

JENNIFER EICHMAN

Reading Instruction: Zhuhong's Guide to Buddhism for a Late-Ming Audience

ABSTRACT:

As a contribution to the history of reading, this article analyzes a selection of the 427 *suibi*-style essays by the late-Ming monk-educator Lianchi Zhuhong 蓮池祿宏 (1535–1615). They were published between 1600–1615 under the title *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* (*Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窗隨筆). Zhuhong sought to improve religious literacy by establishing a baseline for interpreting Buddhist texts, and especially to point literati toward reading the tradition both literally and figuratively; thus a number of the essays concerned the act of reading. The essays analyzed in this article not only map out the differences in reading methods needed for the mastery of Pure Land scripture, Buddhist exegesis, and Chan discourse records, they also make copious references to contemporary literati reading culture. A consummate arbiter of all things Buddhist, Zhuhong sought to draw the broader reading elite toward an acceptance of his view of what constitutes a normative Buddhist tradition. Furthermore, the analyses here allow us to envision the actual and implied reader whom he was addressing.

KEYWORDS:

reading methods, Lianchi Zhuhong, Chan, Pure Land, Buddhist exegesis, Ming-dynasty Buddhism, Hong Mai, zuihitsu, xiaopin, suibi, literati culture, Republican-era Buddhist periodicals

In order to capitalize on the contemporary popularity of a literary genre called *suibi* 隨筆, literally “to follow one’s brush,” the innovative monk-educator Lianchi Zhuhong 蓮池祿宏 (1535–1615) published and distributed an impressive number of slim, portable volumes of essays. Zhuhong’s crowning achievement in this format consists of 427 essays published between 1600 and 1615 in a three-volume series under the title *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* (*Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窗隨筆). Through these handy, plain-bound, illustration-free volumes, approximately 18 x 11 cm in height and width, the series sought to improve the religious literacy of its readership, a goal to be achieved by orienting

➤ Jennifer Eichman, SOAS, University of London

I WOULD like to thank On-cho Ng for inviting me to a conference on the topic of reading, Antonello Palumbo for the opportunity to present a version of this work at SOAS, and, for useful advice, the following scholars: Wendi Adamek, Daniel Stevenson, Lin Chen-kuo, Yi-li Wu, Roderick Whitfield, Jiani Chen, Ruxin Yang, Bernhard Fuehrer, Janice Nichols, Rivi Handler-Spitz, James Benn, and Barend ter Haar.

readers toward a proper understanding of the received tradition, both Buddhist and otherwise, textual and practical. At the same time he introduced them to the strengths and weaknesses of ideas floating around in contemporary, literati Buddhist discourse. Zhuhong's adoption of this popular genre and packaging of it in a cheap portable format attest to his innovative approach to reaching a wider literati audience through reading practices most intimately familiar to them. Given his sizable contribution to the genre, an analysis of the essays is long overdue, as is the recognition of his position as a leading monk-educator and prolific master of the short-essay form. Moreover, *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* may well be the first evidence we have of a Chinese monk-written *suibi* text, since no other *suibi* titles predate it in Buddhist canonical literature.

There is only one preface to the series – the 1615 preface to the third volume. Zhuhong, its author, wrote that he modeled his texts after *Jottings from Rongzhai Studio* (*Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆) written by the Song-dynasty Hanlin academician Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202), a figure best known for his collections of anecdotes and supernatural tales.¹ Given Zhuhong's stated admiration for *suibi* writing, we must consider the situation of the genre more generally. Late-Ming *suibi* essays have often been compared to two other prevalent, yet loosely defined literati genres, *xiaopin* 小品 and *sanwen* 散文. All three genres consist of short informal essays and anecdotal sketches written in a relatively free style on a variety of topics. Many essays showcase their appraisals of literati amusements – gardens, art, theater, and tea – though some venture into the realm of politics, gossip, and ethics in human behavior.²

¹ In contrast to the Japanese context where *zuihitsu* (= *suibi*) appears to have been a mainstay of the monastic repertoire from the 13th c. onward, inspired, likewise, by the work of Hong Mai, Chinese monks seem not to have availed themselves of this genre before the late-16th c. Though beyond the scope of this study, the Japanese reception of Zhuhong's texts certainly deserves scrutiny. Linda Chance hints at 17th-c. Japanese monks' interest in Zhuhong's *suibi* writing, yet we know that Mujaku Dōchū 無著道忠 (1653–1744) criticized some essays in the *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* series. See Linda H. Chance, *Formless in Form: Kenkō, Tsurezuregusa, and the Rhetoric of Japanese Fragmentary Prose* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1997), pp. 56, 262, n. 53; John Jorgensen, "Mujaku Dōchū (1653–1744) and Seventeenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Scholarship," *East Asian History* 32–33 (2007), pp. 25–56, esp. 52–53 on Dōchū's critique of *Jottings*. For more on Hong Mai, see Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1990). Of course, Hong Mai's text inspired other late-Ming figures, notably Zhu Guozhen 朱國禎 (1558–1632), whose original title for *Yongchuang xiaopin* 湧幢小品 was "Fang Hong xiaopin" 倣洪小品 ("Miscellanies in Imitation of Hong [Mai's *Rongzhai suibi*])." For a brief description, see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, 4th edn. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series), p. 926 (entry 70.6.4).

² For an extended discussion of *suibi* and *xiaopin* genres, see Rivi Handler-Spitz, "Short Prose Forms in a Global Sixteenth-Century Context: The Western Essay and the Chinese Xiaopin, Sanwen, and Suibi," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 32.2 (2010), pp. 110–21.

When he sent one of the volumes of *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* to a literati disciple, Zhuhong wrote, "It was written quickly and meanders with no refined theory or abstruse talk, and yet, all of it slices through to the realities of body, mind, nature, and life."³ Despite the framework of a freer style, the 427 essays in *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* are rarely light-hearted or spontaneous sketches; they are, in fact, skillfully crafted, didactic, purposeful, and Buddhist-driven in the moral, doctrinal, and practical conclusions each seeks to impart. Nonetheless, the ordering of essays does have a slightly random feel to it: albeit filled with thematic content, there are no thematic groupings, nor do the essays progress in any apparent order, whether from easy to difficult, or otherwise. Many essays are devoted to foundational doctrines, either Pure Land or Chan cultivation, the treatment of animals, and filial piety. In sum, this looser format readily accommodated an array of essays on disparate topics not found elsewhere in the series.

In guiding his audience to build the skills needed to "read" the tradition – to understand it both literally and figuratively – Zhuhong included a number of essays on the act of reading itself. It is these essays drawn from all three volumes in the series that stand at the heart of this study. The present article's singular focus on the reading techniques Zhuhong sought to instill in his audience sheds light on the strategies a monk might use to capitalize on the *actual* literacy of Ming audiences so that he might build greater *religious* literacy. Religious literacy, as used here, refers to fluency with a given set of religious idioms that denote a broader practice culture that is not limited to but inclusive of any given religious tradition's written oeuvre. In a word, the written word was one medium among many that a monk could employ to foster greater fluency with his tradition. Given the rise in literacy during the late-Ming period, this study underscores the need for more attention being given to the potential for reading competency per se to nurture a religious tradition, an area of inquiry and learning not often

McLaughlin calls late-Ming *xiaopin* a "literature of leisure," however, this freer style could be used for anecdotal histories or a range of more serious topics; Charles A. Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 2008), p. 2. In his brief history of the genre, Yang Ye traces the rising popularity of *xiaopin* to the mid-15th c. and argues that such short literary sketches are akin to vignettes; Yang Ye, trans., *Vignettes from the Late Ming: A Hsiao-p'in Anthology* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 1999), p. 107, n. 2.

³ Excerpt from one of his letters to Tao Wangling; Zhuhong, "Da Kuaiji Tao Shikui taishi" 答會稽陶石簣太史, in *Shu yi* 書一, as printed in *Jiaying da zangjing* 嘉興大藏經 (hereafter, abbreviated J) (CBETA rpt. of *Jingshan zangban banzang* 徑山藏版版藏 [Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 1987]), J no. B277, vol. 33, 129C22–C25. Passages are cited by text number, followed by volume (e.g., here "33"), page (here "129"), register (A, B, or C), and line(s).

considered in the history of literati reading practices.⁴ By mapping out the significant variances between the three different types of reading methods Zhuhong advocated for each of the following genres – Pure Land scripture, the commentarial corpus, and the reading of Chan scriptures and discourse records, this study allows us to envision the kind of readers Zhuhong thought he was addressing, shortcomings and all, and the milieu in which he and they found themselves.

In Zhuhong's view, reading should be undertaken to cultivate the Way (*xue dao* 學道) and anchor the pursuit of awakening (*wu* 悟) in tradition; it was not meant merely to broaden one's knowledge (*xuewen* 學問).⁵ To be competent in reading Buddhist literature demanded a discernment of genre differences, a hermeneutic resistance to literalness and mimicry, and, finally, an ability to weigh competing exegetical claims. To complicate matters, the reading of Pure Land scripture required a different skill-set than that prescribed for the mastery of the practices and goals outlined in Chan discourse records (*yulu* 語錄). In the case of Chan, which valorized the experience of religious transport toward spiritual states inaccessible through language, most especially awakening, for readers without the right set of reading skills the words (or language) of the discourse records simply became obstacles to further spiritual progress. Scriptural exegesis, far from illuminating tricky passages, often would expose the fault lines of irresolvable contention. Acting as an arbiter of tradition, Zhuhong skillfully guided his readers through this textual terrain, praising what he found most credible and pointing out what he chose to dismiss. In this respect, the entire series endeavors to establish a baseline of Buddhist norms for the late-sixteenth through early-seventeenth century.⁶

⁴ For the rise in literacy rates, see Willard Peterson, "Confucian Learning in Late Ming Thought," in Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, eds., *Cambridge History of China, Volume Eight: The Ming Dynasty, Part Two: 1368–1644* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998), pp. 709–88.

⁵ Zhuhong, "Xue dao wu xing qu" 學道無倖屈, in idem, *Zhuchuang suibi* 竹窗隨筆 2 (J no. B277), vol. 33, 46B13–B21. I cite the *Jiaying zang* 嘉興藏 rpt. of the 1898 Nanjing rpt. of *Yunqi fahui* 雲棲法彙, which includes the *Zhuchuang suibi* series in 3 vols. (fascicles 12–14). In this article, footnote references to the individual essays will indicate which volume by stating 1, 2, or 3 after the short title *Zhuchuang*. Attesting to the series popularity, there are numerous extant copies of *Zhuchuang suibi* in rare book collections and on library shelves, not to mention recent webpages devoted to practitioner translations of these essays into modern Chinese. I have consulted two scholarly annotated versions, yet all translations are my own. The annotated edition created by the Japanese Research Group on Song and Ming Philosophy under the editorship of Araki Kengo stands out, yet has in many respects been superseded by the annotated Chinese edition published by a group of Taiwanese followers of the monk Jingkong 淨空 (1927–); see Zhuhong, *Zhuchuang suibi baihua jie* 竹窗隨筆白話解, trans. Huazang jiangji zu 華藏講記組 (Taipei: The Republic of Hwa Dzan Society, 2014). Araki Kengo 荒木見悟, *Chikusō zuihitsu* 竹窓隨筆 (Tokyo: Meitoku Shuppansha, 1969).

⁶ When looking for sources that might serve as a baseline reference for readily available

Zhuhong achieved a formidable reputation as one of the leading monks of his day – the latter half of the sixteenth century. Most of Zhuhong's writing and his literati contacts are squarely grounded in this period and not in the first fifteen years of the seventeenth century, which witnessed perhaps a refinement of his thought and culminated in the publication of a lifetime of reflection on Buddhist topics, such as we see in the *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* series. Zhuhong's formative interactions with a literati audience, the very interactions that informed the writing of this series, largely occurred in the latter half of the sixteenth-century, as did some of the writing itself. For this reason, there are points in this article where it makes sense to reference the late-sixteenth century. To be sure after its early seventeenth-century publication this series further impacted many a reader in the ensuing centuries, a topic largely beyond the scope of this study.

In this study I will analyze a select number of essays drawn from the three-volume series *Jottings by a Bamboo Window*, all of which offer guidance on what and how to read. The study is divided into four sections. The first section opens with a brief introduction to Zhuhong's imagined readership and the second discusses the genres he promoted. The third sheds light on Zhuhong's directives on exegetical reading. And finally, it ends with Zhuhong's attitude toward Chan reading practices.

