

Buddhist *Sūtras* in Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*

Intertextuality and Re-Interpretation

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Abstract The essay deals with intertextuality in the field of religious studies and specifically with the quotation and re-interpretation of authoritative sources of Buddhist sacred texts (or *sūtras*) in the *Shōbōgenzō* written by the Japanese Zen master Dōgen in the thirteenth century. In particular, the purpose is that of highlighting the fact that Dōgen, through a personal and creative interpretation of excerpts from the *sūtras*, proposes an innovative vision of Buddhist doctrine. After a general introduction to religious intertextuality, the essay examines Zen master Dogen's peculiar form of exegesis of sacred texts in order to legitimise his personal vision of Buddhist doctrine. Five concrete examples of manipulative interpretation of quotations from the *sūtras* are presented in order to concretely show how Dogen does not hesitate to twist the meaning of quotations with great linguistic skill with the aim to promote and legitimise his opinion.

Keywords Zen. Buddhism. Dōgen. Sūtras. Re-interpretation.

Summary 1 Intertextuality and Religion. – 2 The *kanjin* Strategy. – 3 Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*. – 4 *Shōbōgenzō* and Quotations. – 5 Re-Interpretation of *sūtras*. – 6 Original Interpretations. – 7 Concluding Remarks.

1 Intertextuality and Religion

Intertextuality is the interplay of mutually related texts by means of quotations and allusions. No text is an island and contrary to structuralist theory, it cannot be understood in isolation. It can only be understood as part of a web or matrix of other texts, themselves only to

be interpreted in the light of other texts. Normally, it is intended as a literary device that generates related understanding in separate works, in a kind of interplay between two or more texts co-present in various forms. This often also creates an interplay of meanings, whether apparent or hidden, by which the author can play on different semantic levels.

As a literary device, it has been employed widely and from ancient times. When I say 'widely' I mean that it is not restricted to literary works, though this is probably the field in which it is most frequently used. The case I present in this essay concerns a rather particular field: that of religion where it has been studied since the second half of the 1980s, especially in Christian and Muslim contexts. I think that intertextuality applied to religious texts has some kind of special feature because in most cases it has an exegetical character, that is, it is intended to operate a critical interpretation of sacred texts in order to reach the comprehension of their correct meaning.

In this case we can speak of 'exegetical intertextuality': passages from sacred texts are quoted – verbatim quotations – and subjected to philological critical analysis in order to provide a correct interpretation. Rather than aiming at providing multiple contemporary semantic levels, allusions and references, this type of intertextuality aims at applying philological and linguistic methods to discuss the genuine meaning of sacred texts.

The two texts, the analysed and the analyser, are on different levels: the first, quoted, belongs to an ancient text, often a sacred text, is authoritative and the object of undisputed veneration and authority, the other, the analyser is subordinate and tentative. The search for the 'genuine meaning' of a text may have multiple objectives: one of which may be the intention to use authoritative texts in order to legitimise one's own original position.

This is often the case presented here in Dōgen's 道元 (1200-1253) *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, thirteenth century). In fact, the Japanese Zen master was well aware of the fact that his teaching had very original traits that may have been misunderstood or opposed in his country where innovative ferments were not well accepted by the traditional schools. The support of the revered and unquestioned authority of the Chinese *sūtras* could enable him to sustain the novelties introduced by his teaching, although this often forced him to bend the Chinese texts to original or even forced linguistic interpretations.

As a matter of fact, the practice of reinterpreting authoritative texts from the past in a blatantly manipulative way was quite common in Buddhist circles in medieval Japan and widespread in all schools. All the more so because the search for original interpretations, even at the cost of philological transgressions was considered an accepted practice.

In the following pages I will show, by means of a few examples, how master Dōgen, who had a superior linguistic ability, employed his competence in this field in order to turn and adapt, or even, without hesitation, to change completely the meaning of *sūtras* and texts of Chinese masters in order to propose his own point of view.

2 The *kanjin* Strategy

In medieval Japan, as in many other countries of East Asia, the production of commentaries on Buddhist sacred texts with exegetic purposes was a wide and intensive activity. One of the main locations of this activity was Mount Hiei 比叡山, the seat of one of the oldest schools in Japan, the Tendai 天台.

