popular culture of East Asian countries. Known as *Putidamo* 菩提達摩 or *Damo* in China, *Boridalma* 보리달마 or *Dalma* in Korea, and *Bodai Daruma* 菩提達磨, or *Daruma* in Japan, *Bo-dhi-dha-rmo-tta-ra* in Tibet, and he can also be found in Vietnam.

The aim of my research was to make a deeper investigation of Bodhidharma as his figure appears in visual arts.

Art and visual culture not only spread nationally, but also crossed borders, influencing the artistic and creative thoughts of other regions. It is particularly true of religion, where monks were the carriers of Buddhism from one country to another, and alongside their religious beliefs they transmitted the visual culture of other territories in the form of religious imagery.

In the representations of Bodhidharma, we can clearly contrast the style of *chinsō*-type colored paintings<sup>1</sup> used for rituals with the more spontaneous monochrome ink-paintings, and the other derivatives of the image, such as the doll-form, which was developed in Japan. Looking at both their function and production, it is evident that style had an importance in the use of these images.

## Iconography of Bodhidharma

Even to those familiar with the images of East Asia, it is sometimes very difficult to name depicted figures because of the lack of inscriptions, especially in the late phases of the development of certain iconographies. This is due to the tendency of using pre-existing patterns and giving them new meaning, as was the case in the Western culture during the early Middle Ages when the pagan Apollo figure was used to represent Jesus Christ. Rather than inventing completely new imagery, combining existing intellectual and religious systems is an easier way to proceed. Therefore, we often find that artists were inspired by previous visual models rather than having drawn primarily from textual sources. In many cases, these textual sources themselves were also inspired by previous visual representations. As the meaning of the depicted figure changed in society and in the mind of the artist, inevitably certain forms merged and new pictorial representations were produced.

1 *Chinsō* (Ch. *Dingxiang* 頂相) Japanese pronunciation of the term for formal portraits of meditation masters, usually made in a meticulous style, using color, with great attention paid to the realistic depiction of the face. *Chinsō* served in the rituals of the transmission of Dharma and substituted for the master himself after his demise (Steiner 2013, 187).

The identification of the earliest images is very important, because they can give us vital clues to the history of certain iconographic types.

Bodhidharma is believed to have lived around the 5–6th centuries, but the earliest surviving images about him can be dated only to the 11–12th century (Mecsi 2014). There are two distinct iconographic types that appeared in China and later became entangled with each other. One is a beardless figure and the other, a more popular representation, shows Bodhidharma as a hairy, bearded man with a stocky build and exaggerated foreign features, often wearing a hood. The majority of the images of Bodhidharma are half-body or bust portrait. The remaining group includes full-body portraits, where we can differentiate between standing and sitting images. Among the standing images, we can find Bodhidharma crossing the Yangzi River on a reed, carrying one shoe or sandal, a combination of the two themes, or sometimes free of any such objects. Among the sitting images Bodhidharma can be found in a chair (especially in the earliest periods) or sitting in meditation, in a landscape, or entirely removed from time and space, with no background or sense of surroundings. The landscape setting varies. For instance, there is Bodhidharma in a cave (a more common version),<sup>2</sup> sitting under a tree<sup>3</sup>, or the combination of the two. According to the type of representation, we can differentiate between en-face, three-quarter profile, profile portraits, and representations showing Bodhidharma from the back. Within the simplified profile and back portraits set against a timeless and spaceless background, a specific iconographic type has developed: the “one-brushstroke Bodhidharma” which, together with the circle (Jap. *ensō*), had interesting religious-spiritual significance in *Chan* Buddhism. Depending on context, there are single Bodhidharma pictures, as well as pictures that form part of a group, and sometimes examples in which he is represented on the middle panel of a triptych. Among these, the oldest type is the group representation.

When Bodhidharma images arrived from China to Korea and Japan, they were used and popularized in different ways, despite the similar features in the images themselves. It was due to the given country’s socio-religious background, which I do not intend to discuss in detail in this article, but I would like to focus on the visual appearances of the Bodhidharma images in Korea and Japan, and point out the use of different models for popularization in these countries.

2 Apart from the fact that cave temples were common in India and China, their symbolism also plays a role in the interpretation of Bodhidharma imagery. See the explanation in the esoteric Sōtō Zen’s kirigami tradition as being a womb (Faure 1987).

3 Sitting under a tree is a reference to Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment. But the activity is also associated with Buddha’s contemporary, Mahavira (599 BCE to 527 BCE), the founder of Jainism (Eliade 1997, 71).