THE ACTUAL AND IMPLIED READER

In many respects the series *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* can be read as a social text. We have actual readers, implied readers, and a statement of authorial intent. Zhuhong's only preface, dated 1615 and printed in the third volume, tells us that many of the essays were based on his observations and feelings. He also sourced his material from conversations with visitors, as well as through the depth and breadth of his armchair travel into the textual tradition, analogized as the crossing of a thousand mountains and the spanning of many generations:

and commonly understood Buddhist ideas among late-Ming literati, I first examined household encyclopedias 類書 like the multi-fascicle 1599 *Santai wanyong zhengzong* 三台萬用正宗 and the 1607 *Wanyong zhengzong bu qiu ren* 萬用正宗不求人, each containing a single fascicle of Buddhist excerpts. However, assessing their impact on any given readership is quite difficult. This is especially so with the former, whose Buddhist section is largely a reprint of the 13th-c. *Shilin guangji* 事林廣記 compiled by Chen Yuanjing 陳元靚 (1137–1181). Zhuhong's views were certainly in competition with other approaches, as the essays in the collection amply demonstrate. Yet given its contemporary provenance and Zhuhong's own substantial number of followers, *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* was more closely aligned with actual late-16th to early-17th-c. literati interests in Buddhist ideas.

In the past there was *Rongzhai suibi*; I emulated it in *Zhuchuang*. Whenever something moved me I wrote it down; whenever I saw something, I recorded it. From its inception to the present, I have completed two volumes. Now more than eight decades have elapsed. Although I am quite aware of my mistakes of the past seventy-nine years, still I realize my heart has not yet quieted down. I cannot simply wait to topple into the Hall of Joyous Rebirth, [nor] am I able to exert myself in [wearing] Venerable Zhao's sandals.⁷ Thus the instant I sit down, I walk a thousand mountains; in a split second my spirit roams the myriad ages. That which I sense and see accumulates over months and years, and suddenly another volume is finished.

Even though anecdotes and stories arrived from the east and conversation from the west, and visitors posed questions, and I as host responded, all of this was haphazard and disorganized and needed to be brought back to the setting in order of the cultivation methods and the evening out and disciplining of the mind-ground. As for the rest, such as events of this world, if they bore no relation to teaching and transforming [others] or were of no assistance in advancing cultivation, then I did not spare any time [to discuss them]. Alas! I am old. How could I not cork the bottle, but keep chatting away like this? Alas! I am old. As the sun sets on my remaining months, how much time do I have? As for this [existential quandary], there is no need to speak of it, even more so, to sit around waiting for the day? If this series has any benefit to others, what is there to worry about? Thus, I take up [the writing brush] Master Guancheng.⁸

Cultural references throughout the 427 essays, like that to Master Guancheng found earlier in an essay by Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824),

⁷ The Hall of Joyous Rebirth 樂生之堂 was likely a convalescent ward; the name refers to rebirth in the Pure Land. Venerable Zhao is the famous Chan monk Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778–897), whose biography states that he began a long pilgrimage in his late fifties and accepted the abbotship of Guanyin yuan 觀音院 in Zhaozhou, modern-day Hebei, when eighty. There is a famous poem about Zhaozhou's travels and his disquieted mind that Zhuhong cites in several of his works. The preceding line plays with the vocabulary from that work. Zhuhong was often plagued by health problems that kept him from leaving Cloud Dwelling Monastery, especially in his later years.

⁸ In Han Yu's essay "The Biography of Fur-Point" ("Maoying zhuan" 毛穎傳), the subject, a writing brush made of rabbit fur, was invested in the city of Guancheng and later called Master Guancheng. For a close reading of this allegorical pseudo-biography, see William H. Nienhauser, Jr., "An Allegorical Reading of Han Yü's 'Mao-Ying Chuan' (Biography of Fur Point)," *OE* 23.2 (1976), pp. 153–74. For a partial and different translation of Zhuhong's preface, see Jeffrey Broughton, trans., *The Chan Whip Anthology: A Companion to Zen Practice*, with contributions by Elise Yoko Watanabe (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2015), p. 39.

exhibit the astute choice of a writer attuned to the literary tastes of his elite audience. Zhuhong frequently addressed the reader as *shidafu* 士大夫 (that is, literati elite), cited classical (Confucian) texts, invoked the work of famous writers such as Han Yu and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1026–1101), and took for granted familiarity with the imperial examination system and official government posts. Clearly, Zhuhong assumed his audience to be elite, educated males. The religious practices of women, children, and men from other social ranks are rarely of concern. Some essays do criticize specific monks or take aim at unacceptable monastic behaviors, suggesting monks too were part of Zhuhong's intended audience.

Four of Zhuhong's many letter-exchanges with high officials, for example, his precept-disciples the officials Huang Hui 黃輝 (1554–1612) and Tao Wangling 陶望齡 (1562–1609) mention these texts.⁹ Because the letters comment on *Jottings by a Bamboo Window*, and in several cases note that Zhuhong sent the recipient copies of one or more of the volumes in the series, they provide the most incontrovertible evidence we have that Zhuhong's texts were written for an elite educated audience. Two of his recipients, Huang and Tao, devoted many years to Buddhist service, participated in releasing-life activities, raised money for Buddhist projects, and were committed to both Chan and Pure Land doctrine and practice. It is clear that by the time they received Zhuhong's post-1600 texts, these two close friends were no longer novice readers. They, in fact, belonged to that coterie of late-Ming *shidafu* who were fully immersed in the complex and variegated ritual and intellectual practices that comprised contemporary Buddhist traditions. Unfortunately, we know much less about the third recipient, an official in the Bureau of Military Personnel, Wu Shiguang 吳始光 (dates unknown),¹⁰ who, like Tao Wangling, also received copies of another portable text, the 1600 *Spurring Through the Chan Barrier* (*Changuan cejin* 禪觀策進).¹¹ The fourth letter, written to a certain Layman Zhu 朱 from Jiangshan, disputes Zhu's interpretation of one of the essays in the second volume in the series. This letter offers a concrete example of reader engagement.¹²

⁹ Letter to Huang Hui; Zhuhong, "Da Sichuan Huang Shenxuan taishi" 答四川黃慎軒太史, in *Shu yi* (J no. B277, vol. 33, 122A7), and letter to Tao Wangling; Zhuhong, "Da Kuaiji Tao Shikui taishi" 答會稽陶石簣太史, in *Shu yi* (J no. B277, vol. 33, 129C22–C23).

¹⁰ Letter to Wu Shiguang; Zhuhong, "Da Anqing Wu Shiguang bingbu" 答安慶吳始光兵部, in *Shu, er* 書二 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 131A18–A26).

¹¹ *Changuan cejin* is not a *suibi* text. For a description, see n. 84, below.

¹² Unfortunately, the essay "Xinde" 心得 discussed in this letter is not translated in this

Zhuhong's 427 essays are a summation of his reflections on nearly a half century of interactions with elite visitors to his monastic residence, Cloud Dwelling Monastery 雲棲寺, near Hangzhou. In fact, many of the essays have the feel of snippets cut from wide-ranging conversations on contemporary Buddhist discourse, whether through engagement with imagined or with real interlocutors. The implied reader, born of this conversational process, is palpable in the structure of the arguments, choice of topics, and numerous references drawn from literati culture, many of which will be pointed out in the analysis of individual essays in the sections to come. Some essays address basic Buddhist ignorance among a reading elite that would not be evident to us without these essays. Still other essays, liberated from the structure of a formal sutra commentary, function as mini-exegeses on scriptural texts and topics so varied they signal to us the breadth and depth of a Buddhist discourse among contemporary literati that is not readily apparent in other Buddhist genres, most particularly the commentarial literature. Although the series was published between 1600 and 1615, not all of the essays were written in the twilight of Zhuhong's life. One essay in particular is nothing more than a short excerpt from his 1584 *Commentary and Its Subcommentary to the Amitābha Sūtra* (*Emituo jing shuchao* 阿彌陀經疏鈔).

Zhuhong slipped in the occasional autobiographical detail. This allows us to catch a glimpse of his own reading history, a topic largely absent from all the official biographies on him. In one very short essay, titled "Buddhist Sūtras Absolutely Must Be Read" ("Fojing bu ke bu du" 佛經不可不讀), Zhuhong confessed that before he was tonsured, he dismissed the need to read sutras. When he did start reading them, he was shocked to realize their importance. The essay divides potential readers into three categories: those who do not read Buddhist scripture are likened to someone who faces a jeweled mountain but never goes to it; those who read with an eye toward improving their conversational repertoire and written essays, but never fathom scriptural meaning, are likened to someone who enters the mountain but never picks up the jewels; the third type, those who discourse on the texts, but offer only superficial explanations because they lack any real level of cultivation, are compared to someone who picks up the jewels but only plays with them. Literati had long been cautioned against reading

study. In brief, Zhuhong's letter corrects layman Zhu's misunderstanding of the relationship between the mind, eyes, and ears with respect to learning. What the mind realizes is far greater than what the eye grasps through reading, which is superior to what the ear merely hears; Zhuhong, "Da Jiangshan Zhu jushi" 答江山朱居士, in *Zhaida* 摘答 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 144B4-B17); "Xinde," in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 27A5-A9).

prose for the express purpose of nursing their own literary ambitions and would have known that the quite famous Song-era Confucian Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) had advised against reading merely to pass the civil service examinations or to improve one's prose.¹³ Other Zhuhong essays elaborate on this same theme. In one such essay, "The Height of Stupidity" ("Yu zhi yu" 愚之愚), to acquire textual facility and debating skills, and to give eloquent lectures on Buddhist topics without some level of spiritual attainment is called, naturally, the height of stupidity.¹⁴ While yet another essay labels anyone who accumulates knowledge without the requisite moral inculcation as one who cultivates crazy wisdom (*kuanghui* 狂慧).¹⁵

Despite its bleak tone, "Buddhist Sūtras Absolutely Must Be Read" ends with an optimistic claim, which is that any contact with Buddhist scripture will plant the seed for future cultivation: "Once [scripture] permeates the field of knowledge, the seed of the Way is finally planted. For this reason one absolutely must read Buddhist scripture 一染識田, 終成道種, 是故佛經不可不讀."¹⁶ The reader is left to ponder the gravity of this final assertion: personal contact with Buddhist scripture, no matter how inadequate, "planted the seeds" for future spiritual growth. Clearly, despite Zhuhong's embrace of the *suibi*-style essay format, *Footings by a Bamboo Window* was not to be glibly consumed at one's leisure.¹⁷ Zhuhong envisioned his ideal reader as someone whose gains in textual facility were accompanied by efforts at self-cultivation.¹⁸

¹³ Zhu Xi was not the only one to make this point. Readers would have easily seen or heard it elsewhere. See Zhu Xi, "Dushu fa" 讀書法, 5.41 and 5.42. The latter is translated in Gardner as 5.27; Zhu Xi, *Learning to Be a Sage: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically*, trans. and comm. Daniel K. Gardner (Berkeley: U. California P., 1990), p. 149.

¹⁴ Zhuhong, "Yu zhi yu" 愚之愚, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 32B3–B7).

¹⁵ Zhuhong, "Shi zhi dang wu" 世智當悟, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 27A25–B7).

¹⁶ Zhuhong, "Fojing bu ke bu du" 佛經不可不讀, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 28C16–C26). In one example of the continued importance of essays from this collection, this one was republished in a 1936 Buddhist periodical; see under his name Lianchi 蓮池, "Fojing bu ke bu du" 佛經不可不讀, *Fojiao yu Foxue* 佛教與佛學 8 (1936-07-01); rpt. Huang Xianian 黃夏年, ed., *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng* 民國佛教期刊文獻集成 (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2006; hereafter, *MFQ*), vol. 78, p. 193.

¹⁷ In a short essay on leisure activities, Zhuhong lists reading as admirable and then proceeds to rank the reading of Buddhist texts as more admirable and the recitation of the name Amitābha Buddha as most admirable; Zhuhong, "Hao le" 好樂, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 27A18–A25).

¹⁸ The idea that contact with Buddhist texts "planted seeds" for future spiritual gain was a standard Buddhist trope. In a letter to Zhuhong, the monk Jiaoguang Zhenjian 交光真鑑 (d.u.) reiterated this idea, "Whenever I meet students and those laymen who understand, I praise your commentary and urge them to read it over and over, so they may plant the seed of re-birth in the Western Land"; Zhuhong, "Da Lu'an Jiaoguang fashi" 答潞安交光法師, in *Shu yi* (J no. B277, vol. 33, 117A17–A20).