Traditionally, there were four types of interpretation of *sūtras* (especially the *Lotus Sūtra*): *innen* 因縁, *yakkō* 約教, *honjaku* 本迹, and *kanjin* 觀心. The last one is the most interesting: *kanjin* literally means 'to observe one's own mind' and *kanjinshaku* 觀心釈 was a personal interpretation based on *kanjin* meditative practice (observing one's 'self' - *shin* or *kokoro* 心 - in order to reach intuitive comprehension); an intuitive flash, an insight based on one's own understanding and practice (Stone 1999, 153; Sekiguchi 1973, 5). By observing one's own mind one can come to grasp the true essence of his own being and consequently of the whole of reality. However, this term was later used in the epistemological field to indicate a personal and intuitive interpretation of Buddhist canonical texts. In fact, rather than interpreting the texts of the *sūtras* in a philological way, people preferred to give a free and original interpretation based on their own contemplative experience.

In simple terms, *kanjinshaku* consisted in the practice of translating Chinese texts by means of *kanbun kundoku* 漢文訓読 (Japanese rendition of the Sinitic language), using additions in the native language to the Chinese text in such a way as to give an original translation, not corresponding to the real meaning of the text, but according to a forced interpretation that gave legitimacy to a personal and pre-constituted doctrinal vision.

The canonical text was never questioned: therein lies the truth. However, this truth was sometimes believed to be hidden, or inaccessible to most people because it was scarcely transparent or esoteric and should therefore be revealed through a personal intuitive interpretation rather than by strictly philological tools. In this way, originally elaborated doctrines were legitimised through the canonical texts and then disseminated as 'true interpretations' of the Chinese text. This kind of elaboration was often possible because all the words of the original text remain even in the native translation, and it is only with the addition of functional - i.e. interpretative - linguistic parts that the translation takes on an unconventional interpretation.

Many of these examples can be given to show how in pre-modern Japan translation by means of *kundoku* favoured the development of new epistemes within Buddhism in particular. Most of the reformers of the Kamakura period (1185-1333), when an indigenous Buddhism emerged, resorted to this translation strategy which they had learned on Mount Hiei, the seat of the Tendai school. The authority of the Chinese texts – and of the Chinese culture from which they came – could not be questioned by masters of a peripheral culture suffering from an inferiority complex. However, the innovative drive could not be curbed and the best way to give legitimacy to their thinking was devised in hermeneutics based on linguistic interpretation. In this way, Japanese peripheral culture, without denying Chinese dominant culture, found a way to elaborate its own specificity through translation: an indirect but effective way to rework and filter mainland culture according to its own perspective.

That of *kanjin* is obviously an interesting but unique borderline case. However, it tells us how the strategy of translation by means of *kundoku* in which two languages overlap in the same text is also the place where two epistemological dimensions overlap and where the boundaries between the proto-text and the meta-text are not clearly distinguishable. Just as the language of translation is a kind of hybrid between two languages, meaning also becomes a hybrid between two different cultures. Hence, translation in pre-modern Japan has for centuries continued to search for a hybrid terrain, a kind of search for a partly artificial intermediate language to act as a bridge between two different worlds. Therefore, while in Europe translation was considered a passage between different cultural and linguistic dimensions, a pouring of meanings from one container into another, a transformation, a change of form while trying to maintain the same content, in Japan a different strategy was implemented: the search for an intermediate means, the language of *kundoku*. In fact, Sino-Japanese was a tool to mediate a culture that never felt completely foreign. The language of *kundoku* is actually an ‘interpretation’ of Chinese, basically a variant of it. In the same way, the culture conveyed by this language was understood as a Japanese interpretation of Chinese culture by those who shared its values. The process of hybridisation and consequently of contamination has led in Japan to the elaboration of a syncretic semiotic universe with blurred and uncertain boundaries.

3 Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō*

Among the many texts written by Dōgen, I have focused on *Shōbōgenzō* which nowadays is considered by scholars and monastics his most representative masterpiece. *Shōbōgenzō* is an important text of Zen Buddhism in medieval Japan and is also considered at present as one of the very relevant texts in the history of Japanese thought.

Shōbōgenzō is the fundamental reference for Dōgen's Buddhist thought and teaching, since it introduces in a rather systematic way his view of practice, enlightenment, and Buddha-nature. It was written during a span of time which extended for many years in the first part of the thirteenth century, after the return of Dōgen from his study journey to China in 1227.