## Bodhidharma in Korea

### Previous Studies on Korean Seon Painting

Compared to the published material and related pictorial art on the Chinese and the Japanese meditation schools, there are only a few sources available on *Seon*<sup>4</sup>, the Korean meditation school. This is partly because of the official ideology of the relatively recent Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) was based on Neo-Confucianism, with Buddhism experiencing a reduced presence.

There is little research on the artistic practice associated with Korean meditational Buddhism, which is more neglected than the religious doctrinal aspects of *Seon*. There is virtually no material on this topic in Western languages, and the few sources available in Korean (see e.g. Choi Suntaek and Kim Nami) are not always critical, but do make a great contribution to our knowledge and provide good reference materials.

### Kim Myeongguk and the Problem of Bodhidharma as Huineng

The earliest surviving pictures of Bodhidharma made by Korean masters are from the 16th and the 17th centuries and have a strong connection with Japan. Among them, the most famous are Kim Myeongguk's (c. 1600–after 1662) Bodhidharma paintings, which long remained a model for later artists approaching this theme. Kim Myeongguk was a member of the Dohwaseo, Royal Painting Institute. His contemporaries described him as a carefree drunkard, a characterization that corresponds to the Chinese image of the eccentric artist.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 1: Kim Myeongguk (b. 1600–d. after 1662), *Triptych*, 17th century, (Ink on silk, hanging scroll, 96.6 x 38.8 cm each), Collection of Tokyo University of Arts (Choi 1998, pl. 21)

4 Seon: the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese word “Chan”.

5 We know several stories about him written by Nam Yuyong (1698–1773) in the collection called Noeyeon jip 雷淵集 (Noeyeon collection) (Nam Yuyong, Noeyeonjip, Jinhwisok ko 1783, 35–36)

In 1637 and 1643, Kim Myeongguk visited Japan as a member of an official delegation.<sup>6</sup> It has been said that he was probably drawn to *Zen* Buddhist figure painting through commissions from Japanese patrons, who generally preferred Buddhist themes. Many of his paintings held in Japanese collections are of this genre, whereas contemporary painting in Korea was dominated by secular themes. The Seoul National Museum has the most impressive example of his most famous painting of Bodhidharma, where the patriarch was depicted with a few forceful, yet delicate, brushstrokes.



Figure 2: Unknown painter, *Huineng* (from *Sancaitubui*), Ming period (1609) (print) (Wang and Wang 1988, 317)

One of Kim Myeongguk's paintings is a triptych belonging to the Tokyo University of Fine Arts, whose central panel shows Bodhidharma crossing water on a reed (Fig. 1). His head is covered with a dark hood, which is most unusual in this kind of representation, yet we can find its source in the famous Ming Chinese printed book *Sancai tubui* 三才圖會 (Kor. *Samjaedohwi*) (Collected Illustrations of the Three Realms), an important resource for the artists, with illustrations of the famous Daoist and Buddhist masters on every page. In this book, the Sixth *Chan* patriarch Huineng 惠能 (638–713) is seen in a dark hood and has similar facial expressions,<sup>7</sup> so we might suppose that Kim Myeongguk had used this pattern book, adding a

6 He stayed for ten months in 1637.

7 Huineng's dark hood existed as a visual formula from the 12th century, where we can see Huineng represented among the patriarchs wearing a separate hood, which was darkened in later copies.

little modification to suit his subject (Fig. 2). Using Huineng's iconography based on the *Sancai tubui* and followed by the *Xianfo qizong* 仙佛奇蹤 (Kor. *Hongssiseon-bulgijong*) (Marvelous Traces of Transcendents and Buddhas), printed in 1602, the hood is not darker than the robe itself, which we also find in other representations of Bodhidharma. The wall painting of the Geukrak Hall of Daewon temple in South Jeolla province shows Bodhidharma with the same features as the image of Huineng seen in both model books, but we can be sure about the identity of the figure in the wall painting, as it shows Huike 慧可 (487–593) presenting Bodhidharma his severed arm, as according to legend he cut off his own arm to draw the attention of Bodhidharma, who then became his master (Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Unknown painter, *Bodhidharma with Huike*, Joseon period, (wall painting), Geukrak-jeon, Daewonsa, Boseong, South Jeolla Province, Republic of Korea

## Kim Hongdo and the Problems of Bodhidharma as an Immortal

In the oeuvre of another famous Korean artist, Kim Hongdo (1745–after 1814) who is considered one of the most outstanding artists of the Joseon period (1392–1910), we find several paintings showing figures standing or sitting on a reed<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> The reed as a motif appears in Buddhist texts when describing Bodhidharma as crossing the Yangzi river and only appeared in the 13th century. The earlier textual sources did not mention the reed as a tool for crossing. There is speculation that the appearance of the reed can be connected to a mistake during transcribing the Chinese characters in a text. However, it can be closer to the truth to suppose the influence of earlier pictorial representations of figures crossing water on various “vehicles”, including a reed among them, which might have an influence on the appearance of this motif in the 13th century (Mecsei 2008).