WHAT TO READ: BROADENING THE SCOPE

Unsurprisingly, in keeping with his own eclectic reading habits, which included forays into Tiantai, Huayan, and Yogacara exegesis, study of ritual manuals, and a wide variety of scripture, Zhuhong attempted to persuade readers narrowly committed to a single Buddhist genre that only a broad and exhaustive reading cross the spectrum of Buddhist literature would result in a thorough and unbiased knowledge of the tradition.¹⁹ His essay “Read Extensively” (“Guang lan” 廣覽) pressed audiences to read three genres: Pure Land scripture, scripture focused on meritorious deeds, and Chan texts. The essay portrays a textual terrain fraught with tension; much of it generated internally by contradictory Buddhist teachings apparent to anyone who has read across these genres. For their potential to mislead naïve readers, Zhuhong particularly singled out two sutras widely read by late-Ming literati: the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* and the *Platform Sūtra*. Both texts appear to disparage Pure Land cultivation and in the case of the latter, any scripture that advocated good works, virtuous behavior, or the generation of merit. In this essay and others, Zhuhong went to great lengths to convince his readers to read Pure Land scripture and scriptures devoted to the cultivation of virtue and meritorious deeds:

In reading sutras one must be thorough and comprehensive, only then will one be completely versed in them and not be biased. Undoubtedly, with respect to sutras, what this one establishes another completely dismisses; what this one completely dismisses, another establishes. Because the [teachings] accord with the times and the capacities of [followers], there is no fixed Dharma 無定法。

Suppose someone only reads the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* and sees that Mahāsthāmaprāpta did not gain “perfect understanding” (*yuantong* 圓通), but does not broadly read the many scriptures that praise the Pure Land, then that person would say that recitation of the Buddha’s name, this method, is not worthy of veneration.

Suppose someone only reads Bodhidharma’s response to emperor Wu of Liang and sees that merit does not reside in doing good, but does not broadly read the many scriptures on the six perfections and myriad acts 六度萬行諸經, then that person would say that the conditioned practice (*youwei* 有爲) of meritorious acts (*fude* 福德) can be dispensed with. Viewed from another perspective, some cling to the Pure Land and reject Chan; some cling to

¹⁹ Zhuhong, “Guang lan” 廣覽, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 32B13–B25).

what is conditioned and reject the unconditioned. They are also like this.

This is analogous to those whose reading of medical texts is not broad. They only see that for treating a cold one [should] use cinnamon bark and aconite and reject the use of scutellaria and coptis; [and only see that] to treat vacuity [one should] use ginseng and astragalus root and reject the use of unripe bitter orange and magnolia bark. They do not know that at times scutellaria, coptis, unripe bitter orange, and magnolia bark should be used, while at other times cinnamon bark, aconite, scutellaria, and coptis should be withheld.

For this reason, those who are partial to a single medical prescription misread the physical body; those who are partial to a single scriptural interpretation misread the wisdom body. [Thus] I constantly say, one should not let those who lack discernment (*wuzhiren* 無智人)²⁰ read the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*. I truly worry that they will grab onto this and reject that.²¹

This essay opens with a typical Buddhist response to bias: when reading extensively one is bound to encounter scriptural contradictions that can be explained away by reference to changing historical contexts and individual spiritual capacities. In a creative explanation of how to benefit from contrary views, the essay ends with a clear-cut analogy to unintelligent use of curatives drawn from medical knowledge familiar to literati readers.²² Just as one should modulate treatment of the body based on the progression of a disease requiring one remedy today and a different one tomorrow, modifications in individual spiritual growth require facility with different doctrines and formulas, even ones in ap-

²⁰ The term *wuzhiren* 無智人 has a Sanskrit origin (*bāla*, *bāla-jana*) and refers to someone who lacks discernment, what I am calling the novice reader. See entry in Charles A. Muller, ed., *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*: <[<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?71.xml+id\(%027b7121-667a-4eba%027\)>](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?71.xml+id(%027b7121-667a-4eba%027))>.

²¹ Zhuhong, "Read Extensively" 廣覽, in *Zhuhong* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 32B13–B25).

²² For a sense of literati medical knowledge at the time, see Andrew Schonebaum, *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2016). The use of medical metaphors extended equally to contemporary Confucian texts. See the preface that Xu Ai 徐愛 (1487–1517) wrote for *Chuanxi lu* 傳習錄, which claims that the famous Confucian exegete Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) said, "Sages and worthies teach in the same way physicians prescribe medicine"; as cited in Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu-Wang School of Neo-Confucianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2009), p. 131. The first part of this passage refers to how one treats so-called "Cold Damage Disorders" (*shanghan* 傷寒). The classic treatment of injury from cold is to use heating drugs (cassia, aconite) while avoiding cold drugs (scutellaria and coptis). But because diseases can transform or require different treatments as they progress, such fixed application of principle without acknowledgement of such transformation is not helpful. I would like to thank Yi-Li Wu for her help with this explanation.

parent opposition, not blind adherence to the dictates of a single text. Zhuhong further singles out the *Platform Sūtra* for special opprobrium. What, after all, was one to do about the unsophisticated, undiscerning reader who grasped the literal word-for-word meaning of polemical texts like the *Platform Sūtra*, yet lacked the ability to weigh its claims against those of other scriptures?

In general, Zhuhong was not one to offer much praise for the *Platform Sūtra*. He worried that naïve readers might take literally its repetition of the famous dialogue between Bodhidharma and emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (464–549);²³ in it Bodhidharma informs the emperor that his pious acts of temple building and financial support of monks will not result in merit. The *Platform Sūtra*, in fact, used this dialogue to reinterpret meritorious acts in terms of the inner cultivation of the self, arguing that only practitioners who made internal adjustments would generate merit through their good acts. Yet novice readers might conclude from this denunciation of good acts that there was no need for them to read the substantive corpus of scripture devoted to an elaboration of the six perfections (Skt.: *paramitas*), myriad good deeds, realms of rebirth, and karma, and perhaps more alarmingly stop giving donations.²⁴ In other words, they would ignore merit-generating good works because such activities were categorized under “conditioned factors of existence” (*youwei* 有爲; Skt.: *saṃskṛta*), which the *Platform Sūtra* treats as problematic. Practices in this category could result in a good rebirth but were of less importance to practitioners who aspired to be liberated altogether from the cycle of rebirth. Instead, such readers gravitated toward discussions of “unconditioned factors of existence” (*wuwei* 無爲 Skt.: *asaṃskṛta*) including the doctrines of emptiness and enlightenment. Zhuhong and many contemporary monks argued that to elevate emptiness at the expense of more mundane merit-generating actions was itself a discriminatory and dualistic practice that fostered only stinginess and greed, not compassion, and would not result in enlightenment.

Zhuhong expressed one other concern. He worried that some late-Ming readers would decide not to read Pure Land scripture or recite the name of the Buddha Amitābha, after reading the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* passages associated with the bodhisattva Mahāstāmaprāpta. One section of the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* discusses twenty-five famous bodhisattvas and monks who all realized perfection, albeit each through different

²³ For more on Emperor Wu, see Mark Strange, “Representations of Liang Emperor Wu as a Buddhist Ruler in Sixth- and Seventh-century Texts,” *AM* 3d ser. 24.2 (2011), pp. 53–113.

²⁴ Zhuhong, “Guang lan” 廣覽, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 32B13–B25).

means. In the passages in question, Mahāstāmaprāpta unequivocally endorses Pure Land rebirths, yet when the Buddha later asks the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī which of the twenty-five had the best method, he chose that of the bodhisattva Guanyin. Despite the strong association between Guanyin and Pure Land soteriology in other scriptures, these passages are not Pure Land in orientation. Apparently, some readers thought Pure Land practices inferior based on this particular episode, an idea Zhuhong clearly rejected.²⁵

Zhuhong's deep reservations concerning the message of the *Platform Sūtra* and its potential to turn audiences away from Pure Land practice recurs in other essays. An essay entitled, no less, "Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch" ("Liuzu tan jing" 六祖壇經) raised just such objections. Having already established a reputation for his Pure Land advocacy in the late-sixteenth century, Zhuhong continued to advise above all that his disciples vow to be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha, and to that end continually recite this Buddha's name, a practice referred to as *nianfo* 念佛. In contrast, the *Platform Sūtra* asserts only that the Pure Land exists in the mind, not in a far distant location. Zhuhong had already disputed at great length both the *Platform Sūtra's* claims about the location of the Pure Land and its rejection of *nianfo* in his 1584 *Commentary and Its Subcommentary to the Amitābha Sūtra*.²⁶ In his short essay, "Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch," he attempts to separate the authentic teachings of the Sixth Patriarch from what Zhuhong reasons is the faulty logic of teachings ascribed to him in the *Platform Sūtra* itself. The *Platform Sūtra* rejects recitation of the name Amitābha Buddha,²⁷ replacing it with the cultivation of the ten

²⁵ Zhuhong's point is aimed at those who use this section of scripture to dismiss Pure Land texts. However, Pure Land practitioners themselves embraced Mahāstāmaprāpta's ideas. In fact, this section of the *Sūraṅgama Sūtra* was eventually designated a stand-alone Pure Land scripture by the monk Yinguang 印光 (1861–1940) and recognized as one of a group of five Pure Land scriptures; *Da Fo ding rulai wanxing shou Lengyan jing* 大佛頂如來萬行楞嚴經 (T no. 945, vol. 19, 128.b4). For the Mañjuśrī passage see *Lengyan jing* (T no. 945, vol. 19, 106A14). For a full citation of "T", see List of Abbreviations; passages are cited by text number, followed by volume, page, and register (A, B, or C), plus line number. For a reprint of the Yinguang preface see, "Yinguang fashi xu *Jingtu wu jing*" 印光法師序淨土五經, in *Foxue banyue kan* 佛學半月刊 69 (1933–12–16); reprint *MFQ*, vol. 49, p. 76.

²⁶ Zhuhong's commentarial section on these terms is quite substantial and fairly complex; *Emituo jing shuchao* (X no. 424, vol. 22, 634A4–9; 675C14–676B3). For a full citation of "X", see List of Abbreviations; passages are cited by text number, followed by volume, page, and register (A, B, or C), plus line number.

²⁷ *Nianfo* 念佛 has several meanings and in earlier texts referred to various forms of meditative absorption. However, Zhuhong often takes it to mean "recite the name," a meaning attributed to *nianfo* starting sometime in the 8th c. that became increasingly popular. The recension of the *Platform Sūtra* known to Zhuhong was the 1290 version attributed to Zongbao 宗寶 (d. u.) (T. no. 2008).

virtuous deeds, a practice many scriptures identify with rebirth in a heaven, a far less adventitious destination still subject to the laws of karma. In Zhuhong's view, the superior choice was rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha, a permanent place outside the realm of rebirth. Zhuhong attributed this incorrect teaching not to the illiterate Sixth Patriarch Huineng 惠能 (638–713), but to his errant disciples who wrote down his teachings and composed the text:

The Sixth Patriarch indicated that he was illiterate; his whole life he had nothing to do with brush and inkstone. The *Platform Sutra* was recorded entirely by others and for this reason it contains many errors. Its explanation of the [concepts] “ten ten-thousand eight-thousand,” “eastern land,” “western land,” and so forth, I have already disputed and clarified long ago.

The text also says, “Just practice the ten virtuous [deeds];²⁸ what further need is there to seek rebirth [in the Pure Land]?” These ten virtuous [deeds] are the cause of a heavenly rebirth. Before the Buddha appeared in the world, the *cakravartin* king converted and liberated living beings by means of the ten virtuous [deeds]. That the Sixth Patriarch did not teach people to be reborn in the Western Land and see the Buddha, but just directed them to be reborn in heaven. How is that possible? This explanation clearly is not worth believing! Therefore, know that as for those who cling to the *Platform Sūtra* and discard the Pure Land, they are gravely mistaken.²⁹

The divide between readers committed to either Pure Land or Chan cultivation regimens is readily apparent in other essays. Elite men were avid consumers of Chan discourse records, encounter dialogue, and *gongan* 公案 (discussed further, below), but many saw no need to read non-Chan Buddhist texts. According to Zhuhong, in their dismissal of scriptural study and exegesis, such men cited the famous four-line Chan dictum attributed to Bodhidharma which includes the phrase, “a transmission outside the teachings 教外別傳.” On the other hand, there were Pure Land practitioners who argued that reading scripture detracted from time better spent in sincere recitation of the name Amitābha Buddha which was all one needed for rebirth in the Pure Land. In a short essay entitled “Scriptural Teachings” 經教, Zhuhong attempted to per-

²⁸ The *Platform Sutra* only has *shi shan* 十善, however, this is generally considered shorthand for either the ten virtuous precepts (*shi shan jie* 十善戒) or ten virtuous deeds (*shi shan ye* 十善業); the contents of these lists are identical.