4 *Shōbōgenzō* and Quotations

Dōgen makes extensive use of quotations from many Chinese Buddhist sūtras in *Shōbōgenzō*. The strategy implemented by Dōgen is that of presenting sūtras as an unquestionable reference for Buddhist truth and, in many ways, Dōgen finds the exposition of his teaching on the interpretation of those texts. In many passages Dōgen, in stark contrast to one of the cardinal principles of Zen of 'not depending on written sources' (*furyū monji* 不立文字), makes appreciative considerations about sūtras and their role in the search for the Buddha-Dharma. For example, in the chapter "Bukkyō" 仏経 (Buddhist sūtras), he writes:

しかのごとくの長老等、かれこれともにいはいはく、「仏経は仏道の本意にあらず、祖伝これ本意なり、祖伝に奇特玄妙つたはれり」。

かくのごとくの言句は、至愚のはなはだしきなり、狂顛のいふところなり。祖師の正伝に、またく一言半句としても、仏経に達せる奇特あらざるなり。仏経と祖道と、おなじくこれ釈迦牟尼仏より正伝流布しきたれるのみなり。

Therefore, such veteran monks all say: "Buddhist sūtras do not conform with the original intention of the Buddhist Way. It is the transmission of the patriarchs which is the original intention. In the patriarchs' transmission the mysterious and the subtle has been transmitted. Such words are extremely stupid. It is talk of madmen. In the transmission of the patriarchs and masters there is not even a word or half a word which differs from Buddhist sūtras. The Buddhist sūtras and the Way of the patriarchs in the same way, have been correctly transmitted and spread from Shakyamuni Buddha". (Etō 1961, 2: 264-5)¹

In a sense, we can almost say that in *Shōbōgenzō*, his view of Buddhist doctrine is presented as a personal and original commentary to famous sūtras.

The largest part of such quotations is from the *Lotus Sūtra* (Jp. *Hokekyō* 法華経, Chinese transl. in the fifth century CE) and from the *Jingde chuandeng lu* (Jp. *Keitoku denkōroku* 景德傳燈錄, Record of

¹ All the translations from Japanese to English are by the Author.

the Transmission of the Lamp of the Jingde Era, eleventh century CE), and other Mahayana texts. What is written there is the truth since they were written by buddhas and patriarchs. Nobody can question their authority; therefore, he considers the Buddhist written tradition with unsurpassed veneration. He estimates tradition as the most important leading guide in the Path of enlightenment.

5 Re-Interpretation of sūtras

However, Dōgen is convinced that texts are open to personal interpretation, or better, that though sūtras ‘the truth is told,’ still this truth is not always apparent and often needs to be ‘correctly’ interpreted. ‘Correctly’ means, in the mind of Dōgen, according to his own view of Buddhist doctrine, that it is not lingering at a mere linguistic level, or at the ordinary interpretation of language as a conventional tool, but going deeper, beyond the ordinary common interpretation. As Leighton maintains:

Dōgen uses [texts] to proclaim his own subjective teachings and to encourage the primary text as a vehicle for the self-interpretation of his audience, as well as for himself. [...] texts are open to an abundance of meaning as appropriate to the diverse worlds of each interpreter. (Leighton 2007, 20)

Dōgen says in the chapter “Zazenshin” 坐禪箴 (Lancet of zazen) of *Shōbōgenzō*:

自己の所見を自己の所見と決定せざるのみにあらず、万般の作業に参学すべき宗旨あることを一定するなり。しるべし、仏をみるに仏をしらず、会せざるがごとく、水をみるをもしらず、山をみるをもしらざるなり。眼前の法、さらに通路あるべからずと倉卒なるは、仏学にあらざるなり。

We should not think that what we see is what should be seen, but we must be convinced that there is a deep meaning to investigate in everything. We should know that seeing a Buddha, we could not recognize him and meet him. [In the same way] seeing water we could not recognize it, and seeing mountains, we could not recognize them. To limit ourselves to the in-mediate fact which is in front of us and to not search more deeply, is not the study of Buddhism. (Etō 1961, 1: 400)

According to Dōgen, to take for granted the doctrine is not the true spirit of Buddhism, which, on the contrary, consists in “striving in search” of the true meaning which is concealed. The Way of Buddhism is a quest which implies the complete engagement of ourselves and of our energy.