One of them bears an inscription “Picture of crossing the sea on a reed” (Fig. 4). Even though we know stories from Japan claiming that Bodhidharma actually crossed the sea and went to Japan, this tradition can be also traced back to the depiction of the Daoist immortals crossing the sea, and has a long history in iconography that predates Bodhidharma’s appearance. In the case of Kim Hongdo, we know that he painted Daoist themes, too. And if we look at the figure in his painting, we see his East Asian rather than Western features, and the fur around his waist also suggests immortal qualities (as a parallel see Shen Chou’s painting of an immortal from China in the Nelson–Atkins Museum of Arts, Kansas City). Kim Hongdo’s other painting shows a young boy sitting and sleeping on a reed. This theme was also popular among artists in 18th-century Korea (see Sim Sa-jeong’s (1707–1769) painting of a similar theme), but even though there is still some confusion in identifying this crossing figure with Bodhidharma (Kim 2000, 90–91), it is probable that the young seated figure follows the iconography of an immortal (see other seated young immortal figures crossing the water, but without a reed). This is supported by the fact that Kim Hongdo painted very similar scenes of immortals crossing water, for instance one such immortal crossing on a shrimp.



Figure 4: Kim Hongdo (1745–1806), *Standing Figure on a Reed*, 19th century, inscription: “Crossing the sea on a reed”, Colors on paper. Gansong Art Gallery, Seoul (Choi 1998, pl. 40)

However, the strongly held view is that Kim Hongdo's crossing paintings depicting Bodhidharma resulted in later images using this iconography, either showing Bodhidharma as a young boy or showing Bodhidharma's crossing on a reed in a seated position.

We have seen from the above examples that the identification of a certain personality in visual arts is interlinked with a given society's beliefs, adding new qualities to an existing legend. The tradition of *arbat* paintings, paintings of patriarchs and paintings of Daoist immortals had a great contribution to the Korean Bodhidharma imagery and the existence of illustrative models and pattern books is evident, though their use was not always first-hand and there was a degree of freedom in their reconfiguration as seen in the use of Huineng's model for the image of Bodhidharma (Mecsei 2014).

This tendency can be observed during the later periods, too, and we can see the use of certain models for producing newer objects, but in a less varied manner.

## **Bodhidharma Images in Contemporary South Korea**

Anyone who visits South Korea today soon encounters representations of Bodhidharma. His figure and legend are usually represented in Buddhist temples, but a recent phenomenon has taken his figure more and more into the secular and semi-secular context, such as souvenir shops not only in the vicinity of temples but in other tourist areas and frequently-visited places, like motorway service stations, or even tube stations and restaurants. Popular women's magazines and television channels often carry advertisements for Bodhidharma painters offering potential well-being.

The chosen sources for promoting this saintly figure are very different in Korea and in Japan, thus the manner in which Bodhidharma images enter the secular world differs considerably in these countries.

In Korea producing Bodhidharma images and objects has become a fashion in recent decades, and has increased considerably in the last couple of years. It started with the Seoul Olympics in 1988, when the so-called gold cards were launched on the market. These gold cards are small cards painted with real gold paint, showing representations of the twelve Oriental zodiac animals, Taoist talismans, and, for the Westerners, four-leaf clovers or images of Jesus Christ, but most of them contained the image of Bodhidharma.

Contemporary painters also turned towards the image of the saint, and we find not only monks, but some professional painters who started to revitalize his image. We



clearly see this not only in the art shops and exhibitions, but also in the publications of several books and albums devoted exclusively to Bodhidharma paintings.<sup>9</sup>

The structure of these books is the same: each painting (usually 100, or more often 108) is followed by a poem or an explanation related to Bodhidharma's legend or to some Buddhist teachings. These books often combine the pattern book format with a drawing manual and include tips on how to draw Bodhidharma. Korean painters of Bodhidharma generally use such pattern books together with other publications on Buddhist imagery, and in many cases it is obvious where they took their models from. However, at the same time, spontaneous ink paintings require some expression from the artist.

In the context of popularization, the importance of major public events must be mentioned, as well as how some artists have used these occasions to propagate the image of Bodhidharma.