²⁹ Zhuhong, “Liuzu tan jing” 六祖壇經, in *Zhuchuang* 3 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 60B12–B18).

suade both audiences to forge a more intimate connection between their cultivation regimens and scriptural study:

My entire life I have advocated recitation of the name and also diligently, tirelessly, advised people to read scripture. Why is this? As for recitation of the name, what is its origin? If what was propagated by the golden mouth [of the Tathāgata] had not been clearly recorded in texts, as for today's sentient beings, from what source would they know that Amitābha Buddha [dwells] beyond the ten thousand million buddha-realms?

As for those who investigate Chan (*canchan* 參禪),³⁰ they rely on "a separate transmission outside the teachings 教外別傳" as an excuse, but do not know that investigation separate from the teachings rests on a false cause (*xieyin* 邪因); awakening separate from the teachings [results in] a perverse realization (*xiejie* 邪解). Even if you investigate and become awakened, you must rely on the teachings for the stamp of verification. If [your experience] does not accord with the teachings, then this is entirely heterodox (*xie* 邪).

For this reason, those who study Confucianism must rely on the Six Classics and Four Books as their standard and those who study Buddhism must rely on the twelve divisions of the Tripiṭaka as their norm.³¹

Zhuhong knew that his educated male audience would immediately grasp his equivalence between the importance of reading more than one Confucian classic and study of all the divisions of the Buddhist canon. Formal recognition of a practitioner's enlightenment typically required testing and verification from another already-enlightened monk. Yet it is quite telling that Zhuhong stressed the role of scripture. Firstly, both Zhuhong and his contemporary Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623) relied on scripture to verify their own levels of awakening and did not receive outside verification from another eminent monk.³² This did not,

³⁰ The term *canchan* is difficult to translate. Many late-16th-c. practitioners used the term as shorthand for Chan practice, especially the cultivation of critical phrases (*huatou* 話頭). *Can* could also refer to the moment of religious breakthrough (*canpo* 參破).

³¹ Zhuhong, "Jing jiao" 經教, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 32A4–A15).

³² Deqing frequently consulted scripture to verify that his many out-of-body experiences indeed corresponded to normative descriptions of Buddhist enlightenment. In his instructions to the monk Huanyou Zhengchuan 幻有正傳 (1549–1614), Deqing argued forcefully that scripture had to be part of verification 若不以教印心,終落邪魔外道. See Deqing, "Shi Jingshan tang-zhu Huanyou Hai chanren" 示徑山堂主幻有海禪人, in *Mengyou ji* 夢遊集 (X no. 1456 vol. 73, 501A2–5). See Lynn Struve, "Deqing's Dreams: Signs in a Reinterpretation of His Autobiography," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 40 (2012), pp. 1–44; Pei-yi Wu, "The Spiritual Autobiography of Te-ch'ing," in Wm. T. de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York:

however, stop Zhuhong from testing other monks and confirming their levels of attainment. Secondly, tying realization to the textual tradition further anchored Chan cultivation in an established set of interpretive conventions and set up a buffer against idiosyncratic interpretations outside the norm of mainstream tradition.

The argument that Pure Land practitioners would not know the history of Amitābha Buddha or be able to conceive of the Pure Land and its location without texts attempts, again, to ground practice in scriptural study. In *Jottings by a Bamboo Window*, Zhuhong says little about the difficulty of reading Pure Land scripture. Pure Land sutras, especially the one-fascicle *Sūtra in Which the Buddha Expounds upon Amitābha Buddha* (*Fo shuo Emituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經; hereafter, *Amitābha Sūtra*) promoted by Zhuhong, employ straightforward narrative devices and rich literary description, but present few difficult doctrinal or philosophical points. Hence any difficulty in reading resided in mastery of transliterated and translated terms, flowery descriptive vocabulary, and obscure characters. More than a few essays in *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* suggest that a number of readers not only expected Pure Land texts and cultivation to be easy and simple, they wanted them to remain that way. Such readers questioned the creation of Pure Land exegesis, particularly when exegesis, also Pure Land ritual manuals,³³ added a layer of complexity that unduly elevated Pure Land doctrine and practice, in critic's eyes, beyond the reach of ordinary practitioners. Zhuhong's *Commentary and Its Subcommentary to the Amitābha Sūtra* came in for just this type of critique.³⁴

EXEGETICAL QUANDARIES

In the above essays, Zhuhong may be seen as having arbitrated, in effect steering his readers in the direction of a broader appreciation of scriptural study and reading. In his essays on the commentarial tra-

Columbia U.P., 1975), pp. 67–92; rpt. Pei-yi Wu, *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographical Writings in Traditional China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1990).

³³ Zhuhong wrote an essay defending the ritual manual *Guan wuliangshou Fo jingshu miao-zong chao* 觀無量壽佛經疏妙宗鈔, written by the Tiantai monk Zhili 知禮 (960–1028). The essay concludes that Zhili did not complicate the Pure Land message so much as make it appealing to those of higher spiritual capacities without obstructing those of lesser abilities; Zhuhong, “Miaozong chao” 妙宗鈔, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 33B1–B7).

³⁴ Zhuhong's commentary offers a line-by-line exegesis to the *Sūtra in Which the Buddha Expounds upon Amitābha Buddha*, but merely cites passages here and there from the longer and more complex Pure Land scriptures *Sūtra on the Buddha of Measureless Life* (often referred to as the *Longer Sūtra*) and *Sūtra on Contemplating the Buddha of Measureless Life*. The monk Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599–1655) agreed with Zhuhong's critics, and for this reason, even wrote a simplified commentary, the *Emituo jing yaojie* 阿彌陀經要解 (T no. 1762, vol. 37, 363ff).

dition, however, he appears to be plainly running interference. Many of the essays on exegesis intervene in others' quarrels concerning the validity of the interpretation of this or that exegete. By the late-sixteenth century, Buddhist practitioners had to contend with more than a millennium of contradictory explanations embedded in the exegetical writings of numerous prominent monks and their lesser counterparts. In *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* Zhuhong addressed this issue albeit at times reluctantly.³⁵ The work offered an ideal forum for numerous mini-exegeses, each devoted to unpacking the meaning of a single knotty scriptural passage central to contemporary debate. In addition, Zhuhong used such a platform to respond to critics of one of his own commentaries.

The present section will, first, introduce several essays defending the need to read commentaries. Subsequently, it presents a sampling of Zhuhong's guidance on: how to approach exegetical contradictions, deal with knotty exegetical problems, and understand his own commentarial work.

Broadly speaking, there were at the time two main types of Chinese Buddhist commentary. The most well-known type offered line-by-line comments on a sutra. The other type summarized the main points of a text or focused on topics of interest without accounting for each and every line. Irrespective of the format, and there were others, Zhuhong defended the need for any well-informed literatus to read this genre. Two of Zhuhong's essays succinctly rebut the view that advocated studying the scriptures exclusively. In an essay titled simply "*Sūraṅgama*, I" ("Lengyan yi" 楞嚴一), Zhuhong playfully indulges the reader in a game of *reductio ad absurdum*. He first concedes that all commentarial writers reshape the original text through their own interpretations, but then suggests that discarding commentary for a direct reading of the scriptural main text still leaves one contemplating the truth from another's perspective, in this case, that of the Buddha. The only escape is to create one's own version of a given text. In a twist, this absurdity is then equated to a wide variety of high- and low-brow views enshrined in classical literature, thus normalizing a broad array of perspectives:³⁶

³⁵ For an essay on his reluctance in parrying such criticisms, see Zhuhong, "Pingyi xianxian" 評議先賢, in *Zhuchuang* 3 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 58B30-C12).

³⁶ For a counter-example, see the advice on reading that another prominent late-Ming monk, Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543-1603), gave to the literatus Feng Mengzhen 馮夢禎 (1546-1623). He tells him to dispense with commentary and simply read the original text; Feng Mengzhen, "Lengyan jing xu" 楞嚴經序, *Kuaxue tang ji* 快雪堂集, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書, *jibu* 集部 (1616; rpt. Jinan: Qi Lu shushe chubanshe, 1995-1997), vol. 164, p. 71.

[The monk] Tianru compiled *Assorted Explanations of the Śūraṅgama [Sūtra]*.³⁷ Some say, “As for this, it is Tianru’s *Śūraṅgama*, it is not the *Śūraṅgama* of Śākyamuni.” I say that although this sentiment is correct, persons new to study latch on to [this idea]. Consequently, they want to completely discard the commentarial writings of the ancients, this is wrong.

As for completely discarding commentarial writing and just preserving the original text (*baiwen* 白文), is there not someone who would then say, “As for this [text], it is Śākyamuni’s *Śūraṅgama*, it is not my *Śūraṅgama*.” Now if the sutras themselves can be discarded, why not the commentaries?

Is there not someone who would then say, “My own *Śūraṅgama* pervades all corners everywhere?” Now this being the case then the [writings] of the [masters] of the Hundred Schools of Thought and even the songs of woodcutters and shepherds, none of them can be discarded. What more so, then, the commentaries and sub-commentaries to the [*Śūraṅgama Sūtra*]?³⁸

A sly reference to the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), which is said to have preserved the songs of woodcutters and shepherds coupled with reference to the philosophic discourse of the so-called Hundred Schools of Thought, both highly acclaimed by a late-sixteenth- through early-seventeenth-century reading elite, help Zhuhong put the writing of Buddhist commentaries in perspective. There was room for a variety of views and all should be preserved.

In the second essay, “*Śūraṅgama*, II” (“Lengyan er” 楞嚴二), written especially for anyone who was “new to study and lacked wisdom 新學無智,” that is, novice readers, Zhuhong exhorted them not to follow the contemporary trend that rejected commentary in favor of creating one’s *own* interpretation of a sutra text.³⁹ Zhuhong accepted scripture as primary, yet scoffed at the shallow interpretations rashly asserted by readers who only read sutras. Another essay addressed to the same

³⁷ This twenty-fascicle compilation consists of comments by Tianru Weize 天如惟則 (d. 1354) and nine other Chan monks; Tianru Weize, *Da Fo ding wanxing shou lengyan jing huijie* 大佛頂萬行首楞嚴經會解, in *Yongle Beizang* 永樂北藏, ed. Yongle Beizang zhengli weiyuan hui (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2000). In *CBETA*, *Yongle Beizang* is given the designation “P”, this being P no. 1618.

³⁸ In this essay Zhuhong uses the term *zhushu* 註疏; it refers to a commentary and its sub-commentary, usually written by two different persons. However, Zhuhong appears to be letting the term stand in for all commentarial writing and thus, in several places, I have translated it accordingly; Zhuhong, “Lengyan, I” 楞嚴一, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 25A18–A24).

³⁹ Zhuhong, “Lengyan, II” 楞嚴二, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 25A25–B3).

skeptical audience, titled “Treatises and Commentaries” (“Lun shu” 論疏), asserts a vital link between the commentarial tradition and the ability to appreciate scriptural meaning.⁴⁰ Zhuhong further claims that those who rely on their own reading are either lazy, arrogant, or both: “If it’s laziness, the person dreads [making] a broad investigation, tires at refining his thoughts, is merely perfunctory in his reflections, and does not exercise his mind. If it’s arrogance, then he treats lightly the ancient worthies and disdains his contemporaries. He just wantonly follows his own heart (*ziyong* 自用), does as he pleases (*zizhuan* 自傳), and ignores others.”⁴¹ Zhuhong names no names, yet the descriptive vocabulary he uses here mirrors that found in Confucian criticisms of current reading practices and was likely directed at the Yangming Confucian trend toward seeking the truth within one’s own heart not in external matters, a position that generated heated discussion over the status of the classics, let alone commentary.⁴²

Nevertheless, despite insisting on the importance of commentarial study, Zhuhong was keenly aware of all its potential difficulties. He conceded that not only were commentaries difficult to read, but that both sutras and exegeses could be corrupted through interpolations and discrepancies between editions that were hard to judge.⁴³ Just as Peter J. Rabinowitz found that readers often look for coherence in the logic of relations within a single text, we can say similarly that Zhuhong’s audience was searching for interpretive coherence across the exegetical corpus associated with a given sutra.⁴⁴ For instance, when faced with a

⁴⁰ Zhuhong, “Lunshu” 論疏, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 52B30–C9).