6 Original Interpretations

In many cases, Dōgen gives new and original interpretations of texts quoted in *Shōbōgenzō*, by way of which he makes *sūtras* say what he wants to be said. These are, as a matter of fact, linguistic and/or semantic manipulations, also called in Japanese *tenshaku* 転釈, or 'different interpretation', and are considered by the Japanese master as a quest to 'unveil' reality and true meaning.

Indeed, in medieval Japan, there are many instances of this kind of semantic manipulation in the Buddhist world, not limited to the Zen sect (for example, in Shinran 親鸞 [1173-1263]). However, the high linguistic ability of Dōgen makes him one of the prominent examples. What follows are five examples taken from chapters of the *Shōbōgenzō*.

6.1 Buddha-Nature

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 大般涅槃經 (The Sutra of the Great Nirvana; probably translated into Chinese around the fifth century CE) there is written:

一切衆生悉有仏性 (SAT, vol. 9, no. 0270)

In *kundoku*:

一切衆生悉く仏性有り

Issai shujō kotogotoku busshō ari

The translation is: "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha nature". This means that all human beings have Buddha-nature, that is, the potentiality that developed through practice, allows access to enlightenment. Practice is the means by which the spark of Buddhahood can be brought to full development.

Of course, in view of the fundamental teaching of Dōgen, that "practice and enlightenment are one" (*shūshō ichinyō* 修証一如), the statement of the *Sūtra* is unacceptable. For Dōgen, Buddha-nature cannot be a latent potentiality to be fully developed. Therefore, with a linguistic strategy, he completely changes the meaning of the sentence of the *Sūtra* and turns it consonant with his teaching.

Dōgen interpretation of 一切衆生悉有仏性 is as follows. He divides the sentence in three parts (Etō 1961, 1: 315):

一切衆生 (*issai shujō*) - 悉有 (*shitsuu*) - 仏性 (*busshō*) [なり]

一切衆生 (all sentient beings) - 悉有 (all beings) - 仏性 (Buddha-nature) - [なり] (are)

Which can be read as: “All sentient beings completely are Buddha-nature”. In this way, Dōgen, by means of a strategic reorganisation of the original sentence, radically changes the meaning of the *Sūtra*: Buddha-nature is not something that we ‘have’, but something that we ‘are’. In other words, Buddha-nature is not a latent potentiality, but a fully developed manifestation, and we also are part of it.

In this way, Dōgen makes the sentence of the *Sūtra* consistent with his teaching of *shūshō ichinyō*. In fact, he negates that practice is a ‘means’ in view of enlightenment, and that Buddha-nature must be enacted by practice.

6.2 Again Buddha-Nature

In *Daie Fukaku zenji goroku* 大慧普覺禪師語錄 (twelfth century), the sayings of the Chinese master Daie Sōkō 大慧宗杲 (1089-1163), we find the following sentence:

識佛性義當觀時節因緣、時節若至其理自彰。(SAT, vol. 47, no. 1998A)

Which means: “If you want to know the meaning of Buddha-nature, observe the temporal causes and conditions. When the time comes, the principle (Buddha-nature) will manifest by itself”. According to Buddhist doctrine, phenomena have no substance of their own, but are the result of the interaction of causes and conditions which from time to time join together giving rise to temporary formations, precisely phenomena. The first part of the phrase “If you wish to know the meaning of Buddha-nature, observe temporal causes and conditions” means that Buddha-nature constantly manifests itself in phenomena. Therefore, knowing the phenomena, one also knows the Buddha-nature.