In 2002 when Korea and Japan held the FIFA World Cup, the monk-painter Kim Dongseong (b. 1954) showed his new works in both countries representing Bodhidharma with a football, updating the figure in a manner appropriate for the event. However, he also included a philosophical explanation for his paintings, referring to the basic qualities and shared pronunciation for the word “ball” (Kor. *gong*) and emptiness (also *gong*), an important concept in Buddhism (Skt. *śūnyata*).

In 2005, during the International APEC (Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting in Busan, the monk Beomju (b. 1943) made a public performance by making a huge Bodhidharma painting. Painting large-scale Bodhidharma images for public events can be traced back to earlier traditions. It is recorded that the famous *Ukiyo-e* artist, Hokusai (1760–1849) also made a similarly giant image in 1804.<sup>10</sup>

Painting Bodhidharma as a performance is not so rare among Korean monk-artists, and Jung Gwang the “mad monk” (1934–2002), who gained international reputation with his daring Bodhidharma paintings and performances, even influenced contemporary expressionist art in the West.

In Korean visual arts and Buddhism there is a burgeoning trend in the production and distribution of images of the first Chan patriarch, which requires an attempt to understand it in the context of its inner developments and history, while placing it within the larger context of other Asian countries.

9 For example Hong and Yi Byoung-kyo 1993; Kim 1999; Kim 2000; *Beomju seunim Dalma seonmuk* 2001; Yu 2002.

10 Kōriki Enkōan, from *Hokusai taiga sokusho saizu* 北齋大画即書細図 (Drawing the Eyes on Hokusai's Big Picture), c. 1817, Nagoya City Museum

## Popularization of Bodhidharma in Japan

To transform the image of a religious founder into a doll is an interesting phenomenon that appeared only in Japan (Fig. 5). It is evident that the customs around the cult of Bodhidharma in the form of a doll are closely related to religious practices of earlier times. We should look for the ties between popular customs, ancient aesthetics, and religious practices, for example, the opening of eyes ceremony and the symbolism in the usage of such dolls on 19th-century Japanese silk farms.



Figure 5: *Daruma dolls in Japan (Photograph taken by the author in 2007)*

An interesting aspect is the appearance of professional doll-makers and the so-called Daruma-markets, mostly in the Kantō region. It shows a connection with the post-war economic situation, and the fund-raising plans of the Buddhist temples, where establishing new cults with minimal effort could help in surviving hard times. There is also an international aspect to the distribution of such images, as it is interesting how a specifically Japanese toy could evolve into the national symbol of the Russians, the famous Matryoshka doll.

Although the story of Bodhidharma has its origins in China and spread to most East Asian countries, it is in Japan that he became the most popular and the most visible figure, seen not only in the temple compounds, but in everyday life, in the streets, in homes, offices, restaurants, public buildings, and many other places. His name in Japanese is Bodai Daruma, but he is known mostly as Daruma, sometimes with the honorific titles, as Daruma *daishi* (“great master Bodhidharma”), which refers to an exemplary founder of the Zen tradition, or simply Daruma *san* (“Mr. Bodhidharma”), a name which refers to his familiarity

with everyday life. Contrary to Korea, in Japan a special textual tradition connects Bodhidharma with Prince Shōtoku, thus making him a part of Japanese culture and linking him with a geographical location where Bodhidharma was never noted to appear in person.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the legend of Bodhidharma became embedded in common knowledge and the image of Bodhidharma became identified with Japan, as if in becoming a figure of popular culture the Indian missionary stepped out of the walls of the monasteries and mingled into the life of everyday Japanese people. In a small temple at Ōji, in the Nara prefecture, a site is indicated as the burial place of Bodhidharma, and two large stones mark the supposed meeting place of Bodhidharma and the Prince. According to tradition, that temple was founded by Prince Shōtoku, who tried to commemorate the meeting by carving a Daruma image, which is currently enshrined at Empuku-ji 円福寺, a Zen temple near Kyōto. This statue is a piece of Important Cultural Property and is considered the oldest Daruma statue in Japan, but, in fact, it is not older than the 13th century (McFarland 1987, 18).

11 The 22nd volume of the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (*Chronicle of Japan*) has a story about Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 (572–622), the famous propagator of Buddhism, as he met a hungry wanderer at the crossroads of Kataoka. The Prince gave him food and his mantle and wrote a poem about him. The other day he sent an envoy to have a look at the poor wanderer, but he was told that the man he met on the road had already died. Shōtoku Taishi became very sad and ordered the body to be buried in the place where they had met. Some days later he told one of his attendants that the man he met on the Kataoka crossroads was not an ordinary man, but a saint. And he sent a servant again to the tomb to observe it, but the servant reported to the Prince that the body was missing; only the cloth which the Prince had given to him lay on the coffin, neatly folded up. Shōtoku Taishi then sent the servant back for the cloth, and he continued wearing it as before. People kept saying that “only a saint recognizes a saint,” and started to respect their Prince more than before (*Nihon shoki* 1987, 98–99).