⁴¹ The *locus classicus* for *ziyong* 自用 and *zizhuan* 自傳 is the *Zhongyong* 中庸. The phrase I have translated “refining their thoughts” (*jingsi* 精思) is shared between Song-era Buddhists and Confucians and refers to the effort involved in self-reflection.

⁴² One need look no further than Wang Yangming’s “Preface to the Collected Writings of Xiangshan,” which encourages readers to set aside Zhu Xi’s criticisms and read Lu Xiangshan’s writings for themselves while seeking the truth within their own hearts, in order to get a sense of the ideas driving this trend. Second- and third-generation Yangming Confucians carried self-reliance much further. Some of this criticism was generated internally by various Yangming Confucians. Ample evidence of their self-criticisms and the pointed Donglin School criticism of the shortsightedness of the trend toward simply relying on one’s own views at the expense of classical references can be found in Huang Zongxi’s *Mingru xue’an* 明儒學案; Wang Yangming, “Xiangshan wenji xu” 象山文集序, in Wu Guang 吳光 et al., eds., *Wang Yangming quanji* 王陽明全集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), p. 245.

⁴³ See for example, Zhuhong, “Zengjian guren wenzi” 增減古人文字, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 36C13–C19). The essay “Nanyue zhiguan” 南嶽止觀 flags several suspected interpolations to the commentary titled *Dasheng zhiguan famen* 大乘止觀法門 (T no. 1924), by the monk Huisi 慧思 (515–578); Zhuhong, “Nanyue zhiguan” 南嶽止觀, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 36A5–36A16).

⁴⁴ Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Columbus: Ohio State U.P., 1987), p. 45.

reader's questions concerning the discrepancies between two commentaries to the *Lotus Sūtra*, one written by the Sui-dynasty monk Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顛 (538–597) and one written by the Northern Song monk Wenling Jiehuan 溫陵戒環 (dates unknown), Zhuhong defended the need to read Jiehuan's text, as we see in his two consecutive essays (I and II) bearing the name "Explanation of the Central Teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*" ("Fahua jing yaojie" 法華經要解).⁴⁵ Zhuhong first argued that because these texts represented two different types of commentarial writing, each had its place within the tradition: Zhiyi's commentaries provide an exhaustive and deep explanation of the *Lotus Sūtra*; whereas Jiehuan's is a simpler explanation of its central features.⁴⁶ In the second essay, Zhuhong singles out two passages from Jiehuan's commentary, one to illustrate a shortcoming and the other a contribution:

Previously I said, "It contains strengths and weaknesses." I will attempt to provide one of its weaknesses. The sutra has, "the birth and death of *wuzhong* 五眾."⁴⁷ The *Central Explanation* defines this as *wuqu* 五趣 [the five realms of rebirth]. However, *wuzhong* is a cognate of *wuyun* 五蘊 [the five *skandhas* (compositional elements of human existence)]. *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (*Dazhi dulun* 大智度論) clarifies this multiple times. Thus to say it is "*wuqu*" is to have failed to take this into consideration.

I will attempt to provide one of its strengths. As for the burning of the body of the Medicine King [Bodhisattva],⁴⁸ the *Central Explanation* explains it thus, "His [body] was [on the level of] [final] subtle awakening and perfect illumination. [A level] which is distinct from the view of the self as a single entity. This [level of spiritual attainment] is made possible due to having grasped the

⁴⁵ Wenling Jiehuan, *Fahua jing yaojie* 法華經要解 (T no. 602). Zhuhong, "Fahua yaojie" 法華要解 (parts 1 and 2), in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 41C23–42A9).

⁴⁶ Zhuhong's judgment here of what counts as either simple or complex is clearly relative: *Fahua jing yaojie* itself contains seven fascicles. As for Zhiyi's two commentaries, *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義 (T no. 1716) has ten fascicles and *Miaofa lianhua jing wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句 (T no. 1718) twenty.

⁴⁷ This is a line from a *gāthā* in the third chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* titled "Biyu" 譬喻 (T no. 262, vol. 9, 12A19).

⁴⁸ These comments are in reference to chap. 23 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, titled "The Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King" ("Yaowang pusa benshi pin" 藥王菩薩本事品). Much has already been written on the topic of auto-cremation and the story of the Medicine King Bodhisattva who in a former life burned his entire body, and in another incident burnt his arm. This story inspired some Chinese to emulate him. For an overview of the Medicine King Bodhisattva story, see James Benn, *Burning for the Buddha* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2007), esp. pp. 54–62. See also Benn's full translation of another Zhuhong essay devoted specifically to the topic of auto-cremation that was published in a 1614 collection of short essays, the *Rectification of Errors* (*Zheng'e ji* 正訛集; J no. B277, vol. 33, 116A1; Benn, *ibid.*, pp. 197–98).

emptiness of the *skandhas*.” ... [However] “if one’s practice is not in accord with the Dharma and results in vainly searching for its traces, this merely increases karmic suffering. ...”⁴⁹ This [explanation] brings to light what Tiantai [Zhiyi] had not remarked on and is of great benefit to later students.

This essay is an excellent example of the types of philological and doctrinal issues one might find addressed in the commentarial tradition. Early scripture and commentary contain many variants for translated terms that required further clarification, as seen here. Though Zhuhong’s essay corrects one of Jiehuan’s mistakes, he also singles out one insight that surpasses the earlier commentaries by Zhiyi, thereby asserting this commentary’s value to later readers. Auto-cremation was discussed more prevalently during the time of the Song dynasty (960–1279), which likely accounts for Jiehuan’s attention to it. Zhuhong further edited Jiehuan’s comments to more forcefully reflect his own rejection of the practice. Anyone who still had any illusions that their body was singularly “theirs” and not an impersonal collection of elements should not try auto-cremation – a standard set high enough to deter all but a tiny minority. In this essay, Zhuhong modulates reader expectations to draw them away from anticipating commentarial perfection toward finding the value inherent in each exegesis.

Reader objections to exegetical excess also extended to Zhuhong’s 1584 *Commentary and Its Subcommentary to the Amitābha Sūtra*. In the thirty intervening years, Zhuhong was privy to various critical comments, most significantly that the work was unnecessarily complex. Zhuhong responded to this criticism by making three points. Each point occupies a single essay published sequentially (I, II, III) in *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* under the same title, “Pure Land, a Dharma Difficult to Trust” (“Jingtu nan xin zhi fa” 淨土難信之法).⁵⁰ First, Zhuhong reminded readers that the Yuan-era monk Tianru Weize 天如惟則 (d. 1354) had already put to rest any criticism that Pure Land practice is the domain of the uneducated, not the elite. After all, Tianru reasoned, such criticism was an affront to the likes of the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, and the Indian exegetes Aśvaghōṣa and Nāgārjuna, whom he viewed as

⁴⁹ I have added the ellipsis to indicate where Zhuhong has left off the end of a sentence or a phrase from the middle of the section. Zhuhong’s elisions more strongly emphasize his own interpretation, which is that one needed to be an enlightened being before attempting this practice; *Fahua jing yaojie* 法華經要解 (X no. 602, vol. 30, 348A17–348A20).

⁵⁰ The phrase, “difficult to trust” is mentioned twice in the shorter *Amitābha Sūtra* in reference to how difficult it is for sentient beings to trust/believe this teaching; *Emituo jing* 阿彌陀經 (T no. 366, vol. 12, 348A23–A26).

Pure Land advocates. It was Tianru, Zhuhong claims, who motivated him to bring out the deeper meaning of Pure Land teachings.⁵¹

Readers' expectations of how difficult a text might be were often tempered through the inclusion in commentaries of a section devoted to a certain method of textual taxonomy that was known as *panjiao* (判教). This was a system of ranking scriptures based on their degree of profundity. In the second essay, Zhuhong's imagined interlocutors argue against creating a commentary that exceeds in difficulty the humbler ranking of the text itself. Zhuhong rejected the general consensus that the *Amitābha Sūtra* was merely a low-ranked *vaipulya* text – scripture that fell under the rubric of universal Mahayana teachings. Instead, he elevated it by two ranks to the highest level, namely, “perfect” (*yuan* 圓), but then qualified that assessment by calling this sūtra “part-perfect” (*fenyuan* 分圓).⁵² Zhuhong defended his choice, first by declaring the *Amitābha Sūtra* to be of superior rank to the *Lotus Sūtra*, which Tiantai exegetes had categorized at the highest level. Secondly, Zhuhong argues that other exegetes had already re-categorized some *vaipulya* texts under the higher rank of “perfect”: most notably Tiantai Zhiyi, who elevated *The Sūtra on Contemplating the Buddha of Measureless Life* (*Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經) to that status; and Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780–841), who placed the *Sūtra of Complete Enlightenment* (*Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經) in the category of perfect.⁵³ As seen here, Zhuhong clearly

⁵¹ This idea and Zhuhong's reasoning have already been discussed at length elsewhere. See Jennifer Eichman, *A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship: Spiritual Ambitions, Intellectual Debates, and Epistolary Connections* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 219–26, 242–51. See Zhuhong, “Jingtu nan xin zhi fa, I” 淨土難信之法 I, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 50B5–B10).

⁵² Simply put, the classification of texts was ostensibly premised on judgments concerning the locale in which it was first taught, the audience's spiritual capacity, and its doctrinal profundity or some combination thereof. In practice, hierarchical rankings depended on the exegetical commitments of the commentator. For the late Ming, earlier authoritative rankings by Tiantai and Huayan exegetes still carried some weight. However, in these short essays Zhuhong is not laying out his own taxonomy, for that we have a very long section in the full commentary. Instead, he is simply responding to the admixture of taxonomic criticisms he received from others. So, for example in later Tiantai texts that discuss the five periods 五時教, *vaipulya* 方等 is the third of five. However, the highest rank is not the “perfect teaching” (*yuanjiao* 圓教), which is borrowed from a different schema, mainly Huayan. For a nice introduction to the later schematization of Tiantai systems, see Ch'egwan, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism: An Outline of the Fourfold Teachings*, ed. and intro. David W. Chappell (Tokyo: Daiichi shobo, 1983); for early taxonomies, see Mun Chanju. *The History of Doctrinal Classification in Chinese Buddhism: A Study of the Panjiao Systems* (Lanham, Md.: U.P. of America, 2006). Zhuhong, “Jingtu nan xin zhi fa, II” 淨土難信之法, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 50B11–B17).

⁵³ The accuracy of Zhuhong's assertions here is somewhat questionable. Tiantai Zhiyi, in fact, classified *Guanjing* under “sudden teaching” (*dunjiao* 頓教). See *Guan wuliangshou Fo jing shu* 觀無量壽佛經疏. For a useful discussion of Zongmi's ranking of the *Sūtra of Complete Enlightenment*, see Peter Gregory, “What Happened to the ‘Perfect’ Teaching?” in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed., *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1988), pp. 207–31.

felt the need to defend his earlier decision to reclassify this scripture, a decision that allowed him to elevate the text and defend the doctrinal complexity of his commentary. The hierarchical ranking of texts was grounded in matters of doctrinal, institutional, and lineage commitments so complex that modern scholars have tended to view it as having been important only to well-educated monk exegetes.⁵⁴ However, this essay and the one that follows, below, make clear the potential interest a broader coterie of educated elite males might have in textual classification schemes.

In his third essay, Zhuhong again refuted the idea that the *Amitābha Sūtra* was shallow. This time he did so through argument by association with the far more complex, lengthy, and higher-ranked *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and its commentaries.⁵⁵ The first example links the profundity of Pure Land practice to an assertion made by the revered Huayan exegete Chengguan Qingliang 澄觀清涼 (738–839) in his commentary to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, in reference to the power of *nianfo* to wipe out transgressions and facilitate a state of mental absorption (*samādhi*). Zhuhong quickly points out that this verifies the profundity of Pure Land practice, though Chengguan does not offer that conclusion.⁵⁶ Vairocana Buddha is clearly the dominant buddha in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, yet in one episode the bodhisattva Samantabhadra urges followers to be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha, not in the Lotus-Treasury World 華藏世界 of Vairocana.⁵⁷ This idea was also cited by Chengguan and Tianru Weize. Zhuhong uses this episode to argue that the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* authorizes the importance of Pure Land practice and soteriology. However forced we might find Zhuhong's explanations, these three essays demonstrate the significant effect the relative ranking of a given scripture *vis à vis* the larger tradition could have on its broader reception and how other commentaries could be used to justify that ranking.