The meaning of the second part in the Chinese texts is: “Buddha-nature, that is, enlightenment will manifest itself only when time and conditions are ripe”. So keep practising, then there will come a day when enlightenment will reveal itself. This conception of practice and enlightenment (or Buddha-nature) is very common, that is, the merits accumulated with constant practice will lead one day to maturation and to the expected outcome. This, however, is very far from that of Dōgen’s view. Therefore, in the chapter “Busshō” 佛性 (Buddha-nature) of *Shōbōgenzō* we find the sentence:

仏言、「欲知仏性義、當觀時節因緣。時節若至、仏性現前」。

That is a manipulation, or modification of the sentence of Daie’s *sūtra*:

(欲)識(=知) 仏性義、當觀時節因緣。時節若至、其理自彰。

Which becomes:

欲知仏性義、当觀時節因縁。時節若至、仏性現前。

Dōgen interprets this sentence as follows:

1. 「欲知仏性義」: “If you want to know the meaning of Buddha-nature” can be read as ‘you know the meaning Buddha-nature’ (いはゆる「欲知仏性義」は、たとへば「当知仏性義」といふなり).
2. 「当觀時節因縁」: “Observe the temporal causes and conditions” means: ‘you know the meaning of the temporal causes and conditions’ (「当觀時節因縁」といふは、「当知時節因縁」といふなり).
3. 「時節若至」: “When the time comes” [means] that ‘the time has already come’ (「時節若至」といふは、すでに時節いたれり).
4. 「其理自彰」 “The principle (Buddha-nature) will manifest by itself” becomes: 「仏性現前」: ‘Buddha-nature is manifested (it is always manifest)’ (これ仏性の現前なり). (Etō 1961, 1: 318)

In this way Dōgen overturns the conception of the *Sūtra* and gives a completely different interpretation, consistent with his thought that enlightenment is immanent and practice is not separate from enlightenment itself.

6.3 Flowers in the Space

The *Śūraṅgama Sūtra* 大佛頂首楞嚴經 (Heroic March sutra, eighth century CE) says:

亦如翳人見空中華，翳病若除，華於空滅

It is like a person who has clouded eyes, seeing flowers in space. If the sickness of clouded eyes is cured, flowers vanish in space. (That is, a person with an eye-disease may see a mirage of flowers in the air, but once the disease is cured, the flowers he saw in the air will disappear.) (SAT, vol. 39, no. 1799)

This means that illusion (flowers in the sky) is considered a kind of ‘disease’; in this case, a disease of the eyes which see a kind of mirage, or something whose existence is illusory and deceptive. In order to eliminate visual distortions, we should cure the disease and see reality as it is, that is to say, in its true aspect. By doing so, the flowers in the sky (or void) disappear and our view becomes clear. The *Sūtra* considers illusion a kind of optical disease, a distortion leading people far from the clear view of enlightenment. The ordinary status

of men is sickness while enlightenment is health. A very simple statement, which however, Dōgen cannot make his own.

In the chapter “Kūge” 空華 (Flowers in the Sky) of *Shōbōgenzō*, denying the common reading of this sentence, he states:

迦牟尼仏言、「《また翳人の空中の華を見るが如し、翳病若し除こほれば、華空に滅す》」。この道著、あきらむる学者いまだあらず。

Shakyamuni Buddha said, “Again, it is like a sick person in the eyes who sees flowers in the sky. If the disease disappears, then the flowers of the sky also disappear”. There is no scholar [of the Way] who has yet understood this expression.

眼翳によりて空花ありとのみ覺了して、空花によりて眼翳あらしむる道理を覺了せざるなり。

They only understand that the flowers of the sky exist because of the diseases of the eyes, but they do not understand the truth according to which the diseases of the eyes exist because of the flowers of the sky.

しるべし、仏道の翳人といふは、本覺人なり、妙覺人なり、諸仏人なり、三界人なり、仏向上人なり。

We should understand that, the person with the eye disease of the Buddha Way, is a person of original enlightenment, is a person of mysterious enlightenment, is a person of all Buddhas, is a person of the triple world, a person who goes beyond the dimension of the Buddha.

His conclusion is that:

諸法実相なれば翳花実相なり。

Since all dharmas are the true aspect of things, [also] the flowers seen with eye disease are the true aspect of things. (Etō 1961, 2: 165-74)

Dōgen disputes the claim that illusions are not part of our world and argues that they too are part of the dimension of enlightenment. Buddhahood is the whole reality, including the so-called illusory reality.

It does so by arguing that scholars do not fully understand the phrase of the *Sūtra* (この道著、あきらむる学者いまだあらず), even if in reality the sentence is very clear and the meaning unquestionable. However, Dōgen gives the *Sūtra*'s statement a completely original interpretation, and again, consistent with his teaching.