The association of Bodhidharma with the hungry wanderer appeared in a biography of Shōtoku Taishi, *Ihon Jōgū Taishiden* いほんじょうぐう太子伝, written by Keimei in 771. This text ends with a question: “Could that starving man have been Bodhidharma?” (See Kuranaka 1996, 23). The tentative speculation in this text became an actual fact in *Denjutsu Isshin Kaimon* 伝述一心戒文 (*The Record of the Precepts in a Mind*), composed by Kōjō in 834, which says that “the starving man was, after all, Bodhidharma.” (See Kōjō 1964, 653) The explanation for this was the story according to which Shōtoku Taishi (574–622) was the avatar of the famous Tendai Master Nanyue Huisi 慧思 (517–577) and a legend says that Nanyue had once been Bodhidharma’s disciple. (For more on this, see Faure 1986, 187–98) When they met for the first time on Mt. Tiantai 天台山, Bodhidharma predicted that they would both meet again in the next life in Japan. This statement is followed by the story about the Prince and the beggar, where the Prince recognized his master in the poor man. (See Kōjō 1964, 74.2379, 653b)

In the *Genkō Era Biographies of Eminent Priests* (*Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釈書, 1322), written by Kōkan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1278–1347), we also find the same story, identifying the hungry wanderer with Bodhidharma. (See Kōkan vol. 62: 66–230) Bodhidharma was also presented in other Tendai writings as well. In Kōshū’s *Keiran Shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集, (compiled between 1311 and 1348), his teachings were contrasted with those of the Tendai school founder, Zhiyi 智顛 (538–97). See Kōshū T.76.2410, 532b.

The appearance of Bodhidharma in many forms and roles is remarkable in Japan. It not only exists in paintings, but it is also sculpted in different media, formed from clay or papier-mâché, or produced in plastic. Its role ranges from the venerable icon to a piece of art, a decoration, a talisman or a toy, or the combination of these. Bodhidharma plays several roles in Japan: he is a symbol of Zen practice and experience, a paradigm of perseverance, a popular god of luck, a patron saint of the martial arts, and an object and inspiration for satire and humor.<sup>12</sup>

Though Buddhism was introduced to Japan around the 6th century via Korea, and Chan Buddhism flourished from the 9th century onwards in China, it happened only in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) that Zen, as a distinct school, emerged in Japan. The monks who transmitted the Zen teachings studied in China at various schools: Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215) introduced Rinzaï Zen in 1191 and Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) brought Sōtō Zen to Japan. It is usually considered that it was due to its simplicity that Zen attracted the samurai elite, who ruled much of the country at that period, thus, with their patronage Zen gained power and endurance. One of the earliest Zen schools was named after Bodhidharma: *Daruma-shū* (Daruma-school) and thus Daruma became a nickname for Zen (Faure 1987, 25–55). In the late Kamakura period, Zen Buddhism gained still more influence among the military rulers, who became practitioners of Zen arts and painted Daruma-portraits, and the Zen monks served as their “spiritual guides and cultural mentors” (McFarland 1987, 35). In the following Muromachi period (1336–1568), Zen Buddhism also enjoyed a great patronage from the ruling elite and produced its most elevated masterpieces in ink paintings. The fourth Ashikaga shōgun, Ashikaga Yoshimochi 足利義持 (r. 1392–1422), was a great devotee of Zen Buddhism and his Bodhidharma painting is a famous example.<sup>13</sup> The emperor also painted Bodhidharma-portraits, as the extant example of the Emperor

12 Humor has a very important role in Chan Buddhism. Laughing is something that cannot be planned, a result of an unusual revelation, a realm outside utilitarian and logical perceptions. Showing Chan personalities laughing (like Hanshan 寒山 and Shide 拾得, Jp. Kansan and Jittoku) is a familiar scene in Chan art. Though Bodhidharma is not laughing, his morose figure makes the viewers laugh. The satirical expressions and the humorous elements in representing Bodhidharma were always present and gained more and more space, especially in popular imagination and related art (Hyers 1973). In accordance with the perception of daring to make fun of those usually venerated objects and personalities, in Chan Buddhism even the religious founder can be open to such treatment. The comic expression of Bodhidharma comes from the depiction of the foreign-looking arhats whose efforts were regarded by the Mahāyānists as a kind of futile achievement compared to the deeds of the wonderfully depicted Bodhisattvas who are saving the humankind. Though these arhats were not taken away, but given their role as protectors of the Buddhist law. The description of arhats can be connected with the Daoist immortals, who were usually out of the commonplace and quite unusual in their appearance as well as in behaviour. Chan Buddhism was very much influenced by the Daoist ideas, and the Chinese spirit of humor.