⁵⁴ See for instance David W. Chappell, "Introduction," in Ch'egwan, *T'ient-t'ai Buddhism*, p. 23.

⁵⁵ There are several Zhuhong texts that rank the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; one ranks it as king, the Mahāyāna sūtras as feudal lords, and the scriptures of the Lesser Vehicle as their vassals; Zhuhong, "Huayan bu ru gengua" 華嚴不如良卦, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 27C22–C30). See also Zhuhong, "Huayan dazang yi jing" 華嚴大藏一經, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 52A24–B2).

⁵⁶ The passage Zhuhong chose to cite is quite cryptic and requires more explanation than he provides, leaving it an open question as to what readers would have made of this, other than to get the point that this text is "profound."

⁵⁷ It must be pointed out that the Lotus-Treasury World was not traditionally conceived of as a place of rebirth; see *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (T no. 293, vol. 10, 848A9–A11). See Zhuhong, "Jingtu nan xin zhi fa, III" 淨土難信之法 III, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 50B18–B25).

In sum, Zhuhong's many essays on the topic of exegetical study helped literati readers evaluate flawed texts, understand textual classification, and develop a greater critical appreciation for this most difficult of genres. The mere fact that instructions on how and why to read Buddhist commentaries as well as essays on various scriptural interpretations and exegeses appear in a series like *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* makes it clear that these texts were important to a literati readership. This in turn has multiple implications for how scholars understand late-Ming reading practices. At the very least, when thinking through how literati interested in both Buddhist and Confucian writings put them in conversation with each other or added Buddhist content to poetry and plays, we should not overlook the possibility that their views were informed by the commentarial literature nor think that this genre circulated only within what some historians have conceived as the "closed" world of monastic confines.

WHEN WORDS BECOME OBSTACLES:
READING CHAN DISCOURSE RECORDS

Scripture and exegesis each presented their own reading challenges. Yet those challenges were rudimentary in comparison to the difficulties Zhuhong observed in his audience's attempts to read Chan discourse records. Chan discourse records usually devoted a number of fascicles to the genre of *gongan*, that is, cryptic dialogic exchanges between an enlightened Chan master and his disciple that demonstrated the enlightenment of the former and presumably propelled the latter toward similar spiritual heights. This literature did not present ordinary conversational exchange, instead it favored paradox, wit, illogical responses, shouts, and physical gestures in what were essentially performative demonstrations of enlightenment meant to disrupt normative reading methods.⁵⁸ On the one hand, being enthralled by this literature, many late-Ming literati memorized famous *gongan* and attempted to reenact them in witty exchanges that repurposed poignant lines, a leisure-time activity for some. On the other hand, literati serious about Buddhist self-cultivation memorized and mimicked this literature in the vain hope that in so doing they could demonstrate to others their own experience of awakening. Still others followed the well-established practice of using a critical phrase (*huatou* 話頭), that

⁵⁸ The literature has also been called "encounter dialogue" (*wenda jiyuan* 問答機緣). Imperfect as it is, this translation has been regularly used in English-language scholarship and I follow that convention here.

is, a keyword or phrase drawn from one of these dialogues as a focal point in meditation practice.

In countering such naive enthusiasm, Zhuhong was adamant that discourse records were not scripts to be memorized and he objected to the use of pat phrases to demonstrate one's own spiritual breakthrough. He was quite vehement that such texts were not to be read literally but *literarily*, requiring foremost the ability to imagine that otherworldly world of enlightenment through envisioning oneself in the subject position of an awakened being. Discourse records are portrayed as the imperfect vestiges of what had truly transpired; they merely gesture toward realities the genre could never hope to embody character-by-character, line-by-line. Zhuhong was resolutely convinced that a cavalier use of discourse records would contaminate the tradition and lead astray both monastic and lay readers, potential effects that he mitigated through the writing of many an essay denouncing contemporary Chan practice so as to improve it. This was done with a critical eye toward repositioning the reader vis à vis the text. The following essays do not present a systematic reading strategy so much as they offer a set of propositions readers needed to know in order to develop a dispassionate and informed appreciation of the genre.

In two autobiographical essays, Zhuhong offered his own sober evaluation of how such texts came into existence. In one short essay, he describes his own early attempts to read and write about Chan, "No sooner had I read Chan discourse [records] than I poured out my deluded thoughts and feelings in imitation, sending them in a letter to a prelate. [The writing] went up and down and all around causing the prelate to flinch." His own clumsy efforts convinced Zhuhong it was advisable to avoid reckless imitation and not try one's hand at this genre until advanced in years.⁵⁹ Later in life, Zhuhong again met the same prelate who was now perplexed by Zhuhong's singular focus on Pure Land cultivation: "Zhuhong laughingly replied: 'There is a proverb to explain this "A newborn ox calf does not fear a tiger"; [only] those with insight into the Dharma are fearful, did you not know this?' The prelate had no response."⁶⁰

In his later years, Zhuhong expressed deep reservations about the conditions under which discourse records were compiled. For Zhuhong, the *Platform Sūtra*, a text he judged rife with error, served as the perfect

⁵⁹ Zhuhong also held this position for the writing of commentaries; Zhuhong, "Zhushu yi zai wannian" 著述宜在晚年, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 46B22–B29).

⁶⁰ Zhuhong, "Tan zong" 談宗, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 32C30–33A5).

example of what happens to the truth when disciples do the writing (discussed earlier, under the section “What to Read”). On the other hand, he admired the work of Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263–1323), whom he singled out for writing his own discourse record.⁶¹ In a short essay entitled “Discourse Records” (“Yulu” 語錄), Zhuhong made it clear he had no intention whatsoever of writing a discourse-record. He even listed four reasons why he forbade his disciples from creating transcriptions of his interactions: First, records of dialogical exchanges paint a partial and uncharacteristic image of a master; second, encounters were only occasional events; third, the subject matter was context specific; fourth, advice targeted only one person’s concerns and was neither universally applicable nor easy to grasp. Zhuhong wrote that such exchanges present provisional not definitive truth (*liaoyi* 了義; Skt.: *nītārtha*) and are recorded by disciples who have listened only half-heartedly. For these reasons, cryptic dialogic exchanges should be considered neither literally true nor self-explanatory. To the contrary, in Zhuhong’s estimation this genre hardly gave full expression to a Chan master’s views, or put another way, there was no reason to over-think authorial intent for a genre that only partially yields it.⁶² In short, the personal skepticism expressed here not only underscored the great divide between how these interactions actually transpired and their eventual literary instantiation, but also served the more didactic purpose of pushing the naively enraptured to reflect more deeply on the nature of the texts lest they merely absorb them uncritically.

⁶¹ The criticism of the *Platform Sutra* and praise of Zhongfeng are implicit in “Discourse Records” 語錄. In his other essay, “Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch,” discussed previously, Zhuhong explicitly attributed to disciple error statements he did not like. This tactic was certainly more judicious than attacking a Chan master directly. With respect to *Tianmu Zhongfeng guanglu* 天目中峰廣錄 (B no. 145, vol. 25), the compilation is comprised of Zhongfeng’s writings, but it was most likely edited by his disciples. The edn. here is that of *Da zangjing bubian* 大藏經補編 (CBETA rpt.; Lan Jifu 藍吉富, ed. [Taipei: Huayu chubanshe, 1984–1985].)

⁶² Rivi Handler-Spitz claims that it was understood in late-imperial times that “the reader must strive to reconstitute authorial intent.” In contrast, Zhuhong is asking readers to let go of the author and find the source within oneself; Rivi Handler-Spitz, *Symptoms of an Unruly Age: Li Zhi and Cultures of Early Modernity* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2017), p. 133.

Scholars long familiar with Song-dynasty Chan texts may question Zhuhong’s blanket dissection of *yulu* 語錄, finding it an inaccurate reflection of either the culture of dialogic exchange or the circumstances under which these texts were published, since at the very least many collections were edited and proofread before publication. Nevertheless, Zhuhong’s view accounts for why he did not personally authorize a discourse record. The thirteenth fascicle of *Yu xuan yulu* 御選語錄 (*Imperially Selected Discourse Records*; X no. 1319), compiled by the emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (1678–1735), has an extensive section titled “Yunqi Lianchi Hong dashi yulu” 雲棲蓮池宏大師語錄. However, the section consists mainly of a Pure Land *wenda*-style text, letters, many short essays from the *Zhuchuang suibi* series, and some poetry (X no. 1319); Zhuhong, “Yulu” 語錄, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 32A16–A23).

Zhuhong's sharply critical stance toward the genre would have seemingly resulted in a dismantling of the sanctity of these texts, but in fact, his views led in quite the opposite direction. In two essays written in the form of a dialogue between himself and an objecting monk that bear the same title, "Recklessly Raising the Encounter Dialogues of Ancient Worthies" ("Wang nian gude jiyuan" 妄拈古德機緣), Zhuhong reminded his readers of the power inherent in dialogic exchange. In the first essay, Zhuhong sought to stem monastic abuse of the genre by creating the following rule: any monk in his monastery who recklessly discussed discourse records would be expelled.⁶³ Unmoved by his interlocutor's pleas for leniency, Zhuhong asserted that the proliferation of unsubstantiated claims to awakening along with the writing of *gāthās* and verse commentary (*songgu* 頌古) by spiritually inept monks indulging in the "samadhi of words (*koutou sanmei* 口頭三昧)" would eventually corrupt the written tradition and destroy Buddhist teachings.⁶⁴ To demonstrate the gravity of such erroneous talk, he cited a famous *gongan*, "Baizhang's Wild Fox," which recounts the story of a monk whose wrong response resulted in 500 rebirths as a wild fox. In the second essay Zhuhong continues with this theme, skillfully demonstrating the crux of the problem by drawing attention to a famous *gongan* that is so succinct as to remain entirely indecipherable. "Fayan Points at a Screen," is the story of a Chan master who asks two monks to roll up a screen. Afterwards he proclaims that one got it and one did not:

The distraught monk asked, "If this is truly the case, then as to encounter dialogues of old virtuosos (*gude* 古德), is it that one really cannot open one's mouth and evaluate them?"

[I] replied, "This just forbids reckless discussion, I have never said it was not acceptable to raise them. Two monks together rolled up a screen. A virtuoso of old said 'one got it; one missed it.' You try evaluating this, who got it and who missed it?"

The monk remained silent.

I said, "Men of old had this saying, 'For every ten questions a master poses, nine responses fail.' This is of no harm. But be

⁶³ The first essay further distinguishes between slandering the Dharma and simply indulging in erroneous speech. The second essay functions as a continuation of the first; Zhuhong, "Wang nian gude jiyuan, I, II" 妄拈古德機緣, in *Zhuchuang* 3 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 58C28-59A11).

⁶⁴ In another essay Zhuhong cites a passage from Dahui Zonggao 大會宗果 (1089-1163) on the dangers of the "samadhi of words" and need for a true realization. Zhuhong, "Shiwu" 實悟, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 26B3-37). In an essay on the *Blue Cliff Collection*, Zhuhong argued that Dahui's desire to destroy the cutting blocks for this text was not an attempt to destroy the text, but to shatter ignorant readers' deluded grasp of it. After all, the text was merely "word wisdom" (*wenzi bore* 文字般若); Zhuhong, "Biyanj" 碧巖集, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 30C13-C20).

wary of ignorant reckless talk, otherwise in the end there will be no progress. Be vigilant!”⁶⁵

In the first essay Zhuhong remained inflexibly strict. This second essay concedes the point that monks can evaluate *gongan*, but then immediately confounds that process by posing an unanswerable question; unanswerable because the identities of the two anonymous monks are irrecoverable and the difference in evaluation inexplicably opaque.⁶⁶ To reinforce this view, Zhuhong further adds a Chan truism, nine out of ten responses fail.⁶⁷ Clearly, Zhuhong thought the evaluation of *gongan*, a process already fraught with uncertainty, was made all the more difficult through a combination of ignorance and reckless talk (*wangtan* 妄談).⁶⁸

The overriding need to clarify the relationship between Chan language and the nonverbal (religiously) transportive modes it ostensibly represented became the subject of a number of essays in *Fottings by a Bamboo Window*. As already mentioned above, Zhuhong often fielded questions on the quintessential Chan claim to a separate transmission outside scripture, a topic addressed multiple times in the essays in this series, and in the title of the following essay, “A Separate Transmission Outside the Teachings” (“Jiao wai bie chuan” 教外別傳). When it came to the ineffable, readers wanted to know which textual corpus they could trust: canonical scripture or the extra-textual transmissions of Chan patriarchs. To this Zhuhong responded that there was no rift; without the teachings of Śākyamuni there would be no patriarchal transmission or for that matter enlightenment. To demonstrate that the relationship between written and oral transmission was intimate and intrinsic, Zhuhong framed his response in terms of the well-known Chan metaphor of a finger pointing at the moon:

⁶⁵ There are many translations of this *gongan*, however, I have followed John Jorgensen in word choice; John Jorgensen, trans. and ed., *Gongan Collections II*, in *Collected Works of Korean Buddhism 7.2* (Paju, Korea: Chun-il Munhwasa, 2012), p. 199. Zhuhong, “Wang nian gude jiyuan, II” 妄拈古德機緣 II, in *Zhuchuang 3* (J no. B277, vol. 33, 59A12–A17).