6.4 Do not Do Any Evil

In the chapter “Shoaku makusa” 諸悪莫作 (Do not Commit Any Evil) there is a quotation from *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 大般涅槃經 (SAT, vol. 12, no. 0374): 「諸悪莫作」 which is to be read in Japanese: 諸悪作る莫れ or ‘do not do the various evils’ (negative imperative form). However, Dōgen reads this sentence differently (Etō 1961, 1: 147-56). Instead of reading 莫作 as 作る莫れ (do not do), he reads it 莫作 or *makusa* as a single word which actually does not exist and is an invention by Dōgen. He interprets this word as ‘evil not be done’, in the sense that evil cannot be done. As a consequence, Dōgen reads 諸悪莫作 as 諸悪は莫作なり or, ‘the various evils, are not done’. Dōgen writes:

諸悪なきにあらず、莫作なるのみなり。諸悪あるにあらず、莫作なるのみなり。諸悪は空にあらず、莫作なり。諸悪は色にあらず、莫作なり。諸悪は莫作にあらず、莫作なるのみなり。

It is not that evil does not exist, but it is nothing other than *makusa*. It is not that evil exists, but it is nothing other than *makusa*. It is not that evil is the void, but it is *makusa*. It is not that evil is phenomena, but it is *makusa*. It is not that evil is *makusa*, but it is nothing other than *makusa*. (Etō 1961, 1: 150)

That is: evil is not this and that. It does not exist as such, cannot be objectified. It does not exist as something concrete, definable, and abstract. Evil is just ‘not doing it’: it is the action of not committing it, that is to abstain from it. Therefore, evil is not a characteristic of reality, it is just what cannot be done. If action is pure evil cannot be done.

諸悪さらにつくられざるなり、莫作の力量見成するゆへに。諸悪みづから諸悪と道著せず、諸悪にさだまれる調度なきなり。

The various evils cannot be committed because the power of not committing is realised. Therefore, the various evils do not express themselves as the various evils and there is no established implementation for the various evils. (Etō 1961, 1: 148)

6.5 Phenomena and Void

The famous *Hannya haramita shingyō* 般若波羅蜜多心經 (Sutra of the Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, Chinese transl. in the seventh century CE), also known as the *Heart Sūtra*, dealing with the subject of wisdom in the opening sentence says:

觀自在菩薩。行深般若波羅蜜多時。照見五蘊皆空。

The bodhisattva Kanjizai (Avalokiteśvara) practising profound wisdom (*prajñā-paramita*) saw clearly that the Five Aggregates are all empty. (SAT, vol. 8, no. 0251)

However, Dōgen quoting this sentence writes:

觀自在菩薩の行深般若波羅蜜多時は、渾身の照見五蘊皆空なり。

The bodhisattva Kanjizai (Avalokiteśvara) practising profound wisdom (*prajñā-paramita*) saw clearly that the entire (own) body is the empty Five Aggregates. (Etō 1961, 1: 79)

Therefore, Dōgen adds the word *konshin* 渾身, literally ‘the whole body’,² but understood as ‘one’s own body’, and makes it the subject of the sentence which follows. While the *sūtra* states that the bodhisattva saw that the Five Aggregates are empty, Dōgen, with the addition of another subject, says that the bodhisattva saw that his own body is formed by the Five Aggregates that are empty.

In other words, while the *sūtra* considers wisdom as the vision of emptiness in a generic sense, Dōgen proposes a conception of wisdom as the vision of oneself as emptiness. In fact, a little later in the same chapter, he uses the expression 渾身般若なり, that is, ‘the whole (one’s) body is wisdom’. Wisdom, therefore, for Dōgen is intrinsic to the human being, it is already given in his existence and is not to be sought outside. It is the original enlightenment, present in man *a priori*.

In the same chapter, Dōgen about the supreme wisdom writes:

色即是空なり、空即是色なり、色是色なり、空即空なり。百草なり、万象なり。

Phenomena are emptiness and emptiness is phenomena, phenomena are phenomena and emptiness is emptiness. They are the hundred herbs (the various things) and the ten thousand phenomena. (Etō 1961, 1: 79)

² In the chapter “Kokū” 虚空 (Void), Dōgen says: 皮肉骨髓の渾身, which means “the whole physical body of skin, flesh, bones, and marrow”.