13 Now in the collection of the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln

Go-Yōzei 後陽成天皇 (r. 1586–1611), which survives at the Jishō-in 慈照院 of Shōkoku Temple 相国寺 in Kyōto.<sup>14</sup>

In popular imagination, the continuous sitting posture of Bodhidharma resulted in the loss of his legs and his arms through atrophy, as they withered and fell off. Sōtō Zen emphasizes the sitting practice (*zazen* 坐禪). The center of power and energy of the human body is believed to be located below the navel, thus the legless and armless Bodhidharma figure is explained as a kind of illustration of the concentrated meditation practice (McFarland 1987, 16). Tōrei Enji 東嶺圓慈 (1721–1792), a famous disciple of Hakuin, referring to the *Damoduolo chanjing* 達摩多羅禪經 (“Bodhidharma Zen Sūtra”),<sup>15</sup> painted Bodhidharma in 1781 showing him with the indication of the eighth, seventh, and sixth levels of consciousness on his body, as well as the field under the navel, marked with dark red, whereas the painting’s inscription “indicated that it is the crucial point where vital energy is gathered”.<sup>16</sup> Thus the roly-poly Daruma dolls symbolizes Bodhidharma’s balance and concentration, which enable him to get upright even though the doll is about to fall down or has fallen over. The roly-poly Daruma dolls are known as *okiagari* 起き上がり, i.e. “eight-rising”, on account of the proverb: “seven times falls, eight times rises” (*nana korobi, ya oki* 七転び八起き), thus the Daruma doll is a symbol of perseverance and resilience. The roly-poly Daruma doll is not only a toy for children, but a talisman for adults and is believed to possess real power against plagues and illnesses. In earliest times Daruma dolls were used to protect children from illness, especially from smallpox, so Bodhidharma was regarded as the god of smallpox.<sup>17</sup> This was partly because of the dolls’ red color, which has magical connotations and which was associated with magical and healing powers enabling it to absorb the smallpox.

A well-known custom is that when one receives a doll such as this, which usually has blank eyes, one should paint one of the eyes of the doll while making a wish;

14 The 177th Emperor of Japan, Go-Yōzei, who lived in a very critical period when Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) attempted to gain power, devoted his time to arts and lived as a scholar, rather than a politician. See McFarland 1987, 22 and 36. Also see *Daruma ten*.

15 A work by Fo-jih and Tōrei Enji *Damoduolo chanjing* 達摩多羅禪經 (*Bodhidharma Zen Sūtra*) (T.15. No.618). A translation attributed to Buddhahadra (359–429), completed around 413. The title of the original text was, apparently, *Yogacharabhumi*, one of many treatises sharing the same title. The original Indian text is lost, but is attested in the preface by Huiyuan (334–416). See Michel Mohr’s handout of his lecture held 16 January 2003 at SOAS, Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions.

16 With the courtesy of Prof. Michel Mohr, through conversation with him in 2003

17 Bernard Faure, the preliminary French version of the article “The Double Life of the Patriarch” kindly provided to me by the author in 2003.