⁶⁶ Zhuhong’s choice echoes that of a story concerning the Chan master Linji who is said to have asked his disciples to distinguish which was guest and host when two monks, one from the eastern hall and one from the western hall simultaneously shouted. Those in the audience who were unable to reply were told not to learn Linji’s shout. See Juhn Y. Ahn, “Who Has the Last Word in Chan? Transmission, Secrecy and Reading During the Northern Song Dynasty,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 37 (2009), pp. 23, n. 80.

⁶⁷ The citation is from Dahui Zonggao, *Dahui Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄 (T no. 1998A, vol. 47, 906B28)

⁶⁸ Zhuhong, “Wang nian gude jiyuan, II” 妄拈古德機緣 II, in *Zhuchuang 3* (J no. B277, vol. 33, 59A16–A17).

Someone said, "Is there truly a transmission outside the teachings? If so, then Śākyamuni's teachings are pointless. Is there really no other transmission outside the teaching? If not, then Bodhidharma's coming from the West was for naught."

My reply: "Outside the teachings there truly is another transmission and yet there is truly no other transmission. Did the [*Sūtra of Perfect Awakening* 圓覺經] not say this? 'Sutras are like the finger that points at the moon.'⁶⁹ The finger is not the moon. If one were to say that outside the finger, there is a moon, this is acceptable. However, as for the moon presently indicated by the finger, if one were to say outside the finger there is no other moon [that it indicates], this is also acceptable. If one insists that the finger is the moon, and says there is no separate moon, this is stupid. If one ignores what the finger points toward and seeks elsewhere for this so-called moon, this is crazy. ["The Appended Sayings" of the *Book of Changes* says,] 'The realization of this [inner] spirit depends on the person, that is all.'⁷⁰

Chinese Buddhists often explained the relationship between the mundane and supramundane by using the metaphor of the finger and moon to illustrate the two-truths theory of causation as Zhuhong does here in his presentation of four points. First, things cannot be produced of themselves. Thus the finger is not simultaneously the moon. Second, things are not produced from another; the finger does not create the moon. Third, a thing cannot be produced from itself or from another; outside the finger there is a moon yet there is no second unrelated moon outside this finger. Fourth, things are neither produced from themselves nor from another; there is neither a moon outside the finger nor not a moon outside the finger. Zhuhong's reply opened with this fourth formulation: outside the teachings there truly is another transmission and yet there is truly no other transmission.⁷¹ Without the teachings

⁶⁹ This favored Chan passage should be "the sutra *teachings* 修多羅教 are like the finger that points at the moon." Zhuhong has dropped "teaching" and made "sutra" the subject; *Dafang guang yuanjue xiuduoluo liaoyi jing* 大方廣圓覺修多羅了義經 (T no. 842, vol. 17, 917B1).

⁷⁰ The final line is a citation from the "Appended Sayings, Part One" ("Xi ci, shang" 繫辭上), the well-known pre-Han interpretive commentary that was appended to the ancient *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經). Nonetheless, my translation reflects Zhuhong's perspective that enlightenment is generated internally. The Chinese has *shen er ming zhi* 神而明之. Strictly speaking *shen* is an adverb modifying *ming*. In Buddhist parlance *ming* refers to the act of awakening or the realization of enlightenment. For this reason, I have not quoted Richard John Lynn's translation "to be aware of the numinous and bring it to light is dependent on the men involved"; Richard John Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1994), p. 68. See Zhuhong, "Jiao wai bie chuan" 教外別傳, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 31A24-A30).

⁷¹ This essay resonates in some ways with the four steps of causal differentiation (*siju* 四句;

of the Buddha as embodied in written scripture, Zhuhong reasoned, there could be no Chan patriarchal transmission either oral or written, thus he asserts that to search for enlightenment without knowing scripture would be futile.

In this essay the written word is reconceived as the traces left by an awakened mind. The reader is invited to imagine what extra-textual factors, including ones the reader has yet to experience, resulted in the creation of Buddhist texts and by extension discourse-records. Hence while the text appears to gesture toward an alternative spiritual mode, it is, in fact, that inconceivable mode which *prima facie* underlies the ability to write the texts. In this respect, the practitioner *cum* reader should be inspired by what the texts represent and not entangled in the literalness of their enunciations. The last line of this essay leaves behind reliance on argument to claim through a short citation from the *Book of Changes*, one of several foundational Confucian texts for the literati, that realization resides within the individual, not in external material supports—whether the hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*, or in this case, Buddhist texts.

One essay in particular offers an astute appraisal of what it is like to read Chan *gongan* without the ability to speak the language of enlightenment. The essay titled “Chan Exchanges” (“Zongmen wenda” 宗門問答) clearly throws into relief the massive divide between novice readers and enlightened monks analogized here to the act of witnessing a conversation between two persons from a remote village with whom one does not share a dialect. Much like Chan masters, such villagers lace their conversations with idioms and cultural references unknown to the outside world. The following excerpt encases the bewildered reader in a cacophony of sound whose meanings can only be guessed at by observing the body language and listening to the cadence and tone of these two animated villagers:

To draw an analogy, if two village fellows separated for a long time by a distance of a thousand *li* suddenly were to meet by chance, they would converse in their village tongue, employ enigmatic references, and use aphorisms. A bystander listening to them would also [surmise the dialogue] to be meaningless or flavorless, could see it as causing fright or doubt, or seeming to scold or joke. Yet

Skt.: *catuṣkoṭi*), but strictly speaking it does not present the fourfold tetralemma developed in Indian Madhyamika. Instead, Zhuhong’s presentation mirrors a Chinese understanding of the relationship between *zhen* 真 and *su* 俗, a formula more closely aligned with argumentation found in the “Qiwu lun” 齊物論 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. I am grateful to Lin Chen-kuo 林鎮國 for his discussion of this topic in a conversation with me.

in truth each and every word and phrase is an expression of inmost feelings, the essence of their hearts and livers. The bystander is assuredly ignorant of this language. However, the two villagers tacitly commune with each other like water in milk or a lid to a box. Now [this generation] would be better to refrain from talk and just turn to drawing strength from their investigation [of a critical phrase] (*bencan* 本參).⁷² Only worry you will not be awakened, do not worry that after awakening you will not have the words.⁷³

Zhuhong's final assertion is quite telling. The only road to fluency, he asserts, resides in individual efforts at self-cultivation not language practice with a native speaker or, to carry the metaphor forward, tutorials with a "dialect coach." Without some level of awakening, the enigmatic Chan use of so-called "meaningless" and "flavorless" critical phrases, the ability to alternately startle or sow doubt, and the seeming rebuke of one disciple and the cracking of jokes with another remained beyond the reach of ordinary readers.⁷⁴ In Zhuhong's view, this literary chasm was unbridgeable for any reader whose self-cultivation remained rudimentary and decidedly disembodied from the "heart and liver." In a word, convergence between text and reader resides in fluency with a dialect gained through personal experiences of awakening, not the memorized parroting of dialogue or the study of the language itself.⁷⁵

In Zhuhong's essays discussed thus far, the bar has been set quite high. So high, the average reader might have concluded that such impenetrable texts were not worth the trouble. Yet there was a catch. Proficient performance of encounter dialogue required a broad and intimate familiarity with Chan literature, especially *gongan*. First, criti-

⁷² Both in this text and in "Yizhuanyu" 一轉語, translated below, Zhuhong uses the term *bencan* 本參. The term could be translated literally as "initial investigation." However, in a letter to a layman Yuan, Zhuhong defines the term simply as the investigation of a critical phrase, and I quote, "What is *bencan*? If in regards to the method of *nianfo* one has complete faith just investigate 'Who is it that recites the name?' This is what is meant by *bencan*." My translation of *bencan* in the above essay and below follows Zhuhong's explanation. For the letter, see Zhuhong, "Da Fujian Yuan xiaolian" 答福建袁孝廉, in *Shu er* 書二 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 131C11-C18).

⁷³ It should be noted that in this context, the term in the title, *zongmen* 宗門, is a reference to Chan; Zhuhong, "Zongmen wenda" 宗門問答, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 30C27-31A6).

⁷⁴ Another essay, titled "Flavorless Words," equally berates Zhuhong's contemporaries for mimicry and repetition without cultivation; Zhuhong, "Wuyiwei yu" 無義味語, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 49A10-A16).

⁷⁵ The conclusion presented here follows Zhuhong, however, the wording is borrowed from Wolfgang Iser's discussion of how to read literary narratives; Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in Jane P. Tompkins, ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1980), p. 50.

cal phrases were drawn from *gongan*. Secondly, there was an intrinsic relationship between the textual finger and the supramundane moon. Another way to look at this is to see that in the essays discussed thus far Zhuhong is prodding the reader to develop through embodied experience a text of his own, yet this text, like the moon, would need to be “iterable or repeatable just as thoughts and words are repeatable, never exactly the same, always changed by context, but never unique, either.”⁷⁶ I am admittedly repurposing to some extent Robert Scholes’s theory of what transpires in the space of meaningful interpretation between author and reader, which for Zhuhong is imagined as a space filled with the kinds of practice that allow practitioners to find their voice, expressed in words neither too imitative nor too unique.

In returning once again to the issue of rote memorization, it is useful to contemplate yet another literary device associated with the genre of *gongan*. Unlike critical phrases, which function as focal points in meditative practice, “capping phrases (*zhuanyu* 轉語)” are brief comments disciples might offer in response to an older *gongan* raised by a Chan master who is testing a student’s level of attainment. Successful responses needed to find that sweet spot between the imitative repetition of previous capping phrases and the outer limits of the tradition, an effort that required deep familiarity with the literature.⁷⁷ In Zhuhong’s view repetition of capping phrases could hinder progress toward enlightenment when mere mimicry or fanciful explanation was mistakenly judged a true marker of actual spiritual progress. Zhuhong blamed some Chan masters for inadvertently fostering this problem:

There was a past worthy who instructed his students, “Today I will not concern myself with the state of your Chan meditation, wisdom, supranormal powers, or eloquence. I just want you to offer an accurate capping phrase 轉語.” After the students heard this, they spent their days and nights studying capping phrases. This is a mistake! If capping phrases are that revered, that unique, then one should know they certainly cannot be mastered through the conjectures of a deluded consciousness or one’s individual com-

⁷⁶ Robert Scholes, *Protocols of Reading* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1989), p. 10.

⁷⁷ Given Zhuhong’s steadfast insistence that the numerous encounter dialogues published in discourse records were the direct result of an awakened mind, not literary exercises, he would surely have objected to any application to Chan texts of the following assertion by Robert Sharf: “[p]rivate episodes do not constitute the reference points for the elaborate discourse on meditative states found in Buddhist scholastic sources”; Robert Sharf, “Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience,” *Numen* 42 (1995), p. 260. See also Sharf, “How to Think with Chan Gong’an,” in Charlotte Furth, Judith Zeitlin, Hsiung Ping-chen, eds., *Thinking with Cases: Specialized Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2007), pp. 205–43.

prehension [of the world]. They must flow naturally from a true, deep penetration, a great awakening. If one looks to sutra teachings, if one turns to the questions and answers and encounter dialogues of the ancients (*wenda jiyuan* 問答機緣), and one handles oral responses by means of cleverness, small wisdom, mimicry, and dubious interpretations, not only will these phrases add nothing new, they will be as [ineffectual] as scratching an itch with one's shoe on; even if in a single moment you let out as many capping phrases as there are sands in the Ganges, what connection might this possibly have to you?