Clearly, the first part “Phenomena are emptiness and emptiness is phenomena” is taken from the famous sentence of the *Hannya hara-mita shingyō* which says: 色即是空。空即是色 ‘phenomena are emptiness and emptiness is phenomena’. However, Dōgen is not satisfied with positing the relationship between phenomena and emptiness and adds that 色是色なり、空即空なり ‘phenomena are phenomena and emptiness is emptiness’. This addition that makes a dilemma into a tetralemma has a deep meaning in Dōgen’s thought, which is also made explicit in the sentence which follows: “They are the hundred herbs (the various things) and the ten thousand phenomena” (Etō 1961, 1: 79). That is, the principle shown in the tetralemma manifests itself in everything that exists, as it exists, and this is true profound wisdom.

Dōgen suggests that it is not enough to relate phenomena and emptiness, but that one must also admit that phenomena as such exist, just as emptiness as such also exists. This does not mean considering phenomena and emptiness as substantial. Rather, they are in accord with the principle developed by the Tendai school (remember that Dōgen was a monk of this school), of the Triple Truth or *santai* 三諦, according to which phenomena have three aspects: the relative and provisional substantial existence *ke* 仮, that of the true nature of phenomena which is insubstantial emptiness *kū* 空, and the intermediate aspect that combines both relative and provisional substantiality and the true nature of emptiness at the same time, called *chū* 中 which is beyond sayability and thinkability. These last two aspects are co-present in such a way that every phenomenon is real and unreal, substantial and empty at the same time.

Therefore, Dōgen, somehow forcing the text of the *sūtra*, makes a modification or addition to it and argues that the two poles of the dilemma, phenomena and emptiness, besides being only mutually related and dependent, also have an individual stance, raising the dilemma into a tetralemma.

We can summarise the above discourse in a scheme:

1. 色是色なり = *Ke* 仮, or relative and provisional substantial existence.
2. 空即空なり = *Kū* 空, or true nature which is insubstantial emptiness.
3. 色即是空なり、空即是色なり = *Chū* 中, or the two aspects which are co-present.

7 Concluding Remarks

Re-interpretations of quotations take various different forms as: word-play, creative reading (*yomikudashi* 読み下し), modification of syntactical markers, phonetic play, reshuffle of word order, word addition, creative change of word function (verbs for nouns and so on), in order to produce Japanese readings of Chinese sentences radically different in meaning, but often (though not always) 'technically' possible, because the words in the original Chinese sentence are generally present in the Japanese outcome. In particular, the syntactical gap between *kanbun* (Chinese) and its *yomikudashi* (Japanese) with the same sinograms (*kanji* 漢字) allows a certain freedom of interpretation of the Chinese source.

It seems incredible to us that a hermeneutical tool as *kanjinshaku* or *tenshaku* may have played such an important role in the development of Japanese Buddhist doctrine, but we must remember that the *sūtras* were considered the words of Buddhas and patriarchs. In the exegetical approaches mentioned above, *kanjinshaku* - especially in the field of Zen - was highly valued as a means to reach comprehension. Therefore, intuitive comprehension of sacred texts, together with a philological approach, was generally appreciated.

The search for enlightenment in Zen is a process founded on intuitive insight, a personal experience based on practice. This means that individual quest outside fixed frameworks, beyond conventionality and logic and in a sense, transgressive, is the true path. To question the words of masters in order to find one's own truth is not denigrative but may be a mandatory route.

What has been presented in this essay by means of a few examples is a particular form of intertextuality largely employed in medieval Japanese Buddhism to help the formation of new Buddhist schools during the Kamakura period with a rich variety of new approaches to Buddhist doctrine. In the spread of Chan from China to Japan, a very important role was played by transmission via texts. In fact, a great quantity of Chinese texts and *sūtras* were imported and studied in Japan. The widespread exegetical approach involved quotation with interpretation and re-interpretation; an impressive work where texts of different origins mixed.

The Japanese researched in the canonical Chinese texts as an authoritative source for establishing a local Buddhism congruent with the socio-political and spiritual needs of Japan at that time. They sometimes used those texts in a transgressive manner in order to support their views of a renovated Japanese Buddhism.

Abbreviations

SAT = SAT *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經テキストデータベース (The SAT Daizōkyō Text Database). 85 vols. <http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/satdb2015.php>.

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