the other eye can be drawn only when this wish has come true.<sup>18</sup> The dotting of the eyes is an interesting counterpart of the traditional Buddhist ritual called *kaigen kuyō* 開眼供養, “opening the eyes ceremony”, in which a new Buddhist image cannot be regarded as sacred until its eyes are ritually indicated. This custom has its roots in the ancient Chinese tradition and aesthetics. According to an old Chinese chronicle, a painter called Lie Yi (around the second century BCE) always left out the pupils of the dragons and phoenixes he painted, because if he had completed them, they could have come to life and flown away (Miklós 1973, 9). Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca 344–ca 407) is also said to have placed particular emphasis upon “dotting the eyes”, sometimes refraining from dotting the pupils for several years (Chen Shih-hsiang 1985, 14). On silk farms in 19th-century Japan, the Daruma images were regarded as luck-bringers maybe because the shape of the cocoons are like *okiagari* Daruma dolls. In some cases the cocoons themselves were used for making Daruma dolls (Jap. *mayu Daruma*), and sometimes a small weight was also put inside them to work like a normal *okiagari* doll (McFarland 1987, 65). The rite of filling the eyes was done the following way: in spring, when the first silkworms hatched, they drew their first eye and when the second generation hatched in autumn they drew the other one. The set of five miniature Daruma dolls painted in different colors is also associated with silk production. The set of five colors invokes many associations, as the number five has a great importance in ancient East Asian culture. McFarland explains it with the five-colored streamers in Shintō shrine displays, and its possible connections with the *gohei*, a vertical wand to which folded paper is attached. He suggests the supposition that “*gohei* is a relic of time when pieces of cloth were presented in this fashion and *gohei* and the streamers had a similar origin in the ancient Shintō cults” (ibid., 66). He also thinks that it probably can be connected with the Shintō prayer (*norito*), which refers to offerings to the *kami* of five types, or—as the language makes it possible—five colored types of things (*itsu-iro no mono* 五色のもの), which are traditionally interpreted as thin coarse silk strips of five colors (ibid., 66). Japan, similarly to Korea, adopted the Chinese cosmological system with its sophisticated equivalences and connections between time, directions, qualities, and senses. Bodhidharma was also fitted into these correlations with his unique and caricature-like personage. As he is represented in a red robe, and red is connected with the element of Fire, Bodhidharma became associated with fire and consequently with the other qualities and directions given in the table of equivalences according to the Chinese belief-system (Yoshino 1995, 114). Bodhidharma was also used in *ukiyo-e* parodies, where “Daruma has been not only removed from the temple, but recast as a figure in the Edo period demi-monde” (McFarland 1987, 82). In this role Bodhidharma is paired with a courtesan, with whom he had exchanged

18 This custom probably appeared in the Edo period.



clothes, and finally his figure is feminized, and he became a woman (McFarland 1986, 168). The term “*daruma*” in the late Edo period was slang for prostitute. Daruma with a courtesan can appear in two ways, either directly, together with the courtesan as a second principal figure when they exchange clothes,<sup>19</sup> and indirectly as a picture on a wall, a decoration on a garment, or as a roly-poly doll placed somewhere in a room. For the question as to how Bodhidharma became a woman, Kidō Chūtārō suggests that the model was a celebrated beauty of the Edo period, called Han Tayū (Kidō 1978, 355–8). She was the highest-ranked courtesan in the Yoshiwara pleasure district at the end of the 17th century. Later on she was redeemed by a wealthy merchant and became a Buddhist nun. While she was a courtesan, she heard the story of Bodhidharma sitting for nine years facing the wall. She laughed at it and said: “That is not such a big deal. Prostitutes have to spend every day and every night sitting and looking for customers—not facing a wall, but facing the street through the windows. After ten years in this world of misery, I have already exceeded Daruma by one year.” And according to the lore, when the painter Hanabusa Itchō (1652–1724) heard this anecdote, he conceived the idea of merging Daruma and the prostitute into a single figure (McFarland 1986, 82). Probably this was the first “*onna Daruma*” or “*woman Daruma*”, which then became a popular figure among the floating world-artists and throughout Japan.

The appearance of the *okiagari onna* Daruma dolls is also an interesting phenomenon. Their connection with the famous Russian Matryoshka dolls is already a proven fact.<sup>20</sup> Daruma is a stimulus to childish fantasies and is included imaginatively in children’s play. Apart from games played by children there are different kinds of wooden Daruma toys, such as puzzles and the popular dropping Daruma (Daruma *otoshi* だるま落とし), which consists of variously colored wooden rings, with a Daruma image on top. The player should knock each ring under the column, while the column remains upright. In Japan a snowman is called “snow Daruma 雪ダルマ” and its representation often appears in ink-paintings. Around New Year, Daruma-markets are held in several places, extensively in the Kantō area. They are scheduled one after the other in order to permit vendors to move

19 The same type of parody can be found in regard of Budai 布袋 (in Japanese Hotei), when he is shown in woman’s dress while a woman is represented with the big sack: the attribute of Budai. See the painting by Furuyama Moromasa (fl. ca. 1704–1748), reproduced in *Christies New York*, 27. 10. 1998, 48–49, lot. 21.