Now do not concern yourself with whether your capping phrases are accurate or not, just set aside [your interest in] the inconceivable, inconceivable [elements] outside this world and guardedly cultivate your [critical phrase] (本參, mentioned above),⁷⁸ intensify your effort, in moment after moment do not let it go. When you have a thorough awakening, how could you worry that you will have nothing to say? Though I am of little spiritual talent (*dungen* 鈍根), I must offer this advice.⁷⁹

Surely the descriptive hyperbole of phrases pouring forth like “sands in the Ganges” overstates the case. Yet Zhuhong is dead serious in his depiction of what is wrong with a milieu dominated by a reading culture geared toward frenzied memorization and oral repetition.⁸⁰ If the goal is to demonstrate through words that one has experienced enlightenment, then the reading method falls flat. Contrary to the essays discussed at the outset of this article whose stated purpose was to convince the literati to read Buddhist texts, the goal here is to get them to put the text down and focus on self-cultivation. In a word, Zhuhong is arguing against what he perceives to be an inverted relationship between reader expenditure on Chan textual study over meditative practice. Zhuhong believed that the right words would flow quite naturally from the experience of enlightenment itself.⁸¹ When reading methods privileged memorization, the result was a false erudition that potentially masked the impoverishment of the practitioner's inner spiritual progress.

⁷⁸ For an explanation of this term, see n. 72, above.

⁷⁹ Zhuhong, “Yizhuanyu” 一轉語, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 41C12–C22).

⁸⁰ For an explicit depiction of elite male memorization of *gongan* gone amok, see Zhuhong, “Zongmen yu bu ke luan ni” 宗門語不可亂擬, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 43C21–C30).

⁸¹ Another short essay repeats this idea and says that one's practice will be complete when the time is right and that diligence should be of foremost concern; Zhuhong, “Huangu” 換骨, in *Zhuchuang* 1 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 25C18–C21).

In an essay warning of the dangers reckless imitation posed to both the textual tradition and the individual practitioner, aptly titled “When Reading Discourse Records One Must Seek the Effort of the Ancients” (“Kan yulu xuqiu guren yongxin chu” 看語錄須求古人用心處), Zhuhong cautioned that simply choosing a particularly attractive turn of phrase and allowing oneself to be dazzled by it or to gather such material for conversational purposes made it all the more difficult to separate the mere performer from the actual practitioner. In contrast, he urged readers of *gongan* to pay greater attention to the *effort* at cultivation portrayed by the words of Chan masters and not to what they literally *said*:

If this is only for the purpose of plundering and imitating, as the days pass and years deepen what one learns rolls out the mouth and off the tongue, just like the ancients, and the two become difficult to separate into true and false. Yet this is none other than to cut flowers from multicolored silk and to draw a cake on paper. What does this accomplish?⁸²

The crux of the matter then is an inability to separate real from false, which corrupts the tradition, deceives others, and in the end, deceives the self. In Zhuhong’s estimation, Chan textual competence required inspired reading, competent cultivation, and progress toward awakening. But without “true” cultivation and real verifiable experiences of enlightenment, the practitioner-reader may appear erudite and finesse the performance of encounter dialogues, yet in the end such pretensions offer up only fake flowers and inedible cake which cannot protect anyone from the laws of karma and rebirth. And thus, Zhuhong surmises, memorization is not the perfect gateway to an experience of enlightenment.

Taken together, the essays selected here establish a clear set of propositions for the reading of Chan discourse records, most especially *gongan*. Zhuhong certainly wanted anyone attracted to Chan discourse records to think textual mastery possible only through an experience of enlightenment. Because discourse records functioned as the descriptive vestiges of others’ extra-textual experiences he conceived of this genre in inspirational not prescriptive terms. For this reason, the reader was not to attempt imitative reenactments of *gongan*, but instead work

⁸² In yet another essay, Zhuhong claimed that the awakened are free to write in any style they so wished, but imitation by novices was unacceptable; Zhuhong, “Zongmen yu bu ke luan ni” 宗門語不可亂擬, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 43C21–C30). The above citation is from Zhuhong, “Kan yulu xuqiu guren yongxin chu” 看語錄須求古人用心處, in *Zhuchuang* 2 (J no. B277, vol. 33, 44A1–A7).

at imagining the inner transportive states that led to their creation. In his insistence that words follow from cultivation, Zhuhong, in effect, loosened the adherence to exact replication and trust in the literal truth of *gongan*. Because such texts do nothing more than mirror the range of possible post-experience iterations, each practitioner should let individual experience guide his own words, not short snippets of memorized dialogue.

It is worth noting just what Zhuhong is *not* arguing here: there is no mention of Chan lineage identity or factional infighting, nor do these essays directly enter into arguments about the work of Huihong Juefan 惠洪覺範 (1071–1128) or its promotion by another famous late-Ming monk, Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543–1603), who embraced Juefan's idea of “literary Chan” (*wenzi chan* 文字禪).⁸³ First, by late-Ming times Linji and Caodong were the only surviving Chan lineages and although Zhuhong trained under the Linji monk Xiaoyan Debao 笑巖德寶 (1512–1581), he was neither his Dharma heir nor was he solely invested in a Chan identity. Secondly, from Zhuhong's vantage point, the actual monastic and lay readers envisioned in his essays need most crucially to make a fundamental change in their approach to this genre, not refine their understanding of a select few *gongan* or weigh in on the past history of lineage disputes. This latter point holds true for the rest of the Chan essays and references in *Jottings by a Bamboo Window*, not discussed here due to space limitations, and for Zhuhong's only major Chan publication, *Spurring Through the Chan Barrier* (*Changuan cejin* 禪觀策進).⁸⁴ This latter collection cites mainly Linji Chan monks and pro-

⁸³ For a lengthy discussion of what was arguably a crisis in textual authority among some Northern Song Chan monks and their claims about Chan reading, a discussion tied not only to issues of factional identity, but also to the role of literal versus metaphorical reading in the comprehension of *gongan*, see Juhn Y. Ahn, “Who Has the Last Word in Chan? Transmission, Secrecy and Reading during the Northern Song Dynasty,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 37 (2009), pp. 1–71. For a discussion of Huihong Juefan's use of the term *wenzi chan* to refer to worldly feeling in the writing of poetry and not as a path to enlightenment, see Jason Protass, “Poetry Is Not the Way,” unpublished paper, 2018. For a discussion of the markedly different set of associations attributed to *wenzi chan* in the late Ming, see Liao Chao-heng 廖肇亨, “Huihong Juefan zai Mingdai: Songdai Chanxue zai wan Ming de shuxie, yanji yu fanxiang” 惠洪覺範在明代, 宋代禪學在晚明的書寫、衍異與反響, *BIHP* 75.4 (2004), pp. 797–837. For a sustained engagement with the work of Huihong Juefan, see George Albert Keyworth, “Transmitting the Lamp of Learning in Classical Chan Buddhism: Juefan Huihong (1071–1128) and Literary Chan,” Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Los Angeles, 2001).

⁸⁴ This three-part anthology gathers short biographies of Linji Chan monks who were enlightened through the cultivation of Chan critical phrases. It too, was plain wrapped, portable, didactic, and comprised of short entries circumventing the need to delve into the longer, more difficult genre of monk biographies. For a detailed discussion and full translation of this text, see Broughton, *Chan Whip Anthology*. For added discussion, see Eichman, *Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship*, pp. 275–76.

motes critical phrase practice, including through the use of the name Amitābha Buddha, but the text is more didactic than polemical.

In a short letter to his precept-disciple, Wen Ziyu 聞子與 (dates unknown), Zhuhong offered this perspective: “Chan 禪 and scripture (*jiao* 教) are like the eyes and feet, they mutually support each other. But take Chan cultivation as primary and textual understanding as ancillary.”⁸⁵ This analogy epitomizes how Zhuhong conceived of the ideal reader’s relationship to Chan cultivation and textual study. Just as the eyes are positioned at a great distance from the feet, Chan cultivation required greater attention than the textual corpus, which was to serve as a foundational support.

CONCLUSION

Zhuhong did not write a single treatise on how to read Buddhist texts nor can we single out one essay among the 427 essays in *Jottings by a Bamboo Window* that lays out a master plan. However, in the aggregate, his many essays devoted to the topic of textual mastery offer a well-thought-out vision of religious literacy. Through half a century of interacting with elite male readers, Zhuhong had come to know them quite well. For this reason, the implied reader was not a singular entity but a composite one. Some essays were aimed at novice readers while others were directed at active practitioners who had already memorized excerpts from discourse records, or waded far enough into the commentarial literature to be confused by contradictory exegetical claims. In guiding his audience toward his vision of what constitutes the accepted norms of contemporary Buddhist tradition, Zhuhong’s first task was to convince his followers to read extensively in more than one Buddhist genre. His second task was to prompt readers to grasp the relationship between reading and self-cultivation. His third task was to help readers navigate the many complex doctrinal and commentarial discrepancies among texts. And his final task was to identify which reading methods worked most effectively with each genre and impart those techniques to his audience. From the essays discussed here it is clear that teaching his audience how to navigate this textual terrain proved quite challenging. Readers had to be nimble enough to reorient themselves to the variations in Buddhist genres, a condition that led Zhuhong to establish a series of conceptual markers for more effective navigation. Chan discourse records required the reader to

⁸⁵ Zhuhong, “Da Wen Ziyu jushi dasheng” 答聞子與居士大晟, in *Shu er* (J no. B277, vol. 33, 133B22–B23).

imagine a world he had likely never experienced, one analogized to hearing a dialect from a distant village. In comparison, the knowledge needed to imagine the landscape of the Pure Land and acquaint oneself with the background story of Amitābha Buddha necessitated a more straightforward exercise in simply reading through Pure Land scripture. Acceptance of Zhuhong's judgments on textual classification required the ability to sift through reasoned argument, while navigating one's way through the contradictory exegeses accrued around a single scripture required an understanding of different commentarial styles and an ability to ferret out the most important points in each work while ignoring any infelicities.

In stepping back from the topic of reading to consider once more the entire three-volume series, *Jottings by a Bamboo Window*, we should not lose sight of the fact that the reader of the series likely experienced the essays gathered here quite differently from the exact order in which I have presented them. The essays on Chan were interspersed among ones on filial piety, Pure Land cultivation, and those on many other singular topics, which means the reader would have encountered them in a more haphazard fashion. Whether this format diluted the essays' overall impact or simply allowed the reader to savor them individually is an open question. Readers could also skip around and pick and choose according to their own interests. The essays seamlessly integrate numerous references to literati culture and further embed Buddhist ideas in late-Ming discourse on the accumulation of knowledge and its relationship to self-cultivation. Whether the views Zhuhong expressed in this series were dominant enough to create a baseline of normativity beyond the parameters of his most trusted disciples remains to be fully established. That said, whatever the objections were to the series the repeated republication of these inexpensive, easily portable texts over the ensuing centuries certainly tips the scales in favor of that reading. As one advertisement published multiple times in 1930s Buddhist journals (during the Republican Era, 1911–1949) put it, this series could be used to “correct errors, set the populace straight, and warn scholars 匡謬正俗, 提醒學人。”⁸⁶ These much later advertisements market the texts as just that, a means toward establishing a normative understanding of “the tradition.”

⁸⁶ “Lianchi dashi zhu Zhuchuang suibi fenlai luebian” 蓮池大師著竹窗隨筆分類略編, in *Haichao yin* 海潮音 3 (1931-04-15) and 4 (1931-05-15), both reprinted in *MFQ*, vol. 177, pp. 359, 496; also in *Foxue banyue kan* 1 (1930-10-16), rpt. *MFQ*, vol. 47, p. 13; *Foxue banyue kan* 79 (1934-05-16), rpt. *MFQ*, vol. 49, p. 339; *Foxue banyue kan* 214 (1940-10-01), *MFQ*, vol. 55, p. 434.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- B When the CBETA digitized the 40 volumes of the Xinwen feng edition of the Jiaxing canon, they used the B designation to indicate texts reprinted from the second series of the Tripitaka Sinica 中華大藏經第二輯
- J *Jiaxing da zangjing* 嘉興大藏經
- MFQ Huang Xianian 黃夏年, ed., *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng* 民國佛教期刊文獻集成
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 et al. (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932). Rpt. Chinese Buddhist Electronic Texts Association 中華電子佛典協會, *CBETA Electronic Tripitaka Collection* 電子佛典集成 (Taipei: 1998–2017).
- X *Xu zangjing* 續藏經, *CBETA* rpt. of *Shinsan Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1975–1989), rpt. of *Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本讀藏經 (Kyoto: Zōkyō shoin, 1905–1912).