20 From the historical perspective, the dolls arrived in Russia from Japan relatively recently, in the 1890s. It is said that somebody brought a wooden carving of a Buddhist saint as a surprise to the Mamontovs, a family of Russian industrialists and patrons of arts. The doll that came from the island of Honshu would break into two halves revealing a smaller one with the same trick, there were five. Ten years after Matryoshka had made its appearance in Russia, it was awarded a gold medal as a typically Russian toy at the World Fair in Paris in 1900. (Katkova 2004)

from one place to another from early January till early March. Many temples in Japan are called Daruma temples. Some of them have a long history of taking part in the popular Daruma cults. Others started to make such associations after the Second World War to cope with their severe financial situation, and thought that with the visibility and the trading of Daruma dolls they would increase their income and popularity. Before the war, parishioners usually gathered at the temple with their own hand-made Daruma-images to pray for protection and prosperity, and, after the war, these events were formalized to become an official festival and the home-made images became substituted with professionally crafted figures sold by the temple (McFarland 1987, 99–100).

In conclusion, Daruma in the form of a doll was said to be a symbol of Japanese identity. In none of the East Asian countries where his figure appeared did he become a part of people's everyday life to such a degree as in Japan. It corresponds to several associations and values: venerating the Indian source and the Chinese development of Buddhism, the adaptation and Japanization of Chinese cultural elements, and Japan's own definition of the uniqueness of its ethos (ibid., 100). As McFarland summarized it aptly: "A great number of Japanese have been associated with Daruma. They have honored and emulated him. They have deified and worshipped him. They have humanized and played with him. They have trivialized and made sport of him." (ibid., 54) Bodhidharma in the form of a doll is much more regarded as a symbol of Japaneseness, and therefore Japanese people popularized this figure at such a grand scale that the city of Takasaki has even chosen the Daruma doll as its symbol, where not only the temple—named after Daruma, of course—is full of Daruma dolls, but the whole city is decorated with Daruma-designs and the shops sell a diverse array of goods all related to Daruma. There is even an association of Daruma temples, and a German medical doctor and collector, Gabriele Greve, who has launched a website for studying Daruma, also established a small museum in the mountains of Okayama prefecture.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

According to tradition, the founder of meditational Buddhism is the Indian-born Bodhidharma, whose legendary figure can often be seen in the visual art and popular culture of East Asian countries. The iconography of Bodhidharma shows strong relationships with the representations of Daoist immortals and Buddhist arhats and patriarchs, which can be seen clearly in the developments

21 See her blog. Gabriele Greve, *Daruma San in Japan, Japanese Art and Culture* (posted on 25. 12. 2007).

and misinterpretations of several images of such genres resulting into new iconographies.

Starting from similar sources, but using different models for the representation and popularization of Bodhidharma, Korea and Japan differ from each other. Socio-historical reasons also play a great role in the difference of models and forms of how Bodhidharma appears in these two countries: in Japan Zen enjoyed a continuous support from the 13th century onwards, and, especially in the Edo period, popular religions and imagination formed and secularized the image of Bodhidharma further. While in Korea, from the 15th century onwards, Buddhism suffered and was marginalized in favor of the dominant Neo-Confucianist ideology, and Buddhist imagery was therefore not as abundant as in Japan, and the Buddhist iconographical themes were blurred and misinterpreted further in this milieu. However, with the revitalization of Buddhism, mostly in the 20th century, the production of Bodhidharma imagery got a new impetus, and they were produced in great quantities by monks and artists alike, often with magical and luck-bringing intentions. The models were mostly taken from earlier Bodhidharma paintings painted by Korean artists, such as the famous Bodhidharma-bust by Kim Myeongguk.

In Japan, however, mostly the popularized and secularized Daruma dolls are used, and they are often brought back to religious contexts (e.g. Daruma dolls appear in Buddhist altars). It can thus be said that in Japan the secularized image became sacralized again; while in Korea, the popularization of Bodhidharma in the form of reinterpreting famous Korean paintings has just started to appear in recent centuries, and has not gone to such extreme forms as it did in Japan, with the versatile forms of the popular Daruma dolls.

When we look at the ways Bodhidharma images are popularized in modern and contemporary East Asia, we find some basic differences between China, Korea, and Japan.

Among these countries, Japan was the first one to popularize Bodhidharma on a large scale, not only in the simplified ink paintings usually crafted by the monk painters and in their popular color prints, but also in the form of a roly-poly doll called *Daruma*.

The transformation of a religious founder's image into a doll is an interesting phenomenon, which only appeared in Japan, and this form of representation entered Korea as a symbol of Japaneseness rather than a representation of Bodhidharma himself (for example, as a sign in Japanese restaurants, like the waving cat).

In China the popularization of Bodhidharma only happened recently, but here the visual appearance does not play such an important role as it does in Japan

or Korea. Here, the cult flourishes especially around the Shaolin monastery and mainly among martial arts practitioners, to whom Bodhidharma is venerated as the founder of Shaolin kung fu.

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